



GOOD PRACTICE PROPOSAL REPORT LATVIA

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11/19/2015

Description of Social and Economic situation in Latvia

Republic of Latvia is situated in the Northern Europe, on the coast of the Baltic Sea. Area of the country is 64,589 km².

Population

The population of Latvia is 1 986 100. The population of Latvia is decreasing (2023.8 m in 2013) due to low birth rates (natural increase rate is -560) and emigration. Population density (persons per sq km) is 32.0 (2015 est.).

Ethnic groups

Latvian 61.1%, Russian 26.2%, Belarusian 3.5%, Ukrainian 2.3%, Polish 2.2%, Lithuanian 1.3%, other 3.4% (2013 est.).

Administrative divisions

110 regions and 9 republic cities.

Government

Multi party parliamentary republic.

GDP

GDP is 6 092 903 EUR. Real GDP Growth is 2.2% (2015 est; 5% in 2011). GDP — composition, by sector of origin (2014 est):

- agriculture: 4.8%,
- industry: 24.8%,
- services: 70.4% ,

Inflation growth is 0.4% (4.4% in 2011).

Employment

There are 984 600 economically active inhabitants, 884 100 people are employed in Latvia. Unemployment rate is 10.4. Average gross wage is 765 EUR per month (2014 est).

Labor force — by occupation (2010 est):

- agriculture: 8.8%,
- industry: 24%,
- services: 67.2%.

Production

Latvia is a small, open economy with exports contributing nearly a third of GDP. Due to its geographical location, transit services are highly-developed, along with timber and wood-processing, agriculture and food products, and manufacturing of machinery and electronics industries.

Industrial Production in Latvia averaged 3.98 percent from 2001 until 2015. Latest data compiled by the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia show that compared to February industrial production volume in March 2015 (according to seasonally adjusted data at constant prices) increased by 10.9%.

Latvia's main exported commodities are:

- wood and wood products,
- machinery and equipment,
- metals,
- textiles,
- foodstuffs.

The majority of companies, banks, and real estate have been privatized, although the state still holds sizable stakes in a few large enterprises, including 99.8% ownership of the Latvian national airline. Latvia officially joined the World Trade Organization in February 1999 and the EU in May 2004. Latvia joined the euro zone in 2014.

Education

423389 people are involved in various stages of formal education. Education expenditure is 4.9% of GDP (2011). School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education) 15 years in total (2012 est). Literacy total population: 99.9% (2015 est).

Consumption

Consumption level is increasing per 0,6% per year. The higher increase is for lodging and for goods and services involving lodging. Consumer Expenditure is 20105 USD. Consumers remain optimistic about their financial futures, they increasingly turning to online shopping sites. There is growing demand for locally produced food products. Consumers' use of financial cards expected to continue to grow, but despite rising incomes consumers still find it difficult to save.

Environment

Latvia's environment has benefited from a shift to service industries after the country regained independence; the main environmental priorities are improvement of drinking water quality and sewage system, household, and hazardous waste management, as well as reduction of air pollution; in 2001, Latvia closed the EU accession negotiation chapter on environment committing to full enforcement of EU environmental directives by 2010.

Social protection

Health expenditure is 5.7% of GDP (2013 est). 569506 persons on average receive different kind of pensions from the state budget every month. 19867 of them receive social allowance from the state budget. 469814 persons receive old-age pension. The average old-age pension payment per month is 272.46 EUR. There are 287 pensioners on 1000 inhabitants or 28.7% from all inhabitants (2015 est).

Description of Social and Solidarity Economy Organizations' role in Latvia

There are no many organizations which identify themselves as social or solidarity economy organizations. The recent research carried out by Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry shows that only 34 out of 1296 (only 3%) commerce organizations define themselves as social enterprise (5).

