



**Migrant  
Integration through  
Locally designed  
Experiences**

**The inclusion of migrants in policy making**

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**A report on Riga, Latvia**

**January 2023**



Co-funded by  
the European Union



The MILE project is supported by the EU's AMIF Action Grant (AMIF-2020-AG-CALL-03 )

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides research evidence on the inclusion of newcomers in local policy making in the municipality of Riga, Latvia, with a specific focus on existing integration and civic participation policy, participatory and diversity mechanisms in the city, while also capturing progress over the last 10 years.

Riga is the capital and the economic, cultural and political centre of Latvia with a population of 605,802 (2022). In comparison, the population of Latvia is 1,875,757 (2022). From a legal standpoint, Riga city is a separate municipality which consists of a decision-making authority and executive authority.

Key sectors of economy of the city, which attract the largest number of employees, are the services, wholesale and retail, industry, transportation and storage, and manufacturing industry. The unemployment rate in Riga has been lower than the national average for the last 18 years.

Over the past decade, net migration in Riga has been negative, but this trend has slowed down. Since 2021, net migration in Riga has been positive. In comparison, whilst immigration in Latvia has increased since 2013, the net migration is still negative.

More than half of newcomers in Latvia reside in Riga. Overall, the newcomer population size in the city is 34,148 (6%). As of 2022, the largest groups of newcomers residing in Riga were Russian nationals, Ukrainian nationals, EU27 nationals (excluding Latvians) and Belarussian nationals.

The integration governance can be described as 'decoupled', with some elements of multi-level governance. Different integration measures, such as language, integration courses, education of minors and employment support are scattered across several ministries and governmental agencies without any sufficient coordination. Integration measures are not thoroughly coordinated between different levels of governance, although, some steps were taken towards coordination of integration measures with the development of the "one stop shop" under the auspices of Society Integration Fund.

In relation to central government, local governments act independently and are given autonomous functions also in the area of integration. In accordance with state level policy, integration policy of Riga Municipality includes different social groups, where newcomers are one of the target groups. Riga Municipality has the discretion to design its integration strategies within the delegated municipal functions. So, Riga Municipality has designed its integration strategies corresponding to the situation in the municipality, addressing the needs of city's residents.

Integration has been consolidated as a separate municipal policy in Riga since 2010 with the development of a Division of Project and Society Integration. In 2022, after a structural reorganization of the customer support centre, the Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre was developed to focus on city's neighbourhoods and promote participation. The integration function of the municipality was also transferred to Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre, which collaborates with different municipal structural units, as integration policy in Riga Municipality is horizontal.

Municipal Integration Policy commits to creating conditions for diverse participation of different societal groups. It has six policy directions, including civic participation, intercultural dialogue, tolerance, learning of the official language, social inclusion, accessibility of information, and accessibility of urban environment and integration measures.

To ensure the possibility for residents to participate in the decision-making process, a number of participation structures have been developed by Riga Municipality. These structures include citizens' forums, committees, and different consultative boards, including a Consultative Board on Society Integration issues, where several mostly newcomer-represented organizations provide opinion and additional initiatives on drafts of policy planning documents and other aspects regarding integration. Newcomers can participate through various channels, including citizens' forums, and with the development of the Riga City Neighborhood Residents Centre, through neighborhood associations.

Even though these participation mechanisms are available within the municipality, participation of newcomers during the past decade has been fragmented. There are several newcomer-represented and newcomer-led non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working with newcomers in Riga, but they are relatively scarce. There have been cases when newcomers voice their opinion in citizens' forums or are involved with NGOs in Consultative Board on Society Integration issues and calls for projects launched by the municipality. Regarding participation in policy making process, newcomers often face obstacles such as language barriers, bureaucratic requirements to form an organization and problems attracting funding for the development of organizations.

Riga Municipality does not use migrant-specific communication channels. NGOs provide newcomers with specific information they request and the municipality communicates with newcomer-led or newcomer-represented organizations regarding the needs of newcomers in the city.

## 1 THE LOCAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXT OF MIGRATION

### 1.1 The municipality context

*Geographical location.* Riga is the capital of Latvia and the largest port-city in Latvia and the Baltic States. It is located in the north-eastern part of Europe (the eastern part of the Baltic Sea region) on the southern coast of the Gulf of Riga. Situated in the central part of Latvia, at the mouth of the Daugava River, Riga is the economic, cultural and political centre of the country.

*Population size.* The city's population as of 1 January 2022 was 605,802, according to the most recent data available.<sup>1</sup> From a legal standpoint, Riga city is a separate municipality. The population size of Latvia at the beginning of 2022 was 1,875,757.<sup>2</sup>

*Political composition of the current local authority.* Riga city municipality consists of a decision-making authority (Riga City Council) and executive authority. Riga City Council consists of 60 members who are elected for a four-year term as well as three Deputy Chairmen and eight committees.

Within the coalition of Riga city decision-making authority, political parties represented are [center-right liberal] *Development/For!/* [left liberal) *Progressives* alliance (*Attīstībai/Par!, Progresīvie*), [centrist] *New Unity (Jaunā Vienotība)*, [right] [centrist] *National Alliance/Association of Regions (Nacionālā Apvienība/Latvijas Reģionu Apvienība)* and *New Conservative Party (Jaunā Konservatīvā Partija)*.<sup>3</sup> While the parties represented in opposition are [positioning as social-democrat, involving and engaging with the Russian-speaking population] *Harmony (Saskaņa)*, *Latvian Russian Union (Latvijas Krievu Savienība)* and [split-off section of Harmony] *Honour to Serve Riga (Gods kalpot Rīgai)*.

Chairman of the Riga City Council, Mārtiņš Staķis, represents the party alliance *Development/For!/Progressives*. Three Deputy Chairmen Vilnis Ķīsis, Edvards Smiltēns and Linda Ozola represent political parties *New Unity, National Alliance/*

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<sup>1</sup> Official Statistics Portal of Latvia. (2022). Table No. IRV031 Available: [https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP\\_PUB/START\\_POP\\_IR\\_IRV/IRV031/table/tableViewLayout1/](https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START_POP_IR_IRV/IRV031/table/tableViewLayout1/) (Accessed: 07.06.2022.)

<sup>2</sup> Official Statistics portal of Latvia. (2022). Table No. IRS010 Available: [https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP\\_PUB/START\\_POP\\_IR\\_IRS/IRS010/table/tableViewLayout1/](https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START_POP_IR_IRS/IRS010/table/tableViewLayout1/) (Accessed: 07.06.2022.)

<sup>3</sup> Rīgas dome (2020). Rīgas domes Pārmaiņu koalīcija paraksta Sadarbības līgumu un Rīcības plānu. Available: <https://www.riga.lv/lv/jaunums/rigas-domes-parmainu-koalicija-paraksta-sadarbibas-ligumu-un-ricibas-planu> (Accessed: 07.06.2022.)

*Association of Regions* alliance and *New Conservative Party*.<sup>4</sup> The decision-making authority also consists of eight committees: Finance and Administration Issues Committee, City Property Committee, City Development Committee, Transport Issues Committee, Social Issues Committee, Committee of Housing and Environment, Education, Culture and Sports Committee, and Security, Corruption Prevention and Public Order Issues Committee. Main objective of the committees is provision of operation in Riga City Council and preparation of issues for decisions at Riga City Council sessions.<sup>5</sup>

Riga City Executive authority consists of seven sectoral departments, municipal agencies, and Central Administration. Sectoral departments are subjected to seven committees mentioned above. The Departments are responsible for finances, property, city development, traffic, housing and environment, welfare, and education-culture-sports. A separate administrative body is dealing with the income of municipality. Central administration structures are responsible for legal management, capital companies of the Municipality, personnel and landscaping. The Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre falls under the authority of the Central Administration, besides all the sectoral structures mentioned above. This Centre provides unified customer service, public involvement and service management system for local government.<sup>6</sup>

*Economy*. In 2022, the key sectors of economy, attracting the biggest number of employees in Riga, were the services (179,091 employees), wholesale and retail (85,618), industry (46,971), transportation and storage (42,377), and manufacturing industry (37,977).<sup>7</sup> The most popular fields of investment in 2022 were: finance and insurance (24.3%), real estate (16.5%), wholesale and retail (14.8%), manufacturing industry (11.6%), unqualified services (7.6%), agriculture, forestry, fish farming (4.2%), IT and communications (3.6%), other (17.5%). In 2022, the total amount of foreign investments in Riga was 12.7 billion EUR compared to 16.7 billion EUR in the entire Latvia.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Riga City Council (2020). Council management. Available: <https://www.riga.lv/en/council-management> (Accessed: 08.06.2022.)

<sup>5</sup> Riga City Council (2020). Riga City Council committees. Available: <https://www.riga.lv/en/riga-city-council-committees> (Accessed: 08.06.2022.)

<sup>6</sup> Rules of Procedure for Riga City Neighbourhood Residents' Centre.

<sup>7</sup> Rīgas investīciju un tūrisma aģentūra (2022). Rīga 2022: Rīgas Pilsētas Ekonomikas Profils.

Available: [https://liveriga.com/userfiles/files/Invest\\_in\\_Riga/R%C4%ABgas%20ekonomikas%20profils%20-%202022.gads.pdf](https://liveriga.com/userfiles/files/Invest_in_Riga/R%C4%ABgas%20ekonomikas%20profils%20-%202022.gads.pdf) (Accessed: 07.06.2022.)

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem.

*Labour market.* For the last 18 years, the rates of unemployment in Riga have been lower than the national average. As of June 2022, the unemployment rate in Riga was 4.3% and the national average was 5.9%. Nationally, 57% of unemployed persons were female and 43% were male. The majority of unemployed persons have vocational education (33.4%). Regarding age groups, the majority of unemployed persons are in 50+ age group (41.7%).<sup>9</sup>

One of the crucial skills required by local employers is the knowledge of at least one foreign language - about 95% of residents of Riga know at least one foreign language, and 54% know at least two foreign languages.<sup>10</sup> This aspect has been consistent during the last 10 years. In 2016, it was reported that 95.7% of inhabitants in Latvia know one or more than one foreign language, a slight increase from 94.9% in 2011.<sup>11</sup> There are indications that Russian is the second-most used language in public communication. English is used widely in work environment, so the knowledge of English increases the ability to compete in the job market.<sup>12</sup>

*Self-employment and entrepreneurial activity.* Overall, there are 76,902 active enterprises in Riga. Self-employed persons are not included in data.<sup>13</sup> In 2019, 98% of registered enterprises in Latvia were small and micro enterprises, of which 5% were located in Riga. Regarding social enterprises, in 2020, 59% of them were located in Riga.<sup>14</sup>

## 1.2 Migrant population and migration history

### 1.2.1 Migrant population and migration trends

The term 'migrant' is non-existent in Latvian legal acts, and no statistics are gathered on such a category in Latvia. Latvian laws define several groups of residents that are

<sup>9</sup> Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra (2022). Bezdarba situācija valstī. Jūnijs 2022. Available: <https://www.nva.gov.lv/lv/media/15254/download?attachment> (Accessed: 10.11.2022.)

<sup>10</sup> Rīgas dome (2020). Rīgas Pilsētas Ekonomikas Profils. Available: [download \(riga.lv\)](https://www.riga.lv) (Accessed: 21.06.2022.)

<sup>11</sup> EUROSTAT. Foreign language skills statistics. Available: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Foreign\\_language\\_skills\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Foreign_language_skills_statistics) (Accessed 27.07.2022.)

<sup>12</sup> Ministru kabinets (2021). Valsts valodas politikas pamatnostādnes 2021.-2027. Available: <https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/media/13858/download>, 12.lpp. (Accessed: 27.07.2022.)

<sup>13</sup> Lursoft (2022). Aktīvo un likvidēto uzņēmumu skaits sadalījumā pa Latvijas novadiem/pilsētām. Available: <https://www.lursoft.lv/lursoft-statistika/Aktivo-un-likvideto-uznemumu-skaits-sadalijuma-pa-Latvijas-novadiem-pilsetam&id=57> (Accessed: 10.06.2022.)

<sup>14</sup> Latvijas Republikas Ministru Kabinets (2021). Informatīvais ziņojums "Par sociālo uzņēmumu darbu un attīstību". Available: <https://tap.mk.gov.lv/mk/tap/?pid=40488145> (Accessed: 09.06.2022.)

related to migration – a citizen of the European Union, an asylum seeker, a person with a refugee/alternative status, a third country national, a stateless person, and a repatriated person (Latv. *repatriants*). In recent years, another group of residents has formed in Latvia – ‘re-(e)migrants’.<sup>15</sup>

As of January 2022, the largest groups of third country nationals residing in Riga were as follows: Russian nationals (19,356 persons), Ukrainian nationals (3,819 persons),<sup>16</sup> Belarusian nationals (1,338), nationals of the United Kingdom (212), other (5,766).<sup>17</sup> 3,657 foreign nationals residing in Riga were EU 27 nationals, excluding Latvians.<sup>18</sup> Based on this data, more than half, approximately 54% of third country nationals and EU 27 citizens in Latvia live in the capital city Riga.

There are also statistics available on the ethnic origin of the population and several national minority groups can be distinguished, such as Russians, Ukrainians, Poles and Lithuanians. From a legal point of view, national minorities are citizens of Latvia who are culturally, religiously or linguistically different from Latvians. These groups have traditionally lived in Latvia for generations and consider themselves to belong to the Latvian state and society, while also preserving their culture, religion or language.<sup>19</sup> However, as with nationality, on an everyday basis it is quite difficult to distinguish if a representative of a certain ethnic group came to Latvia recently or a while ago. Representatives of multiple ethnic minorities have developed communities and organizations. There are indications that newcomers<sup>20</sup> that have similar ethnic background, join these communities, so there can be no clear distinction between newcomer-led, newcomer represented, and Latvian born minority communities. Distinctions can be made only if citizenship is obtained.

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<sup>15</sup> People who are Latvian nationals and have returned to Latvia after living a certain time abroad.

<sup>16</sup> Since the start of Russian military aggression in Ukraine on 24 February 2022, 33 747 Ukrainian civilians had arrived in Latvia (according the data provided by the Ministry of Interior on 30 June 2022.)

<sup>17</sup> Official Statistics Portal of Latvia (2022). Table No. IRV012. Available: [https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP\\_PUB/START\\_POP\\_IR\\_IRV/IRV012/sortedtable/tableViewSorted/](https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START_POP_IR_IRV/IRV012/sortedtable/tableViewSorted/) (Accessed: 13.06.2022.)

<sup>18</sup> Official Statistics Portal of Latvia (2022). Table No. IRV012. Available: [https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP\\_PUB/START\\_POP\\_IR\\_IRV/IRV012/sortedtable/tableViewSorted/](https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START_POP_IR_IRV/IRV012/sortedtable/tableViewSorted/) (Accessed: 13.06.2022.)

<sup>19</sup> Saeima (2005). Par vispārējo konvenciju par nacionālo minoritāšu aizsardzību. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/109252-par-visparejo-konvenciju-par-nacionalo-minoritasu-aizsardzibu> (Accessed: 10.11.2022.)

<sup>20</sup> The term ‘newcomer’ is used for persons who have moved to Latvia after the restoration of its independence. This group includes refugees and persons who have acquired subsidiary status, third- country nationals, re-emigrants and EU citizens who need support measures for their integration into Latvian society.

