

**BRITISH COUNCIL
in Latvia**

Projects 2019/2020

This is the fourth year since British Council offices Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia started implementing an ambitious project – the *People to People Cultural engagement* project, or *P2P*. The project is aimed at supporting education, art, cultural and social entrepreneurship activities, focused on 21st century skills, inclusive art, education and social cohesion issues. Truth be told, the fourth year of this project, from April 2019 to March 2020, has seeped into the fifth and final project year due to the pandemic, as the postponement of many of our projects has blurred the boundary between these periods. Therefore, our fourth project booklet has arrived to you electronically, and will soon be supplemented with new descriptions for projects that took place from April 2020 to March 2021, leading up to a printed version, the summary of the fifth year of the P2P programme.

This year was challenging and eventful – by March 2020, we managed to implement 46 projects in over 60 Latvian municipalities. There were bigger and smaller initiatives, from projects implemented

with our support by recently-founded local community groups, all the way to large-scale events in Latvia, where we were just a part of a larger team. We are tremendously proud of every event inspired, initiated, and supported by us here in Latvia. It is easy to implement bold and significant ideas when you have trustworthy partners persistently working to materialise our ideas, visions and goals, as well as theirs.

The strength of the P2P programme lies in cooperation, but implementing large-scale projects would be impossible without its strong local foundation – my colleagues at the British Council Latvia office who usually work backstage, answering our partners' questions along the way, managing agreements, reports, and all the rest. I express my gratitude for their resilience and ability to stay positive even in the most stressful situations.



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Programme
Manager



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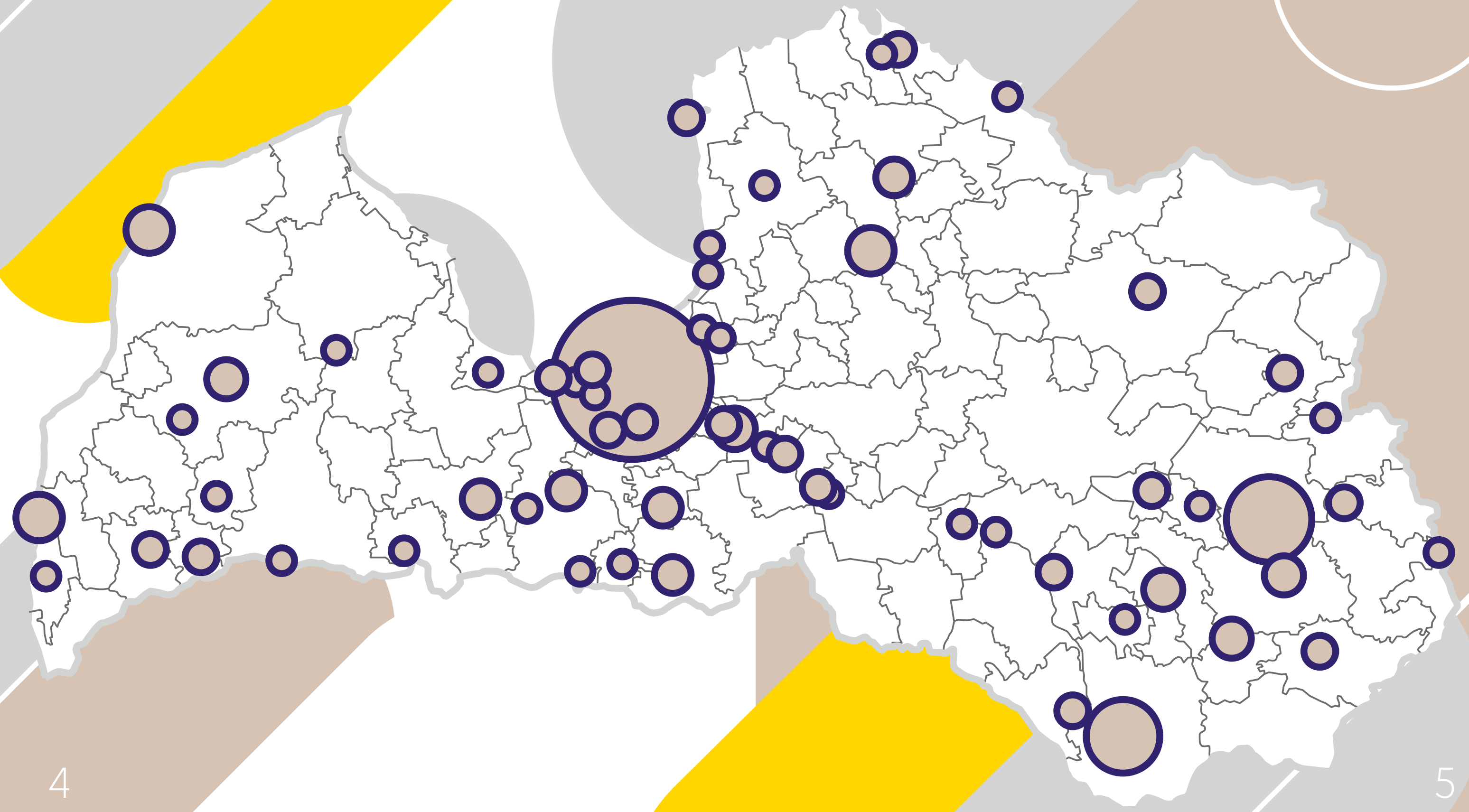
On behalf of British Council Latvia, I thank everyone who has been there with us organising, supporting and attending our projects. Your ideas, wishes, attitude and work open new horizons and future possibilities, and provide a positive input in strengthening the cultural and education cooperation between Latvia and the United Kingdom. And, what's most important, you are helping us create a better and safer world to live in.

Zane Matesoviča
Country Director, British Council Latvia



People to People Cultural Engagement programme statistics 2019-2020

British Council Latvia implemented **46** projects
in **67** Latvian municipalities in collaboration
with over **35** partners.

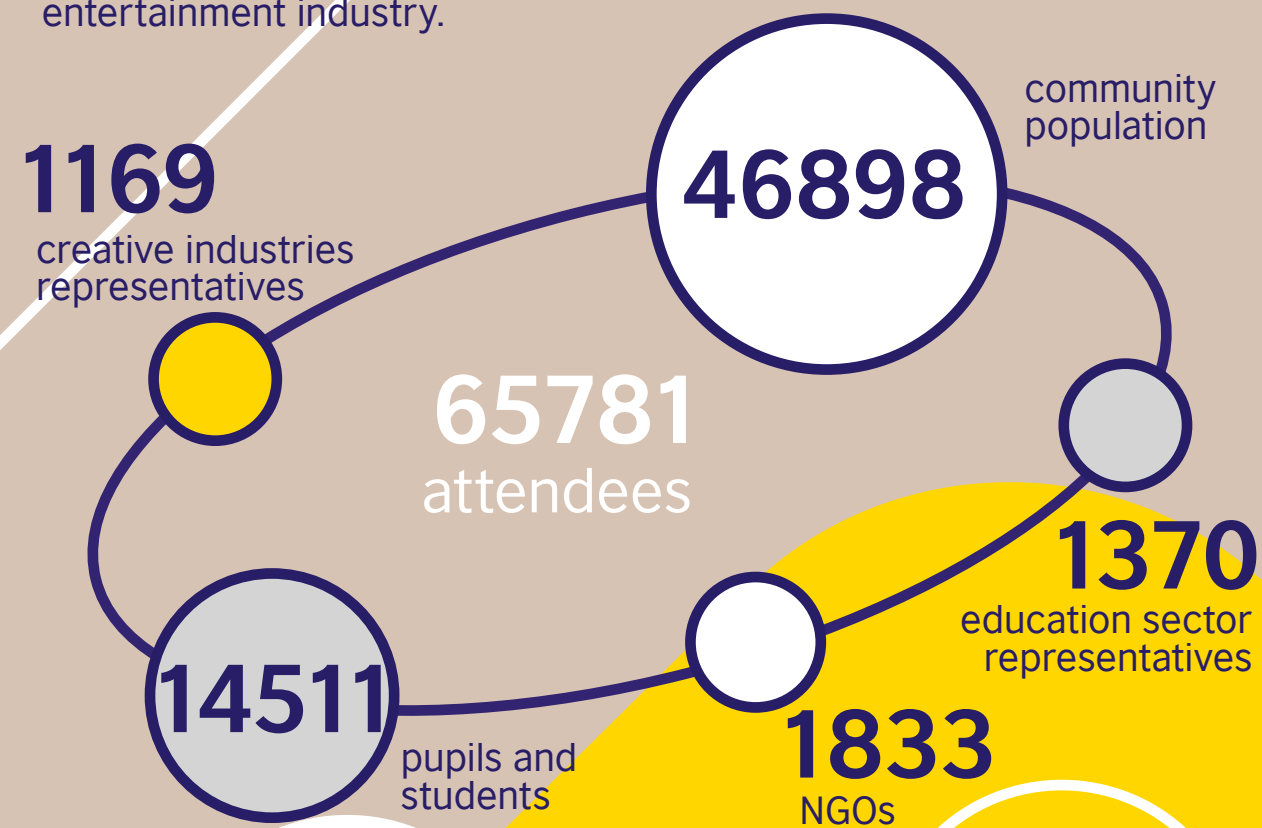


The People to People Cultural Engagement programme 2019-2020

British Council – an organisation promoting cultural relations and education opportunities in over 100 countries – is implementing the ambitious *People to People Cultural Engagement* programme, which is in its fourth year in the Baltics. It includes training, master classes, establishing local communities and support activities, festivals and cultural events aimed at involving participants of all ages, environments and communities to help improve the necessary skills and facilitate social integration, as well as promote open dialogue between central and local government institutions.