Researchers couldn't mark off organizations which define themselves as organizations working in the field of social or solidarity economy. Even organizations interviewed don't attribute social or solidarity economy to their activities, organization goals and outcomes. Only one stakeholder in the interview recognized the concept "solidarity economy" and could reflect on it. Two another informants use the term "social economy" but mostly speaking on theoretical approaches and concepts. Common term used by the all level stakeholders is "social entrepreneurship" and "social enterprise". This locally used term was also used to address interview

questions to the chosen informants. The term social entrepreneurship comes together with EU Initiative on social entrepreneurship. Recently some public forums of social entrepreneurship in Latvia take place on a regular basis. The term of social entrepreneurship is included in The National Development Plan 2014–2020. So, the term more and more becomes embodied in the business, policymaking, academic, non-profit sector discourse. Unfortunately terms social economy or solidarity economy aren't so familiar outside the academic circle. It was taken into account in sampling and adjusting questions to the Latvian context.

Researchers are positive that we can attribute social entrepreneurship to social and solidarity economy, keeping in mind that this approach doesn't grasp the whole phenomenon.

The major part of social entrepreneurship actors is registered as associations. Associations and foundations are non-governmental organizations according to Latvian legislation. In Latvia there is the Associations and Foundations Law (Biedrību un nodibinājumu likums) which regulates the foundation, operations and liquidation of NGOs. The major part of social enterprises that has chosen the legislative form of association also has similar characteristics (5):

- half of these organizations have the public benefit status,
- the major part of them are raising funds from project tenders,
- only a small part of their budget income comes from business activities,
- the main fields of their work are organization and implementation of educational activities,
- only several of them hire regular employees,
- all of them involve volunteers in their everyday activities.

Social enterprises in most cases are associations with members, so one can say these enterprises are organized groups of people with common goals and interests.

There are social enterprises that:

- motivates and coordinates civil society,
- improves individual life quality,
- carries out social and economical activities,
- protects environment,
- organizes charity,
- provides social services and services of social rehabilitation,
- maintains cultural heritage,
- provides educational services,
- integrates socially disadvantaged groups into society.

Latvian social entrepreneurship performers are young, enthusiastic people who are not focused on the potential profit from a specific business form, which they have chosen. Their activities accompany altruistic, but at the same time ambitious targets. Part of the social enterprises formed facilitated by the financial instruments accessible in Latvia. For example, the company Hopp social entrepreneurship activities were implemented in the Contemporary Art Centre program Brigade program, which was financially supported by the Soros Foundation Latvia. Thanks to this foreign funding, a number of social enterprises were formed in Latvia, however, the part of these companies has finished its activity or action has been temporarily suspended since the end of financial support or the specific scope of activities has not been profitable.

Description of public and legislative initiatives that affect the described sectors

Social and Solidarity Economy and Social Entrepreneurship as well is a new concept and there is no legislation which regulates this sphere particularly. There is no common definition or body of criteria which demarcate social or solidarity economy organizations from societies (associations or foundations) and commercial organizations.

Till now social enterprises can work within the scope of commercial business enterprise or non-governmental organization (association or foundation). According to the Associations and Foundations Law, Article 7, institutions are entitled to take the form of ancillary economic activities associated with its property maintenance or use, as well as carry out other economic activities in order to achieve the objectives of the association and foundation. The economic activity for an association or foundation is permitted instrument which they can use to promote the statutory goals, but in such an ancillary work form neither association nor foundation can be regarded as social enterprise in its classical sense.

In fact there are only self-proclaimed social enterprises in Latvia. There are many organizations that don't even recognize their special mission or status. In accordance with the evidence that social enterprises in Latvia are functioning without recognition and state support, the Ministry of Welfare in 2013 organized work group which elaborated The Conception on Implementation of Social Entrepreneurship in Latvia. The main aim of The Conception was to establish those criteria which could characterize social enterprise. The criteria developed by the Ministry of Welfare within The Conception should be general and all-purpose in order not to exclude organizations to become or to implement social economy activities.

There are some privileges to develop social entrepreneurship under the flag of the association. Unlike businesses, associations and foundations are exempt from corporate income tax and when a business turnover during the year does not exceed EUR 50 000, association or foundation does not register as a value-added tax (VAT) payer.

