

Nordic-Latvian Cooperation 2020



Nordic Council of Ministers'
Office in Latvia

YEARS IN LATVIA

30

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#Foreword



Photo: Jurgis Rikveilis

In spite of difficulties caused by the pandemic, the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia continued its work and was involved in a wide range of activities and projects in 2020. Unfortunately, we were unable to welcome as many Nordic visitors to Latvia as usual and fewer Latvians were able to visit the Nordic countries, but Nordic-Baltic networks remained strong, even though many activities happened only online. With this publication, our aim is to highlight some of the Nordic events that took place in 2020, giving readers a glimpse of the wide spectrum of cooperation that exists between Latvia and the Nordic countries.

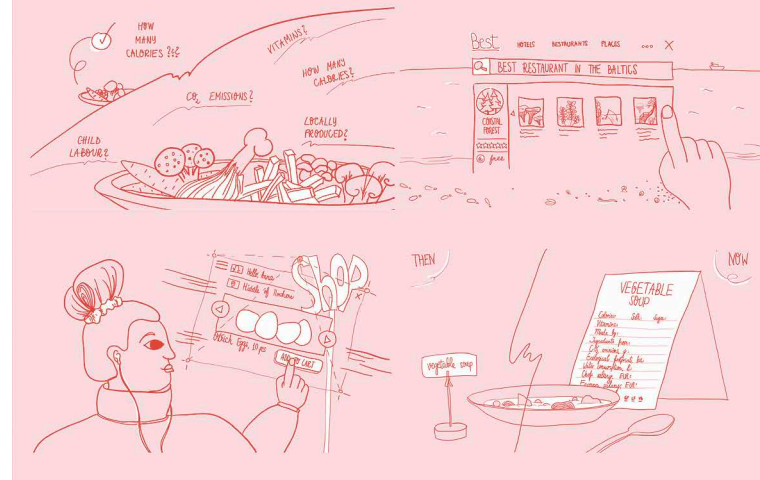
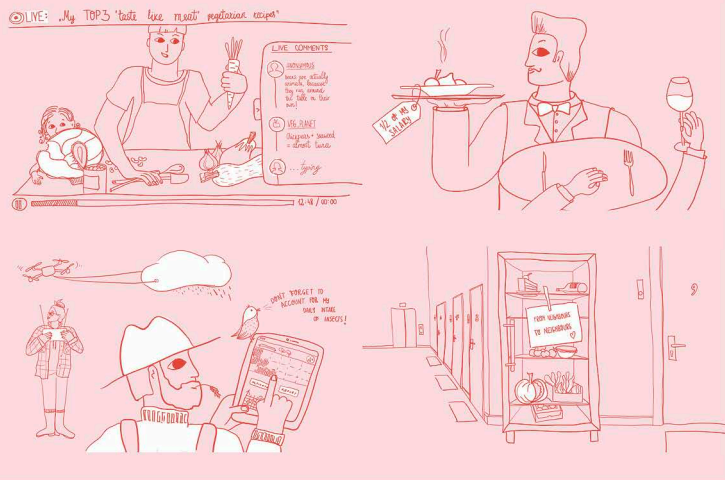
Throughout 2020, our office worked primarily in three priority areas, which were in line with the new Nordic vision and therefore focused on three pillars: a green Nordic region, a competitive Nordic region and a socially sustainable Nordic region. In addition to the events described in this booklet, there were of course many other excellent Nordic-Latvian initiatives and projects under way, sometimes with support from Nordic embassies in Rīga or other Nordic organisations.

Looking back at 2020, certain projects and events come particularly to mind. The project about future food trends in the Nordic-Baltic region was launched in February 2020 with a food innovation hackathon in Rīga that gathered over a hundred active participants. This was followed by a year of joint Nordic-Baltic research resulting in a published report on eight megatrends in the regional food systems. In September, the Nordic-Baltic children's literature exhibition "Book Flood" opened at the Latvian National Library. Together with the Nordic embassies, we managed to organise Nordic Days in Rēzekne in Latvia's Latgale region at the end of September. After its postponement from the spring, the international conference "Digital Humanities in the Nordic countries 2020" finally took place digitally in Rīga in October. It was the first time the event was organised outside the Nordic countries, and for this reason, the organisation's general assembly decided to rename itself "Digital Humanities in the Nordic and Baltic countries".

Cooperation efforts in 2020 were productive and rewarding, and for this the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia would like to express gratitude to all our partners. We look forward to expanding our networks in the years to come and exploring new ideas of common interest that will bring Latvia and the Nordic countries closer together. In 2021, our work will continue to focus on the Nordic vision 2030 and the ways in which our partnership with Latvia and the Baltic countries can be developed in line with the vision's priorities, making our common region the most sustainable and integrated in the world. We will also celebrate the 30th anniversary of our office opening in 1991, as well as the 50th anniversary marking the founding of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 1971. Our plans for 2021 also include opening a temporary Nordic presence in Daugavpils in eastern Latvia, which hopefully will open new and unexplored opportunities for cooperation.

Stefan Eriksson,
Director of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia

#Green Growth



The goal of the **"Future trends of foods in the Nordic-Baltic region"** project is to address regional gaps in knowledge and awareness regarding food, nutrition, health and sustainability. A 24h food innovation hackathon in Riga launched the project in February 2020, where more than 200 participants, including students, food innovators, start-up founders and industry experts, worked together in groups on four themes — circular shift, food waste, new food and digitalisation. The hackathon was a side event at TechChill 2020 — the Baltics' leading startup and technology event.