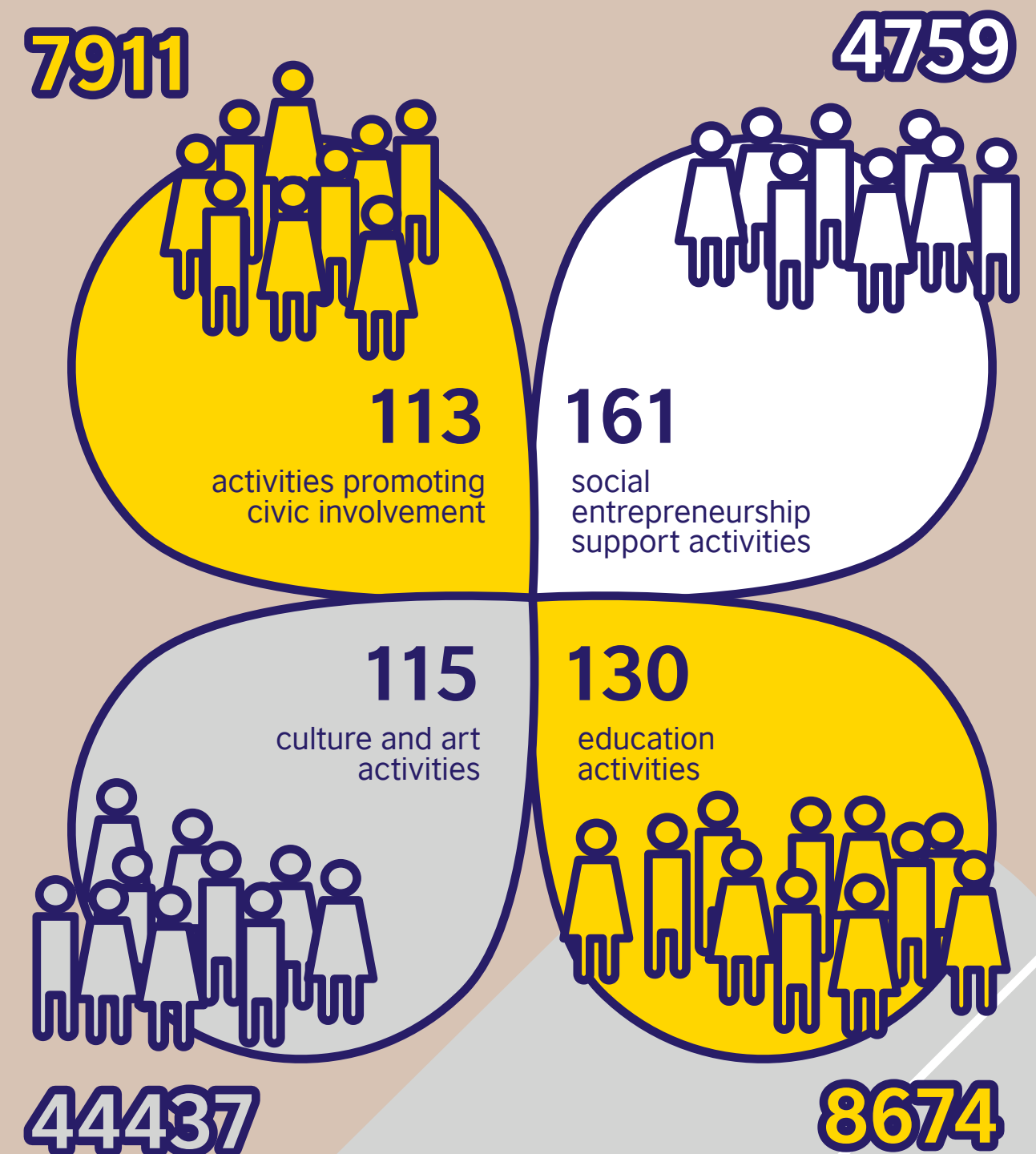
The *People to People* programme helps various communities work for a joint cause, promoting collaboration, simultaneously strengthening the relations between Latvia, the Baltic States and the United Kingdom. Through this programme, British Council Latvia creates opportunities and promotes positive change in our society by nurturing an environment that facilitates the exchange of skills and promotion of mutual understanding – these changes make the world a better place for us all.

The projects supported by British Council Latvia in the 2019/2020 season gathered **65781** attendees – representatives of the education sector, civic activity and community, as well as art and entertainment industry.



Project directions

The People to People programme was aimed at four important areas – activities promoting civic involvement, social entrepreneurship support activities, culture and art activities, and education activities.



Pilna doma

Project Director Katrīna Tetere-Frolova says the idea for the project title “Pilna doma” came while looking for words that reflect the essence of the project – quality content, professional journalism, critical thinking and media literacy. This is the third time when for a period of two months, 11 well-known journalists from the most popular Latvian media visit 46 high schools, including several gymnasiums and one college, in various Latvian cities to teach the students about recognising fake news, identifying trustworthy sources, distinguishing between high-quality content and manipulation, and to discuss the main principles observed by professional journalists. Three online question-and-answer games were also developed, helping the students recognise fake news and walk a mile in a journalist’s shoes. The games were played by over 4000 students from various schools. 40 students with the best results got the chance to attend the closing ceremony at the National Library of Latvia and visiting leading Latvian media editorials. The project included developing bilingual educational media literacy material, which was published on the project website and social network accounts, as well as developing nine educational videos. Many people who are popular among the youths also took part in the project, helping to conduct many exciting experiments – for example, the host of channel “16+” tried buying people’s personal data for 5 euros on the street.

Findings

Katrīna Tetere-Frolova was surprised by the huge differences in the student’s knowledge and motivation to learn: “In many schools, the students were very knowledgeable and could very well teach their parents and teachers alike. In other schools, though, there were gaps in the teacher and student understanding about media and its role in our society.” This made the organisers think about finding the right approach to communicate with the less knowledgeable population. Minority schools showed less interest (30%) in the project, so an approach is needed to involve them, too. The Russian-speaking schools that participated in the project insisted on learning in Latvian, even though information was also available in Russian.

Project goals

Project developers had a secondary goal of promoting investigative journalism as a future career to the students. “The level of activity in the project “Pilna doma” gives us hope that the future is bright for journalism,” says journalist Jānis Siksnis. It is fascinating that the project united many journalists who compete professionally to now collaborate and make a joint effort to popularise the project. 60% of the participants admitted to using a wider range of media and information resources because of the project. In addition, the youths are educating themselves and actively passing on the information to the older generations, which are slower to adapt to the quick change in the way we use technology and the media. All material developed as part of the project can be used to further educate the youths and the older generations on media literacy, and they can be shared with our foreign colleagues. The future goal is to develop new material and communication activities in order to ensure that learning about media literacy involves students as young as possible. More involvement of education experts and teachers is preferable when developing project activities, preparing students for journalist lectures, and motivating them to participate in online games.



Developer: Baltic Centre for Media Excellence



Best achievements:

- 1 Increased student capacity to identify and willingness to consume quality media content.
- 2 Students pass the acquired information to their family members.
- 3 More students are thinking about investigative journalism as their career choice.



Latvian and minority school cooperation project Building Trust Through Collaboration



Developer:
Education and Information
Services of Riga City (EISRC)

The aim of the Building Trust Through Collaboration project was to unite Latvian and minority schools located in the same municipality in order to meet each other while implementing a joint initiative. This promotes the understanding that the world on the other side of the street is the same as ours. The project involved two schools in Ventspils, Liepāja, Rēzekne, Jūrmala, and six schools in Riga. Representatives of these schools had not met before and saw each other for the first time in the recreational complex "Turbas" which hosted a two-day lecture on writing projects, management, and developing publicity. Though the initial reward for participation was an exchange visit to Scotland, the main prize was completely unexpected: "Our biggest accomplishment was seeing the projects expand to unforeseen horizons," said Signe Neimane, Director of the EISRC.

Besides celebrating the traditional holidays, together the participants learned about various subjects such as history, exchanged information between students and teachers, created a maths-themed quest room, an open day for parents, organised a gingerbread market, hosted and participated in seminars, and even organised a meeting between two teachers of different schools. "The trip to Edinburgh and Glasgow was most beneficial to minority schoolteachers, as for most of them this was their first exchange visit ever. Some of the things experienced in Scotland have already been put into practice – several schools, for instance, have implemented a "talking wall" of student projects and material, which serves as a reference point and motivation for future projects. Six out of the seven pairs of schools continue to collaborate by implementing joint projects.



Best achievements:

- 1 Neighbouring schools speaking in different languages were brought together for the first time.
- 2 Nearly all Latvian and minority school pairs continue collaborating.
- 3 Crushing Latvian and minority school stereotypes.
- 4 Students from different schools continue their friendship and communicate electronically during the pandemic.
- 5 Setting a great example to other schools – they are ready to join in.



Projects implemented jointly by EISRC and British Council:

Teaching theatre in schools

29 Latvian language and literature teachers from various schools in Riga attended a two-day workshop where they learned about the methods applied to teaching drama and theatre with British lecturer Nikky Smedley. The project was aimed at providing the teachers with the necessary skills needed for teaching drama, which is included in the National educational curriculum as a separate study subject since September 2020. Some of the participants said the most important thing they've learned is understanding how much there is to learn in order to provide quality drama lessons.



Teacher participation in the Narva International Conference

14 teachers from Riga attended the 7th International English Language Conference "CLIL and ELT: Changing English, Changing Content" in Narva, Estonia. The conference was aimed at discovering new forms of teaching English at schools through expert presentations, workshops and panel discussions. The conference focused on research, novel ideas and practical needs, and highlighted the importance of regular personal improvement not just for students, but for teachers as well.



Living, learning and working TOGETHER

The project “Living, learning and working TOGETHER” is a continuation of two projects previously supported by the British Council Latvia. This project is aimed at providing diverse, interactive and meaningful activities for Latvian youths and teachers from various schools, bringing together colleagues and peers to improve their knowledge and understanding about Latvia in terms of European and global values, to strengthen their sense of belonging, and notice the multitude of choices and possibilities that create the foundations for the future of the individual and the society. “By re-wording the project goal (promoting integration and involvement of the youths), we’ve arrived to the tried and true conclusion that the aim of a school is to uncover, utilize and develop the potential of every learner, and to create an opportunity to learn from life and the variety of contexts showcasing its diversity. Each of us have our own path to this goal, and every one of us needs a different kind of support in order to learn from different experiences and stories,” says Aija Tūna, Project Content and Methodology Expert.



Developer: Education Development Centre

The project began with teams representing 15 schools including one administrative representative, one teacher, and two students from various schools around Latvia. Within the period of 6 months, teams representing Latvian-speaking and minority schools attended the Winter and Summer School, lectures, interactive workshops and seminars, and made cultural awareness visits to each other. Some of the participants admitted to never having visited another school, proving it was beneficial for them to see how topical questions and issues are being solved elsewhere.

The participants were tasked with organising an event at their school or community, using the methodology learned through the project.



The Liepāja Liedaga High School, for instance, organised an interactive urban environment event commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Barricades, involving all of the city schools: “People from other schools were surprised to hear that this event was organised by minority school students,” says Aija Tūna.

As a result, over 100 engaging projects were developed to promote involvement and integration of the youths and strengthen their sense of belonging within their community and country.

With joint participation in various activities and implementation of cooperation projects, Latvian-speakers and minorities proved that divisiveness and the foundations of a bi-communal society in Latvia exist more so in the media, and not the people.



Other schools developed election simulation games, events targeting high school students’ parents, a trivia game about the Latvian army, a charity campaign, and other events. In many cases the students were the ones to come up with a proposal to collaborate, and they have developed close contact with students from other schools.

At the end of the project, the students attended the discussion festival Lampa and spoke in the panel discussion “What it means to be a young person in Latvia”. Though for most it was their first time attending the festival, the youths felt liberated and were actively involved – even those not fluent in Latvian.



Overall, the project events involved over 6400 participants that have improved their civic participation, critical thinking, discussion, and collaboration skills, as well as media literacy and cultural knowledge.

“By providing the students with the ability to execute their ideas, we are able to hear and understand them better. During this time, we’ve developed valuable and meaningful collaboration between the school administration and student self-government. We are truly TOGETHER,” says Gunita Lūse, teacher at Liepāja High School No. 7. During the media literacy lecture, the project developers found that, often, both the students and the teachers are living in a completely different era – some do not look up public media or the National encyclopaedia for information, while others are not aware that a lot of important information is available in the Cabinet of Ministers or State museum websites, and so on. The students are better at finding information quickly, while the teachers are better at using information in a meaningful way. One of the secondary goals of the project was to improve teacher and student collaboration.



