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NON-GOVERNMENTAL  
ORGANIZATIONS –  
PARTNERS IN LOCAL  
DEVELOPMENT

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In 205



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## SUMMARY

Public involvement in municipal decision making is an essential element of effective public administration and provision of public services. The participation of different interest groups in the early planning stages makes it possible to incorporate compromises between conflicting interests early on in the decision-making process. Although Latvian legislation anticipates opportunities for public participation and a procedure for public involvement in territorial development planning, in reality public involvement is often a formal exercise. The public frequently lacks information about the effectiveness of participation and the procedures. In addition, administration officials often do not effectively stimulate public participation because, for understandable reasons, they are concerned about the efficiency of public activities.

According to lawmakers and development planning specialists, NGOs are among the main target groups that need to be involved in planning. In practice, however, public organizations often engage in negative participation in the form of protests against decisions that have already been taken and their consequences. The result is that, despite the formal procedures, the public can feel frustrated and the democratic process can be compromised.

The purpose of this study is to stimulate the effectiveness of NGO participation in the development planning process, at the same time avoiding sacrifice of the need for efficiency in public administration. So far, not much attention has been devoted in Latvia to studying the involvement of non-governmental organizations in planning, which would help local governments improve the public involvement process as such and the quality of planning documents.

The study:

- describes the system for municipal development and territorial planning in Latvia;
- evaluates local government capacity to involve the public and NGOs in planning;
- evaluates the role and capacity of non-governmental organizations in cooperating with local governments on development and territorial planning;

- appraises NGOs as local government partners in the planning process, describes existing cooperation and proposes new cooperation models.

The study also includes recommendations connected with:

- storage of planning documents in a publicly accessible manner;
- supervision of adherence to territorial plans;
- linkage between development programs and municipal budgets;
- improvement of local government and NGO capacity, and coordination of cooperation.

The results of the study show that, where NGO and local government cooperation in Latvia is concerned, there are three distinct areas that illustrate the opportunities of non-governmental organizations to take part in decision making:

- NGO activities, which act as a catalyst for an innovative planning process, frequently with the involvement of large parts of the community;
- NGO opinions, based on the experience that each NGO has acquired in its specific field;
- Participation in the implementation of plans, supervision of the work of local governments to ensure transparency.

The intended result is more informed decisions using NGO expertise in a timely manner, without sacrificing public sector efficiency.

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## INTRODUCTION

Municipal development planning concerns every person living in Latvia. The use of municipal territory, which is regulated by a plan, affects the quality of life and environment of everyone living in this territory. Development planning must set priorities for the improvement of living conditions in a municipality. Legislation that governs territorial development planning stipulates that the public must be informed about and involved in the planning process in order to improve the quality of the planning documents and the decisions taken on the basis of these documents.

It has been observed, however, that the public does not always understand its role in the planning process. It reacts only when a local government decision affects people's private property. The United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Human Development Report 2000/2001 shows that only about 6% of those questioned had taken part in public consultations or hearings on development plans for their city or township. 11% had attended any kind of public hearing event at all, and only 30% considered this form of public participation to be effective.<sup>1</sup> People do not generally believe that participation can change anything. This situation has a negative effect on people's trust in and support for the decisions taken by their local government. The planning documents of many local governments, especially the development programs, are criticized by the media and by professional special interest groups.

Territorial development planning affects the areas in which non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operate. Participation in non-governmental organizations gives many people self-confidence and the belief that it is possible to influence processes in order to improve the existing situation.<sup>2</sup>

Experience in other countries shows that when non-governmental organizations take the initiative, the public is more actively involved in the planning process, and people

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<sup>1</sup> Latvia: Human Development Report 2000/2001. UNDP. Riga (2001), p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Conditions for Enhancement of Civic Participation. Baltic Data House. Riga (1998).

more readily submit proposals and follow the decision-making process.<sup>3</sup> In Latvia, both public and nonprofit organizations have so far been considered NGOs. Their participation in decision making has not received much attention; there is an absence of information about concrete models of cooperation, their advantages, possible drawbacks and impact on decision making.

**The goal of this study** is to promote the effectiveness of NGO participation in the development planning process. Little research has been done in Latvia so far on whether and how involving non-governmental organizations in planning could help local governments to improve the public involvement process as such and the quality of planning documents. According to current legislation and to development planning theories, NGOs are among the main target groups for involvement in planning. In practice, however, negative participation can often be observed on the part of these organizations. NGOs frequently protest against decisions that have already been taken and against the effects of these decisions. At the same time, there are also many positive examples of cooperation.

#### **Objectives of the study:**

- **The first section of the study** describes the municipal development and territorial planning system in Latvia;
- **The second section of the study** assesses local government capacity for involving the public and NGOs in the planning process, and the role and capacity of NGOs in cooperating with local governments on development and territorial planning;
- **The third section of the study** assesses NGOs as local government partners in the planning process, describes current forms of cooperation and provides alternative cooperation models.

Public involvement at the local level (cities, counties, townships) was chosen as the object of the study because for many people local governments represent the closest and, therefore, the most familiar and comprehensible level of administration.<sup>4</sup> Territorial development plans have an immediate effect on the quality of life and the environment of the people living within a municipality; they are also important for the public organizations that contribute to social and economic development. In their efforts to involve the public, non-governmental organizations have been active in many different areas – environmental protection, territorial development, etc., but no complex studies

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<sup>3</sup> “Participate” campaign data (December 1999 – January 2000). European Environmental Bureau, Brussels.

<sup>4</sup> Latvia: Human Development Report 2000/2001. UNDP. Riga (2001), p. 115.



have been done on practical experience with public involvement at the local level and on possible alternative models for cooperation.

The success of a planning process is largely determined by local circumstances and different variables. This is why the study uses concrete examples to describe forms of cooperation, and the recommendations have been kept sufficiently general to permit a choice of alternatives that can be adapted to local circumstances.

## Methodology

The objective of the chosen methodology is to compile and evaluate possible models of cooperation that could be modified by local governments and non-governmental organizations and adapted to local capacities and needs.

At present, it is difficult to obtain statistical data on Latvia's non-governmental organizations and their activities, and there are not many studies on the subject. This is why the following qualitative methods have been applied in this study:

- **Partially structured in-depth interviews**,<sup>5</sup> to obtain comprehensive information from municipal planning experts and NGO representatives. Respondents were chosen on the basis of their previous experience with local government and NGO cooperation in projects that involved planning. The interviews were conducted from January 2002 to March 2003.
- **Qualitative content analysis of planning documents.** Municipal development programs, territorial plans and public hearing/consultation materials that were submitted to the Technical Archives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development in 2001 were analyzed. The documents were evaluated in categories such as public participation in the planning process, reflection of the work of public organizations in development planning documents, forms of NGO participation in the preparation of planning documents. When evaluating development programs, special attention was paid to the sections of these documents that deal with strategy.
- **Survey of municipal planning experts.** 46 municipal planning experts were randomly chosen from the list of territorial planning and building experts in the database of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development's Building Department. The survey showed the main trends in cooperation between planners and NGOs. The results of the survey substantiated the information obtained from the in-depth interviews.

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 6.

The study also made use of information obtained from legislation that regulates territorial and development planning, project proposals and reports on completed projects submitted by NGOs to their financial supporters, as well as press reviews and information obtained at international conferences and seminars.

Information about non-governmental organizations in Latvia was obtained from the statistical data supplied by the NGO Centre and from analysis of cases that illustrate NGO participation methods, their advantages and possible complications.

Since there are significant differences between municipalities in Latvia in regard to size, economic potential and social conditions, and since the amount of available statistical data was limited, the study was carried out using qualitative research methods. This methodology makes it possible to evaluate the specific character of the effect of NGO activities. NGO activities are usually connected with improvement of the quality of life in various ways and over a longer period of time, which is why the results of NGO activities cannot be fully evaluated using a quantitative research method.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Wainwright, Susan. "Measuring the Impact of the Voluntary Sector." Conference material, 2001. National Council for Voluntary Organisations. <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk> Last accessed on August 29, 2003.

See also: Wainwright, Susan. "Demonstrating the Voluntary Sector's Impact in the UK." Published on the [www.policy.lv](http://www.policy.lv) public policy website, June 10, 2003.

<http://www.policy.lv/index.php?id=102690&lang=en> Last accessed on June 11, 2003.

## 1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT AND TERRITORIAL PLANNING

This section looks into Latvia's municipal development and territorial planning system to evaluate opportunities for public participation in development and territorial planning processes. Planning principles and objectives are examined; the term "the public" is defined, as well as non-governmental organizations as part of the general public. The conclusion analyzes the opportunities for public participation that are provided by current legislation.

### 1.1. Why is development and territorial planning necessary?

**Development planning** at the municipal level is required so that, after analyzing the current situation and establishing local development priorities, a local government can outline a strategic development course, from which follow concrete activities and projects aimed at improving the quality of life in the municipality.

The objective of local government development programs is to analyze the current situation, define priorities, projects and activities with the aim of planning municipal development in a way that takes into account the economic and social conditions, and the principles for improvement of the quality of life. Ideally, decisions on matters connected with development, including the local government budget, should be based on the development plan or program, which provides information about the local government's priorities and available resources. Development programs or plans should be seen as guidelines, which are not directly binding for the local government.

**Territorial planning** objectives, according to the Law on Territorial Planning<sup>7</sup> and the Law on Regional Development,<sup>8</sup> are:

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<sup>7</sup> Law on Territorial Planning. *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, June 12, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Law on Regional Development. *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, April 9, 2002.

- to promote sustainable and balanced development by applying an effective territorial planning system and considering the specific characteristics and opportunities of the country as a whole and of individual parts of its territory;
- to ensure rational use of a territory by promoting economic development and protecting the environment in accordance with the long-term development priorities and plans set by the central or local government;
- to provide the grounds for binding building regulations that guarantee the rights of land owners and users to use and develop property in accordance with the conditions of the territorial plan.<sup>9</sup>

In accordance with the principles of partnership, transparency and coordination of interests that are anticipated by the law, in order to reach these goals it is necessary to involve the public in the planning process. Among the main target groups are non-governmental organizations because they represent the views of different segments of society and can contribute in various ways to achieving a balanced plan.

The Law on Territorial Planning specifies four planning levels: the national level, the regional level, the district level and the municipal level. A municipal territorial plan (city, county, township) is a planning document of which the parts that are binding are adopted as local government regulations. The detailed territorial plan is a city's, county's or township's planning document, which the local government adopts as binding regulations, and in which it details and explains the recommendations and requirements of the general plan and defines the boundaries of the territory to which these requirements apply.

Each local government is responsible for preparing its own territorial plan and development program. Planning is carried out in Latvia by local governments, either independently or together with private planning companies.

## 1.2. Conditions and principles of public participation

Public participation is based on two main concepts: 1) **Participation gives the public a better understanding of the decision-making process**<sup>10</sup> and of issues connected with

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<sup>9</sup> Marana, I. Metodiskie norādījumi "Par sabiedrības līdzdalību un iesaisti teritoriju plānojumā izstrādē [Methods for public participation and involvement in territorial planning]." Commissioned by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. Riga (1998).

<sup>10</sup> The preparation and adoption of planning documents should be seen as part of the decision-making process.

this process. 2) The public hearings/consultations that take place at the drafting stage of a project have **three main goals**:

- 1) **to obtain information that will contribute to making a well-reasoned and fair decision;**
- 2) **to involve the public in the decision-making process,** which will ensure transparency of the process;
- 3) **to coordinate public interests with private interests.**

When a territorial plan is drafted, rules are established for the development of this territory. The plan lays down the conditions that must be observed when making decisions on how a territory is to be used in the future. When deciding whether or not building should be allowed on a piece of land, the local government is bound by the territorial plan that it has approved and adopted in accordance with the law. A territorial plan is based on the principles that have been established in the development program for a concrete territory.

This means that both the territorial development program and the plan affect all future local government decisions regarding the quality of life of the people living in its administrative territory. The territorial plan also directly affects private property – the value of the property and the ways in which it may be exploited, for example, whether or not building is permitted.

### **The procedure for public involvement and the limits of public participation**

The extent to which and the way in which the public can influence decision making is determined by legislation, which will be described in greater detail in the following sections. Appendix 2 provides a general overview of the procedure for public participation in territorial planning, as anticipated by the law.

**Public participation in the planning process cannot be unlimited. The local government has the right to set requirements for the way in which proposals may be submitted, in order to make sure that work is carried out effectively.** If the person who submits a proposal wishes to receive a written reply, these requirements must be observed. The local government may dismiss all manner of objections and proposals if procedure and deadline for submitting such proposals have not been observed.

Current legislation says that, where territorial and development planning are concerned, the public plays the role of consultant. The final decision about the content of the development planning documents for a municipal territory is taken by the local government council, which is not obliged to take notice of views and proposals

expressed and submitted in the process of public participation. At the same time, such decisions usually affect the interests of many people, which is why the public has the right to be informed about the drafting process of the documents, to express its views and to expect that these views be considered.

### 1.3. NGOs as a part of the general public

Different target groups must be involved in the planning process: public administration institutions, the mass media, commercial structures, various professionals, and the public. One of the most important groups, one that represents a broad spectrum of public interests, is the group of non-governmental organizations.

#### The “public” and the “interested public”

The role of the public – and to some extent its responsibility – in the territorial and development planning process has grown. This is why it is important to establish the meaning of the “public” and the “interested public.”<sup>11</sup> The concept of public participation does not always imply involvement of the masses. For example, the Århus Convention defines the public as one or a number of natural or legal persons, their associations, organizations or groups. An “interested public,” on the other hand, is a public which:

- a) is affected or could be affected by decisions; for example, the owners of real estate, or tenants’ associations;
- b) is interested in the decisions that are made; for example, non-governmental organizations that are concerned with protection of the environment.

The “public” can be just one person (individual), if such person has an interest in the issue that must be decided.

**In accordance with current legislation, any natural or legal person may participate in the territorial development planning process.**<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Meiere, Silvija. “Par sabiedrības ietekmi uz publisko tiesību subjektiem un to lēmumiem [Public influence on public administrators and their decisions].” *Jurista vārds* No. 196, February 13, 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Law on Territorial Planning (in force since June 26, 2002), Section 9. It should be noted that the Law on Regional Development (in force since April 23, 2002), which regulates the drafting of development programs, calls for application of the principle of transparency. This can be narrowly interpreted as simply informing the public, but it does anticipate NGOs as partners, in accordance with the partnership principle (Section 4).

Although public involvement in drafting territorial plans and participating in public hearings/consultations is an individual process, specific instructions do exist in regard to the owners of real estate affected by a decision and to the owners of adjacent properties. The Regulations on Territorial Planning<sup>13</sup> regulate the way in which such persons can be involved in the overall procedure (see Appendix 2).

### The “public” and the “organized public”

When analyzing public involvement and participation in territorial planning processes, a distinction must be made between the public and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Although non-governmental organizations are a part of the public, they have their own agendas, which are geared to each organization’s specific interests and goals. This means that **NGO involvement cannot fully substitute for involvement of the general public**, inasmuch as NGOs cannot represent the views of society as a whole. **Public involvement endeavors should be sufficiently widespread and varied to ensure that a broad spectrum of interests is covered and not just the interests of individual groups.**

#### 1.4. Laws and binding regulations as a prerequisite for public participation in development and territorial planning

Currently, the planning of development programs and territorial plans is regulated by the Law on Regional Development, the Law on Territorial Planning and the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations on Territorial Planning. Territorial planning has been separated from development planning, each is covered by a separate law. In 2003, municipal development and territorial planning issues were placed under the supervision of the Minister for Regional Development and Local Government Affairs.

- **The Law on Regional Development** (April 23, 2002) stipulates that **the principle of transparency** must be observed in the regional (incl. municipal) planning process, and this can be directly applied to public and NGO participation. This principle calls for transparency in decision making connected with regional development planning and related processes. It also anticipates that the public must be informed about regional development planning and related processes, and about the results.

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<sup>13</sup> Cabinet of Ministers Regulations on Territorial Planning (2000), which are in force until new regulations are adopted.

NGO participation is also anticipated in the **partnership principle**. This ensures cooperation between public administration agencies, international institutions, regional planning councils, local governments, **non-governmental organizations** and the business community.

Pursuant to the Law on Regional Development, the procedure for public hearings/consultations is set by the Cabinet of Ministers, which must adopt specific regulations on regional development planning and implementation of plans.

- **The Law on Territorial Planning** (June 26, 2002) calls for the principle of transparency to be observed in the regional (incl. municipal) planning process. The principle says that the public must be involved in drafting territorial plans and that information flow and decision making must be transparent. The principle of transparency makes it possible for the public and NGOs to take part in planning.

