CHANGE!
English summary of the Integrated Action Plan of Riga Planning Region

The Integrated Action Plan (IAP) by Riga Planning Region (RPR) as Latvian partner within the URBACT CHANGE! network and its supporting URBACT Local Group (ULG) is based on the thought that a change in public services culture is based on socially and culturally enriched communities. Stable and self-assured communities guarantee to be mutually trustworthy and well-balanced partners in a further cooperation process with public authorities. In the same time territorial administration units (municipalities or district administrations) and their public services are in need to prepare themselves for an improved outreach and prospective stronger and equally balanced collaboration with the public. The best addressee in this respect are communities, hence a sensitive and well developed interaction with municipalities on the one hand and communities on the other hand is a step in a more collaborative and democratic future.

WHY: Why did you join the CHANGE! network?

(You can find useful information to answer these questions in the Application form and baseline study)

1) Describe the challenges your region and its communities were facing at the start of the CHANGE! project

Case study analyze
The Riga Planning Region created within the CHANGE! project a network of four representative municipalities and territorial case studies of the RPR area with high potentials and good practices in social planning and participatory social design (participatory collaboration experiences and an active civic society). By the use of the within the project established municipal network and additionally by involving national experts, the Riga Planning Region worked with the URBACT Local Group (ULG) to clarify actual common and specific issues, characters of each pilot territory, social profiles in aim to define real actions to be implemented starting with the „Year of Change 2018". Expectations are to unlock collaborative capacity and to provide public services based on community common interests and their own capabilities.

The case study consists of
• *Jaunpils*, a very small municipality on the Western frontier of RPR.
• *Ķekava*, directly South of Riga and a prospering municipality.
• *Carnikava*, Northeast of Riga and immediately at the seashore.
• *Rīga* and two of its actively involved communities Sarkandaugava and *Čiekurkalns*.

Each municipality and in case of Riga, the two neighborhoods have been analyzed according to the main interests of the set objectives during project time:

Present challenges Jaunpils:
• Leadership capacity building, bridging from the present to the future leadership.

- Possible administration reform endangering the community and municipal work.

Present challenges Ķekava:
- Fragmented territorial and and incoherent spatiality.
- High influx of many young families coming in existing or newly developed territories without clear sociality. (Up to 50% influx of newcomers during last years).

Present challenges Carnikava:
- Municipal parts & communities are partially extremely incoherent.

Present challenges Rīga:
- Communities and municipality urgently need a developed communication and collaboration practice.
- There's a relevant need of a serious development strategy for community work.

Present challenges for Sarkandaugava & Čiekurkalns
- Sarkandaugava and Čiekurkalns have to come forward with their own concrete and individual needs assessment i.o. to drive their spaces more collaborative and steer an asset based development approach.

- *Conclusion I: The analyze and the ULG working sessions concluded that Riga Planning Region offers and serves as a communication platform, ensuring to voice and showcase the interests of the communities and according municipalities to the 'inside' as to the 'outside'. The region will be meaningful strengthened at its core and given a relevant communicative and mediative function. Prospective: The regions of Latvia are the voices and the advocates of Latvian communities / municipalities, symbolizing the interface between state (and international) and the very local neighborhoods and villages.*
- *Conclusion II: Pro-actively applied professional community work is urgently needed.*

2) Describe the key objectives facing these challenges (what do you want to achieve?)

The project focus: Supporting a RPR territorial community support scheme

The project main working objectives:
- The general need to closely involve decision makers and connect them to ongoing communicative planning processes.
- Close and tight cooperation between municipalities and community organizations.
- Strengthening the community working environment (knowledge and experience exchange, communication practice, cooperation methodology).
- Strengthening and possibly creating territorial focused community organizations.
- Alliance of different organizations where needed.
- Community development strategies and policies in local governmental areas.
- Creation of an experience exchange network on regional level.
- Applying village and neighborhood planning instruments wherever possible.
- New socially designed public services in each of the territories.

3) Explain why and how the CHANGE! network could help you in meeting these objectives (why was the CHANGE! network - or specific partners within the network - interesting for your city?)