The rest of the year was dedicated to research and communication efforts, which were for the most part unaffected by the pandemic. Research focused on megatrends, using a methodology developed by SITRA from Finland. A comparative analysis of nutrition data for the region served as the foundation for **a publication entitled "8 Megatrends in the Nordic-Baltic food systems"**, which was launched with a PR campaign in December. The project is in line with objectives 3 (sustainable food systems) and 4 (healthy and sustainable food consumption and innovation in the Nordic food sector) of the NV Action Plan. It was also the subject of a discussion panel at the LAMPA democracy festival in September.

Publication: <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1506755/FULLTEXT01.pdf>



1

The “Nordic Sustainable Cities” exhibition played an important role in showcasing Nordic solutions to urban challenges. It served as an opening event for the NCM Danish Chairmanship in Latvia and in February was displayed at the Akropole shopping centre in Rīga. During the year, two sets of the exhibition were displayed and given for permanent use to students — one to the University of Latvia’s Department of Geography and Earth Sciences and the second to Rezekne Academy of Technologies. On 30 September the exhibition opened at the Latvian Museum of Architecture, and on 1 October it was included as one of 22 different stops on the SEG’s Design Walk in Rīga.

The exhibition was created by the Danish Architecture Center (DK), Design and Architecture Norway (NO), ArkDes & Form / Design Center (SE), Iceland Design Center (IS) and Archinfo (FI), and funded by Nordic Innovation. The exhibition was adapted into Latvian by the Nordic Council of Ministers’ Office in Latvia.



2

Photo: NCM LV, Ansis Vegners

1. Opening of the exhibition at Rezekne Academy of Technologies
2. Opening of the exhibition at the Latvian Museum of Architecture

12.00–12.30	Moderna Museet projekts <i>Acclimatize</i> Ilva Hillströma (<i>Ylva Hillström, Moderna Museet, Zviedrija</i>)
12.30–13.00	Ilgspēja pārmaiņu laikā. <i>Creative Green Programme</i> Graciela Melitsko Torntone (<i>Graciela Melitsko Thornton, Julie's Bicycle, Lielbritānija</i>)
13.00–14.00	Pusdienu pauze
14.00–14.30	Līdzšinējās vides ilgtspējas prakses Latvijas muzejos. <i>Aptaujas rezultātu prezentācija</i> Iveta Skripste (<i>Rīgas Stradiņa universitātes muzejs</i>)
14.30–15.00	Kā muzejam dzīvot zaļāk? <i>Vienkārši un pieejami paņēmieni</i> Elina Kolāte (<i>Sustainable Tips</i>)
15.00–15.15	Kafijas pauze

Photo: NCMLV

The “Museums for Environmental Sustainability” seminar took place on 27 October at the Latvian National Museum of Art. The first part of the seminar focused on examples of good practice in Estonia, Lithuania, Sweden and Great Britain. Moderna Museet (the Modern Art Museum in Stockholm) presented the Nordic perspective. Ylva Hillström provided more detailed information about the Acclimatize project — an online source of inspiring ideas and reflections on climate change — as well as current Moderna Museet initiatives related to sustainability issues. The project presents ideas that can serve as steps towards the UN goals for 2030.

#Competitiveness

DHN2020 Conference

Digital Humanities in the Nordic Countries 5th Conference

17–20 March 2020
Riga, National Library of Latvia

The annual conference “**Digital Humanities in the Nordic countries**” (DHN2020), co-financed by the NCM, was held in the Baltics for the first time in 2020. Originally, it was to take place in Rīga in March, but travel restrictions in many European countries resulted in the conference being postponed until October and redesigned for an online format. It gathered together Nordic and Baltic researchers from the emerging multidisciplinary field of digital humanities, which encompasses humanities, social sciences and information technologies. This year’s conference focused on the intersection between humanities and social sciences, including data journalism, human-computer interaction, AI challenges with regard to the social sciences, citizen science and more.

The National Library of Latvia, in cooperation with the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, and the Institute of Mathematics and Computer Science, operating under the University of Latvia, were the main organisers of the conference. The main audience were Nordic and Baltic researchers from the field of digital humanities. Although the intended networking opportunities were unable to occur due to the online format, the conference attracted a much wider audience than usual and led to new discoveries and exchanges of knowledge. This was the first time a DHN conference was organised outside the Nordics, and attendance by Baltic participants was considerably higher compared to previous years. As a result, the general assembly of the organisation “Digital Humanities in the Nordic Countries” voted in favour of renaming itself “Digital Humanities in the Nordic and Baltic Countries”.

For more information:
<http://dig-hum-nord.eu/conferences/dhn2020/>



Photo: NCM LV, Inga Puriņa, Per Bakke Ingebrigtsen



Every year, the NCM, together with Nordic embassies in Latvia and the Danish Culture Institute, organise **Nordic Days** in one of Latvia's regions. The annual Nordic Days on 24–25 September took place in eastern Latvia in the city of Rēzekne. The joint Nordic delegation met with Rēzekne's city council, held a discussion with school students and took part in various exhibitions and the Nordic Film Days opening ceremonies. An informative seminar about Nordic-Baltic mobility programmes and a seminar on media literacy in connection with Covid-19 were also held. A beautiful concert by Vestards and Elīna Šimkus and an open-air reception at the Latgale embassy GORS concluded the Nordic visit to Rēzekne. A concert entitled "Northern Lights" featured music composed by Edvard Grieg, Ture Rangström, Jāzeps Medīšs, Sergejs Rahmaninovs, Olli Mustonen, Carl Nielsen and Vestards Šimkus himself.