As of 2022, the largest ethnic minorities in Riga were Russians (35.7%), Belarusians (3.6%), Ukrainians (3.5%), Poles (1.7%), Lithuanians (0.8%) and other ethnicities which made up 7.4% of inhabitants in Riga. Overall, the largest ethnic minorities in Latvia are the same as in Riga but the number of Russians, Belarusians and Ukrainians in Latvia as a whole tend to be smaller, with the exception of Polish and Lithuanian minorities that tend to be larger.<sup>21</sup>

There is another category of permanent residents: ‘non-citizens of the Republic of Latvia,’ a group of citizens of the former USSR registered as permanent residents on the territory of Latvia, possessing neither Latvian nor any other citizenship and holding a non-citizen passport issued by the Latvian government. The total number of non-citizens in Latvia is 182,375; of them 92,791 reside in Riga.<sup>22</sup> This group is excluded from the overall number of migrants reported earlier in this report because, according to the Immigration Law,<sup>23</sup> foreigner is a person who is not a Latvian citizen or a non-citizen of Latvia. Status of a non-citizen is unique in EU and global context; it was formed in unique historical and geopolitical circumstances after the fall of the Soviet Union. Persons who have a non-citizen status in Latvia arrived in the territory in Latvia before the restoration of Latvia’s independence in 1991. (Children, who were born after the restoration of Latvia’s independence, and whose both parents had the non-citizen status also received the non-citizen status until January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020).<sup>24</sup>

In view of both the historical situation and the new challenges of migration, Riga municipality uses the term ‘newcomers’ with respect to persons who have arrived in Latvia after the declaration of independence of the Republic of Latvia was established in the first half of 1990s. This group includes persons who have received status of international protection<sup>25</sup> in Latvia, third-country nationals, re-emigrants and EU citizens who need support to integrate into the Latvian society. The term ‘newcomer’ provides distinction both from the ‘non-citizen’ and the representative of an “traditional” national minority.

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<sup>21</sup> Official Statistics portal of Latvia. (2022). Table No. IRE030 Available: [https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP\\_PUB/START\\_POP\\_IR\\_IRE/IRE030/table/tableViewLayout2/](https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START_POP_IR_IRE/IRE030/table/tableViewLayout2/) (Accessed: 13.06.2022.)

<sup>22</sup> Official Statistics Portal of Latvia (2022). Table No. RIG0301 Available: [https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP\\_PUB/START\\_POP\\_IR\\_IRV/RIG030/table/tableViewLayout1/](https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START_POP_IR_IRV/RIG030/table/tableViewLayout1/) (Accessed: 17.06.2022.)

<sup>23</sup> Saeima (2002). Immigration law. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/68522> (Accessed: 11.08.2022.)

<sup>24</sup> LV Portāls (2020). Nepilsoņi Latvijas sabiedrībā. Available: <https://lvportals.lv/norises/310087-nepilsoni-latvijas-sabiedriba-2019> (Accessed: 27.07.2022.)

<sup>25</sup> Persons who have been granted refugee or subsidiary protection status.

Throughout the centuries, Riga has developed as a multi-ethnic city. Founded in 1201, the city came under different political entities: Livonian Confederation, Polish-Lithuanian Union, the Swedish empire, and the Russian empire throughout a period of approximately 700 years. There were changes in the ethnic composition of the population when Latvia gained independence during the interwar period (1918-1940), with major changes in the second half of 20th century. During the Soviet occupation in the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the number of residents in Latvia increased from 1.85 million inhabitants in 1948, to 2.6 million inhabitants in 1991.<sup>26</sup> This increase was related to immigration from other Soviet Republics and natural movement. As the immigrant population included a higher proportion of 20–30-year-olds, immigration also resulted in the increase of birth rates.<sup>27</sup> In 2000, the main ethnic groups living in Riga were Latvians, Russians, Belarussians, Ukrainians, Poles and Lithuanians.<sup>28</sup>

Since regaining its independence in 1991, Latvia has seen more emigration than immigration. From 1990 until 2022, the city of Riga lost around 300,000 inhabitants.<sup>29</sup> These changes occurred due to persons returning from Latvia to the ex-Soviet Union republics, and many persons leaving Latvia for Western Europe after Latvia joined the European Union in 2004. A significant number of people emigrated from Latvia after the financial crisis of 2008-2009 and the subsequent period of austerity measures.<sup>30</sup> Over the last 10 years, net migration in Riga tended to be negative, although the trend has slowed down. In 2011, net migration in Riga was -6,301 while in 2021 it was 290. In the same period, net migration in Latvia overall has been negative as well: -20,077 in 2011, and -86 in 2021.<sup>31</sup> Since 2013, the number of persons who arrived in Latvia has increased and the number of persons who left Latvia has decreased. Therefore,

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<sup>26</sup> Official Statistics Portal of Latvia (2022). Table No. IRS010. Available: [https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP\\_PUB/START\\_POP\\_IR\\_IRS/IRS010/chart/chartViewLine/](https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START_POP_IR_IRS/IRS010/chart/chartViewLine/) (Accessed: 23.11.2022.)

<sup>27</sup> Eglīte, P. (2019). Iedzīvotāju skaita izmaiņas un to ietekmējošie faktori. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22364/talsai.02> (Accessed: 23.11.2022.) No: Krūmiņš, J., Krišjāne, Z. (red.) Tautas ataudze Latvijā un sabiedrības atjaunošanas izaicinājumi. Rīga: LU Akadēmiskais apgāds

<sup>28</sup> Official Statistics Portal of Latvia (2022). Table No. RIG 0401. Available: [https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP\\_PUB/START\\_POP\\_IR\\_IRE/RIG040/table/tableViewLayout1/](https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START_POP_IR_IRE/RIG040/table/tableViewLayout1/) (Accessed: 21.09.2022.)

<sup>29</sup> Official Statistics Portal of Latvia. (2022) Table No. IRS030 Available: [https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP\\_PUB/START\\_POP\\_IR\\_IRS/IRS030/table/tableViewLayout1/](https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START_POP_IR_IRS/IRS030/table/tableViewLayout1/) (Accessed: 17.06.2022.)

<sup>30</sup> Krišjāne, Z., Bērziņš, M., Sechi, G., & Krūmiņš, J. (2019). Residential change and socio-demographic challenges for large housing estates in Riga, Latvia. In Housing Estates in the Baltic Countries (pp. 225-245).

<sup>31</sup> Official Statistics Portal of Latvia. (2022) Table No. IBE080 Available: [https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP\\_PUB/START\\_POP\\_IB\\_IBE/IBE080/table/tableViewLayout1/](https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START_POP_IB_IBE/IBE080/table/tableViewLayout1/) (Accessed: 29.07.2022.)

migration balance has also increased, but still is negative nationwide.<sup>32</sup> In Riga, the situation slightly differs from the nationwide trends. Since 2013, immigration has increased and emigration has decreased, but, in comparison to nationwide trends, migration balance in Riga is positive since 2021.<sup>33</sup>

### *1.2.2 Civil society and migrant-led organisations in the municipality*

There are several newcomer-led and newcomer-represented non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Riga. For example, MakeRoom<sup>34</sup>, a partner in the current project which recently became a migrant-led organisation and offers versatile support to newcomers in Riga, including social mentoring, Latvian language courses, assistance with reporting hate crimes, finding employment, and other support. Among other NGOs actively engaging with newcomers are “I Want to Help Refugees,” “Shelter,” “Safe House”, “Latvian Red Cross,” “Latvian Center for Human Rights” and “The Creative association for youth TREPES”. Most recently, with the influx of war refugees from Ukraine, Riga has seen a great activity by numerous long-existent and newly established NGOs and community groups (e.g. community centre for Ukrainians “Common Ground”, NGO “Tavi Draugi”) offering support to the newly-arrived Ukrainian civilians.

The Riga Municipality, for its part, has an NGO House - a structural unit of the Municipality which supports and cooperates with NGOs since 2013.<sup>35</sup> The NGO House offers different resources to NGOs, including its premises for organising different events. It has collaborated with several organisations, such as “Shelter “Safe House””, “Society’s Cooperation Platform”, “Education Development Centre”, “Dialogu nams”, “AFS Latvija” who run intercultural programmes, as well as with “Art Expansion”, “AIESEC Latvia” and “Jauniešu brīvo interešu biedrība” who organise informal events for newcomers, mainly students.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Official Statistics Portal of Latvia. (2022) Table No. IBE010 Available: [https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP\\_PUB/START\\_POP\\_IB\\_IBE/IBE010/chart/chartViewLine/](https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START_POP_IB_IBE/IBE010/chart/chartViewLine/) (Accessed:29.07.2022.)

<sup>33</sup> Official Statistics Portal of Latvia. (2022) Table No. IBE080 Available: [https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP\\_PUB/START\\_POP\\_IB\\_IBE/IBE080/table/tableViewLayout1/](https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START_POP_IB_IBE/IBE080/table/tableViewLayout1/) (Accessed: 29.07.2022.)

<sup>34</sup> MakeRoom Latvia. Available at: <https://makeroomeu.com/about/makeroomlatvia/>

<sup>35</sup> Riga City Council. (2022). About NGO house. Available: <https://apkaimes.lv/integracija/par-nvo-namu/> (Accessed: 17.06.202.)

<sup>36</sup> Specially prepared data by Riga City Council. 16.06.2022.

## 2 THE LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND MIGRATION AND DIVERSITY POLICY

### 2.1 Governance structure and local decision-making powers

The local decision-making powers, as well as policy areas within which the local authorities are entitled to act as decision-makers are laid out in the Law on Local Governments.<sup>37</sup> In relation to central government, local governments act independently within their competence and the law.<sup>38</sup> According to the Law on Local Governments, municipalities are given autonomous functions also in the area of integration. In the interests of residents, *“local governments can carry out their initiatives with respect to any matter if it is not within the competence of the Saeima, the Cabinet, ministries, other State administrative institutions, the courts or other local governments or also if such activity is not prohibited by the law.”*<sup>39</sup>

As mentioned above, local governments are free to carry out their initiatives respective to the Law on Local Governments. Within the competence of Local Governments also are autonomous functions prescribed by the Law on Local Governments and autonomous functions prescribed by other laws.<sup>40</sup> Autonomous functions of Local Governments include:

- ensuring rights to education
- promoting traditional culture
- ensuring the accessibility of healthcare
- social and housing assistance
- responsibility for guardianship, custody, adoption and protection of children's personal and property rights and interests
- promotion of economic activity and reduction of unemployment
- issuance of permits and licences for commercial activities when provided by law
- determination of the use of land and development arrangements
- registration of civil status
- collection and provision of the necessary information for national statistics
- organising further training for teachers and methodological work in education

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<sup>37</sup> Saeima (1994). On Local Governments. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/57255> (Accessed: 07.09.2022.)

<sup>38</sup> Saeima (1994). On Local Governments. Chapter I, Section 5. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/57255> (Accessed: 07.09.2022.)

<sup>39</sup> Saeima (1994). On Local Governments. Chapter II, Section 12. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/57255> (Accessed: 07.09.2022.)

<sup>40</sup> Saeima (1994). On Local Governments. Chapter II, Section 6. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/57255> (Accessed: 07.09.2022.)

- keeping a register of children living in the municipality and protecting children's rights<sup>41</sup>

Autonomous functions are organized by the local governments. Local governments can also be assigned additional functions, in these cases supplementary sources of financing must be allocated from the State.<sup>42</sup>

## 2.2 Migration and integration policy

In terms of social assistance, all newcomers holding permanent residence permits and having officially registered places of residence in Riga are entitled to the same services from the municipality as other inhabitants. Based on needs assessment, these services include guaranteed minimum income (GMI) benefit, housing allowance, a one-time benefit in a crisis, a benefit for covering certain expenses, as well social care and rehabilitation services. In addition, all minor newcomers regardless of their status, are entitled to state-funded primary and secondary education provided by municipality schools.<sup>43</sup> Individual consultations for minor newcomers and minors with special needs are also provided by the Municipality.<sup>44</sup>

Free-of-charge language and integration courses to the third country nationals and the beneficiaries of international protection are mostly provided by specific NGOs implementing projects funded by the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and administered by the Ministry of Culture. These courses are available only for third country nationals. Riga Municipality also provides language courses which are available for everyone who is declared in Riga.<sup>45</sup> Access to these courses, however, is not guaranteed, as the demand exceeds the offer; slots in the courses are taken quickly, resulting in long waiting lists.<sup>46</sup> Free Latvian language courses are also offered by several other organisations and training centres in Riga with the support of the Riga City Council. These courses are open to newcomer adults who have declared their place of residence in Riga and are not registered as unemployed with the State

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<sup>41</sup> Saeima (1994). On Local Governments. Chapter II, Section 15. Available:

<https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/57255> (Accessed: 07.09.2022.)

<sup>42</sup> Saeima (1994). On Local Governments. Chapter II, Section 7, 8. Available:

<https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/57255> (Accessed: 07.09.2022.)

<sup>43</sup> Riga City Council (2015). Handbook (Guide) on Services Provided by the Municipality of Riga to foreigners. Available: <https://www.riga.lv/lv/media/15080/download> (Accessed: 20.06.2022.)

<sup>44</sup> Information from interview No. 3, 15.08.2022.

<sup>45</sup> Information from interview No. 1. (06.07.2022.)

<sup>46</sup> Information from interview No. 1. (06.07.2022.)

Employment Agency as the State Employment Agency organises Latvian language courses paid from the state budget.<sup>47</sup>

A decoupled model of integration governance is dominant in Latvia, which includes absence of any coherent coordination between local and central government levels.<sup>48</sup> Different integration measures, such as language and integration courses, employment support, education of minors, etc., are scattered across several ministries and governmental agencies without any sufficient coordination. Social assistance is offered through municipalities, according to the Law on Social Services and Social Assistance.<sup>49</sup> Overall, the integration measures are not thoroughly coordinated between different levels of governance, however, steps have been taken towards a better coordination of integration measures. Measures are wholly aimed at newcomer groups - beneficiaries of international protection and third- country nationals legally residing in Latvia.<sup>50</sup> At the end of 2021, Society Integration Fund was appointed to be the national coordinating institution for socioeconomic inclusion of beneficiaries of international protection.<sup>51</sup> A “one stop shop” is now operational under the auspices of Society Integration Fund in order to provide services to beneficiaries of international protection and third country nationals legally residing in Latvia.<sup>52</sup>

Since 2010, society integration tasks in Riga have been consolidated in a separate municipal policy. At the end of 2009, Riga Municipality’s Education, Youth and Sports Department and the Culture Department were merged into the Education, Culture and Sports Department. A Division of Projects and Society Integration was established within the Department in 2010, tasked with promoting and sustaining the society integration process in the city, so there is not a dedicated team focusing on newcomer

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<sup>47</sup> Rīgas dome (2022). 11. jūlijā sāksies pieteikšanās pašvaldības atbalstītajiem latviešu valodas kursiem. Available: <https://www.riga.lv/lv/jaunums/11-julija-saksies-pieteiksanas-pasvaldibas-atbalstitajiem-latviesu-valodas-kursiem> (Accessed: 21.06.2022.)

<sup>48</sup> Garcés-Mascareñas, B. and R. Penninx (2016) Integration Processes and Policies in Europe: Contexts, Levels and Actors, London: Springer Open. P 94.

<sup>49</sup> Saeima (2002). Law on Social Services and Social Assistance. Chapter II, Section 9. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/68488> (Accessed: 09.09.2022.)

<sup>50</sup> Beneficiaries of international protection are persons who have been granted refugee or subsidiary protection status.

<sup>51</sup> Sabiedrības integrācijas fonds (2021). SIF noteikta par koordinējošo iestādi personu, kurām nepieciešama starptautiskā aizsardzības sociālekonomiskās iekļaušanas jomā. Available: <https://www.sif.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/sif-noteikta-par-koordinejoso-iestadi-personu-kuram-nepieciešama-starptautiska-aizsardziba-socialekonomiskas-ieklausanas-joma> (Accessed: 21.06.2022.)

