

President of Latvia: neighbourhood associations are a great example of civic activism

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Egils Levits



Today, President of Latvia Egils Levits visited the Riga NGO House and met with Riga neighbourhood associations to discuss their vision for Riga's development and building better life for neighbourhood communities.

During the meeting, President of Latvia thanked neighbourhood associations for being a great example of civic activism: 'Neighbourhood associations, their activities and dialogue with local community and administration of Riga is democracy in action. As a President, and an inhabitant of Riga, I am enormously grateful to you for everything you have done as volunteers to help Riga grow.'

President praised Riga leadership for creating a Council on the basis of the NGO Memorandum and dialogue with neighbourhood ambassadors. He underlined the need to ensure that the new Law on Local Governments offers communities greater involvement in democratic processes deciding the future of local municipalities through elected community representatives who would take care of local needs.

Most of Riga's 58 neighbourhoods have their local associations, and most of these neighbourhood associations are part of the Riga Neighbourhood Alliance (RNA), an organisation deeply concerned with sustainable development of Riga and good governance for the benefit of city's inhabitants. According to binding regulations adopted by the City Council in June 2021, neighbourhood associations are eligible to compete for 1000 euro annual support that they can then spend on a wide variety of activities.

Discussion focused also on cooperation with Riga City Council and some of the goals of 2021-2027 Riga Development Plan.

Participants of the meeting expressed their views about urban infrastructure development and appearance of Riga, traffic safety, sports activities, environment and climate, mobility.

Participants included Māris Jansons, Chair of the Riga Neighbourhood Alliance, Māra Melnbārde, board member of “Brasa” Association, Oto Ozols, board member of ‘City for the people’, Agrita Kiopa from Dzirciems and Ilguciems Association and representatives of 39 other Riga neighbourhoods, Raivis Knoks, Director of Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre, Ilona Stalidzāne, Head of the Neighbourhood Development and Client Service Department of the Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre, and managers of client service offices.

NGO House, located at the 43A Ieriķu Street, opened its doors in 2013. Its primary purpose is to help non-governmental actors boost their capacity through training and consultancy. It offers NGOs office space and other resources for information, cultural and educational purposes.

<https://www.president.lv/en/article/president-latvia-neighbourhood-associations-are-great-example-civic-activism>