Photo: Rezekne Academy of Technologies (RTA)

A total of 400,000 participants from 170 countries have registered for the free course Elements of AI since its creation in the spring of 2018. Since May 2020, the course has also been available in Latvian. In an effort to show how simple it is to take the free course, Evija Celma from Start(IT) held an online lecture about artificial intelligence at Rezekne Academy of Technologies (RTA) in September, during the Nordic Days in Rēzekne. "I really enjoyed the lecture. I learned what AI is all about and that it's always necessary to learn something new," shared Skaidrīte Golubovska, a 2nd year student in the RTA "Mechatronics" programme.

On 5 November, 2020, NCM LV sponsored an online seminar entitled "My First Date with Artificial Intelligence", in order to explain the goals, content and benefits of the course. The seminar was streamed online and featured Baiba Sipeniece-Gavare completing assignments for the first lesson.

Start(IT) and Riga Technical University are the official Elements of AI partners in Latvia. The course was designed by the tech company Reaktor and the University of Helsinki. Elements of AI is financed by the Finnish government as part of the 2019 Finnish presidency of the Council of the European Union. Translation to EU languages is provided by the European Commission.

What are the megatrends influencing 5G?

In September, the joint Nordic-Baltic ministerial declaration Digital North 2.0. was signed. It underpins a vision of the Nordic-Baltic region leading the way globally in digital transformation, showing that new digital technologies and data can be used and shared in a fair, open and democratic way.

Latvia has taken the lead on 5G-related issues, and for the third time Latvia organised the Baltic Sea **Region 5G Ecosystem Forum "5G Techritory"**, which took place digitally this year in Rīga in November. NCM took part both with an introductory speech by Paula Lehtomäki, Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers and a panel discussion led by Maija Kale, adviser for Sustainability & Digitalization at the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia entitled **"What are the megatrends influencing 5G?"**. The panel consisted of leading women working in sectors with low female representation — 5G and energy — sharing their visions of the key megatrends that will drive the development of 5G and digitalisation in the years to come. One of the speakers was Sofia Elamson from Nordic Energy Research. The panel discussion, recorded as a Nordic Talks podcast, was one of the forum's most popular. The forum's main Latvian partner and organiser was the Electronic Communications Office of Latvia, a governmental agency under the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development.

What are the megatrends influencing 5G?

MAIJA KĀLE
Moderator
Adviser on Sustainability and Digitalization at the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia

SOFIA ELAMSON
Advisor, Nordic Energy Research

ELĪNA LĪDERE
The 5G Innovation Lead at the LMT

LESLIE SHANNON
The Head of Ecosystem and Trend Sourcing at Nokia

Organised by: Electronic Communications Office of Latvia

Powered by: LIAA Imt

Strategic partner: Nordic Council of Ministers

ONLINE November 11 - 12, 2020
5G TECHTRITORY

Photo: NCM LV

#Social sustainability



Photo: NCM LV, Ansis Vegners



The project on trust, inspired by NCM's report **"Trust — the Nordic Gold"** and ongoing for several years, was concluded and its finale events organised in 2020. On 17 January, professor Lars Johannsen from Aarhus University gave a lecture at the State Chancery on the integrity of political officials. He was also interviewed by the Latvian Television programme "World Panorama". In order to sum up the experiences of the project and discuss possible ways forward, a concluding seminar was held on 26 February, 2020. Participants included partners involved in the project and other organisations interested in the subject. Ulf Andreasson, an analyst at NCM Secretariat and author of the "Trust – the Nordic Gold" report, gave an update about trust in the Nordics; Māra Šimane, a consultant at the Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre, gave a presentation entitled "Trust in the Context of Latvia's National Development Plan for 2021–2027"; and Inta Mieriņa, associate professor and director of the Centre for Diaspora and Migration Research at the University of Latvia, presented the topic "Who do we trust and why? Understanding the post-communist space".



On 13 November, Louise Bringselius, associate professor of Management Studies at Lund University in Sweden, delivered an online lecture to Latvian high-level state officials on the topic of **trust-based management**. Professor Bringselius shared valuable experiences from her work as head of research at “Tillitsdelegationen”, the Government Commission for Trust-Based Public Management in Sweden, highlighting the positive effects that building a culture of trust can have on all aspects of an organisation. The main message was that a large administration that evaluates and regulates excessively and focuses on controlling details does not always generate better quality or performance, that a trust-based approach can lead to increased productivity, better health and a better working environment, as well as increased tolerance for differences in the workplace.



Photo: NCM LV, Ansis Vegners



Photo: NCM LV, Ansis Vegners



It's certain that the **LAMPA Conversation Festival** will always find a way to keep conversations about important issues going. The festival took place from 2 to 5 September in 2020, both online and in person.

NCM LV was involved in three LAMPA events, one of which was the **panel discussion entitled "Future of Food"**. In the Nordic and Baltic countries, the discussion surrounding alternative protein sources, a more sustainable food system and food waste reduction is becoming increasingly important. To make the right decisions, understanding what significant future trends will affect the food system and society as a whole is vital. The discussion offered an opportunity to imagine the future of food. Food expert Afton Halloran, scientist Miķelis Grīviņš and Danish farmer Jesper Holm, residing in Latvia, participated in the discussion, which was moderated by Maija Kāle, Sustainability Adviser at the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia.