<sup>52</sup> Sabiedrības integrācijas fonds (2022). No 2. Janvāra SIF uzsāk Vienas pieturas aģentūras pakalpojumu sniegšanu ārzemniekiem. Available: <https://www.sif.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/no-2janvara-sif-uzsak-vienas-pieturas-agenturas-pakalpojumu-sniegsanu-arzemniekiem> (Accessed: 06.01.2023.)

integration. Instead there is a division that works with overall integration of different societal groups. In March 2022, integration function of the municipality was transferred to the Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre and the Society Integration and Participation Division is working within this institution.<sup>53</sup> Among other responsibilities, Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre develops strategic planning documents on social inclusion, sets priorities and organises their implementation. It also ensures cooperation with Riga's residents, entrepreneurs, NGOs, religious organizations and citizens' initiative groups on issues of social integration.<sup>54</sup>

Integration policy within Riga Municipality is seen as horizontal, so different departments and municipal institutions and structural units are involved, such as:

- Communication Department
- Department of Education Culture and Sports
- Department of Welfare
- City Development Department
- Riga Education and Information Methodological Centre
- Riga Municipality Children and Youth Centre
- Riga City Council Property Department
- Schools and kindergartens<sup>55</sup>

Structural units mentioned cooperate with the Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre which oversees development of strategic documents for the integration of society. In accordance with state level documents, integration policy of Riga Municipality includes different social groups, where newcomers are one of the target groups. In cooperation with structural units mentioned, Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre develops priorities of Municipal integration policy and all other structural units complete tasks delegated to them within their competence.

At a state level, the overarching State level policy planning document "National Development Plan for 2021-2027" aims to promote social inclusivity and equal rights

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<sup>53</sup> Rīgas dome (2022). Sabiedrības integrācijas funkciju pārņem Apkaimju iedzīvotāju centrs. Available: <https://www.riga.lv/lv/jaunums/sabiedribas-integracijas-funkciju-parnem-apkaimju-iedzivotaju-centrs> (Accessed: 15.06.2022.)

<sup>54</sup> Rules of Procedure for Riga City Neighbourhood Residents' Centre

<sup>55</sup> Rīgas dome (2019). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas pamatnostādņu 2019. -2024. gadam īstenošanas rīcības plāns 2019.- 2021. gadam. Available: <https://apkaimes.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/pamatsnostadnuricibasplans.doc> (Accessed: 29.07.2022.)

as well as the improvement of living standards.<sup>56</sup> It notes the need for positive net migration and emphasizes remigration of Latvia's nationals who previously left as the main means to achieve it, not mentioning foreign nationals<sup>57</sup> in Latvia. The need for positive net migration is emphasized due to the overall decline in population and the need to ensure the future existence of the nation.<sup>58</sup> Increasing immigration trends is seen as a challenge. Integration measures, as well as measures to promote inclusion, diversity and tolerance, are included in the Plan. Participation of civic society is one of the top priorities.<sup>59</sup>

The "National Development Plan for 2021-2027" is supported by a national medium-term policy planning document as well as main up-to-date State level document in the area of integration, named "Guidelines for the Development of a Cohesive and Civically Active Society for 2021-2027" developed by the Ministry of Culture, which is set to address the challenges of civic participation and overall social cohesion. The Guidelines focus on the development of a national cohesive, open and civically active society, based on democratic values and human rights established in the Constitution of Latvia, the Latvian language and the Latvian cultural space. The document has three policy directions, including national identity and belonging, culture of democracy and inclusive citizenship and integration. Based on this document, integration is targeted at increasing civic participation, access to early integration measures, and development of social contacts.<sup>60</sup>

To ensure enforcement of the aims defined in the above-mentioned Plan and the Guidelines, a short-term State level policy planning document, named "Plan for the Development of a Cohesive and Civically Active Society for 2022-2023"<sup>61</sup> was developed. According to this latest Plan, integration will be promoted through activities such as culture-orientation and language courses. The main goal within this

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<sup>56</sup> Cross- Sectoral Coordination Center (2020). National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021-2027. Available: [https://pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/NAP2027\\_ENG.pdf](https://pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/NAP2027_ENG.pdf) (Accessed: 21.06.2022.)

<sup>57</sup> Regarding differences of terms in State and Municipal level documents, the term 'foreign nationals' is used when describing State level policy and the term 'newcomers' is used when describing policy implemented by Riga Municipality.

<sup>58</sup> Cross- Sectoral Coordination Center (2020). National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021-2027. Available: [https://pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/NAP2027\\_ENG.pdf](https://pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/NAP2027_ENG.pdf) (Accessed: 21.06.2022.), 23.lpp.

<sup>59</sup> Ibidem, 43. lpp.

<sup>60</sup> Ministru kabineta rīkojums nr. 72. (2021). Par Saliedētas un pilsoniski aktīvas sabiedrības attīstības pamatnostādņem 2021.-2027. gadam. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/320841> (Accessed: 21.06.2022.)

<sup>61</sup> Ministru kabineta rīkojums nr. 32. (2022). Par Saliedētas un pilsoniski aktīvas sabiedrības attīstības plānu 2022.-2023. gadam. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/329302-par-saliedetas-un-pilsoniski-aktivas-sabiedribas-attistibas-planu-2022-2023-gadam> (Accessed: 21.06.2022.)

policy direction is to make sure that newcomers can communicate in Latvian at least at a basic level after a year of living in Latvia. Another focus is awareness-raising and reduction of discrimination in the receiving society in Latvia.

State level documents, such as the “National Development Plan for 2021-2027”, include a number of different policy priorities, including Strong Families, a Healthy and Active Population, Knowledge and Skills for Personal and National Growth, Business Competitiveness and Material Well-being, Quality Living Environment and Regional Development, Culture and Sport for an Active Lifestyle and a United & Open, Safe and Secure Society.<sup>62</sup> As it might be apparent, indicated policy priorities are relatively wide-ranging and broadly outline the way forward in different policy areas. Within most recent up-to-date State level document in the area of integration in “Guidelines for the Development of a Cohesive and Civically Active Society for 2021-2027” it is indicated, this document is dedicated to a United & Open, Safe and Secure Society policy priority mentioned in the “National Development Plan for 2021-2027”<sup>63</sup>. Within the “Guidelines for the Development of a Cohesive and Civically Active Society for 2021-2027”, policy priorities include national identity, Latvian language, trust, solidarity and cooperation. This document also indicates relatively broad policy priorities as well as lines of action which include national identity, culture of democracy and inclusive citizenship and integration. Within the actions regarding culture of democracy and inclusive citizenship there is a focus on sustainability of civic society which is focused on educational measures about civic participation, fostering civic cooperation and development of a space of democratic discussion and communication for promotion of civic participation.

Regarding integration, promotion of civic participation of foreign citizens living in Latvia and raising awareness of diversity are seen as means of integration on a State level. For each year of the period, funding is allocated to State institutions for implementation of lines of action mentioned.<sup>64</sup> Specific measures are defined in the “Plan for the Development of a Cohesive and Civically Active Society for 2022-2023”. Measures regarding culture of democracy and inclusive citizenship include

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<sup>62</sup> Cross- Sectoral Coordination Center (2020). National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021-2027. Available: [https://pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/NAP2027\\_ENG.pdf](https://pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/NAP2027_ENG.pdf) (Accessed: 21.06.2022.)

<sup>63</sup> Ministru kabineta rīkojums nr. 72. (2021). Par Saliedētas un pilsoniski aktīvas sabiedrības attīstības pamatnostādņēm 2021.-2027. gadam. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/320841> (Accessed: 21.06.2022.)

<sup>64</sup> Ministru kabineta rīkojums nr. 72. (2021). Par Saliedētas un pilsoniski aktīvas sabiedrības attīstības pamatnostādņēm 2021.-2027. gadam. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/320841> (Accessed: 21.06.2022.)

development of workshops for learning about democracy and civic participation as well as assistance for civic initiatives, financial support for NGOs, and others. Regarding integration as a line of action, a State level coordination system is to be developed to provide assistance and promote civic participation of newcomers. This line of action also focuses on widening of usage of Latvian language in the public space, promotion of inter-cultural dialogue and assistance during early integration process.<sup>65</sup>

On a local level, a comprehensive long-term policy planning document that charts the overall direction of the city's development "Riga 2030" emphasizes that Riga should become a multicultural and tolerant city. One of four policy directions within "Rīga 2030" includes a goal to be an internationally recognised, significant and competitive metropolis in Northern Europe. In order to achieve this goal, it is envisaged that the Municipality will actively participate in various international networks and organizations.<sup>66</sup> Medium-term policy planning document "Riga Development programme 2022 – 2027" also includes tasks to promote the participation of citizens and NGOs in decision-making process of functions relevant to the municipality, to build an inclusive city and to promote interaction between different groups in society. The rationale is to prevent social exclusion and, by promoting cultural and community initiatives in local neighborhoods, to improve the identity of local communities.<sup>67</sup> The aim of the "Riga Development programme 2022 – 2027" is to fulfill the goals set out in "Riga 2030".

As mentioned above, Structural units of Riga City Council cooperate with the Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre which oversees development of strategic documents for the integration of society. Through this cooperation, the Centre develops priorities of Municipal integration policy and all other structural units complete tasks delegated to them within their competence. Some of the nationally set integration policy areas are covered on a municipal level, adapting to the needs of city's residents. As mentioned before, Riga Municipality has discretion to design its programmes within the delegated municipal functions. Riga municipality has

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<sup>65</sup> Ministru kabineta rīkojums nr. 32. (2022). Par Saliedētas un pilsoniski aktīvas sabiedrības attīstības plānu 2022.-2023. gadam. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/329302-par-saliedetas-un-pilsoniski-aktivas-sabiedribas-attistibas-planu-2022-2023-gadam> (Accessed: 21.06.2022.)

<sup>66</sup> Rīgas dome (2014). Rīga 2030. Rīgas ilgtspējīgas attīstības stratēģija līdz 2030. gadam. Available: [https://www.rdpad.lv/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/STRATEGIJA\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.rdpad.lv/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/STRATEGIJA_WEB.pdf) (Accessed: 28.09.2022.), P. 25.

<sup>67</sup> Rīgas dome (2022). Rīgas attīstības programma 2022.-2027. gadam. Rīcības plans. Available: [https://www.rdpad.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/03\\_Pielikums\\_Ricibas\\_plans\\_Nr.1284.pdf](https://www.rdpad.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/03_Pielikums_Ricibas_plans_Nr.1284.pdf) (Accessed: 28.09.2022.)

designed its strategies corresponding to the situation in the Municipality, addressing the needs of city's residents. When designing the municipal-level documents, priorities which are set on governmental level are taken into account and adapted to the situation in the municipality.

As for now, the local integration policy is set out in the Riga City Integration Programme, "Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)",<sup>68</sup> and in the "2019-2021 Action Plan for the implementation of the Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)."<sup>69</sup> In 2022, preparation of the 2022-2024 Action Plan was underway. Local level Integration Policy commits to creating conditions for diverse and active participation of different societal groups.<sup>70</sup>

Local level policy has 6 policy directions: civic participation and cooperation, intercultural dialogue and tolerance, learning of the official language, social inclusion, accessibility of information, and accessibility of urban environment and integration measures. Activities foreseen in the "2019- 2021 Action Plan for the implementation of the Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)" includes allocation of financial resources to implement 6 policy directions mentioned above. Given the broad framework of integration policy, both the Guidelines and the 2019-2021 Action Plan mentioned above include measures for residents at risk of social exclusion. From the 6 policy directions mentioned above, civic participation, intercultural dialogue and tolerance, learning of the official language, accessibility of information, and accessibility of urban environment and integration measures, include actions for inclusivity of newcomers.<sup>71</sup>

In comparison with State level integration policy, Riga Municipality's integration policy includes more specific measures in regard to lines of action and actions that should be taken in the context of integration policy. When comparing the lines of action within the strategy documents to date acquired for this report,<sup>72</sup> it can be indicated

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<sup>68</sup> Rīgas dome (2019). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas pamatnostādnes 2019.-2024. gadam. Available: <https://apkaimes.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/integracijas-pamatnostades.docx> (Accessed: 16.08.2022.)

<sup>69</sup> Rīgas dome (2019). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas pamatnostādņu 2019. -2024. gadam īstenošanas rīcības plāns 2019.- 2021. gadam. Available: <https://apkaimes.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/pamatsnostadnuricibasplans.doc> (Accessed: 29.07.2022.)

<sup>70</sup> Rīgas dome (2019). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas pamatnostādnes 2019.-2024. gadam. Available: <https://apkaimes.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/integracijas-pamatnostades.docx> (Accessed: 16.08.2022.)

<sup>71</sup> Rīgas dome (2019). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas pamatnostādņu 2019. -2024. gadam īstenošanas rīcības plāns 2019.- 2021. gadam. Available: <https://apkaimes.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/pamatsnostadnuricibasplans.doc> (Accessed: 29.07.2022.)

<sup>72</sup> Data acquired from interviews with representatives of Riga City Council

that the Municipality is able to somewhat successfully adapt its integration policy to the situation in the Municipality (i.e. adapt to the needs of Municipality's residents), and introduce more specific financial assistance measures, such as administrative capability strengthening of NGOs, or financial assistance to promote inclusivity of newcomers.

## 2.3 Diversity and equality policy

### 2.3.1 Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion

Focus on diversity can be identified within the local level policy planning documents. In the "Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)" it is noted that the aim of the city's integration policy is to *"create pre-conditions for active and diverse involvement and cooperation of residents' groups in various areas of life, allowing them to develop their social, cultural and civic resources to develop relationships, based on mutual understanding and respect, and increase the quality of their lives in contemporary, inclusive and multi-cultural urban environment."*<sup>73</sup> Regarding communication in the context of city's diverse culture, Riga City Council provides such information where possible.<sup>74</sup> The vision of Riga becoming a multicultural city is embedded in policy planning documents that are approved by the Riga City Council. Riga Municipality Agency "Riga Investment and Tourism Agency" also sees openness towards collaboration and dialogue as one of their values. Attracting investment, tourists, students and highly skilled professionals is one of the objectives of this Municipal structure.<sup>75</sup>

Information about activities of NGOs that represent newcomers and national minorities is published on website [www.apkaimes.lv](http://www.apkaimes.lv) which is funded and provided by Riga City Council. Information published is approved by the Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre. NGO House also regularly publishes monthly newsletter about latest events and activities that also include information about representatives of different minority NGOs.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Rīgas dome (2019). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas pamatnostādņu 2019. -2024. gadam īstenošanas rīcības plāns 2019.- 2021. gadam. Available: <https://apkaimes.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/pamatsnostadnuricibasplans.doc> (Accessed: 29.07.2022.), 4., 5.lpp.

<sup>74</sup> Information from interview No. 2, 09.08.2022.

<sup>75</sup> Rīgas dome (2022). Rīgas pašvaldības aģentūras Rīgas investīciju un tūrisma aģentūra. Vidēja termiņa darbības stratēģija 2022.- 2024. Gadam. Available: [https://www.liveriga.com/userfiles/files/02\\_Strategija\\_Nr.1700.pdf](https://www.liveriga.com/userfiles/files/02_Strategija_Nr.1700.pdf) (Accessed: 23.11.2022.)

<sup>76</sup> NGO House publishes monthly newsletter named "NGO News". Edition of August 2022 available here: [https://apkaimes.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/NVO-nama-zinas-7\\_2022-1.pdf](https://apkaimes.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/NVO-nama-zinas-7_2022-1.pdf)

### *2.3.2 Strategy for promoting diversity and equal opportunities*

There is no separate policy planning document regarding issues of diversity and equal opportunities, but within the “Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)” and the “2019-2021 Action Plan for the implementation of the Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)” the issues of diversity, participation and inclusivity are enshrined among other aspects. Within these documents, newcomers are also mentioned as one of the target groups regarding integration and civic participation, so funds for NGOs are available for activities including assistance to newcomers, educational and informative events and other activities. The city does not have dedicated services to tackle particular axes of inequality. This function is ensured by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Latvia ([www.tiesibsargs.lv](http://www.tiesibsargs.lv)).