The procedure for public hearings/consultations is set by the Cabinet of Ministers. The Law on Territorial Planning anticipates the drafting of new Cabinet of Ministers regulations. These were under preparation by the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government Affairs at the time of this research. Until the new regulations take effect, the procedure for public hearings is regulated by the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations on Territorial Planning (December 5, 2000).

The Law on Territorial Planning makes it the duty of local governments to ensure public participation in the territorial planning process. Section 8 prescribes the organization of public hearings/consultations on territorial plans. The local government is required to publish in the newspaper *Latvijas Vēstnesis* and in a local newspaper the announcement that territorial plans are in the process of being drafted or amended, information about the public hearing/consultation procedure, information about when and where the public can see the territorial plan or its amendments and submit written proposals and opinions. The local government must organize public participation and allocate funds for this purpose.

Section 9 of the Law on Territorial Planning also provides for the right of natural and legal persons (incl. NGOs) to take part in public hearings/consultations on territorial plans. This gives each and every natural and legal person the right to access existing territorial plans and those submitted to public scrutiny, to take part in public hearings/consultations, to express and defend his or her views, and to submit proposals. The law also provides for the right to submit written proposals and opinions within a set period of time, and to receive an answer. This does not significantly differ from the procedure set out in the previous Law on Territorial Development Planning; the only new aspect is the right of natural and legal persons to defend their views, not just express them, as stated in the previous law.



- Until new regulations are adopted, the current **Cabinet of Ministers Regulations on Territorial Planning** (December 5, 2000) remain in force.

These Cabinet of Ministers regulations set out in detail the territorial planning procedure that must be observed by regional, district and municipal administrations, the public involvement procedure, and the documents that are required for territorial plans.

## Conclusions

- Legislation that regulates the drafting of development programs does not provide a detailed procedure for public involvement, but only general principles. Whether or not the public is involved and the extent to which this is done depends on whether or not a local government sees the need for this, on the skills of professionals, and on the available financial and human resources.
- Legislation that covers territorial planning sets out the public involvement procedure in no uncertain terms and with sufficient attention to detail. The only thing left to the discretion of the local government is the decision about additional measures for stimulating public involvement. No special measures for informing NGOs are anticipated. This too is left to the discretion of each local government.
- The laws and regulations on public involvement that were adopted in 2002 do not call for any radical changes. They provide general standards for public involvement in the preparation of planning documents – anticipating public involvement as a requisite component of the process – and allow different ways and means of informing and hearing the public, depending on local circumstances. The public involvement procedure for public hearings/consultations on territorial plans is still **strictly regulated**, with a certain number of measures that must be taken by every local government. Legislation allows additional measures to be taken if a local government finds this necessary. However, the public involvement procedure for drafting development programs is still not regulated.
- The laws and regulations that were adopted in 2002 clarify the requirements for public involvement procedures by focusing separately on territorial plans and development programs. The situation was complicated by the fact that the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development was responsible for financing and supervision of development and territorial planning at the municipal level, while development planning at the district, regional and national level was the responsibility of the Ministry of Finance.

- In a development planning context, NGOs are highlighted (Law on Regional Development) as partners, alongside government agencies and the private sector.
- Current legislation does not in sufficient detail regulate the system that should be applied for evaluating the quality of territorial development planning documents or the quality of public involvement measures.

## 2. LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND NGOs IN LATVIA – PARTNERS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS?

This section examines public and NGO capacity for involvement in the planning process and the role and capacity of non-governmental organizations for cooperation with local governments in development and territorial planning. This must be done in order to subsequently assess whether or not the potential and capacity on both sides allows effective cooperation.

The information obtained during the course of the study shows that effective participation is possible only when there is a balance between the demand for cooperation and the supply, i.e., the interest shown by the public and non-governmental organizations and the desire to participate in planning processes equals the opportunities provided by local governments to obtain information about cooperation opportunities, to participate and gain assurance that participation can produce positive results. This is why capacity assessment of both sides – local governments and NGOs – is necessary. During the course of the interviews, it became apparent that there is a shortage of information about non-governmental organizations, which is why information sources are listed at the end of this section.

### 2.1. Local government planning and public involvement capacity

In May 2001, the Populated Areas Planning Office at the Building Department of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development carried out a survey among local governments that had received earmarked subsidies in the period from 1996 to 2000 – 73% of all local governments. 22% of the respondents claimed that the qualifications of municipal experts on questions involving territorial development were poor, and 52% felt that this was a problem that they were confronted with when planning territorial development.

On the whole, local governments have so far not succeeded in convincing the public that participation in the drafting of development programs and territorial plans is an effective form of public participation. According to the UNDP Human Development Report 2000/2001, only 6% of the population have taken part in public hearings/consultations on municipal development plans, and only 31% find that this form of participation has any effect. Both the public and non-governmental organizations consider short-term and spontaneous forms of participation to be more effective, for example, protests, which are basically the opposite of long-term and constructive forms of cooperation such as planning.

There are several reasons for this situation:

In the mind of the public and non-governmental organizations, doubts have been cast on participation in territorial planning as an effective form of participation by front-page press coverage of cases where public protests have been disregarded or where municipal building regulations (which are part of a territorial plan) have simply been ignored when issuing building permits.

In order to evaluate whether or not development programs are effective, it would be necessary to regularly obtain data on local governments that plan their budgets in accordance with the priorities set out in their development plans. The public has come to believe that development programs play an insignificant role in municipal policy-making and allocation of budget funds to the priorities that have been accepted as such. R. Zile also points to this problem: "If they are not backed by public funds, the plans won't work."<sup>14</sup>

Another indication that many local governments have a negligent attitude toward public involvement procedures can be found in the content analysis of the territorial plans. Only 11 of the 32 plans that were analyzed had public hearing/consultation materials attached, and even those did not always meet the requirements of the Cabinet of Ministers regulations.

The survey that was carried out for this study among municipal territorial planning experts outlines current trends in cooperation between local governments and NGOs. The survey shows that 26 of the 46 surveyed planners have cooperated with NGOs.

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<sup>14</sup> Former Special Assignments Minister for Cooperation with International Financial Institutions, Roberts Zile, in conversation with the Brussels representative of the Cooperation Council of Agricultural Organizations, Bruno Barons, and *Diena* journalist Sanita Jemberga. "Nu, pagaidiet, tā nevar!" Published on the [www.politika.lv](http://www.politika.lv) website, October 15, 2002. <http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=104713&lang=lv> Last accessed on January 15, 2003.

26 of the respondents say that cooperation has been positive or very positive, and only 4 found it to be negative. Interestingly, 16 experts claim that NGO involvement in the planning process had taken place following the initiative of the local government, and none of the respondents say that the organizations had been involved at their own initiative. In 20 cases where local government experts responded that they had not succeeded in involving NGOs in the planning process, the following were mentioned as the main reasons:

- lack of information about public organizations and their interests (6);
- lack of a methodology on how to involve public organizations in planning (4);
- lack of effective cooperation (2).

It is interesting that in 10 of the cases the reason that is named for failure to cooperate with NGOs is the absence of public organizations in the municipality. On the basis of the information obtained from in-depth interviews and discussions, this answer can be interpreted in at least three different ways:

- 1) there are active interest groups within the municipality, but for various reasons (usually lack of information and financial resources) they have not formally registered;
- 2) the local government is not informed about local organizations and their activities;
- 3) there really are no public organizations in the municipality.

Of the 60 programs that were analyzed, only 14 were complete with a strategic section that was worked out in detail – a necessary pre-condition for a program to be applicable.<sup>15</sup> Public organizations and NGOs had participated in the preparation of 8 of these, had not participated in 1, and in 5 of the cases it is not possible to determine from the program whether or not they had taken part. A description of the current situation (in narrative form) was provided for 20 of the programs. In 16 of these cases, the public and representatives of public organizations had not taken part in drafting the programs.

Of course, these figures are not a direct proof that the participation of NGOs and the public produces improved development programs. The quality of the plans, like the successful involvement of the public and NGOs, testifies first of all to the professionalism of those who have prepared the plan. Nevertheless, the connection between

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<sup>15</sup> A well-prepared program should include a strategic section with development goals, tasks, approximate costs, activities, executors, financial sources, expected results.

opportunities for participation and quality of the development programs that is reflected in these figures cannot be denied.

## 2.2. NGO capacity

The capacity of non-governmental organizations – the ability to achieve their goals and carry out their tasks – is determined by a variety of factors, which are outlined in this sub-chapter.

The way in which the non-governmental sector's share of responsibility for and participation in public administration has evolved, has been influenced by three factors:

- the activities of local grass-roots organizations, which cater to the specific needs of the population and operate in a specific territory;
- the position taken by public and private institutions or other independent/international non-governmental organizations on a specific issue;
- the priorities set and advocated by the government, reflected in the Government Declaration and the agendas of the individual ministries.<sup>16</sup>

Currently, local governments are informed primarily about NGOs that operate at the local level (this includes the local branches of national or international organizations, for example, the Red Cross).

NGO numbers and activities differ from municipality to municipality. A Soros Foundation – Latvia survey that was carried out in 2000<sup>17</sup> shows that the majority of non-governmental organizations in Latvia are public benefit organizations.<sup>18</sup> These organizations engage in activities that benefit society as a whole. For example, they provide

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<sup>16</sup> Kalniņa, S., NGO Center project coordinator for cooperation with government institutions. “NVO ietekmes atslēga – neatlaidība un kompetence [The key to NGO influence – persistence and competence].” Published on the [www.politika.lv](http://www.politika.lv) website, January 14, 2003. <http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=105229&lang=lv> Last accessed on August 29, 2003.

<sup>17</sup> Šņitņikovs, A. Report on a survey of local governments, 2000. Soros Foundation – Latvia Baltic American Partnership Program. Unpublished manuscript. In 2000, the Soros Foundation – Latvia Baltic American Partnership Program carried out a survey among local governments. Questionnaires were dispatched to 500 local governments in Latvia, asking about the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the work of local governments. Only 60 of the questionnaires were returned. This is not a sufficient number to allow general conclusions about all local governments and their relations with NGOs in Latvia.

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix 1. Explanation of Terms.

services that are important for the community and cater not only to the interests of their own members, but to those of a much broader spectrum of society. This has to do with the level of popular interest about certain issues and the fact that it is easier for NGOs to get public support for such issues. The larger municipalities have a greater number of member benefit NGOs,<sup>19</sup> whose main aim is to cater to the interests of their members. In the smaller municipalities (townships), where contacts between NGOs and the local government can be very direct (in some cases local government employees are also NGO members), it is harder to classify NGOs by activity profile; they usually fall into the category of nonprofit public benefit organizations. A small township community is not sufficiently diversified to accommodate many different interest groups and registration of the respective NGOs. The answers that were received allow the conclusion that there are a significant number of positive examples for cooperation between local governments and NGOs in Latvia. Several local governments provide financing for NGOs and are involved in joint projects together with the NGOs. Financial support for NGOs can represent from 0.2% to 7% of a local government's annual budget – from 25 lats to 4,000 lats for a single NGO.

Data provided by the NGO Centre makes it possible to draw the profile of a typical NGO.<sup>20</sup> A non-governmental organization in Latvia is generally:

- recently established (has existed for less than four years);
- small (less than 50 members);
- with a small budget (the annual budget does not exceed 1,000 lats or 1,732 euros);
- an organization whose activities are to a great extent focused on educational and social issues, including support for youth;
- headed by a director or executive director who has been with the organization for less than two years and is also a member of the board;
- an organization which has a declared mission that has not been reviewed or amended since it was first approved, and which engages in strategic planning once a year.

Interviews with organizations and the study carried out by the NGO Centre have not produced a particularly positive picture of the capacity of non-governmental organizations. This is borne out by various indicators, for example, the number of volunteers and salaried employees in each organization. Of the organizations interviewed by the

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<sup>19</sup> See Appendix 1. Explanation of Terms.

<sup>20</sup> The NGO Sector in Latvia: 2000/2001. NGO Center (2002). The report was prepared with the financial support of the Baltic-American Partnership Program. Information was provided by the Lursoft company.

NGO Centre, 68% do not have any salaried employees. This suggests that the organizations do not have a regular source of income for covering administrative expenses. The work is done by volunteers in their spare time, and this undoubtedly has an effect on cooperation opportunities, although it does not rule them out in cases where the issue at hand is sufficiently important for the organization. Of the organizations with salaried employees, the largest group is made up of NGOs with one salaried employee – approximately 14% of all the organizations. 10% have two to three employees.<sup>21</sup> Members of the organizations themselves admit that they frequently have a huge workload because the organizations or their local branches do not have enough people. For this reason, it is often not possible to take advantage of all available opportunities for cooperation, but it is important that local governments keep these opportunities open<sup>22</sup> so that organizations can return to them when they have improved their capacity.

The projects submitted to a competition for financing announced in 2002 by the Regional Environment Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)<sup>23</sup> show that in the majority of cases **non-governmental organizations do not have a clear understanding of how planning is done and how to participate in the process**. Possible reasons for this are:

- lack of capacity,
- lack of experience,
- lack of information on what to do in order to participate.

Whether or not NGOs can become valuable local government partners in planning processes is to the greatest extent dependent on the local governments' level of interest, willingness to cooperate and support, and on the mutual understanding that participation in planning is more than just a public relations exercise or even manipulation with public opinion. Existing examples of cooperation prove that NGOs can make a contribution to planning and influence the decision-making process. This is possible in cases where an organization has both access to the necessary information and the opportunity to participate in planning processes connected with the organization's interests, goals and activities. These examples are examined in Section 3 of the study.

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<sup>21</sup> The NGO Sector in Latvia: 2000/2001. NGO Centre (2002). The report was prepared with the financial support of the Baltic-American Partnership Program. Information was provided by the Lursoft company.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Jānis Ulme, international relations project coordinator for the Environmental Protection Club, May 23, 2002.

<sup>23</sup> The local grants competition for NGO environmental projects to be carried out in 2002/2003 comprised three sections, among them the improvement of public participation in municipal territorial development planning.



### 2.2.1. NGOs: where to find them?

The majority of NGOs are registered in the Enterprise Registry as public organizations or nonprofit organizations – limited liability companies. All organizations are registered at their official addresses. Special investigation is needed if local governments seeking partners among these organizations want to find out where these organizations actually carry out their activities. The Enterprise Registry does not apply a method of classification that provides statistical data on organizations by area of activity (for example, how many of the organizations in a municipality are involved with environment or social issues). Establishing and maintaining a database on NGO activities within a specific municipality is made difficult by the fact that the necessary information can be obtained from the Enterprise Registry only for a fee. Local governments with very limited budgets cannot afford to make use of the Enterprise Registry's services.

The NGO Centre's database, "NGO Catalogue," <http://www.ngo.org.lv/nvokatalogs.php> provides comprehensive information on Latvia's non-governmental organizations free of charge. The database contains contact information for over 1,000 organizations, as well as information on areas of activity, with a variety of links to choose from. Valuable information can also be obtained from the Regional NGO Support Centers, which in most cases are also able to provide more detailed information about local organizations that have registered at a specific NGO Centre or are registered in the Enterprise Registry at an address located in the municipality. The information in these databases is usually not complete, so that it is not possible to get in touch with absolutely all NGOs operating within a specific region.

