

Baltic Data House

**CONDITIONS OF ENHANCEMENT  
OF CIVIC PARTICAPATION**

RIGA - 1998

## Content

<b>1.CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN LATVIA (BRIGITA ZEPA) .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>INTRODUCTION .....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS .....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>2. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN LATVIA: THE MAJOR RESULTS OF SURVEYS CARRIED OUT IN LATVIA .....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>STUDIES OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION CARRIED OUT BY THE BALTIC DATA HOUSE IN 1990-1997 .....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>3. CONDITIONS WHICH FACILITATE AND IMPEDE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION .....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>CHANGE OF VALUES AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION .....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>4. SOCIAL NETWORK AS A SOCIAL CAPITAL .....</i>	<i>24</i>
<b>2. MOTIVES AND IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION IN NGO: RESULTS OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (INESE OZOLIŅA, LIENE ČAPLINSKA).....</b>	<b>35</b>
<i>MOTIVES WHY PEOPLE INVOLVE IN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS .....</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>THE EFFECT OF INVOLVEMENT IN NGOS ON THEIR MEMBERS .....</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>Change of Outlook.....</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>Attitudes Toward People with Different Views.....</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>Attitudes Toward Events in the Neighborhood and Toward Non-Governmental Organizations .....</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Attitudes Toward the State.....</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Attitudes Toward Processes in Latvia and the Future of Latvia .....</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>CHANGES IN PERSONAL LIFE AFTER JOINING NGOS .....</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>FACTORS IMPEDING PARTICIPATION .....</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>SUMMARY .....</i>	<i>51</i>
<b>3. MAJOR CONCLUSIONS (BRIGITA ZEPA) .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1: TABLES AND FIGURES.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2: DISCUSSION PLAN.....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>66</b>

# **1.Civic participation in Latvia (Brigita Zepa)**

## ***Introduction***

Political participation, including involvement in non-governmental organizations, is an important precondition for the creation of a civic society, since the health and stability of a modern democracy depends not only on the justice of its “basic structure” but also on the qualities and attitudes of its citizens, for example, their sense of identity and how they view potentially competing forms of national, regional, ethnic, or religious identities; their ability to tolerate and work together with others who are different from themselves; their desire to participate in the political process in order to promote the public good and hold political authorities accountable; their willingness to show self-restraint and exercise personal responsibility in their economic demands and in personal choices which affect their health and the environment. Without citizens who possess these qualities, democracies become difficult to govern, even unstable (Kymlichka, Norman, 199..). The German scholar Gert Meyer has argued that the necessity of political participation is growing worldwide. This is a consequence of:

- the need for individual self-realization;
- the demands of informally or formally organized groups for autonomy and pluralism in addressing socially important issues;
- participation as an instrument of political legitimization;
- participation as a precondition for economic growth, increased labor productivity and technological innovation;
- the increased labor productivity and technological innovation;
- the increased role of participation in the implementation of effective reforms during crises and in periods of stable social development.

The aim of this study will be to facilitate the formation of civic society, which is a guarantor for the stability of democracy. The end product of the study will include publications and presentations at conferences revealing the effect of political participation on the values of individuals, on individual behavior, and the influence of political participation on other fields of life.

The major hypotheses of this study were postulated, taking into account the peculiarities of the transitional-type society. We assume that participation in a post-communist society has a series of peculiar features. This pertains to the quantity as well as to the structure and contents of participation. Starting from the liberalization at the beginning of the transitional period in late 1980s, the level of political participation among the population grew fast. There was a typical wave of political participation throughout the former countries of the Eastern Europe and the Baltic States which differed in its contents from the “simulated” participation of the Soviet times as well as from participation as existing in countries with significant experience in democracy, for example, in Nordic Countries, France, which have a high level of participation among other nations.

We assume that the behavior (including participation) of the individual in transitional society is determined by two kinds of factors: on the one part, it is the experience of the Soviet times, on the other part, it is the current experience, which develops fast under the influence of changes in social and economic conditions. As regards the youngest generation, the socialization of which proceeded during the period of independent Latvia, the Soviet experience has affected them indirectly, taking into account that such significant agents as the family and school contain quite a lot of Soviet “heritage”, from which it is impossible to get rid of at the same time as the regime is changed.

*The major hypothesis:* 1) the civic participation of the individual in a transitional society is determined by:

- lack of experience of positive participation,
- lowered self-evaluation of one’s own competence,
- change of values in society as a result of changing social and economic conditions.

To check this hypothesis, we will mainly use the results of quantitative research (surveys of inhabitants).

Following the ideas of R. Putnam about the influence of civic participation on other spheres of life, such as economy, law, culture, etc., we have set the task to find out whether this connection could be found also in a transitional-type country. Taking into account that participation in different organizations is very low and it is not possible therefore to find out the different nuances of the influence of participation on attitudes and behavior of people in mass surveys, we intend to use, as the source of information, focus group discussions with people who are involved in various non-governmental organizations. Such discussions will allow to view this problem on the individual level.

The *tasks* of this study:

- 1) to find out the dynamics of participation during the period from 1990 till 1998,
- 2) to investigate the effect of participation on the values and attitudes of individuals,
- 3) on the basis of comparative research in the Baltic States, to establish the differences between Latvia and Estonia and Lithuania,
- 4) to investigate the conditions which facilitate the participation of inhabitants.
- 5) Taking into account that there is a significant proportion of non-citizens in Latvia (28% of the total population), special attention will be focused on participation of non-citizens.

The following research *methods* will be used:

- 1) document analysis,
- 2) analysis of results of different surveys,
- 3) comparative analysis by application of the data of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP),
- 4) group discussions with leaders and participants of non-governmental organizations.

## ***1. Theoretical Framework for Analysis***

### The Sector of Non-Governmental Organizations in a Democratic Society

To discover the role of civic participation of inhabitants in the democratization of society, we mainly applied the pluralistic perspective, which emerged under the influence of changes in the Western society at the end of the 19th century. These changes were caused by industrialization and urbanization and, especially, by the development of bureaucratization and centralization of power, which threatened individual freedom. As a result of the flourishing of democratic ideas and industrialization, the social aristocracy, which was the group that previously served as an intermediary between the masses and monarchs, gradually lost its power. One of the founders of the pluralistic theory, A. de Tocqueville, believed that, in modern societies, the role of such social intermediary should be taken up by a network of well-organized voluntary organizations representing the economic, political as well as social interests of members of society. (A. de Tocqueville, 1969).

The early pluralists as well as E. Durkheim pointed out that voluntary organizations satisfy the needs of individuals for community, intimacy, attachment, friendship, love, trust and reliance, facilitate the development of individuals as well as their socialization and integration in society, and ensure that the cultural heritage is preserved and handed over to next generations. (E. Durkheim, 1978) A. de Tocqueville and other social researchers pointed out that the existence of such organizations is a crucial guarantor of individual freedoms (A. de Tocqueville, 1969).

The aspect of individual freedom is also applied to the sphere of organizations. R. A. Dahl and other pluralists of our century believe that organizations should be, as far as possible, formations autonomous from the state. According to the pluralistic approach, the state is interpreted as a promoter of conflicts between interest group in society, as a result of which interest groups as well as organizations unite to be stronger. (R. A. Dahl, 1961)

Special attention on cooperation between different interest groups in society was focused in the modern theory of pluralism, created in 1950s. Davis Truman, one of the representatives of this theory, pointed out that political behavior is formed and realized in groups and between them – even more so than between individuals. (D. Truman, 1951)

D. Truman defines interest group as a group the constituent individuals of which have common interests and attitudes which take the form of concrete demands against other groups in society. The principle of voluntary participation is the basis of the existence of these groups. The citizens, who make up these groups, may, in the name of the group or organization, declare their opinions and decisions to the government requesting its support and responsibility. Thus, pluralists believe that politics is a competition between mutually conflicting groups, a territory supervised by the state, in which groups act as pressure groups on the government.

A correctly functioning pluralist system is a system in which none of the separate groups, in the presence of other groups, can impose its will on society as a whole. This contrasts the totalitarian system, in which one group governs the society and is not responsible before citizens for its governance. Since modern societies are very heterogeneous, pluralism is crucial for them, since decentralized, sophisticated and multi-faceted society needs a decentralized, sophisticated and versatile political system.

The theory of pluralism has been repeatedly subject to extensive criticisms. The criticisms are most often based on the belief that the theory of pluralism “dilutes” itself in its idealistic interpretation of the democratic society. Also subject to criticism is the persisting attitude of pluralists on the issue of full independence of non-governmental organizations from the state and the market. Critics say that cooperation between non-governmental organizations and the state could make a positive contribution for democratization of society, which is especially important in the countries of the transitional-type, since actually it is difficult for the sector of non-governmental organizations to develop without any support of the state.

### The Democratization Potential of NGOs in a Democratic Society

In literature, different possibilities of the non-governmental sector to further democratization of society have been discussed.

#### *1) Participation in non-governmental organizations and controlling the state power*

One of the basic ideas of the theory of pluralism is that NGOs are necessary to ensure continuous control over the state. R. A. Dahl describes it as the necessity to prevent the leaders of the country from carrying out non-democratic actions. (R. A. Dahl, 1961, p. 16) A. de Tocqueville points out that non-governmental organizations, as being independent of the government, should be able to control or supervise the government in cooperation with the media to ensure that the rights of the state apparatus, as defined in the constitution, are not transgressed. (A. de Tocqueville, 1969). Dahl stressed that NGOs should perform this same function of supervision in the profit generating or market sector. It is important to carry out this function of control by the public in this sphere because the drive for profit takes a more and more dominant place in society and in the behavior of politicians. (R. A. Dahl, Ch. Lindblom, 1976) NGOs can influence and form the public opinion. R. A. Dahl and other pluralists believe that NGOs is an essential element in socialization of future political leaders. The sector of NGOs has the potential and the possibility to inoculate and educate the political culture in society. (R. A. Dahl, 1971).

#### *2) Non-governmental organizations as the agent of participation*

In the opinion of pluralists, the participation of the public in politics is very important, but political participation may not encompass the whole of society. The mechanism of elections affects the wishes and actions of the political leaders, preventing them from unlimited

manipulation with the needs of the public, but it is only one of the many types of civic participation. The most important precondition of democracy, which guarantees public control, is a civic society able to mobilize itself. It is not crucial that every single citizen should be active in dealing with all the issues of public significance, but rather that all citizens should have equal opportunities to deal with them. (R. A. Dahl, Ch. Lindblom, 1976) To actually be able to use these opportunities, there must be certain organizations, i. e. the NGOs, to provide for optimal realization of political demands through their activities.

NGOs render a certain contribution to the education of those inhabitants who are involved in them, which is a very important aspect in the formation and development of the political culture of the people. The task of NGOs is to strengthen, in citizens, the necessary values and readiness to participate in political processes. NGOs members may also use their organizational experience in other processes related to political participation, taking part in passing important decisions for the public.

Carol Pateman points out that it is possible to develop the system of individual attitudes and psychological features necessary for democracy by involvement in the process of participation. She stresses that participation exists because it makes easier the passing of collective decisions. (C. Pateman, 1970)

### *3) Non-governmental organizations as providers of such services which are not rendered by the state or the market*

This kind of influence of activities of NGOs on the democratic process is reflected in three theories: “Contract Failure”, “Mellow-Weakness” theory and the “Average Voter” theory.

According to the “Contract Failure” theory by Henry Hansmann, when the consumers find out that they cannot trust the profit-gaining enterprises any more, they apply to non-profit organizations as potential providers for their needs. (H. Hansmann, 1987)

According to the “Mellow-Weakness” theory by Wolfgang Seibel, the sector of NGOs is the sphere in which those problems are dealt with which the state is unable to resolve. In the opinion of Seibel, the task of the sector of NGOs is to prove to the state that these problems will be resolved if entrusted to the sector of NGOs. (W. Seibel, 1990)

The basic thesis of the theory of the “Average Voter” by Barton Weissbrod follows the fact that the government usually awards priority to those needs which are demanded by the majority of the population. However, the needs of different minorities remain unsatisfied. It is the task of NGOs to satisfy these needs. (B. Weissbrod, 1977)

### *4) Participation in non-governmental organizations and social and political integration*

To prove the potential of NGOs in integrating society, authors usually refer to the ideas of F. Tonnies, G. Simmel as well as E. Durkheim about different ways in which society is organized.

R. A. Dahl (1961) stresses that, to achieve stabilization of the political system, it is necessary to ensure solidarity between different social groups. The state may facilitate the formation of conflicts between the groups, as a result of which several groups unite to become stronger. The unification of interest groups and of NGOs is possible by developing dialogue between groups and reaching compromise.

5) *Participation in non-governmental organizations as guarantor of pluralism*

Numerous studies confirm that, when the level of participation is higher, people become more convinced that co-existence of different opinions is a normal and positive social phenomenon. This belief protects people from involving into fast conflicts when encountering the interests and opinions of other groups. The fact that different opinions can exist in society side by side is positively evaluated by many theoreticians of democracy who believe that this is one of the preconditions for the stability of democracy.

6) *Non-governmental organizations as an instrument for mobilization of the political interests and demands of society*

Representatives of the analytical pluralism in the USA as well as R. A. Dahl (R. A. Dahl, 1982) have been those who have dealt with this issue most of all. Members of society can make their demands known to the government through the mediation of NGOs and other social groups. It depends on the strength of NGOs or the pressure created by different social groups, however, to decide whether the government will actually react to these demands.

7) *The influence of the involvement in NGOs on the economy, justice and culture of the state*

Robert D. Putnam has made the greatest contribution in studying this issue: the studies carried out by Robert D. Putnam, comparing the involvement of inhabitants in social communities in Northern and Southern Italy, and concluding that a developed civic society considerably promotes the development of state economy, cultural, law enforcement and other structures.

Indicators which Characterize Political Participation

Geraint Parry (1977) suggests that it is necessary to examine three aspects of political participation: the mode of participation, its intensity, and its quality. By mode he means what form it takes. Intensity seeks to measure how many individuals participate in particular political activities and how often they do so. Quality is concerned with the degree of effectiveness achieved by participation, seeking to measure its impact on those wielding power and on policy-making. In his book *Political Participation*, Lester Milbrath (1965) posited a hierarchy of participation, ranging from non-involvement to holding public office, with the lowest level of actual participation being voting in an election. He divided the American public into three groups: “gladiators” – those frequently active in politics (between 5 and 7 percent), “spectators” – those minimally involved in politics (about 60 per cent), and

“apathetics” – those uninvolved in politics (about 33%). In the second edition (Milbrath and Goel 1977) a more complex hierarchy was adopted which sought to accommodate different types of “gladiators”, especially those who engaged in various forms of protest.

In another study of participation in the USA, Verba and Nie (1972) found more found more complex picture and divided their respondents into six groups. These were totally passive (22 percent), those whose only political activity was voting (21 percent), “localists” (20 percent), whose only political activity was confined to local politics and issues, “parochials” (4 percent), whose only concern was what affected them personally, “campaigners” (15 percent), who were involved in politics only in relation to particular issues on which they campaigned, leaving “total activists”, those involved over the range of politics, to number 18 percent.

Numerous empirical studies, including the *World Values* by Ronald Inglehart were carried out by basically using these or slightly modified measuring scales for political participation.

We should add that those authors who focus their attention on studying attitudes (S. Oskamp, 1977), stress three different components of attitudes (cognitive, affective and behavioral). This approach was also used in the study *Role of Government* (1996), carried out within the framework of the International Social Survey Program. Taking into account that we, as participants to the ISSP program, have access to the data of the Project *Role of Government* not only about Latvia but also about other countries, we will also use this approach in our analysis, and one of our hypothesis is also based on the different components of attitudes.

### Factors which Affect Political Participation

On the basis of an extensive pool of data from surveys carried out in different countries, Milbrath and Goel suggest that participation varies in relation to four major factors: political stimuli, political position, personal characteristics, and political environment.

In their work *Politics and Society*, Michael Rush (1992) maintains that skills, resources and commitment need to be added to these factors.

Almond and Verba (1989) point out that subjective self-evaluation is a very important factor which affects the participation of citizens. On the basis of results of surveys carried out in five countries, they conclude that the more subjectively competent an individual considers himself, the more likely he is to be politically active.

R. A. Dahl, in his work *Modern Political Analysis* (1991), divides all people in two groups: *apolitical stratum*, i. e. those who are not interested in politics, and *political stratum*, i. e. those who are interested in politics. Among the latter group, there are the *powerful* ones who are deeply involved in politics and who have more power than the others, i. e. the *power seekers*, i. e. those who are deeply involved in politics and wish to get power. Thus, R. A.