### *2.3.3 Consideration of intersectionality*

The City Council is working with diverse social, ethnic, and other groups without differentiating any of the groups but considering specific needs of certain groups when drafting policy planning documents. The specific needs of certain groups are identified also through communication with NGOs, who represent newcomers or where newcomers take part in. Municipal institutions report on what is needed when interacting with newcomers. Due to specifics of national and local level integration policy, certain measures, such as targeted language courses can include not only newcomers, but other target groups of integration policy, such as re-emigrants, as well.<sup>77</sup> Newcomers who are parents with children are most likely to seek contact with the Municipality regarding education, but there are cases when specific needs are taken into account within projects led by Riga Municipality.

The intersectional approach is adopted across different policy spheres. Many policy areas within the Municipality, e.g. integration, are horizontal, so different Divisions and Departments<sup>78</sup> are involved and collaborate. There is both formal<sup>79</sup> and informal<sup>80</sup> cooperation between institutions.<sup>81</sup> Across all policy spheres, Municipal institutions report on what is needed when interacting with newcomers. Due to specifics of national and local level integration policy, certain measures, such as targeted

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<sup>77</sup> Information from interview No. 1. (06.07.2022.)

<sup>78</sup> Regarding integration policy, Departments and Divisions of Riga City Council involved are mentioned in section 2.2 of this report.

<sup>79</sup> Formal cooperation between institutions is understood as exchange by letters.

<sup>80</sup> Informal cooperation between institutions is understood as exchange by calls and e-mails.

<sup>81</sup> Information from interview No. 3, 15.08.2022.

language courses can include not only newcomers, but other target groups of integration policy as well.

There are no generalised policy directions addressing specific challenges of newcomers, rather there are isolated cases when Municipal institutions react to the needs of newcomers and provide necessary support.<sup>82</sup> But in this context, situation differs for Ukrainian civilians arriving in Latvia, who have access to a package of different services at the “Riga Support Centre for the Residents of Ukraine”. Social services available for Ukrainians are integrated in the overall social support system.<sup>83</sup>

The city does not have a dedicated service to tackle inequalities arising from migrant status. This function is ensured by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Latvia and advocacy NGOs, such as Latvian Centre for Human Rights, “I Want to Help Refugees”, “Shelter “Safe House””, and “Centre for Public Policy Providus”.

Portrayal of newcomers in the policy planning documents is rather neutral. Within the “Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)”,<sup>84</sup> newcomers are portrayed as one of the groups Municipality is working with, which is in accordance with State level policy planning documents. In State level policy planning documents the term ‘foreign nationals’ is used instead of ‘newcomers’. Within the “Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)” it is noted that newcomers, like any members of the public, need to *“respect the law and the fundamental values of European society, but the different identity of newcomers should be taken into account in policy development.”*<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Information from interview No. 1. (06.07.2022.)

<sup>83</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>84</sup> Rīgas dome (2019). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas pamatnostādnes 2019.-2024. gadam. Available: [https://apkaimes.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/integracijas\\_pamatnostades.docx](https://apkaimes.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/integracijas_pamatnostades.docx) (Accessed: 16.08.2022.)

<sup>85</sup> Ibidem, p. 43.

## 3 THE EVOLUTION OF INCLUSIVITY OF MIGRANTS IN POLICY MAKING

### 3.1 Migrant inclusion in local policy making

Until 2012, Riga Municipality did not have a separate integration strategy. Previously, there was no overarching Municipal level policy and the integration policy of Riga was based on the State level document “Societal Integration in Latvia”,<sup>86</sup> which was developed in 2001. Until 2010, some community building activities were carried out, but aspects regarding societal integration were not seen as a policy priority on a local level.<sup>87</sup> In 2010, after reorganization, the Department of Education, Culture and Sports was established, which included a division dedicated to integration.<sup>88</sup> Policy change and focus on integration on a local level was linked to the initiative of municipal staff. Initiative to focus on integration on a local level was also supported among decision-makers in the Riga City Council.<sup>89</sup>

After the development of a municipal division dedicated to integration, work on the first local level integration policy planning document started. The key reason for developing an integration policy planning document was the political will from the decision-makers in Riga City Council and the initiative from the municipal staff.<sup>90</sup> After the reorganization and development of the first integration strategy, the approach to integration on a local level became more systematic, with specific objectives regarding integration, civic participation, education, culture and social inclusivity.<sup>91</sup> In accordance with state level documents, integration policy of Riga Municipality includes different social groups, where newcomers are one of the target groups.

With the increase of foreign nationals in Riga City,<sup>92</sup> during the last 10 years the focus of Municipality’s integration policy has shifted as well. When comparing the focus on

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<sup>86</sup>Ministru Kabinets (2001). Valsts programma “Sabiedrības integrācija Latvijā”

<sup>87</sup> Rīgas Dome (2012). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas programma 2012.-2017. Gadam. Available:

<https://sus.lv/sites/default/files/media/faili/rigaspilsetassabiedribasintegrācijasprogramma2012-2017.pdf> (Accessed: 16.09.2022.), 4. Lpp.

<sup>88</sup> Rīgas Domes Izglītības, Kultūras un Sporta Departaments. Par departamentu. Available: <https://iksd.riga.lv/lv/rd-iksd/par-departamentu> (Accessed: 16.09.2022.)

<sup>89</sup> Information from interview No.1, 06.07.2022.

<sup>90</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>91</sup> Rīgas Dome (2012). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas programma 2012.-2017. Gadam. Available:

<https://sus.lv/sites/default/files/media/faili/rigaspilsetassabiedribasintegrācijasprogramma2012-2017.pdf> (Accessed: 16.09.2022)

<sup>92</sup> Number of Russian citizens in Riga has increased from 16,2 thousand in 2011, to 19,3 thousand in 2022. Number of other foreign nationals in Riga has increased from 6,8 thousand in 2011 to 14,8 thousand in 2022. Source: Official Statistics Portal of Latvia. (2022) Table No. RIG0301. Available:

newcomers in Municipal policy planning documents “Riga City Integration Programme for 2012-2017”,<sup>93</sup> and “Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)”,<sup>94</sup> it is apparent the focus has shifted towards targeted measures to promote integration and participation of newcomers in the city. The former consists of wider policy directions, such as availability of education, culture and sports, social inclusivity, participation and availability of information, as well as intercultural dialogue, tolerance, prevention of discrimination and integration of newcomers. The latter, in comparison, includes policy priorities such as civic participation and collaboration and tolerance, State official language, social inclusivity, availability of information and availability of urban environment and integration measures. It is apparent that newcomers are mentioned in the context of almost all policy directions within the “Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)”, adapting to the increase of foreign nationals in Riga since 2011,<sup>95</sup> while in the “Riga City Integration Programme for 2012-2017”, newcomers are mentioned only in regard to education and public participation.

### *3.1.1 What progress has been made over time, and was there any regress?*

Progress has been made regarding possibilities of public participation in Riga Municipality. For example, in 2010, the Consultative Board on Society Integration Issues of Riga City Council was created and representatives of several NGOs that represent newcomers, such as “Shelter “Safe House””, “Civic Alliance- Latvia”, “Centre for Public Policy Providus”, “Latvian Centre for Human Rights”, “Latvian Red Cross” are among organizations that have been active long term participants.<sup>96</sup> The Board additionally consists of elected deputies of the Riga City Council who can also come up with initiatives. Integration programmes developed by Riga Municipality are also communicated with the Board and the Board members can provide their opinion on

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[https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP\\_PUB/START\\_POP\\_IR\\_IRV/RIG030/table/tableViewLayout1/](https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START_POP_IR_IRV/RIG030/table/tableViewLayout1/) (Accessed: 16.09.2022.)

<sup>93</sup> Rīgas Dome (2012). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas programma 2012.-2017. Gadam. Available:

<https://sus.lv/sites/default/files/media/faili/rigaspilsetasabiedribasintegracijasprogramma2012-2017.pdf> (Accessed: 16.09.2022.)

<sup>94</sup> Rīgas dome (2019). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas pamatnostādnes 2019.-2024. gadam. Available: <https://apkaimes.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/integracijas-pamatnostades.docx> (Accessed: 16.08.2022.)

<sup>95</sup> Official Statistics Portal of Latvia (2022). Table No. RIG0301. Available: [https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP\\_PUB/START\\_POP\\_IR\\_IRV/RIG030/chart/chartViewLine/](https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START_POP_IR_IRV/RIG030/chart/chartViewLine/) (Accessed: 23.11.2022.)

<sup>96</sup> Information from interview No.1, 06.07.2022.

documents presented as well as discussing additional initiatives that should be added to the documents.

Since 2013, several NGOs have joined renewed Memorandum between NGOs and the Riga City Council<sup>97</sup>, within which integration is one of the aspects that is discussed. Memorandum, a document, which is dedicated to active cooperation between the NGOs<sup>98</sup> and the Riga City Council in the decision-making process, was signed by 208 NGOs.<sup>99</sup> This Memorandum also has a Memorandum board, which consists of 9 NGOs who represent the overall opinion of NGO sector in several policy areas in the Municipality.<sup>100</sup>

Progress has also been made by widening the overall possibilities of participation through various channels, including citizens' forums, as well as the idea of participation through neighbourhoods. The creation of Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre can be seen as a significant progress towards widening accessibility of participation. The Centre makes local government services and participation opportunities more accessible to residents of Riga Municipality, and provides networking opportunity by introducing activists to neighbourhood associations.<sup>101</sup> There are indications that several participatory mechanisms have been developed in the Municipality, such as the already mentioned Consultative Board and the Memorandum, as well as committees and working groups in different policy areas.<sup>102</sup>

### *3.1.2 Are there any differences that can be observed across policy spheres?*

Some of the policy spheres, such as health, are a state level issue. Regarding other policy spheres which are within the competence of Municipality, newcomers are involved through NGOs within the work of the Consultative Board on Society Integration Issues. There have been cases when newcomers voice their opinion on

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<sup>97</sup> Rīgas dome (2020). Par sadarbības memorandu. Available: <https://www.riga.lv/lv/sadarbiba-ar-nevalstiskajam-organizacijam> (Accessed: 24.11.2022.)

<sup>98</sup> Rīgas dome (2013). Rīgas pilsētas pašvaldības un nevalstisko organizāciju sadarbības memorands. Available: <https://www.riga.lv/lv/media/5578/download> (Accessed: 19.09.2022)

<sup>99</sup> Rīgas dome (2022). Rīgas domes un nevalstisko organizāciju sadarbības memorandu parakstījušo organizāciju saraksts. Available: <https://www.riga.lv/lv/media/11558/download> (Accessed: 19.09.2022.)

<sup>100</sup> Rīgas dome (2022). Rīgas valstspilsētas pašvaldības un nevalstisko organizāciju sadarbības memoranda īstenošanas padomes nolikums. Available: <https://www.riga.lv/lv/media/28760/download> (Accessed: 19.09.2022.)

<sup>101</sup> Information from interview No. 2, 09.08.2022.

<sup>102</sup> Frīdenberga, A., Stafecka, L., Tarasova- Dubkeviča, S. (2021). Iedzīvotāju iespējas iesaistīties lēmumu pieņemšanā Rīgā. Available: [https://providus.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Petijums\\_iedzivotaju-iespejas-iesaistities-Rigas-pasvaldiba.pdf](https://providus.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Petijums_iedzivotaju-iespejas-iesaistities-Rigas-pasvaldiba.pdf) (Accessed: 11.08.2022.)

citizens' forums as well. Newcomers can also be involved in NGOs that participate in calls for projects launched by the Municipality. Due to the relatively small number of newcomer-led organizations,<sup>103</sup> direct participation of newcomers during the last 10 years has been fragmented. As for now, a number of NGOs that represent newcomers participate in policy-making process within the Consultative Board on Society Integration Issues. These NGOs sometimes apply for project calls targeting inclusivity of newcomers. There are no clear indications, that there are significant differences in different policy areas regarding inclusivity of newcomers.

### *3.1.3 What were the key 'critical events' that have shaped the evolution of inclusivity of migrants in local policy making process?*

The evolution of inclusivity of newcomers in local policy making process can be captured by exploring the influence of various events at the global, national and local level over the past decade or so (table 1). On a national level overall, civic participation in policy making is defined in the "Civil Society and Integration Policy Guidelines 2012 – 2018"<sup>104</sup> as one of the main principles for promoting civic engagement and integration of all societal groups whilst reducing discrimination. While the document was in force, the effects of Syrian refugee crisis can be identified as an influence since Latvia committed to join the EU Relocation Programme in 2015.<sup>105</sup>

The "Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who needed International Protection" was subsequently issued in 2015,<sup>106</sup> in which the process of integration for persons who seek asylum and receive international protection status was defined. Previously, there were almost no targeted support policies available in this area.<sup>107</sup> This aspect is important, because Asylum Law was adopted in 2015<sup>108</sup> and changes in other legislative acts concerning beneficiaries of international protection

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<sup>103</sup> Information from interviews No. 6 (24.08.2022.), No. 7. (25.08.2022.), No. 8 (12.09.2022.)

<sup>104</sup> Ministru Kabinets (2011). Par Nacionālās identitātes, pilsoniskās sabiedrības un integrācijas pamatnostādņēm 2012.-2018. Gadam. Piejams: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/238195-par-nacionalas-identitates-pilsoniskas-sabiedribas-un-integracijas-politikas-pamatnostadnem-2012-2018-gadam> (Accessed: 01.08.2022.)

<sup>105</sup> Geks, R. F., Lāce, A. (2018).

<sup>106</sup> Cabinet Order No. 759 (2015). Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who need International Protection. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/278257> (Accessed: 01.08.2022.)

<sup>107</sup> Geks, R., F., Lāce, A. (2018). Starptautiskās aizsardzības saņēmēju integrācijas izvērtēšana un uzlabošana. Sākotnējais izvērtējums: Latvija. Available: [https://providus.lv/article\\_files/3568/original/NIEM\\_Latvian\\_FINAL.pdf?1561037129](https://providus.lv/article_files/3568/original/NIEM_Latvian_FINAL.pdf?1561037129) (Accessed: 19.09.2022.), 4. Lpp.

<sup>108</sup> Saeima (2015). Asylum Law. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/278986> (Accessed: 19.09.2022.)

were made. Asylum Law was adopted in 2015, ensuring the right to receive asylum or status of international protection.<sup>109</sup>

Further developments regarding the evolution of inclusivity in policy making include “National Identity and societal integration implementation plan 2019- 2020” approved in 2018 by the Cabinet of Ministers<sup>110</sup> as a continuation of the “Civil Society and Integration Policy Guidelines 2012-2018”. Within this plan, civic participation is seen as a form of integration. Policy of inclusivity of foreign nationals and asylum seekers can be seen as multi-faceted in which the policy planning has gradually developed, with Syrian refugee crisis being one of the axis which has affected certain aspects of integration policy in Latvia.

The Ukraine refugee crisis has had the biggest effect on a Municipal level. A separate division “Riga Support Centre for the Residents of Ukraine” under the Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre was formed, acting as a one-stop-shop to ensure the needs of civilians arriving from Ukraine were met. Besides this, Ukrainians in Riga Municipality are seen as priority target groups for calls for projects for NGOs and subordinate institutions of Riga City Municipality in 2022.<sup>111</sup> Overall, the Ukraine refugee crisis has affected Municipalities significantly. According to the Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians, Municipalities provide social assistance and certain housing assistance which is compensated by the State.<sup>112</sup>

The development of division dedicated to integration in 2010 has resulted in significant changes in local level integration policy. With the formation of numerous participatory mechanisms, newcomers are involved through NGOs within the work of the Consultative Board on Society Integration Issues, there have been cases when newcomers voice their opinion on citizens’ forums as well. Newcomers can also be involved in NGOs that participate in calls for projects launched by the Municipality. Due to the relatively small number of newcomer-led organizations,<sup>113</sup> direct participation of newcomers during the last 10 years has been fragmented. Increase of focus on inclusion and participation of newcomers in policy making can be identified when comparing two local level integration policy planning documents in

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<sup>109</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>110</sup> Ministru kabineta rīkojums Nr. 345 (2018). Par Nacionālās identitātes, pilsoniskās sabiedrības un integrācijas īstenošanas plānu 2019.- 2020. gadam. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/300483-par-nacionalas-identitates-pilsoniskas-sabiedribas-un-integracijas-politikas-istenosanas-planu-2019-2020-gadam> (Accessed: 01.08.2022.)