Debate Leader School

Debates are taught to students in order to develop critical thinking, media literacy, and develop an understanding about democratic values.

The number of mentors involved in the “Debate Leader School” project has increased ten-fold within the span of four years, and in 2019 the project had expanded to about 40 activists with established debate clubs helping others learn the art of debate.

The Debate Leader School has over 60 participants from 24 Latvian schools – each school is represented by two students and one teacher. They attended intensive two-day seminars, lectures and practical courses on debate techniques over the period of nine months. Each student also has to attend at least two regional debate tournaments and organise debate events at their respective schools. Each school has its own mentor who is available and present throughout the entire project together with their small team of mentors. Anyone who is willing and able can attend the Annual International Debate Tournament in Estonia free of charge.

The main criteria – motivation!

The main criteria of acceptance in the project is motivation. Project organisers will double-check the student’s motivation in case they feel that the letter of motivation was written by the teacher alone. “Our four-year collaboration with British Council Latvia has helped us grow tremendously. Following a 20-year break, we participated in the 2018 World Schools Debating Championships – an equivalent to the Olympics in sports. Half of the Latvian delegation were graduates of the Debate Leader School. Even though the language of our project is English, many Russian-speakers admit to also beginning to feel much more comfortable with speaking Latvian, too”, says Sintija Tarasova, Executive Director of the Latvian Debate Association “QUO tu domā?”. Debates have become increasingly popular among students over the recent years – in Rēzekne, for instance, where there is no tradition of debating, the event was attended by over 100 students from nearby schools. “Some of the schools continue organising debate events without our help. They engage in interschool cooperation. We teach them methodology, which they use to develop their own projects,” Sintija explains.



Developer: Latvian Debate Association “QUO tu domā?”





The debates cover any topic from a progressive tax rate to receiving refugees, to philosophical and non-topical issues. Newcomers usually debate about simple issues, like whether mobile phones should be banned in schools. The methodology applied in the Debate Leader Schools has been adopted by the students and the teachers, as well as experts at the Ministry of Culture, to promote media literacy. Besides the above mentioned, debate events were organised for the educational TV channel "Tava klase" (*Your Classroom*), and several new events were introduced as well, such as online teacher lectures on critical thinking.

The Debate Leader School graduation, held at the gable of the National Library of Latvia, is an emotionally uplifting event aimed at inspiring the young debate leaders to become excited about organising future debates.



The number of mentors has increased ten-fold within the span of four years, actively helping others learn the art of the debate.

Russian-speakers admit to also beginning to feel much more comfortable with speaking English and Latvian.

Co-operation with the State Centre for Education and School2030

The ESF project Competence-based approach in the curriculum or “Skola2030”, developed by the National Centre for Education, is aimed at developing and implementing a Latvian general education curriculum which would allow the students to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for modern life. This project includes events to support teachers in developing an improved curriculum, such as training for over 16 thousand teachers, including nearly 5,000 teachers working in minority schools, conferences, web seminars, support materials, etc.. With the help of British Council Latvia, the project “Skola2030” organised two education conferences this year – one in Valmiera and one in Jelgava, which included lectures by experienced British experts who shared their professional knowledge.



Conference “Working, exploring – joyful learning”

The goal of this conference was to raise awareness about the primary school teacher as the authority of a child’s learning process, ensuring the pupils can explore, ask, search for answers, collaborate, and engage in joyful learning. The conference included three thematic directions – primary school curriculum, teacher as the driver of the education process, and teacher collaboration. During the conference, the teachers also had the opportunity to attend various workshops to help understand the importance of learning in action for children, the methods of teaching responding to new situations, involving the pupils in setting study goals, and many other skills.



The conference highlighted the future need of transforming from teaching separate subjects to becoming an authority advancing the pupils along their study process.



Valsts izglītības satura centrs

SKOLA
2030

COGITO



One of the lecturers – Patricia Herbert, British teacher and education consultant – shared her experience of developing pupils' ability to be active and independent, which, in turn, promotes their sense of responsibility.

She highlighted the importance of self-motivated action as a crucial precondition for success in an uncertain future.

The conference was attended by 500 attendees and was also broadcast online.



Conference “The world of school – the school of the world” in Jelgava

This conference was dedicated to the discussion of the role of a value system in schools and curricula.



Children can develop their capacity for moral responsibility towards themselves and the society in general in a school where the entire staff follow the same values and demonstrate them in their actions on a daily basis. Understanding values is the foundation of the ability to develop respectful relationships and find common ground with people regardless of their background, social group or cultural experience.

The conference had three thematic directions – values of the school as an organisation, values of the curriculum, and potential future challenges. During the conference, various workshops were organised for each theme, which involved sharing practical examples between representatives of schools and education experts. Neil Hawkes, founder of the British organisation “Values-based education”, gave a lecture, entitled “BREATHING value into education”. He provided a practical system which has already helped many schools around the world create a sustainable learning environment which improves the students' and teachers' satisfaction and well-being, and personal results. Incorporating basic values like respect, compassion, accountability, justice, and fairness helps improve personal relationships, the students' behaviour and motivation.





Find your passion in Latgale



Developer: Latvian Intellectual Development Foundation "Cilvēkam"

150 people from various regions in Latgale participated in online training, which lasted several weeks, and three face-to-face seminars, to gain the knowledge and skills involved in finding the right profession. The project united students, the unemployed, and representatives of many different professions, equally representing the Latvian and Russian-speaking communities of Latgale. When meeting face-to-face, the participants had to find a partner with a different mother tongue, and this collaboration and support had to be maintained throughout the project. This method proved to be effective – many of these pairs continued their relationship after the project ended, and some even had ideas about future projects. The project was aimed at developing a closer community by applying a common learning process, and to let the participants unleash their potential and motivate them in their future professional endeavours.

During training, the participants were presented with over 30 methods to improve their self-motivation and communication skills, empathy, overcoming stress, the ability to choose priorities, and other skills. The flow method – finding the good in difficult or annoying circumstances – was chosen as their favourite by the majority of project participant. The second most popular method was the joy meter, which requires evaluating one's own well-being, and improving it with physical exercise or a talk, if needed.

Online training was facilitated by the fact that answers to the tasks were visible to other participants, which helped to get to know each other better and find like-minded people: "People become warmer and more understanding when given the opportunity to publicly express their thoughts, problems and future plans. It generates new ideas, because communication brings us closer," says one participant. The training process paved the way to overcome ethnic prejudice, as stated by another participant: "For the first time in my life I've become motivated to improve my Latvian skills to the point where I could freely communicate with interesting, positive and good people. And to do that for me, not the Language Committee."

During the project, the participants realised that despite different ethnic and financial backgrounds, their problems are in essence very similar.





The stereotypes upheld by the media, as well as the collective myths, are difficult to change if we never meet and talk face-to-face. Project questionnaire results indicate that many project graduates continue using the methods learned through the project and maintain contact with other participants. After the project, half of the participants said to have found a new job or started to feel more comfortable with their existing situation.



Best achievements:



- 1**
The participants broke stereotypes about members of the Latgalian community speaking in another language.
- 2**
The participants continue to apply the methods of improving their professional life.
- 3**
Many participants have found a new job or improved their existing work situation.



Youths camp #World Ready



Developer: National Centre for Education

The #World Ready camp was organised to advocate youth's self-development, which is the main goal of the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award. Award applicants must be aged 14 to 24 with an aim to set and complete individual objectives within four programme areas: physical form, volunteer work, adventure trip, or new skills. 50 youths aged 14 to 17 and from 16 various regions in Latvia learned the programme objectives in the week-long #World Ready camp. Some of them had applied for the Award before, while for others this was their first time participating in the.

"The programme is focused on individual development, not mutual competition. Because Latvians love the feeling of togetherness and seeing what others are doing, we decided that this camp is just what they need. Seeing other people's accomplishments gives us the confidence to try ourselves," says Katrīna Sprudzāne, Camp Organiser. Programme mentors encourage setting very specific goals which can be realistically accomplished within a limited time frame – becoming a millionaire, for instance, is seen as an abstract goal.



The organisers held parallel training for adult programme supporters or past participants. During training, the organisers shared their experience in organising events which help the youths accomplish their long-term goals instead of relying on short-term enthusiasm.

The camp title – #World Ready – was adopted from an international campaign initiated by the Award. This campaign encourages the youths to take on self-development opportunities, allowing better preparation for independent life and real-world challenges.





During the course of the week, participants split into five teams with 10 people from one region of Latvia in each team. The teams did not compete with each other, as each had their own tasks and goals – Team Purple, for instance, did not participate in common activities but organised events for other teams instead. The youths camp included various lectures and a 24-hour hike along the Gauja National park, cooking by the campfire, visiting the “Cīrulīši” retirement home and “Lācīši” animal shelter in Cēsis, and attending a dance class, charades, and a quiz, which provided new knowledge about the regions of Latvia.

This camp was an opportunity for the participants to learn more about themselves and collaborate with others, as well as break stereotypes – it turned out, for instance, that not everyone from Daugavpils is a Russian-speaker.



Following the civic participation workshop, the youths were certain they'll vote in the election once they reach the legal age, and they were encouraged to continue sharing ideas that would be beneficial to their community and society in general.

The youth camp inspired an active discussion and exchange of information in the new Whatsapp group chats, as well as multiple face-to-face visits organised by the participants themselves. One of the most successful participants is Toms, who not only reached his goals set for the Award, but also came up with the idea that his hometown of Auce is in need of a youths centre. “The World Ready camp was visited by lecturer and entrepreneur Āris Birze and talking to him about his experience in Kuldīga I realised I'd like to have a youths centre in Auce too. He gave good advice on how to proceed – establish a youth's society, get a youth worker position at the City Council, and find a good space. We slowly moved through these steps.



This camp gave me the courage to realise my dream. Before that, nobody believed it could be done. With courage and persistence of an “Awardian” and great teamwork, we were able to achieve the impossible.

Yet another success story unfolded in Daugavpils. There, the youths took on their own initiative – organising the next #World Ready camp. Unfortunately, the project was halted by the global pandemic. But the best evidence of success is a letter of one parent to the project organisers, saying that one participant cried hysterically on their way home because the camp was over already!



Youth Media Literacy Project

A media literacy project was organised in the Rēzekne District to promote media literacy and knowledge on quality journalism to the youths of the Latgale region. The project had two stages. The first stage was a Summer School of Journalism at Lake Rāzna, Rēzekne District, where 30 youths, aged 14 to 17, learned the basics of journalism alongside experienced professionals for one whole week. The Summer School was aimed at promoting an understanding and knowledge on quality journalism to Latgalian youths already interested in this profession, thus creating a new generation of journalists, as well as ambassadors to the freedom of speech, media literacy, fake news, and other issues. During the Summer School, the youths learned about journalism, interviewing techniques, source and fact checking, creating video material, and gained many other skills which were then used in practice towards the end of the Summer School while creating journalistic pieces of various formats. The Rēzekne District Summer School of Journalism was organised by the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga and the Rēzekne Academy of Technologies.