Dahl indicates four groups of inhabitants: the apolitical stratum, the political stratum, the power seekers and the powerful.

Taking into account that only part of the people participate in the political stratum, R. A. Dahl discusses several fundamental reasons why people do not become involved in politics. He points out to six causes:

You are less likely to get involved in politics...

- 1) ... if you place a low value on the rewards from political involvement relative to the rewards you expect from other kinds of activity,
- 2) ... if you think that there is no significant difference in the alternatives before you and, consequently, that what you do won't matter,
- 3) ... if you think that what you do won't matter because you can't significantly change the outcome anyway,
- 4) ... if you believe that the outcome will be relatively satisfactory to you without your involvement,
- 5) ... if you feel that your knowledge is too limited for you to be effective,
- 6) the greater the obstacles placed in your way, the less likely you are to become involved in politics.

Considering these causes in reverse, R. A. Dahl concludes that it seems obvious that you are *more* likely to become involved in politics if you:

- 1) value the reward to be gained,
- 2) think the alternatives are important,
- 3) are confident that you can help to change the outcome,
- 4) believe the outcome will be unsatisfactory if you don't act,
- 5) have knowledge or skill that bears on the question on hand,
- 6) must overcome fewer obstacles to act.

More and more authors turn to the question about the correlation between value orientations and political attitudes. This is the issue first discussed twenty years ago by R. Inglehart in his work *Silent Revolution* (1977), stressing the significance of changing values in society. In their study *European Values Survey* (EVS), carried out in 12 European countries, Oscar W. Gabriel and Jan W. Van Deth (1995) support the general claim that postmaterialism is an important factor in explaining why people become involved in politics. Upon analyzing the EVS data, Sami Borg (1995) makes his conclusion about the impact of postmaterialist values on turnout levels.

In their analysis, the said authors base their conclusions mainly on countries with certain experience in democracy, therefore we, in our study, posted also hypotheses about the impact of other factors on political participation related to the peculiarities of the transitional society.

Taking into account that the socialization of the younger generation in transitional societies proceeds under different conditions than it was for older generations, we paid special attention also to the correlation between the change in values and the change in political attitudes.

## ***2. Political Participation in Latvia: the Major Results of Surveys Carried out in Latvia***

### 1. Analysis of statistical data about participation of inhabitants in non-governmental organizations during the period from 1990 till 1996

1) Corresponding legislation is one of the conditions for participation of inhabitants in different organizations. In 1991, the Law was adopted in Latvia “On the Rights and Duties of Person and Citizens”, which provides for the freedom of speech and association, and the “Law on Trade Unions”; in 1992, the “Law on Social Organizations and Their Associations” and the “Law on Social Organizations” were adopted. All the said laws form the legislative basis for setting up non-governmental organizations.

2) Before the Latvian independence was restored (in 1990), most of the Latvian inhabitants were involved in social organizations, of which trade unions encompassed the largest masses of the population. By the end of 1980s, participation in political organizations was growing fast. Since 1990, participation in different organizations diminished rapidly, since the network of the old Soviet organizations broke down, while the new network was only started to be created. In 1994, only 19% of the Latvian population were members of any non-governmental organizations, but since 1994 participation in various organizations is again on the rise. The number of the non-governmental organizations has also increased fast during the last 2 years, this number is approximately twice as large now. (See Appendix, Table 1).

3) We should point out that the proportions of the political and other types of participation have changed: participation in political parties and movements has significantly diminished, like also the turnout at elections, but the intensity of participation has increased in other directions (see Appendix, Tables 2, 3, 4). It can be explained by the fact that the problems of economic and social character are now more in the focus of attention, and also by the political alienation of the masses.

### Evaluation of results of studies carried out in Latvia on participation of inhabitants in non-governmental organizations

(Group discussions organized by UNDP, the survey carried out by the Latvian Ministry of Welfare about participation of inhabitants in and attitudes towards NGOs, interviews of leaders of NGOs carried out by the NGOs’ Center). Several, although rather fragmented,

studies have already been carried out in Latvia regarding participation of inhabitants in non-governmental organizations and about the directions of activities of these organizations. The major conclusions, which were possible to reach on the basis of group discussions with people who are involved in some non-governmental organization, were as follows:

1) Positive effects:

a) participation in non-governmental organizations promotes creation of ties between people with different interests, from different social groups; the principle of voluntary participation in non-governmental organizations has been highly evaluated, since it helps to overcome the difficulties faced by the non-governmental organizations during the transitional to the democratic system. Among the positive consequences, there are also the following: the flexibility of NGOs, as compared with state institutions, the fact that they are better aware of the actual conditions, that they are able to deal with problems in a more creative way and to find new solutions, that socially and economically more active people involve in these organizations who, by pooling their forces, are able to achieve quite a lot.

2) Shortcomings:

a) uncertainties in the legislation as regards the taxation of non-governmental organizations, fears that changes in laws could limit the activities of non-governmental organizations, lack of spare time of those people who are involved in these organizations, lack of leadership skills, lack of communication between different organizations which results in duplication of activities, shortage of information materials about local non-governmental organizations.

3) Recommendations:

- a) the need of training on all levels (both for the leaders as well as members of NGOs);
- b) it is necessary to improve communication with the sector of non-governmental organizations, to set up a network between the centers to coordinate their activities (levels of influence, directions), to set up regional centers;
- c) development of relations with the public by using public media, setting up the image of non-governmental organizations;
- d) facilitating cooperation between non-governmental organizations and state authorities.

In the survey carried out by the Latvian Ministry of Welfare (1995) about the lines of activities of non-governmental organizations, about target groups, organizational structure, leadership, sources of incomes, it was concluded that the major activity of these organizations is rendering of social assistance, the major target group includes disabled and sick people and children.

## The interviews of leaders of NGOs carried out by the NGOs' Center, their analysis (1997)

As we know, different options of civic participation have been discussed in literature as well as various possibilities of the non-governmental sector to promote democratization of society. In Latvia, about 5% of the population are involved in the activities of NGOs. This proportion is too small to ensure sufficient versatility of these organizations.

### *1. Participation in non-governmental organizations and control of the state power*

The activities of non-governmental organizations in controlling the activities of authorities is very weak, since there is lack of knowledge and information about the governance as well as the necessary experience and self-confidence. At the same time, non-governmental organizations feel being dependent on the state (in the fields of legislation, taxation), the state does not show much interest in non-governmental organizations, does not render any financial support to them.

### *2. Non-governmental organizations as the agent of participation*

Like all other people, members of NGOs do not have sufficient understanding about the potentials of cooperation, they lack knowledge about the mechanisms of how collective decisions should be passed, there is a current view that there are already too many organizations around (which could be justified in the case of political parties: 38 parties were registered in 1997). A negative factor is lack of spare time, people cannot work and carry on public activities at the same time, sometimes these activities seem to be a waste of time, the general public is poorly informed about the activities of non-governmental organizations since these organizations often "serve" only their own members.

### *3. Non-governmental organizations as providers of such services which are not rendered by the state or the market*

In Latvia, non-governmental organizations are most often active in the field of social services which the state sector is unable to provide, especially as regards the social sphere, since these organizations are mainly engaged in helping those people who live in difficult circumstances, since this is a very topical issue in society today.

### *4. Participation in non-governmental organizations and social and political integration*

Non-governmental organizations perform the function of promoting political integration mainly in the form of activities of cultural organizations. However, the activities of these organizations, too, are more directed towards themselves than towards other groups of society. Integration is impeded by the fact that in society as a whole (both among the members of organizations as well as among other people) integration is not perceived as a necessity, which could be regarded as a feature inherited from the totalitarian regime. Generally, even if organizations are ready to promote integration, neither society as a whole nor the state is ready to support it.

## *5. Participation in non-governmental organizations as guarantor of pluralism*

Non-governmental organizations promote different opinions among their members. However, lack of experience is evident, especially in relations with public media.

According to the answers given by experts, the potential of non-governmental organizations has found only limited application: (1) only a small part of the population is involved in the activities of NGOs; (2) these organizations only start to become aware of their role and potential; (3) they are functioning best in promoting different opinions, in rendering social services, which the state is unable to provide. Non-governmental organizations are less effective in performing their other functions.

### ***Studies of Political Participation Carried out by the Baltic Data House in 1990-1998***

#### *Participation in non-governmental organizations*

Participation in NGOs in 1995, as compared with 1990, decreased threefold (participation in political parties was not taken into account in calculations). The major conclusion reached in the study carried out to compare participation in 1995 with that in 1990, was that network of the old Soviet communities and organizations was broken down, while the structure of new communities, which could allow every Latvian inhabitant to find possibilities for social contacts, was not yet created. Among the largest organizations were trade unions (every second inhabitant was their member in 1995; about 12% in 1990); amateur artistic circles (15% in 1990, 5% in 1995); sports organizations (15% in 1990, 4% in 1995). The number of people who wished to become involved in some organization was also small: 12% wished to take part in some sports organization; 9% – in interest groups; 8% – in women's organizations; only 4% wished to join trade unions.

#### *Political Participation of Latvian Citizens and Non-Citizens in 1997*

##### *Participation in Non-Governmental Organizations in 1997*

Taking into account that 28% of Latvian inhabitants are non-citizens, we will specially focus on involvement of citizens and non-citizens in non-governmental organizations and on other forms of participation.

The fact that three quarters of citizens and 90% of non-citizens are not members of any organizations is an evidence that, as a whole, the participation of Latvian inhabitants in public life is very weak (see App., Fig. 1). It means that people basically contact only their family members, friends, colleagues, but they do not form any new social networks extending their contacts with other people, thus promoting their integration in the Latvian society. The most popular non-governmental organizations in Latvia are trade unions (12%

citizens, 5% non-citizens), religious organizations, church congregations (6% citizens, 2% non-citizens), sports, entertainment organizations (4% citizens, 1% non-citizens).

As most significant motives for participation in social activities, people mentioned the opportunity to be among other people, the sense of duty, the possibility to gain new experiences, sympathy with those who live in poverty, the desire to facilitate the solving of problems in the neighborhood.

On average, the social and economic status of members of non-governmental organizations is higher than the status of those who are not NGOs' members: they have higher incomes, higher educational level, they are engaged in professions of higher qualification. Most of the members of NGOs are 30-65 years old, but the age group 50-65 is represented most of all. Participation of youth in the non-governmental organizations is much lower than participation of people of the middle and older generation. In our opinion, it is a shortcoming that there are too few ordinary among the members of NGOs.

### Participation in Political Activities

71% of citizens and 89% of non-citizens had taken no part in any of the political activities proposed in the optional answers (trying to convince someone to vote for a particular political party, meeting with deputies, ministers, local government deputies or officials to discuss some political issue, participation in organizing the election campaign, signing some petition (appeal, support letter), participation in protest actions (pickets, demonstrations, strikes), meeting with reporters on some political issue). (App., fig. 2) Generally, citizens-Latvians had more often participated in different political activities (31% of them had taken part in at least one activity, while the percentage of such citizens-Russians was only 22%).

People with higher education and people with higher incomes were those who were relatively more participating in such activities.

In the case of non-citizens, not more than 3% of them had taken any part in the aforementioned activities. Typically, however, people with higher incomes are significantly more active than other non-citizens; for example, 8% of this group had "tried to convince someone to vote for a certain political party", while the average percentage of non-citizens trying to do that was just 3%. 5% of the group of wealthier non-citizens had met with journalists on some issue (1% of all non-citizens had participated in such activity on average).

Generally, we can conclude that both citizens as well as non-citizens have low participation rates in various organizations, which means that their range of communications usually is limited to that of their family, friends and colleagues at work. This is a typical feature of a weakly organized society, its major shortcoming leading to easy subjection to eventual manipulations.

## Interest in Politics

In most cases, the interest of both citizens as well as non-citizens in politics is medium active, and it can be described as follows: “I have interest in the most significant events” and “I have interest sometimes”. These answers were given by about three quarters of citizens and non-citizens. Likewise, the percentage of those who are “carefully following political developments” (17% of citizens (Latvians: 18%, Russians: 11%)) is rather similar among citizens and non-citizens. However, there are slightly more people among non-citizens who do not have any interest in politics (16%), as compared with citizens (10%). (App., fig. 3)

### ***3. Conditions which Facilitate and Impede Political Participation***

In late 1980s, for the first time since the 1930s, the Latvian people enjoyed relative freedom to express their thoughts, views and opinions, to form political movements and parties, that is, alternatives to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), and various non-governmental organizations, to participate in rallies and demonstrations in accordance with their views and will rather than in submission to the decrees and control of the ruling totalitarian structures. During the period 1988-1991, the level of political activity was high: the level of “unconventional” participation (for example, in protests) in Latvia was several times greater than the average level of activity in democratic countries. (App. Table 1.)

However, it should be noted that the “Awakening” period of the late 1980s was an extraordinary time in the Latvian history. Therefore, it is unlikely that such levels of participation will be reached again. A comparison of survey data from 1991 and 1994 shows that popular political participation has indeed declined generally. (App. Tables 3, 4.)

The decline in participation activities could be explained as a gradual ebb of the political activities after their high tide during the time of “Awakening”. However, we should note that this fall is too steep, for example, the voters’ activity during the elections to the 6th Saeima (in which only 72% of the eligible voters took part) was even lower than it is usual in the elections of legislative bodies in Scandinavian countries, where it vacillates around 80%. Taking this into account, we should look also for other causes for the decline in political participation. As it was already mentioned in the introduction, we post the *hypothesis that the civic participation of the individual in a transitional society is determined by lack of experience of positive participation, lowered self-evaluation of one’s own competence, and the change of values in society as a result of changing social and economic conditions.*

Robert Dahl, in his book “Modern Political Analysis”, examines six reasons why people do not become involved in politics (see above). In order to better understand the conditions and factors which impede the political participation of Latvian inhabitants, we will compare the results of surveys of inhabitants in two countries: in Latvia, which is a transitional-type country with very limited experience in democracy, and Norway, which is a country with experience in democracy already since the beginning of this century (the ISSP data were used from the 1996 project “Role of Government”).

*Table 3.1 There are many ways people or organizations can protest against a government action they strongly oppose (Definitely) %*

	Latvia	Norway
Organizing public meetings to protest against the government	27	72
Organizing protest marches and demonstrations	21	56
Organizing a nation-wide strike of all workers against the government	16	26

There is a rather significant difference on the cognitive level of how people perceive public meetings and demonstrations: only 27% and 21%, respectively, of the Latvian inhabitants regard them as a form of protest against the government, while in Norway these figures are 72% and 56%. There is lesser difference on the issue of organizing a nation-wide strike: it is supported by every fourth Norwegian inhabitant and every 6th Latvian inhabitant.

*Table 3.2 Would you or would you not do any of the following to protest against a government action you strongly opposed (Definitely)*

	Latvia	Norway
Attend a public meeting to protest against the government	14	33
Go on a protest march or demonstration	12	21

Also on the affective level, the Norwegian inhabitants more often express the attitude that they could themselves take part in a public meeting or demonstration (33% and 21%), as compared with Latvian inhabitants (14% and 12%).

These results suggest that, both on the cognitive as well as affective level, the attitudes of Latvian inhabitants towards public meetings and demonstrations as protest forms against the government are significantly weaker as compared with Norway.

*Table 3.3 In the past five years, how many times have you done each of the following to protest against a government action you strongly opposed? (the answers: once + more than once were counted together)*

	Latvia	Norway
Attended a public meeting to protest against the government	10	21
Went on a protest march or demonstration	6	18

These data suggest that also on the behavioral level, the attitudes of Latvian inhabitants towards public meetings and demonstrations as protest forms against the government are more passive as compared with Norwegian inhabitants.

*Table 3.4 Self-evaluation of one's own political competence in Latvia and Norway (the answers: strongly agree + agree were counted together)*

	Latvia	Norway
I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country	26	47
I think most people are better informed about politics and government than I am	66	19

Latvian inhabitants have much lower self-assessment of their awareness of politics in their country, as compared with Norway: two thirds of Latvian inhabitants believe that they are worse informed about politics than others, while in Norway only every fifth inhabitant expressed this attitude.

*Table 3.5 Political trust and efficacy in Latvia and Norway (the answers: strongly agree + agree were counted together)*

	Latvia	Norway
People we elect (as MPs) try to keep the promises they have made during the election	8	28
Most (civil servants) can be trusted to do what is the best for the country	20	33

There is only a small proportion of Latvian inhabitants (8%) who believe that members of parliament keep their pre-election promises (in Norway – 28%) which suggests that there is a deficit in Latvia of positive expectations in regard to the end result of political participation, as compared with Norway. The trust in civil servants is also much lower in Latvia as compared with Norway.

