



# **Diversity Unites – heading towards an inclusive European citizenship**



Diversity Unites  
together for Europe!

Co-funded by the  
Europe for Citizens Programme  
of the European Union



**KREIS  
RECKLINGHAUSEN**  
DER VESTISCHE KREIS

## Imprint

District of Recklinghausen  
Head of the district authority

Department for growth, the county council and the head of district  
Ansgar Lewe

Division for services for elderly and disabled, integration aid and  
The Municipal Integration Centre  
Sabine Fischer

Realised within the framework of the European project



between



In Germany



In Poland



In Sweden



In Latvia

With financial support from the European Commission's programme:



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.  
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Dear reader,

keeping Europe ever closer together and making it possible for every citizen to participate and contribute their ideas to our integrated communities are the leading goals of our recently founded network between the District of Wodzisław in Poland, the County of Sörmland in Sweden, Jelgava Local Municipality in Latvia and the District of Recklinghausen in Germany.



This fruitful cooperation took its starting point in the long-term and close trilateral partnership work we have been realising since the year 2010 together with our friends from Wodzisław and Sörmland. Together with our project partner, Jelgava Local Municipality in Latvia, we now have reached the next stage of creating strong regional bonds across Europe and opening up our exchange to new groups of people, what we understand as a diverse representation of our societies.

Having worked the last two project years hand in hand on questions about „good“ and effective political and social participation in our communities and neighbourhoods, new forms of societal engagement and an inclusive European citizenship we have also deepened our common solution-oriented thinking. The project discussions have shown us, that we can find good solutions in many different ways!

We moved a lot – not only for realising the project „Diversity Unites – together for Europe!“ where over 500 people came together in 6 international workshops, with an international participation of close to 40% – but also for the future of our cooperation. Let’s keep in mind the meaning, ‘Why’ this international bond is being created: The future European unity is crucial!

With the good examples in this booklet we brought together from all four parts of Europe ...

- ...we want to portray people or organizations who are a perfect example of how social inclusion can become reality and who through their actions enhance the development towards an inclusive society!
- ...we want to illustrate and point out positive experiences made through European interaction and portray people who represent and live an active European citizenship!

We believe that caring for a mutual intercultural understanding and bringing down barriers that separate parts of the society who want to actively participate and build strong local European bonds are our contributions to an inclusive European citizenship! We are glad to accept this responsibility together.

“Glück auf!” - as we say in the Ruhr area - wishing good prospects of a successful journey heading towards a united and inclusive Europe as a joint aim of the sustainable future network between our four districts.

Enjoy the present collection of good examples from Latvia, Poland, Sweden and Germany and get some impressions of the mutual project activities and achievements from 09-2015 to 08-2017!

With the best hopes for our common future Europe!



Cay Süberkrüb  
Head of District



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# The District of Recklinghausen



*Photo: Svenja Küchmeister*

The District of Recklinghausen is one of the most densely populated areas in the Federal Republic of Germany.

With a population of over 630,000 people on 761 km<sup>2</sup>, the district's landscape on the northern border of the Ruhr area shows itself as very versatile – it lies between the rivers Emscher and Lippe. This is represented by

the three-coloured waves on the district's logo.

Between heathland, woodland and fields, the old winding towers show the structural change of years past. Old industrial and mining areas have given way to near-natural habitats, which are a fixed part of the vivacious region, offering various leisure activities and cultural events. Hiking enthusiasts can for example learn interesting facts about mining and structural transformation, landscape change and industrial culture, by taking part in 12 themed tours over the district's mining heaps.

The people who reside here are also diverse and varied. The district offers a large range of industry, handicraft, services and businesses as well as science and education. Around 20 %



of the inhabitants were born in another country, or have parents who immigrated from another country. From the ten district towns, the largest has over 120,000 inhabitants and the smallest town close to 30,000. The district assembly consists of 72 members, which are elected by the citizens for a duration of five years. The total budget has more than a billion Euros.

The inhabitants' quality of life is guaranteed by the collaboration of the towns and the district. Therefore, the scope of responsibilities of the district government extends from health care and integration support to the job centre to civil and environmental protection.



*Photo: Svenja KÜchmeister*



*Photo: Svenja KÜchmeister*



# The District of Wodzisław



*Photo: Archive of the District of Wodzisław*

The District of Wodzisław is a place for everyone. Here you can live, work, recover, feel good and spend a nice time. In spite of the fact that our region is associated with heavy industry you can find many interesting places in the district both in terms of landscape and architecture.

The territory of the present-day Wodzisław district consists of five rural communities: Marklowice, Mszana, Gorzyce, Godów and Lubomia and four towns: Wodzisław Śląski, Rydułtowy, Radlin and Pszów. It largely coincides with the area of Status Minor Vladislaviensis – a historical unit that existed from the end of the 15th century to the beginning of the 19th century with a capital in Wodzisław.

The district is located in the center of a densely populated Silesian-Moravian ag-





glomeration – the biggest in Central-Eastern Europe (approx. 5,7 million people) – slightly more than 50 km south of Katowice and 30 km north of Ostrava (CZ). The area of the district is 287 square kilometers and it's inhabited by about 158 000 citizens. In effect, the county is the second most densely populated district in Poland.

One of the main tasks of Polish counties is to support and activate people with disabilities. For this reason the Polish partner of the multilateral project "Diversity Unites - together for Europe" focused on the problem of social, cultural and vocational integration of this important part of society.



*Photos: Archive of the District of Wodzisław*

# The County of Sörmland



*Photo: Archive of the County of Sörmland*

The open council for equal health and living culture in a sustainable, viable region!

Landstingets Sörmland main goal is to be the healthiest county in Sweden by the year 2025.

The main tasks of the County Council of Sörmland is to offer services in the area of health care,

culture, education and public transport in the region. There are around 5,300 employees.