“It is unbelievable that the youths were able to learn to film and edit so quickly and were not afraid of the camera at all! Several of them are so well-prepared that we could employ them as regional LNT news reporters in Latgale,” says Uldis Āboliņš, Summer School expert and LNT journalist. As part of the Summer School, the youths also visited several media editorials and, three months after graduating, were presented with the opportunity to secure an internship in news portals “Delfi.ru”, “Lsm”, or “Latgales multimediju studija” to improve their skills and develop real publications under professional editors’ guidance. The Summer School was organised in three languages – Latvian, Russian and English – which promoted collaboration between youths with different linguistic backgrounds.



Developer: Stockholm School of Economics in Riga and Rēzekne Academy of Technologies



The Summer School was an opportunity for the youths to experience the diversity of Latvia, and collaboration of people from different cultural backgrounds is immensely beneficial to our society.

“I think I could be a journalist. I’ve also met peers who have similar interests as me. I’m sure this project will promote the development of a tight-knit community. We learned, but what’s more important – we researched, we spent our time together, and we loved it!” says Māriete Zīra, graduate of the Summer School of Journalism.

The second stage of the project, entitled “The School of Opinion Leaders”, took place from October 2019 to March 2020, and was a collaboration between the Rēzekne Academy of Technologies (RAT), British Council Latvia, the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, and the Rēzekne District Municipality. As part of the project, 35 youths, aged 11 to 19, met twice per month to learn to express their opinion, discuss topics, take photographs, film, and edit videos.





Each class provided theoretical knowledge, which was later used by the youths while working on projects of their choice. Inta Rimšāne, the person behind the idea, says that she started thinking about the project a while ago. “Our youths have a lot of new and exciting ideas, however they lack the skill and opportunities to substantiate and explain their ideas, and thus they cannot gain any supporters. Every new idea needs an initiator, but, without supporters, the idea will simply die. The project brought together a great team of field experts and teachers, including communications professor Sandra Murinska, journalist Diāna Selecka, photographer Eduards Medvedevs, and video operator Māris Justs. We learned we can indeed help the youths to make an argument, and prepare their opinion for publishing on various social networks, the radio, or the television.”

We learned by doing, not by slugging through some boring lecture. The youths are used to doing things quickly, and are often discouraged to continue working if they cannot see immediate result.

The project attracted a wide range of youths – some were already motivated and could not wait to get to work, while others were more so interested in communicating with peers. Līga Runčis – sister of Aigars Runčis, lead singer of the popular band *Borova MC* – now a student of communication science at the University of Latvia, reveals that participation in the project was very interesting for her. “I’ve long been interested in journalism and communication, and the project was a chance for me to improve existing skills, gain new knowledge, and new friends. Communication is a skill to be learned. I, too, felt shy at the beginning, and found it hard to talk to people. However, thanks to my brother, who involved me in different events, and the project, of course, I’ve now become much more open, and able to communicate and make an argument.

Meldra Gailne, mother of project participants Jānis Andris Kačkāns and Valters Viesturs Kačkāns, approves of their involvement in the School of Opinion Leaders. “I find it great. We need more projects like this, as they allow our children to be creative while learning and practicing interesting skills. My children have learned to make videos, pick and assess information, collaborate, and create scenarios. They are now able to assess their opportunities. Their discussion skill has improved, and they are more confident and secure in themselves. Thank you all for this project! You definitely need to continue the project!”

The teachers learned along with the students. Photographer Eduards Medvedevs thinks that nowadays, the youths lack patience: “We learned by doing, not by slugging through some boring lecture. The youths are used to doing things quickly, and are often discouraged to continue working if they cannot see immediate result. Working with them was a huge challenge to us, as we had to develop tasks with immediate results, but also remind them that some things take time.”



Active Citizens

The Active Citizens programme, developed by the British Council, is working in about 75 countries worldwide, with the aim of promoting public participation. The Active Citizens project started last year with a four-day training. The participants, led by international trainers, had the opportunity to learn about different methods of developing knowledge to further pass it down to other members of the community by means of seminars, classes, camps and other formats. The training brought together 21 attendees from over ten cities of Latvia with different professional backgrounds – representatives of NGOs, local governments, psychotherapy, art therapy, representatives of a youth centre, and others. Almost half of the attendees who were trained last year have already used the obtained knowledge at their own initiative, by organising activities within their communities. Youth training organised in

Nature in Our Hearts

The idea about the project *Nature in Our Hearts* came about during a summer camp for children with special needs. Parents were very interested in the children's workshops, and they were offered an opportunity to learn new skills themselves. The chosen general theme was nature and ecological lifestyle, and the workshops were dedicated to making herbal tea, skincare products, pottery and home décor. As part of the project, collaboration was



ACTIVE CITIZENS

Daugavpils, the New Leader School established in Riga, a strategic planning meeting moderated for the Riga Jewish Community – these and other events were attended by over 350 people in total. The secondary goal of the project was to support community initiatives, encouraging collaboration between representatives of different language-speaking groups in order to create lasting change within our community. "All of these projects are small, yet important impulses which jump-start and set in motion larger change within the communities and provide even bigger opportunities. It may seem insignificant that one person now feels comfortable and confident when socialising in a bilingual environment, but it is a significant change for the individual, as well as the larger community," says Project Manager Kristīne Leontjeva. Overall, six projects were organised, and they were attended by over 200 people.

established between the Informal Education Centre "Zeimuļs" and the Social Services in Rēzekne – representatives of the latter actively involved high social risk groups in the workshop activities. During the master classes, the participants worked in small groups or pairs, collaborating with people who speak another language or have a different social background. This format was an opportunity to learn new practical skills, as well as experience the power of mutual support and spending time in a thoughtful way. Participants who raise special needs children in their families admitted that it is very important to take care of oneself and break away from the daily routine. Discussions followed after every master class, aimed at letting the participants find the courage within themselves to speak up, or build the patience and tolerance needed to accept other people's views. There have also been talks about future projects, for example, developing relaxing activities and various workshops in collaboration with Mothers Club Rēzekne.



Developer: Association "Enģeļi ar mums"

Me for Latgale

Association *IIC Dino* in collaboration with Daugavpils City Council Youths Department organised investigative visits to youth centres of various cities in Latgale in order to examine the current situation concerning the youths, share experiences, and develop future collaboration.

We cannot expect somebody else to come along and promote regional development. We have to do it ourselves, and it is most productive to plant the seed of determination at a young age. The meeting focused on building youth leaders' organisational skills by including them in the process of planning various activities and events.

The main goal of the project was to strengthen the network of youth centres in Latgale and raise awareness to youth leaders, specialists and youth organisation workers about the importance of their work in the development of the region and young people's sense of belonging to the country.

Urban Thinking Game

If Purvciems were a city, it would be the fourth most populated city in Latvia. Still, this urban area is severely lacking quality public outdoor spaces for relaxation, spending free time or attending cultural events. Purvciems is currently famous for its car parking lots and intensive construction of new economy-type apartment blocks. Though the Purvciems Neighbourhood Association has been established to solve these issues, the involvement and civic participation of the inhabitants is still quite low. Being this close to one another has not brought people closer – instead, it has made them become more distant. It has caused apathy towards what goes on outside their apartment. And that is why the Riga Neighbourhood Alliance has come up with a proposal of organising a game for all inhabitants of Purvciems, which would allow seeing their neighbourhood in a new light and pushing the existing local organisation further by involving new members who are interested in the development of their neighbourhood.

"When it comes to quality public outdoor space, the larger neighbourhoods of Riga are lacking, and the environment is largely degraded in the neighbourhood centres. We'd like to change both the City Council's and the people's attitudes, and the appearance of these areas," says Project Manager Alija Turlaja.



RĪGAS
APKAIMJU
ALIANSE

Developer: Riga Neighbourhood Alliance



Developer: Association IIC Dino

This trip was a push toward getting the regional processes off the ground. Meanwhile, a Facebook group entitled "Darbs ar jaunatni Latgalē" (Working with the youths of Latgale), helps activists to regularly exchange information, find collaboration opportunities and provide mutual support. If a member of the group runs into any problem, they can turn to other active peers working in their region. Thanks to this project, a congress is planned this year for the people of Latgale involved in youth work, presenting examples of best practice compiled during the visit.





The local public meeting was purposefully organised at a café overlooking the area that surrounds the shopping centre “Minska” – an area currently used as a large car parking lot, but with potential to be inhabited differently. The interactive game format is a laid-back way of initiating a discussion between strangers who live side by side every day. The game toolset that was developed specifically for the project may be used repeatedly for similar activities in other neighbourhoods. Following the workshop, project authors also met with the Riga City Architect’s Office to hear about their vision, share experience and agree on future exchange of ideas. Meanwhile, a Facebook peer group, entitled “Dari Purvciemū” (*Make Purvciems*), was created to discuss joint projects and improve the cultural environment of the neighbourhood.

Two Languages, One Experience

Directors of the Latvian Society of the Blind have observed that, due to the language barrier, Russian-speaking members are shy to take part in common initiatives. Therefore, a project was created to finally encourage Russian speakers to start speaking, thus improving their Latvian language skills, by participating in musical or crafts activities, or playing board games. The scope of the project included 12 workshops that were attended by around 20 members and their assistants. Once a month, the society organises group excursions to the museums in Riga, and a trip to Sigulda to visit “Cēriņu spārni” (*Wings of Hope*) – an NGO that works with special needs children and youths. Since the excursions were organised in Latvian, the participants were encouraged to cooperate and explain to non-Latvian speakers what the guide is saying. For the majority of the participants this was a completely new experience as they had never been to a museum before. The society also visited

the social enterprise shop “Visi var” (*Everybody can!*) in Sigulda that sells works created by special needs children and youths, which turned out to be very inspiring. During the visit, an idea was born to collaborate with the shop, creating another location in Riga. The main project achievement is finding new friends, which has encouraged the members to take part in future activities of the society as well. Members Valentina and Vladimir have changed the most – the true introverts have overcome their fear and gained self-confidence to just talk and get involved in activities.



Developer: Latvian Society of the Blind



Developer: Project Workshop

Waldorf Education in Town Ogre

The aim of this project was to develop workshops which would create a favourable environment for meeting and exchanging ideas between the families, teachers and other children’s education enthusiasts of the local communities of the town Ogre. The acquired experiences and knowledge were intended to be used as basis for establishing a new alternative education centre in Ogre. During a period of three months, 14 activities of various formats, including practical and common leisure activities, were organised for the participants to learn from one another, gain trust and transform the experience into a wider community of peers. The workshops were also attended by representatives of seven Latvian schools which follow the Waldorf pedagogical principle. Project developers have found that, generally speaking, the inhabitants of Latvia have low collaboration skills, so this time workshop participants had to use extraordinary methods of collaboration. Developing and strengthening new skills takes time, but there has already been noticeable change.



After participating in the practical workshop and educational activities, one pre-school teacher said, for instance, that she’s not sure she can continue working as she had before, having discovered much more meaningful methods and types of education.