*Table 3.6 How well or badly do you think the system of democracy in Latvia works these days. %*

	Latvia	Norway
It works well and needs no changes	2	10
It works well but needs some changes	35	74
It does not work well and needs a lot of changes	40	9
It does not work well and needs to be completely changed	10	2
Can't choose	12	4

Latvian inhabitants, as compared with Norwegians, are much less satisfied with the functioning of the democratic system in the country: only one third of the population expressed satisfaction with democracy in Latvia, while in Norway more than three quarters expressed such attitude.

Dissatisfaction with the results of political activities was also reflected in the assessment by voters of their choice in election: just two months after the election of the 6th Saeima, a considerable part of voters in Latvia (42%) were dissatisfied with their choice, but in certain cases the proportion of dissatisfied voters was even higher: the voters for “Tautas kustība Latvijai” [The Popular Movement for Latvia] (a very populist party) was especially conspicuous in this aspect: only two months after the election, 60% of them were dissatisfied with their choice. About 45% of voters are more or less satisfied with their choice; most of satisfied voters are among those who voted for the Nationally Conservative Party “Tēvzemei un Brīvībai” [For Fatherland and Freedom] – more than two thirds among them are completely or partially satisfied with their choice.

According to this comparison between the data from Latvia and Norway, we can conclude that the following factors have had negative effect on the political participation of inhabitants:

- 1) the lack of attitude of inhabitants (weakly expressed attitude) against the object of political activities (both on the cognitive as well as affective level);
- 2) lowered self-assessment of one’s own political awareness;
- 3) dissatisfaction with the results of political activities;
- 4) low level of political trust;
- 5) deficit of positive expectations in regard to the result of participation.

To a significant extent, these results correspond to the conditions mentioned by R. A. Dahl when explaining unwillingness to take part in politics, but we should keep in mind, however, that R. A. Dahl spoke about societies with a certain experience in democracy. In a transitional society, there are also other conditions which are mainly related to dissatisfaction of inhabitants with the result of their political activities and deficit of positive experience.

#### The conditions which facilitate participation

Following the approach of R. A. Dahl, and looking at the negative factors in reverse, we can assume that those who take part in the political and public life are people who follow the opposite motivation:

- 1) they have a certain definite attitude towards the object of political activities (both on the cognitive as well as affective level);
- 2) they have an adequate self-assessment of their political awareness;
- 3) they have a desire to positively affect the result of political activities,
- 4) they have a medium or higher than medium level of political trust;

5) they have positive expectations in regard to the result of participation.

If we compare political activities in Latvia with those in other countries, we will see that, for example, in the last five years, Latvian inhabitants have attended protest rallies against the government about as often as in other post-communist countries (Czech Republic 10%, Hungary 8%), but substantially less than people in the countries with democratic experience (Norway 21%, France 19%, Sweden 18%, Spain 18%, Germany 15%).<sup>1</sup>

It is apparent that the lack of experience in democracy, lack of positive experience and of positive expectations is a very important reason why the political participation is low in Latvia, like in the other post-communist states, despite the fact that social problems in Latvia and in other post-communist countries are much more acute, and the level of living is substantially lower than in the first-world countries.

*Table 3.7 Would you or would you not do any of the following to protest against a government action you strongly opposed?*

*(Definitely) %*

	Attend a public meeting organized to protest against the government	Go on a protest march or demonstration
Latvia	14	12
Russia	14	12
Hungary	22	18
Germany	22	20
Czech Republic	24	13
Spain	30	29
Norway	33	21
Sweden	35	28
France	48	47

If we consider the attitude (on the affective level) towards participation in protest meetings and demonstrations, we see that this attitude is weaker among Latvian inhabitants as compared with the post-communist countries of Eastern Europe or countries with longer experience of democracy. The affective attitude of Latvian inhabitants towards participation in protest meetings and demonstrations is similar to that of inhabitants in Russia.

This means that the past political regime and the experience of democracy have very significant role in shaping the attitude towards political participation: in countries with stronger totalitarian regimes (Latvia and Russia) the attitude towards political participation is weaker than in the post-communist countries of Eastern Europe, where the influence of the Soviet system was comparatively weaker, but the strongest attitudes can be observed in countries with long experience of democracy (Nordic and Western European countries).

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<sup>1</sup> ISSP 1996. Role of Government.

We see from regular surveys carried out in Latvia and in the other Baltic States that people in these countries are not satisfied with their level of living (R. Rose 1994, 1995, 1996) and also with the processes of democracy in their countries. However, dissatisfaction with their material situation and democratic development is not sufficient factor to stimulate political protest.

The results of our research confirm the conclusions of Almond and Verba about the influence of subjective self-evaluation on participation. It shows the importance of the civic society in which “individuals see themselves as equals, they are likely to think of themselves as independent and self-standing persons whose way of life predominantly derives from their own reflections and choices and not from any source external to their lives” (Steven M. De Lue, 1997).

We also pay attention to the fact that the transitional period is related to a faster change of values in society than it is characteristic for countries of stable democracy, and this change of values has a certain effect on political participation.

### ***Change of Values and Political Participation***

Within the comparative project of Nordic and Baltic countries, the Baltic Data House, alongside with sociologists from the University of Tartu, Lithuanian Academy of Sciences and Umea University (Sweden), has for several years followed changes in values in the Nordic and Baltic countries (according to the methodology of Rokeach M., 1973). This comparative project has confirmed theoretical hypotheses that the change of values is closely linked with economic changes (Halman L., Petterson T., 1994). Thus, for example, in Sweden, where the economy can be described as rather stable – not subject to any drastic changes, the values of inhabitants are also quite stable. Situation is quite different in the Baltic States where fast social and economic changes are underway. Economic reforms are more successful in Estonia, where there are certain hopes among the population that the level of living is beginning to stabilize, and many people expect that their welfare will improve already in the near future. To compare: about 60% of Estonians are satisfied with the economy of their country (50% of the other nationalities in Estonia), while in Latvia only 25% of the ethnic Latvians and 28% of non-Latvians are satisfied with the national economy (Rose R. 1995).

It turns out that fast changes happened not only in the economy of Estonia and that the values of Estonians have also changed in the last five years.

The question is: what are these changes?

Social values, for example, *clean environment*, as well as national values, for example, *national security*, have become less important, while hedonistic, individualistic values (*comfortable, interesting life, self-realization*) have become more important in the eyes of Estonians. In this process, the values of Estonians have become closer to the opinions of Swedes about the place of different values in human life. “Westernization” of values is

taking place. In Latvia, on the other hand, economic changes are slower, and correspondingly the system of values has also changed less. However, if we assess events in the recent years, similar tendencies can be observed in Latvia as in Estonia. It is typical for Latvia that the importance of social and national values has significantly decreased, including such as *clean environment, national security, freedom, peace in the world, stable family*, while other values have gained importance, such as: *comfortable, pleasant life, self-realization, social acknowledgment*. These are values focused on self-development of the individual, comfort of the individual.

Values in different age groups. It turns out that values are differentiated most depending on the age, even more so than between people of different nationalities.

We can speak both about structural changes in the systems of values of different generations as well as about the general interests of a certain generation which take the form of an increased or lowered rating of certain values.

Thus, for example, it was typical for Latvians in 1993 that the highest rating of many values (both social as well as materialistic and individualistic) was given by young people in aged 20-29.

The picture was different in the survey of 1995 – the attitude towards values was differentiated in various age groups: social, ethical and materialistic values got the highest rating in the middle-age group (40-49); while hedonistic, individualistic values (*carefree, interesting, easy life, social acknowledgment, true friendship*) were higher rated in the youngest age group (15-19). On the other hand, it was characteristic that people over 50 most often gave the lowest rating to most values.

Noteworthy that the divergence of ratings between different age groups was more pronounced among non-Latvians than Latvians, in other words, the distance between the systems of values of different generations was greater among non-Latvians. For young Russians and younger people of other nationalities, hedonistic values – *interesting, carefree, easy life, as well as power and self-realization* – seem to be more important.

*Self-realization, interesting and easy life* are also more important for the Latvian youth as compared with people of older generations. Both for Latvian as well as non-Latvian youths, the individualistic, hedonistic values are more preferred as compared with people of older generations. We could say that there are no essential differences between the groups of younger people. But there are significant differences in the older age groups. For middle-aged and older Latvians, social values are more important, such as: *peace in the world, freedom, national security, equality* as well as ethical and esthetic values: *life according to one's conscience, justice at work, stable family and beauty in the world*. For the older generation of non-Latvians, however, such values are most important as *equality and life according to one's conscience*.

These data suggest that political participation also decreases under the influence of changes in dominating values, especially in connection with lowered ratings of national and social values in the eyes of the younger generation. To a certain extent, this explains the lower participation rates of the youth in the election of the 6th Saeima as compared with older people: in the age group of 18-24 years old, participation in election was by 15% lower than the average participation of all voters. It is true, however, that – according to the data of foreign studies – participation of the youth in elections is traditionally lower as compared with older generations. Western researchers explain this fact by greater busyness of younger people in the family, in child-raising, with career, etc. (See Erikson R., Lutberg N., Tedin, 1988). It seems that the decrease in political participation can be explained by the change of values, which affects all the age groups more or less.

However, speaking about changing values, we could probably post a hypothesis that although the significance of nationalist values declines, especially among younger people, causing lower interest in political participation, which often has nationalist tendencies today, it is still possible that, as values change, other values could appear in the foreground, such as: feminism, environment, rights of minorities, the wish of self-realization in politics, forming the basis for a new, different set of motives for more active political participation.

#### *Latvian Inhabitants About Materialistic and Social Values*

In order to find out the attitudes of Latvian inhabitants towards materialistic and social values, we used the Materialistic and Post-Materialistic Values Scale of R. Inglehart (R. Inglehart, 1977).

In expressing their attitudes towards such values as stable economy or progress towards a more humane society, or towards a society where ideas are more valuable than money, most of the Latvian citizens stress the importance of stable economy: for most citizens and non-citizens, the values which pertain to the basic needs of people seem more important (63% and 59%, respectively), while the number of those who regard the progress towards a more humane society as more important is considerably less (13% of citizens, 20% of non-citizens), and even lesser is the number of those who value a society where ideas are more valuable than money (citizens: 3%, non-citizens: 2%) (App. fig. 6). The poorer people as well as people with higher education more often support the idea of a more humane society; from non-citizens, these are more often the younger people and more wealthier people.

Generally, it is rather typical for the Latvian society that three quarters of the population strictly defend the importance of materialistic values, and this is similar among citizens as well as non-citizens. This is understandable, taking into account the low living standards of the people. Also in Latvia, the younger generation pays more attention to social (postmaterialistic) values, such as: participation in passing important national decisions, participation in dealing with issues at work and in their neighborhoods, progress towards a more humane society, freedom of speech. These are, probably, the values which could facilitate political participation in the future. This idea was also suggested by R. Inglehart:

“Postmaterialists feel relatively secure about these needs and have a greater amount of psychic energy to invest in more remote concerns. This may lead to involvement in a wide variety of activities, among which politics is one possibility.” (Inglehart, 1979)

Generally, we can conclude that the declined political participation in the last five-six years cannot be explained only as an ebb of the high-intensity political activities of the “Awakening” period, but also by low political efficacy, dissatisfaction with the results of political activities, reduced self-evaluation of one’s own political awareness, lack of positive expectations in regard to the result of participation, lack of positive experience in democracy. Participation has declined also under the influence of changed values in society: first, the significance of national values gradually declines, while the importance of hedonistic, individualistic values grows; second, the younger generation supports humanistic, democratic values, which could facilitate the growth of political participation in the future by appearance of new forms of political activities.

#### ***4. Social Network as a Social Capital***

##### Individual and social network

Social contacts of the individual can form various networks, beginning with the family, friends and expand further into much wider circles of society. Social network is to be considered as a specific social capital, which is difficult to measure. When this capital runs out, an individual feels isolated and alienated, thus he or she is poorly integrated in the society. Durkheim uses it in explanation of causes of suicides.

A. de Tocqueville emphasizes that developed informal contacts are a solid ground for the formation of formal organisations, for example a network of NGOs, which generally furthermore strengthens the horizontal bonds in the society (A. de Tocqueville society: informal network - impersonal institutions).

R. Rose (Rose, 1996) points out that similarly to the errors in the economy, weak sides can be detected also in the special sphere: if social networks are inadequately developed, it should be taken as a social error.

##### Measurement problems, empirical indicators

In order to measure the nearest informal social network the following questions have been used:

- 1) where would a person turn to in case of difficulty,
- 2) does a person have somebody to borrow small amount of money in case of financial difficulties.

*Table 4.1 Social network in overcoming difficulties (%)*

*a) Who do you rely on first when you have problems?  
(2 answers allowed)*

Can rely on ...	EstEst	EstRus	LatLat	LatRus	LitLit	LitRus
Self	88	91	86	86	79	87
Friends, relatives	31	41	36	34	51	45
Employer	5	5	5	2	3	3
State	5	4	3	3	3	2
Public organizations, unions	0	0	1	0	0	1
Charities	1	2	1	1	3	1
Church	2	2	5	3	6	3
Other	2	1	1	2	2	1

*Sorce: Rose R. Vilomorus, Baltic Data House & Saar Poll. New Baltic Barometer III: A Survey Study, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 1997.*

*b) Relying, combined*

Can rely on ...	EstEst	EstRus	LatLat	LatRus	LitLit	LitRus
Self only	56	48	51	58	35	46
Self and informal	26	34	27	23	39	37
Informal only	5	6	8	10	11	8
Informal and formal	9	11	11	6	13	6
Formal only	4	1	3	2	3	3

*Sorce: Rose R. Vilomorus, Baltic Data House & Saar Poll. New Baltic Barometer III: A Survey Study, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 1997.*

Approximately each second Baltic resident believes that they could only rely on self in case of difficulties, 25-40% could overcome difficulties with assistance of friends and relatives (informal). 5-10% would rely chiefly on their relatives, friends. There is an insignificant number of those who hope to receive help from employer (2-5%), and the state (2-5%), similar number of people would rely on the church. Hardly any help is expected from public organizations. It indicates that the basis of communicative bond is relatives and friends, in most cases not going beyond family and employer. It can be viewed as one of the indicators of weakly developed civic society.

The principal tendencies in all Baltic countries are similar, there are only minor differences between the countries. Thus it is characteristic of Lithuanians that they are forced to rely only on self less frequently, they expect to receive assistance from relatives and friends (51%), as well as from the church (6%). As regards Estonia, the difference from other Baltic states lies in the fact that residents more frequently expect to receive assistance both from the state and employer. Although there is no great difference, perhaps, it can be considered as a symptom, which testifies about more successful formation of social relationship between an individual and various formal institutions in Estonia in comparison with Latvia and Lithuania.

*Table 4.2 Social contacts in case of financial problems (%)*

*Do you have a friend or a relative to borrow an amount of weekly wages or pension of your family had little money?*

Friend, relative ...	EstEst	EstRus	LatLat	LatRus	LitLit	LitRus
Definitely yes	45	32	34	23	46	35
Probably	34	42	30	28	35	33
Probably not	13	16	17	21	11	21
Definitely not	8	10	18	27	8	12
Combined, those who do not have a friend or a relative to borrow	21	26	35	48	19	33

*Sorce: Rose R. Vilomorus, Baltic Data House & Saar Poll. New Baltic Barometer III: A Survey Study, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 1997.*

Approximately 75-80% in Estonia think that somebody could lend them money, this number is almost similar in Lithuania, whereas in Latvia there are fewer people who expect that somebody could lend them a small amount of money (about 65% among Latvians and only each second among non-Latvians). The least number of those who do not have anybody to borrow is among Lithuanians (19%) and particularly among Estonians (21%). We can put forward an assumption that in Estonia the better economic situation of the households gives people a possibility to assist mutually, but in Lithuania it is in turn secured by close ties with the relatives, friends and the church.

There are more Estonians and Lithuanians (about 74-80%) who feel certain that there would be someone to rely on, amount Latvians this number is about 65%, but less assured about it are non-Baltic residents (50-60%). In this case it is also apparent that Estonians and Lithuanians feel more secure. Most probably in case of Estonians it is rooted in more stable social security system, which incorporates both the social aid, state insurance system, and benefits on the part of the employer, but in Lithuania the sense of security is strengthened by the strong bonds with the church.