The landscape of Sörmland covers a land area of 6,103 square kilometers with lakes, forests, agriculture, small and medium-sized towns and an archipelago. It is characterised by dynamic development being close to the capital area - Stockholm. There are nine communities in Sörmland, the largest has around 104,000 inhabitants and the smallest 9000. There are approximately 288,000 inhabitants in Sörmland, around 20 % of them were born in another country than Sweden.

The County Council of Sörmland is governed by 71 politicians, elected from the inhabitants in Sörmland and the budget is financed mainly by taxes from the inhabitants in the county.



The County Council was established in 1862 by a national law, which made it possible to establish self-government. The County Council is now, in 2017, preparing for a new form of organisation together with two other authorities in Sörmland, to become the "Region of Sörmland".



*Photos: Archive of the County of Sörmland*



# Jelgava Local Municipality



*Photo: G. Timmermanis*

## About the Municipality

Population: 24,260

Area: 1317 km<sup>2</sup>

Year of establishment: 2009

Jelgava Local Municipality is formed from 13 parishes: Eleja, Glūda, Jaunsvirlauka, Kalnciems, Lielplatone, Līvērze, Platone, Sesava, Svēte, Valgunde, Vilce, Virca-va and Zaļenieki.

It is located in central Latvia

and shares a border in the south with the Republic of Lithuania.

The second largest river in Latvia, the Lielupe, has 20 tributaries and traverses Jelgava Local Municipality. Due to the clean surrounding environment, rare species of plants, birds and animals can be found in the river's bends and on its meadows.

Forestry and timber processing companies are expanding within the municipality with 26% of its area covered by forests.

Jelgava Local Municipality is a typical agricultural municipality.

The good quality soil, the location and climate provide work in all fields of agriculture.

Bountiful grain harvests are gathered from the fields in summer which is why this area is



called the bread basket of Latvia. Sixty seven percent of the municipality's territory is used for agriculture.

A municipality logo and motto for Jelgava Local Municipality – For a Sustainable Future! – was created to strengthen the sense of belonging to the municipality. The green colour in the logo symbolizes the environment

and its traditional agriculture; the blue is the Lielupe and its tributaries, and the gold is for people, families and the work ethic.

For ages, leaders have been stressing that strong families are the foundation of a strong nation. Accordingly, the local council has been working on strengthening families and on

creating a family-friendly environment in the Jelgava Local Municipality. This is acknowledged in the vision set out in the planning documents – Jelgava Local Municipality – a great location for every family. The Jelgava Local Municipality's greatest assets are its residents who have created and developed it.

Therefore, the Jelgava Local Municipality has chosen families and children as the target group in this project.



*Photo: G. Timmermanis*



*Photo: Jelgava Local Municipality*

# Workshop in the District of Recklinghausen, Germany – September 2015



The focus of the first international workshop with the theme 'Multiculturalism' was laid on the topic of neighbourhood development. After a short introduction to the topic, the four participating groups from Sörmland, Jelgava, Wodzisław and Recklinghausen were given the task of developing their own model neighbourhood. 'What is needed for a successful neighbourhood development?'; 'How can the citizens of a quarter become more active?' and 'How can we recognise obstacles for people in the neighbourhood and provide support for them?' - these were some of the key questions posed for the groups, which included participants from the sectors of politics, government, social work, as well as citizens and welfare organisations. A Swedish "Democracy office", a Polish "District TV", Latvian

day-care centres offering services for four target groups as well as a renovated German church serving as a meeting point are a few examples of their creative problem solving. Even the Best Practice visits to an intercultural centre, a mosque association and a quarter centre, have led the cooperation of the mixed groups of people to participate in an active exchange of ideas and brought us a vast variety of prospects.



*Photo: Caritasverband Datteln e.V.*

# Workshop in the District of Recklinghausen, Germany – June 2016



For an introduction on the topic of EU politics, the workshop participants were invited to a podium discussion on their first day. The Head of District, a representative from a district town, a former MEP as well as a representative of the 'Europaunion' addressed the question in what way different political aspects and topics, especially EU politics, have an effect on life, diversity and integration within the living quarter.

On the second day the participants were given the opportunity to directly experience European politics for themselves by slipping into different roles within the EU structures. In collaboration with 'Europe Direct Duisburg', a simulation game on EU politics – "Integration through Education"

– was played. After a short presentation on the work of the European Union, an EU-wide framework for educational politics and a suggestion for guidelines had to be established within the simulation game.



*Photo: Matilda Karlsson*





*Photo: Matthias Gard*

The participants assumed the roles of members of various European institutions, such as the Parliament, the Commission or the experts. Using the example of education and integration on an EU-wide level, the participants could discover how EU institutions and legislative procedures work and which opportunities there are to participate in the actions of the European Union.

# Final Workshop in the District of Recklinghausen, Germany – August 2017



Highlight of the final workshop and certainly of the whole EU-project was the celebratory signing of the 'Memorandum of Understanding on Sustainable future networking' by all partners. The joint signature was conducted by Ingrid Jerneborg Glimne (County of Sörmland), Ilze Vītola (Jelgava Local Municipality), Leszek Bizoń (District of Wodzisław) as well as by Harald Nübel (District of Recklinghausen).

More activities of the programme from the 27th to 31st of August 2017 were an international cooking-event with self-made specialties of all engaged regions and a tour alongside the river Emscher with different sightseeing stops. In the final group work session the importance of the project for the work on location in every district was emphasized. Creative Highlights were the project summary in form of a poem and the living sculptures showing the importance of Europe which were presented by the participants. The train to "Europe"

was then boarded by everyone...



At the closing evening memories were exchanged and under accompaniment of a Jazz-combo celebrated. All involved persons hope for an early reunion, at the best in the framework of a further common EU-project!

# Gabriele Preuß



*Photo: European Parliament visitors service, Gabriele Preuß – Front row, eighth from the right*

"I campaign for **Europe for its citizens**, which guarantees not only peace, but also social progress, and which offers great opportunities for young people. Education and vocational training are key factors for growth, social participation and equal career opportunities," says the Social Democrat Gabriele Preuß, a member of the European Parliament representing the District of Recklinghausen. Within the framework of our EU project, a group of people from the District of Recklinghausen was able to visit the MEP in Brussels and to learn more about her work and what motivates her. Her interest in Europe was awakened by the realisation that local decision-making processes are influenced more and more through European legislative procedures and provisions.