The association or foundation choosing the legal form of the non-governmental organization has the opportunity to obtain public benefit organization status and get a chance to attract additional funding, enabling donors to receive a tax credit (relief). This is an indirect state aid which Latvian non-governmental organizations that have acquired public benefit status enjoy in contrary of businesses organizations which have no such rights. In addition, the association or foundation receives property tax exemption if they are leased or transferred to the possession of municipal property, which is used for medical and social care services. It should be noted that this "benefit" can claim any association or foundation, as well as the merchant. In addition to the above, local governments may issue regulations, which provide privileges for individual real estate tax payer categories.

According to the currently existing regulatory framework, social enterprise can choose a merchant form. A merchant is an individual person registered in the Commercial Register (individual merchant) or corporation (a partnership and a corporation). The Commercial Law provides that the merchant does business that is open economic activity, which in its own name for profit is performed by a merchant. It should be noted that the law does not oblige split profits exclusively between the owners, so that the form can be applied in selecting social entrepreneurship as an operational target, where the social entrepreneurship concept provides that the profits are used for social problems.

If social entrepreneur chooses merchant legal status, it is a subject to all the terms and conditions applying of any merchant - obligations to pay taxes and fees, without being able to get any privilege simply because the enterprise carries on social entrepreneurship.

At present, the state does not offer any effective support mechanisms directly for social entrepreneurs, because if the state will recognize formation of the social enterprises desirable, it would be necessary to create special tools of support specifically for that business form. Till this moment there is no developed or implemented any special public support mechanisms to promote social entrepreneurship in Latvia.

Description of the proposed SSE Good practice

5 national/territorial relevant stakeholders dealing both with Development Cooperation and Social and Solidarity Economy was selected and interviewed in the July, 2015.

Stakeholders are as follows:

1. Governmental Development cooperation sector: **Anda Grīnberga**, LR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Head of the Cooperation Policy Department.
2. Non-Governmental Development cooperation sector: **Andris Bērziņš**, Latvian Samaritan Association, the head of the board, the director.

3. SSE sector: **Sabīne Sīle-Eglīte**, a member of the board of the foundation Partners in Ideas Fund and Ieva Lāce, social entrepreneur, the association Allnature.
4. Local authorities: **Ilze Tijone**, Bauska county municipality, the head of the Development and Planning department.
5. Trade unions and/or social movements: none. There was a difficulty to find any relevant stakeholder which deals both with issues of social economy and development cooperation. However Raimonds Elbakjans, the social youth movement founder and the leader of the association Ghetto Games was interviewed. Unfortunately he neither is defining himself as a social entrepreneur nor attributing the association`s work to development cooperation in any way. It was decided not to enclose his interview to the list.

SSE Good practice proposal

The chosen organization as SSE Good practice partly or fully corresponds to the following principles:

- **Solidarity:** It informs the cooperation between members inside a solidarity economy enterprise, between such enterprises and with the community more broadly.
- **Collective ownership:** ensures the assets and resources of the solidarity economy enterprise brings benefits to all within the enterprise, to the community and future generations. It ensures control and power are shared.
- **Self management:** gives members (women and men) and worker owners the rights to impact on decision making.
- **Control of capital:** is a crucial practice to secure benefits for the individual enterprises, the wider solidarity economy and the community.
- **Eco-centric practice:** places an emphasis on a non-destructive relationship with nature through inputs, production processes, services rendered, and consumption and household practices.
- **Community benefit:** encourages a broader social awareness as an integral part of how the solidarity economy works.

The members of organizations shares ethical values of Social and Solidarity Economy, namely, caring, sharing, self reliance, honesty, democracy, equality, learning, ecological consciousness, social justice and openness.

Organization responsible for the the proposed SSE Good practice

The Foundation Otrā Elpa (Second Breath) is an independent private foundation working to develop a socially responsible society in Latvia.

By promoting the practice of venture philanthropy, applying business solutions to societal problems and joining together of socially responsible companies and individuals, Second Breath creates new opportunities for the corporate sector as well as private donors to be involved and excited about their philanthropic giving.

The Foundation Second Breath develops and implements corporate social responsibility programmes, identifies areas in need of support, provides assistance in finding an effective capital philanthropic investment and offers support to non-governmental charity organizations.