*Table 4.3 Social contact in case of serious illness (%)*

*Do you have anyone except your family members to rely on if you were seriously ill?*

Can rely...	EstEst	EstRus	LatLat	LatRus	LitLit	LitRus
Definitely yes	38	25	31	19	42	29
Probably	37	36	35	32	38	34
Probably not	17	22	17	24	10	21
Definitely not	8	17	16	24	10	16
Combined, those who do not have anybody to rely on	25	39	33	48	20	37

*Sorce: Rose R. Vilomorus, Baltic Data House & Saar Poll. New Baltic Barometer III: A Survey Study, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 1997.*

It can be concluded that communication networks of the Baltic state residents most often confine themselves within the family and friends, thus as the basis there is personal relationship, which rarely intermingles with non-personal relationship, characteristic of formal institutions, like NGO. In numerous cases it can be an obstacle in overcoming difficulties, since rather often these close relatives or friends are indigent as well and in case of necessity they would not be able to provide support, because not only financial, but even moral support can involve expenditure (transport, phone calls etc.)

In Tocqueville's society the social capital (Rose, 1996) of informal networks and face-to-face local institutions is positively integrated in large impersonal institutions of a nation's civil society, such as trade unions, churches, universities, political parties, mutual insurance or health funds, etc. Personal contacts as if naturally pass over to broader formal organization contacts. It is essential to point out that this transition does not create a conflict of interests between private communication on the one hand and public communication on the other hand. It considerably differs from the communication models of the soviet times, when there were personal communication networks with prevailing personal interests on the one hand, and communication networks that represented the interests of the society on the other hand, which actually were identified as "interests of the state". It produced a strong stereotype about incompatibility of private and public interests, there was a contrast between these notions. The case when state and personal interests do not supplement each other, but on the opposite are in collision. This is alienation between an individual, society and state.

Stereotype about incompatibility of interests of an individual and society is strong and particularly topical at the moment. Most probably it considerably hinders the development of social capital in transition societies, since people experience problems in stepping across the border, which they have set up themselves: contrast of private and public interests. It restrains people to unite, get involved in various communities, participate in organizations - to integrate into the society. It could be said that the widespread stereotype about incompatibility of interests of an individual and society is one of the essential features of transition society.

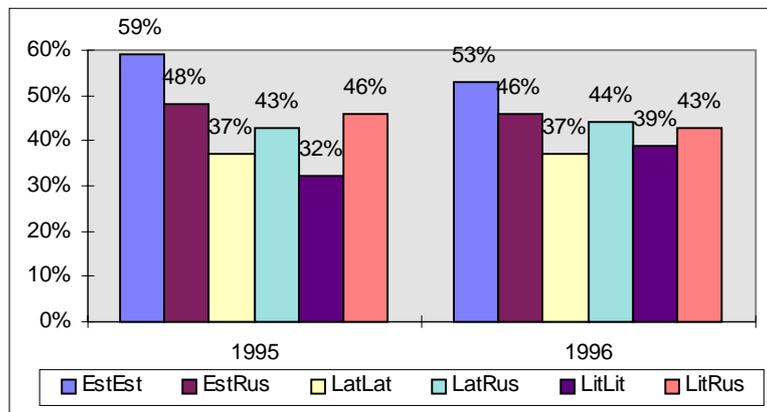
#### Orientation of Baltic residents towards the expansion of social contacts

In order to have a possibility to expand the individual communicative network the stand of an individual towards impersonal network formation is important. In this connection there was a question asked in the questionnaire: *the best way to get ahead is to cooperate with others in this community to promote common interests*, either: *the best way to get ahead is to look after oneself and not bother with what other people do*. The possibilities offered by cooperation are assessed more highly by Estonians than by residents of Latvia or Lithuania. It appears that in Estonia there are both more people who are members of non-governmental organizations and also those who consider that cooperation is useful in order to achieve the objectives.

It is also interesting that Estonians support cooperation more than non-Estonians, whereas in Latvia the situation is different - non-Latvians support it more than Latvians. The attitude of minority nationalities of the Baltics towards cooperation is quite similar, but the attitude of Baltic majority nationality differs considerably: among Estonians positive stand towards cooperation was expressed by more than 50%, but among Latvians - less than 40%, similarly to Lithuanians.

*Fig. 4.1 Attitudes of Baltic residents towards cooperation in order to promote common interests (%)*

*The best way for people like me to get ahead is to cooperate with others in this community to promote common interests*

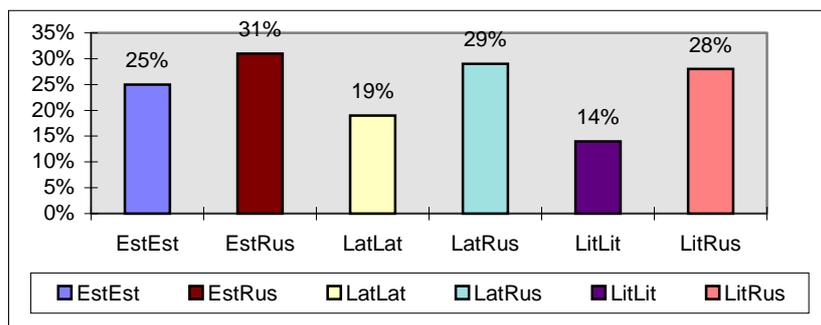


*Sources: Rose R. Vilomorus, Baltic Data House & Saar Poll. New Baltic Barometer III: A Survey Study, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 1997. Rose R. New Baltic Barometer II. University of Strathclyde, 1995.*

Baltic residents about interpersonal trust

In order to widen the impersonal network, the stand of an individual about whether people can be trusted is important. It appears that, among Estonians, if we compare Latvians and Lithuanians, there are more people who think that people can be trusted. Thus Estonians are both more inclined to cooperate and have more trust in people. Interpersonal trust and orientation towards cooperation are correlated and these can be viewed as an indicator of democratization of society. R. Inglehart makes use of the findings of World Values Survey (1990-1991) to point out the link between the interpersonal trust and experience of democracy (period, since which the democratic regime is in place). These findings revealed that in such new- democracy countries as Latvia, Chile, Belorussia, South Africa, Lithuania, Poland, etc. there is a low interpersonal trust, yet in countries with long democratic tradition, for example, US, UK, Canada, Scandinavian countries, interpersonal trust is much higher (Inglehart, 1992). As far as Latvia is concerned it can be added that interpersonal trust has not increased since 1990, when first measurement of this type was carried out. It is quite an interesting fact that testifies that the pace of changes is different in various life spheres. It implies that changes have not occurred in the comprehension of moral aspects of interpersonal communication, however at the same time it is recognized, that essential political, social and economic changes have taken place in the society. It ascertains that social capital development, changes in the way of thinking of people happen at a much slower pace than the social and economic changes. It can be viewed as a factor, which notably hinders the course of social changes, which is of great importance in the transitive society.

*Fig. 4.2 Attitude of Baltic residents towards interpersonal trust (%)  
Most people can be trusted (Positive answers)*



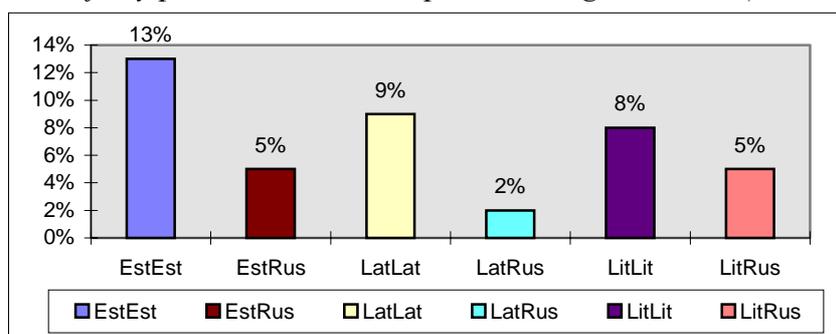
*Sorce: Rose R. Vilomorus, Baltic Data House & Saar Poll. New Baltic Barometer III: A Survey Study, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 1997.*

Participation in non-governmental organizations (NGO)

Among the Baltic countries the residents Estonia are participating more in NGOs (about 10%), particularly Estonians (13%), among residents of Lithuania there are 7% NGO members, more Lithuanians (8%) than Lithuanian Russians (5%), as to the residents of Latvia only about 5% are participants of NGO.

These data as if supplement and help to corroborate what has been said in the above chapter: the fact is obvious that in Estonia the network of informal organizations is developing more successfully, which allows the individual to broaden his or her communication network. There is also a possibility that social capital of informal networks is gradually positively integrated into various impersonal organizations.

*Fig. 4.3 Participation in non-governmental organisations (%)  
Are you a member of any public or non-state sponsored organization? (Positive answers)*



*Sorce: Rose R. Vilomorus, Baltic Data House & Saar Poll. New Baltic Barometer III: A Survey Study, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 1997.*

State power and society: political trust and efficacy

What states Robert Dahl (1991, p. 100): “you are less likely to become involved in politics if you think that what you do won’t matter because you can’t significantly change the outcome anyway. A great many surveys have demonstrated a strong relationship between the confidence that what one does really matters and the extent of one’s political involvement. The weaker one’s “sense of political efficacy”, the less likely one is to become involved”

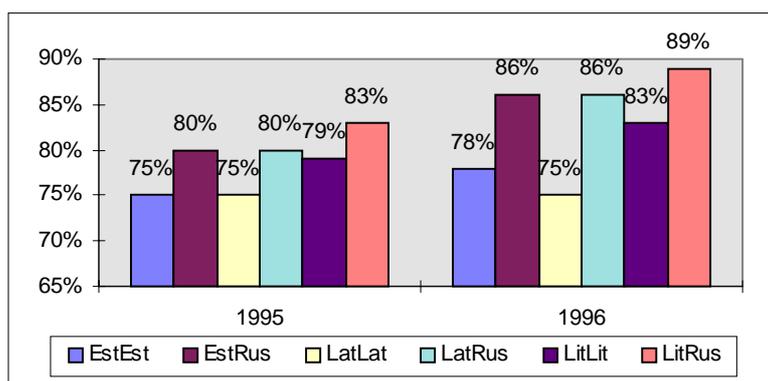
The answers to the following questions testify about the alienation of the masses from the highest state structures:

- 1) *If the local authorities made a decision which went against people's interests, do you think you could do something about it or not?*
- 2) *If the national government made a decision which went against people's interests, do you think you could do something about it or not?*

In both cases 75 - 85% of the residents of Latvia gave a negative reply - they think they could probably not do anything about it. It indicates that people are alienated from state structures, there is also less trust in those structures. Furthermore, it restricts contacts between the society and leaders. There exists a network of contacts both in the higher and lower level, yet there are hardly any bonds that would unite both those levels. In reality power structures and totality of residents as if form a pattern of sundial: there is an extension at the top and at the bottom, but the link in the middle is scarcely visible. Virtually it almost excludes control "from the bottom", the possibilities of social capital are being ignored.

*Fig. 4.5 The attitude of Baltic residents towards possibilities to influence the decision of local authorities (%)*

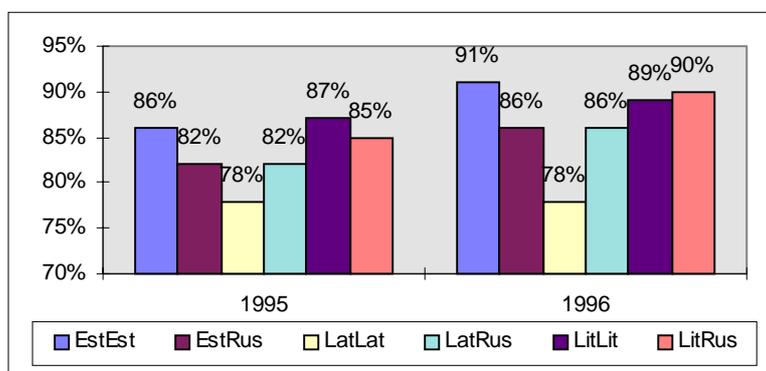
*If the local authorities made a decision that went against people's interests, do you think you could do something about it or not (probably not +not a chance)*



*Sources: Rose R. Vilomorus, Baltic Data House & Saar Poll. New Baltic Barometer III: A Survey Study, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 1997. Rose R. New Baltic Barometer II. University of Strathclyde, 1995.*

*Fig. 4.6 The attitude of Baltic residents towards possibilities to influence the decision of national government (%)*

*If the national government made a decision that went against people's interests, do you think you could do something about it or not (probably not +not chance)*



*Sources: Rose R. Vilomorus, Baltic Data House & Saar Poll. New Baltic Barometer III: A Survey Study, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 1997. Rose R. New Baltic Barometer II. University of Strathclyde, 1995.*

It must be stressed, however, that among those who are members of non-governmental organizations, almost each second is confident that he or she could do something about decisions of power structures if they went against people's interests.

#### Participation in formal organizations and democratic values

- NGO participation and trust in state and public institutions.

NGO members are rather often more determined in their attitude towards various state and public institutions: rather often they give both positive and negative estimation of the institutions, it refers to both the estimation of basic state power structures in Latvia, e.g. Saeima, the Cabinet, and also in the attitude towards other institutions (farmers' organisations, private entrepreneurs), NGO members have given less uncertain answers in comparison with others. In Latvia NGO members trust more often in officials, army, farmers, organizations, private entrepreneurs, trade unions, state president. However there are no such institutions, to which NGO would give lower trust estimation in comparison with others. It indicates that NGO participation fosters approximation of people to various formal organisations, also state organizations.

Similar coherence can be observed in Estonia: NGO members more than others have expressed more trust in the parliament, army, private entrepreneurs, as well as the Bank of Estonia and church.

- NGO participation and stand towards the possibilities provided by the cooperation

As regards the viewpoint about how to achieve best success: in cooperating with other people or just relying on oneself, only a slight prevalence among Latvian NGO members is in favour of the first opinion, in Estonian this prevalence is more evident.

*Table 4.4 Attitude of NGO members towards the cooperation (%)*

*The best way for people like me to get ahead is to cooperate with others in this community to promote common interests*

The best way for people like me to get ahead is to cooperate with others to promote common interests	Are NGO members	Are not NGO members	dk
Latvia	41	35	6
Estonia	58	48	10

*Sorce: Rose R. Vilomorus, Baltic Data House & Saar Poll. New Baltic Barometer III: A Survey Study, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 1997.*

- NGO participation and political efficacy

One of the topical political problems in the Baltics is political alienation, i.e. people feel distanced from power structures, they have no faith that they could influence the political decisions, regardless of whether it is on the level of local authority or national level. The research carried out in Latvia (1994 - 1996) suggests that  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the residents do not believe that they could influence the decisions of local authorities or the government. Different opinion is held by those who are NGO members - in Latvia approximately each second among them thinks that it is possible to influence political decisions. Also Estonian NGO members have a similar stand on the issue. Although it is true that in relation to the possibilities to influence the governmental decisions Estonian NGO members are less optimistic in comparison with Latvian NGO members.

We can therefore conclude that generally there are very weak vertical bonds in the Baltics, which could promote the relationship between the masses and the political elite, distinct alienation can be observed between the common people and political elite.

*Table 4.5 Attitude of NGO members towards the possibilities to influence the decisions passed by the government and local authorities (%) (definetly+probably)*

	Latvia		Estonia	
	NGO members	All	NGO members	All
Possibility to influence the decisions passed by the local authorities	48	19	40	18
Possibility to influence the decisions passed by the national government	43	16	19	10

*Sorce: Rose R. Vilomorus, Baltic Data House & Saar Poll. New Baltic Barometer III: A Survey Study, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 1997.*

- NGO participation and orientation towards authoritarianism

#### Orientation towards a strong leader

In the Baltics, similarly to other new-democracy countries, there is a disappointment in the democracy and as a result of this the idea about a strong leader is being considered. Actually, it is a proof that horizontal links in society are very weak, since one of the most ominous heritages from the times of the Soviet system is *atomization of society* (Shopflin,

1993) and consistent destruction of horizontal links, cultivation of general distrust, both in the field of inter-personal communications as well as in relation to state authorities. Under such conditions, the state is perceived as something distant and abstract beyond the will and control of individuals. Unfortunately, the change of political system does not guarantee a change in these attitudes. The individual feels even more isolated, since everything is changing around, there are no horizontal links which would fix him or her in society, would stabilize his or her position. The individual, lonely and alienated, is afraid of relying on him- or herself, therefore he or she is looking for support from outside, the individual can be easily manipulated with, he or she can be easily impressed by strong personalities who are found in new political leaders.