# Refugees & Integration



*Photo: Archive of Municipal Integration Centre*

Many people have moved to the District of Recklinghausen, especially since 2015. They came from other EU countries, such as Bulgaria, but also from Syria or Afghanistan. For the vast majority of them it is important to learn the language, to find work, to have contacts in Germany and to be a part of the community.

One of them is Fakhluddin Nikbai. He is 28, he comes from Afghanistan and now lives in Datteln. Therefore, he also takes part in the workshop of the Municipal Integration Centre (Kommunales Integrationszentrum, KI), contributing towards the district-wide integration concept. "I think it's great that one can talk about problems and ideas here," he says.

For the founding of the integration concept, the Municipal Integration Centre conducted 9 workshops on various topics together with the district towns. At these workshops, topics such as education, habitation and sports were discussed with volunteers and full-time professionals who work with refugees as well as interested citizens. New immigrants themselves took part in the final workshop. Everybody has the collective goal of improving the integration and social participation of new immigrants through improved communication and networking.



# Diverse living quarters



Photo: Matilda Karlsson

Our society is becoming more and more "colourful" and is developing more and more social differences. The communities are responsible for safeguarding the cohabitation of their inhabitants in their neighbourhood through different measures of support in order to improve their quality of life and prevent social conflicts. The financial resources of the communities in the District of Recklinghausen are becoming more and more sparse. Local supplies in the living quarters are diminishing, social organisations are being closed and apartment blocks require restructuring. Thus, the topic of neighbourhood development is becoming increasingly relevant and the district and district towns want to create a pleasant living and working environment for their inhabitants despite the abovementioned problems. Local initiatives demonstrate that the inhabitants of the respective neighbourhood want to improve the situation together with politicians, the local government and stakeholders.

How can coexistence in living quarters evolve into a community?

This involves young and elderly people, families, single people, both new and long-established immigrants, people with disabilities, people who live in the neighbourhood as well as those who work there and people who need support with every-day life.

The quarters are "villages" within one city and they need to be lived in. The direct environment is important, especially for small children and elderly citizens. The living quarter, as a spatial centre, has to be shaped by its inhabitants, who have made a home there.

The 'Kreativ.Quartier' in Herten is an example of how people support their neighbourhood with a plethora of ideas, commitment and creativity. Artists, welfare organisations, associations, religious communities, businesses and other service providers have joined forces with the inhabitants to support the community and to create various intercultural activities from vacancies. In this way, a mix of normal and creative stores, businesses and meet-ups came to life in the neighbourhood. Artists visit the retirement home and the kindergarten and offer a public gardening space for meetings and "urban gardening". The 'Kreativ. Quartier' bears the motto "Urban Culture & Social Innovation", and it combines education and social work with creative endeavours such as music, theatre, painting and literature. This brings people together within their city districts as well as bringing life to new creative businesses, which upvalues the district.

The EU project inspired an active exchange of ideas about neighbourhood development and many new and interesting ideas have been introduced by the partner districts.



# Encourage people to find their talents!



Finding and implementing new ways and models for scouting talented students for universities – this is the aim of the project **"Improving my talents"** project at the Westphalian University of Applied Sciences in Gelsenkirchen. The talent scouts visit schools and search for young people, who have the potential to study at university, but who need external encouragement to do so. They may be lacking advice from their families, or finances for studying. Talent scouts inspire courage and motivation, and show new paths! Which requirements are there for a study programme? How do I become an engineer? Where and how would I acquire a scholarship? Conversations with parents will also be carried out by the talent scouts



*Photo: Archive of the association*

as well as communication to the right establishments. The scouts are directed towards the talented pupils by the teachers on site, who know their pupils very well and who have a strong collaboration with the Westphalian University. The talent scouts see their duty as removing obstacles, showing education opportunities and building bridges. This is what the talent scout Suat Yılmaz has to say about his work: "I try to shape the path from school to university to be as pleasant and as successful as possible." Suat Yılmaz has initiated the talent promotion at the Westphalian University and has been successfully implementing this idea for years.

# Fair education opportunities for all!



"Education and life opportunities" – this is the motto of '**Chancenwerk**', an association, which brings young people together and gives them the opportunity to become educational role models. This creates educational opportunities regardless of financial barriers, the origin or the gender of pupils.

This is how it works: students support school pupils with a subject they struggle with at school and in return, these pupils support younger pupils with their school work. This is actually an easy system, however it can only be successful with support and regular exchange of ideas. 'Chancenwerk's' concept fulfills an important need: pupils learn the school curriculum together



*Photo: Archive of the association*

and from each other, and they develop their social skills through team spirit and a feeling of togetherness. Students from different parental homes and with different school and migration backgrounds give and receive equal amounts of support with their schoolwork. A learning cascade is created, which gives access to education regardless of finances, and thereby provides fair education opportunities for all. In 2015, 'Chancenwerk' reached out to around 2500 children and teenagers per week at 44 schools in Germany. Schools in the District of Recklinghausen are also involved with 'Chancenwerk'.

# Workshop in the District of Wodzisław, Poland – May 2016



“Integration of people with disabilities into their social environment. Possibilities of social and intercultural performing on a local and European scale” was the title of the second international workshop in the District Wodzisław.

In the seminar took part parliamentarians, representatives of local and regional authorities,

as well as representatives of institutions providing assistance to persons with disabilities, associations and non-governmental organizations apart from the foreign delegations. Among the 39 members of foreign delegations, who participated in the seminar were representatives of people with disabilities.

The main objective of the meeting was to exchange

experiences and best practices in the field of work's methods with disabled people in Poland. The seminar was opened by the Head of District- Ireneusz Serwotka. MEP Marek Plura emphasized that over the past 20 years many things have changed in the approach to persons with disabilities - e.g. More and more employers want to hire people with disabilities.