#### Box 1. Regional NGO Support Centers

- The Alūksne NGO Support Center  
Dārza iela 11 – 209, Alūksne, LV 4301  
Tel.: 43 22 236 Fax: 43 22 236 E-mail: [nvo\\_al@inbox.lv](mailto:nvo_al@inbox.lv)  
Dzintra Zvejniece
- The Southern Latgale NGO Support Center  
Parādes iela 1 – 314, Daugavpils, LV 5400  
Tel.: 54 23 468 Fax: 54 23 468 E-mail: [nvo@nvo.dpunet.lv](mailto:nvo@nvo.dpunet.lv)  
Valdis Kudiņš
- The Liepāja NGO Centre  
Ausekļa iela 9, Liepāja, LV 3401  
Tel.: 34 27 500 Fax: 34 27 500 E-mail: [liepaja\\_noc@navigator.lv](mailto:liepaja_noc@navigator.lv)  
Lāsma Vaiče

- **The Zemgale NGO Support Center**  
Uzvaras iela 8, 2. stāvs, Jelgava, LV 3001  
Tel.: 30 21 910 Fax: 30 21 910 E-mail: [znvoc@apollo.lv](mailto:znvoc@apollo.lv)  
Uldis Dūmiņš
  
- **The Tukums NGO Association**  
Talsu iela 5, Tukums, LV 3100  
Tel.: 31 81 021 Fax: 31 81 021 E-mail: [nvo@tukums.parks.lv](mailto:nvo@tukums.parks.lv)  
Velta Straupmane
  
- **The North Kurzeme NGO Support Center**  
Kr. Valdemāra iela 17a, Talsi, LV 3201  
Tel.: 32 81 384 E-mail: [zkcentrs@latnet.lv](mailto:zkcentrs@latnet.lv)  
Mareks Indriksons
  
- **The Madona NGO Support Center**  
Saules iela 18b, Madona, LV 4801  
Tel.: 48 22 041 Fax: 48 22 041 E-mail: [madonasnvo@kvarcs.lv](mailto:madonasnvo@kvarcs.lv)  
Lidija Spilberga
  
- **The Cēsis Regional NGO Support Center**  
Glūdas iela 4, Cēsis, LV 4100  
Tel.: 41 22 067 Fax: 41 07 146 E-mail: [cesunvoc@apollo.lv](mailto:cesunvoc@apollo.lv) [cpic@apollo.lv](mailto:cpic@apollo.lv)  
Daiga Rubene
  
- **The Sēlija Regional NGO Support Center**  
Brīvības iela 229, Jēkabpils, LV 5201  
Tel.: 52 81 239 Fax: 52 81 238 E-mail: [ctjek@mail.zednet.lv](mailto:ctjek@mail.zednet.lv)  
Aleksandrs Kalniņš
  
- **NGO Volunteer Support Center *Meridiāns Plus***  
Atbrīvošanas aleja 116/2, Rēzekne, LV 4601  
Tel.: 46 36 580 Fax: 46 36 580 E-mail: [nvocentrs@rezekne.lv](mailto:nvocentrs@rezekne.lv)  
Sandra Virskule
  
- **The Ventspils Regional NGO Support Center**  
Tirgus iela 7, Ventspils, LV 3601  
Tel.: 36 24 363 Fax: 36 24 363 E-mail: [uacvents@apollo.lv](mailto:uacvents@apollo.lv)  
Ruta Šenkeviča
  
- **The Valmiera Public Organization Support Center**  
Cēsu iela 19, Valmiera, LV 4201  
Tel: 9 533 917; 64 18 135 Fax: 42 81 792 E-mail: [gunta@va.lv](mailto:gunta@va.lv)  
Gunta Bērziņa

Most of the regional NGO support centres provide information on open competitions for funding from various institutions as well as consultations on the preparation of project proposals.

## Conclusions

- In the majority of cases, local governments have not managed to convince the public that participation in planning processes can produce results and that this is an effective form of participation. A negative light on the effectiveness of this form of participation is cast by practical experience with plans and programs (violations of territorial planning principles when building permits are issued, lack of information on whether and how development programs are linked to municipal budget plans). Many local governments do not attach much importance to public involvement, even in cases where this is required by the law.
- In the majority of cases where development programs have been prepared professionally, members of the public and representatives of non-governmental organizations have been involved. The analysis shows that in 80% of the cases where a development program simply describes the existing situation, public organizations and members of the public have not been involved in planning.
- The opportunities of NGOs to actively and constructively participate in processes connected with planning are limited by lack of capacity; however, organizations are motivated to participate by their interest in concrete issues connected with development. A big problem, one that negatively affects the activities of organizations and their capacity for sustainable cooperation with local governments, is the lack of financial resources for administrative expenses. In this situation, organizations focus on specific activities and are forced to carefully weigh the pros and cons of any type of cooperation to decide whether or not it can be included in the organization's agenda.
- Organizations are often prevented from demonstrating initiative in planning issues by a lack of knowledge about planning procedures and cooperation opportunities.

### 3. COOPERATION MODELS, EXAMPLES AND PROPOSALS

Keeping in mind the capacity of local governments and NGOs, as well as existing practice, this section examines non-governmental organizations as partners of local governments in the planning process, analyzes current forms of cooperation and proposes new cooperation models.

#### 3.1. Cooperation between local governments and NGOs in planning territorial development: general outline

Planning theory sees NGOs as one of the main target groups for involvement in planning processes. There are better prospects for establishing good cooperation in development planning between local governments and organizations in cases where there is already a previous history of cooperation. In such cases, the local government has at least to some extent become acquainted with the organization's goals, capacity and ability to implement plans. According to the "Indicators of Local Democracy in Latvia" study,<sup>24</sup> contacts between local governments and NGOs are closer in rural areas and small towns (especially in municipalities with a population of 5,000 to 9,999), but not as close in cities. It should be kept in mind that local organizations in smaller municipalities cannot exist without some form of support from the local government (for example, premises or facilities). This is also why contacts are closer and local government officials better informed about their NGOs. At the same time, these organizations frequently become dependent on the local government whose support is necessary for the continued existence of the organization. In the cities, on the other hand, there is a much larger number of NGOs, which are involved in a variety of social or economic activities, so that local government officials here are usually not acquainted with all of the organizations active in their territory.

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<sup>24</sup> Vilka, Inga, Maris Pukis and Edvins Vanags. "Indicators of Local Democracy in Latvia." In: Gábor, Sóos, Tóka Gábor and Glen Wright (eds.). *State of Local Democracy in Central Europe. Local Government and Public Reform Initiative*. Budapest (2002).

The content analysis of development programs shows that the work of non-governmental organizations is frequently not described and analyzed separately. Instead, this is done in the sections of development programs that deal with an area in which an organization is active. Local NGOs are mentioned in 28 of the 60 development programs that were analyzed. In 13 of these cases the NGOs are analyzed in a separate section, but in 18, their activities are described in the sections of the program that deal with the area in which a specific organization is active.<sup>25</sup>

Judging from the content of the development programs, NGO activities are analyzed separately by local governments which:

- a) have a well-established non-governmental sector and previous joint projects with NGOs;
- b) have made activation of the public one of its goals;
- c) see the non-governmental (third) sector as a guarantor for development, with the same type of sector-specific activities and development idiosyncrasies that are typical for the “traditional” guarantors for development – the public and private sectors.

The significant difference in the number of programs that analyze the activities of local NGOs (13 of 60) and those that do not (47 of 60) could have a number of reasons:

- disparate development of the non-governmental sector;
- local governments’ lack of information about the third sector and its activities;
- lack of positive examples for cooperation between local governments and NGOs in the implementation of development projects.

All of the above factors are connected and are reflected in the results of the survey that was carried out among municipal territorial planners.

Ten of the 46 surveyed municipal planners told interviewers that there are no public organizations in their municipality. This answer can be interpreted in different ways, for example, that the local government lacks information about the public organizations active within its territory (6 of the respondents mentioned lack of information about public organizations and their activities). However, this could not be the situation in the small municipalities, where local government officials are usually informed about the activities of the population. These municipalities really do have a shortage of formally registered public organizations, but they often have public interest groups that

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<sup>25</sup> See Appendix 4.

carry out their activities on a voluntary basis, without any financial support. An organization that is not officially registered cannot apply for financial support, take part in project competitions or enter into contracts with the local government. Example 1 illustrates a private consulting company's initiative to ensure sustainability of development plans by promoting NGO activities in municipalities where the company had previously prepared development programs or territorial plans.

### Example 1.

Project title	<i>Grupa 93</i> Experience with the Promotion of NGO Establishment and Activities in the Preparation of Municipal Development Programs
Project executor	The <i>Grupa 93</i> consulting company designs municipal development and territorial plans, provides consultations, and seeks to involve the public in planning processes. The company's experience shows that public initiative and the presence of non-governmental organizations in a municipality are extremely important for implementation of the projects set out in the strategic part of a development plan.
Project goal	To encourage the establishment of NGOs in order to ensure public participation in promoting sustainable municipal development even after the development plan has been completed.
Project participants, organizations, institutions, social groups	Local interest groups, local governments, foreign partner organizations.
Methods	Meetings with interest groups, including the inaugural assemblies, which <i>Grupa 93</i> helps to conduct. Further meetings to prepare specific assignments (usually projects). At these meetings, the people themselves voice the need for an organized group and name active members of the local community.
Timeframe, events, results	Non-governmental organizations founded by <i>Grupa 93</i> during the preparation of municipal territorial development plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Kates</i> (Vērgale Township, Liepāja District);</li> <li>▪ <i>Gardenes lēdijas</i> (Auri Township, Dobele District);</li> <li>▪ Association of Zemgale's Rural Entrepreneurs (Auri Township, Dobele District);</li> <li>▪ <i>Valles pūces</i> (Valle Township, District).</li> </ul> Cooperation with existing public organizations: <i>LEISA</i> (Stoļerova Township, Rēzekne District); <i>Maijas</i> (Vecumnieki Township, Bauska District).

“In Valle and Vērgale, the women had already met before and agreed that they have similar problems and that something must be done. The Vērgale Township public organization *Kates* profited from the fact that the township council had a good Scandinavian partner. In Auri, *Grupa 93* helped to identify the advantages of NGOs and define the women’s mutual interests. Here, the meetings that were held on special topics (usually flower arrangements, cooking, handicrafts, psychology, gardening) helped, as did the fact that 6 months later there was a meeting of NGOs at the district level, where each NGO could introduce itself and get to know the others (a very good way of sharing experience). *Valles pūces* were aided by women’s movements in Latvia, which organized many events in the Bauska District. Together with *Grupa 93*, *Valles pūces* prepared a project that was submitted to the Foundation for the Integration of Society. Although the project was not selected from among the 190 applications for a 10,000 lat grant, it provided a stimulation, and the organization’s next project won in a project competition jointly organized by the Baltic – American Partnership Program (BAPP) and the Aizkraukle District Council. The local government helped to find premises for the organization (in the township council building).”

(From an interview with Liga Ozoliņa, *Grupa 93* consultant.)

The Association of Zemgale’s Rural Entrepreneurs has from the very start tackled large projects, but still needs help with planning activities and with management. The work of the NGO stimulated an idea for a cross-border cooperation project for the Phare Access Microprojects Programme (<http://www.eiropainfo.lv/access/index.htm>). The activities of the Regional Fund (RF) from 1999–2001 were a model for the entrepreneurs’ association. The RF held regular training courses and meetings with entrepreneurs from the whole Dobeles District. These took place in Auri.

There are no instant leaders, a lot of work must be done first. The efforts of *Grupa 93* have resulted in four registered non-governmental organizations, although there is potential for local NGOs in many more of the rural communities. Their size would probably place them in the category of local initiative groups, but legal formalities must be observed. It is important for concrete activities to follow immediately after founding of the organization, so that noble goals and good intentions are not forgotten. Project applications were prepared together with the newly founded organizations, and next year’s agendas put together. This means that meetings were more or less regular, concerned with specific topics, and interesting. Quite often, rural NGOs do not even have the 25 lats and the transportation that is needed to register the organization (especially if the distance that must be traveled exceeds 200 km) – NGOs can only be registered in Riga. The basis for the work of these fairly small organizations is cooperation with the local government. Moral, organizational and very often financial support (for example, for the registration fee or premises) is received from the local government.

	<p>“These are not simply projects. This is a feeling of togetherness, concern about one’s hometown, the desire to help others, to learn. All of these organizations contribute to the rebirth of the rural communities.”</p>
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(From an interview with Līga Ozoliņa, *Grupa 93* consultant.)

Despite limited capacity, individual examples show that cooperation with NGOs improves the quality of development plans and contributes to a better understanding of sustainable development processes. Although many organizations are interested in planning, their activities are frequently not coordinated, and local governments are either not informed of these activities in due time or simply ignore them. As a result, these activities remain unnoticed and lose their effect and purpose.

“As more opportunities arise for participation in NGO initiatives and international projects, the diversity of the plans increases to the extent that in some instances the same territory gets several plans that bear little or no relation to each other. Sometimes, the municipal administration does not even know about all these plans. In order to improve planning as an instrument for sustainable development, the methodology for development planning needs to be improved in order to replace the currently dominating estimating approach with a strategic approach. The principle of uninterrupted or constant planning needs to be introduced and staffing needs to be ensured, so that municipalities are able to operatively amend their plans or add new sections. A scientific analysis of planning documents also needs to be undertaken and a summary made of planning experiences that can be disseminated to planners and the public.”<sup>26</sup>

The director of the REC office in Latvia, Ērika Lagzdīņa, says<sup>27</sup> that organizations have good potential for participation in development planning if they participate in specific activities connected with the preparation of development programs or territorial plans. Such activities can involve, for example, environmental protection (establishing which territories must be protected and marked as protected territories in the plans), or the social sector (the inclusion of various social problems in development programs). The NGO advantage is that once they have understood the participation mechanism they are able to make it understandable to others within the community because they operate primarily at the individual level. Local governments, on the other hand, have a more sector-oriented approach to development and planning issues. The most effective forms of NGO participation that have been observed since REC was established are the seminars organized by NGOs and round table discussions about various topics and

<sup>26</sup> Latvian National Report “Rio + 10” to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. Riga (2002), Section 6.2. Planning.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Ērika Lagzdīņa, director of the Latvian office of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), July 31, 2002.



problems. In rural areas, where local governments are often both physically and mentally remote from the population, NGO representatives are much better able to reach people and arouse their interest.

Each cooperation process is unique because each territorial development program and plan is drafted and implemented in a specific situation and a specific municipality. This is why it would be important to separately examine the participation of organizations that (in a similar way to professional territorial planning companies) operate nationwide. Ērika Lagzdīņa points out that such national organizations can claim professional status, but their input is still best in cases where there are local branches in different places in Latvia. These give national organizations better insight into the local situation, and this improves the quality of cooperation. NGOs often operate without compensation for their participation, on a voluntary basis, and are able to attract a certain amount of funds from various sources. Undoubtedly, the majority of regional NGOs also need support from their local governments. Cooperation agreements that clearly indicate who is responsible for what open up promising prospects. Such agreements should also include cost estimates. The agreements may involve a transfer of local government functions to NGOs, or the contracting of services at a relatively low cost, which means that no competition or tender is announced. For this reason, special attention should be paid to potential conflicts of interest and to the possibility that NGOs may risk losing their nonprofit status if they provide consulting services. Financial dependence on local governments also comprises the risk that NGO opinions may be accommodated to local government requirements.

### Box 2.

#### Which factors must be considered prior to cooperation with an NGO?

- Nature of the organization (principles of operation, cooperation experience and traditions).
- Services provided, nature and goals of previous projects.
- Organization's interest in and attitude to a **concrete** local government project.
- Structure of the organization.
- Board and staff (employees).
- Financial structure, financial supporters.
- Is the organization registered with the Ministry of Finance?
- Is the organization a public benefit or a member benefit NGO?
- Work experience – age of the organization, previous projects.
- Annual report (depending on the planned form of cooperation, it might be wise to take a closer look at the organization's financial reports).

Handbook for Non-Governmental Organizations. Editor M. Apine. NGO Library, NGO Centre. Riga (2000).

Cooperation with NGOs (including professional and special interest groups) can be both informative and consultative. At the outset of cooperation with an NGO or any other representative public group, the local government must inform this group about the goals of the cooperation and the competency of the local government regarding the respective task or issue. The constraints that are placed upon the local government should also be discussed. This should be done to avoid loss of trust during the course of cooperation.

Both local and national non-governmental organizations can be involved in working groups during the drafting stage of the planning process. Professionals who are authorities in their fields and NGO activists with extensive previous experience can also be included in these working groups. The experience of NGO professionals can be useful not only for making sure that specific issues are included in the planning documents (for example, social or environmental problems and possible solutions), but also for informing the public and involving it in the preparation of a program.

## Conclusions

- The likelihood of good cooperation in development planning between local governments and NGOs is greater in cases where there is previous experience with cooperation.
- Local governments lack experience and information about opportunities and models for cooperation with NGOs. In interviews, municipal planning experts frequently said that organizations should take the initiative for cooperation with local governments.
- An analysis of the opportunities that are provided for organizations to participate in planning leads to the conclusion that the majority of non-governmental organizations that are active outside the big cities find themselves at the very beginning of their development. They must improve their management and their capacity, for example, to provide services. A huge problem is the lack of funds for administrative expenses, without which the organizations are not able to carry out their functions on a permanent basis or fulfil their obligations. The smaller municipalities need informative and financial support to stimulate registration of interest groups since unregistered interest groups cannot obtain financing for their activities or evolve into reliable service providers and local government partners.
- Organizations lack information on how to influence local government decisions and on opportunities for taking part in municipal planning processes. Lack of such information limits NGO capacity for taking the initiative. Local governments draw

the conclusion that the organizations “don’t know what they want,” or, in other cases, underestimate the cooperation potential of the organizations. The difference in local government and NGO levels of information about planning processes and cooperation opportunities leads to a situation in which local governments and NGOs “each speak their own language.” This also leads to uncoordinated activities and the preparation of unrelated plans. Another problem that is mentioned in this context is the poor technical equipment of NGOs (for example, lack of Internet communications).<sup>28</sup>

- One of the biggest problems is the popularity of campaign-type activities – the desire to achieve quick results. Such activities, which come to an end when public interest dies down or the money runs out, rarely produce sustainable results in regard to goal-oriented involvement of the public and individual target groups (including NGOs) not only in planning, but also in decision making and the implementation of plans.