Therefore, there is still a tendency to have more trust in personalities than in institutions, and personalities are therefore the target of political attitudes, and much hope is focused on them.

Formulation of the question: *It is best to have a strong leader who can quickly decide things without bothering with Parliament and elections* undoubtedly defined authoritative regime. Approximately as much as 40% of residents of Latvia and Estonia think that strong leader could be able to solve numerous problems, there are even more supporters of strong leader in Lithuania - each third resident.

However, among the NGO members this opinion is much less prevalent - it can be referred to both Latvia and Estonia.

These data seem to be of great importance because they indicate that people, who have broader social network understand the opportunities offered by cooperation thus they do not approve of a strong leader.

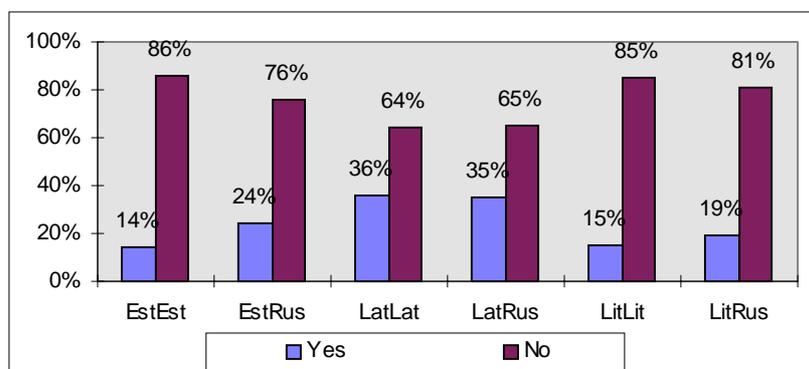
*Table 4.6 Attitude of NGO members towards the necessity of a strong leader (%) (strongly agree + somewhat agree)*

	Latvia: yes		Estonia: yes	
	NGO members	All	NGO members	All
It is best to have a strong leader who can quickly decide things without bothering with Parliament and elections	36	48	34	45

*Sorce: Rose R. Vilomorus, Baltic Data House & Saar Poll. New Baltic Barometer III: A Survey Study, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 1997.*

- Trade union participation and attitude towards democratic values

Fig. 4.7 *Participation of Baltic countries in trade unions (%)*



Source: Rose R. Vilomorus, *Baltic Data House & Saar Poll. New Baltic Barometer III: A Survey Study*, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 1997.

The members of trade unions are more often people with higher social-economic status (qualified employees, higher rank and higher level of education). Affiliation to the trade union does not influence the attitude towards cooperation and attitude towards democratic values. The only difference is that trade union members have more trust in various social institutions. It is obvious that NGO members are more orientated towards cooperation, they understand the opportunities of cooperation better than trade union members, where in most cases it is only membership without active participation. Trade union membership is rather formal thus it can to a lesser extent form and influence attitudes towards democratic values.

The study allows to make an important conclusion that the participation of residents in formal organizations, NGOs in particular, considerably fosters political trust and also increases efficacy. It can be particularly referred to Estonia, where participation in formal organizations is higher than in other Baltic states. Participation in formal organizations also reduces the importance of the estimation of an authoritarian leader. People with a broader social network feel more cooperation opportunities and they rely less on a particular leader.

Although it is characteristic for the Baltic states that in most cases the individuals are satisfied with the non-formal social network, still it must be pointed out that Estonians are more predisposed to cooperate in order to promote common interests, among them there are more such people, who think that most people can be trusted, Estonians also broaden their formal social network more often.

## 2. Motives and Impact of Participation in NGO: Results Of Focus Group Discussion (Inese Ozoliņa, Liene Ēaplinska)

### *Motives Why People Involve in Non-Governmental Organizations*

Most of the participants of the survey were prompted to involve in NGOs by their dissatisfaction with the existing situation and their desire to change something – either in their own life or to deal with different problems by helping others. Several members of the groups regard their activities in non-governmental organizations as their mission, since they see problems and feel that they are able to solve them:

- *I saw the situation with alcohol and illegal drugs. I understood it as my mission – there is a situation like that around us, but I am a worker of the culture and can do much. Apparently I wanted to do something. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*
- *My mission is love to children. I saw children begging in the street, saw large families in terrible situations. I felt sorry for them. I could not sleep anymore or do anything. Simply, I had to help them. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

Other people were prompted to involve in the activities of non-governmental organizations as they saw the shortcomings of the work done by state authorities in different fields:

- *I was in Western Germany. I saw that everybody is protected there – whether he is a drug addict or drunkard. Society has not cast them out...I was an orphan myself, and I feel that this problem (the situation of orphans) gets worse and worse. There are more and more orphans indicted for crimes, because the state is not working with these people. Therefore I stayed and work here. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*
- *If the state is unable to do something, then a group of people appears who need to do it, they unite and set up an organization. (Leader of an NGO)*
- *I took up the leadership of the association of disabled persons because I saw the nonsense that is going on in our country. (Leader of an NGO)*
- *If the state is not properly functioning in a specific field, then a group of persons concerned unite to put the things in order. I have observed in real life that you can solve different things between non-governmental organizations, not between any formal authorities. (Leader of an NGO)*

Members of the group explained the wish to help others by the feeling of solidarity. Organizations have been formed on the basis of the principle of solidarity. There are also such members of organizations who have first encountered difficulties themselves and then found that it is better to unite to reach own goals:

- *It was the principle of solidarity. To help, to come and teach something, to add to, to share knowledge. It was the reason why our organization was established. Families came together. It was the way of solidarity and helping each other, to support each other. It was like an internal mission to help others, to share with each other. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

*- Two years ago, twins were born to us – the fifth and sixth child. It was the time when we understood: if we would do nothing, then we would get nothing. We have to struggle. Nobody will help from outside. At the beginning, it was only wish, since we had small children. Now, the wish has come true. And it is the calling of my life. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

Other people were motivated to associate by their hobbies, or they liked to spend time together with certain people, it seemed interesting:

*- I have always had my hobby in addition to my work. Swedes came, gave us the equipment and told: play. So, we started to play and have now reached world level. Step by step. We help people to organize themselves. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

*- I used to go to the meetings of vegetarians, and they invite interesting people. When the spring came, we made different salads from vegetables. So I got involved. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

People are motivated to involve in organizations also by their need to be with people who share their views, to get the feeling of togetherness, moral support:

*- I stopped using alcohol and found that I need some organization with people sharing my views, since there was the sea of drunkards around. And I needed people who would support me morally. Then, as now, I saw in this organization a deeply civic, public meaning. Since at that time it was an organization which went across the state policies favoring drinking. (Leader of an NGO)*

*- Everybody told me: you are alone, nobody else thinks like that. So I started looking for somebody. Maybe I am really alone and should go to a doctor? I started looking around for somebody else thinking like me. In the currency situation, the need for an organization is clear. It is already a certain force to be reckoned with. (Leader of an NGO)*

In brief, we see that the major motives for involvement in NGOs include such as: the sense of mission, the wish to help others, to deal with urgent problems, the need for people with the same views, for moral support, as well as hobbies and the possibility to spend time in an engaging manner. What is common to all these people is that they wish to be socially active.

## **The Effect of Involvement in NGOs on Their Members**

### ***Change of Outlook***

Through the activities in NGOs, many of their members have gained the sense of self-confidence, better reliance on their abilities, their opinions, their activities and the faith that it is possible to change something to improve the existing situation:

- *My views have changed in the sense that I have felt freedom. You can do whatever you wish – within the law, of course. I wish what I want, and I know what to do. (Leader of an NGO)*
- *They have changed. I have confidence in the necessity of what I do. I have now got information about how others have solved these problems, there is exchange of information. Sense of stability. (Leader of an NGO)*
- *For myself, my views have become stronger about what I am. My conviction. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

People perceive their activities in non-governmental organizations as self-improvement and a way of exploration, in the course of which people get new experience and different skills:

- *... I have wider horizons now, I have become more daring. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*
- *A non-governmental organization teaches the leadership skills, the ability to concentrate thoughts on a given subject. (Leader of an NGO)*

Through their activities in non-governmental organizations, many people have gained better understanding about current processes, about the role of non-governmental organizations in society:

- *I understand now that my views develop. Maybe they have not changed, but they develop. I understand now that non-governmental organizations can affect the democratic processes here in Latvia, they can affect state policies. (Leader of an NGO)*
- *Through our activities in the non-governmental organization, we have come to know so many new things. Information exchange is going on. Before that, we just lived in our four walls and did not know what is happening elsewhere. (Leader of an NGO)*

There are also such people, the very life-style of whom has changed according to their changed views:

- *My views have changed. Vegetarianism makes the mind brighter. I have changed, virtually everything in my life has changed since I became a vegetarian. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*
- *I am in the organization only one year, but it has changed my life by fifty degrees. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

However, there were several participants of the discussion who believe that, before you even decide to involve in a non-governmental organization, you already have a certain world outlook, clearly defined goals that you wish to achieve. This is why you get involved in a NGO. The involvement in NGOs in itself does not change your views substantially, it rather means gaining new experiences and accumulation of knowledge:

- *I think that, in the first place, you have formed certain opinions, and this is why you involve in a non-governmental organization. Because you have some concrete opinions, resolutions, aims that you wish to achieve. Therefore you have found the way, the door through which to proceed. The way that is your mission, your duty. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

- *You do not change as a person. You are now the same as you were before. Simply, there was a chance to do something, and you could do what you wished. You got new experiences, but the essentials have not changed. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*
- *It seems that my views have not changed. I was enthusiastic from the very beginning. If I do something, I do it because I think so. You get new experiences, knowledge, things like that... (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*
- *My beliefs about life have not changed much, rather my ideas about the existing situation and about what I wish to achieve have clarified. I have immersed in things as they actually happen. The main thing is that I have got new experiences. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

Generally, most of participants of the survey said that their views have not substantially changed while they were involved in NGOs – they are basically the same as they were before, but the experiences in the activities of non-governmental organizations have significantly widened their outlook and understanding of the existing situation, have made them understand the role of non-governmental organizations in society, and have given the feeling of self-confidence and stability. And this has allowed their opinions to develop.

### ***Attitudes Toward People with Different Views***

Most of the participants of the survey, when speaking about changes in their attitudes toward people with different views, said that – through their activities in non-governmental organizations – not only have their general views widened but also tolerance increased toward people with different opinions:

- *I have become more democratic. I understood that you must listen to other people. I was intolerant before – how can he think or speak so? I have become more tolerant now. (Leader of an NGO)*
- *I have always allowed other people to think. To think for themselves. But the organization has changed me. There is more tolerance now. (Leader of an NGO)*

While working in non-governmental organizations, where the work is related to people, the participants get better understanding about the problems of other people, and their tolerance and love to them grows:

- *Following our teaching, you come to love and understand other people. You do not censure them. We are all people. Therefore, the hostility ends. It is regrettable that people argue and become hostile only because they think differently. But it is no sin to be different. You try to give an example, and then can convince others. It is definitely now better, not worse. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*
- *Every day, I have different tasks, and I could not work if I saw enemies in these people. It is so wonderful that there are different people, because otherwise the world would be colorless. At the same time, I feel that my values have become more stable, they have become ordered by rank. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

*- Definitely. We become fixed on our own problems, but when we have different meetings, forums, we get to know many new things about others. You understand and know about what other people are doing. (Leader of an NGO)*

Especially the rank-and-file members of a NGOs stressed the importance of mutual respect toward each other, and that we still have to learn much about how to respect each other:

*- This is a very serious problem. Under the communism, people were not taught at all about how to treat other people, how to respect each other. Now, we live in the free Latvia, and we must be united to be successful. Simply, people have not yet learned to live with each other, they are not able to accept other people as they are. I cannot remake another person, but I can help him to live if I respect him. We have to be ready to compromise, to be modest, wise. But we all have to learn it, we must teach that to the members of our group. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

At the same time, there were also such members of non-governmental organizations who were not so clear about the existence of different views, since, as they said, the differences can impede work and even disrupt the organization:

*- It is good to have different opinions. But if that interferes with my work, with my organization which I love... (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

*- This thing has its good and its bad side. At the beginning, we were united, but then we started to divide, and new organizations were formed. On the one hand, it is not bad: other people with the same opinions appeared, everybody started to work in a definite direction without interfering with each other. But, on the other hand, these divisions, when everybody goes separately, impede solidarity, prevent us to unite our forces to deal with certain issues. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

We can conclude that: if an organization is more open and if its activities are related to contacts with people, rendering of help, then the tolerance towards people with other views grows – people become more tolerant, since they are focused on cooperation, help and understanding of the situation. But there are different attitudes when the organization is rather closed in itself and when there are internal conflicts in it.

### ***Attitudes Toward Events in the Neighborhood and Toward Non-Governmental Organizations***

Participants of the survey had not a distinct identification with the place where they live, with their area, neighborhood. This was evidenced by the fact that they often misunderstood the essence of the question which was asked during the survey. Since most of participants of the survey are inhabitants of Riga, they feel closely related to Riga as a city in general, but not with the particular area in which they live, and many of them do not even much like that area:

*- I have lived in Riga since my birth. I moved from the downtown area to Vecmīlgrāvis which is a beautiful place. However, most of the people there are Russians. (Leader of an NGO)*

*- I hate the area in which I live. I really hate it. I cannot get used to it, cannot feel myself at home. The non-governmental organization encompasses the whole of Riga, not the particular area in which you live. (Leader of an NGO)*

However, there were also some members of non-governmental organizations who acknowledged that understanding of and awareness of local problems is one of the preconditions for people to involve in the activities of non-governmental organizations:

*- All those who involve in public work have understanding of local life. Since otherwise, if you do not see any problems, if you do not feel belonging to your place, then why should you involve in public activities, because it is a work you do for free. Without this understanding, without the awareness of the problem you cannot be a member of a non-governmental organization. (Leader of an NGO)*

When involving in non-governmental organizations themselves, the people's attitudes toward non-governmental organizations also change. Members of NGOs reach understanding about the role and meaning of non-governmental organizations, and about their abilities to affect the situation:

*- I think that non-governmental organizations are very good. Socially active people who do not work (pensioners) can realize themselves through these organizations, they can engage in useful activities. (Leader of an NGO)*

On the whole, participants of the survey did not link their activities in non-governmental organizations with the particular area in which they live, rather with a larger region (with the city in general, with the whole of Latvia), therefore their interest in and understanding about the problems of the neighborhood are less pronounced, or they even disassociate themselves from their area of residence. However, there were some members of non-governmental organizations who are of the opinion that involvement in NGOs is directly linked with awareness of local problems.

Speaking about the change of attitude toward non-governmental organizations, it was said by participants of the survey that, through involvement in the non-governmental organization, their views have widened about the processes going on in the country, about the role of non-governmental organizations in them and possibilities to change something with the help of NGOs.

### ***Attitudes Toward the State***

There were two opposite views expressed about the change of attitude in regard to the state. The first view, which is more common among the leaders of NGOs, focuses on the point that it is loyalty toward the state which is expressed through the activities of NGOs which try to deal with different problems in Latvia, and that many of these activities are for the benefit of the state. The other view, which generally dominated among the participants of the survey, is dissatisfaction with the state and the fact that NGOs have to carry out those functions which should be performed by the state.