<sup>111</sup> Information from interview No.1, (06.07.2022.)

<sup>112</sup> Saeima (2022). Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/330546> (Accessed: 11.08.2022.)

<sup>113</sup> Information from interviews No. 6 (24.08.2022.), No. 7. (25.08.2022.), No. 8 (12.09.2022.)

Riga described in section 2.2. As mentioned before, the increase of focus in the Riga Municipality on newcomer inclusion and participation in policy making parallels the increase of newcomers in Riga.

In 2021, Riga Municipality initiated major structural changes where the customer service centre was formed into the Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre which provides a variety of services and has several divisions, including the Division in charge of the development of integration policy. Changes in local government had a significant impact on these structural reforms. Following the Extraordinary Elections to the Riga City Council in 2020, and the change in political composition of the coalition of the Riga City Council (when *Development/For!/ Progressives* alliance won 26.2% of the votes<sup>114</sup> and formed a coalition of the Council along other parties mentioned in section 1.1.3), the development of Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre was among the goals of the new Riga City Council.<sup>115</sup> These changes were done to focus on city's neighbourhoods and promote participation more effectively, as coordinators are allocated to each of the city's neighbourhoods. The neighbourhood coordinators act as intermediaries between local authorities and residents by helping to raise issues brought up by residents on a municipal level. There are plans to promote networking among residents of neighbourhoods and foster cooperation and understanding between different residents of the city, including newcomers.<sup>116</sup>

During the last 10 years, there haven't been any major changes on a national level that highly affected the Municipal policy on integration, besides Latvia joining the EU relocation programme, which resulted in the development of the "Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who needed International Protection". This plan targets asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. The Ukraine Refugee crisis contributed towards the adoption of the "Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians" at a national level,<sup>117</sup> while municipalities, including Riga, adapt to the situation.

The last 10 years have been crucial for Riga Municipality because the first overarching Municipal level policy-planning documents regarding integration were developed in 2012 (see section 2.2). Changes in the local level integration policy were caused by the development of integration strategy in 2012 (section 3.1) and change of political

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<sup>114</sup> Central Election Commission(2020). August 29, Riga city elections. Available: <https://rd2020.cvk.lv/pub/en/election-results> (Accessed: 19.09.2022.)

<sup>115</sup> Information from interview No. 2, 09.08.2022.

<sup>116</sup> Information from interview No. 2, 09.08.2022.

<sup>117</sup> Saeima (2022). Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/330546> (Accessed: 01.08.2022.)

composition of Riga City Council in 2021 that resulted in major structural changes in municipality. Increase of focus on inclusion and participation of newcomers in policy making can be identified when comparing two local level integration policy planning documents in Riga (section 2.2). As mentioned before, the increase of focus to newcomer inclusion and participation in policy making is related to increase of newcomers in Riga, therefore municipality adopted the integration policy in accordance to these changes.

Any initiative can be a cause of change in policy. As indicated by the representatives of Riga City Municipality, the policy is tailored to the situation in the Municipality. For example, an increase of newcomers in Riga has resulted in newcomers being added as a target group regarding project grants for NGOs. Riga Municipality also adapted to the situation caused by the Ukraine refugee crisis – a separate unit within the Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre was developed to ensure the needs of civilians arriving from Ukraine to Riga.

**Table 1** Migrant inclusion in policy making: timeline of progress in the municipality of Riga

When	Global event	National event	Local event	Impact
2010			<b>Establishing social integration division.</b> At the end of 2009, Riga Municipality's Education, Youth and Sports Department and the Culture Department were merged into the Education, Culture and Sports Department. A Division of Projects and Society Integration was established within the Department in 2010, tasked with promoting and sustaining social integration in the city, focusing on the integration of different societal groups, including newcomers. <sup>118</sup>	<b>Recognising the importance of integration.</b> The Riga Council recognises the importance of its integration function due to an emergence of political will within the Riga Municipality.
2010			<b>Creating a consultative board on integration.</b> In 2010, the Consultative Board on Society Integration Issues of Riga City Council was created, involving representatives of several civil society organisations that represent newcomer	<b>Civil society influencing integration policy.</b> The new consultative board created a mechanism within which civil society organisations that represent newcomers in Riga can take a stand in municipality's integration policy. In 2022, civil

<sup>118</sup> Rīgas dome (2022) 'Sabiedrības integrācijas funkciju pārņem Apkaimju iedzīvotāju centrs', Available at: <https://www.riga.lv/lv/jaunums/sabiedribas-integracijas-funkciju-parnem-apkaimju-iedzivotaju-centrs> [Accessed on 15/06/2022]

			communities, including Shelter “Safe House”, Civic Alliance-Latvia, Centre for Public Policy Providus, Latvian Centre for Human Rights, Latvian Red Cross. <sup>119</sup>	society organisations continue to be engaged in the consultative board. The Centre for Public Policy Providus and Shelter “Safe House” work on migration issues.
<b>2011</b>	<b>The onset of the Syrian civil war.</b> The civil war in Syria is an ongoing conflict, started in 2011 as an uprising against President Bashar al-Assad, with large numbers of casualties and refugees fleeing the country. <sup>120</sup>			<b>Latvia responds to refugee crisis.</b> More than 6.8 million Syrians have been forced to flee their country since 2011. <sup>121</sup> Latvia committed to join the EU Relocation Programme in 2015. <sup>122</sup>
<b>2011</b>		<b>Introducing a national policy on integration.</b> In 2011, a new policy ‘National Identity, Civil Society and		<b>Taking a systemic approach to integration.</b> Policy directions regarding national identity, civil society development and integration are defined at a national level, taking a systemic

<sup>119</sup> Source: Interview with the Riga Municipality officials who work in the area of integration, 6 July 2022.

<sup>120</sup> Loft, P., Sturge, G. and Kirk-Wade, E. (2022) ‘The Syrian civil war: Timeline and statistics’, Research Briefing, House of Commons Library, UK Parliament, 6 September 2022, Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9381/> [Accessed on 21/11/2022]

<sup>121</sup> UNHCR. Syria Refugee Crisis Explained. Available at: <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/#:~:text=After%20ten%20years%2C%20Syria%20remains,million%20people%20remain%20internally%20displaced> [Accessed on 23/11/2022]

<sup>122</sup> Geks, R. F. and Lāce, A. (2018) ‘Starptautiskās aizsardzības saņēmēju integrācijas izvērtēšana un uzlabošana’, Sākotnējais izvērtējums: Latvija, Available at: [https://providus.lv/article\\_files/3568/original/NIEM\\_Latvian\\_FINAL.pdf?1561037129](https://providus.lv/article_files/3568/original/NIEM_Latvian_FINAL.pdf?1561037129) [Accessed on 12/12/2022]

		Integration Policy Guidelines 2012- 2018' is introduced. <sup>123</sup>		approach to integration challenges. <sup>124</sup>
2012			<b>Introducing Riga City Integration Programme.</b> The Riga Council introduces 'Riga City Integration Programme for 2012-2017', consisting of wider policy directions, such as availability of education, culture and sports, social inclusivity, participation and availability of information, as well as intercultural dialogue, tolerance, prevention of discrimination and integration of newcomers. <sup>125</sup>	<b>Newcomer integration mentioned explicitly.</b> The 'Riga City Integration Programme for 2012-2017' was the first integration policy document in Riga. The policy priorities are for the first time set out on a municipal level and the term 'newcomers' is also mentioned for the first time.
2013			<b>Establishing the NGO House.</b> The Riga Municipality creates a new NGO House in 2013 to support civil society and NGOs in the city. The NGO House is a structural unit of the	<b>Support and resources for NGOs.</b> The NGO House offers different resources to NGOs, including its premises for organising events. It has collaborated with several organisations that run

<sup>123</sup> Ministru Kabinets (2011) 'Par Nacionālās identitātes, pilsoniskās sabiedrības un integrācijas pamatnostādņem 2012.-2018', Gadam. Piejams: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/238195-par-nacionalas-identitates-pilsoniskas-sabiedribas-un-integracijas-politikas-pamatnostadnem-2012-2018-gadam> [Accessed on: 01/08/2022]

<sup>124</sup> Ministru Kabinets (2011) 'Par Nacionālās identitātes, pilsoniskās sabiedrības un integrācijas pamatnostādņem 2012.-2018', Gadam. Piejams: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/238195-par-nacionalas-identitates-pilsoniskas-sabiedribas-un-integracijas-politikas-pamatnostadnem-2012-2018-gadam> [Accessed on: 01/08/2022]

<sup>125</sup> Rīgas Dome (2012) 'Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas programma 2012.-2017', Gadam, Available at: <https://sus.lv/sites/default/files/media/faili/rigaspilsetassabiedribasintegracijasprogramma2012-2017.pdf> [Accessed on: 16/09/2022]

			Municipality which supports and cooperates with NGOs. <sup>126</sup>	intercultural programmes and organise informal events for newcomers, mainly students. <sup>127</sup> The House supports the preservation of ethnic identity and the capacity building activities for NGOs. <sup>128</sup>
2015		<b>Latvia commits to asylum seeker relocation.</b> Latvia joins the EU relocation programme in 2015 in response to the Syrian War refugee crisis. <sup>129</sup>		<b>Action plan for refugee inclusion.</b> The Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection is issued in 2015, creating a system for socio-economic inclusion of refugees and persons who have obtained alternative status. <sup>130</sup> Asylum Law was adopted, ensuring the right to receive asylum or the status of international protection. <sup>131</sup>
2019			<b>Introducing a new integration programme.</b> The Riga City Integration Programme 'Guidelines on Societal	<b>Strengthening newcomer integration and participation.</b> This second integration policy consists of six key directions,

<sup>126</sup> Riga City Council (2022) 'About NGO house', Available at: <https://apkaimies.lv/integracija/par-nvo-namu/> [Accessed on: 17/06/2022]

<sup>127</sup> Specially prepared data by Riga City Council [16/06/2022]

<sup>128</sup> Par NVO namu. Available at: <https://apkaimies.lv/integracija/par-nvo-namu/> [Accessed on 14/11/2022]

<sup>129</sup> Ministru prezidents (2015) 'Par darba grupu', Available at: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/275505-par-darba-grupu> [Accessed on 23/11/2022]

<sup>130</sup> Cabinet of Ministers (2015) 'Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection', Available at: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/278257> [Accessed on 23/11/2022]

<sup>131</sup> Saeima (2015) 'Asylum Law', Available at: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/278986-patveruma-likums> [Accessed on 12/12/2022]

			integration of Riga 2019-2024' is introduced, setting out the local level integration policy which commits to creating conditions for diverse and active participation of different societal groups. <sup>132</sup>	including civic participation, intercultural dialogue, tolerance, and learning of the official language. In comparison to the first integration programme, there is a wider focus on newcomers.
<b>2019</b>			<b>Introducing action plan on integration.</b> The 2019-2021 Action Plan for the implementation of the Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024) was introduced. <sup>133</sup>	<b>Allocating financial resources for integration.</b> Financial resources are allocated in response to policy directions outlined in the Riga City Integration Programme 'Guidelines on Societal integration of Riga' (2019-2024).
<b>2020</b>	<b>Global outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic.</b> The COVID-19 pandemic is a global outbreak of coronavirus – an infectious disease. First detected in China in late 2019, the virus spread quickly across the world. The World Health			<b>COVID-19 impact on newcomers.</b> The pandemic exposed structural issues in the Latvian health sector, and posed challenges for newcomers to receive up-do-date information about measures to control the spread COVID-19 introduced by the government. <sup>135</sup>

<sup>132</sup> Rīgas dome (2019) 'Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas pamatnostādnes 2019.-2024', Gadam, Available at: <https://apkaimel.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/integracijas-pamatnostades.docx> [Accessed on: 16/08/2022]

<sup>133</sup> Rīgas dome (2019) 'Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas pamatnostādņu 2019.-2024', gadam īstenošanas rīcības plāns 2019.-2021. Gadam, Available at: <https://apkaimel.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/pamatsnostadnuricibasplans.doc> [Accessed on: 29/07/2022]

<sup>135</sup> Sabiedriskās politikas centrs "Providus". Diskusija: Vai ārvalstnieki Latvijā saņem pietiekamu informāciju par Covid-19 un spēj pielāgoties pandēmijas apstākļiem? Available at: <https://providus.lv/raksti/diskusija-vai-arvalstnieki-latvija-sanem-pietiekamu-informaciju-par-covid-19-un-spej-pielagoties-pandemijas-apstakliem/> [Accessed on: 12/12/2022]

	Organisation declared it a public health emergency in 2020. <sup>134</sup>			
<b>2020</b>	<b>Civil society protests in Belarus.</b> After the 2020 presidential election, peaceful civil society protests erupted in Belarus. Protests were violently repressed by the authorities. <sup>136</sup>	<b>Latvia responds to Belarus protests.</b> Following the violent crackdowns on peaceful protesters after the presidential elections in Belarus, Saeima, the parliament of the Republic of Latvia, adopted a statement not recognising Alexander Lukashenko as the legitimate President of Belarus. <sup>137</sup>		<b>Welcoming asylum seekers from Belarus.</b> In 2020, Latvia received 44 asylum seekers from Belarus and applications for international protection status from Belarussian citizens were examined on a priority basis. A number of other measures, such as assistance for students from Belarus who continue their studies in Latvia, and eased entry and relocation of Belarussian companies to Latvia, were carried out. <sup>138</sup>
<b>2021</b>			<b>Political change in Riga Municipality.</b> Due to the extraordinary elections in 2021, the political composition of the Riga City Council changed and,	<b>Promoting civic participation of residents.</b> Following major restructuring in 2021, the new Riga City Neighbourhood Residents' Centre aims to

<sup>134</sup> World Health Organisation (2022) 'Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic: Overview', Available at: <https://www.who.int/europe/emergencies/situations/covid-19> [Accessed on 22/11/2022]

<sup>136</sup> European Parliament (2020) 'European Parliament resolution of 17 September 2020 on the situation in Belarus', (2020/2779(RSP)), Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0231\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0231_EN.html) [Accessed on: 12/12/2022]

<sup>137</sup> Saeima (2020) 'Saeima pieņem paziņojumu, kurā neatzīst Aleksandru Lukašenko par leģitīmu Baltkrievijas prezidentu', Available at: <https://www.saeima.lv/lv/aktualitates/saeimas-zinas/29208-saeima-pienem-pazinojumu-kura-neatzist-aleksandru-lukasenko-par-legitimu-baltkrievijas-prezidentu> [Accessed on: 21/11/2022]

<sup>138</sup> Osmane-Siliņa, I. (2021) 'Ziņojums par migrācijas un patvēruma situāciju Latvijā 2020', gadā, Available at: [https://www.emn.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ARM\\_2020\\_LV.pdf](https://www.emn.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ARM_2020_LV.pdf) [Accessed on: 21/11/2022]

			subsequently, Riga Municipality initiated major restructuring, including reorganisation of the previous customer support centre to form the Riga City Neighbourhood Residents' Centre.	promote civic participation more effectively. The new Neighbourhood Coordinators act as intermediaries between local authorities and residents. The Centre plans to promote networking and to foster cooperation and understanding between different residents of the city, including newcomers. <sup>139</sup>
2021		<b>Refugee crisis on Latvia-Belarus border.</b> Actions of Lukashenko regime triggered an unprecedented influx of irregular migrants across Latvian-Belarussian border in the summer of 2021. <sup>140</sup>		<b>Unprecedented influx of irregular migrants.</b> In August, Latvian government introduced emergency situation in municipalities on the Latvia-Belarus border, which included prevention of <i>"persons from the illegal crossing of the state border of the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Belarus."</i> <sup>141</sup>
2021		<b>Amendments to the Asylum Law.</b> Previously, asylum seekers could start employment 6 months after applying for asylum.		<b>Asylum seekers allowed to work earlier.</b> The new amendments to the Asylum Law enable asylum seekers to work

<sup>139</sup> Source: Interview with the Riga Municipality official who works within the Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre, 9 August 2022.