### 3.2. NGO participation in drafting development programs and territorial plans

NGO participation in drafting territorial plans is not particularly widespread. Organizations often lack the know-how that is needed to take the initiative and formulate their views, and they are not willing to take responsibility for measures that they themselves propose. In such circumstances, cooperation should be initiated by senior local government officials and by the planners. In cases where the planners consider cooperation with non-governmental organizations to be sufficiently important, it is possible to achieve productive participation and find solutions that incorporate compromises between different groups of society.

#### Cooperation Model 1. Consultations

Consultations provide an opportunity to receive input from different target groups. This includes the views of individual organizations, meetings and discussions with individual social groups, and the results of public hearings/consultations. This form of participation involves a higher degree of intensity than the simple distribution of information, and it can provide valuable input both in the planning and the implementation stages. Due to experience gained from active involvement in specific areas, NGOs are frequently well informed about the issues that target groups are concerned about. They are able to provide reliable information about the priorities of these groups and offer practical solutions in the form of projects.

<sup>28</sup> See Appendix 3. Results of a survey carried out among municipal planning experts.

## Example 2.

Project title	<b>Microreserve Status for the Pāvilosta Gray Dune</b>
Project executors	The Pāvilosta City Council; the Dune Protection Committee; the regional branch of the Environmental Protection Club, the Saka County Nature Fund; University of Latvia biology professor Brigita Laime. Authors of the detailed territorial plan: the Regional Studies Centre.
Project goal	To achieve microreserve status for the Pāvilosta Gray Dune <sup>29</sup> in the detailed territorial plan.
Project participants, organizations, institutions, social groups	In this case, a happy coincidence made it possible for University of Latvia Biology Faculty experts to take part in the territorial planning process, using research material that had been obtained when mapping coastal biotopes as the basis for the detailed territorial plan. However, the scientists say that protection of rare natural phenomena is only possible with public involvement. Granting of a microreserve status was facilitated by successful cooperation between the Pāvilosta City Council, the authors of the detailed territorial plan, the Regional Studies Centre, the Pāvilosta population and landowners, the regional branch of the Environmental Protection Club – the Saka County Nature Fund, and the Dune Protection Committee.
Methods	Active involvement in the planning process: participation in public hearings/consultations, articulation of views, writing of letters, cooperation between local public organizations and members of the public with planners, the local government and University of Latvia experts.
Timeframe, events, results	12 public hearings/consultations took place, during which members of the public, representatives of public organizations and University of Latvia experts met and discussed the territorial plans with the company commissioned to prepare them – the Regional Studies Centre – and members of the Pāvilosta City Council. On September 26, 2002, the local government ruled that the territory of the Gray Dune was to be granted microreserve status to protect its biotopes, and that corrections would be made to the existing Pāvilosta development plan. In an interview, Regional Studies Centre project manager Egons Bērziņš said

<sup>29</sup> Gray dunes are an extremely rare natural phenomenon in Europe, and even in Latvia they are now found in only in a few places – Pāvilosta, Užava, Pape. These are open, not entirely stable sand dunes, covered with moss, lichen, low-growing plants, some trees and shrubs.

Driķe, Nora. “Pāvilosta dziedē brūces pelēkajā kāpā [Pāvilosta heals wounds in the gray dune].” *Diena*, February 5, 2003.

See also: Laime, Brigita and Egons Bērziņš. “Teritoriālā plānošana un jūras piekrastes biotopu aizsardzība [Territorial planning and the protection of coastal biotopes].” In: *Aktuāli savvaļas sugu un biotopu apsaimniekošanas piemēri Latvijā*. Riga (2002).

	<p>that public groups are often quite radical and initially reluctant to make compromises. Many public hearings are then required, at which the views of all sides are heard and discussed, and a lot of painstaking explaining must be done in order to reach a balance, for example, between the positions of the public organization and the landowners. However, the time and the resources must be invested to make sure that the plan will be successful. Cooperation with public environmental protection organizations in the form of public hearings and consultations makes it possible to register conflicting views early on and prevent conflict situations or territorial development trends that are unacceptable to the majority of the local population.</p>
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Upon receiving any type of information whatsoever from NGOs and from the public, planners must understand that they have a responsibility toward those providing this information as to the way in which it will be used. If an NGO has submitted its views, statistics or some other form of information to the planners, it undoubtedly expects that this information will be analyzed and taken into consideration. Frequently, obtaining and preparing this information has used up a large part of the organization's resources. If the information that is provided is not used in a responsible manner, all future cooperation is seriously handicapped.

#### Cooperation Model 2. Working groups (NGO involvement)

Direct involvement of public organizations in formulating political decisions, including strategy planning, is the form of participation with the highest degree of intensity. This cooperation model is the most intensive one and also the one that requires the most work. At the same time, it is more effective and, although it requires greater financial resources, it has greater advantages. Admittedly, the status of a planning document has a big effect on the motivation of organizations to get involved. If a territorial plan produces building regulations that are binding for the local government, these will have a direct impact on the local government's decisions. Development programs, on the other hand, are simply guidelines; they do not strictly define the local government's development priorities, so that these can change. Furthermore, local governments currently tend to prepare development programs in descriptive, not strategic form,<sup>30</sup> and do not use them as the basis for budget planning. In this situation, organizations fail to see the practical purpose of development planning and have little motivation to participate. In interviews, however, local government officials say that if organizations take part in

<sup>30</sup> Linuža, Laima. "Dārga, bet reti praktiska literatūra [Expensive, but rarely practical literature]." *Lauku Avīze*, May 30, 2002.

preparing a municipal development program it is easier for them to draw attention to the issues that they are concerned about and, subsequently, receive the government's support for concrete projects.

### 3.3. Public involvement in the municipal development planning process with the participation of NGOs

Cooperation Model 3. Participation in public hearings/consultations or public involvement in preparation and implementation of a program

Simple distribution of information is the form of participation with the lowest degree of intensity; nevertheless, it is extremely important in planning, inasmuch as it allows organizations and the public to better understand and carry out their functions.

“Public organizations play an important role in distributing information, explaining and promoting issues. The information flow between central and local governments, the business community, and public organizations is one of the main concerns of the NGO Centre. Although Latvian legislation grants the people fairly extensive rights to receive information, there are a number of serious problems:

- people are not informed about their rights and about opportunities to receive information;
- information must be sought in numerous agencies;
- there is insufficient “horizontal” exchange of information, dialogue and coordination between public administration institutions;
- inadequate public policy makes it difficult to establish information centres or “one-stop agencies,” which would make it easier to obtain information.

In order to improve access to information, it is necessary to develop an information distribution network, and compile and distribute information about available information resources, government institutions, local governments, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions. A “horizontal” flow of information between government institutions and local governments must be stimulated, and public organizations must be involved more effectively in distributing information and carrying out explanatory work. This will improve the delegation of functions to public organizations.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Latvian National Report “Rio + 10” to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. Riga (2002), Section 6.4. Free access to information.

One of the big advantages that local governments can gain from cooperation with NGOs is **access to specific population groups** (for example, to young people through youth organizations; to senior citizens through senior citizens' organizations). Planning, organization and implementation of special events can be carried out through the special interest NGOs.

**Information campaigns** (informing and involving the unorganized part of the population in consultations about specific issues connected with territorial development planning). Certain activities can be planned together and joint responsibility assumed for their implementation. A widespread campaign can be planned and carried out in cooperation with NGOs. Example 3 illustrates an NGO initiative to involve a broad spectrum of the public in planning the development of Riga's Historical Centre.

### Example 3.

Project title	<b>Riga 801 for Our Future: Accountable Riga Development Planning</b>
Project executor	<p>The Public Policy Institute (PPI) is an independent policy analysis institution, founded in 2001 as a public nonprofit organization. The mission of the Public Policy Institute is to prepare qualified analyses and provide recommendations for accountable public policy, stimulate public involvement and participation in decision and policymaking.</p> <p><b>Main areas of specialization:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– regional development and regional policy</li> <li>– environmental policy</li> <li>– language policy</li> <li>– development planning and development partnerships</li> <li>– public participation methods and technologies</li> <li>– public accountability procedures</li> <li>– local government policy</li> <li>– healthcare policy</li> </ul>
Project goals	<p>The main goals of the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ to involve as broad a spectrum of the public as possible in forging a vision for the development of Riga's Historical Centre;</li> <li>▪ to prepare a common vision for Riga's development;</li> <li>▪ to test public involvement methods in practice.</li> </ul> <p>An additional goal of the PPI project was to hear and to communicate public opinion<sup>32</sup>.</p>

<sup>32</sup> Aistara, Guntra and Aivita Putniņa. "Atstāsim Rīgu saviem bērniem [Let's Leave Riga for Our Children]!" Project to involve the public in forging a vision for the development of Riga's Historical Centre. Final Report, December 19, 2001. [http://www.instituts.lv/lv/SPI\\_zinojums.pdf](http://www.instituts.lv/lv/SPI_zinojums.pdf) Last accessed on August 29, 2003.

Project participants, organizations, institutions, social groups	A wide circle of partners was involved in the project. Financial supporters: the US Embassy's Democracy Commission, the Baltic-American Partnership Program, Soros Foundation – Latvia. Organizational support: Riga City Council (RCC), RCC Urban Development Department, University of Latvia Social Science Faculty, artist Līga Henriņa, House of the Riga Latvian Society, private companies, musicians, members of the Consultative Council, planning seminar guest speakers, survey and discussion participants, among them members of the public and non-governmental organizations.
Methods	<p><b>Seminars</b></p> <p><b>Survey</b> (questionnaire with open-ended questions). Distribution of the questionnaire: special information stands set up in the city, volunteer pollsters, newspapers, the Internet.</p> <p><b>Discussions</b> with representatives of various organizations, agencies, companies and population groups.</p> <p><b>Working groups</b> (made up of “city user groups” to formulate development visions).</p>
Timeframe, events, results	<p>The “Let’s Leave Riga for Our Children!” project that was carried out in 2001 was well received by the public. 1,322 persons participated in various events – filled out questionnaires, took part in discussions and seminars. The views of the population were compiled in a vision for the development of Riga’s Historical Centre, which was submitted to the Riga City Council (RCC) and to the City Council’s Development Department. These results are being analyzed and incorporated into the Riga Historical Centre Protection and Development Plan.<sup>33</sup></p> <p>For the new project, “Riga 801 for Our Future: Accountable Riga Development Planning,” PPI invited each and every person living in Riga to take part, express their opinions and contribute proposals and solutions for the development of Riga’s Historical Centre (RHC). Three big events were organized. The first event was the launching of the project on June 20, 2002 – a concert in the Dome Square and a competition for children’s drawings attracted a large number of people. All who were interested were able to receive information about RHC and take part in a survey. The next two events were public planning seminars. The first took place on June 29–30 and focused on building issues and open public spaces. The second seminar took place on September 7–8 and was dedicated to sustainable development and transportation. The data obtained at both these seminars and from the survey was processed and submitted to the Riga City Council and its department heads for comment.</p>

<sup>33</sup> Aistara, Guntra. “Nākotnes veidošanā jābūt neatlaidīgiem [Perseverance is needed when shaping the future].” Published on [www.politika.lv](http://www.politika.lv) website, September 19, 2001. <http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=101442&lang=lv> Last accessed on August 29, 2003.



	<p>The last activity that was part of this project was the public hearing on November 25, 2002, with participation of the RCC Urban Development Department's Working and Coordination Group for Preparation of the Riga Historical Centre Protection and Development Plan with the results of its own survey, RCC Executive Director Māris Tralmaks acting as host, RCC department directors, the RCC Urban Development Committee, and the executive directors of Riga's districts and suburbs. The purpose of the event was to introduce the public to the views of experts on survey results. PPI invited members of the public to take active part in the discussion and to ask the experts and public officials questions about the development of Riga's Historical Centre.</p> <p>At the beginning of December, the combined results of the project were submitted to the Riga City Council and to the RCC Urban Development Department's Working and Coordination Group for Preparation of the Riga Historical Centre Protection and Development Plan.<sup>34</sup> The other goal of this event was to encourage the public to take more active part in all manner of public policy processes and thereby in shaping the country's future. (September 19, 2001)</p>
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NGO participation in public involvement projects can have a particularly positive effect because, once they have understood the planning procedure, organizations are able to "translate" this into a language that can be understood by the public and to adapt public involvement activities to the concrete situation. NGO involvement in planning provides an additional channel for coverage of the planning process in the media (radio, TV, press) and, as a result, more publicity.

Examples 3 and 4 both show that NGOs can do an excellent job of distributing survey questionnaires and, in individual cases, of processing the results.

Example 4 illustrates public forums as an accessible and effective planning model.

<sup>34</sup> For more information about the projects see the Public Policy Institute's homepage <http://www.institut.lv/lv/jaunumi.html> Last accessed on August 29, 2003.

## Example 4.

Project title	<b>The Lielvārde Public Forum</b>
Project executor	The project was prepared by a volunteer working group (the Forum Organizing Committee) made up of 16 people from the town of Lielvārde, among them businessmen, teachers, public officials, doctors and students. The project was carried out with support of the Baltic – American Partnership Program and participation of the Lielvārde local government, the Lielvārde Bureau for Promotion of Foreign Contacts and Education, and the NGO Centre.
Project goals	<p>The authors of the project say:</p> <p>The Law on Territorial Development Planning prescribes the need for public involvement in territorial planning and the right of every individual to participate in the territorial development planning process, to express and defend his/her views. It is left to the local government to decide which methods to apply in order to effectively involve the population in territorial development planning.</p> <p>The public forum is a way of organizing communication between the local population and the local government.</p>
Methods	<p>The project seeks to develop community philanthropy in Latvia. Similar projects have been carried out in other Eastern European countries with positive results. The community philanthropy project is based on the idea that the population (township or district) should take active part in resolving problems that affect the community. In order to select the topics for discussion at the Forum, the organizing committee together with Lielvārde school students questioned the local population. Altogether 800 persons voiced their views on territorial development in the town of Lielvārde and its rural territory and expressed readiness to participate. The topics for discussion were selected on the basis of the ideas expressed by these persons. The survey showed that the people of Lielvārde would like to see the following in their municipality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ a well-developed infrastructure;</li> <li>▪ good leisure opportunities;</li> <li>▪ a safe life;</li> <li>▪ job and business opportunities;</li> <li>▪ opportunities to obtain a good education and enjoy cultural events;</li> <li>▪ regulated social issues;</li> <li>▪ a healthy environment;</li> <li>▪ development that is stimulated by cooperation between the public and public administration institutions.</li> </ul> <p>Participants at the Forum were able to present their views and proposals in the working groups that each dealt with one of the above wishes of the population. Many ideas were discussed, but time was limited and not all could be discussed</p>

<p>Timeframe, events, results</p>	<p>at length and planned in detail. Each working group proposed three concrete projects. All participants voted on the projects, and the five that were chosen were further elaborated in the working groups.</p> <p>These were the five projects that were chosen and proposed for implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ a new playground and benches;</li> <li>▪ a youth forum with the motto “I Like Living in Lielvārde”;</li> <li>▪ a pedestrian crossing;</li> <li>▪ a Lielvārde youth center;</li> <li>▪ a social house – the “Day Centre.”</li> </ul> <p>A project manager has been appointed for each of the five projects. These persons will be taught how to prepare a project proposal for submission. In accordance with the priorities that were established at the Forum, the local government has prepared a special program and allocated an earmarked subsidy of 3,000 lats to the projects, naming the Lielvārde Bureau for Promotion of Foreign Contacts and Education as the executor.</p> <p>The Lielvārde Public Forum took place on April 6, 2002, with participation of 70 people from Lielvārde.</p> <p>The purpose of the Forum was to encourage public participation in dealing with local problems, to promote the expedient use of human and financial resources, and thus contribute to development of community philanthropy. Community philanthropy is understood to mean the contribution of one’s skills, time and money to improving life in a community in accordance with the wishes of its members. All of the ideas that were presented at the Forum have been compiled and will be saved. Descriptions of the proposed projects will be accessible to the public. These ideas have also been put forward to the working group that has been commissioned by the Lielvārde Town Council to draft the Lielvārde development program and territorial plan.</p> <p>In the last 10 years, changes have affected nearly all areas of the economic, political and public sectors. During this time, changes have also been taking place in the way that people relate to each other, in the way that they relate to their government. A new civic culture is developing. Society must learn to adapt to these changes. The Lielvārde Public Forum is also an attempt to stimulate civic involvement in political and economic decision making. The response of the population and its interest is the yardstick by which to measure the success of this endeavor.<sup>35</sup></p>
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<sup>35</sup> Baltača, Brigita. “Kopienu filantropija – viena no iespējām līdzdarboties [Community philanthropy – one of the opportunities for participation].” November 21, 2002. <http://www.delfi.lv/news/comment/comment/article.php?id=4311567> Last accessed on November 26, 2002.