Among the holders of the first view, it was said that you cannot blame the government and that inhabitants themselves have to be active and have to deal with problems:

*- I will never blame the government. There is no such country in which citizens are faultless. (Leader of an NGO)*

Some of the participants of the survey are aware of their organization as a part of the state and as a certain force which can affect events, and they stressed the positive role of non-governmental organizations, which prevent the elite from simply manipulating people:

*- Initially, we united to reach quite narrow goals. After three years of activities, I understand that this has been our contribution to the creation of a democratic society and that we ourselves can build our country and prevent manipulation with us. We can affect the people's choice in the election of Saeima. The political forces will have to understand that we are not just soft words but a real power. We are the citizens who build the state. (Leader of an NGO)*

Some of the participants said that they cannot understand at all that members of non-governmental organizations, citizens of Latvia could hold negative attitudes toward the state as such, and they pointed out that it is necessary to draw distinction between the state as such and the people who hold power: Saeima, Government, civil servants:

*- If you are a citizen of this country or if you live here and are loyal toward the state, I do not understand how can you have bad thoughts about this country. And you should not mix up two things – the attitude toward the state and the attitude toward the parliament and the civil servants. If you are loyal to your country, if you work for it, you cannot be indifferent to this country. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

On the other hand, there were very negative evaluations of the existing Saeima and the state, especially about the way in which different social issues are solved during the transitional period:

*- There was a very faithful period. But I have a very bad opinion about the existing Saeima, it could not even be worse. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

*- Why should we be positive about the state, if it does destroy everything, if it destroys pensioners? (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

*- We should speak more about the policies of the state. It has been delivered, advised, accounts presented, but at the same time the situation of families deteriorates according to all indicators, and these policies are very ineffective. I understand that this is transitional period, but it should be done otherwise. Nobody is concerned about the situation of children. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

As NGOs' members acquire experience in the activities of NGOs, they also gain understanding about the work of authorities and its shortcomings, which they did not possess before:

*- Since I joined in, I came to see more shortcomings both of the state as well as people. As long as you stay at home, you do not see anything, do not know anything, but as you get out, you... (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

*- As a representative of a non-governmental organization, I have information about the processes available. I am thankful for it. (Leader of an NGO)*

On the whole, the attitude toward the state is negative, this negative attitude being focused on civil servants, associating the state with those who hold the power:

*- Negative. Those people do not wish to understand the other person, they do not represent the interests of the state. They represent only themselves – the civil servants. (Leader of an NGO)*

*- I would agree what was said about the negative experience. There is so much of incompetence and lack of professionalism in state authorities. Unfortunately, this experience is negative. (Leader of an NGO)*

Several members of non-governmental organizations expressed their indignation about the fact that NGOs have to perform those functions which the state has failed to carry out:

*- Our state fails in many things. Those organizations which have grown larger and have developed more, have taken up the functions of the state. (Leader of an NGO)*

The participants of the survey were dissatisfied with the situation that, on the one hand, it is advantageous to the state that the non-governmental sector develops, since it means that people get educated and those problems are solved which the state is unable to deal with, but, on the other hand, the state does not sufficiently support non-governmental organizations and their work, shows no interest in developing the non-governmental sector:

*- The more organizations, the better it is for the state, since there are more people who are competent in each particular issue. (Leader of an NGO)*

*- Non-governmental organizations are, in fact, similar to expert groups. The state should be interested to attract possibly more such non-governmental organizations. (Leader of an NGO)*

*- We are experts. And, in many cases, we are better than those who have studied it. The state structure should acknowledge that we are better specialists on many issues. (Leader of an NGO)*

There were also such respondents, however, who said that not only the government should be blamed, because it was elected by the people themselves:

*- People are negative about the government. But, on the other hand, who elected the government? No gnomes, in any case. We did. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

Speaking about the state, participants of the survey also discussed possible influences by NGOs on the state and acknowledged that the network of non-governmental organizations is not yet sufficiently developed to be able to affect the decisions of the state, and that it is, to a large extent, the duty of non-governmental organizations themselves – to further develop the non-governmental sector which is currently yet too weak to affect the adoption of decisions by Saeima and the government:

*- We have to be aware that the third sector, the non-governmental organizations, are not yet sufficiently strong. However, if we work in a consistent manner and are united, then we will develop and become a very strong sector which will be able to influence*

*state structures. I will be a difficult way but we have started on it. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

*- We, as members of non-governmental organizations, have to take this problem (the low level of education and political culture) upon ourselves. We have to educate people, to direct the change of opinions. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

On the whole, both leaders as well as common members of NGOs acknowledged that non-governmental organizations have to improve their work, have to develop themselves and work much to achieve improvements, also by searching opportunities to cooperate with the authorities:

*- We have much to do ourselves. Until now, we do not know how to write projects. (Leader of an NGO)*

*- It seems that we all say now that we did not expect our state to have such an enormous bureaucracy. We have to unite in associations, societies. We have to look for people who share our views among the deputies, as we have done it in the last years. (Leader of an NGO)*

*- I have always stressed that we are partners with the state. If we have dialogue, we will have future. (Leader of an NGO)*

If we summarize the attitudes toward the state, we can conclude that many NGOs' members have had negative experiences when trying to cooperate or looking for contacts with state officials, therefore they have formed negative opinions about the state in general. However, several participants of the survey pointed out that the state as such and civil servants, who are often non-professionals and are not interested in solving problems, should be separated. Some NGOs' members have rather constructive attitudes toward the state, the state power, saying that non-governmental organizations have much to improve in their work, so that they could positively affect the work of state authorities.

### ***Attitudes Toward Processes in Latvia and the Future of Latvia***

Speaking about the processes currently underway in Latvia, participants of the survey noted that they, through their activities in non-governmental organizations, are themselves taking part in the processes going on in Latvia and thus have an effect on these processes, and that this is the task of NGOs:

*- Our organizations give the people what is most necessary – they prompt them to think, to take part in and to influence these processes, instead of standing apart and waiting that somebody else will act. Nobody else will work in your place, but if they will, it will not be in your interests. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

Thus, for example, non-governmental organizations are involved in the movement towards the European Union, which means that they exchange experiences and thus acquire new knowledge from other countries:

- *One of these processes, encountered by NGOs, is the movement towards the European Union. On the one hand, people do not believe. On the other hand, we have positive experiences from establishing partnerships and come to know much from other countries. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

Most of the participants of the survey are future-oriented in their ideas and activities and try to secure better future through their activities in NGOs. They even compared their work with that of missionaries:

- *This is our contribution, that we are here and work without remuneration. This is our contribution to the future. (Leader of an NGO)*

- *To a certain extent, all of us have thought about the future of Latvia when we started to work. We have had this attitude, and have turned this attitude into concrete activities. (Leader of an NGO)*

- *In principle, my work is intended to help my state, my people to get upwards. Through my knowledge, my work. This is my leading motive, my vision which I try to achieve. I know that about 99% of those who work in non-governmental organizations are fanatics. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

- *I think that this is such a historic period when those who work in NGOs could be regarded as missionaries or, as we call them, New Latvians. And they just go and do this work. One person cannot change the world, but the more such people are, the more they can do. I believe we do not have any other country to go, we only have this one Latvia. It is the duty of everybody who lives here – to raise the welfare of the country. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

The attitudes of members of non-governmental organizations toward the future of Latvia can be regarded as positive, opinions are optimistic on the whole: they spoke about the future as of something bright, in contrast to the rather gloomy reality. Participants of the survey hope that the relations between NGOs and the state and local governments will become better in the future, that the role of NGOs in society will increase:

- *Everything develops. I believe in my soul that non-governmental organizations will be able to influence the state and local governments more and more. We have the chance to do something, to change something. Maybe I am overly optimistic. But I believe that there will be balance achieved. (Leader of an NGO)*

- *I am also involved in all these commissions and believe that these proposals will improve the situation. If I did not have this thought I would have left everything since long and got away. It is clear that people are necessary, organizations which could influence the state policies. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

- *I believe in better future but not in fast results. I think that all of us sitting here believe in a better future, otherwise we would not be working here. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

Many participants of the survey link all their thoughts about future with children, believing that education and raising of children are the main things to care for:

- *I believe that our future is children. And if there is no serious program in relation to children, then such country has no future at all. (Leader of an NGO)*

*- I think that help to children means help to the country and the people. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

It was also said that replacement of generations is necessary, and therefore special attention should be paid to training the young people:

*- The major task is to train our own people. To tell, train, render consultations, give knowledge about how to struggle, how to defend themselves. In this way we will educate the new politicians. It is our duty to train the new staff. The youths that we train will build the future. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

*- If we train the leaders of non-governmental organization, we will be able to extend our activities. These young leaders will change the situation in 2, 4, 6 years. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

Speaking about the future, people also turn back to the heritage from the past, stressing that they also have to change and improve themselves:

*- Many times, we are influenced by people who have preserved their thinking from Soviet times. Quite often, we have only ourselves to blame and do not have to look for somebody outside. If you find an enemy image, it is easier to mobilize people, but if you then lose that image, the activity slows down or you feel that there is nothing to fight for. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

Some participants of the survey said that there is lack of pride among people in Latvia about their own country and nationality and that special attention should be paid to this in schools:

*- I would like to have the future as in America: when Americans sing their anthem, they are proud and have tears in their eyes. At the beginning, we had a beautiful dream. But now we are not proud any more about being Latvians. The pride has disappeared somewhere. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

Others said that the state also think more about the education of the youth, and some were skeptical about the possibilities of the young people to improve the situation:

*- Without concrete state policies targeted toward gaining more such people nothing will be achieved soon. There is a need for more and more people who believe in these changes, who could promote changes. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

*- Nothing will happen on its own. This generation, which grows up now, is already corrupt, they only think about how to steal something from the state, how to get something somewhere. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

On the whole, most participants of the survey said that they themselves are involved in the processes going on in Latvia, and although they are dissatisfied with these processes how they proceed today, they have much hopes about the future, in the name of which they have joined NGOs and contribute all their time and knowledge for it. Much attention is being paid to the youth and children who are the future of Latvia, and therefore, according to the participants of the survey, much work and attention must be focused on the growing young generation. Special attention must be paid to education of patriotism and moral standards, and the role of non-governmental organizations in the country must be increased.

### ***Changes in Personal Life After Joining NGOs***

Speaking about changes in life after joining NGOs, both positive as well as negative changes were mentioned. Among the negative changes, respondents mentioned lack of time, saying that time was often taken away from the family:

- *The more you involve in public activities the less you are at home, and so you take away much from the family. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*
- *You try to get something for society, but you take it away from the family. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*
- *Very few time is left for other things. (Leader of an NGO)*

During the discussions, the lack of time was also linked to the lack of money, since no profit is gained from activities in non-governmental organizations:

- *There is less and less time, children ask for money more and more, I am at home less often. There is not enough money. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

It was also said that public activities and lack of time are obstacles for having more children, it especially pertains to the family life of women:

- *When I wanted to marry, I had to choose between my work in the NGO and children. This is the tragedy of many active women. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

Other people said that they would probably have developed their own business, had they not joined non-governmental organizations:

- *You often think that you could gone into business, have you not been involved in public activities. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*
- *Those who engage in public activities miss so many business opportunities, when they could have established useful contacts. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

However, many positive changes, linked to the involvement in the work of non-governmental organizations, were also mentioned. The positive aspects, mentioned more often, included opportunities to meet interesting people, wider contacts, public attention:

- *There are also many positive things – I meet interesting people. (Leader of an NGO)*
- *Much wider contacts. I have gained public recognition which I also value. (Leader of an NGO)*

A tendency can be observed that the more active a person is the wider contacts he or she acquires, and there are also new duties and responsibility:

- *For myself, this activity resulted in myself, as an activist, being elected the trade union leader at my workplace. This was one more such public duty. Thus, these activities and contacts sum up. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*
- *We have now meetings with people and responsibility. Nice changes, of course. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

Other positive aspects, mentioned as gains through NGOs' activities, were knowledge and experience:

- *My life changed by 100%. I learned English, to work on computer, and finished courses... (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

There were positive responses about opportunities of an active life style related to work in NGOs:

- *Since I joined the non-governmental organization, I have improved my health, since movement means life. (Leader of an NGO)*
- *I have an absolutely different life rhythm now. Much more active. (Leader of an NGO)*

The activities in NGOs also render self-confidence to people, faith in themselves and in their work, as well as satisfaction and joy because they can help others, and the activities also give them a sense of purpose:

- *These activities are good. They create faith in yourself. You learn to stand strong in your position, not allowing anyone to change your views. (Leader of an NGO)*
- *I have developed the ability to mobilize myself, to arrange and plan my life. (Leader of an NGO)*
- *What has changed is only that you see the aim to help others who are worse off than yourself. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

While speaking about the influence of activities in NGOs, participants of the survey mainly assessed their own lives, but they also mentioned the invaluable positive influence of NGOs on young people, since NGOs give many opportunities to acquire necessary skills and abilities thus preparing them for their future life and helping to find jobs:

- *Organizations help their members to find jobs, to improve themselves. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

Furthermore, what is not less significant, the work in NGOs develops personality, the system of values, it raises confidence, gives a sense of freedom:

- *People become more purposeful, since they perceive themselves as personalities. In our meetings, people learn to speak in a manner that deputies and ministers could learn from them. (Leader of an NGO)*
- *They become internally more free. They acquire freedom. Therefore I see the future, since there are enormous potentials in all organizations to change something. (Leader of an NGO)*
- *Self-esteem grows, and values, too. (Leader of an NGO)*

On the whole, we can conclude that activities in non-governmental organizations substantially increase responsibilities, load and busyness of the people who are involved in them. Therefore, these people have less time to spend on their personal lives, families and business interests. At the same time, the work in NGOs widens contacts, allows to meet interesting people, organizes and mobilizes people for certain activities, gives them specific experiences and knowledge, and increases their self-confidence and determination.

### ***Factors Impeding Participation***

Members of both groups unanimously agreed that there are too few non-governmental organizations and that this sector should be extended:

- *There are much too few of them. There should be more. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*
- *I think, there are too few of them. There should be at least twice as many. (Leader of an NGO)*

Noteworthy that, in the perception of the participants of the survey themselves, the number of NGOs' members seems to be much higher than it actually is. Contacting other NGOs' members have created the feeling in them that some 20%-50% of inhabitants have been involved in the sector of NGOs:

- *So few, really? I rather thought that it was a half of all the people. (Leader of an NGO)*
- *I think it is more than 5%... Somehow I feel about 20% could be involved in Riga. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

Speaking about the obstacles impeding involvement in the activities of non-governmental organizations, lack of funds was mentioned. The financial difficulties in the country have led to a situation when people donate their own, already meager, means to create, develop and provide for activities of non-governmental organizations. This situation is dramatic, since it allows only those socially active people to involve in non-governmental organizations who are convinced that public activities, which are carried out without remuneration, are necessary and significant to build the future of the country:

- *Apparently, all of us have public temperament, which helps us to work. (Leader of an NGO)*
- *We have to acknowledge that the situation is difficult. We work outside our working hours. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*
- *The current economic situation prevents many people from involving. They have two or three jobs, just to survive. Only fanatics, who can sustain it, can work in NGOs. (Leader of an NGO)*
- *You feel overworked and think that you should rather abandon all these ideals. But then the question arises: who will do all that? (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

In the current situation, people mostly struggle to meet their primary needs and do not much think about society as a whole. In the opinion of the participants of the survey, the situation will change when a middle class appears in society with stable incomes. The people from this class will be able to spend their time in improving society:

- *These are social and economic problems since you will not look any further before you feed the family. When you have stable incomes, a normal job, normal salary, then you will start to think about working for society. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*
- *The poverty of the people is the obstacle. Before a middle class is formed in Latvia, these activities will be insufficient. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

The hard economic conditions not only impede the development of NGOs in the sense that many people are prevented by them from activities in non-governmental organizations, but also that these conditions threaten the very existence of these organizations. Many members of NGOs acknowledged – if an organization does not learn to attract funds or make some profit, it will not be able to exist and carry on its activities:

- *Money is the major obstacle. Those, who have not learned to find money, do not have it. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*
- *If there is no money, there will be no development. The organization must have some way to make money. It must proceed slowly, decisively, to help those who have no money. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*
- *Financial problems. We do not have the hot-line any more which helped so many. It is so humiliating to go and ask for money, I cannot overcome myself. (Leader of an NGO)*

In the group of NGOs' members, lack of human resources was mentioned as the cause why people do not involve in public activities. The historic experience has affected society, and therefore only few people have developed leadership skills, self-initiative, a creative, active approach to problem-solving, which is so necessary in the activities of NGOs:

- *Organizations do not have the ability to find leaders and have not yet learned to convince these leaders. When a person walks into my office, I see it at once whether he has the leadership talent or not. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*
- *As soon as it comes to taking up initiative and doing something, it comes to nothing and the man goes away. He better walks around the streets or watches television. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*
- *There are few people who are ready to do something on their own. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

In the opinion of many participants of the survey, the situation is made worse by the reserved and closed type of character, typical for the Latvian mentality, which does not promote association in organizations:

- *Latvians are unsociable. They are not so communicative, open as people of other nationalities. They try to resolve their problems on their own. (Leader of an NGO)*
- *Jews keep together, but we stay separate. This is our mistake. (Leader of an NGO)*

Furthermore, people are not sufficiently informed about non-governmental organizations, and they do not have the knowledge necessary to lead and organize their activities under conditions of the market economy. The members of NGOs themselves acknowledged quite often that many opportunities have been lost because of lack of knowledge. This can lead to distrust in their own abilities, and people can start to doubt that they can actually influence the on-going processes:

- *Lack of information, lack of confidence, too. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*
- *Another obstacle is lack of education. We are unable to use all the existing opportunities. We are critical about what we do not know. And lack of information, too. (Leader of an NGO)*

Speaking about obstacles which impede the activities of the sector of NGOs, the leaders of NGOs mentioned also the following factors – in addition to the lack of personal motivation and mentality of the Latvian people, referred to by the rank-and-file members of NGOs: general causes related to non-existence of national programs, the economic situation and public media. Thus, for example, the leaders of NGOs said that it is very necessary to feel the support of the state. It was often said that, ironically, foreign institutions and international foundations seem to be more interested than local authorities:

- *The attitude of the state and financial problems are impeding factors. We have strong regional branches, but we cannot work together since we do not have communication facilities. We would need moral and financial support of the state. (Leader of an NGO)*
- *The state has no programs, for example, what to do about handicapped people. And non-governmental organizations should have their place in such a program, for the activities to be more constructive. (Leader of an NGO)*
- *It seems sometimes that foreigners are more interested in what happens here than we ourselves. This is surprising. When we organize events, it is easier to get money from foreign institutions than from local ones. (Leader of an NGO)*

Insufficient interest by the public media in the activities of non-governmental organizations is also an impeding factor, and this lack of interest hinders focusing the public attention on those problems which non-governmental organizations try to solve:

- *Insufficient attention by the public media. Very meager information in public media. (Leader of an NGO)*
- *It is especially hard to get into television. (Leader of an NGO)*

There were also such participants of the survey who think that the existing situation in the sector of NGOs is quite normal. They said that the formation and development of non-governmental organizations is a gradual process which has started in Latvia and develops comprehensively:

- *I think it is normal. If we remember what was eight years ago, we can say that the process has started. I believe that this process is going on quite normally in Latvia, people below are in motion. (Rank-and-file member of a NGO)*

If we summarize what was said above, we can conclude that both members as well as leaders of non-governmental organizations think that the difficult economic conditions is the main

obstacle impeding the development of NGOs. People think about how to get their means of living, about how to meet the basic needs of their families, and this keeps them away from involvement in public activities from which they get no remuneration. It was said that involvement in non-governmental organizations will be sufficient only when a middle class appears in society with stable, sufficient incomes, who will be able to spend their time in working for society.