The **panel discussion entitled “How and why to demystify media literacy”** focused on defining media literacy, why it’s necessary in the era of artificial intelligence, big data, and surveillance capitalism and how to think strategically about it. Participants in the panel discussion were Arminas Varanauskas, executive director of Knowledge Economy Forum; Ingus Bērziņš, editor-in-chief of DELFI; and Saara Salomaa, deputy director and head of the department of Media Education and Audiovisual Media at the Finnish National Audiovisual Institute (KAVI). The discussion was moderated by Guna Spurava, researcher in the field of media education at Tampere University and UNESCO Chair on Media and Information Literacy at the University of Latvia.

The **panel discussion “Keeping societies together in the 2020s — where does the sense of increased social and economic inequality come from?”** was co-organised with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. The social contract, which is the traditional cornerstone of the Nordic welfare model and its redistribution of wealth, remains intact, but it is threatened by increasing economic disparities. In Latvia, there’s also growing discontent among certain social groups, as they perceive that resources are unfairly distributed and demand greater attention to delivery of public services like healthcare and education. Politicians are once again referring to solidarity, a concept and word with historically strong ideological connotations, especially in the Baltics. Moderator Pauls Raudseps encouraged participants — Nils Muižnieks, political scientist and human rights expert; Morten Hansen, head of the economics department at the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga and vice-chairman of the Fiscal Discipline Council of Latvia; Liene Ozoliņa, political sociologist; and Olaf Groh-Samberg, professor of sociology at the University of Bremen — to reflect on and discuss social and economic inequalities.

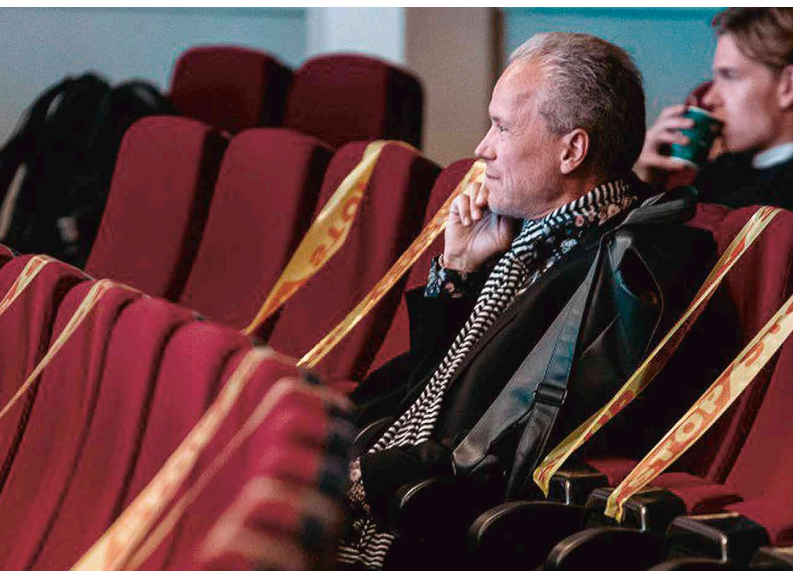


Photo: NCM LV, Ansis Vegners



Photo: NCM LV, Inga Puriņa

On 20 February, 2020, a seminar about the representation of persons with disabilities in political, media and NGO discourse in Latvia was held on the premises of NCM LV. The presentation was given by Baiba Baikovska, who has a bachelor's degree in international relations and a master's in communications from RSU and who is currently enrolled in RSU's Communication Culture and Multimedia doctoral programme.

How do politicians, representatives of the non-governmental sector and the media speak and write about disability issues in Latvia? The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) has been binding in Latvia since 2010. This document is based on the assertion that disability isn't just a medical diagnosis but also a set of psychological and social factors. Unfortunately, research shows that Latvian laws and regulations still define disability as a strictly medical diagnosis. People with the same diagnosis, however, can live very different lives, which means that we shouldn't ignore environmental factors' importance. The state's role is to help create conditions where persons with disabilities can live life to the fullest. This would change public attitudes toward the disabled and, more importantly, the self-esteem of persons with disabilities. The seminar was part of a research project supported by the US embassy.



A seminar on **efficient problem-solving methods for coping with children with problematic behaviour** was organised by the NGO Velki Foundation in cooperation with the National Centre for Education and NCM LV and took place on 5 March, 2020 at the Latvian National Library. The aim of the seminar was to present efficient and safe methods for solving problems in coping with children who have special needs. It was led by two Nordic experts – Bo Hejlskov Elvén from Denmark, one of Europe's leading clinical psychologists on problematic behaviour in autism, and Anna Sjölund, CBT psychologist, behavioural researcher, autism educator and autism specialist from Sweden. The seminar was also launching of the Latvian translation of *Act! Assess! Change! A peaceful approach and structure-based methods*, a book co-authored by the two experts. The audience, mainly Latvian education and social care professionals and family members of children with special needs, greatly appreciated the problem-solving methods based on human dignity and children's rights, which were presented as a solution for coping with problematic behaviour.



