

The President of Latvia: the power of Riga Metropole must be unleashed to promote the development of the entire Latvia

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President Egils Levits today discussed with the representatives of the association "Rīgas metropole" the most important issues and possible solutions for Riga and the Riga Region in order to unlock the capacity of the Riga Metropole and contribute to the development of the entire Latvia. The President of Latvia welcomed the activities of the "Rīgas metropole" association, which, together with the Latvian Association of Large Cities and Association of Local and Regional governments, is a format for exchanging views, formulating opinions, and representing interests in the government.

President Levits emphasised that Riga and the municipalities of the Riga Region, or the Riga Metropole, are the engine of development of the whole country. However, Riga in particular, is currently "suffering from a lack of fuel". The president also noted that so far Riga has not received adequate attention in the national policy - Riga is equated with other municipalities, even though the costs are objectively higher: "Riga metropolitan area is a nationally important region with high return potential, but politically this is not enshrined either in laws and regulations or in policies. Rather, there is a reliance on the ability of Riga and the Riga Region to mutually agree and manage on their own". The President of Latvia sees the Riga or Riga Metropole Law as a solution. Changes to existing legislation to provide for exceptions for Riga Metropole municipalities in specific areas are also possible.

Currently, the residents of the metropolis use a single Riga Metropole area, but the existing regulations do not create synergy and hinder the use of the metropolitan area and its service potential. During the meeting, the possible directions of cooperation between the "Rīgas metropole" municipalities in the fields of education, transport and public utilities were discussed. The President of Latvia stressed that "municipalities should look at all services from the point of view of the residents, so that the services are beneficial to them".

During the meeting, special attention was paid to the issue of the Local Government Finance Equalisation Fund (LGFEF), to which Riga is the largest contributor. At the same time, Riga provides services to a wide region, but there is insufficient incentive for the capital to grow and develop. During the discussion, representatives of the municipalities of "Rīgas metropole" association pointed out the need to assess the objectives of the LGFEF and who are the contributors and beneficiaries of this fund. The representatives of "Rīgas metropole" suggested that the fund should be divided into two tiers, with one part of the funds jointly and severally provided to the beneficiaries for the provision of minimum basic needs. The other part of the fund is earmarked for municipal development. Representatives of "Rīgas metropole" informed that the methodology of the financial equalisation coefficient will be revised soon in cooperation with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development.

The meeting discussed possible solutions to increase the borrowing capacity of local governments to promote infrastructure development and attract investment.

The discussion was attended by Edvards Ratnieks, Vice-Chairman of the Riga city council, Co-Chairman of the "Rīgas Metropole" association, Vice-Chairman of the Riga Planning region development council, Karīna Miķelsone, Chairwoman of the Ādaži municipality council, Co-Chairwoman of the "Rīgas Metropole" association, Mārtiņš Staķis, Chairman of the Riga city council, Member of the board of the "Rīgas Metropole" association, Līga Sausiņa, Chairman of the Sigulda municipality council, Normunds Līcis, Chairman of the Saulkrasti municipality council, Ainārs Vaičulens, 1st Deputy Chairman of Ropaži municipality council, Juris Žilko, Chairman of Ķekava municipality council, Chairman of the Riga Planning region development council, Andrejs Ence, Chairman of Mārupe municipality council, Raivis Anspaks, Chairman of Salaspils municipality council, Anita Līce, Executive Director of "Rīgas Metropole" association, Edgars Rantiņš, Head of Riga Planning region administration.

The meeting with the representatives of the "Rīga metropole" association took place during the President's regional working visit. Egils Levits participated in the technology education programme class "Robo Pilots" at the Carnikava Secondary School and visited the electronics manufacturing company "Volburg". During the working visit, President Levits discussed environmental education and circular economy issues with the management of the waste management company "Getliņi Eko".



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