The Foundation is running the charity shop Second Breath (Otrā Elpa). The charity shop is a retail establishment operated by the Foundation — an independent charitable foundation in Latvia, for the purpose of fundraising. The income from the store sales will be used to further the charitable work. The idea of the shop comes from

Great Britain Oxfam charity shops.

The charity shop is an excellent example of reusing items that otherwise would be sent to landfill. Donations of goods and their sale in the shop are environmentally friendly actions that bring in money for other good causes.

Thanks to the donated items, volunteers and pro bono support from both companies and individuals, they are able to keep the costs and prices low.

The charity shop mainly sell good quality second-hand goods, celebrity items, some new goods, which could also be branded to the charity (e.g. original artwork, greeting cards) and goods that have connection with causes supported by the Partners in Ideas Fund (fair trade/direct trade products).

Donors are individuals (general public, artists, musicians, etc.), businesses, diplomatic community, celebrities and NGOs.

Proposed activities

The Foundation is located in Riga, Marija street 13. Its social goal is raising prosperity of socially vulnerable groups, engagement of youth and re-use of belongings. The foundation`s activities are adapted to the specific needs of target groups that are spotted in society and updated in collaboration with the organization clients.

About the activities within the charity shop: two of the shops are situated in Riga and one in Liepaja (Kurzeme region), where people can donate their belongings. Second breath. BB and Second breath. Post in Riga and Second Breath. Beach in Liepaja is not only a charity shop but also a legal way to raise the necessary funds for charitable and social projects. In all stores variety of "second life" items donated by individuals and organizations and local craftsmen / artists / producers donated products at very low prices can be purchased. Part of donated items is on sale, the second part is forwarded to municipalities and other organizations for charity. The income from the business is forwarded to support various social projects. Clients (customers) are those who vote for the project proposals in the shop and in fact they decide to whom the earned money goes.

Management model and stakeholders involvement

There are three founders and board members. The Foundation brings together interested confident, socially responsible people, organizations and companies to jointly participate in various kinds of social changes in project design and implementation in order to find effective, sustainable and results-oriented solutions to urgent social problems in society.

The shared responsibility and stakeholders' involvement the informant describes as follows:

"The most vivid example is the division of finances in our organization. In many cases the decision about financing the project is not made by experts or the board, but by purchasers themselves. The purchasers who are our customers are voting for the project they want to support. In that case the same people who donate belonging, from which donations the fund is raised, are the same people who decide to whom the money goes, there is no any control over that process. We as the board are responsible for the transparency of the process, but we are not controlling who receives money".

In May, 2015 3000 EUR was forwarded to the association Mini SD for renovation of premises where places soup kitchen and humanitarian aids distribution. 1807 purchasers voted, totally 902 votes were received for this particular project. Every month charity shops provide 4 to 5 NGOs with material items.

Turnover, job creation and quality

The Foundation offers vacancies for employees and for volunteers. Informant confirms:

"Our employees are happy to work here because they are helping people. Our employees are working with pleasure. During the economical crisis many volunteers came to work at our company in order to be positive, to be a part of something good. There is lot of positivism which is hardly to find in other workplaces. It is the honor and great happiness. We are providing job vacancies with good salary, not only for us and not as in typical NGO where people are volunteering, working without salary or receiving

ridiculous salary. We are doing well, we are solving social problems, we are providing stable job with good salary in that way.”

At this moment in the shops and the Foundation there are 17 employees and 15 volunteers.

Social and ecological externalities

The founders of the foundation declares that charity shops Second Breath is a place to relax after the race in today's rush ridden world. It is a place to raise a positive attitude and energy, to promote the right to create pleasure for yourself and others. They are aware of reducing environmental damage and saving resources and energy giving second breath to second hand things. They declare that their business is based on the interaction of three fundamental values — charity, environmental friendliness and social responsibility. Their mission is to promote social understanding of values, positive social change, protecting the environment, and be a people chose mediator for implementing charity projects.