Photo: NGO Velki Foundation

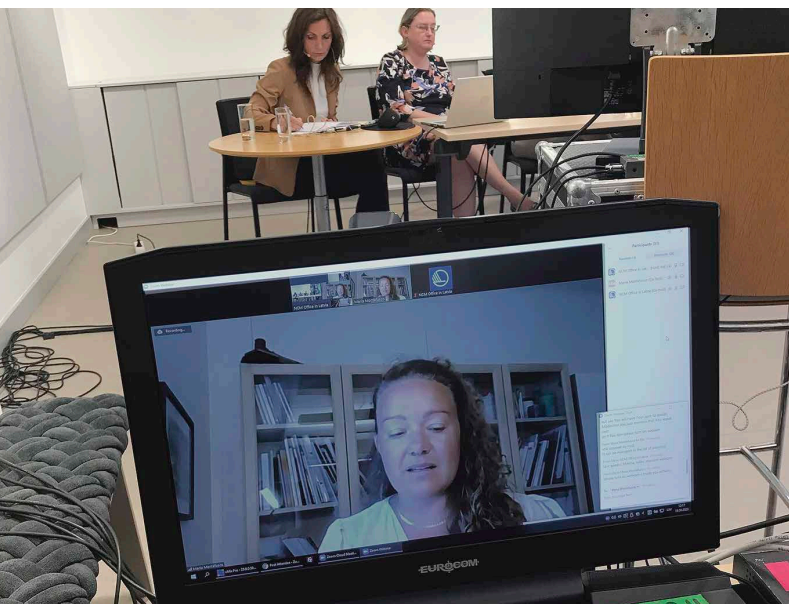


Photo: NCM LV, Inga Puriņa



On 19 August, a **discussion entitled “Equal Opportunities and Roles in Modern Society for Women and Men with Disabilities”** was organised on the premises of the NCM LV Office, in cooperation with the Latvian Ministry of Welfare, marking the 10th anniversary of Latvia’s ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Maria Montefusco, an expert on disability policy and practices from the Nordic Welfare Centre, took part online and presented insights from Nordic countries regarding implementation of the UN convention. During the discussion, participants shared their experiences and visions of the role of people with disabilities in modern society and reflected on what it would take for everyone with disabilities to have equal opportunities to live a full life, despite inherent functional limitations.

A black and white portrait of Frode Thuen, a man with a beard and glasses, looking slightly upwards and to the right. The background is dark and textured.

Frode Thuen

Psihologs, pāru terapeits,
profesors un autors
no Norvēģijas

ATTIECĪBAS – MENTĀLĀS VESELĪBAS BALSTS

Photo: NCM LV

World Mental Health Day is observed every year on 10 October, its overall objective being to raise awareness worldwide of mental health issues and mobilise efforts in support of mental health. On 10 October, 2020, the **online conference "Relationships — the pillar of mental health"** highlighted approaches and actions to take in order to strengthen and improve relationships. The quality of our relationships is the foundation for our quality of life and mental health. However, we aren't born with sufficient knowledge and skills to nurture quality relationships; we acquire and improve these through social learning. The conference was organised by the initiative Viegli būt kopā ("Easy to be together") led by clinical psychologist Kristīne Balode and entrepreneur and relationship researcher Anna Andersone. NCM LV supported the participation of a Nordic lecturer, Frode Thuen — Norwegian psychologist, couples counsellor and author of several books.

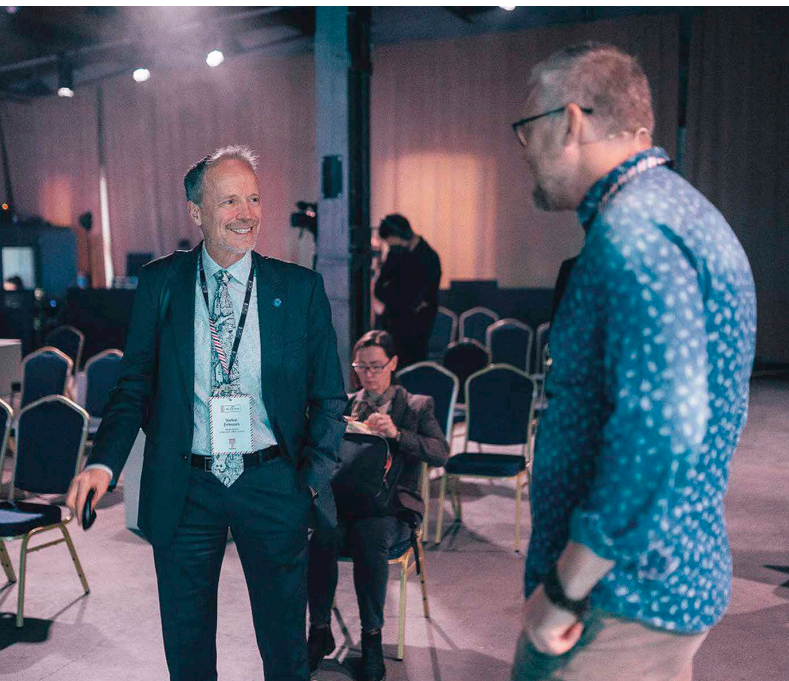


Photo: The Ministry of Welfare of Latvia



Within the framework of Nordic-Baltic cooperation on gender equality, on 22 October, 2020, the **Barbershop Conference on Men's Role in Promoting Equal Rights in Modern Society** was organised in Riga by the Ministry of Welfare of Latvia, in cooperation with the Nordic Council of Ministers. The conference was planned for March but was postponed and eventually held as a hybrid event. The conference brought together outstanding Latvian role models and European experts to discuss modern masculinity and ways for men to harmonise professional life with caring for family. Debates on gender equality often lack the perspective of men. The Barbershop conference offered a place for dialogue and discussion with a male majority audience, thereby involving men in shaping a more gender equal society. It was an opportunity not only to become more familiar with practices developed in other countries, but also to discuss current gender equality trends in terms of challenges faced in our everyday lives.