Baltača, Brigita. “Lielvārdiešu forums 2002 [The Lielvārde Public Forum 2002].” April 11, 2002. <http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=102933&lang=lv> Last accessed on November 26, 2002.

The public forum is a particularly effective cooperation model, inasmuch as it allows people to assume responsibility for dealing with specific problems in a territory to which they feel that they belong. This process is more effective in bringing together different interest groups and introducing the public to the work of local governments than processes in which the public simply informs the local government of its interests and priorities with the help of proposals or comments on the development program. If a forum or some other form of planning work is to be effective, it is important to prepare the public beforehand for this type of cooperation. In the case of the Lielvārde Public Forum, people were prepared by means of the questionnaires that were distributed prior to the event. Filling out the questionnaires made people think about issues connected with development and put their views into words. This process was then taken one step further during the discussions at the Forum.

### 3.4. NGO role in monitoring adherence to territorial plans

#### Cooperation Model 4. Education of private owners and the public about land use restrictions and possibilities in a concrete territory

The dialogue about private property issues must be persistently continued and intensified in the territorial planning process. An attempt to balance the interests of the owners of different types of property against public interests must be made early on in the process. NGOs are able to reach private owners even in cases where these owners do not live on their property or even in the municipality. Example 5 shows that NGOs can successfully bring together different target groups for the purpose of protecting a specific territory and planning its development.

#### Example 5.

Project title	<b>Activation of Civic Participation in Environmental Policy Decision Making</b>
Project executor	<b>The non-governmental organization Gaiziņparks Nature Park Public Council.</b> The Gaiziņparks Nature Park Public Council (GNPPC) is a relatively new organization, registered on August 23, 2000, in Riga. Almost all of the park's landowners were among the founding members of the organization, and the local government of the three townships that are located within the territory of the park has delegated its representatives to take part in the work of the council. The council takes active part in all activities connected with the nature park. The council has put a stop to a number of unlawful activities that were planned within the park's territory, for example, the illegal construction of new buildings in the protected area of the park.

Project goals	<p>The project was prompted by the exhaustion of the natural environment in Latvia's rural areas. No productive dialogue has evolved between landowners, NGOs and local governments, and state institutions. The primary goal of the project was to activate public participation in environmental policy issues in rural areas by involving four target groups: 1) forest and land owners, 2) public organizations, 3) local governments (townships, cities), 4) state institutions (regional environment offices, forestry offices).</p>
Project participants, organizations, institutions, social groups	<p>Central and local government officials, landowners and one public organization: experts from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development; Gaiziņparks Nature Park landowners; Vestiena, Arona and Bērzaune township public officials; the Madona District local government; the Madona Forestry Office; the Madona Regional Environment Office.</p>
Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Involvement of qualified experts;</li> <li>▪ creation of a database on landowners, who were individually informed about the seminar and invited to attend;</li> <li>▪ informative and educational seminars on land use restrictions and possibilities;</li> <li>▪ discussions.</li> </ul>
Timeframe, events, results	<p>The project took place from December 5, 2001 to May 5, 2002.</p> <p>Project initiatives and results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ An information booklet was published on the Gaiziņparks Nature Park's zoning regulations, rules on use of the park, and the rights and responsibilities of the landowners (1,000 copies). The booklets were distributed to all landowners, local governments and state institutions. They are also available to every park visitor at the information centre in the Smilteņu School.</li> <li>▪ Three round table discussions have been held and three educational seminars for landowners on the protection of biological diversity, prevention of deforestation, and new legislation. A total of 60 persons attended these events. Landowners were able to discuss current issues and obtain information from Environmental Protection Department of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Madona Forestry Office and Madona Regional Environment Office officials. GNPPC found the addresses of the landowners (by questioning neighbors and in other ways) and sent all of them written invitations to the seminar. Attached to the invitation was comprehensive information about the seminar program and an explanation of the practical benefits of the seminar (information about SAPARD, opportunities to receive subsidies). Landowners were also motivated to attend through individual discussions with GNPPC representatives about the goals of the seminar.</li> <li>▪ The landowners, together with local government officials, took active part in developing ideas for the park's new management plan and installation of public facilities, and preparing concrete proposals for a plan to set up signposts and signboards.</li> </ul>

- The landowners demonstrated remarkable activity during the course of the project. The seminars were even attended by landowners who do not live on the spot, in the territory of the park, but in Riga. Despite a snowstorm that closed down most roads before one of the seminars, even this one was attended by 83% of all those who had signed up (12 persons).

The project produced an “idea bank” for the next project to be carried out together with the local governments – putting up signs in the park territory. During the course of the project, it became known that the local governments had also had the idea of putting up signs. It was agreed that the next project would be prepared together with the public organization and that the local governments would contribute a concrete sum of money.

“The results are what they are because the organization invites the local governments to every event. This means that resources and events are not doubled and there are better results. The moment you start with “you” and “we,” it’s all over. It is important to speak as though the local government were already involved in the project. The majority of the local governments respond quite positively.”

(From an interview with I. Luse, Gaiziņparks Nature Park Public Council board member.)

As an extension of the project, in September 2001 a new project was launched for drafting a detailed territorial plan of the crest and foot of the Gaiziņkalns Hill. The project began in September 2002 and will end in May 2003. The overall goal of the project is to rally the public, local governments and state institutions to work together in planning the development of their territory. A working group has been planned (this would include landowners, GNPPC, central and local government officials). The working group would work independently and would continue working – meeting once a month – even after the end of the project. The local government’s only contribution to this project is information and cartographic material. The project is financed by the Regional Environment Centre, and the cartographic material is provided free of charge by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development.

The main reason for the successful involvement of all of the target groups: GNPPC underlined that each person’s views and participation were important, that the final decision would be far better if every single person who was personally addressed participated.

“When the public is seen as an equal partner, when people’s views are invited early on – this works. Especially if these views are subsequently taken into consideration – this motivates people to come and participate (next time as well). It is important to approach people as equals. This motivates them to attend a seminar just as much as the possibility of receiving information about compensations, subsidies and land use possibilities.”

(From an interview with I. Luse, Gaiziņparks Nature Park Public Council board member.)

A study carried out by the trilateral cooperation program of the Baltic Ministries of Environment, the Baltic Environmental Forum,<sup>36</sup> showed that the major environmental NGOs in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were better informed about EU environment protection measures than the 34 Baltic territorial planning experts who were also interviewed. The 14 interviewed NGO representatives who work with environmental issues in the Baltic States were all interested in taking part in EU projects that involve protection of the environment.

#### Cooperation Model 5. Informing the public, local and central governments of potential violations of the territorial plan

This should actually be classified as a form of collaboration by organizations as opposed to cooperation. Here, the NGOs assume the role of “watchdog,” and this comprises a potential for conflict, especially if local governments are slow to pick up the signals sent out by the organizations and fail to begin a dialogue with the NGOs in an attempt to resolve the problem. Example 6 illustrates a situation that involves a decision taken by the central government and an NGO protest campaign. However, this type of situation is also possible at the local government level. It must be pointed out that ignoring the views of public organizations and hesitating to begin a dialogue about an issue that is important to society, and not entirely clear-cut, can ultimately cost the decision-maker more than inviting a dialogue and cooperation early on in the process.

#### Example 6.

Project title	<b>Campaign for Keeping Saulesdārzs under State Ownership</b>
Project executor	Transparency International Latvia (Delna) and the Mežaparks Development Society.
Project goal	To prevent privatization of the Saulesdārzs territory, which is based on unlawful changes in the zoning regulations of the territorial plan.
Project participants, organizations, institutions, social groups	The Ministry of Education and Science, the Riga City Council, the prime minister, the Ķeizarmežs company, Transparency International Latvia (Delna), the Mežaparks Development Society, 47 public organizations representing a variety of interests, and 1,013 private individuals.
Methods	Widespread publicity and public involvement, canvassing of signatures, discussions in the media, meetings with senior politicians, letter to the prime minister, the public hearing “The Future of Saulesdārzs in Our Hands.”

<sup>36</sup> Lang, Stefanie. Results from the 2nd Opinion Poll on Knowledge and Attitude of the Public towards Natura 2000. Baltic Environmental Forum sub-project on “Baltic States’ Regional Preparation for Natura 2000.” Riga, February 2003.

<p>Timeframe, events, results</p>	<p>On April 1, 2000, half of the territory belonging to the Saulesdārzs Friends of Nature Youth Centre was leased by the Ministry of Education and Science to the Skonto subsidiary Ķeizarmežs, which immediately submitted to the Riga City Council a proposal for amendments to the territory's zoning regulations. The government refused to consider the Riga City Council's request that it retract its decision to close down the youth centre and transfer ownership of the property to the Riga City Council in order to provide an opportunity for interest-related education for Riga's children.</p> <p>On May 9, 2000, the remaining part of the Saulesdārzs territory was also leased to the Ķeizarmežs company for a period of 25 years. Despite public protests against an amendment of the zoning regulations, the Ķeizarmežs company proceeded to develop its plans for the territory, which included building private homes where the greenhouses were previously located.</p> <p>As a result, at Ķeizarmežs' proposal, the Ministry of Education and Science recommended privatization of Saulesdārzs, which then took place very quietly on December 28, 2001, in accordance with Cabinet of Ministers Instruction No. 651. Before that, the territory was divided up into separate lots, contrary to the government's regulations on territorial plans and the Riga development plan, which requires that a detailed territorial plan must be prepared and approved by the Riga City Council before a property can be divided and built up. According to the City Council, no detailed territorial plan had been either prepared or approved for this territory, which meant that dividing up the property was against the law.</p> <p>Other laws had also been violated. The Ministry of Education and Science had ignored Section 15 of the Law on Education, which stipulates that "proposals for founding, reorganizing or closing down the state's educational establishments and educational support establishments shall be submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers and coordinated with the respective local governments." Furthermore, Article 105 of the Latvian Constitution says that "property shall not be used contrary to public interests."<sup>37</sup></p> <p>On April 9, 2002, Transparency International Latvia (Delna) sent a letter to President Vaira Viķe-Freiberga, asking for the president's support in evaluating all aspects of closing down the youth centre and leasing and privatizing the Saulesdārzs territory.</p> <p>Following the protests of public organizations, in April 2002 the government revoked its decision to privatize half of the Saulesdārzs territory and in October of the same year agreed to the establishment of a government agency, the Youth</p>
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<sup>37</sup> Struberga, Sigita. "Nozagtā valsts [The captured state]." [www.politika.lv](http://www.politika.lv) March 6, 2002. <http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=102618&lang=lv> Last accessed on August 29, 2003. Putniņa, Aivita, Andris Zilāns and Kristīne Āboliņa (Mežaparks Development Society) "Elpu aizraujoša privatizācija [Breathtaking privatization]." <http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=102367&lang=lv> Last accessed on August 29, 2003.



	<p>Interest-Related Education and Sports Centre, in the Saulesdārzs territory. A consultative council was set up for this agency, made up of 17 representatives of public organizations (the National Youth Initiatives Centre, the Latvian <i>Mazpulki</i> organization (similar to Boy Scouts), the Mežaparks Development Society, the Latvian Entomology Society, the public organization “Marijas Māja”, the Children’s Park Support Foundation “Neparastie rīdzinieki”, the Association for Street Children, etc.). In accordance with the statute of the agency, it is the council’s task to promote effective implementation of the agency’s development strategy and to monitor adherence to the rules of public administration in the work of the agency. It is hoped that the presence of so many public organizations will ensure that the agency acts in the public interest.</p> <p>On November 30, 2002, Prime Minister E. Repše asked the Prosecutor General’s Office to examine the option of breaking the contract with the Ķeizarmežs company and to investigate the possible consequences. On his last day in office, on November 6, 2002, former Minister for Education and Science Kārlis Greiškals had signed an agreement breaking the contract with the Saulesdārzs tenant, the Ķeizarmežs company. Ķeizarmežs, on the other hand, has calculated the losses that the company has incurred following the government’s decision not to allow privatization and is contemplating the possibility of suing the government for compensation.</p>
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The Saulesdārzs example shows that NGOs and the public can influence decisions that have been taken without involving the community. This example also shows that the monitoring process has so far usually taken the form of negative participation. In itself, this form of participation is not really negative just because it does not make a positive contribution to the policy dialogue. It becomes negative only when it is practically the only form of public participation. NGOs can apply negative forms of participation, for example, media campaigns, protests, strikes and demonstrations, to express their dissatisfaction with a chosen policy. Such activities are important, inasmuch as they create precedents to show that it is possible to influence decisions, and they allow those groups which have so far not had their own “forum” an opportunity to voice their opinions.

#### How to control and ensure that public views and proposals are considered?<sup>38</sup>

When examining the legal aspects of public involvement, it might appear that there is nothing to prevent decisions that ignore public views and proposals, since the public has no more than a consulting function. Not a single law or regulation stipulates that

<sup>38</sup> Silvija Meiere has examined this question from a legal aspect. See: “Par sabiedrības ietekmi uz publisko tiesību subjektiem un to lēmumiem [Public influence on public administrators and their decisions].” *Jurista vārds* No. 196, February 13, 2001.

anyone is obliged to heed the views and the proposals of the public. The main reason why public opinion cannot be binding for decision-makers in a direct way is this: the law allows a local government a certain amount of discretion to make sure that one particular opinion cannot obstruct well-considered decisions that are dictated by local circumstances. It is not possible to take into consideration all proposals, especially since a positive or negative public attitude can also be an expression of interests that are not aimed at improving the quality of the decision. This factor must also be considered when planning and evaluating forms and motives of NGO participation.

It is wrong to assume that the views and proposals of the public are of little importance and that they cannot influence decisions that are important to the community. It is the duty of the local government to evaluate the substance of the proposals that have been submitted.

In the concrete case, it is the duty of those making a strategic decision to:

- 1) establish a balance between individual and public interests;
- 2) establish an equilibrium in the goals of government activities (including planning) and find the right priorities and the optimal compromise.<sup>39</sup>

In any case, the following basic principles must be observed:

- 1) the decision-making process must be transparent (and therefore controllable); only then is it possible for everyone to make sure that everything has been done correctly and in accordance with public interests;
- 2) the decision must be rational and well-reasoned; this, however, is not possible without a legal analysis and an assessment of various circumstances, among them public views and proposals.<sup>40</sup>

It is important that conflicts of interests and views be uncovered early on in the course of planning, that they be examined with the help of the public, that a well-considered

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<sup>39</sup> Briede, Jautrīte. "Tiesiskās pašāvēības aizsardzība – viens no administratīvā procesa principiem [Protection of the principle of legitimate expectations – one of the principles of administrative procedure]." *Cilvēktiesību Žurnāls* No. 5, 1997, p. 35. See also: Cipeliuss, R. *Vispārējā mācība par valsti* [The general principles of a state]. AGB. Rīga (1998), p. 105.

Quoted from Meiere, Silvija. "Par sabiedrības ietekmi uz publisko tiesību subjektiem un to lēmumiem [Public influence on public administrators and their decisions]." *Jurista vārds* No. 197, February 20, 2001.

<sup>40</sup> Meiere, Silvija. "Par sabiedrības ietekmi uz publisko tiesību subjektiem un to lēmumiem [Public influence on public administrators and their decisions]." *Jurista vārds* No. 197, February 20, 2001.

decision be then taken and explained to the public. By consistently involving the public in the entire planning process, it is possible to avoid future conflicts, receive public support and, subsequently, improve the quality of the decision.

As mentioned previously, the local government is entitled to dismiss any public or NGO proposals or protests if these have not been submitted on time, or have not been submitted in the form prescribed by law.

**If a proposal has been submitted in accordance with all formal requirements, but is not acceptable in itself, the local government is required to give a written answer, explaining why the proposal has been rejected.** Observance of this requirement can be considered the criterion for whether or not proposals have actually been considered, and this provides NGOs and members of the public with an opportunity to control the work of local governments.