The regional setting of RPR meets a threefold challenge - an urban texture with engaging neighborhoods/communities, urbanization processes in sprawling Riga and finally deeply rural conditions. The set up of the CHANGE! network included municipal or regional partners of totally different nature. This massively supported RPR's idea to strengthen the network within Riga's region by offering a bigger variety of partners within the URBACT network. In this way the variety of RPR ULG members could meet similar partners on an international level.
Additionally international meetings or staff exchange usually took place with a mixture of local RPR partners. Experiencing different international settings in commonality improved the inter-municipal/community exchange of our local partners. Especially when traveling in such an arrangement, local RPR partners that usually don't meet suddenly are brought together and create a mutual understanding.
As to conclude, the network and project time most of all stimulated inter-municipal/ community understanding within our Latvian group, thus strengthened, or created a common ground that wasn't before the project start.
Secondary the international meetings, workshops and staff exchanges allowed specifically the rural RPR partners to gain an understanding that similarly located territorial entities have equally significant challenges. This precisely helped to widen our RPR partners perspective and supported their focus on concrete challenges at their locality.

HOW: How did the CHANGE! network actually help you to meet your key objectives?

4) Describe how you involved your ULG and external stakeholders in the project and explain their impact (Did involving a ULG help you? Did a process of collaboration actually take place? If so, how did this improve your situation? Briefly describe this process.)

Strengthening togetherness, elaborating common grounds and raising mutual trust as well as communication between the ULG members and external stakeholders was one of the main priorities of the project. Straight from the beginning the ULG meetings were arranged in a different manner and at unusual locations - From bowling together to a meeting in a shopping mall, from hiking through remote landscapes, including a detailed and very successful workshop in the woods to a meeting in a local car workshop at a Riga neighborhood, locations and settings were always inspiring and extremely stimulating the communicative atmosphere of the meetings.
The Latvian CHANGE! project partners have been proving, that a common ‚social design' even of the IAP and defining concrete further actions through many conversations and negotiations is possible. Thus the ULG wasn't only ‚just' an involved stakeholder, but the entire program developed alongside the groups specific interests and developing common grounds.
A strong and coherent collaboration between such unlike partners was build within the project time and improved certainly the ability of the Latvian URBACT partner to

focus on the common goal to design and implement a region-wide goal supporting all members of the ULG. The achievement will possibly even strengthen the five Latvian *Planning Regions* role as such, defining a new and relevant objective for the administrative work of the region/s as main municipal - community driving mediators and supporters.4

5) Explain how transnational meetings, best practices /study visits and staff exchanges helped you to develop a solution to meet your objectives and face your challenges. Please give specific examples related to partners *(You can use the learning contracts you filled in after transnational meetings and staff exchanges).*

Two specific learning experiences and project meetings, resp. staff exchange meetings supported the general development of the Latvian URBACT CHANGE! project:
• Gdansk: The specific nature of the urban environment, the size and its post-socialist character and transition condition (both industrial as generally economically) have been understood by all participating ULG members as extremely similar to Riga and its regional environment. The way how the City Council of Gdansk fosters a unique social development and planning strategy, and additionally openness of city authorities, incl. the Mayor of Gdansk have been directly supporting the elaboration of the main RPR goals and the concrete action planning. Next to the impressive experiences and directly measurable learning results the workshop set-up in Gdansk was fostering the productivity of the meeting.
• Aarhus: Next to the fact that Aarhus is an impressively well developed and wealthy city, the participatory policy and pro-actively arranged communication between public institutions and inhabitants was very intriguing for the Latvian ULG members. The employment strategy and the city's readiness to risk and invest in trust-building measures between „users" and „authorities" was a milestone in the project development and opened many RPR decision makers minds.

NOW: what is the result of participating in the CHANGE! network

6) Describe the actions of your Integrated Action Plan

Building the backbone of communities in Riga's Planning Region

Action 1
Community Mapping - Regional and local capacities
• *Content:* Identifying the community neighborhood associations and existing municipal strategies and/or policies in all 30 municipalities of RPR.
• *Methodology:* Mapping process and min. 1 workshop in Riga and 3 workshops on regional level. Linked to Action 2_1.