The Barbershop conference is a format introduced by Iceland and Suriname in 2014. It was inspired by the UN global solidarity movement HeForShe. To date, Barbershop conferences have been held in Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland and the USA.



Photo: www.healthdatasummitriga.eu



The November 2020 globally promoted online summit **"Towards Data-Driven Health: Sharing is Caring"** was organised in close cooperation with the Ministry of Health of Latvia, the National Health Agency, The American Chamber of Commerce in Latvia and involved several Nordic participants. Its subject was the most urgent needs of the healthcare system as highlighted by the global pandemic, with a focus on facilitating data-driven healthcare. Two panel discussions with representatives from various sectors addressed how meaningful data could improve patient healthcare experiences in a practical way. The purpose of the summit was to generate well formulated recommendations in terms of a health data strategy and data-driven decision-making, and to improve awareness among responsible parties of the need and benefits of investing in digitisation.

Young and Free to Vote?

Baltic and Nordic
youth speak out on elections

17 November 2020,
11:00—14:00 (CET+1)

@Zoom @Facebook @norden.lv

Image – www.vecteezy.com



Photo: NCM LV

In connection with the NCM LV project “Digital Democracy in Schools”, an online webinar entitled **“Young and Free to Vote?”** was held on 17 November, 2020. Nordic and Baltic youth councils shared their experiences regarding shadow elections in schools and various practices to foster youth engagement in democratic processes. Mock elections are a long-standing civic awareness raising tradition in Nordic schools, where pre-voting age students engage in an entire simulated election cycle, from political campaigning to debating and, finally, to casting ballots. A similar principle was applied in six Latvian schools selected in 2019 in connection with the European Parliament elections — but in digital format! Outcomes of the project were presented by Imants Breidaks, CEO of the public participation foundation ManaBalss.lv. The second part of the seminar was open for a panel debate.



Photo: NCM LV

Since the start of the pandemic, we've all turned, to some extent, to the digital world. NCM Latvia was among the first institutions to launch digital webinars to address important issues. In March, NCM LV organised a **webinar entitled "How are the Nordic and Baltic media coping with their tasks during the COVID-19 crisis?"**, a theme regularly discussed throughout the year in many countries. Participating in the webinar were Brit Stakston, media strategist from Sweden; Asbjørn Slot Jørgensen, journalist from Denmark and associate professor at the Danish School of Media and Journalism; and Guna Spurava from Latvia, UNESCO Media Literacy Chair at the University of Latvia. The webinar was moderated by the director of NCM LV.

In May, NCM LV organised a similar event — the **webinar entitled "Nordic-Baltic discussion: Democracy challenges in COVID-19 times"**, with Vita Tērauda, member of the Latvian Parliament and head of the Committee for European Affairs and the Subcommittee for Media Policy; Staffan Lindberg, professor at Gothenburg University and director of the Variety of Democracy Institute; Zakia Elvang, democracy activist and advisor at the Danish NGO WeDoDemocracy and the Democracy Festivals Association; and Andris Šuvajevs, holder of a master's degree in social anthropology from Oxford University and social policy researcher at the NGO PROVIDUS. The discussion was moderated by Ieva Morica, executive director of Foundation DOTS.

#Other projects

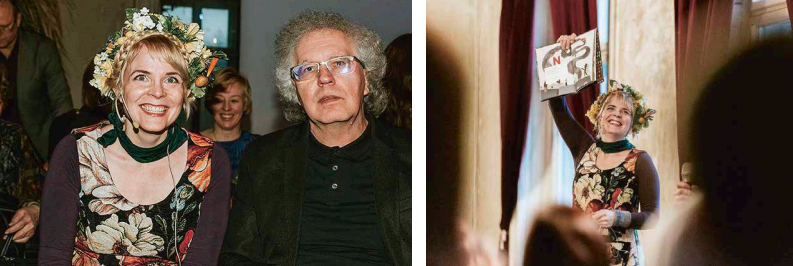


Photo: NCM LV, Ansis Vegners

Heli Laaksonen is one of Finland's most popular poets. Her poems are written in the south-western Finnish dialect, the so-called short Finnish language. Laaksonen was reportedly inspired at the beginning of her creative journey by south-eastern Estonian poets and has worked with Jan Rahman who writes in the Võro dialect. In 2000, they published a joint collection of poetry entitled *Maapuupäiv*. Laaksonen's fiction debut, *Pulu uis* (2000), became a national phenomenon in Finland, and Heli Laaksonen is now the most beloved and best-selling poet in Finland.

She is also famous and well-loved in Latvia. Three collections of her poems have been translated into Latvian by Guntars Godiņš, who uses features of the Vidzeme variety of the Liv dialect in his poetry. At the end of 2019, a selection of Heli Laaksonen's poetry, *Soul. Burkans. Undens*, was released by Pētergailis publishing house. Prior to that, the selection of poetry, *Kad gos smeļi*, was published in 2012 and a book of poetry for children, *Piec ait kalns*, in 2015.