“If public participation could in no way affect territorial planning and the decisions of the local government in this context, it would lose its meaning as a necessary part of the process. This leads to the conclusion that the absence of public participation must be seen as a sufficiently serious violation of the decision-making procedure to render the decision itself unlawful and contestable.”<sup>41</sup>

If the public views and proposals that are expressed in the process of public participation are ignored, this casts doubt on the objectivity of the decision-maker and, consequently, on the legitimacy of the decision itself. This conclusion is supported by Section 48, Paragraph 2 of the Law on the Public Administration System. This stipulates that issues of public importance require an agency to hold public hearings/consultations. Special attention should be paid to the second sentence in Paragraph 2: “Should an agency make a decision that is contrary to the views of a large part of the public, it shall be required to justify this decision.” This means that, if an agency ignores the views of the active majority, it shall be required to answer for its decision. However, the law does not prescribe any consequences for the failure to do so. An answer to this can be found in the Administrative Procedures Code: a decision is unlawful if procedural violations have been committed, and persons whose interests or rights are affected by this decision may contest or appeal the decision.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Meiere, Silvija. “Par sabiedrības ietekmi uz publisko tiesību subjektiem un to lēmumiem [Public influence on public administrators and their decisions].” *Jurista vārds* No. 197, February 20, 2001.

<sup>42</sup> Briede, Jautrīte. “Jaunas atbildes pārvaldes darboņiem [New answers for public administrators].” A review of the Law on the Public Administration System. June 6, 2002. [www.politika.lv](http://www.politika.lv) Last accessed on November 26, 2002. <http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=103478&lang=lv>

### 3.5. NGOs and the implementation of development plans

Participation in the implementation of decisions or policies also includes decisions on the way in which specific activities are to be carried out. Although the major decisions have been taken during the planning process, participation in **the implementation of decisions** can be crucial for making sure that decisions and activities find public acceptance and that they are implemented successfully.<sup>43</sup>

By working out their own sustainable development indicators or applying indicators provided by European Union institutions, some local governments have started to evaluate their municipality's progress towards sustainable development. Cooperation with international institutions plays an important role in this process. The continuity of sustainable development initiatives launched by local governments has often been guaranteed by local public organizations or schools. The main problems, which often make it difficult for local governments to actively support sustainable development, are lack of local capacity and resources, and requirements imposed on local governments, which cannot be fulfilled due to insufficient revenues and which ignore local priorities as regards the basic needs of the population.<sup>44</sup>

Another serious problem is that many local governments currently do not use their development programs as guidelines for making decisions. Admittedly, many development programs are not well enough prepared to be used for this purpose. As a document, a development program has only guideline character and this diminishes the initial motivation of organizations to take part in planning work. If the local government lacks the political will to stick to the development program, non-governmental organizations are not able to influence decisions of the local government with the argument that they are not in line with the development program.

If local governments have established cooperation with NGOs when drafting their development programs, it is much easier for the organizations to understand their role in the municipalities' overall development process. Furthermore, this role is not

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<sup>43</sup> See: Crosby, Benjamin. *Participation Revisited: A Managerial Perspective*. USAID (United States Agency for International Development) Implementing Policy Change Project, Monograph No. 6 (April 2002). <http://www.usaid.gov/cgi-bin/jumper.pl?url=%2Fdemocracy%2Fipc%2FMn-6-ms.pdf> Last accessed on November 14, 2002.

<sup>44</sup> Latvian National Report "Rio + 10" to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. Riga (2002), Section 7.4. Local Governments.

imposed on the organizations – this would completely disagree with the quintessence of non-governmental organizations, since these organizations are not subordinated to central or local governments.

#### Cooperation Model 6. NGO participation in the implementation of planning results

Ideally, during the planning process, a local government has obtained sufficient information about previous NGO projects and the capacity of the organizations to agree with them on forms of cooperation – be these joint projects that the local government supports with earmarked subsidies, or delegation of functions. In either case, complete transparency is required in regard to the cooperation mechanism and the principles for the choice of non-governmental partners in order to avoid situations in which cooperation is based on self-interest. Unfortunately, open competitions can only be held if there are a number of non-governmental organizations in a municipality, which all have the experience and the goals to be considered for the delegation of specific local government functions. In cases where there is only one such organization, sufficient publicity must be guaranteed. The public must be informed about the duties connected with a specific function, the funds that have been granted to obtain the desired results, the terms of the contract, and the previous experience of the selected organization as an indicator for whether or not the organization is capable of carrying out a function satisfactorily.

Currently, there is not enough reliable statistical data on local governments that have delegated specific functions to NGOs or analyses on the results of this process and the difficulties involved. According to the “Indicators of Local Democracy in Latvia” study,<sup>45</sup> the category “Percentage of NGOs having service contracts with local governments” received a particularly poor rating (15%), while the highest rating (34%) went to the category “Percentage of NGOs supported by local governments.” This suggests that organizations in many municipalities need more support to make them eligible to act as local government partners and service providers.

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<sup>45</sup> Vilka, Inga, Maris Pukis and Edvins Vanags. “Indicators of Local Democracy in Latvia.” In: Sóos, Gábor, Gábor Tóka and Glen Wright (eds.): *State of Local Democracy in Central Europe. Local Government and Public Reform Initiative*. Budapest (2002). <http://lgi.osi.hu/publications/default.asp?id=100> Last accessed on November 14, 2002.

**Box 3.****How to assess the effectiveness of cooperation with NGOs?**

The main problem is that it is not possible to evaluate the effectiveness of this form of cooperation with quantitative methods alone. It is best to apply a procedure that permits the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. NGO activities must be evaluated from various aspects, with consideration for the views of volunteers, financial supporters, target groups or those benefiting from planned projects, the local population, etc.

Areas of evaluation:

**investments** – resources that have been earmarked for a program (or spent by the program), including financial resources, staff, material and equipment, premises.

**activities** – how the invested resources are applied to achieve project goals.

**direct results** – results of activities that can usually be expressed in measurable units, for example, the number of persons involved in public hearings, the number of seminars held, media coverage, etc.

**final results** – benefits or changes at the individual level, which become apparent during program activities or following participation in program activities.

“Measuring the Impact of the Voluntary Sector.” Conference material, 2001.  
Susan Wainwright, National Council for Voluntary Organisations.

<http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk>

Cooperation model 7. Public involvement in the implementation of planning results:

- within the framework of individual projects;
- when carrying out a function delegated by the local government.

It must be underlined that there is a big advantage to having the public participate in the planning and not just the implementation of projects and activities. Usually, local governments and public organizations are able to involve the public in smaller projects (task groups are quite popular). This encourages a positive public attitude toward the local government and allows the public to become familiar with issues that are within its competence and capacity, to see the local government as a partner and not as an institution set apart from the community.

### 3.6. Resources for public participation

Any form of participation involves expenses, which must be shared by the existing organizations and the local government. The size of the expenses and the means to cover them mark the practical boundaries of public participation – the participation capacity of the organizations and the ability of the local governments to support and establish a participation process that embraces all interested organizations.

NGOs can obtain financial resources for planning from sources that are not directly available to local governments (international or local supporters). This stimulates municipal development and helps in dealing with issues for which there are no budget funds. However, the interviews conducted during the course of this study showed that local governments tend to establish and register NGOs to make it possible for them to participate in competitions for funding that are targeted at NGOs or NGO and local government partnerships. This tendency is unacceptable for two main reasons:

- 1) it prevents those NGOs which have been formed as public initiatives from establishing cooperation with local governments in the preparation of project proposals and the implementation of projects;
- 2) it reduces the motivation of local governments to seek new partners among NGOs.

Among the examples presented in this study are some that were only possible due to financial support from international foundations. It should be noted that international financing is declining and that organizations are now frequently being asked to co-finance projects and make advance payments. This will increasingly apply to the EU Structural Funds.

When analyzing opportunities for NGO and local government planning cooperation and current NGO development levels in connection with financing, two major groups of expenses must be examined:

- 1) expenses connected with the participation of organizations in the planning process;
- 2) funds for improving the capacity of organizations (for example, for training courses on planning procedures).

Opportunities for cutting expenses by cooperating with NGOs have been observed primarily in the following areas:

- volunteer work, involvement of volunteers (in accordance with an organization's goals and interests);
- cost-free procurement of opinions or involvement of experts;

- outside financing;
- cost cutting through effective and transparent planning and preventing conflicts and public protests at an early stage.

### Example 7.

Project title	<b>The Talsi Regional Foundation<sup>46</sup></b>
Project executor	The Northern Kurzeme NGO Support Centre and partners (see below).
Project goal	To establish a sustainable mechanism for the development of local philanthropy – the Talsi Regional Foundation.
Project participants, organizations, institutions, social groups	<p>The Baltic-American Partnership Program (support for the Talsi Residents' Forum (April 27, 2002), which was the first activity of this type to promote the development of community philanthropy and was implemented as part of the pilot project "Public Participation and Community Philanthropy").</p> <p>The NGO Centre (national support organization for implementation of the project).</p> <p>The Hansabanka Talsi branch, <i>Talsu Vēstis</i> and the Talsi City Council (support for the Talsi Residents' Forum by providing technical assistance, staff, funding, etc.).</p> <p>43 entrepreneurs, representatives of NGOs, state and local government officials and other active residents who are the founders of the Foundation.</p>
Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Forum;</li> <li>▪ consultations with residents and stakeholders;</li> <li>▪ participation of stakeholders in the implementation of the projects chosen by the Forum;</li> <li>▪ to ensure a wide representation of stakeholders in the Foundation, the statute of the Foundation states that each new member must recruit another new member.</li> </ul> <p>A community foundation is based on three principles:<sup>47</sup></p> <p>Firstly, a community foundation works at the local level, embracing as many local areas of interest as possible.</p> <p>Secondly, a foundation is financed from local resources and retains a balance between the interests of the donors and use of the resources.</p>

<sup>46</sup> Indriksons, Mareks. "The first community foundation in Latvia." March 19, 2003. Published on [www.politika.lv](http://www.politika.lv) website <http://www.policy.lv/index.php?id=102597&lang=en> Last accessed on June 11, 2003.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Olga Aleksejeva, director of the British Charities Aid Foundation mission in Russia. Interviewed by M. Čerkašina, "Nozare.lv." Published on the [www.politika.lv](http://www.politika.lv) website, June 3, 2003. <http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=106257&lang=lv> Last accessed on June 11, 2003.



<p>Timeframe, events, results</p>	<p>Thirdly, a community foundation forms a financial basis or endowment, which in time becomes the mainstay of the foundation's operations and development, and grants the foundation unlimited sustainability.</p> <p>The process towards establishment of the Foundation began with the Talsi Residents' Forum on April 27, 2002, and the Talsi Regional Foundation was founded on February 24, 2003.</p> <p>The mission of the Talsi Regional Foundation is to cultivate a local tradition of philanthropy and to further the development of Talsi and the surrounding region by supporting projects involving education, culture, the arts, amateur sports, literature, social activities, regional history, environmental protection and other areas of nonprofit activity as determined by the Foundation.</p> <p>The Talsi Regional Foundation was founded by 43 Talsi residents and legal entities, with two more people joining the group of founders during the inaugural meeting. Membership in the Foundation is not limited to the local population, but is open to any private individual or legal entity in Latvia or abroad with an affinity with Talsi and a desire to support the development of the region through the Foundation.</p> <p>In the first decade of its work, the Foundation will have to reconcile two conflicting factors. On the one hand, there is the desire of forum participants, foundation members and society at large to see quick results – a playground for children, a sports field for young people, etc., which require a great deal of work and sizeable funds. On the other hand, community foundations normally provide financial support from the returns earned on an untouchable endowment. Currently, the Talsi Regional Foundation's endowment is zero, and it will take many years to build it up.</p> <p>In order to meet these two separate demands, the members of the Foundation have agreed to pay yearly dues. The minimum sum required both this year and next is 20 lats, but members can choose to pay more. 75% of the members' dues will be used for the Small Projects Program, which will solicit proposals for at least one project each year, on which every member of the Foundation will be asked to vote. 25% of the members' dues will be placed in a Permanent Endowment, to provide for future financing of grants from the returns. These grants could be available in 8 to 10 years. It is hoped that financial resources from other sources will be added regularly to facilitate a quicker accumulation of funds. This approach will ensure both immediate support and additional resources in the future.</p> <p>Private individuals and legal entities are welcome to donate to the Foundation. Donors may choose whether or not to indicate how their donation is to be used, or even dictate the terms for the use of their donation. The Foundation will also solicit donations for the implementation of projects put forth by its members. Donors do not have to be members of the Foundation.</p>
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	<p>“If we wish to place all responsibility on the municipality, we should think about the resources that will be needed and where the municipality will get them. By increasing taxes? Who will benefit from that? Besides, the taxpayer cannot always influence the way that that money is spent. On the other hand, people can influence the way in which a community foundation’s resources are spent. By putting financial resources together with in-kind contributions it is possible to achieve results that are not feasible for a municipality.”<sup>48</sup></p>
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### How can local governments support development of non-governmental organizations and cooperation projects?

- Local governments often support local NGOs, for example, by granting them rent-free use of local government premises or reduced rates for utilities payments. Current legislation does not set out criteria for choosing NGOs eligible for such support.
- In accordance with the Law on Prevention of Misuse of State and Municipal Financial Resources that was in force at the time of the preparation of this study (2002), local government enterprises or local government controlled enterprises may make donations to NGOs that operate in the fields of science, education, sports, healthcare and social welfare.

However, at the beginning of 2003, the Ministry of Finance prepared amendments to this law, aiming to ban donations by state or local government controlled enterprises to NGOs, citing several cases where money laundering through donations was suspected. At the time of the preparation of this study, the discussion was still going on, and numerous NGOs had suggested that the ban should be replaced by an improved control mechanism. The government was proposing a centralized NGO support mechanism to be financed from the state budget. The objection to this proposal was that NGO needs should be defined at the local level, and local government support for NGOs was vitally important for the existence of newly founded and small local NGOs.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Olga Aleksejeva, director of the British Charities Aid Foundation mission in Russia. Interview by M.Čerkašina, “Nozare.lv.” Published on the [www.politika.lv](http://www.politika.lv) website, June 3, 2003. <http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=106257&lang=lv> Last accessed on June 11, 2003.

<sup>49</sup> See: Draft Amendments to the Law on Prevention of Misuse of State and Municipal Financial Resources (Approved by the Cabinet of Ministers Committee on June 2, 2003). <http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=105311&lang=lv> Last accessed on June 11, 2003. See also: Gertnere–Ozola, Kaija. “Ziedošana nav līdzekļu izšķērdēšana [Donations are not a misuse of resources].” Published on the [www.delfi.lv](http://www.delfi.lv) website, March 27, 2003. <http://www.delfi.lv/archive/article.php?id=5085064&ndate=1048716000&categoryID=898102> Last accessed on June 11, 2003.

Following an initiative launched by the NGO Centre, a meeting between NGOs and Ministry of Finance officials took place at the Ministry of Finance on April 11, 2003. During this meeting, both sides agreed that the Ministry of Finance would restrict its proposals for amendments to the law to state and local government enterprises. The proposals submitted by NGOs were included in the amendments that the Ministry of Finance was planning to submit to the State Chancellery on April 17, 2003. These proposals anticipate a ban on donations only for those state and local government enterprises which provide publicly regulated services. Other state and local government enterprises would be allowed to donate a limited sum of money each year. The draft law also dispenses with the donation permits that are issued to state-owned enterprises by the Minister of Finance, since these do not ensure control over the use of resources.<sup>50</sup>

- When planning their budgets, local governments may decide to allocate certain sums to programs that will be implemented by public organizations. Current practice shows<sup>51</sup> that NGOs usually submit their project proposals and cost estimates to local governments in November, and the projects are reviewed by the responsible local government departments. If a proposal finds support, the local government includes the project in its budget plans. It is important for non-governmental organizations to inform the local government of their activities as early as possible and to take part in development planning. This makes it possible for the local government to plan the funds necessary for cooperation in its budget and to ascertain during the planning process whether the organization is capable of carrying out the planned projects.

The local government may ask an NGO to perform a specific function (for example, organize task groups or festivities) and provide the necessary financing.

- New Cabinet of Ministers Regulations on the Delegation of State and Local Government Functions are currently being drafted. These will lay down the procedure by which NGOs will also be able to assume certain local government functions. The draft regulations anticipate open competitions for those who wish to assume such functions. The deputy head of the State Chancellery's Policy

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<sup>50</sup> "Risinajums ziedojumu sistēmas sakārtošanas jautājumā [Solution for reorganization of the donation system]." NGO Centre News, April 11, 2003. <http://www.ngo.org.lv/news.php?id=483> Last accessed on June 11, 2003.

See also: "Ziedot NVO – tas nenozīmē veltīgi izmest naudu [Donations to NGOs do not mean a waste of money]." Interview with International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law program director Catherine M. Shea. Interview by Dita Arāja, Diena. Published on the [www.politika.lv](http://www.politika.lv) public policy website, April 8, 2003. <http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=105920&lang=lv> Last accessed on June 11, 2003.