People also mentioned lack of interest on the part of the state, absence of national programs on certain issues, lack of productive cooperation with public media as obstacles impeding involvement in non-governmental public activities.

There was also a group of obstacles discussed related to the fact that people are not prepared for public activities. They lack information and education about the activities of non-governmental organizations, people do not have the necessary features of character, such as responsibility, enterprise, self-initiative, etc.; and the particular features of the Latvian character, such as reticence, individualism, and similar, also prevent them from associating and uniting with others.

### ***Summary***

The people who involve in the activities of non-governmental organizations are socially active people, endowed with “public temperament”. Quite often, the cause for participation in a non-governmental organization is a sense of mission when, according to the expressions of participants of the survey, they feel responsibility, duty or simply the ability to deal with their own and other people’s problems, the ability to improve the environment.

Another factor, which stimulated people to involve in public activities, is the principle of solidarity – the wish to help people with similar problems. Also, the need for people who share the same ideas and for moral support as well as devotion and possibility to spend one’s time in an interesting manner are among the stimuli for involvement in non-governmental organizations.

Most of the people who took part in the survey said that their beliefs have not substantially changed during the time they participated in public activities – they have remained basically the same as before their involvement in public activities. The most important gain, according to all the participants, is experience. They have substantially increased their knowledge about the existing situation, have acquired understanding of the role of non-governmental organizations in society, have got stimulation for self-improvement, and have developed such features of character as self-confidence and stability. And this, in turn, allowed their existing views to further develop and become perfected.

Involvement in non-governmental organizations has affected people in such a way that – through their work and contacts with other people – they have acquired better understanding of and therefore tolerance against the surrounding people. The following correlation can be

observed: the more open an organization is and the more the work of the organization is related to contacts with people, rendering of help, the greater is tolerance towards people with other views. The attitude towards people with different views is less tolerant in cases when the organization is rather closed in itself and when there are internal conflicts in it because of divergence in views.

Speaking about changes in personal life, occurring after the involvement in NGOs, both positive as well as negative changes were mentioned. When people involve actively in the work of non-governmental organizations, their responsibility, busyness and work load grow. Therefore these people have less time to spend on their personal lives, families as well as business interests. This is the negative aspect of the work in non-governmental organizations. Among the positive changes, people mentioned increased contact networks, opportunities to meet interesting people, organizing people and mobilizing them for certain activities, acquiring specific experience and knowledge, as well as increased self-confidence and determination.

Likewise, involvement in non-governmental organizations has improved the understanding of the participants of the survey of the role and significance of public organizations and the possibilities to affect the situation.

Speaking about those processes which are currently underway in Latvia, the participants of the survey noted that they are better informed about them than the rest of society, therefore they believe that the involvement in these processes, shaping of them, as well as explanation and popularization among wider public is the task of non-governmental organizations.

The participants of the survey had a rather weak identification with their nearest surroundings, their place of residence, neighborhood. This could be explained by the Soviet-time city development policies and artificial mixing up of the population. Only separate participants of the survey noted that all those who involve in public work have a certain understanding of local life, that this is one of preconditions for involvement in non-governmental organizations.

If we analyze the attitude towards the state, there are mainly two tendencies. The first is that many members of NGOs have had negative experiences when trying to cooperate or establish contacts with civil servants, therefore they have formed a negative attitude towards the state in general. They also have negative assessments of many programs implemented by the state and do not understand why the state is not interested in the development of the non-governmental sector. However, several participants of the survey noted that there is a difference between the state as such and state authorities and civil servants who are often non-professionals and are not interested in real problem-solving. The second tendency is that other members of NGOs have a rather constructive attitude towards the state, the state power, believing that non-governmental organizations have to significantly improve their work to acquire a positive ability to influence the work of state authorities, to supplement it in those fields where there are certain shortcomings.

Both members as well as leaders of NGOs believe that the hard economic conditions are the major obstacle for the development of the sector of NGOs. In the existing situation, people mostly struggle to meet their primary needs and do not much think about society as a whole. In the opinion of the participants of the survey, the situation will change when a middle class appears in society with stable incomes. The people from this class will be able to spend their time in improving society.

Speaking about hindering conditions, people mentioned the lack of interest on the part of the state, absence of any national programs to deal with certain issues, non-existence of productive cooperation with public media. It was noted therefore that moral support of the state, its readiness to cooperate with non-governmental organizations and popularization of the sector of NGOs through public media could serve as appropriate factors promoting the development of non-governmental organizations in Latvia.

The development of non-governmental organizations is also impeded by the fact that people themselves are not ready for public activities, they are not sufficiently informed about the tasks and role of non-governmental organizations, there are not enough people who could act as leaders, which reflects the need of the whole society in responsible, daring people endowed with self-initiative. Therefore, in addition to the tasks mentioned above, non-governmental organizations have to carry out training and preparation of future members and leaders of these organizations who could also promote cooperation between the state and non-governmental organizations in the future.

The attitude of members of non-governmental organizations towards the Latvian future can be assessed as positive – optimistic. Participants of the survey said that they are motivated by hopes in a more affluent Latvia, in which many things would be in a better shape, and that this vision prompts them to spend their time and knowledge for it. Most of participants of the survey link the thoughts about the future of Latvia with children, their raising and education. They think that special attention should be paid to the education of patriotism and moral standards, and that the role of non-governmental organizations in the country should be increased.



### **3. Major Conclusions (Brigita Zepa)**

Participation of inhabitants is considerably lower as compared with the time of “Awakening”, but while the activities of the “Awakening” period could be regarded as an extraordinary situation when the people of Latvia struggled to regain national independence, the current participation levels can rather be explained by the specific features of a transitional-type society.

Upon summarizing the results reached in different surveys, we can conclude that the hypotheses proposed were confirmed.

First of all, it is the low welfare level in society which demands so much energies and time from the people just to maintain their families, therefore participation in public activities is prevented by pragmatic considerations which require people to prefer those activities which render some financial gains. At the same time, the conditions of the market economy open new opportunities of economic activities which lead to increasing one’s welfare level, pursue career, achievements and individualism as a value. Dominating in society is orientation toward materialistic values: raising one’s level of material well-being, increased sense of security, which is a direct consequence to the unsatisfied needs of inhabitants. In a transitional society, orientation toward social values (participation in passing national decisions, participation in problem solving at workplace and in the neighborhood, progress toward a more humane society, freedom of speech) is very weak, and it is notably more pronounced among younger people. It can be regarded as a symptom that (following the logic of R. Inglehart) the part of society which is freer from the everyday material burdens is more open to social values, and that participation of the younger generations could grow, especially in new forms of participation.

The results of the study, especially the comparison between the results of surveys carried out in Latvia with those in countries with different experience in democracy, allowed the conclusion that, in a transitional society, there is pronounced lack of positive experience and lowered self-evaluation which significantly prevents people from involvement in different political and social activities.

Likewise, in group discussions with members of NGOs, similar impeding factors were found out which can be generally regarded as consequences to the lack of financial and human resources as well as insufficient support by public media and the state:

- the low standard of living prevents people from public activities, since they are engaged in providing for their primary needs; according to the participants of the survey, a larger number of people will take up public activities when a middle class develops in society;
- lack of human resources (education, self-initiative, leadership, creative and active approach) prevents people from involvement;

- lack of information in society, inability of media to inform the public about the sector of NGOs;
- lack of support from the state.

At the same time, the results of focus group discussions showed that participation in NGOs give people new experience, knowledge, skills, it raises their self-confidence, faith in their abilities to change something, to benefit society, and all this promotes a positive outlook on the future. This proves that the same correlation can be observed in Latvia as a transitional-type country which has been confirmed by so many other studies throughout the world: participation in NGOs increases personal responsibility, destroys delimitation of individual and public sphere typical for totalitarian societies, and strengthens civic virtues in society.

It was established in the New Baltic Barometer survey (Rose, 1997) that NGOs promote trust in state authorities. Group discussions rendered more detailed results on this issue: members of NGOs are often dissatisfied with the functioning of state authorities, with activities of civil servants. At the same time, many members of NGOs expressed constructive attitudes toward the state, stressing that non-governmental organizations must further develop to be able to have positive influence on the state and to provide added value in those fields where there are shortcomings in the functioning of state authorities. The critical attitudes of NGOs' members differ from those of common people, since the latter are critical about the state because of their dissatisfaction with their own economic situation, while members of NGOs criticize the state, first, for its inability to deal with social issues and, second, for absence of interest in non-governmental organizations, while the latter partially perform the functions of the state and help to solve those problems which the state is unable to tackle with. Although non-governmental organizations are only slightly aware of their potential to control the state power, this potential certainly exists, and it can be expected that NGOs will gain more power over state authorities in the future.

As a result of the survey, it was also possible to establish the effect of participation in NGOs on the understanding of democratic values: members of NGOs are more confident about their political efficacy, they have higher opinion about the role of cooperation in achieving their aims, and they are more reserved, as compared with other inhabitants, about the role of a strong leader in society. On the whole, it can be said that democratic values are closer to and more understandable for members of NGOs as compared with other people, which means that these organizations play a crucial role in democratization of society. These findings were confirmed and supplemented by group discussions with members and leaders of NGOs, which showed that:

- having an extended range of social contacts, members of NGOs have acquired information about many people with different habits, destinies, which has generally created tolerance in them toward other people, tolerance toward different views, conviction about the value of mutual respect in inter-personal relationships;

- participation in NGOs has deepened their understanding of social processes, has created notions about the place and role of non-governmental organizations in society, about their possibilities to influence the existing situation;
- participation in NGOs has raised self-confidence, faith in their ability to achieve certain goals through cooperation, has created a feeling of freedom, optimistic outlook on the future;
- participation in NGOs has created new, democratic-style working skills, for example, democratic problem-solving: the ability to discuss issues, to prove one's point by reasonable arguments, to be tolerant toward the views of others; participation has facilitated learning of practical skills which have, in turn, helped them to solve other problems, for example, to find a job;
- participation in NGOs has widened the range of social contacts which have led both to new responsibilities as well as new opportunities.

The findings confirm that NGOs create the conditions necessary for a democratic society: they contribute to the stability of democratic values and pluralism, they develop individual potentials – intellectual as well as social; participation in NGOs serves as a mobilizing tool for public interests. Involvement in NGOs also promotes other types of political participation. At the same time, we should stress that only about 5% of Latvian inhabitants are today involved in NGOs.

The problem of integration of minorities in society is very topical in Latvia now, since Russians, the largest minority, make up one third of all Latvian inhabitants. According to the results of the study, “Toward a Civic Society”, carried out by the Baltic Data House (1998), there are active inter-personal contacts between Latvians and minorities (90% of the people from minorities have relatives and/or friends among Latvians), while communication on group level, including NGOs, is impeded by the fact that 60% of the people from minorities do not know the Latvian language. (Toward a Civic Society, 1998). Because of this factor, NGOs are unable to fully realize their potential in integrating the Latvian society.

According to the results of studies, political participation in Latvia is now considerably weaker than in countries with long-term democratic experience. At the same time, we should stress that values are rapidly changing in society, especially among younger people who tend to give higher ratings to social values. This could be a factor facilitating participation in the future.

It is very important that the results of the study would be made widely known to the general public, so that people would become aware of the positive participation experience of members of NGOs, which would facilitate understanding among the public about the potentials of political participation, the potentials of NGOs, would induce people to political participation. Not only the general public but especially public media should learn about the positive experiences of NGOs so that they could deliberately contribute to the formation of

public opinions in this direction. Representatives of state authorities (both on governmental as well as local government levels) should also be acquainted with the results of the study, to make cooperation between them and NGOs more productive.

## Appendix 1: Tables and Figures

*Table 1. Non-governmental organizations registered in Latvia (1995.-1997.)*

Organizations	March, 1995	July, 1996	April, 1997	January, 1999
Public and religious	984	1534	1849	2408
Open public funds	185	274	318	538
Sports	412	603	697	859
Trade unions	95	109	113	117
Total	1676	2520	2864	3922

Source: Latvia. Human Development Report, 1995. UNDP, Riga. UNDP, Development of Civic society "DRAFT, Unpublished data, 1996; Plato, Diena, 1997, April 18. Ministry of Justice, 1997, 1999.

*Table 2. Political Participation in Latvia, 1988-1995*

(Percentage participating at least once during the given period)

	1988-1991			1991-1994			1995		
	All	Lat.	Other	All	Lat.	Other	All	Lat.	Other
Participation in election campaigns	38	44	31	24	30	18	19	19	19
Contacts (with Saeima deputies, local council members, media representatives)	48	56	40	20	28	12	28	36	19
Party membership	20	32	7	3	5	1	5	8	2
Social organization membership	54	52	56	42	48	37	20	26	12
Protest (participation in demonstrations, strikes, pickets, petition signing)	80	89	70	24	32	16	12	12	12

Source: Latvia. Human Development Report. 1996. UNDP, Riga.