<sup>140</sup> Blažytė, G., Raubiško, I., Mataitytė-Diržienė J. and Pelse, D. (2022) 'Comparative Report on the Influx of Irregular Migrants Across the Border of Belarus: the Response by the Governments of Lithuania and Latvia'. Available at: [https://providus.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/NIEM\\_comparative\\_report\\_Lithuania\\_Latvia.pdf](https://providus.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/NIEM_comparative_report_Lithuania_Latvia.pdf) [Accessed on 23/11/2022]

<sup>141</sup> Cabinet of Ministers (2021) 'Regarding the Declaration of Emergency Situation', Available at: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/325266> [Accessed on 23/11/2022]

		Amendments to the Asylum Law made in September 2021 allowed asylum seekers to start employment 3 months after applying for asylum. <sup>142</sup>		legally 3 months after submitting the application for asylum. <sup>143</sup>
<b>2022</b>	<b>Russian invasion of Ukraine.</b> On 24 February 2022, Russian Federation invaded Ukraine in violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. <sup>144</sup>			<b>Introducing support for Ukrainian refugees.</b> Latvia reaffirmed support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. <sup>145</sup> Law on assistance to Ukrainian Civilians is adopted, <sup>146</sup> introducing various support measures for Ukrainian civilians arriving in Latvia, including several assistance coordination platforms for reception, long-term stay, housing, social assistance,

<sup>142</sup> Latvijas Vēstnesis (2021) 'Grozījumi Imigrācijas likumā', Available at: <https://www.vestnesis.lv/op/2021/176A.1> [Accessed on: 23/11/2022]

<sup>143</sup> Latvijas Vēstnesis (2021) 'Grozījumi Imigrācijas likumā', Available at: <https://www.vestnesis.lv/op/2021/176A.1> [Accessed on: 23/11/2022]

<sup>144</sup> Saeima (2022) 'Saeima strongly condemns the military aggression and wide- scale invasion by Russia into Ukraine', Available at: <https://www.saeima.lv/en/news/saeima-news/30648-saeima-strongly-condemns-the-military-aggression-and-wide-scale-invasion-by-russia-into-ukraine?phrase=russia%20ukraine> [Accessed on: 12/12/2022]

<sup>145</sup> Saeima (2022) 'Saeima strongly condemns the military aggression and wide- scale invasion by Russia into Ukraine', Available at: <https://www.saeima.lv/en/news/saeima-news/30648-saeima-strongly-condemns-the-military-aggression-and-wide-scale-invasion-by-russia-into-ukraine?phrase=russia%20ukraine> [Accessed on: 12/12/2022]

<sup>146</sup> Saeima (2022) 'Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians', Available at: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/330546> [Accessed on: 09/11/2022]

				healthcare, employment and finances. <sup>147</sup>
2022			<p><b>Centralising the municipal integration function.</b> The integration function within the Riga Municipality was moved from the Education, Culture and Sports department to the Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre where it is under central administration rather than under one department.<sup>148</sup></p>	<p><b>Expanding neighbourhood and integration activities.</b> The centralisation of the integration function under the Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre means that there is now bigger scope of work with the different neighbourhoods and its inhabitants, including newcomers. Additional activities beyond initial focus on neighbourhoods, such as calls for projects, were transferred to the Centre.<sup>149</sup></p>

<sup>147</sup> European Website on Integration (2022) 'Latvia: Civil society organisations offer support to those fleeing Ukraine', Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/latvia-civil-society-organisations-offer-diverse-support-those-fleeing-ukraine\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/latvia-civil-society-organisations-offer-diverse-support-those-fleeing-ukraine_en) [Accessed on: 21/11/2022]

<sup>148</sup> Rīgas dome (2022) 'Sabiedrības integrācijas funkciju pārņem Apkaimju iedzīvotāju centrs', Available at: <https://www.riga.lv/lv/jaunums/sabiedribas-integracijas-funkciju-parnem-apkaimju-iedzivotaju-centrs> [Accessed on: 12/12/2022]

<sup>149</sup> Rīgas dome (2022) 'Sabiedrības integrācijas funkciju pārņem Apkaimju iedzīvotāju centrs', Available at: <https://www.riga.lv/lv/jaunums/sabiedribas-integracijas-funkciju-parnem-apkaimju-iedzivotaju-centrs> [Accessed on: 12/12/2022]

### 3.2 Best practice example of migrant inclusion in policy making

In Riga, newcomers are not directly involved in policy making. Nevertheless, some NGOs (that represent newcomers) participate in project competitions to obtain municipal funds for their activities. They also take part in the Consultative Board on Society Integration Issues of Riga City Council. Within this Consultative Board, the NGOs cooperate with elected members of the Riga City Council to discuss the development of policy planning documents, integration initiatives and other integration-related issues.

Over the last 10 years, there have been several newcomer-led organizations which have been participating in calls for projects and received funds within projects. The newcomer-led organization “Make Room” has been participating in policy making process in Riga Municipality, among other organizations that represent newcomers.

From the perspective of Riga Municipality, the lack of motivation among newcomers, as well as insufficient knowledge of the Latvian language present the two biggest obstacles to participation.<sup>150</sup> There are several indications that newcomers face obstacles in regard to civic participation. In many cases language barrier, bureaucratic requirements, and a lack of overall knowledge about the development of associations and organizations from the legal point of view, and the resulting problems in attracting funding for the development of newcomer-led or newcomer-represented organizations which are relatively scarce.<sup>151</sup>

During the last 10 years, there have been several innovative initiatives that promote inclusivity in Riga Municipality. Initiatives that will be mentioned as best examples (boxes 1-3) regarding inclusivity in entrepreneurship, employment and promotion of participation during the focus period have been carried out by the Department of Welfare as well as Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre. Participatory budget and entrepreneurship support targeting vulnerable groups were chosen as the best practices.

Criteria for initiatives and ideas are developed within the department or division responsible for implementation of them. In the context of this report, initiatives mentioned were considered as the best practices based on feedback given by the Riga City Council and NGOs. When comparing a number of initiatives developed and implemented by the Riga Municipality, inclusivity and availability for different societal groups to participate was taken into account, as well as the level of cooperation and

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<sup>150</sup> Information from interview No. 1, (06.07.2022.)

<sup>151</sup> Information from interviews No. 6 (24.08.2022.), No. 7. (25.08.2022.), No. 8 (12.09.2022.), No. 9 (15.08.2022.)

interaction between civil society and Municipality, as well as other relevant actors. The initiative came from both Riga Municipality and members of civic society as well, the implementation of ideas mentioned was decided based on the situation in Municipality, i.e. the needs vocalized by the residents.

### **Box 1 Consultative Board of Society Integration Issues of Riga City Council, Riga**

#### **Target group**

Residents of Riga City

#### **Objectives**

Ensuring participation of the non-governmental sector in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the social integration policy of the Riga City Municipality.<sup>152</sup>

#### **Key features**

Consultative Board of Society Integration Issues of Riga City Council (thereinafter: Consultative Board) ensures participation of the non-governmental sector in the decision-making process in Riga Municipality. Consultative Board participates in the development of long-term policy planning documents regarding integration and gives opinion on normative acts and strategic documents of Riga City Municipality institutions as well as pending issues affecting the process of social integration. A meeting is held approximately one every three months.

Consultative Board consists of chairperson of the Education, Culture and Sports Committee of the Riga City Council, representatives of the factions of the Riga City Council Education, Culture and Sports Committee, Director of the Education, Culture and Sports Department of the Riga City Council, representatives of the Projects and Society integration, a representative of the Welfare department of Riga City Council, a representative of Public Relations Department of Riga City Council and representatives of non-governmental organizations.<sup>153</sup>

#### **Results achieved**

Within the Consultative Board of Society Integration issues, both local level integration programmes<sup>154</sup> have been drafted. This participatory mechanism has overall provided civic participation in the decision-making process.

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<sup>152</sup> Rīgas dome (2010). Rīgas domes Konsultatīvās padomes sabiedrības integrācijas jautājumus nolikums. Available: [https://kultura.riga.lv/media/INETGRACIJA/2020/Nolikums\\_Nr\\_73\\_Konsultativa\\_padome%20\(1\).doc](https://kultura.riga.lv/media/INETGRACIJA/2020/Nolikums_Nr_73_Konsultativa_padome%20(1).doc) (Accessed: 16.11.2022.)

<sup>153</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>154</sup> First integration programme: Rīgas Dome (2012). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas programma 2012.-2017. Gadam. Available:

## Box 2 NGO House, Riga

### Target group

Residents of Riga City

### Objectives

Provision of free-of-charge premises and consultations for NGOs to ensure cooperation with Riga Municipality and assistance for NGOs.

### Key features

The NGO House was founded in 2013 to provide free-of-charge premises for NGO activities and resources for activist training, exchange of information, capacity building, attraction of participants and promotion of cooperation between sectoral organizations.<sup>155</sup>

### Results achieved

The NGO House offers different resources to NGOs, including its premises for organising different events. It has collaborated with several organisations in which newcomers take part in or which represent newcomers, such as “Shelter “Safe House””, “Society’s Cooperation Platform”, “Education Development Centre”, “Dialogu nams”, “AFS Latvija” who run intercultural programmes, as well as with “Art Expansion”, “AIESEC Latvia” and “Jauniešu brīvo interešu biedrība”, “The Creative association for youth TREPES” who organise informal events for newcomers, mainly students.<sup>156</sup> NGO house has also conducted multiple seminars about a number of topics, including digital communication, issues regarding contracts, accounting, attraction of funds, etc.<sup>157</sup>

## Box 3 Participatory Budget, Riga

### Target group

Residents of Riga City

### Objectives

- Promotion of neighborhoods as parts of the city with special identity and recognition, promotion of revitalization,
- promotion of involvement and participation of the residents in neighborhoods and promotion of overall continuous neighborhood development,

<https://sus.lv/sites/default/files/media/faili/rigaspilssetassabiedribasintegracijasprogramma2012-2017.pdf> (Accessed: 16.09.2022.), second integration programme: Rīgas dome (2019). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas pamatnostādnes 2019.-2024. gadam. Available:

<https://apkaimes.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/integracijaspatnostades.docx>

<sup>155</sup> Par NVO namu. Available: <https://apkaimes.lv/integracija/par-nvo-namu/> (Accessed: 14.11.2022.)

<sup>156</sup> Specially prepared data by Riga City Council. 16.06.2022.

<sup>157</sup> Notikušie semināri. Available: <https://apkaimes.lv/integracija/seminari/> (Accessed: 16.11.2022.)

- creation of publically assessable improvements in neighborhoods, encouraging cooperation and creativity between residents.<sup>158</sup>

### Key features

Participatory budget is a civic engagement mechanism where each resident of Riga city who has reached the age of 16 can provide ideas and initiatives for improvement of urban environment in Riga. All residents, including newcomers, are able to vote about initiatives submitted via public administration services portal [www.latvija.lv](http://www.latvija.lv). All residents, who are declared in Riga Municipality, can submit project ideas as well. Each year since 2019,<sup>159</sup> Riga City Council allocates funding for participatory budget and publishes calls for initiatives. The Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre is responsible for implementation of this initiative.<sup>160</sup> Residents come up with ideas and initiatives, and then Municipality-appointed commission evaluates which initiatives are feasible and meet the requirements. The chosen initiatives must be implemented within the premises owned by the municipality in order to make all improvements accessible to the public, and must not conflict with other projects planned in the city. The Commission appointed by the city Council to evaluate project applications decides compliance with the rules and initiatives are put to public vote. Ideas that have collected the largest support by the public vote are then implemented. Municipality implements the ideas that have received funding (in contrast to regular municipal project calls where the parties receiving funding are the implementers.) Key outcomes of the participatory budgeting include needs- based and citizen-driven environmental improvements,<sup>161</sup> such as childrens' playgrounds, enhancement of parks, creation of sports parks, etc. Most of the project initiatives are mostly submitted by neighbourhood associations.<sup>162</sup>

### Results achieved

After the development of the participatory budget it was clear that in some cases assistance in development and the project-writing process is needed for residents of the city. In this case the Neighborhood Coordinators of the Neighborhood Residents' Centre can assist residents when developing ideas and potential initiatives within for the participatory budget.<sup>163</sup> As a result of this initiative many improvements to local infrastructure have been implemented.

<sup>158</sup> Rīgas Dome (2022). 2022. gada Rīgas pilsētas līdzdalības budžeta projektu ideju īstenošanas konkursa nolikums. Available: [https://balso.riga.lv/sites/default/files/2022-03/2022.gada%20konkursa%20nolikums\\_0.docx](https://balso.riga.lv/sites/default/files/2022-03/2022.gada%20konkursa%20nolikums_0.docx) (Accessed: 15.11.2022.)

<sup>159</sup> Rīgas Dome (2022). Rīgas pilsētas līdzdalības budžeta projektu ideju īstenošanas konkurss. Available: <https://www.riga.lv/lv/konkursi/rigas-pilsetas-lidzdalibas-budzeta-projektu-ideju-istenosanas-konkurss> (Accessed: 19.09.2022.)

<sup>160</sup> Rīgas Dome (2020). Rīgas apkaimju iedzīvotāju centra sniegtie pakalpojumi. Available: <https://www.riga.lv/lv/rigas-apkaimju-iedzivotaju-centra-sniegtie-pakalpojumi> (Accessed: 19.09.2022.)

<sup>161</sup> Information from interview No. 2, 09.08.2022.

<sup>162</sup> Rīgas dome (2022). Projekti. Available: [https://balso.riga.lv/projekti?title=&field\\_apkaime\\_target\\_id=All&izmaksas=All&gads=4](https://balso.riga.lv/projekti?title=&field_apkaime_target_id=All&izmaksas=All&gads=4) (Accessed: 24.11.2022.)

<sup>163</sup>Information from interview No. 2, 09.08.2022.

## 4 ENGAGEMENT OF MIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN POLICY MAKING

### 4.1 City strategy for local participation

*4.1.1 Does the city have an explicitly written strategy to promote participation by residents in public decision making irrespective of their nationality / background?*

Yes, the “Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)”,<sup>164</sup> stresses inclusivity and promotion of participation, including the development of a friendly environment for newcomers by promoting and financing the involvement of NGOs. In this context, volunteer work is also seen as important to promote inclusivity. Within this document, newcomers are seen as one of the target groups within overall efforts to promote participation of city’s residents. A supporting document of the Guidelines, entitled “2019-2021 Action Plan for the implementation of the Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)”<sup>165</sup> sets out specific actions to be taken to achieve the goals set out in the Guidelines (see section 2.2).

*4.1.2 Does the strategy commit to (1) making this a two-way process of communication; (2) responding to the voice of residents; and (3) giving voice to informal participatory action as well as formal processes such as consultations?*

No, within the “Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)”, availability of information is one of the policy directions. Interaction-focused informative infrastructure is seen as one if the goals - social media is used to ensure availability of information - but this strategy does not include the necessity to answer the requests of residents as well as the need to respond to informal participatory measures.<sup>166</sup> However, Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre is working on ensuring a two-way communication by allocating Neighbourhood Coordinators to City’s neighbourhoods and increasing communication with residents through social media, in person meetings, different thematic events, e-mails and phone calls.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Rīgas dome (2019). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas pamatnostādnes 2019.-2024. gadam. Available: <https://apkaimes.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/integracijas-pamatnostades.docx> (Accessed: 16.08.2022.)