At the beginning of 2020, from 29 January to 1 February, **Heli Laaksonen and Guntars Godiņš went on a poetry tour** to give readings and narrate stories in Pāvilosta, Alsunga, Liepāja, Kuldīga and Rīga. The book launch of *Soul. Burkans. Undens* took place on 1 February in Rīga at K. K. von Strick's villa, where WILLA Theatre presented Heli Laaksonen's poetry performance "Putn ilgs", directed by Varis Piņķis and performed by Inga Alsiņa-Lasmane.

The poetry tour was organised by the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia, the international association "Poetry Ride" and the Finnish J. Rozentāls Society.



Photo: NCM LV, Ieva Hermansone

Emil Friis Ernst is a Danish cartoonist and illustrator. He was one of the artists selected for the kuš! comic book artist residency in Latvia in 2020. During his residency in November, NCM Latvia organised an online lesson with Danish language students from the Gymnasium of Nordic States in Riga. The artist talked about his stay in Latvia, his work related to the residency and his sources of inspiration, and introduced the students to his body of work and future creative plans.



Photo: NCM LV, Ansis Vegners

The second **Nordic-Baltic Creative Writing Camp** brought together young people from Finland and the three Baltic countries, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, in the Latvian seaside resort of Jūrmala from 16 to 20 August. The three-day camp was led by Finnish poet Susinukke Kosola (Daniil Kozlov), who writes social poetry, hosts workshops for people of various ages and backgrounds and teaches creative writing at the University of Turku. Participants learned basic writing techniques, how to jumpstart creativity, and tips for finding, improving and amplifying their artistic voice. The young writers had the opportunity to discuss important and relevant issues such as the nature of social reality, social media as a publishing platform, experimental writing and autofiction.

The Nordic-Baltic Creative Writing Camp is a joint project of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Offices in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania and is financed by the Nordic Writers Crossing Borders programme, which is supported by the Norden Associations (Foreningen Norden Forbund).



Photo: NCM LV, Ansis Vegners



As part of the Nordic Branding Programme, NCM Latvia managed to organise the Nordic-Baltic children's literature exhibition **Book Flood – The Nordics meet the Baltics in children's books** from September to December 2020 at the National Library of Latvia.

Nordic Book Flood is an interactive exhibition for children between the ages of 5 and 11. As reading is the key to learning, and children's interest in reading is best encouraged through play and creativity, the exhibition invited young visitors to actively participate in playful games and interactive tasks. The exhibition was originally created in 2018 by the Nordic House in Iceland, and its curator is Icelandic author and illustrator Kristín Ragna Gunnarsdóttir. It is a joint project of the three NCM offices in the Baltics. The exhibition attracted around 2,000 visitors, mostly school groups and families with children. It will be locally adapted and exhibited consecutively in all three countries. The local partner in Latvia is the children's literature department at the Latvian National Library.



Photo: Vitālijs Pavlovs

Surprised by the number of similarities between the Liv coast of Latvia and Gotland, located 185 kilometres away, photographer and musician Jānis Mednis was inspired to create **"Convening", a photo and music exhibition**. Through his portraits of people and nature, he draws parallels between the cultures of these two countries and the life messages they offer. The exhibition was supported by NCM LV.



Photo: Riga IFF

Featuring 129 films presented in ten thematic programmes, the seventh Riga International Film Festival (RIGA IFF) took place between 15 and 25 October, 2020. The **Nordic Highlights** films are traditionally selected in cooperation with the embassies of Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland, as well as the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia and the Danish Cultural Institutes in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. This year, the programme featured 13 Nordic films. NCM LV took part in the festival's opening and provided support for subtitling the 13 films.



Качественная журналистика на русском языке в Балтии. Как расширить горизонты?

(((•))) Онлайн-конференция \ 26 ноября 2020 года

Photo: NCM LV

On 26 November, 2020, the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence (BCME) organised the **needs-assessment forum "Empowering Quality Russian Language Journalism in the Baltics"** in Rīga. This was the first forum of its kind, bringing together 40 leading representatives of minority language media outlets from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and media academics from the region's top journalism schools. The forum's goal was to identify skills and business model gaps that expert trainers could later address, as the Russian-speaking independent media community is a key target group for the BCME training programme.



Photo: <https://chayka.lv/>

In early December, NCM LV, together with the Swedish embassy, provided support for the reading of a Belarusian play at the Daugavpils Theatre. The **play *Insulted. Belarus (sia)*** was written by Belarusian playwright Andrey Kureichyk and depicts events in Belarus following the presidential elections in August from the perspective of seven different characters. The reading was recorded by Chayka.lv and presented online during the second week of December.

#Funding Schemes

The **Nordic-Baltic mobility programme "Public Administration"** is a well-established cooperation programme supporting exchanges between civil servants at both national and municipal level. Even in the middle of the Covid-19 crisis, 12 applications from Latvia were submitted and 11 approved. Lead partners from Latvia included the local municipalities of Adaži, Saldus and Skrunda, Rīga City Council's Welfare Department, Strenči Psychoneurological Hospital, the Nature Conservation Agency and the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, as well as the Court Administration. NCM LV's efforts to attract new Latvian partners to the programme, especially at municipal level, have been successful thanks to information seminars in 2019 and early 2020.