Project “Brīvode +”

Brīvode is a special money-free shop. People may bring their unwanted things there and exchange for something else they need. It's not just about the exchange of items however— it's about having a place to just talk to somebody. The idea to set up shop in one of the building on Turgeņeva Street, owned by the Free Riga movement, was borrowed from similar exchange shops located in Berlin, Germany. When we saw that people really like this place and feel good here, we started thinking about adding some educational or creative activities. As part of the project, visitors of *Brīvode* are welcome to attend various activities including an improvisation workshop, practical skills workshop, movie nights with discussions, or a self-portrait session, which has morphed into a powerful boost of self-confidence and a chance to meet new people and socialise. Workshops offered new socialisation possibilities to the locals, and the chance to just be busy for those who had no such opportunity or external push to do so before.



Developer: The Free Riga movement



Brīvode + workshops were attended by the locals, mostly seniors from various language-speaking backgrounds, who mutually contributed and gained the feeling of belonging to their community, and, most of all – a boost of confidence. A great example of the change initiated in the local community by *Brīvode +* is Andris, who initially visited the shop from time to time. After finding out that another visitor got their

phone stolen during one of the workshops, Andris expressed that he wanted to become the shop's security guard. The next day, he came back in a uniform, ready to take on the duty of protecting shop visitors and employees. As time went on, he became more self-confident, began making tea and chatting with everybody, thus creating a lovely atmosphere here in *Brīvode*. He's even learned to crochet!

People of various language backgrounds meet at *Brīvode +* to become more open, share their life stories, and as a way of spending time with their grandchildren and other relatives.



Active Citizens in Latgale

The idea to develop four resource centres was created while working on other projects and experiencing the lack of initiative and courage to improve daily life, which is often a characteristic of the people in Latgale: "The people of Latgale are lovely, but they tend to give up when faced with a challenge. We realised that additional stimulus is needed, and we need to show examples of the possibilities of making interesting changes in the local community," says Daiga Zaķe, Director of the CEI. The most important thing is to not tell them what to do, allowing them to arrive at their own ideas instead.



The main goal of the project was to establish collaboration between educational institutions and the local society by establishing Active Citizens Communities and promoting local entrepreneurship.



The resource centres in Daugavpils, Rēzekne, Preiļi and Aglona were established with the support of local governments. The most active people – local community leaders – are involved with the resource centres, organising them and planning first common projects. The first project completed while establishing the Rēzekne centre was a children's drawing competition which allowed everyone to share their vision about the visual appearance of the centre. The Rēzekne centre is an outdoor space, established with the involvement of the whole local community – teachers, parents, local entrepreneurs and active local citizens. Inspired by local cultural traditions, activists of the Preiļi resource centre have bought a kiln. On the opening day it was used to create flowerpots, which were then used in a kindergarten to grow flowers. The flowers were then transported to the Day Centre, where the idea morphed into a greenhouse.



Developer: Centre for Education Initiatives (CEI)

The flowers are now grown and cared for by inhabitants of the Day and Crisis centres, as well as lonely senior citizens. Pre-schoolers are actively involved in the Daugavpils resource centre – where they grow herbs with the help of their teachers. The herbs were then presented as a gift to the lonely senior citizens and the Crisis Centre with the help of local social housing. Inhabitants of the Crisis Centre were so moved that, to thank the children, they made bird cages and gifted them to the kindergarten students, who then painted them. The Aglona resource centre is the place to learn embroidery skills by making various regional souvenirs, and joint effort resulted in a Path of Senses in the Aglona pre-school. "It may seem insignificant, but the people in the communities have learned a lot, they have shared warmth and found their inner motivation to continue working," says Kristīne Liepiņa, Project Manager of the CEI.

Initially, the four centres were intended to serve as a model for other centres, exemplifying that working together improves the surrounding environment, thus advocating for young people to stay and return to their hometowns. Motivating teachers to work outside their educational institution is also important for the operation of the resource centres. Teachers were once regional community leaders at the epicentre of the local society, social and cultural life. Perhaps more resource centres will be established in the Latgale region, as several municipalities have expressed interest. What's most important is that the locals now understand that they don't always have to wait for a signal from the authorities.



Best achievements:

Four resource centres established in Latgale, serving as an example for the rest of the region of the possibilities of improving the quality of life within the community.





Imanta Festival



Developer: Urban Institute Association

The idea about the Imanta Festival belongs to Anete Vanaga, a representative of the Urban Institute Association. Even though Imanta is one of the largest neighbourhoods of Riga, during the planning stage of the Festival, it was lacking a local organisation dedicated to the well-being of its inhabitants. This neighbourhood has low civic activity, many residential houses with fragmented ownership, and a large proportion of Russian-speaking residents.



The goal of the Festival was to promote collaboration between different NGOs, as well as civic activity, by questioning imagined differences between languages and cultures to work together to break the stereotype of living in a Riga neighbourhood.

The inhabitants of Imanta admit that the biggest problem lies not in mutual integration, but more so in the misconceptions regarding Imanta. "Integration here is everywhere. Latvian children learn Russian at the playground, but neighbours speak Latvian in the lift," said one local.





In 2019, the Imanta Festival was held for the second time. The latest event was organised at the Annīmuiža Park, and the main organisers, the Urban Institute Association and "The Annenhof un Imantas draugi", collaborated with international partners METASITU (Ukraine/Greece) and the Helsinki artist collective to create a colourful celebration. The Festival had organised musical improvisations as well as art workshops. Landscaping and developing of a recreational area were done in the Annīmuiža Park in collaboration

with the Zero Waste Brothers Organisation, while animal shelter "Ulubele" organised a dog parade and a meeting for animal lovers. The event was held to show the locals that their participation can cause real and lasting change. During the Festival, one local senior citizen together with the grandson and other locals took on re-painting of the sports equipment originally installed in Imanta in 1980. The Festival concluded with a picnic, which was accompanied with a concert by Sniedza Prauliņa and Edgars Šubrovskis.



One of the most successful instruments for promoting participation was developing a map of special places, during which the organisers and the locals selected over 50 important attractions in Imanta. About 50 people attended the excursion around Imanta, led by Mārtiņš Eņģelis, and active discussions about future plans were held at the "Forum of Locals". During the Forum, the locals exchanged contact information, shared their experience, and their future visions of organising the activities on a regular basis. Rigonda Bērziņa, Head of "Rīga Annenhof", said that this time, the Forum was not attended by the regular attendees of other activities of the association in Imanta, therefore it can be concluded that this event addressed a section of the population which was previously uninvolved. "Involvement is a difficult target for us due to the lack of traditions. Self-initiative was purposely suppressed during the Soviet period. It is important for local involvement to improve the people's quality of life [...]," says Vanaga. "We've never had anything like this before" – the phrase was heard multiple times during the Festival. The Festival has opened up new frontiers.

The activities of the Imanta Festival were attended by about 800 people. This project was presented at a conference of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development and for the 2021-2027 Rīga Developmental Programme task group as a successful event. The Urban Institute Association however, used the Festival as a platform for obtaining data and testing professional tools to improve the understanding about what forms the basis of human motivation and initiative, which will help to develop future projects. A visual compilation of the experiences gained during the Festival is intended to be accessible to anyone in the future.



Best achievements:

- 1 Establishing collaboration between the local organisations.
- 2 The locals understand that their actions can cause real and lasting change.
- 3 The Urban Institute Association has gained experience in tool testing, which can be used for future projects.

Latvian Cultural Ambassador Academy

The Latvian cultural ambassador movement began in 2012, an idea borrowed from Great Britain. There, this movement is represented by community leaders, but here in Latvia, the emphasis is mainly on promoting culture and traditions. This is why here we call them “cultural ambassadors”. The Latvian Ambassador Academy is a cycle of cultural projects since 2014, developed to activate the current and future Latvian cultural ambassadors to collaborate with various ethnic communities.

The project cycle includes educational events for current ambassadors, as well as activities for promoting inter-cultural dialogue and uniting the Latvian society, which is currently suffering from ethnic fragmentation.

Training and events invite members of the Latvian cultural ambassador movement, representatives of state and regional culture and educational institutions, as well as other interested parties that encounter minorities on a daily basis. The ambassador movement is focused particularly on projects where Latvian traditions and other types of involvement is practised informally with the youths, representing various ethnic backgrounds. The youths will be the ones to define the face and the unity of Latvian society. Everyone can become a trained and qualified cultural ambassador after graduating from the training and summer camp. There are currently 261 cultural ambassadors in Latvia.



Latvian Cultural Ambassador Summer Camp

Smārde parish hosted the four-day Latvian cultural ambassador summer camp for the fifth time, gathering community leaders from all over Latvia. The goal of the project is to invite Latvian cultural ambassadors to pass their knowledge down to future cultural ambassadors and any interested party wishing to implement activities in their community, improve professionally, or gain an understanding of establishing successful inter-cultural dialogue. During the summer camp, participants learned about the design thinking method, and the preconditions of writing projects, public speaking, developing joint initiatives, and building effective teams.

“The camp exceeded expectations by 1000%! The seminars helped me see the future prospects clearly, and to understand previous mistakes or flaws. I gained collaboration partners in various cities (...),” says one participant. In addition to learning, summer camp participants established

new partnerships and developed ideas for next year’s projects. “The camp united people representing vastly different fields and ethnicities, all recognising themselves as community leaders. Special attention was paid to comprehending mindfulness, as well as strengthening and developing new skills,” says Lauma Celma, Head of the Association “Society's Cooperation Platform”. The goal of project developers was to advocate more effective and higher-quality community leader work to create an open and inclusive society by working together.



SADARBĪBAS PLATFORMA

Developer:
Society's Cooperation Platform

Youths Camp “Latvijas elpa Sabilē”

The youths camp “Latvijas elpa Sabilē” (Breath of Latvia in Sabile) invited 12 to 18-year-old Latvian and minority youths from Glūda parish, Rēzekne, and Riga (including the Bolderāja neighbourhood) to learn about Latvian traditions and culture together on a four-day trip. The participants got to experience the region of Sabile, local cuisine, jewellery, and folk songs through interactive activities, played games, attended creative workshops, and visited the “Indāni” farmstead. During the second half of the day, the youths climbed the haystack at the barn to learn storytelling skills together with Guntis Pakalns, entertained each other with fairy tales, adventure stories and even poems, and then danced the evening away with the locals.

The youths worked closely together throughout the event, thus improving tolerance and developing inter-cultural dialogue between different ethnic groups.



“The youths enjoyed learning about historical jewellery and traditional Latvian costumes so much that at the closing ceremony they asked to try on the costumes once more and organised a small parade in Sabile,” said Lauma Celma. The saddest part was definitely saying goodbye to new friends.



Latvian Folk Dress Class

The Latvian folk dress class was organised in minority schools in Glūda parish, Rēzekne, and Riga. During the class, students learned about the regional variations in the Latvian folk dress, their historical causes, and how to wear the folk

dress properly. The youths also had the chance to compare the folk dress of Latvia and other regions of the world, searching for the commonalities and differences between them.

The students also learned about folk music instruments, learned how to play them, and danced to folk songs, thus gaining more understanding about the Latvian cultural heritage and traditions in an informal and interactive way.