*Table 3. Political Participation in Latvia, 1988-1991*

(Percentage voting at least once during the given period)

Election	Total population	Latvians	Other Groups
USSR Congress of People's Deputies, 1989	69	77	61
Local government, 1989	78	84	72
Latvian SSR Supreme Council, 1989-1990	80	88	72
Never voted	10	6	14

Table 4. Participation in Elections

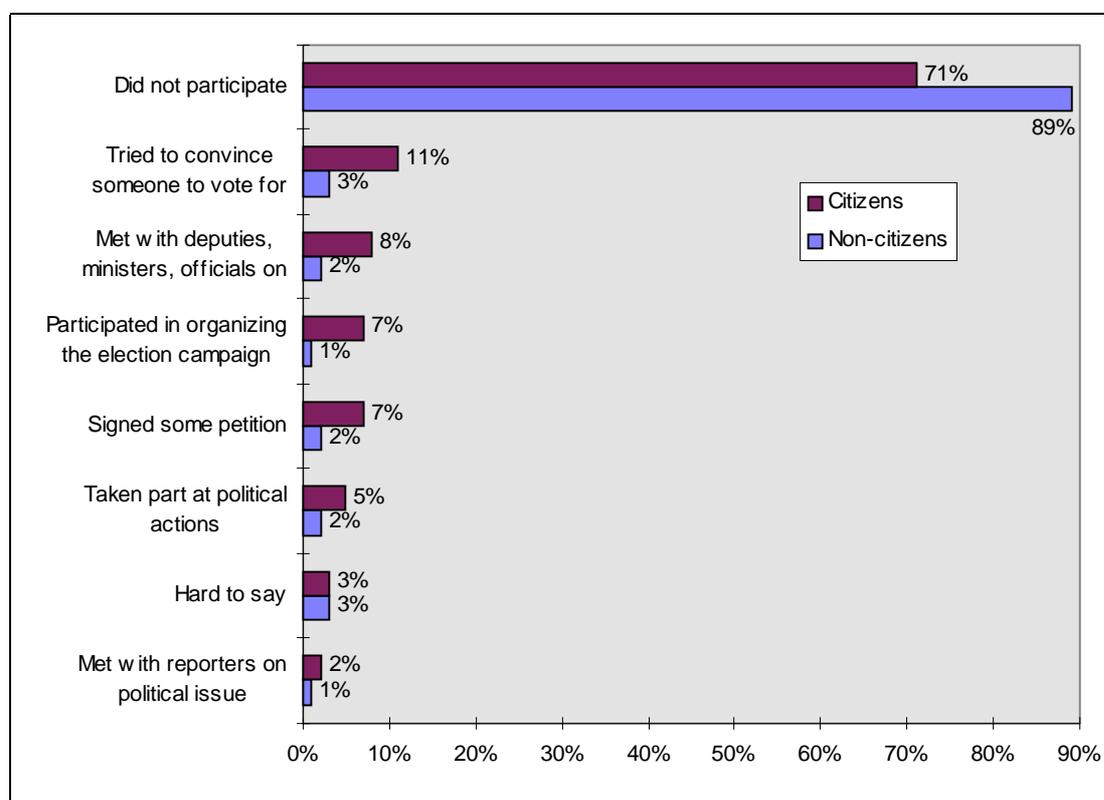
(Percentage of eligible voters voting)

Fifth Saeima election, 1993	89
Local government elections, 1994	63
Sixth Saeima election, 1995	72
Local government elections, 1997	54

Source: Latvia. Human Development Report. 1996. UNDP, Riga. "Diena" 25. marts, 1997.

Fig. 1. Political participation

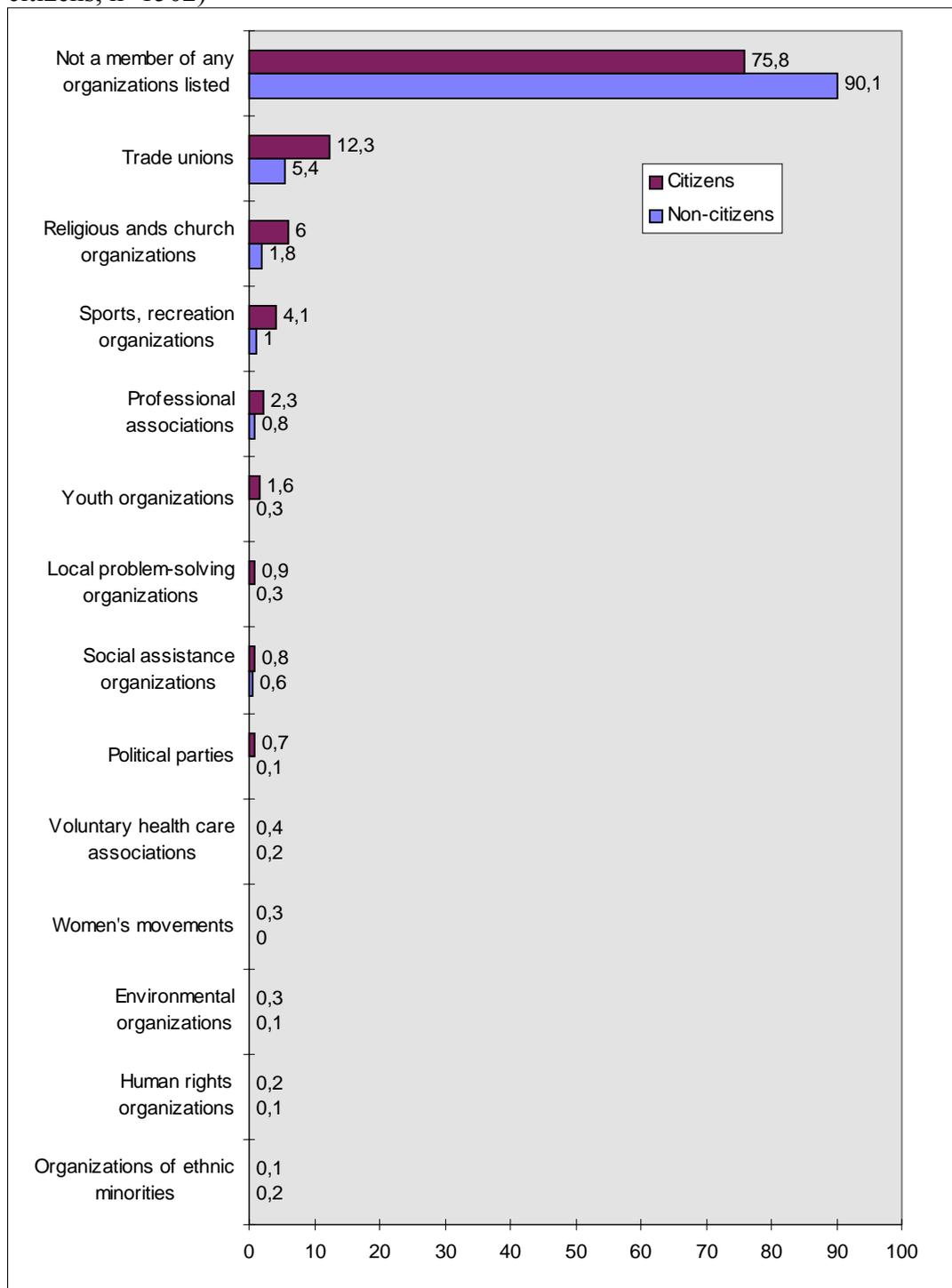
Within the last three years, have you done anything of what is mentioned in this card? (Mult response question; % of citizens, n=1507; % of non-citizens, n=1502)



Source: Baltic Data House, 1997 December.

*Fig. 2. Participation in organisations*

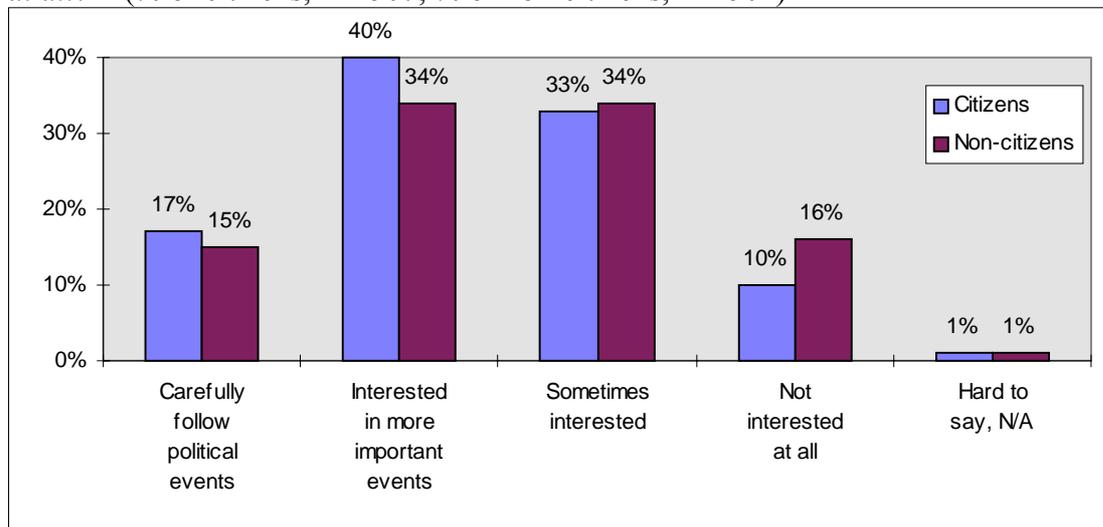
*Are you a member of the organisations listed below? (% of citizens, n=1507; % of non-citizens, n=1502)*



*Source: Baltic Data House, 1997 December*

Fig. 3. Interest about political events

*To what extent are you interested in politics: do you carefully follow political events, are you just interested in the more important events, are you sometimes interested or not interested at all? (% of citizens, n=1507; % of non-citizens, n=1502)*



Source: Baltic Data House, 1997 December.

Fig. 4. The aims of Latvia in the nearest 10 years

*In this card, several opinions are stated about what should be the aims of our country in the nearest 10 years. Which of them (one) do you regard as the most important aim? (% of citizens, n=1507; % of non-citizens, n=1502)*

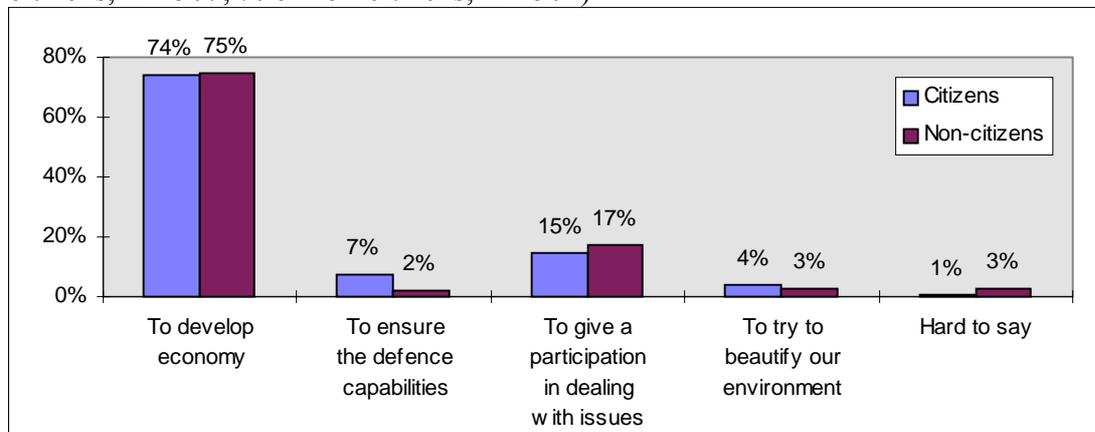


Fig. 5. Most important tasks of the State

*If you had to choose, what, in your opinion is the most important thing of what is mentioned in this card? (% of citizens, n=1507; % of non-citizens, n=1502)*

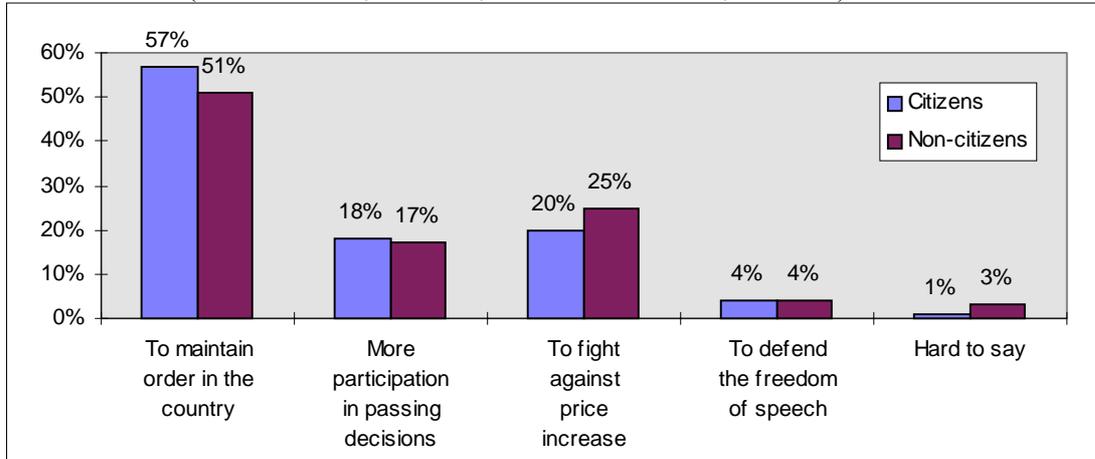
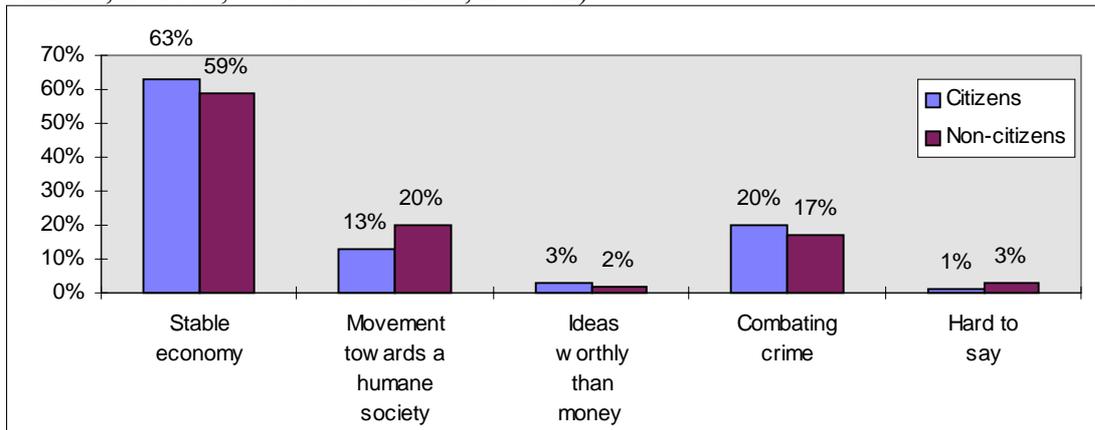


Fig. 6. Material and social values

*Another list. What, in your opinion is the most important of what is mentioned here? (% of citizens, n=1507; % of non-citizens, n=1502)*



## **Appendix 2: Discussion Plan**

### **Introduction**

*Aim: The necessary formalities according to ESOMAR regulations on social and market research.*

1. What we are and what we do

- We are in the Baltic Data House and you are participants in one of the group discussions organized to study the influence of non-governmental organizations on people.

2. “Rules of the game”

- We are interested in your ideas and opinions about these issues, therefore we ask you to express your personal views freely and without fear. Do not be afraid if your opinion is different from what other people say, because there are no correct and incorrect answers here.
- Please speak one at a time.
- If necessary, you can stop the moderator and ask him/her questions.

3. The necessity of recording / observation and guarantee of confidentiality

- The recording is being used to fix what is said here and to use it later to sum up the results in different groups.
- All that you say here will be used in the form of a summary, and your expressions will never appear together with your name.

### **Warming-up part of the discussion**

*Aim: To acquaint with respondents, to establish their social status. Unbinding the participants.*

Let us start by introducing each other, by giving our names. Please, tell briefly about yourself and the organization you represent.

age

profession

education

the NGO the person is involved

### **Discussion**

1. Why did you decide to join NGO?

2. Has the involvement in NGO changed your views?

In what way has it changed your views?

3. Has your involvement in NGO changed your attitude toward people with different views, life styles, destinies? In what way has it influenced your attitude toward these people? Maybe you can mention some examples from your life?

4. Has your involvement in NGO changed your attitude toward the events in your vicinity, residence, neighborhood? In what way has it changed your attitude? Do you understand now better the problems that exist in your area, neighborhood, etc.? Do you feel belonging to this area?

5. Has the involvement in NGO changed your attitude toward non-governmental organizations. In what way has it changed?

6. In what way has involvement in NGO changed your attitude toward the state?  
(The aim was to find out whether there is less alienation in their ideas as compared with the discussion of citizens / non-citizens, whether they feel more responsible and whether they have a more constructive attitude)

7. Has your involvement in NGO changed your attitude toward the processes going on in Latvia? In what way? Do you support these processes?  
In what way has the involvement in NGO changed your attitude toward the future of Latvia?

8. What has changed in your personal life since you were involved in NGO?  
Have you started public activities? What kind of activities?  
Have you changed your job? Why?  
Have you taken up any business activities? Why?  
Have you established new contacts? What kind of contacts?

9. If you think of other people involved in NGOs together with you, in your opinion, can the involvement in NGOs change people? In what way? Do their beliefs and attitudes change? Have they changed something in their lives (job, friends, etc.)?

10. As we know, about 5% of all the Latvian inhabitants participate in NGOs – do you regard it as sufficient, as too high, too low? Should the participation in NGOs be increased?

11. What, in your opinion, prevents people from taking part in NGOs? What aspects, in your opinion, impede the development of NGOs in Latvia?

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