<http://www.nb8grants.org>

In 2020, the Nordic and Baltic ministers for culture decided to extend the **Nordic-Baltic mobility** programme "Culture" through 2021 to 2023. The "Culture" programme's overall objective is to strengthen cultural and artistic collaboration in the Nordic and Baltic countries by supporting travel, networking and residencies. The programme is jointly financed by NCM and the three Baltic states and administered by the Nordic Culture Point in Helsinki, with the NCM Office serving as a local information point. During 2020, there were a total of 63 applications from Latvia, of which 16 were granted funding. Total support amounted to 107,605 EUR, divided among 11 individual mobility grants, four short-term network projects and one artist residency project. In addition, Latvian participants were and continue to be involved in other network projects where the lead partners are from other countries.

www.nordiskkulturkontakt.org

The objective of the **Nordic-Baltic NGO Programme** is to strengthen and make civil society more dynamic in the Baltic Sea Region by increasing the capacities of Baltic NGOs, through cooperation and knowledge sharing with Nordic NGOs. The programme promoted sustainable development as its priority in 2020. Supported projects were also in line with NCM's other priorities — children and youth and gender equality. The four projects given funding in Latvia dealt with the design of user-friendly municipal social services for families with children, increasing citizen investment in sustainable CSOs (NGOs), interaction between young architects from various countries and local inhabitants for greater sustainability and higher quality urban environments / public spaces, as well as networking around culture and place identity issues. All four projects applied for an extension because of COVID-19. One of the four was implemented in 2020, while the rest were extended until June 2021.

<https://www.norden.lv/en/funding-programmesprogramme-for-ngos-in-nordic--baltic-countries/>

Nordplus is a Nordic-Baltic education programme that promotes lifelong learning and aims to strengthen cooperation between Nordic and Baltic countries at all levels of education. The programme supports Nordic and Baltic cross-border mobility for students and teachers as well as joint projects and networking between Nordic and Baltic institutions and organisations. Nordplus consists of five sub-programmes covering the entire educational sector. In Latvia, the State Education Development Agency administers the programme. NCM LV mainly assists by disseminating information about the programme, and on three occasions Nordplus was included in joint information events about all Nordic-Baltic mobility programmes. In 2020, a total of 86 Nordplus applications from Latvia were submitted, of which 54 were approved. The largest number of approved project applications were submitted to the Nordplus Junior subprogramme — 28. For the Nordplus Higher Education subprogramme, 14 were approved; the Nordplus Adults subprogramme approved eight applications; three were approved for the Nordplus Horizontal subprogramme; and one for the Nordic language subprogramme. The total amount granted was 1,142,767 EUR.

www.nordplusonline.org

The Nordic Organisations' and Institutions' Mobility Programme provides support for exchanges between civil servants, academia and NGOs in the Nordic-Baltic region. It is administered by each NCM Baltic office and can be used for visiting Nordic organisations and institutions individually or in groups. In 2020, it was only possible to arrange one visit before the pandemic, which was to Nordregio, where planners, regional and local authorities and policy coordinators attended the ESPON BT2050 workshop on the future of the Baltic Sea Region.

Funding for Nordic cooperation among organisations for people with disabilities is intended to help organisations that serve people with disabilities in the Nordic countries to exchange experiences and knowledge and develop projects and build partnerships - also with corresponding organisations in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Northwest Russia. Funded activities must in some way promote the interests of people with disabilities in society.

<https://nordicwelfare.org/en/disability-issues/the-funding-scheme>

The **Research and Innovation Programme on Digitalisation of the Public Sector** aims to combine and integrate knowledge-based, digital innovation efforts with research on its related effects and/or impact on society and end users, based on factors that enable and drive the public sector's digital transformation: emerging technologies, emerging organisational practices and/or emerging regulatory frameworks and governance mechanisms.

www.nordforsk.org/en/programmes-and-projects/digitalisation-of-the-public-sector

The **research programme involving Nordic Energy Research (NER) and the Baltic countries** has three main goals: to promote intra-Baltic and Baltic-Nordic energy research projects, to create a Baltic-Nordic PhD programme and to foster energy research exchange within the Nordic-Baltic region. These projects should address research questions from a Baltic-Nordic perspective and focus on regional perspectives or solve questions that increase Baltic-Nordic knowledge.

<https://www.nordicenergy.org/programme/the-joint-baltic-nordic-energy-research-programme/>

The overall objective of the **Nordic Council of Ministers' funding programme for NGO cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region** is to promote cooperation between Nordic, Baltic, Polish, Belarusian and Russian NGOs in order to underline the key role that NGOs play in building networks and cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. The programme has existed since 2006, and NGOs are invited to apply for funding for international cooperation projects. Focus areas for the programme are social and health, culture, the environment, and the development of democracy.

<https://www.norden.org/en/funding-opportunities/nordic-council-ministers-funding-prog>

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Photo: NCM LV / Jurgis Rikveilis



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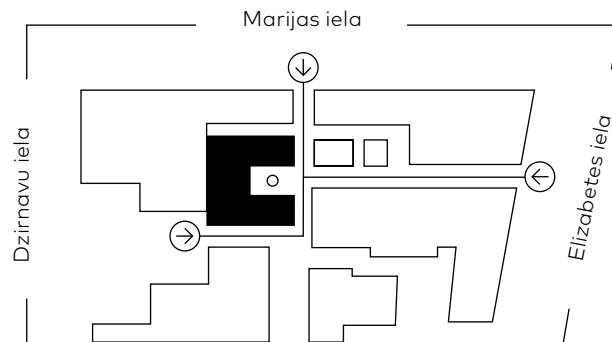
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