Lecture Cycle “The most important religious traditions and religions of the humankind – an insight into their beginnings, interactions and development”

A special lecture cycle was organised to increase the Latvian culture and educational workers’ and NGOs’ knowledge about inter-cultural and religious differences. For three days, attendees learned about the religious roots of humanity – the Indo-European (ancient Aryans, Vedas and Europe), Semitic (Judaism and Islam) religions, and the religions of the Far East, led by Valdis Svirskis, a researcher of the history of philosophy and religious ideas. The participants were also introduced to the prospects of religion and religious practice in the context of human development and technology. “We increasingly meet different religions while meeting people of

different ethnicities in our daily work. We therefore believe that understanding the origins and significance of different religions, and the behavioural and communication norms, is important. Understanding these differences makes it easier to understand each other, establish cooperation, and avoid unnecessary communication challenges,” says Lauma Celma.

Following the lecture, attendees said the acquired knowledge will facilitate future inter-cultural collaboration and help prevent mutual hatred, lack of trust and human isolation.

The Bolderāja Festival



SADARBĪBAS PLATFORMA

Developer: Cooperation Platform Society

For the first time, the Bolderāja Festival was organised to celebrate the centenary of Latvia in 2018, an initiative started by the Bolderāja Music and Art School. This year, the celebrations were kicked into high gear and involved local education and cultural institutions, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which coordinated various educational activities and informed the locals about their working goals. The Festival motto this year was "Participate! Learn! Create! Relax!", with special focus on spending quality family time in a creative and active environment, as well as on improving collaboration between the local institutions and the NGOs. All day long, seven themed islands of Bolderāja and Daugavgrīva held concerts, master classes, a Lego labyrinth, bubble show, brain games, exhibitions, excursions, various sports games and other exciting activities. In order to promote all activities, festival-goers also had the opportunity of participating in a game with tasks to be completed at specific Festival locations. By participating and collecting all of the points, one would then be entered in a lottery.

During the Festival, the Cooperation Platform Society took on the "Social Island", where the locals could partake in various activities and learn about 30 NGOs and their goals, as well as learn about joining existing organisations or establishing a new organisation. The "Social island" was home to NGOs representing various ethnicities and areas of interest, such as charity, sports, volunteer work, and also to social work associations like the Blue Cross Foundation and Red Cross, which provides shelter to people in crisis. "Attendance was very high. We're excited to say that after the Festival, one of the four NGOs of Bolderāja was activated and participated in another one of our projects – the cultural ambassador movement," says Laura Celma, Chair of the Cooperation Platform Society Board.

The "Cooperation Island" was a chance to receive consultations on integration, discuss European values and common future, learn about other cultures and the opportunities of providing social support or doing voluntary work. Overall, the activities on the "Social Island" were attended by over 1500 locals. "I've just now learned about the existence of NGOs, and that they do so many different things, including working with Latvian and Russian-speakers," says one Festival attendee.

The goal of the organisers is to continue the tradition of the Festival, promoting tolerance among different generations and ethnicities, and building collaboration between the locals, various institutions and the NGO sector.



Social Entrepreneurship Ambassador Network

The most significant earnings for social entrepreneurs are not monetary. Instead, it's the possibility of starting positive change in any social group or community, including developing a more empathic and inclusive society.

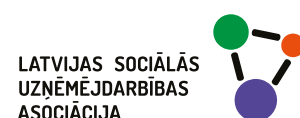
Four years ago, it became clear that a single Riga-based social entrepreneurship support and promotion organisation cannot reach all regions of Latvia. Therefore in 2017 an idea was born, and the first projects were developed to create a strong network of ambassadors to develop an ecosystem of social entrepreneurship here in Latvia. In 2019, 30 active ambassadors were involved in organising 38 different events, which were attended by over 2000 people. The biggest change is arguably observed in the local communities and governments where the ambassadors work. The social entrepreneurship ambassadors have become well-known in Latvia.

Thanks to the active participation of ambassador Mārcis Zaneris, the Ogre Municipality was the

first one to offer space for social entrepreneurs free of charge, and is now working on a socially responsible public procurement. Social entrepreneurship ambassador Anda Briede has been invited to join the Consultative Council of the Vidzeme planning region in Cēsis, setting procurement procedures for social entrepreneurs as one of the first tasks. Liene Kazāka, ambassador in Gulbene, has achieved incorporation of support for social entrepreneurs in the municipality's support system for entrepreneurs and civil society. Several NGOs, such as the social support centre "Cēriņu māja" in Liepāja, have taken on social entrepreneurship.

Last year saw social entrepreneurship promotion events of various formats all over Latvia, including such events as the Social Entrepreneurship Forum 2019, online webinars, the Social Entrepreneurship Market in Riga's Kalnciems Quarter, "Socitons" social idea development marathon in Jelgava, social entrepreneurship brunch event "Hello Solyanka" in Daugavpils, Social Innovation Hackathon in Kuldīga, and the ambitious project entitled LEADER, which unites ten communities to work together on developing social entrepreneurship in the rural regions, and many other events.

Ambassadors have also established inter-community collaboration by visiting one another to exchange experiences and provide valuable consultations in various fields, like legal, for instance. "[...] collaboration is the basis of developing ideas, and most importantly, implementing them at all levels," says Iveta Balčūne, social entrepreneurship ambassador in Rēzekne. Social entrepreneurship is impossible without collaboration.



LATVIJAS SOCIĀLĀS
UZŅĒMĒJDARBĪBAS
ASOCIĀCIJA

Developer: Social Entrepreneurship Association of Latvia

1

Developing a network of 30 active ambassadors.

2

Structured social entrepreneurship-based changes in several municipalities.

3

Increased interest in establishing new social businesses in rural regions, among other areas.



The *New Door Long* programme

Social entrepreneurship combines the possibility of solving topical social problems, while providing self-expression in action and reward for people whose capacity for work is limited due to health problems or other causes. *New Door* is the only social entrepreneurship accelerator in Latvia where social business innovators can meet to exchange ideas, provide support and develop new partnerships. The *New Door* social entrepreneurship accelerator took place for the fifth time, offering new entrepreneurs the chance to learn about new business concepts, meet local and international lecturers, and work on developing their own projects. This year, 16 out of 80 applications were accepted, and all of the accepted applicants graduated from the programme.



During the five-month training programme, social entrepreneurs learn the basics of economy, product and brand development, sales, attracting funding, digital marketing, and other valuable information.



Developer:
New Door Accelerator



The training programme includes four modules, two working days each, spread over a period of several months, giving the participants time for intense individual work between the modules. Each participant is linked with one or several mentors who provides help and support throughout the entire process of developing a business. The final idea is then presented in English, Russian or Latvian. This year, the author of the winning presentation won a cash prize of one thousand euros for further development of their business idea, courtesy of the United States Embassy in Latvia.

By the end, programme graduates have developed a clear sales and marketing plan, a business plan for investors, a detailed plan of action for the next year, and an operation prospect for the next three

years. “The majority of past programme graduates already have social businesses – examples include the privately-owned pre-school “Mācos mācīties”, established by Barbolele, Ltd, “Ramala” creative bread lab in Ventspils, “Visi var”, “OWA fashion”, and this year’s winner has founded *IW - Invisible World*, Ltd (the Dark Museum – see with your heart),” says Diāna Lapkis, Member of the Board and Director of the social entrepreneurship accelerator *New Door*. *New Door* enthusiasts have actively been supporting the development of a social entrepreneurship accelerator in Kiev, Ukraine. This year, the social entrepreneurship accelerator *New Door* is nominated for the Emerging Europe Awards 2019 in the Equality-Friendly Initiative of the Year category.



Discussion “Participate in creating the future of Latvia”

The Civic Alliance of Latvia and the Providus Centre for Public Policy, in collaboration with British Council Latvia, organised a discussion for the inhabitants of the Kurzeme region in March 2019 to evaluate the existing cohesion policy and come up with ideas for developing a more cohesive society together. A discussion in Liepāja was hosted for the inhabitants of the Kurzeme region representing the diverse portrait of our society, encompassing gender, age, nationality, citizenship and occupational diversity.

The discussions were a part of the pilot project, entitled “Latvia 2019-2118: developing a cohesive society” aimed at involving the Latvian society in planning our national future, therefore helping the authorities to prepare policy planning documents of higher quality.

The opinions expressed during the discussion were compiled in a single document by project partners, thus giving feedback to the people involved in the conversation. The document was also sent to policymakers, inviting them to also take into account the opinions and needs of the public. Following the end of the project, participants of the discussions were regularly provided with information regarding the process of developing policy planning documents, and the inclusion of their opinions in these documents. In addition, the project partners – the Civic Alliance of Latvia and the *PROVIDUS* centre – gave an official conclusion based on the opinions provided.

At the same time, the project promotes searching for better and more inclusive ways of compiling the views and solutions offered by the representatives of the Latvian society, as well as educating and informing the society about the social cohesion policy and the general means of participation.



Developer: Think Tank Providus
Association The Civic Alliance of Latvia



Festival “Lampa”

DOTS
FONDS ATVĒRTAI SABIEDRĪBAI



Developer: Foundation “Dots”



Six years ago, the Cēsis Castle Park hosted the first ever Latvian Conversation festival LAMPA – a festival of democracy, discussion and a culture of conversation, which promotes civic participation through discussions, debates, and unique cultural events. Now, the Festival has grown into a popular brand and an event bringing together more and more people with differing opinions.

It is a place for ministers, officials, environmental activists, education experts, students, young mothers, or simply thinkers, to meet and discuss important issues in a non-formal atmosphere.

Several governmental institutions and political parties have become important Festival partners and co-organisers. Support for diversity of opinion and inclusive society is diminishing across Europe, but LAMPA remains a pleasantly democratic oasis where talking, sharing opinions, gathering inspiration and broadening horizons is encouraged. The Festival has also jump-started associations of like-minded people, or those facing similar issues. The main theme of the 2018 festival was the reason behind experts including promotion of social trust among the goals set out in the National Development Plan. At LAMPA, the Investment and Development Agency of Latvia was inspired to organise the Technological Innovation Festival “Inovuss”. The Festival also inspired students of the Riga Catholic Gymnasium to organise their own alternative conversation festival in the school backyard. It really is the birthplace for change.





In parallel with the Festival, for the third time, LAMPA in collaboration with British Council Latvia is providing a practical seminar cycle as part of the LAMPA School of discussion, covering various topics, including public speaking, critical thinking, media literacy, and respectful discussion, among many others. Over four thousand people have attended 49 seminars, of which 23 were hosted in rural areas, but nine were re-scheduled and held

online due to the pandemic. The Festival has established successful collaboration with some municipalities, while others are sceptical about seminar attendance. They are, however, surprised to see that class was attended by over 50 people. This invites local governments to view their population differently. Community activism should never be underestimated.



LAMPA, in collaboration with British Council Latvia, is also organising a youth learning programme, entitled "Īssavienojums" (Short Circuit), which brings together 20 youths from all over Latvia each year. Grade 9-12 students attend a set of five classes, learning improvisation skills, advertising and communication, and public speaking, as well as event planning and management. Besides learning, they are also given a task to develop their own event at the Conversation festival LAMPA with the help of Festival organisers and mentors. After finishing the classes, one of the students has continued volunteering for other festivals (TEDEx, Riga IFF, etc.), while several students have signed up and successfully organised their own individual events for the upcoming Festival.



"Steam that causes boiling", a phrase coined by the Latvian poet Imants Ziedonis, can definitely be used to describe the Festival LAMPA.