Action 2
Concept Development - Community platform and development opportunities

- *Content:* Build out a community development strategy on a regional level and define the optional umbrella organization.
- Methodology: 1 workshop in Riga and 3 workshops on regional level. In cooperation with Action 2. Individual consultation with municipal institutions and civic society representatives.

Action 3
Implementation 1 - Preparation period
- *Content: Contact & Information* - Preparation meetings for the first community platform umbrella assembly. These preparation meetings aim to increase the significance of the final RPR community assembly: Representatives of active communities are invited to co-design the further steps of the community platform implementation period. Therefore the importance and the co-design and collaboration resources are better used.
- Methodology: Workshop meetings in Riga and min 2 regional cities/towns.

Action 4
Implementation 2 - The RPR community assembly meeting
- *Content:* First RPR umbrella organization meeting with as many as possible communities being represented.
- *Methodology*: Large scale event with presentations, workshops and assembly settings. Possibly running for two days and including an international section.

7) Describe the (expected) outcome and benefits of your Integrated Action Pan (what is the best case scenario?)

Development scenario Jaunpils:
- Masterplan on how to create sustainability in communities and leadership, thus maintaining the good work. How to sustain and future organize the well developed active community life in Jaunpils' communities?
- Case study of „Community work without municipality" direct relationship i.o. to maintain the good work of the last years in an independent way and not constantly being in need of the municipality taking action. Therefore improving resilient abilities.

Development scenario Ķekava:
- Applying a holistic approach on the scattered physical and mental space.
- Use youth, schools, families as an asset to build mental-spatial coherence (ABCD).
- Ķekava - the case study of: „Community Developers": REAL applied community management: Responsible municipal directed community work in the neighborhoods and villages.

Development scenario Carnikava:
- A „*Free Riga*" (https://www.facebook.com/FREERIGA/) case study in Garciems - bringing life in abandoned spaces, creating a real life and bottom-up community center, aiming to build a more coherent social space.
- Case study „Village Planning" - An arena for getting experiences in „Village Planning", building a case study for the future of (possibly all) RPR communities.

Development scenario Rīga:
- Riga case study: Developing a RPR community network platform concept:
    1. Practice 1: Community network platform (informal or umbrella organization).
    2. Practice 2: Applying top-down collaborating with bottom-up community work at urban communities (see case studies - there're options for many more possible neighborhood case studies in other districts).
    3. Practice 3 / Political 1: The district authorities have to run the daily cooperation with the communities on bases of a formal responsibility.
    4. Political 2: A long term community work strategy has to be elaborated for Riga, entering a serious social dialogue. The political discussion is highly necessary in order to strengthen the collaborative and participatory position of this document.

Development scenario for Sarkandaugava & Čiekurkalns:
- Sarkandaugava - The applied case study of community work in urban settings and at non-coherent areas with high proportions of social challenges.
- Čiekurkalns - A case study in applying a community space in reality in an urban setting. The community being compact and dense enough, to create a case study here with decent learning and experience output for all urban communities.

Development scenario for Riga Planning Region:
Riga Planning Region
Setting RPR in a context with the main action idea of the project.
- Riga Planning Region - being the community institution, driving the support schemes forward also on a national level: Building a national community support instrument. Not to mention that is action in the same time supports the Region and its existence in itself as a necessary third level of administration. We hereby lay down foundation for a very good tool to supervise the actual work at local level and in case to mediate between community and municipal interests.
- Thus the Region has to be the main driving force of…
    1. A region wide community networking platform, possibly initiator of a formalized umbrella organization. We suggest to elaborate this in strong cooperation with existing NGOs experienced in community development.
    2. This instrument should furthermore support with capacity building and training. Parallel RPR can cooperate in this issue with universities and other institutions, VARAM, regional agency and also international community work organizations fostering professional community work in the region and in Latvia.