*Photo: Archive of the District of Wodzisław*

The process approach to integration in education presented Anna Bialek - director of the Secondary School in Wodzislaw Slaski, which was the first of the district educational institutions who introduced the inclusive teaching. Her students presented an extraordinary spectacle in convention of black theater, with a combination of visual effects: white fabric, black background and ultraviolet lamps.

The huge number of participants, great fun and great atmosphere – just like that, can be summed up the concert „Blues for disabled“, which took place at the Recreation Center in Olza. In the eleventh edition the event for people with disabilities was attended by over 900 people und also by the guest from Germany, Sweden and Latvia.

Part of the workshop was also a study visit in the Foundation for the Development and Social Entrepreneurship „Be Together“ from Cieszyn. It implements many projects for activating the unemployed and at risk of social exclusion and creates new workplaces in the social enterprise. Moreover the

organization supports the returning to society of people threatened with marginalization by: education, work, initiating occupational activity, assistance, mutual aid.

The final event of the workshop was a common learning of basic phrases in the native languages of the partners and singing songs based on a song book & dictionary, which was published within the project.

The last evening was a real “tower of babel” and the most-singing place in the Silesia region. The program participants liked it very much, so that they decided to continue it on the workshop in Germany!



*Photo: Archive of the District of Wodzisław*

# Marek Plura



*Photo: Personal Archive Marek Plura*

Marek Plura was born on 18th of July 1970 in Racibórz. Since birth he has been struggling with progressive muscle atrophy and as a result he moves only in an electrical wheelchair. He is a member of the Polish national Parliament. In 2014 he was elected to be a member of the European Parliament. There, representing the European People's Party, he was a member of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and also a member of the Committee on Transport and Tou-

-ism. **He calls himself a "social worker"**. In his work he focuses mainly on people with disabilities. He was the founder of the "Good Home" Association (in polish: "Dobry Dom") and was the president of the Silesian Association for Education and Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities – "Akcent". He was also the chairman of the Silesian Library Integration and Bibliotherapy Department's Programme Board. When it comes to the international arena he served as the vice-treasurer of the International Disabled Peoples' Parliament and was the vice-president of Very Special Arts Poland.



# Dominika Głodowicz



*Photo: Personal Archive Dominika Głodowicz (on the left-hand side)*

Dominika Głodowicz – Wodzisław Śląski District Department of Promotion, Culture and Sports inspector. For several years she has been organizing many projects related to sports and culture in the District of Wodzisław. She's also responsible for foreign cooperation and realization of soft projects. Having a Master's Degree in International Relations as well as degrees in Tourism Management and Latin American Studies she combines her passions with professional work. **By committing to this project she has shown that the cultural differences between the four project partners can be creatively pieced together.**

# Tobiasz Wierzbicki



Photo: Personal Archive Tobiasz Wierzbicki

Tobiasz Wierzbicki – Wodzisław Śląski District Office employee. His job is to find and analyze information about external funds for projects held in the District of Wodzisław. This project gave him the idea of how diverse the partner districts are in the field of administration. It also showed him the benefits and opportunities that come from working with the project partners. As he believes: **„We learn from the best and the diversity which united the partners is a great model to learn from.”**



# For people with disabilities

## ZAZ



**Zakład Aktywności Zawodowej Zakład Usług Pralniczych (Vocational Activity Company – Laundry Services Company, ZAZ)** in Wodzisław Śląski was founded in 2008. Thanks to a laundry room equipped with high-quality equipment the company offers a complete range of laundry service for: hotels, restaurants, health care facilities as well as individual customers.

The modern laundry room has been prepared for a specific audience and also has enabled the creation of further job positions for people with disabilities. The continuous raise of interest in laundry services is the best proof of the commitment and conscientious work of the disabled persons.



*Photo: Archive of the District of Wodzisław*

The main idea behind founding the ZAZ Company in Wodzisław Śląski was to provide work for disabled people from the Wodzisław district. In the first years of its activity the company employed 15 people with disabilities. Today it employs 33 workers with disabilities, from which 18 with a considerable degree of disability, 15 with a moderate degree and 11 able-bodied members of the staff. Since the company's creation the employment of people with disabilities has increased by over 100%. Additionally, in order to provide medical care to the disabled employees, the company offers infirmity care and has a contract with a Medical Center, which allows ZAZ employees to make use of appropriate medical specialist services. ZAZ employees are hired in following positions: launderer, "clothing-presser",

“mangler”, cleaner, laundry worker, administrative assistant. The number of people waiting for employment is still growing, which is shown by a very large number of submitted applications. For many people employment at the company is the only chance to take up a job, to rehabilitate their professional life and above all it’s an attempt to become independent.



*Photo: Archive of the District of Wodzisław*

For people with disabilities ZAZ is often the only opportunity to live a normal life. After a period of rehabilitation and preparation the work gives them an opportunity to function better on the open labor market and a chance for their independent functioning in society. The company’s main objective is the professional activation of people with disabilities, to whom it’s

harder to manage it on the open labor market. A lack of motivation, shyness, lack of faith in themselves and in their own abilities are the reasons for their professional passivity. Properly chosen and systematically conducted work is one of the methods of treatment. At work a disabled person becomes aware of his or her value, which allows him or her to accept the disability. It also indirectly affects the shaping of his personality, necessary to engage in professional and social life. Thanks to professional activation people with disabilities acquire important life skills such as punctuality, regularity, responsibility. In addition they earn a real salary and participate in health rehabilitation on a daily basis. Work at the company is an effective way of achieving professional and social rehabilitation of people with a severe and moderate degree of disability.

A person with a disability taking up employment at the company is placed in a completely new situation, therefore as anyone starting a new job they can feel apprehensive. Because persons with disabilities are particularly susceptible to stress, the first day at work can weaken their mental health condition. However, overcoming these difficulties creates remar-

kable opportunities. One of the most important changes takes place in the field of self - perception. They recognize their own strengths, which most often include conscientiousness and dutifulness. Through occupational rehabilitation the company aims to make a person with a disability realize that he or she is a competent human being, who can achieve a lot despite his or her disability.