HAND-IN-HAND

“By joining three initiatives in a single project, we were able to widen our collaboration networks and look at our work from another point of view which allowed for new ideas about better working” says Lauma Celma, Head of the Cooperation Platform Society. All three projects have a common theme of exchanging cultural heritage and experiences between various ethnic groups. One project was

focused on the interaction between the traditions of the ethnic groups living in Latvia, the other allowed Russian-speaking youths to learn about the Latvian cultural heritage in an informal way, while the third project allowed for the exchanging of experiences with British experts about how community musicians can help solve various social issues.



Developer: Cooperation Platform Society

Borderland Festival in Ezere

The fifth Borderland Festival “Ezere – the place to meet. Ezere – where borders disappear” was held in the Saldus District. Since the majority (80%) of the families living in Ezere are formed by couples of different ethnic backgrounds, mostly Latvian and Lithuanian, an idea was born to create a festival that promotes interaction between the traditions of the ethnic groups living in Latvia.

The Borderland Festival is the place where Latvians and Lithuanians, as well as Russians, Ukrainians, Polish, Moldovans, and the Romani share their intangible cultural heritage.

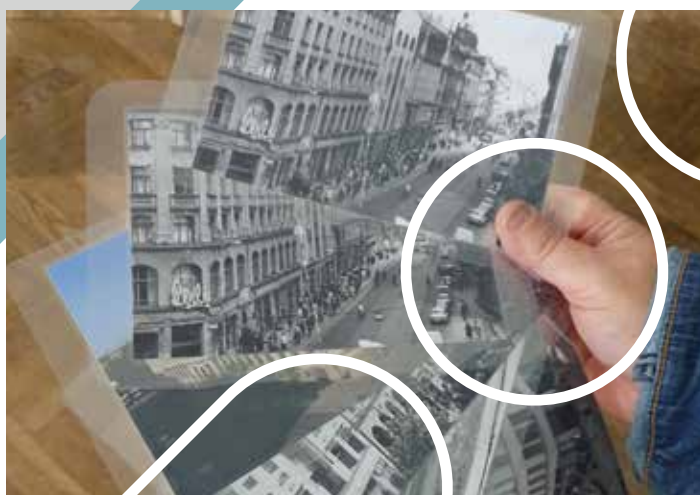
The goal of the Festival developers was to create a shared experience to exchange various traditions, and to create fertile ground for future inter-cultural or community projects. By collaborating with several NGOs, municipalities, and cultural ambassadors, the Festival held various master classes, workshops, concerts, dances, games, and a large craft and artisan product market. Māris Zusts, Mayor of the Saldus District, was delighted to see events of this scale being organised in the district's rural area, thus promoting de-centralisation of cultural events and wholesome entertainment opportunities. The Ezere Festival has also served as motivation to work more actively on developing and cleaning up the Ezere Park. “Following the Festival, the Ezere Park hosted a woodworking workshop, where ideas were generated about restoring the historical objects at the park, as well as creating new objects out of the roots of fallen trees. The work is still ongoing,” said Lauma Celma. The Festival was also the birthplace of the idea to organise the Vadakste River bridge Festival to remember the rich history of Ezere and highlight the importance of collaboration. The Festival was attended by over 1500 people.





Urban + Place in the 21st Century

In collaboration with students of the Riga 33rd High School, an idea was created to develop a project for learning about Latvian culture and folk traditions in an informal atmosphere. Following the Bolderāja Festival, organised by the Cooperation Platform Society, the school management expressed interest in finding opportunities for the students to learn more about the Latvian know-how, as the school environment is dominated by the Russian culture. "Whenever there is some interest coming from the other party, it creates a good basis for mutually beneficial collaboration," says Lauma Celma. Within the scope of the project, several groups of high schoolers went on multiple excursions – the youths learned about the most important sites on Krišjāņa Barona Street and the Vērmanes Garden Park, traced the footsteps of poet Aleksandrs Čaks on the streets of Riga, visited the National Museum of Art, and celebrated the autumn solstice with a sauna ritual in the Piebalga District. Finally, the students organised a ceremony to share their experiences with other peers and thank event organisers. "The students admitted that their perception about Latvian-speakers has changed greatly – they've met new friends and understood they can also participate in "Latvian" events, without feeling like the odd ones out," said Lauma Celma.



The excursions were overall attended by 156 students who gained a better understanding of Latvian culture and traditions, and also improved their Latvian language skills and released themselves of the stereotypes about Latvians as reserved people who do not wish to communicate with other ethnic groups.



Socially responsible amateur art

This project included several seminars and master classes for heads of folklore and dance groups, as well as schoolteachers to learn about the various ways in which community musicians can help solve different social issues. Musicians from the British folk art and education company "Wren Music", whose main goal is to pass on knowledge to the community, visited to share their experience. The finale of the project was a shared concert programme which also became part of the Live Music Festival which took place in Riga and Cēsis in October. Several master classes on using music

and social work for improving local communities were also held at the Festival: "These musicians play and inspire others with their music, but also visit special needs centres, thus making the patient's lives more interesting and diverse. I think that we can also learn from their experience," says Festival Organiser Ilmārs Pumpurs. As part of the project, a discussion about wider use of music in community life, lifelong learning, and social care was organised in the European Union House in Riga.

Overall, the activities directly associated with the project were attended by over 200 people who have become community ambassadors and help to change the view towards using music to solve social issues.

Shows Station WhoKnowsWhatWhere and Unwanted

Every year, the Valmiera Summer Festival is dedicated to a special topic, with specific artists creating new pieces during a period of two weeks based on this topic, in collaboration with members of local communities. The slogan for this year's Festival was "A Living City", and directors were asked to develop shows specifically for children and youths. "The ideas of both directors, Paula Pļavniece and Jessica Wilson, correspond with the Festival programme director's task of focusing on children in the urban environment. We are thinking about how the children see their daily environment, and what stories they create," says show producer Alma Kuške. The show "Stacija Nezinkaskuriens" (*Station WhoKnowsWhatWhere*) by Paula Pļavniece looks at the city's homeless from a different angle, whereas Jessica Wilson developed her show *Unwanted* together with the youths at the Valmiera SOS Children's Village.

Station WhoKnowsWhatWhere

Director: Paula Pļavniece

The show is a science fiction-adventure story that allows children to look at the city's homeless in a different way.

From the impoverished, beggars, or even worse – bums, they turn into secret agents who could, perhaps, be the first humans to freely travel through space. The show's description reads: "The secret agents have been collecting materials all over Latvia for years now to build the *WhoKnowsWhatWhere* developed by scientists. Secret agents? We mostly refer to them as the people of the streets... The homeless." The show also touches slightly upon the Memorial for the fallen WWII troops located in Valmiera – this Memorial has been neglected due to the opposing interpretations of history existent in the Latvian society. The show was co-developed by members of the local community – the children's folk dance collective "Gauja" and the musical ensemble "Dedzieda". Developing art that raises attention to social issues was a unique experience to both collectives. The city's homeless were only involved whenever they showed some interest.



Developer: Association "Pusstāvs"

Movement and visual perception were chosen as the main means of communication to avoid potential language barriers for festival goers who are not fluent in Latvian.

Producer Aija Kuške says that the adults did not understand the show, while for the majority of the children, it was their favourite show: "Paula Pļavniece has developed a show aiming towards our specific target audience, and the adults just could not comprehend it." The parents did admit, though, that the show has changed the way their children perceive the homeless. Children no longer call them bums – anonymous beings without an identity, nationality, age, or gender. Instead, they now say: "Look, it's the secret agents from Station *WhoKnowsWhatWhere*!"



Unwanted

Director: Jessica Wilson

Jessica Wilson's show *Unwanted* is a social tale about an outcast boy and his childhood girlfriend. To develop the show, the creative team drove around the city with children from the SOS Village and low-income families, listening to their stories and trying to understand the extent of the influence that the value systems of the surrounding adults have on the children's experiences and ways of thinking. The youths learned to form their stories, express their opinion, and thus impact the course of the show, as all of their stories could potentially form the basis of the narrative.



The team aimed towards building critical thinking and sympathy instead of creating a didactic lecture. They wanted the youths to be heard.



The audience watched the show from a bus, allowing to turn Valmiera city into a giant stage. "Moving through the city, the audience can watch what's happening outside. When, however, an "outsider" enters the bus, the audience become participants," the show description indicates. During the Festival, it was clear that the show was a success, with the critics and the audience raving. This show had an emotional effect on many viewers, even moving some of them to tears. "This was absolutely the best show at the Festival! The

storyline was so simple, but the characters were clearly defined, and their stories left room for fantasy and speculation," one viewer says.

The director herself has also changed her initial perceptions about Latvia and its people: "Jessica is from Australia, and she had no prior knowledge about Latvia and its history. She thought shops don't accept payment cards here," says Alma Kuške. While talking to the children from the SOS Children's Village, Jessica was surprised by the children's knowledge and creativity, all presented to her in fluent English.



Festival “Komēta”

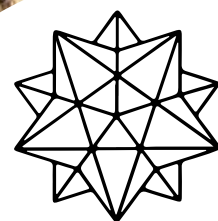
The Festival was named after the Daugavgrīva fortress, thought to be nicknamed “comet” by the locals. “It later turned out that “comet” refers to the nearby fort, still, the name is very fitting – the fortress has a star-shaped building, and the Festival, too, is like a star coming down to light up the area for three whole days,” says Producer Madara Enzele. The open-air Festival was held for the fifth time, inviting the locals to attend various workshops, visit exhibitions, movie screenings, see concerts and even contemporary circus performances for three whole days in the territory of the Daugavgrīva fortress. This year, in parallel with the three-day Festival, three events – the Comet Academy, Community Day, and the Comet Dance – will be organised with free admission.

In the last few years, activities for developing the neighbourhood and strengthening the local community were organised throughout the whole year. Several public cleaning activities were organised, for instance, and a woodworking workshop was held, where locals could learn to make a bench from old wooden material, and their creations made the area more accessible to seniors and those with disabilities. Master classes were organised in collaboration with artists Inga Erdmane and Ed Schouten, which collected and depicted the locals’ stories about their relationship with the fortress, the neighbourhood, Riga, and one another. This year, in addition to four events held at the Fortress, an anthropological café was opened

there for a whole month, which provided visitors with refreshments as well as a chance to share their vision of the future of the Daugavgrīva Fortress.

Upon meeting and discussing the potential change in the neighbourhood, many questions were related to the municipality’s failure to act. Therefore, representatives of Riga City Council were invited to join the locals in the seminars. The long-term goal of the Festival is to revive the neglected Daugavgrīva fortress, turning it into a lively and culture-filled area, as well as to strengthen the communities of Daugavgrīva and Bolderāja, and give people of various ethnic backgrounds the opportunity to meet and be actively involved in the processes related to the development of their neighbourhood. One local said: “It all depends on how you look at it. The municipality and people living in the city centre see this place as the outskirts. But for us, this is the city centre.” That is why one of the aims of the Festival is to shine a new light on the stereotypical perception about neighbourhood as a scary place with huge potential for conflict.