<sup>51</sup> This information was obtained from interviews with NGO representatives during the course of this study.

Coordination Department admits that in the majority of cases the procedure for the administration of delegated functions is too complicated for NGOs to want to take upon themselves.<sup>52</sup>

#### Box 4.

#### What should local governments and other government institutions consider before cooperating with NGOs?

(Principles of cooperation prepared by the British National Council for Voluntary Organizations)

- Public organizations will get involved in public planning partnerships with local governments only if such involvement is consistent with the goals of these organizations. It should be kept in mind that public benefit organizations may only assume functions that are conform with the charitable goals set out in the statutes of these organizations.
- Different partners can contribute to partnerships in different ways – conclusions about NGOs should not be drawn simply from their fundraising capacity.
- Many organizations may want to participate in public planning partnerships, but lack the capacity. Great Britain's experience shows that such partnerships play a growing role in the implementation of public policy, including development planning. Legislation and public administration institutions increasingly support or even demand involvement of public organizations. However, working in a partnership requires time. Many volunteer organizations are concerned that constant pressure to participate without the benefit of additional resources to cover the costs of additional work can sidetrack public organizations from their initial functions.
- It should be kept in mind that no single organization can speak in the name of the whole sector or represent all NGOs, or the public at large.

Ideally, local government agencies should recognize the value of public organizations and investigate possibilities for financing and supporting them to ensure their participation in the public planning process. NGOs are frequently unable to divert income and financial support to activities that do not directly meet the initial objectives of these organizations. It would, therefore, be wrong to assume that the funds that NGOs attract are to some degree public or municipal budget funds that a local government can divert to social or other problems that are within its competence.

<sup>52</sup> Panel discussion at the seminar "The Role of Public Administrators, Non-Governmental Organizations and the Media in Involving the Public in Decision Making." February 12, 2003. State Chancellor, British Council.

When delegating functions to non-governmental organizations and providing the financial resources to carry them out, local governments should always be required to publish information about the size of the allocated finances and an explanation for why a specific organization has been chosen to carry out a specific function. It must be kept in mind, however, that municipalities do not always have a number of competing organizations to choose from.

Improvement of the status of NGOs as partners of local governments is also seriously hindered by local governments' lack of experience with the formal aspects of cooperation: local governments do not have access to sample agreements or contracts. Many cooperation agreements are oral and therefore not binding for either NGOs or local governments if circumstances unexpectedly change.

## CONCLUSION

Participation may occur with varying degrees of intensity. It is possible to range the participation forms in ascending order according to their intensity – information sharing, consultations and reception of information from NGOs, participation in implementation of decisions/policies, and participation in decision making<sup>53</sup>.

The examples of NGO and local government cooperation that have been examined highlight three distinct areas that characterize the opportunities of non-governmental organizations for taking part in decision making:

- 1) NGO activities, as a catalyst for an innovative planning process, frequently with the involvement of large parts of the community;
- 2) NGO opinions, based on the experience that each NGO has gained in its specific field of interest;
- 3) participation in the implementation of plans, supervision of the work of local governments to ensure transparency.

The first two allow cooperative relations between non-governmental organizations and local governments. The third, on the other hand, underlines the necessity for the NGO potential to make and make public independent judgments. This can pose a problem in the current situation, where organizations are frequently financially dependent on local governments.

The examples show that, if NGOs are given the opportunity to cooperate, they are able to improve the quality of development programs and territorial plans in various ways and are capable of assuming functions delegated by local governments, which involve planning and the implementation of plans.

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<sup>53</sup> World Bank 1993 or The World Bank Participation Sourcebook. The World Bank. Washington, DC (1996).

Promotion of greater public participation can provide opportunities to reach a variety of objectives, which can be divided into three groups (according to the World Bank study):<sup>54</sup>

1. Involvement of NGOs in planning and implementation processes will increase the circle of stakeholders that will participate in the discussion of territorial development issues and preparation of planning documents. Thereby, the planning process will become increasingly open and accessible to the public. The accessibility of participation opportunities in planning primarily benefit small and new organizations due to their limited capacity and status. **Ultimately, the participation of these organizations may increase the likelihood of implementation or sustainability of a new local policy. NGOs may develop the capability to contract particular tasks delegated by the local government.** Participation grants organizations with limited capacity an opportunity to be heard and motivates these NGOs to inform the local government about the needs of their target groups, to initiate activities of seeking solutions for particular issues that are related to development of the respective municipality. Thus, NGO participation in planning may increase the self-support capacity of society groups, i.e., if an organization advocates the interests of a particular group of society, the opportunity to participate in the planning process creates the awareness that the organization is capable of influencing the situation for the benefit of its target group. This is an important pre-condition for development.
2. **Increased participation opportunities allow target groups to improve the development policy of a local government and, in particular cases (especially in cooperation with the private sector), to influence the quality of public services.** In this case, the objectives of participation are:
  - to improve effectiveness of proposed solutions and their correspondence to local needs;
  - to attract additional resources for preparation and implementation of the plan;
  - to improve the coordination of activities.
3. **Public participation may ensure public and NGO support of the decisions, thereby increasing their legitimacy, transparency, comprehensibility and, as a result, acceptability.** Greater public participation in the planning process ensures that a decision or plan will be accepted more readily, even among groups that do not stand to benefit directly from the results. Expanding participation also helps to assure greater responsiveness to the needs of the population, since the information

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<sup>54</sup> World Bank 1993 or The World Bank Participation Sourcebook. The World Bank. Washington, DC (1996).

obtained during the preparation of the plan about the needs and idiosyncrasies of target groups makes it possible to produce solutions that have good chances of implementation. And finally, increased participation helps to reduce active opposition against a particular policy. By involving groups or NGOs in the planning process, which have previously been excluded from the decision-making process and are known for their negative participation activities, there is a possibility of gaining their support.

It must be pointed out that the second and third group of goals can motivate decision-makers to provide for an expanded participation process. The first, on the other hand, may seem insignificant unless it is possible to prove that by providing opportunities for participation with the goal of giving smaller organizations “a vote” it eventually becomes possible to involve organizations in target group issues and, thus, facilitate the work of local governments.

**If there is a bilateral capacity problem, attempts to improve the situation of only the one side will not give the desired results – the capacity of one side will improve, but the other side will not be able to react accordingly.** Information obtained from interviews and the analysis of planning documents indicate that there are problems on the NGO side where participation demand is concerned (organizations often lack the capacity, competence and motivation to assume a productive role in planning). This usually means that there are also problems where participation offers are concerned – legislation is not implemented due to absence of an implementation mechanism, local governments lack the financial and technical resources to offer cooperation opportunities and to process the results.

The ability of a local government to consider participation initiatives depends on its accessibility and transparency, the ability to respond to initiatives and incorporate them into its decisions, and on the extent and depth of participation.<sup>55</sup>

The participation initiatives of public organizations are determined by how encouraging and favorable the local circumstances are, by prevailing participation traditions, by existing/institutionalized relations between local governments and individual NGOs, by the intensity of competition between different groups, by NGO ability to formu-

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<sup>55</sup> See Landell–Mills, P. and I. Serageldin. “Governance and the External Factor.” Proceedings of the World Bank Annual Conference on Development Economics (1991).

See also: Crosby, Benjamin. Participation Revisited: A Managerial Perspective. USAID (United States Agency for International Development) Implementing Policy Change Project, Monograph No. 6 (April 2002). <http://www.usaid.gov/cgi-bin/jumper.pl?url=%2Fdemocracy%2Fipc%2FMn-6-ms.pdf> Last accessed on November 14, 2002.



late their needs and proposals in a clear and logical manner, and by an organization's previous experience – be it positive or negative.

The examples that have been examined in this study show that organizations can effectively participate:

- by contributing opinions and information on a concrete situation or issue;
- by involving larger parts of the general public in evaluating situations and seeking solutions;
- by bringing attention to concrete issues of public interest;
- by involving experts and seeking financing for analysis of the issues and preparation of the groundwork for possible solutions.

In the planning process, non-governmental organizations may carry out additional functions to those provided for by legislation and carried out by the local government. These can render the planning process more transparent and versatile. Organizing non-traditional events, demonstrating new approaches, finding and involving experts (both members of the organization and outside experts) and convincing them to participate on a voluntary basis or for symbolic payment are just some of the examples. An elementary part of successful cooperation is the ability of organizations to work independently and transparently, and to assess their own possibilities (for example, to involve experts and consider their opinions if this is necessary for justifying the organization's position on an issue).

Very often during the planning process, especially the preparation of development plans, organizations actively attempt to adapt them to their own agendas. In such cases, it is important to make sure that as many NGOs as possible are involved in order to balance conflicting interests (for example, in the form of open consultative or cooperation councils).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Amendments to Legislation

- **The Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government Affairs**, in the process of drafting the new Cabinet of Ministers regulations on territorial planning (anticipated by the Law on Territorial Planning<sup>56</sup>) and on the procedure for public hearings/consultations on development programs (anticipated by the Law on Regional Development<sup>57</sup>), should ensure that these regulations enable local governments to prepare development programs and territorial plans using various planning and public involvement methods.
- In accordance with the above-mentioned **Cabinet of Ministers regulations**, the **Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government Affairs** should provide a detailed clarification of the procedure provided for by the law for systematically monitoring compliance of the territorial planning process with the law to make it possible to prevent or withdraw poorly prepared plans, for example, in cases where there has been no public involvement or where this has been purely formal.
- **The responsible ministry should ensure that information connected with territorial planning and development plans is stored in way that permits access by local governments, NGOs and the public.** At present, the law makes the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government Affairs responsible for maintaining archives and a database on all territorial plans that have been prepared by local governments in Latvia.
  - **This database should be made accessible to the public through the homepage of the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government Affairs and the Union of Latvia's Local Governments.**
  - **The database should be expanded to include the municipal planning and development projects that are currently being drafted.**

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<sup>56</sup> Law on Territorial Planning (in force since June 26, 2002), Section 7.

<sup>57</sup> Law on Regional Development (in force since April 23, 2002), Section 6.

- **Cabinet of Ministers regulations on territorial planning should require local governments to inform the ministry about planning activities and submit to the database all necessary information about the beginning and conclusion of the planning process.**

Of course, every municipal development program and territorial plan must be accessible within the respective municipality. Until now, the development programs and territorial plans that were drafted with financial support from the earmarked subsidy program of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development (which was previously responsible for supervising territorial planning in the whole country) had to be submitted to the ministry's technical archives, which are now administered by the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government Affairs.

- **The mechanism for monitoring adherence to plans must be improved** to prevent cases such as the issue of building permits that contravene the zoning regulations of a territorial plan. In accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations on Territorial Planning (December 5, 2000), the responsible ministry must control whether municipal territorial plans meet the requirements of these regulations (previously, this was the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development; now, the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government Affairs), but supervision of the plans (i.e., evaluation, coordination with other plans) is the responsibility of the District Council. In practice, adherence to territorial plans is controlled only by the local government itself.

#### Improvement of Local government planning capacity

- With organizational support from the **Latvian Local Government Training Centre, the Union of Latvia's Local Governments and the Territorial Planning Association**, and financial support from the **Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government Affairs**, the educational opportunities and capacity of municipal planners should be improved. An agreement should be reached with Latvia's higher education establishments on bachelor's and master's programs on territorial planning.
- The **Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government Affairs** should have the handbook commissioned and published by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development<sup>58</sup> on how to involve the general public in development planning updated and published on the ministry's homepage

<sup>58</sup> Marana, Ināra. Par sabiedrības līdzdalību un iesaisti teritoriju plānojumu izstrādē. Metodiskie norādījumi [Handbook on methods for public participation and involvement in territorial planning]. Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. Riga (1998).

and the homepages of the Union of Latvia's Local Governments and the NGO Centre.

- In cooperation with the **Regional NGO Support Centres**, training opportunities should be provided for local government employees on public involvement and cooperation with interest groups. In each region, professional facilitators should be invited to conduct cooperation-oriented joint development planning sessions for members of the local government and the local public. Members of other local governments should also be invited to attend and share their experience.
- **With the support of the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government Affairs** and in cooperation with the **NGO Centre**, a consultants' catalogue should be published. Such a catalogue would make it possible to locate certified consultants who could help local government officials to conduct joint planning sessions with various public groups and NGOs and train them to use tried and tested methods for cooperation with public groups. The catalogue should be made accessible through the homepages of the NGO Centre, the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government Affairs, and the Union of Latvia's Local Governments.
- **The NGO Centre** in cooperation with the **Latvian Enterprise Registry, the Ministry for the Integration of Society** and the **Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government Affairs** should publish a yearly catalogue of NGOs in Latvia, which should also be made available in electronic form.

#### Improvement of NGO capacity

- **The Ministry for the Integration of Society** in cooperation with the **NGO Centre** and with the participation of a broad spectrum of interested non-governmental organizations should prepare a series of initiatives to stimulate the activities of municipal NGOs:
  - project competitions should be held twice yearly on topics that are announced beforehand;
  - an effort should be made to resolve the question of NGO registration costs and administrative expenses;
  - joint training courses should be held for local government officials and NGO members on the preparation of projects.
- In order to improve the status of NGOs as local government partners, local governments should be taught how to prepare formal cooperation agreements and contracts. Possible partners for providing training courses and finding financing: **the Latvian Local Government Training Centre, the Union of Latvia's Local Governments, the NGO Centre, regional NGO Support Centres.**

- **Local governments** should promote NGO training on development planning procedures, cooperation opportunities and benefits of cooperation, prior to the beginning of the drafting process for development programs and territorial plans.
- When providing the funding for NGOs, **local governments** should organize open, transparent competitions that are announced well in advance. The results of the competitions should be published in the local newspapers.
- Local governments should pay greater attention to coordinating development programs with the budget.
- Local partnership experience,<sup>59</sup> institutionalization and future options of partnerships should be analyzed.

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<sup>59</sup> For example, the experience of the Latgale Regional Development Agency's Rural Partnership Programme. [http://www.latgale.lv/RPP/rural\\_informacija.html](http://www.latgale.lv/RPP/rural_informacija.html) Last accessed on August 29, 2003.



## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

#### Explanation of terms

**Development** – an advancement process involving the natural, cultural and social environments and economic activities that benefit society.<sup>60</sup>

**Vision** – a generally defined broad concept for the future development of a territory (for example, an urban environment). The vision is the initial stage of the development planning process. At this stage, public views define development tendencies and problems, but do not provide solutions. Once a vision has been elaborated, it can be used to seek and offer professional solutions.<sup>61</sup>

**Territorial development plan** – a body of documents, which comprises the development program and the territorial plan and which – taking into account the principles of and preconditions for territorial development planning, the results and prognoses of territorial and economic development analyses – sets out the goals for comprehensive and sustainable development of a territory and the strategy for achieving these goals.<sup>62</sup>

#### Territorial development planning documents:

For the purposes of this study, they are the following documents:

**Development program** – the body of documents that sets out the goals, the tasks, the instruments and the sequence of territorial development.<sup>63</sup> The territorial

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<sup>60</sup> Law on Territorial Development Planning (1998). Although this law is no longer in force (since June 26, 2002), the definitions set out in the law will be used in this study, as long as they do not contradict the current situation.

<sup>61</sup> See “Atstāsim Rīgu saviem Bērniem [Let’s Leave Riga for Our Children]!” Project to involve the public in forging a vision for the development of Riga’s Historical Centre. Final Report. Prepared by Aivita Putniņa and Guntra Aistara. December 19, 2001. [http://www.instituts.lv/lv/SPI\\_zinojums.pdf](http://www.instituts.lv/lv/SPI_zinojums.pdf) Last accessed on August 29, 2003.

<sup>62</sup> Law on Territorial Development Planning (1998).

<sup>63</sup> Law on Territorial Development Planning (1998).

development program is a medium-term (seven years) regional policy planning document.<sup>64</sup>

**Territorial plan** – a document, which in written and graphic form illustrates a territory's current, planned and permitted forms of exploitation (buildings, infrastructure, public services), restrictions on exploitation of this territory, and the parts of the territory that are reserved for specific purposes (for example, roads, bridges, protected areas).<sup>65</sup> A territorial plan is prepared with a 12-year perspective and is based on the development program.<sup>66</sup>

**The public** – any natural or legal person interested in or affected by a local government decision concerning use and development of municipal territory.

**Public participation** – a public initiative; the public makes its views known to the relevant public officials, monitors the planning process, requests information on the planning process and results, and helps to implement the development plan. Public participation is encouraged by public involvement events.

**Public involvement** – a local government initiative; the local government fulfills requirements imposed by legislation or prepares additional measures to promote public information and involvement both in the planning process and in the implementation of a territorial development plan.