The company gives them a chance to participate in social life and the ability to break down negative stereotypes about disabilities and people affected by it. It tries to show the local community that a disabled person is a fully-fledged member of the society, while showing the person with a disability, that despite all the constraints they can fulfill themselves both vitally and professionally.



*Photo: Archive of the District of Wodzisław*

# Workshop in the County of Sörmland, Sweden – September 2016



In September 2016 Sörmland was host of the international workshop. Half way through the project we worked together with our external process support looking back on what we had learned and looking ahead to our anticipated outcome after the completion of the project.

We were informed about the work of the 'Council of Senior citizens' in the city of Eskilstuna, which is an organisation of politicians and representatives from senior citizens associations. Their main goal is to give advice and information as well as to ensure that important concerns of seniors are taken into account and that their expertise and experience are considered.

Invited guests from the city of Eskilstuna also informed about the political activity of their 'Council for Minorities and Integration'.



*Photo: Matilda Karlsson*

During the three workshop days we also made a study visit at a family centre which is part of one of our health care centres. It is a collaboration between Eskilstuna city and the

County Council of Sörmland, where all families with children are offered different services in one place and where you can meet staff members from the Centre for Childbirth, child care centre, kindergarten and social workers.

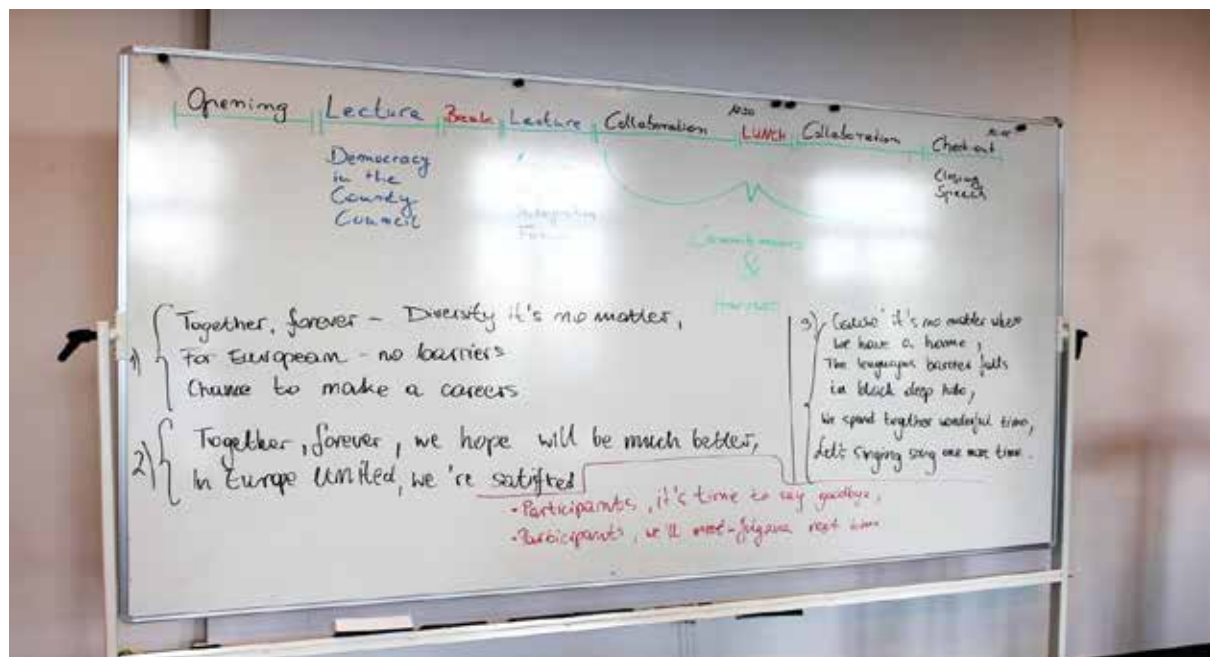


Photo: Matilda Karlsson

On the last day the Polish delegation composed the 'Diversity Unites-song', which became the "closing act" of the workshop!

# Matilda Karlsson



Matilda Karlsson studies history of ideas at the University of Uppsala.

The project has given her a deeper knowledge about the European Union as well as working in international projects and a deeper understanding of how important it is to give all persons the opportunity to feel really included. "We can learn so much from each other, for example how to handle the same issues in different ways. Regardless of economic and administrative systems – **it is the humans we shall focus on!**"



# Ing-Britt Blomstedt



*Photo: Matilda Karlsson*

Ing-Britt Blomstedt is an expert in the field of disability issues from the administration of the County Council of Sörmland. "Everyone - regardless of who you are, where you come from or if you have a physical or mental disability - needs the feeling of a meaningful life, to participate in everyday life and in society. I have gotten a broader and deeper insight in the fact that we have the same challenges in our regions and it has been interesting to study "best practices of assistance" for people needing help in the districts we have visited. **I learned that we can do good things in many different ways."**



Vedad Begovic  
&



Christer Kax Sundberg



Photo: Matilda Karlsson



Vedad Begovic has been working with integration, diversity and intercultural issues since 2001, mainly in the town of Eskilstuna. Vedad came from Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1991. Eskilstuna is a town with a long tradition of immigration.

"No man is an island, as little as a region an island is. Today, when Europe as a whole faces similar challenges, it's even more important to cooperate with each other. Good contacts and networking in order to exchange best practices and learn from each other are part of our own development. We are all in the same learning process to create integrated communities – not only for immigrants but for everyone's sake. That is why contacts between our regions are very important."

Christer Kax Sundberg is Vice Chairman of the County Council of Sörmland.

"The intention of the project was to give the participants knowledge about how the target groups reflect upon their daily life. The lectures and study visits under participation of persons belonging to the target groups have been very interesting. Economic and administration systems may differ between our regions, but we confront the same challenges in order to get all persons included in our society.