<sup>165</sup> Rīgas dome (2019). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas pamatnostādņu 2019. -2024. gadam īstenošanas rīcības plāns 2019.- 2021. gadam. Available: <https://apkaimes.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/pamatsnostadnuricibasplans.doc> (Accessed: 29.07.2022.)

<sup>166</sup> Rīgas dome (2019). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas pamatnostādnes 2019.-2024. gadam. Available: <https://apkaimes.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/integracijas-pamatnostades.docx> (Accessed: 16.08.2022.)

<sup>167</sup> Information from interview No. 2, 09.08.2022.

In both “Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)” and “2019-2021 Action Plan for the implementation of the Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)” assistance to participatory action within the City is described and funding is allocated for different kinds of activities for residents. Wider overview of these documents is in section 2.2.

*4.1.3 Does the strategy adopt an intersectional approach seeking to tackle multiple axes of inequality simultaneously to promote local participation? Are some axes of inequality considered as principal?*

The strategy does not explicitly adopt an intersectional approach to tackling multiple axes of inequality in its commitment to promote participation, although it does commit to promoting civic participation of all residents.

*4.1.4 Is the intersectional approach to local participation adopted across different policy spheres?*

Civic participation in public administration is regulated on a national level, by the State Administration Structure Law, Development Planning System Law and Cabinet Regulation No.970.<sup>168</sup> A universalistic approach where all residents are able to voice their opinion about development planning documents and drafts of legislation, and to participate in identification of problems and providence of alternatives, is adopted in Riga Municipality. Mechanisms of civic participation are incorporated in policy planning process and in Riga Municipality there are several mechanisms within which civic participation is possible, such as citizens’ forums, committees, advisory councils, consultative commissions within the city’s departments,<sup>169</sup> as well as a Memorandum between NGOs and Riga City Council which is described in section 3.1.1. of this report. Across all the policy spheres of Riga Municipality, civic participation is needed, according to the data,<sup>170</sup> but it is not always achievable due to the capacity problems many NGOs face.

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<sup>168</sup> Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 970. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/197033> (Accessed: 02.08.2022.), Saeima (2002), State Administration Structure Law. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/63545> (Accessed: 02.08.2022.), Saeima (2008). Development Planning System Law. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/175748> (Accessed: 02.08.2022.)

<sup>169</sup> Frīdenberga, A., Stafecka, L., Tarasova- Dubkeviča, S. (2021). Iedzīvotāju iespējas iesaistīties lēmumu pieņemšanā Rīgā. Available: [https://providus.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Petijums\\_ledzivotaju-iespejas-iesaistities-Rigas-pasvaldiba.pdf](https://providus.lv/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Petijums_ledzivotaju-iespejas-iesaistities-Rigas-pasvaldiba.pdf) (Accessed: 11.08.2022.)

<sup>170</sup> Information from interview No. 1, 06.07.2022.

#### *4.1.5 Does the city have any existing structures for political / civic participation of the local migrant population?*

Civic participation for local migrant population is possible through a variety of mechanisms which are the same for all residents of Riga. On an individual level, all residents of Riga are free to contact Neighbourhood Coordinators of the Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre through various channels, including social media, telephone calls, messages, in person meetings, different thematic events and e-mail. Neighbourhood Coordinators can provide information needed for participation, as well as promote networking between newcomers and neighbourhood associations. Through website [www.eriga.lv](http://www.eriga.lv) residents can voice their opinion about different projects and initiatives, but website is available only in Latvian.<sup>171</sup> Other structures, such as advisory councils, public consultations, sectoral committee meetings and online participation, opinion expression platforms are available for newcomers in Riga, but targeted promotion of participation for newcomers has not been carried out by the Riga Municipality.

Newcomers can participate through NGOs; it is possible within the Consultative Board on Society Integration Issues of Riga City Council where several newcomer-represented NGOs take part in the decision-making process. Activities related to community building, inter-cultural dialogue, and other activities are also carried out by NGOs within the NGO House<sup>172</sup> - a structural unit of the Municipality which supports and cooperates with NGOs since 2013.<sup>173</sup> The NGO House offers different resources to NGOs, including its premises for organising different events. It has collaborated with several organisations, such as “Shelter “Safe House””, “Society’s Cooperation Platform”, “Education Development Centre”, “Dialogu nams”, “AFS Latvija” who run intercultural programmes, as well as with “Art Expansion”, “AIESEC Latvia” and “Jauniešu brīvo interešu biedrība” who organise informal events for newcomers, mainly students.<sup>174</sup> There are not many newcomer organizations; however, there is interest among certain groups of newcomers, as they believe that having an organization will strengthen their voice and presence.<sup>175</sup> In the context of formation of newcomer organizations, many face bureaucratic obstacles, language barrier and issues regarding accounting capacity. Due to these obstacles, newcomers

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<sup>171</sup> Information about initiative on website eriga.lv is available only in Latvian. Available: <https://www.eriga.lv/Anonymous/Service.aspx> (Accessed: 20.09.2022.)

<sup>172</sup> Information from interview No. 9, 15.08.2022.

<sup>173</sup> Riga City Council. About NGO house. (2022) Available: <https://apkaimes.lv/integracija/par-nvo-namu/> (Accessed: 17.06.2022.)

<sup>174</sup> Specially prepared data by Riga City Council. 16.06.2022.

<sup>175</sup> Information from interview No. 8. (12.09.2022.)

can fulfil very limited number of functions within organizations. Newcomer-led organizations need support regarding paperwork, and raising funds.<sup>176</sup>

## 4.2 Leadership, communication and coordination of participation

*4.2.1 Do decision makers actively promote participation of residents irrespective of their nationality?*

Yes. Public discussions and other activities regarding possibilities of civic participation are carried out by Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre, which also carries out certain communication activities through social media. All units of the Riga City Council have webpages and social media accounts, but all communication is centralised and organized by Communication Department taking into account different areas of activity of the Departments.<sup>177</sup>

*4.2.2 Does the city use migrant-specific communication channels to make the case for participation among (and to reach) migrant communities? What communication channels are used to make the case for participation? How are residents informed about the possibility to participate? Does the city use diverse communication methods to inform residents about the possibility to participate?*

There are no migrant-specific communication channels and civic participation is promoted to all inhabitants of Riga. In addition to Latvian language, English and Russian languages are used in municipal websites and other forms of communication, thus widening the amount of information available for newcomers.

Many newcomers face language barriers regarding the acquisition of information, so many approach NGOs which provide them with specific information they request, some also obtain information through various websites and social media pages, social media adverts and newsletters of Universities in Riga. NGOs like MakeRoom are continuously raising awareness among newcomers about possibilities of civic participation in Riga.<sup>178</sup> Riga Municipality also communicates with newcomer-led or newcomer-represented NGOs regarding the needs of newcomers in the city. These NGOs help the city council to reach out to migrants and communicate the possibilities of civic participation.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Information from interviews No. 6 (24.08.2022.), No. 7. (25.08.2022.), No. 8 (12.09.2022.), No. 9 (15.08.2022.)

<sup>177</sup> Information from interview No.2, 09.08.2022

<sup>178</sup> Information from interview No. 8, 12.09.2022.

<sup>179</sup> Information from interview No. 1, 06.07.2022., interview No. 7, 25.08.2022.

The Department of Communication is in charge of planning and organising of internal and external communication activities about questions that are the competence of the Riga City Council. Information about activities of Riga Municipality is provided by using the official website of the Riga Municipality as well as other websites of Riga Municipality, for example, websites of the departments of the Riga City Council and their social media accounts.<sup>180</sup>

Different communication methods are used to inform City's residents. Due to the impact of measures to limit the spread of Covid-19 over the last two years, many communication activities, such as providing information via leaflets, have been transferred online.<sup>181</sup>

#### *4.2.3 Is intersectionality considered in communication?*

No. Riga City Council's communication is based on an annual communication strategy. Within Riga Municipality, communication process is centralized and coordinated by the Department of Communication. To ensure coordination of the communication process, Departments exchange necessary information about their activities.<sup>182</sup>

#### *4.2.4 Does the city communicate the results of consultations to residents? How are the results of a consultation process and its responses communicated to residents?*

Yes. The City Development Department presents programmes in citizens' forums, public events, so citizens could impact the programmes. Usually most of the initiatives proposed by the neighbourhood associations or NGOs are included in planning documents. The results of major public consultations are published in the form of press releases. They are prepared by the Department of Communication and based on the information provided by the Departments in charge of public consultations. The results of major public consultations are sent to media and published on the official website of the Riga Municipality [www.rigalv.lv](http://www.rigalv.lv). Results of other public consultations are published by the Departments responsible.<sup>183</sup>

#### *4.2.5 Does the city produce information about consultations in different languages? Who produces the information and in which languages is it provided?*

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<sup>180</sup> Rīgas Valstspilsētas Pašvaldība (2022). Rīgas domes Komunikācijas pārvaldes reglaments. Available: <https://www.riga.lv/lv/media/21779/download> (Accessed: 20.09.2022.)

<sup>181</sup> Information from interview No.1, 06.07.2022.

<sup>182</sup> Information from interview No. 5, 01.09.2022.

<sup>183</sup> Information from interview No. 5, 01.09.2022.

Information about public consultations in most cases is published in Latvian. The official website of the Riga Municipality and also other websites of Riga Municipality are partly available in English and Russian,<sup>184</sup> but there can be occasions when certain pages of the official websites of the Riga Municipality are not translated in foreign languages.<sup>185</sup> Website [www.eriga.lv](http://www.eriga.lv) through which residents can voice their opinion about different projects and initiatives is available only in Latvian.<sup>186</sup> Cases when a foreign language can be used to inform the residents, is regulated by the Official Language Law.<sup>187</sup>

*4.2.6 Is there a coordination mechanism in place to ensure that participation of all residents is actively promoted and communicated effectively?*

Riga City Neighbourhood Residents' Centre is stepping up its efforts to promote participation of all residents of the city through various channels, including events in city's neighbourhoods, through social media as well as through communication with local neighbourhood associations. In this context the role from the Riga City Neighbourhood Residents' Centre is to explain, introduce and help to understand the possibilities of participation and to show that city has diverse members of society that can participate in the decision-making process within the local neighbourhood associations and other organizations active in the city.<sup>188</sup>

### **4.3 Equal access**

*4.3.1 Does the city use diverse platforms to enable participation? Do all residents have an equal chance to make their voices heard?*

Platforms for cooperation can be seen as diverse. The development of Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre framework can be seen as a step towards diversifying the platforms for participation by organising events in neighbourhoods to promote participation and a sense of belonging, and making participatory

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<sup>184</sup> Information about Public consultation on the design of construction is available both in English, available: <https://www.riga.lv/en/services/public-consultation-design-construction>, and Russian, available: <https://www.riga.lv/ru/uslugi/publicnoe-obsuzhdenie-stroitel'nogo-zamysla> (Accessed 20.09.2022.)

<sup>185</sup> List of public consultations within is available only in Latvian. Available: <https://www.riga.lv/lv/sabiedriskas-apsprisanas-0> (Accessed:20.09.2022.)

<sup>186</sup> Information about initiative on website eriga.lv is available only in Latvian. Available: <https://www.eriga.lv/Anonymous/Service.aspx> (Accessed: 20.09.2022.)

<sup>187</sup> Saeima (1999). Official Language Law. Section 21. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/14740> (Accessed: 20.09.2022.)

<sup>188</sup> Information from interview No.2, 09.08.2022

mechanisms more available for residents of the city. By organising events in the neighbourhoods, it is intended to promote cohesion of the residents by creating content about cohesive and democratic society. Participation is also easier because of the neighbourhood coordinators who communicate with residents via social media (e.g. Facebook), so communication between the Municipality and residents is made easier.<sup>189</sup> Neighbourhood coordinators can also assist persons who are interested in civic participation and provide assistance for residents to develop initiatives. For public participation, online forums, formal consultations and in some cases consultative bodies are used to enable participation. Within the “2019-2021 Action Plan for the implementation of the Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)” neighbourhood forums are indicated.<sup>190</sup>

#### *4.3.2 Can migrants, refugees and asylum seekers access these platforms taking into account their specific circumstances?*

In theory, newcomers can access these platforms the same way as all residents of Riga. The problem is that most information is provided in Latvian, which is one of the main obstacles to participation. Communication regarding the needs of newcomers is not maintained directly between the Municipality and groups of newcomers. There are no institutionalized and stable ways of collecting opinions, questions and initiatives of newcomers, all the communication between Municipality and newcomers is mostly carried out through NGOs, who represent newcomers.<sup>191</sup>

#### *4.3.3 Are these diverse platforms of participation proactively communicated to diverse groups of residents? Is it visible and known to all communities how they can participate? Are their specific concerns considered?*

No. Although platforms of participation can be considered as diverse, there is no overall communication strategy that would address newcomers. News about the possibilities of participation is published in social media sites and the official website of Riga Municipality. In some cases, leaflets with the information needed are available in municipal offices and customer centres.<sup>192</sup> Main obstacles in this regard include the language barrier, because most of the information is available only in Latvian, in some cases in Russian and English as well.

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<sup>189</sup> Information from interview No.2, 09.08.2022.

<sup>190</sup> Rīgas dome (2019). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas pamatnostādņu 2019. -2024. gadam īstenošanas rīcības plāns 2019.- 2021. gadam. Available: <https://apkaimes.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/pamatsnostadnuricibasplans.doc> (Accessed: 20.09.2022.)

<sup>191</sup> Information from interview No.1, 06.07.2022.

<sup>192</sup> Information from interview No. 1, 06.07.2022.

Meaningful proposals raised by the residents are mostly considered and taken into account, especially when drafting policy planning documents through the framework Consultative Board on Society Integration Issues of Riga City Council. NGOs that represent this group participate and raise ideas regarding the needs of newcomers, but due to relatively small number of newcomer-led organizations in Riga, very few newcomers are aware of the civic participation process itself.<sup>193</sup>

#### **4.4 Institutional links and responsiveness**

*4.4.1 Is there a fully established mechanism in place to ensure that public institutions respond and incorporate the migrant voice in their decision-making processes?*

Consultative Board on Society Integration Issues can be seen as a mechanism within which voices of newcomers are incorporated in decision-making process. Within this participatory mechanism NGOs that represent newcomers are able to voice their opinion and provide their input on current drafts of policy-planning documents.

*4.4.2 Are migrants consulted on key policy spheres such as housing, education, health and employment? On which issues are migrants consulted?*

No. Migrants' needs are identified and voiced through communication with NGOs that represent newcomers, not by consulting newcomers directly.<sup>194</sup> Issues raised by NGOs that represent newcomers are taken into account on key policy spheres when policy planning documents are drafted.

*4.4.3 To what degree are migrants represented in the city's consultative bodies, committees and issue-based groups? Are migrants involved in consultative bodies for key policy spheres?*

Newcomer-represented NGOs participate in consultative bodies, such as the Consultative Board on Society Integration Issues of Riga City Council. However, newcomers are not represented directly in consultative bodies for key policy spheres. Many newcomers are not aware of the possibility to participate in decision making process and the number of newcomer-led organizations is relatively low partially due to various obstacles.<sup>195</sup> Although, during the last 10 years, there have been isolated cases when newcomers have participated in certain mechanisms such as citizens' forums, public consultations, and Consultative Board on Society Integration Issues of Riga City Council, Latvian language proficiency is required, as well as motivation to

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<sup>193</sup> Information from interview No. 8, 12.09.2022.