“We’re really happy about Community Sunday which was a free admission part of the Festival, but became a separate event in 2020. Two years later, I still remember the utopian sight of circus artists in tight-fitting animal-print leotards holding hands and dancing for the local fathers, grandmothers and children.



Developer: Festival “Komēta” Association

No sight of racism, homophobia or any other form of hate. That is the kind of world we would like to live in outside the three-day Festival,” says Madara Enzele.

The locals appreciated the various creative workshops available at the Festival. Festival attendees were very respectful of the surrounding environment, avoiding single-use plastics, sorting waste, and rebuilding infrastructure from recycled or donated materials. Last year, the Festival was attended by around 2000 locals. The future goal of Festival organisers is to establish an artist’s residence and a year-round centre for educational activities.



Best achievements:

- 1**
Meeting of communities representing various ethnic groups with a goal of tidying the area.
- 2**
The abandoned Daugavgrīva fortress is becoming a great place for cultural and educational events.
- 3**
Fighting stereotypes about city neighbourhood as a scary place with huge potential for conflict.



Theatre plays *Granny Country* and *LV vs RU*

Both plays by the theatre group “Kvadrifons” are dedicated to discussing two very sensitive topics – age, and the relations between Latvian and Russian-speakers. The play, entitled “Granny country,” is a compilation of 17 personal stories about grandmothers and the role of senior citizens on our modern society. In the play, entitled “LV vs RU”, its actors are trying to figure out who’s had it worse – Latvians or Russians?



**KVADRI
FONS**

Developer: theatre group “Kvadrifrons”

Granny Country

Director: Paula Pļavniece

“This play is about our grandmothers and how they raised us, what they taught us, how they nursed and annoyed us. It’s a story about co-existing, growing up, and settling. It’s about the gradual ageing of the Latvian society. It’s about the laughably low pensions. It’s about heart-warming food. It’s about being together, overbearing, the friendships between the generations, and family experiences. *Granny Country* is dedicated to all grandmothers of Latvia, and their grandchildren, too,” says the description of the play. Local choirs helped actors tell these stories. *Granny Country* premiered at the conversation festival “Lampa”,

and was later also shown in Valmiera, Kuldīga, Liepāja, Daugavpils and Rēzekne. Personal on-stage stories are accompanied by statistical data and TV clips. The TV symbolises a senior citizen’s only trustworthy companion in a monotonous life.

Photo-based Romanian artist Odetta Catana’s exhibition is an intrinsic part of the play. The exhibition displays the photographs of senior women met by the artist while preparing for the play. After the play, the viewers and the creative group participated in a discussion about the role of senior citizens in our modern society.



Members of the children’s choir were excited to participate in the play: “I loved to be a part of this event, and it was also interesting to see the play. I enjoyed being involved in the play, and being allowed to answer the questions,” says one participant.

The play has also impacted the viewers, like 18-year-old Dārta from Smiltene: “Being old is not easy, and we should talk more about it. The current government is not taking proper care of our seniors, and the situation borders on survival, with small pensions, long hospital queues and loneliness... Thank you for the opportunity to see this play in Valmiera! Thank you for making us think, and for reminding us to love our grandmothers.”

We live in an age that celebrates the cult of youth – the old and the sick are hidden away in old people’s homes or trapped in apartments, lest they become burdens for society. It is significant that very young artists have chosen to discuss this sensitive topic with their peers.

LV vs RU

Director: Reinis Boters

Director Reinis Boters reveals that the idea about the play LV vs RU was born during the project "MĒS" (US) which was supported by British Council Latvia. "I participated in a creative workshop, where young theatre professionals had a discussion with inspiring people, such as director Krista Burāne, communications

researcher Olga Procevska, poets Sergey Timofeyev and Artūrs Punte, among others. During Olga Procevska's lecture I gained a new understanding about the development of Latvian and Russian-speaker relations since regaining our independence, and I wanted to share them on stage, using drama.



The play is centred around two actors – one Latvian and one Russian-speaker, who share their past experiences, competing for who's had it worse.



The winner is declared by an audience vote multiple times throughout the play. According to the description of the play, "mundane confessions are intertwined with prejudice etudes, documentary video fragments, contemplative music, love and cursing". The play is bilingual, which helped actors learn each other's native language in order to talk to parts of society which they had previously avoided because of the language barrier. The developers believe their biggest achievement is the conversations that took place after watching the play. People had the opportunity to discuss and re-evaluate

controversial recent historical events, which indicates that people still think about them and are open for discussion. "By the last song, which was sung in Russian, people were swaying in unison in the row where I was sitting, and I am certain both Latvian and Russian-speakers were sitting there, and therefore I conclude that we have achieved harmony and a prejudice-free co-existence among at least one row of viewers," revealed one student at the Latvian Academy of Culture, after viewing the play. The play helped to fight prejudice about the segregation of the bi-communal society of Latvia.



Creative quarter in the Lūznava Manor

The Art Picnic Festival at the Lūznava Manor and Park was held for the fourth time, offering various musical, artistic, tasting and educational experiences. This year, the Festival included a Creative quarter, which held almost 30 different creative workshops for learning new skills. Inga Žirgule, Cultural Project Manager at the Lūznava Manor, said the idea about the Creative quarter was created based on the goals of her NGO:



“One of the main goals of ESTO is to promote individual freedom, self-realisation, tolerance and successful integration. This project was a means to involve the locals in common creative activities, thus developing a more cohesive local community.”



es **biedrība**
Developer: ESTO NGO





Attendees of the Creative quarter were able to learn dreamcatcher making skills, fabric flower, keychain and hemp paper making skills, as well as the basics of graphic design, screen printing and weaving techniques. They got the opportunity to attend a fairy-tale laboratory and jazz master class, learn to make pottery and many other skills. Festival organisers were happy to meet a local whose passion is calligraphy. It was agreed that she would teach a master class for the other Festival attendees. She was surprised by the large public interest in calligraphy, as well as the willingness to learn a new skill.



In collaboration with several hundred attendees, the Creative quarter offered quite an untraditional activity – co-painting, during which the local community, led by professional artists, created two paintings, one depicting a photograph taken in Lūznava in 1946, and the other – an abstract, picnic-themed painting.



The Creative quarter also started the environmental object “Mūza” (Muse), which could be supplemented by the local population or city visitors throughout the summer. The locals were also involved in the preparation works for the Festival by making knitted and crochet flags and helping to decorate the Festival site.

Some of the best achievements for the Festival organisers were ensuring accessibility of art to

everybody, regardless of gender, age or ethnicity, as well as promoting collaboration and respectful dialogue between the locals of various social groups, and creating a sense of belonging to the community, environment and the history thereof. Following the Festival, 74 various proposals have been received from the local community regarding possible future cultural art and creative activities in the Lūznava Manor. During the Festival, the Creative quarter was attended by about 1700 people.



Children's play

Plastic Hooligans

***Plastic Hooligans* is a one-and-a-half-hour play that teaches pre-primary and primary school children about the importance of protecting nature and leaving behind as little waste as possible.**

Director: Pamela Butāne

The first part of the play is based on "Plastmasas huligāni" (*Plastic Hooligans*), a book by Agnese Vanaga, which tells a story about two brothers and their fight against plastic bags: "They're everywhere – on the streets disguised as hedgehogs, in the oceans swimming like jellyfish, and hiding in trees like birds. Their micro-particles are having a blast in our stomachs [...]," the description indicates. The second part of the play invites children to participate in a practical workshop to recycle waste and talk about environmental pollution with the actors.

The play was initially shown in the mornings during the weekend at the Kaņepes Culture Centre, and it has been shown 44 times (one-third of what was planned before the world was paralysed

by Covid-19) in both Latvian and Russian, and in 13 different cities of Latvia that have a large minority population.

Project goals

The goal of this project was to find an active way of showing children that caring for natural resources is our common responsibility, and that, together, we can care for the world, regardless of our nationality, gender, race or location.

Children should learn about environmental protection as soon as possible so that caring for nature and acting responsibly becomes a habit practised throughout their lives. Producer Beatrise Zaķe says that children are much more interested in nature than adults: "I was surprised that civic responsibility and an understanding about environmental protection seems to be encoded into them naturally. We've been contacted by schools, saying that the play has inspired children to seriously consider recycling. They become ambassadors for recycling, inviting their family to start recycling, too."



Developer: PERFORācija



1

Children become ambassadors for nature, thus educating their families about decreasing the amount of waste.

2

Children think about the need to protect the environment, developing a habit practised throughout their lives.

3

Teachers continue recycling waste together with the students, and plan to buy waste recycling equipment at schools.



The schools have also shown some interest in acquiring recycling equipment to turn trash into treasure with the students every day.

The parents said that after viewing the play, their children don't allow them to take plastic bags from

shops. Some of the parents, especially fathers, have considered buying their own mobile recycling equipment.

After the play, the children were asked to define their feelings, using an emoji.

When asked why they chose the sad emoji, one young viewer said the play made him think about how dirty the planet actually is, which made him feel afraid.



Drama critic Līga Ulberte shared a different thought: 'People, come to see this play with your children! For a while, you'll feel that every plastic bag is alive.' In the future, the developers plan to adapt this play for an older audience of students, and to develop printed material about acting responsibly towards natural resources in Latvian and Russian.

Latvian stories. Shakespeare meets Blaumanis

The project started with a master class cycle led by foreign experts, wherein about 100 specialists representing various sectors learned the methodology of community theatre in 12 different areas throughout Latvia. Community theatre is a production centred around a group of people united by their geographical, social or cultural

environment. The same people are involved in all stages of creating the play, from choosing a topic and devising to acting. "Our goal is not to create the best play in the world. Instead, our goal is to create a play that can be acted out by our participants," says one of the developers, director Jan-Willem van den Bosch.



This is a way of finding opportunities for the locals, especially amateur theatre directors and leaders of the local culture, to widen their horizons and experience the power of telling stories about societal processes and events in their community through contemporary theatre.

INITIUM

Developer: INITIUM Foundation

Ieva Niedre, Project developer and Creative Producer at the INITIUM Foundation, recalls that Diāna Bolgare, one of the participants who teaches English to Russian-speaking children, said this project has completely changed her life. She has improved herself professionally and has also realised that she likes working with Latvian speakers who turned out to be nice, smart and open-minded people.





Last year, as part of the Latvian Centenary project, directors from Latvia and abroad worked in ten different districts together with the local communities to develop contemporary productions about the Latvian people, places, history, the past and the present of the country. The play examined, for instance, the role of culture in the lives of the people of Skulte, revealed the events transpiring at the main gathering place in Aizpute – the “Kings” 24/7 gas station, enacted the legend of Lielvārde, among others. One of the performances, the utopian opera “(Iz)dzīvot pirmdienu” (Surviving Monday) by director Edgars Niklasons and musician Goran Gora, was even praised by the jury of the “Spēlmaņu nakts” Latvian Theatre Awards – an extremely rare occurrence in the history of community projects..

Authors of the project, the INITIUM Foundation, have established a Baltic Community Theatre School together with Lithuanian and Estonian partners, where students can learn theatre methodology and are working on new performances.



Project participants and local experts believe this methodology is a great tool for strengthening local communities and discussing topical events which other communities, though not all that far away, may not be aware of due to a different environment and living circumstances.



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