The political conclusion is that we have a lot in common, but how we work with it is different. Future cooperations between regions must be organized for a better EU. In Sweden we have had peace for 200 years, our partners in this project have a different history. **If we don't meet and talk there is a risk we don't understand each other."**

# All different – All equal!



One of the main tasks of the County Council is education.

**‘Åsa Folkhögskola’** is a school for grown up people. The school is independent of religion and politically free, open to people from different backgrounds and wants to encourage discussions and democratic thinking.

One of the courses at the school is designated for pupils learning Swedish as a second language. The course includes practicing to read, write, talk and understand Swedish, but also other studies.

My lives in Sweden for 30 years, Fehmi came from Irak to Sweden in 2002 and Dekka, who was born in Somalia, has lived in several other countries before she came to Sweden. They are all students at the school and convinced that knowing the language and getting a job is the best way to integration.

At ‘Åsa Folkhögskola’ you can also study dance. ‘Street dance Five Styles’, which is a world unique education for



Photo: Matilda Karlsson



anyone, who is investing in a professional career as a dancer. 'Street dance One Style' is for motivated and disciplined dancers, who want to take their dancing to a higher level. There is also a course for 'Two Styles'.

Matti comes from Finland, Romy and Joel from Germany. They are pupils at the dance course at 'Åsa Folkhögskola'.

"It must be OK to be different - a puzzle needs to have different pieces to fit together. When everybody is different we seem to be equal – we all belong to some minority, so the minorities become the majority!"

Dancing is their way to express themselves. They do understand each other without the spoken language!



# Participation in society



A second issue for the County Council of Sörmland is to offer medical aid for persons with different kinds of reduced function. The '**Medical Aid Central's**' vision is to provide assistance for people with disabilities so they can be active, make their own choices and participate in society!

In Sörmland there are around 53.000 persons using some kind of medical aid, half of them are using advanced technical aids for rent or personally borrowed, e.g. for cognitive, medical communication for hearing and seeing impaired. The number of users is increasing as attitudes towards aids are changing to be more and more accepted. The offering includes advanced technical machines, such as equipment for recording and reproducing sounds, machines to prevent breathing stops when you sleep and of course different kinds of mobility aids.



*Photo: Matilda Karlsson*

Today one big challenge is to follow the fast development in the technical area. If you are hearing impaired or deaf you have the right to get help from an interpreter for free in order to be able to take an active part in society, for example when you visit the doctor, for leisure time activities or meetings. The interpreter can use dif-



ferent ways to translate – such as sign language, writing on a screen or “writing” \* on the back of the person.

\*Social haptic communication

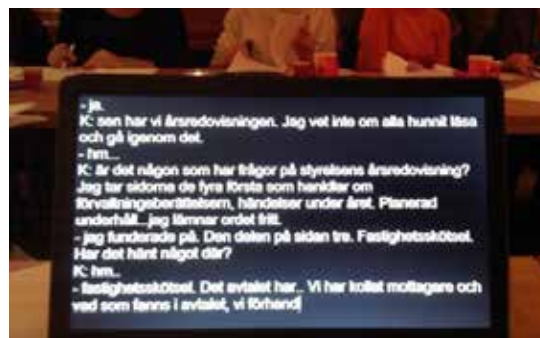
“When communication flows and people forget about me, that’s when it’s at its best!”, says the interpreter. Interpreting is to translate not just words, but “a real communication” so you can understand the tune of it and the feelings.



*Photo: Matilda Karlsson*



*Photos:  
Archive  
of the  
association*



# Workshop in Jelgava Local Municipality, Latvia – April 2017



A delegation from Germany, Poland and Sweden visited Jelgava Local Municipality from 24th to 28th April 2017, to resolve issues together related to the topic of “Social Inclusion Policy” with the local council of the Jelgava Local Municipality.

In the days devoted to the topic of “Social Inclusion” there were discussions, exchanges of experience and a conference at which representatives from the Ministry of Welfare provided information about social inclusion and family support policy in Latvia. The Director of the Latvian Samaritan Association, Andris Bērziņš, introduced participants to innovations in the social sector and revealed a vehicle equipped for home support. In turn, the Director of the SOS Children’s Villages Latvia Greater Riga Regional Programme, Ilze Žagare, shared examples of good practice.

A representative from the Latvian Institute, Ieva Stare, provided an insight into the development of Latvia’s image and about events dedicated to Latvia’s centenary. Ilze Vītola, the Vice Chairman, shared the experience of Jelgava Local Municipality about issues in the social sector and talked about the four chosen target groups – refugees, senior citizens,



*Photo: Archive of Jelgava Local Municipality*

people with special needs and families with children. Ilze Vītola stated: "Recognizing that we are a part of the European Union, we need to know how to take the experience and be conscious that by living in the European Union we are on the one hand each different, but on the other hand we all have similar problems. Together, by merging our cultural differences, we can learn and adapt to each other so that people feel a sense of belonging at any place and time."

An insight into integration for different aged and social groups was obtained at Viesu Līči Farm, whereas access to the environment for people with special needs was demonstrated at Jelgava St. Trinity Church tower, at the promenade on Pasta Island and at Tērvete Nature Park. There were also working group sessions at Tērvete to develop a new project, where each country defined their project goals, activities and planned results.

In Caunītes Farm in Ozolnieki Municipality project partners gained information about Latvian way of life, along with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development's narrative about multi-level governance and differences between municipalities and regions in Latvia, which followed.

At the final evening, project partners were guests at Lielvircava Manor, where the Svirlauka Adult Dance Group from Jaunsvirlauka Parish performed for them.

# Vita Antāne



*Photo: Personal Archive  
Vita Antāne*

## **TOGETHER WE CAN! WE CHANGE THE WORLD BY HELPING ANOTHER!**

Professor Antāne of the Latvia University of Agriculture organizes events for families at risk with the local council, ADRA Latvia (Adventist Development and Assistance Agency), Jelgava Seventh Day Adventist congregation and others. Children get to make friends and receive guests through the Children help Children Project. The second largest event is the Mum, Dad, I in SPORTland family sport festival where the goal is to bring families together and promote an active lifestyle. Everyone shares products, time, energy, ideas and everyone benefits.