**Public hearings/consultations** – a part of the planning process; the main goals are:

- to help people understand territorial development planning issues;
- to obtain information that will help to prepare a well-reasoned and well-considered territorial planning and development program;
- to balance private and public interests;
- to convince the public that its views are being considered.

**Public hearing/consultation stages** – one or a number of public hearing/consultation procedures, which ensure transparency in the preparatory stages of a project:

- Stage 1 – preparation of the project is announced;
- Stage 2 – consultations on the decisions that will have to be taken;
- Stage 3 – public hearings/consultations on the completed project.

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<sup>64</sup> Law on Regional Development (2002), Section 13.1.

<sup>65</sup> Law on Territorial Development Planning (1998).

<sup>66</sup> Cabinet of Ministers Regulations on Territorial Planning (2000), IV, 20; V, 27.2.



**Public hearing procedure** – at each stage of the public hearings/consultations, one or more activities are carried out in accordance with the prescribed procedure.

**Non-governmental organizations** – public or nonprofit organizations whose goals are not of a commercial nature and which are not state or local government institutions. Although many Latvian laws and regulations refer to NGOs, they are not defined in Latvian legislation. However, even in 2000, there were 86 Saeima, Cabinet of Ministers and other regulatory enactments, among these, 38 international conventions, pacts and agreements that used the term “non-governmental organization, institution, agency.”<sup>67</sup>

The International Centre for Nonprofit Law defines NGOs as “non-governmental legal persons, which do not seek to gain profit and which engage in the promotion of development or consultations. They can also be described as public organizations or nonprofit organizations”<sup>68</sup>.

In Latvia, NGOs are usually considered to be public organizations. However, in accordance with Latvian legislation, the term NGO can be applied not only to public organizations, but also to many nonprofit organizations, employer’s unions and associations, religious organizations and trade unions.<sup>69</sup>

**Public benefit organization**<sup>70</sup> – this status is granted to a society or an establishment, or a religious organization, or its institutions, if the statute of the organization anticipates a public benefit activity as the organization’s principal activity.

A public benefit activity is an activity that is carried out in one of the following areas:

- 1) aid for disadvantaged groups and needy persons and families (charity);
- 2) education;
- 3) science;
- 4) culture;
- 5) heritage preservation;
- 6) environmental protection;
- 7) amateur sports;

<sup>67</sup> NGO Centre data.

<sup>68</sup> Information on Laws that Apply to Public Organizations. Open Society Institute and the International Centre for Nonprofit Law (1996), p. 3.

<sup>69</sup> Apine, Margarita. Atzinums par nevalstisko organizāciju attīstībai labvēlīgu vidi [Report on positive environments for the development of NGOs]. NGO Centre (2000).

<sup>70</sup> Draft Law on Public Benefit Organizations. *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, October 17, 2002.

- 8) healthcare and prophylaxis, first aid for casualties and disaster victims (health protection);
- 9) protection of civil and human rights;
- 10) corruption prevention;
- 11) integration of society;
- 12) social welfare.

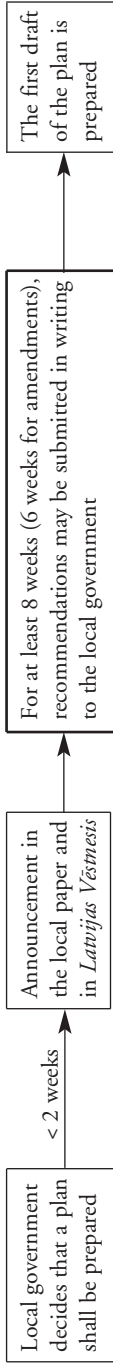
**Member benefit organization**<sup>71</sup> – this type of organization is characterized by activities aimed only at satisfying the private interests and needs of the members or founders of the society or establishment, and those of persons connected with the organization, for the purpose of providing mutual assistance, information, support and fulfillment of interests, with the exception of activities carried out by a society or establishment that has been founded and operates with the aim of protecting the rights and interests of disadvantaged groups or needy persons and families.

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<sup>71</sup> Draft Law on Public Benefit Organizations. *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, October 17, 2002.

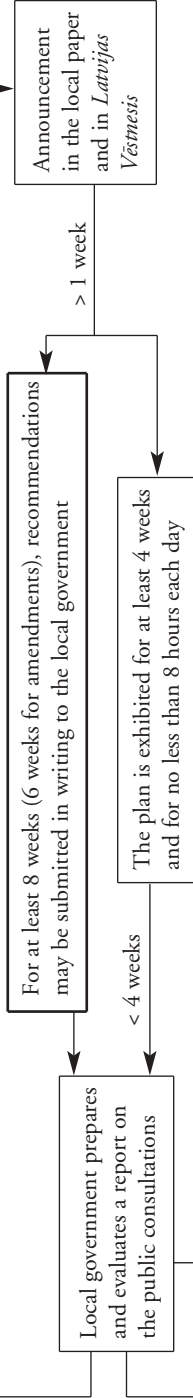
## Appendix 2 Public involvement in preparing and approving municipal plans<sup>72</sup>

### *Public Hearing/Consultation Stage 1*

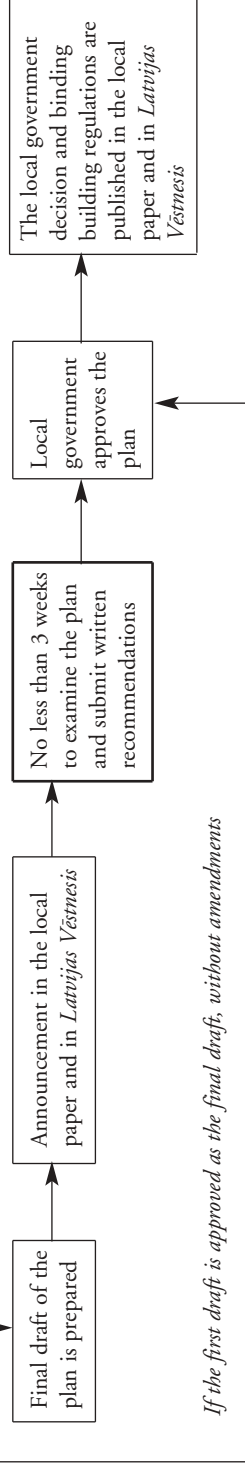


### *Public Hearing/Consultation Stage 2*

*Should the first draft be turned down*



### *Final information of the public*



*If the first draft is approved as the final draft, without amendments*

<sup>72</sup> Information Material on the Latvian Territorial Planning System. Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. Riga (2001). In accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations on Territorial Planning. *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, December 8, 2000.

## Appendix 3

### Survey carried out among municipal territorial planners

The telephone survey was carried out in the period from November 1 to December 2, 2002. Using the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development's database on territorial planning and building experts employed by Latvia's local governments, 46 randomly chosen territorial planning experts were questioned.

#### 1. Have you ever cooperated with public organizations in a professional capacity?

	Number of answers
Yes	26
No	20 (in 10 cases, respondents say that there are no public organizations in their municipality)

#### 2. How do you judge the participation of public organizations in development planning?

	Number of answers
A. Very positively	8
B. Positively	18
C. Negatively	4
D. Very negatively	–
E. Difficult to say	16 (8 of these – local governments which have not cooperated with NGOs)

#### 3. Has the involvement of NGOs in the planning process taken place:

	Number of answers
A. At the local government's initiative	16
B. At the organization's initiative	–
C. As the result of a joint decision	6
D. At a consultant's recommendation	–
E. Difficult to say	4
Total:	26

4. If cooperation has taken place, in what form:

a) Information needed for planning purposes received from organization(s)

Yes	16
No	10

b) Views on a specific question requested from the organization(s)

Yes	12
No	14

c) Organization(s) invited to participate in the work of the planning group

Yes	16
No	10

d) Views of specific population groups probed with assistance from organization(s)

Yes	20
No	6

e) Opinion survey questionnaires distributed with assistance from organization(s)

Yes	14
No	12

f) Public informed about questions and decisions connected with planning with assistance from organization(s)

Yes	12
No	14

5. If there has been no cooperation, what are the reasons? (Each local government could give several reasons.)

	Number of answers
A. Lack of information about public organizations and their interests	6
B. Lack of a methodology for involving organizations in planning	4

C. There are no public organizations in the municipality	10
D. Cooperation with public organizations is ineffective	2
E. Don't know	–
F. Other reasons	4

6. What would be needed to encourage and improve cooperation between territorial planners and public organizations?

#### The freely formulated responses of the planning experts

- Information about public organizations is needed. Special interest NGOs possibly do not represent the groups that should be addressed in the course of planning – unemployed women, homeless persons.
- NGOs are often not informed about the local government's structure, its legislation.
- 1) Resources: public organizations are often like non-governmental organizations, like a personal hobby; it would be good (if possible) to reimburse people for participation.  
2) NGOs frequently lack technology: computers, e-mail; it would be good if there were a database with the e-mail addresses of organizations; this would facilitate communication.  
3) Methodology would also be useful. Organizations have different levels of knowledge; it would be good if organizations were better prepared.
- [Organizations] do not entirely understand the process, which is why the results are not as good as one would like. [What is needed is] understanding of the planning process. NGOs do not believe that they can effectively influence decisions.
- The council is poorly informed about the types of organizations, about their spectrum. We know that there is an NGO Support Centre in this city; [it] should do more to popularize information about public organizations and their interests. Methodological material [would also be useful].
- Greater interest on part of the organizations is needed.
- If a planning process took place, the local government would find its way to the public organizations.
- There is a shortage of information.
- Organizations should register [in this municipality they operate as informal interest groups].
- There is a lack of mutual interests Organizations do not understand the territorial planning process.

- There are no public organizations in the rural municipalities.
- In this municipality, there is one public organization that concerns itself with local history. They do provide information, but have not been of much help in the actual planning process.
- Public organizations themselves are not particularly active, even though information about public hearings is widely available (although it is not specially sent to the organizations). There has been only one case where a public organization has expressed its views on a project. On the whole, we are happy about the participation of the public and the organizations because this makes our own work easier.
- Energetic action; good will.
- [In this municipality] there is only one public organization, but there have been no problems.
- More information. [Bilateral] capacity problems.
- Data on public organizations is needed.
- The capacity, the technical equipment of the organizations must be improved – it is impossible to reach organizations on the phone.
- The Cabinet of Ministers Regulations on Territorial Planning do not anticipate a role in the planning process for public organizations. The regulations must be amended. Maybe there is still time to do this. The Cabinet of Ministers regulations set out the procedure for drafting technical plans, for establishing the requirements that must be observed, and for examining and evaluating fulfillment of these requirements.

## Appendix 4

### Content analysis of municipal development programs

Local government development programs that received earmarked subsidies for preparation of the program in 2000 and are registered in the Technical Archives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development were analyzed in order to get an idea about current trends in development planning and about the quality of the documents.

The archives contained only the programs that received earmarked subsidies from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. The local governments that finance the preparation of development programs from their own budgets are not obliged to submit a copy of the program to the ministry's archives. The total number of programs analyzed: 60.

#### 1. Program prepared by:

Local government	33
Consultants	4
Local government in cooperation with consultants	23

#### 2. Did NGOs participate in the preparation of the program?

Yes	5
No	32
NGOs did not participate in the working group, but did contribute opinions/information	3
NGOs did not participate, but members of the community (representatives of different social groups) were involved in the working group	10
No information about public or NGO participation provided in the program	10

#### 3. Does the local government's development program provide information about local NGOs?

Yes	28
No	32



Conclusion:

- The information about organizations that is available to municipal planners is not sufficient, or the organizations have not officially registered and operate as interest groups (this is also confirmed by the survey carried out by local governments).

4. Does the local government’s development program separately analyze the activities of local NGOs?

Yes	13
No	47

Conclusions:

- The work of the organizations frequently is not described and analyzed separately, but in those sections of the development program that deal with the areas in which the organizations are active. (This is confirmed by result No. 3: local NGOs are mentioned in 28 of the analyzed programs. In 13 of the cases they are analyzed in a separate section, but in 15 of the cases their activities are described in the sections of the development program that deal with the areas in which the organizations are active.)
- The activities of individual NGOs are separately analyzed by municipalities in which:
  - a) there is a powerful and well-developed third sector, which has carried out joint projects together with the local government;
  - b) one of the declared goals is the activation of society, and the third (non-governmental) sector is considered to be a guarantor for development, with the same type of sector-specific activities and development idiosyncrasies that are typical for the “traditional” guarantors for development – the public and the private sectors.
- The significant difference in the number of programs that analyze the activities of local NGOs (13 of 60) and those that do not (47 of 60) could have a number of reasons: disparate development of the third sector, lack of information in local governments about the third sector and its activities, lack of positive examples for cooperation between local governments and NGOs. As a result, local governments do not see NGOs as a separate sector that develops according to its own specific rules. All of the above factors are connected and they are also reflected in the results of the survey that was carried out among the territorial planners.

## 5. Qualitative assessment of development programs

		NGOs/public representatives <b>involved</b> in preparation of the program	NGOs/public representatives <b>not involved</b> in preparation of the program	<b>No information</b> about whether NGOs/public representatives involved in preparation of the program
Programs without a strategic section (Situation report)	Program has only a situation report.	3	3	–
	Report, vision and goals.	1	12	–
	Activities are basically unrelated to the initial priorities of the program.	–	1	–
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>–</b>
Programs with an incomplete strategic section	Goals and measures are indicated, but nothing is said about concrete activities, executors and financing.	1	8	–
	Nothing is said about executors and financing.	2	2	2
	Nothing is said about executors.	2	–	–
	Nothing is said about costs, financing.	–	3	3
	Those mentioned in the plan as financing sources have not been involved in planning.	1	2	–
	<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>
Programs with a detailed strategic section	Goals, tasks, approximate costs, activities, executors, financial sources, expected results are indicated.	8	1	5
	<b>Final total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>10</b>

## Appendix 5

### Content analysis of municipal territorial plans

Analyses were carried out of municipal territorial plans that received earmarked subsidies for preparation of the plans in 2000 and are registered in the Technical Archives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. The archives contained only the plans that received earmarked subsidies from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. Local governments that finance the preparation of plans from their own budgets are not obliged to submit a copy to the ministry's archives. The total number of plans analyzed: 32.

#### 1. Plan prepared by:

Local government	18
Consultants	3
Local government in cooperation with consultants	11

#### 2. Were public hearing/consultation materials attached to the plan?

Yes (but this does not mean that there is also a report on the public hearings/consultations)	11
No	21

#### 3. Have NGOs presented their views during the course of the public hearings/consultations?<sup>73</sup>

Yes	5
No	6
Not known	21

#### 4. Have NGOs provided information / participated in the work of the planning group?

Yes	2
No	26
Not known	4

<sup>73</sup> In view of the fact that in 21 of the 32 territorial plans that were analyzed there were no public hearing/consultation materials and/or reports attached to the plans, the possibilities of assessing the participation of non-governmental organizations are limited.

## Appendix 6

### List of interview respondents

No.	Date	Respondent
1.	January 29, 2002	NGO lawyer
2.	March 7, 2002	Local government territorial planning expert
3.	January 15, 2002	Union of Latvia's Local Governments, advisor on regional development
4.	April 6, 2002	NGO representative
5.	May 8, 2002	Local government development and territorial planning consultant
6.	May 14, 2002	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, senior official
7.	May 14, 2002	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, senior official
8.	June 11, 2002	Territorial Development Planning Centre expert
9.	July 25, 2002	Environmental NGO project manager
10.	July 31, 2002	Environmental NGO manager
11.	November 7, 2002	Local government development and territorial planning consultant
12.	September 3, 2002	Public policy NGO expert on public participation
13.	September 5, 2002	NGO impact assessment expert
14.	October 28, 2002	NGO manager
15.	November 22, 2002	Representative of an NGO consultative council
16.	November 27, 2002	Environmental NGO representative
17.	November 29, 2002	Environmental NGO project manager
18.	December 3, 2002	Environmental NGO manager
19.	December 3, 2002	Local government development department director
20.	December 10, 2002	Local government consultation centre director
21.	December 11, 2002	NGO manager
22.	December 11, 2002	Local government territorial planning expert
23.	December 12, 2002	NGO consultant
24.	January 9, 2003	NGO manager
25.	January 15, 2003	Union of Latvia's Local Governments, senior advisor
26.	January 24, 2003	Environmental NGO manager
27.	January 24, 2003	Head of a local government
28.	February 13, 2003	University of Latvia Biology Faculty professor
29.	March 4, 2003	Local government territorial planning expert
30.	March 19, 2003	NGO project manager
31.	March 20, 2003	Architect, specialist for territorial planning

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