<sup>194</sup> Information from interview No. 1., 06.07.2022.

<sup>195</sup> Information from interview No.8, 12.09.2022.

stay in Latvia and to contribute actively to the local society. The lack of knowledge of the state official language is a barrier that potentially could prevent newcomers to participate in city's consultative bodies, committees, and issue-based groups.<sup>196</sup>

#### *4.4.4 Can migrants set their own agenda or are the issues pre-selected by the local authority?*

Newcomers can participate in the same way as other residents of the City, but it needs to be noted that the lack of knowledge of Latvian language can potentially be an obstacle to involvement in the decision-making process. Newcomers are mostly represented through NGOs which can voice their opinions and provide input for policy planning documents within the Consultative Board on Society Integration issues.

#### *4.4.5 Are provisions in place to ensure that participation structures, such as consultative bodies, can feed into the mainstream policy process of relevant public authorities and get a considered and timely response?*

Yes. The procedure of how public and local government staff responds to applications of residents, is regulated by the Law on Submissions. According to this law, municipalities set out the procedure for responding to any submissions and initiatives.<sup>197</sup> Contact information of staff of Riga City Council is available on its website.<sup>198</sup>

The Consultative Board on Society Integration issues also is a consultative body within which NGOs meet with decision makers of the Municipality to discuss drafts of policy planning documents. Within this Consultative Board, NGOs can voice their opinion and provide additional input for drafts of the policy planning documents.

## **4.5 Support for community self-organisation**

### *4.5.1 Does the city administration work with migrant associations?*

The Consultative Board on Society Integration Issues of Riga City Council comprises several organizations that represent ethnic minorities, such as Romani, Ukrainian, Belarussian and Georgian. Newcomers are represented by two organizations – the “Centre for Public Policy Providus” and “Shelter “Safe House””. Yet, no newcomers are

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<sup>196</sup> Information from interview No. 7, 25.08.2022.

<sup>197</sup> Saeima (2008). Law on Submissions. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/164501> (Accessed: 30.08.2022.)

<sup>198</sup> Rīgas Dome (2022). Darbinieku kontakti. Available: <https://www.riga.lv/lv/darbinieki> (Accessed: 21.09.2022.)

directly involved in the consultative process, even though Riga Municipality has taken steps towards more targeted promotion of participation of newcomers. Within the draft “2022-2024 Action Plan for the implementation of the Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)”, several support activities for newcomers are intended. Riga Municipality aims to identify new areas where support for newcomers is not available or insufficient and to adapt support measures accordingly while ensuring no duplication of support that is already provided by other organizations and foundations.<sup>199</sup> The already mentioned scarcity of newcomer-led organizations is a key obstacle preventing newcomers from engaging with the city administration.

#### *4.5.2 Does the city administration support the self-organisation of migrant communities?*

Yes. The city administration supports overall self-organization of communities. After the initiative of the citizens of Riga, the NGO House was opened in 2013 to provide free of charge premises for NGOs to organise events such as discussions, seminars, conferences, training, exhibitions and concerts. The House also receives consultations about NGO activities and takes initiative to facilitate cooperation and active participation.<sup>200</sup>

MILE is seen as a project that could potentially support self-organization of newcomer communities. In 2022, the possibility to participate in decision making for newcomer communities is the same as for other residents in Riga Municipality. Assistance is provided through project grants for different set of activities. According to the “2019-2021 Action Plan for the implementation of the Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)”, financial assistance is available for NGOs that work with newcomers. More in-depth information about the resources allocated to NGOs is available section 2.2.

#### *4.5.3 Are there funds or other support for organisational capacity building targeting migrants? Where does the funding come from and how sustainable are these funds in longer term?*

Yes. Allocation of funds to NGOs that work with newcomers through assistance is available. Newcomer-led NGOs tend to face problems in raising funds, due to numerous bureaucratic, administrative and organizational obstacles, e.g. newcomers can fill out a limited number of tasks due to the lack of the Latvian language.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Information from interview No. 2, 09.08.2022.

<sup>200</sup> Par NVO namu. Available: <https://apkaimies.lv/integracija/par-nvo-namu/> (Accessed: 14.11.2022.)

<sup>201</sup> Information from interview No. 7, 25.08.2022.

Activities foreseen in the “2019- 2021 Action Plan for the implementation of the Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)” include allocation of financial resources to implement 6 policy directions mentioned above. Given the broad framework of integration policy, both the Guidelines and the 2019- 2021 Action Plan mentioned above include measures for residents at risk of social exclusion. From the 6 policy directions mentioned above, civic participation, intercultural dialogue and tolerance, learning of the official language, accessibility of information and accessibility of urban environment and integration measures include actions for inclusivity of newcomers.<sup>202</sup>

In the context of civic participation and cooperation, funding is available for promotion of participation of residents and NGOs, assistance with inclusion of newcomers, infrastructural and consultative assistance to NGOs, administrative strengthening of youth organizations, civic education and promotion of acquiring citizenship as well as promotion of development of voluntary work. Riga Municipality also focuses on neighbourhoods and funding is allocated for the promotion of civic participation and fostering a sense of belonging to the neighbourhoods.<sup>203</sup>

#### *4.5.4 Does the city administration support intercultural dialogue and exchange between communities?*

Yes. Promotion of intercultural dialogue is one of the policy directions within the “Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)”, and within the “2019-2021 Action Plan for the implementation of the Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)”. Funds for activities related to intercultural dialogue are allocated to NGOs.

Regarding intercultural dialogue and tolerance, funding is allocated for promotion of interaction between different ethnic groups and assistance for preservation of ethnic identity as well as increasing professional competence for intercultural dialogue and inclusive activities. Learning of the official language is also promoted by allocating funding for improvement of residents’ knowledge of the official language, including newcomers. Regarding accessibility of information, funding is allocated for the dissemination of information on municipality’s official websites as well as television, radio, newspapers in different languages and largest social media networks, including

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<sup>202</sup> Rīgas dome (2019). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas pamatnostādņu 2019. -2024. gadam īstenošanas rīcības plāns 2019.- 2021. gadam. Available: <https://apkaimes.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/pamatsnostadnuricibasplans.doc> (Accessed: 29.07.2022.)

<sup>203</sup> Rīgas dome (2019). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas pamatnostādņu 2019. -2024. gadam īstenošanas rīcības plāns 2019.- 2021. gadam. Available: <https://apkaimes.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/pamatsnostadnuricibasplans.doc> (Accessed: 29.07.2022.)

Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Funding in this context is also remarked for research and data collection about societal integration. Regarding accessibility of urban environment and integration measures funding is allocated to increase of cultural events in neighbourhoods, assistance to intercultural events and promotion of interaction between different ethnic and social groups.<sup>204</sup>

## 4.6 Monitoring quality of participation schemes

*4.6.1 Does the city work with residents to improve activities promoted by its participation strategy at all levels, and to make it more effective?*

Yes. Proposals of residents, neighbourhood associations, NGOs and other stakeholders are considered within the development stages of policy planning documents. Most relevant initiatives provided by the civic society are incorporated into the policy planning documents of Riga Municipality.<sup>205</sup>

*4.6.2 Is there regular monitoring and evaluation of these participation activities?*

Yes. Projects within which Riga Municipality allocates funding, are always monitored as well as implementation and results of the projects. Each year an evaluation of the implementation of the "Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)"<sup>206</sup> is done and the results are compared to the performance indicators defined in developing it. Regular studies on the integration of society are done where the impact of the integration policy is evaluated.<sup>207</sup><sup>208</sup> Different control procedures are allocated to each kind of participatory mechanisms.

*4.6.3 What mechanism is in place to check the procedures and impact of participation schemes on a regular basis?*

Each participatory mechanism has its control procedure. In projects, the implementation and results of projects are monitored. Each year an evaluation of the "Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)" is done, to determine the

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<sup>204</sup> Rīgas dome (2019). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas pamatnostādņu 2019. -2024. gadam īstenošanas rīcības plāns 2019.- 2021. gadam. Available: <https://apkaim.es.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/pamatsnostadnuricibasplans.doc> (Accessed: 29.07.2022.)

<sup>205</sup> Information from interview No.2, 09.08.2022.

<sup>206</sup> Rīgas dome (2019). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas pamatnostādnes 2019.-2024. gadam. Available: <https://apkaim.es.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/integracijas-pamatnostades.docx> (Accessed: 16.08.2022.)

<sup>207</sup> Kantar (2021). Sabiedrības integrācija Rīgā. Rīgas iedzīvotāju aptauja. Available: [https://apkaim.es.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/5994\\_RD\\_Sabiedrības\\_integrācija\\_2021\\_Atkaite.pdf](https://apkaim.es.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/5994_RD_Sabiedrības_integrācija_2021_Atkaite.pdf) (Accessed: 21.09.2022.)

<sup>208</sup> An example: a study of public attitudes towards integration issues in Riga, done in 2021: Kantar (2021). Sabiedrības integrācija Rīgā. Available: [https://apkaim.es.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/5994\\_RD\\_Sabiedrības\\_integrācija\\_2021\\_Atkaite.pdf](https://apkaim.es.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/5994_RD_Sabiedrības_integrācija_2021_Atkaite.pdf) (Accessed: 08.11.2022.)

effectiveness of policies implemented. In regard to Consultative Board on Society Integration issues, Municipality observes whether this participatory mechanism fulfils its functions which are defined in rules of procedure of the Consultative Board on Society Integration issues.<sup>209</sup>

#### *4.6.4 How are changes to the participation schemes being decided?*

Initiatives for changes in participation mechanisms can come from residents, civic society, politicians, executive authorities, or anyone else, who has an initiative. If a proposal for changes is being initiated, the matter is placed on the agenda of the responsible authority which decides whether the change should be implemented.<sup>210</sup>

### **4.7 Resources for participation**

#### *4.7.1 Is the value of participation in public decision making by all communities recognised by the city?*

Riga Municipality has developed a system in which every resident of the city is able to participate in the decision-making process. However, it is not clear to what extent it has been possible to involve citizens in decision-making process.<sup>211</sup> Riga City Neighbourhood Residents' Centre also seeks to draw attention to opportunities for participation by all city residents. Participation in the decision making process is open to all residents of the city, but there are many obstacles that are not taken into account, such as language barriers and different bureaucratic obstacles in the participatory mechanisms described in this report. There are no targeted measures to promote the involvement of different communities, such as newcomers, that take into account potential barriers these groups might face in the context of civic participation.

#### *4.7.2 Is there adequate budgeting for staff time and training to support and facilitate residents' participation?*

Yes. Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre has several full-time employees in different neighbourhoods of the city. They work as Neighbourhood Coordinators for participation and facilitate residents' participation through neighbourhood associations.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Information from interview No. 1. (06.07.2022.)

<sup>210</sup> Information from interview No.2, 09.08.2022.

<sup>211</sup> Information from interview No.2, 09.08.2022.

<sup>212</sup> Information from interview No.2, 09.08.2022.

#### *4.7.3 Are grant programmes used to support residents in creating stable, inclusive activities and structures that can strengthen civic and political participation for the long term?*

Calls for projects are used to create inclusive activities that can promote participation. Since 2010, NGOs can attract funding from Riga City Council for calls for projects in relation to society integration and neighbourhood activities. For example, from 2019 until 2021, associations, NGOs and units of Riga Municipality, and other organizations, could submit project proposals in areas like development of civic participation and mutual cooperation, promotion of social inclusion, promotion of tolerance and prevention of discrimination of any kind, and participation and inclusion of newcomers in Latvian society.<sup>213</sup>

In relation to fund raising areas mentioned above, activities carried out by the NGOs are mostly project-based and this approach does not result in long-term sustainable activities and structures within the municipality. There are several organizations that have the capacity to carry out certain activities and attract funding for a fixed period of time, but if an organization has a limited capacity regarding attraction of funding, their activities are fragmented and do not result in long-term activities.

Within the Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre, a participatory budget is in place for residents to come up with different initiatives and projects and submit the ideas to the municipality. Then the ideas are evaluated by an evaluation committee and voting is set by the residents to decide which ideas can get funding. The ideas should improve environment and are not of a commercial, religious, or political nature. They are implemented by the municipality.<sup>214</sup>

#### *4.7.4 Which resources does the city invest in provisions for participation?*

Each department within the council allocates its own funds for certain activities that are needed for the department. The necessity for public participation is incorporated both in local and national level legislation. So, funds are allocated from the budget of each structure that implement participatory activities. For example, Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre has participatory budget within which any resident of Riga can come up with an idea for improvement of a public place belonging to the municipality.<sup>215</sup> Funds for project grants are also allocated from the budget of the

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<sup>213</sup> Rīgas dome (2022). Par pašvaldības atbalstu sabiedrības integrācijas un līdzdalības aktivitāšu īstenošanai Rīgā. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/332068-par-pasvaldibas-atbalstu-sabiedribas-integracijas-un-lidzdalibas-aktivitasu-istenosanai-riga> (Accessed: 28.09.2022.)

<sup>214</sup> Information from interview No.2, 09.08.2022.

<sup>215</sup> Information from interview No.2, 09.08.2022.

structure that initiates the call. For example, if project proposal is initiated by the Welfare Department of Riga City Municipality, then funding is allocated from the Departments' budget.<sup>216</sup>

#### *4.7.5 Are training opportunities for participants in place?*

Funding allocated within the "2019-2021 Action Plan for the implementation of the Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga (2019-2024)" partially involves funding for involvement of residents and NGOs, as well as informative and educational seminars for NGOs and consultations for capacity building activities.<sup>217</sup>

#### *4.7.6 Is there a secretariat or a similar support structure to support participants?*

No information given.

### **4.8 Commitment to full political rights for all residents**

#### *4.8.1 Does the city actively lobby for granting / extending full local voting rights to their migrant population?*

No.

#### *4.8.2 What channels does the city use to make the case for extended political rights?*

The City does not use any channels to make the case for extended political rights, due to it being an issue that would be decided on a national level.

## **REFERENCES<sup>218</sup>**

Eurocities / Migration Work (2014) *Integrating Cities Toolkit: Engagement of migrant communities in local policy making processes and political participation.*

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<sup>216</sup> Information from interview No.2, 09.08.2022.

<sup>217</sup> Rīgas dome (2019). Rīgas pilsētas sabiedrības integrācijas pamatnostādņu 2019. -2024. gadam īstenošanas rīcības plāns 2019.- 2021. gadam. Available: <https://apkaimes.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/pamatsnostadnuricibasplans.doc> (Accessed: 20.09.2022.)

<sup>218</sup> The research conducted as part of this project was informed by these sources, providing a framework for evaluating existing integration, equality, diversity and civic participation policy and practice.

Eurocities / Migration Work (2014) *Integrating Cities Toolkit: Managing diversity and promoting equality in cities administration and service provision.*

Garcés-Mascreñas, B. and R. Penninx (2016) *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe: Contexts, Levels and Actors*, Springer Open (eBook)

Igualtats Connect (2019) *Toolkit to incorporate intersectionality into local policies.*

## APPENDIX – List of primary data sources

1. Interview No. 1, 06.07.2022. – Riga Municipality officials who work with integration issues,
2. Interview No. 2, 09.08.2022. – Riga Municipality official who works within the Riga City Neighbourhood Residents Centre,
3. Interview No. 3, 15.08.2022. – Riga Municipality official who works with education issues,
4. Interview No. 4, 17.08.2022. – Riga Municipality official who works with employment issues,
5. Interview No. 5, 01.09.2022. – Riga Municipality official who works within the Department of communication,
6. Interview No. 6 24.08.2022. – representative of NGO that works on issues related to migration,
7. Interview No. 7, 25.08.2022. – representative of NGO that works on issues related to migration,
8. Interview No. 8, 12.09.2022. – representative of a newcomer- led organization,
9. Interview No. 9, 15.08.2022. – Riga Municipality official who works within the NGO house.