# Inta Savicka



*Photo: Jelgava Local Municipality*

## **BOUNDLESS ENERGY**

Inta Savicka has gained recognition and respect at the local council through her work with people. Inta's phenomenal skill is in bringing them together and getting them involved. Inta's optimism, enthusiasm and understanding encourages the Jelgava Local Municipality's senior citizens to get involved in an active lifestyle. They often get together for parties, sporting events, travel, Nordic walking or learn cooking skills with Inta. Her talent is her ability to develop warm personal contact with everybody and to get people to open up due to her generosity and calm.



# Herta Elza Šalkovska



*Photo: E. Pogoželskis*

## **FINDING OUT AND ACTING**

Herta Elza Šalkovska is a board member of Development centre – live wise! Association and the director of the day centre.

The association, formed in 2007, attracts funding for projects like the development of BMX tracks, public saunas and laundry points and has received good feedback. Funding has been obtained for training courses (photography, making ornaments, floristics etc.) and a gym. A children's activity and play centre has been created at the centre, where celebrations and other events are held.

Herta's great work is reflected by people's happy involvement. She is the right person for the job!

# USE OUR WINGS TO FLY!



**The Spārni (Wings) Association - Zemgale Region Foster Family Support Centre** - was established in 2010, with the goal of improving the lives of foster families and children without parental support, providing developmental, informative and preventative programmes for acquiring social skills. The association brings together foster and guardian families from various municipalities to involve them in support and self-help group activities.

One of the association's projects is the Muzikanti Holiday House which has a playground and other amusements for children, a mini-zoo with domestic animals, a therapeutic walk and an outdoor gym. Families have the opportunity to participate in interesting discussions, to listen to concerts and participate in creative workshops, sit by a campfire in the evenings and enjoy



*Photo: E.P ogozelskis*

herbal tea. Children from the Jelgava City Social Welfare Centre arrive on weekends and meetings are held to discuss foster family issues. The educational support group activities for children from foster families and guardian families have assisted with solving problems, which arise in connection with the arrival of a child in a family.

# HUMANS, NATURE, DEVELOPMENT



The **IDEA** Association promotes civil society's involvement in decision-making and in local councils, national life, development of life-long education, informal education projects and a motivated, confident, creative and democratic younger generation.

The association was established in 2007. The first projects, together with the local council and schools, attracted funds to clean up the environment and for landscaping as well as for the education of local residents via informal education. Since 2008 the *IDEA* Association has implemented national and international projects and facilitated the social inclusion of the younger generation in society.

The association organizes informal *Erasmus+* EU programme education projects with the local council. Young people, youth activists and teachers are the target audience. Travel widens the worldview of participants and their ability to assess themselves, their identity and personality and to recognize their place in the local community.

Since 2011 the association's youth representatives have been active on the Jelgava Local Municipality's Youth Council so that the rural region's representation and development of youth issues is promoted at the political level.



*Photo: Archive of IDEA Association*

# HELPING PEOPLE STAY IN THEIR HOMES



The **Samaritan Association of Latvia** is one of the oldest and largest Latvian non-government associations which provides education, social and medicine care services as well as implementing and working on welfare projects.

In 2014 the Samaritan Association of Latvia service's Zemgale branch for Samariešu atbalsts mājās (Support at home) was created in Jelgava Local Municipality. Its task is to provide quality care and assistance

for isolated rural senior citizens as well as people with special needs.

The service's main concept is that care must be brought to people who have no available amenities and have some everyday hardship, so that they can enjoy a full life in their usual environment. A specially equipped vehicle which contains a transportable care office with an autonomous power generator, shower, toilet, gas

stove, refrigerator, washing machine and special equipment for pedicures and hairdressing was built for providing the care. The carers bring in firewood, help with access to the post office, shops or provide care via the care vehicle. Everyday work is planned, organized and controlled using contemporary IT solutions – tablets, computer programmes, GPS, and alarm buttons.



# TOGETHER WE CAN, TOGETHER WE DO



The **Saulesstars Association** was established in 2014 so that people with special needs and young mothers could learn something new, improve their financial situation and spend some free time away from home.

The goal of the association is to facilitate the integration into society of groups of residents who are at risk of social exclusion and to promote the employment of the abovementioned groups.

The association provides the opportunity to obtain new skills in making handicrafts so that people can work at home and add to their family budget. An opportunity to sell the handicrafts (goods from leather and pearls, socks, gloves, shawls, clothes for children and adults) in a shop in Jelgava has been



provided through the support of the Jelgava Local Municipality.

Great pleasure is gained by these people from sharing skills with each other. Once a month they get together and show what they can do or what they have made. The latest trends in handicrafts are also discussed.

The association participates in the development of various projects. The latest project, the development of an internet shop, has been developed with the help of the local council.



# RESTORING HOPE TO FAMILIES



The **Tuvu Association** is a Christian charity, its goal being to decrease social exclusion and social risk and improve the lives of Latvian families, children and single people. The organization has been operating since 2013 to:

- put Christian core values into practice;
- provide assistance in crises and emergency situations;
- attract specialists and partners to provide material, emotional and social support;
- create and develop a charity tradition in Latvia.

The Tuvu organization holds events for children, camps for young people and organizes building projects to help improve the living environments of families with children.

In 2016 the association undertook this type of housing improvement project for a family with 5 children at Glūda Parish in Jelgava Local Municipality. A children's playground was created next to a building where other families (about 20 children) were also living.



*Photo: Archive of Tuvu Association*

"It brings us great joy to see that we are able to bring hope to families which have lost it. We create change so that hope returns to families. Hope is what will help the nation to develop", said K. Diwald, the Director of the GAIN Germany Association.

# THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY



The **Europe Direct Information Centre (EDIC)** in Jelgava has been operating since 2005; the European Commission and the Jelgava Local Municipality provide support for its functions.

EDIC provides information about current events in Latvia and the European Union and involves various groups of residents in the municipality – school children, young people, students, senior citizens, non-government organizations, businesses, local council employees and others – in its activities.



*Photos: Europe Direct Information Centre*

# Project products





# Coming together



# Working in international groups





# New insights



# Creative interaction





# Positive outlook



# Statements from the international participant's point of view:



## **“Freut mich, Dich kennenzulernen!” – Nice to meet you!**

### **Experiences gained from the international workshops in Germany**

“The experience from Germany shows that refugees (political) are not bogeymen to be feared. The integration programmes which have been developed and improved over several decades prove that refugees integrate well into society and add to the numbers in the workforce.

It is worth revisiting our attitude to the refugee issue and to develop a suitable integration programme for Latvia as the aging of society and the emigration of young people is also an urgent issue in Latvia.”

“Society’s attitudes towards the different! The impression arises that multiculturalism doesn’t create any headaches there. A variety of denominations, cultures and races can exist peacefully side by side.”

## **„Miło Cię poznać!” – Nice to meet you!**

### **Experiences gained from the international workshop in Poland**

“I was pleasantly surprised by Poland’s practice in working with people with special needs. Attention is focused not just on the fulfilment of the primary needs and health care of handicapped people, but also their integration into the workforce, inclusion in community activities and promoting public awareness so that people are accepted as they are and can access the particular profession that they desire etc.”

"I am happy that there is care for people with special needs and their inclusion in society at a national level – developing accessibility to various everyday services, cultural and educational events, rehabilitation and work therapy which together promote the acquiring of skills and abilities for everyday life. It is important that everything is concentrated and accessible at a social centre."

**"Det är trevligt att träffas!" – Nice to meet you!**

**Experiences gained from the international workshop in Sweden**

"I was surprised by what could be seen in Sweden – how accessible everything was to people with special needs. It was very interesting to hear how the work with people seeking refuge (refugees) is organized in Sweden."

"In my opinion, the work in small groups, where there were representatives from different countries, was a wonderful opportunity. Even though the communication varied a little, we could get to know others a lot more. I also gained an understanding of how to respond when representatives from other countries wanted to find out about Latvia. Through the work in our group, I concluded that we are diverse and we can consequently provide a lot of ideas for our common work, as long as we are able to listen and move ahead with our ideas."

**"Priecājos Tevi satikt!" – Nice to meet you!**

**Experiences gained from the international workshop in Latvia**

"To come to Jelgava was a great experience - it was my first time in Latvia, but I am sure not the last! The landscape and all interesting information about the country made me curious to learn more. I was very impressed of the way of giving services to elderly people living on the countryside and the creative way of thinking around those issues. And it was fun to participate jointly in the traditional dances!"

"We experienced a lot of remarkable work dealing with social inclusion as well as special



offers for families in Jelgava Local Municipality. Families are seen as the centre of the community. At the same time it has been particularly rewarding and mind-opening to learn more about the Latvian traditions – folk dances and the strong connection to nature – as well as the common history of our four countries, as these mostly have been new insights for parts of the German group.

The innovative solutions that are provided in order to enable elderly people staying in their homes in rural areas have been very impressive and inspiring for us.”



# Memorandum of Understanding on Sustainable future networking

## Preamble

The project partnership between Jelgava Local Municipality in Latvia, the County of Sörmland in Sweden, the District of Wodzisław in Poland and the District of Recklinghausen in Germany is a very positive occurrence, determined by a number of factors which we consider as substantial not only for the implementation of the project „Diversity Unites – together for Europe!“ but also for the future of our cooperation. Such determinants are among others: the political consolidation process of reciprocal international contacts, the continuous cooperation between the project partners and the growing role of intercultural dialogue.

For the successful functioning of the network it is necessary to recognise not only the need for international cooperation, but also the meaning ‘why’ the bond is created: The future European unity is crucial!

The process of European integration has been characteristic and visible since the end of World War II. The integration of Europe is a very dynamic process, which has involved and still involves a lot of new challenges. In that sense partnership requires knowledge of ourselves and our partners. Respect of diversity expresses openness and readiness to take advantage from the wealth of other cultures and it becomes an important element of shaping and implementing European regional policy.

The openness of all four members of this network promotes the creation of a strong integration, able to stand up to numerous processes in Europe and in the world. In the cooperation of our four districts, in European integration, close relations and using positive experiences, we see a great opportunity for the development of each single district and our network as a whole. Our regionalism creates reciprocal trust and our international network shows an example of the effective functioning of the regional policy in the European Union.

## INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE NETWORKING



Recklinghausen Wodzisław Sörmland Jelgava

Co-funded by the  
Europe for Citizens Programme  
of the European Union



In order to sustain the fruitful cooperation between the four project partners and to strengthen the European integration and European citizenship the parties



**Landstinget Sörmland, Jelgavas novads pašvaldība  
Powiat Wodzisławski, Kreis Recklinghausen  
hereby agree on a sustainable future networking amongst the four of them.**

The illustration above provides a graphic representation of the topic range the future international network wants to engage in. Essential cornerstones of future actions are pictured in the centre. The network interaction may be realised in the framework of common projects, working meetings, exchange of methods, vocational traineeships and any matching course of action.

The parties agree to include one another in the preparatory process of new network activities. Due to the topic range and different fields of work and responsibilities the implementation phase may however take place between two, three or all four partners. Where it is needed it may also include the participation of a district town, taking on the part of the respective district/ county/ municipality. This designates the flexibility of the sustainable network. The network will follow the principles of Multilevel Governance in Europe.

**Recklinghausen 29th of August 2017**

**On behalf of**

**Kreis Recklinghausen**

**Powiat Wodzisławski**

**Jelgavas novads  
pašvaldība**

**Landstinget Sörmland**

**Harald Nübel**  
STELLVERTRETENDER  
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**Ireneusz Serwotka**  
STAROSTA WODZISŁAWSKI

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**Ilze Vītola**  
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VIETNIECE

**Ingrid Jerneborg Glimne**  
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ANDRA VICE ORDFÖRANDE