Store shelves are not filled with orders from factories, but by every individual. Everyone can donate things that are unnecessary for them but which may be quite useful for another. Property donations allow to start the cycle of good work and immediately help three groups of people:

1. those who shop for cheap can buy useful items,
2. those who find themselves in crisis situation, in shelters, orphanages, nursing homes, and gets out of the store free material assistance,
3. those who benefit from the realized charitable initiatives.



Buyers donated property converted into real cash. Second breath low price policy helps to acquire good things for good money. At the same time people have helped themselves, as well as they help those who realized charitable initiatives out of earned money. Reuse of unnecessary things is environmentally friendly action, things that would otherwise reach the waste dump is again used for charitable purposes.

The shop is the place where reciprocity between donors and buyers takes place. However, the profit of this process is redirected to the specific charity initiatives, which in turn sooner or later pay off positively for the whole society, donors and buyers of belongings including.

Communication and advocacy

The foundation was a pioneer in the field of social entrepreneurship in Latvia. Taking into consideration that there were not legislative regulation of this kind of business, founders and board members were forced to do a great deal of advocacy job. The informant describes the situation:

“When we started in 2009, we put enormous work and energy in clarification work. We couldn't to carry out our work, we had to take part in numerous commissions in order to make legal environment for such a form of the entrepreneurship. We had to figure out many things on our own, to find auditors to consult with, to get permissions from Income Office although they hesitated to do that and we had to be “iceboats”. The concept of the social entrepreneurship was new. We like to explain thing to the society but we were asked to define legal concepts and forms...we had to battle for the permission to do good things. We would like more initiatives from lawmaking people. At the beginning we have support from diplomatic sector, from representatives from other countries here in Latvia, in those

countries where the same praxis was known, they understand and support us. The first time when we went to Riga City Council, they were surprised and listened to us with wide open mouths and eyes, they were interested, and they listened. Yes, the interest was aroused, but we were asked to develop draft law. It was a little bit silly, it seems weird that they expect to do the lawmakers job.”

The foundation is doing job for disadvantaged groups of people but their aim is not advocacy of particular group interest.

Communication with public is channeled through internet network, home page, Facebook, Twitter and directly face-to-face communication with their customers, partners and other stakeholders. Broadcast organizations and press address the Foundation themselves.

Networking, affiliations and openness of the Good practice to the existing networks

The Foundation cooperates with Riga and Liepaja municipalities and their social care and support service agencies and shelters. Riga Shelter, associations homo ecos: and Green Liberty are among these the Foundation cooperates on regular basis.

Description of the Good practice's connection with development cooperation and social and solidarity economy fields

If we understand development cooperation as support to poor and less developed countries to contribute to their community and their long-term social and economic development and thereby contribute to reducing poverty in the world, then the Second Breath doesn't carry out any purposeful activity in this area. However if we understand the concept of development cooperation in wider sense, namely, as cooperation with different stakeholders to contribute to their community and their long-term social and economic development and thereby contribute to reducing poverty of the territory/community, then we can assert that the Foundation contributes their work and resources into this domain.

Interaction of SSE and DC is found in the following initiatives:

1. Business opportunity fund. The Second Breath is grown from their core organization — the Foundation Partners in Ideas Fund. Partners in Ideas Fund developed the Business Opportunity Fund (BOF) — a business lab for people with disabilities and their support persons with the mission to establish a long-term support network and a self-sufficient support structure providing opportunities for people with disabilities to start up and manage a business. BOF is established under Apeirons- a non-governmental organization for people with disability and their supporters. The strategy of the BOF is to:



- raise the entrepreneurial awareness amongst people with disability,
- organize workshops,
- establish individualized and flexible support scheme for each case,
- provide non-financial support during the development stage of the business idea and the start-up process, and ongoing support in the long term,
- provide financial support and attract external financial capital,
- preserve intellectual and financial capital in the BOF,

- establish financial independence of the BOF and generate income for Apeirons in the long term.
2. Temporary work agency. In 2008, Partners in Ideas Foundations together with NGO Apeirons established a Temporary Work Agency. The Agency aims to provide employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Latvia by:
- providing temporary jobs (in the charity shops),
 - providing adjusted work environment and equipment,
 - organizing training courses.

The training courses were financially supported by The Vitol Foundation. Non-financial support is provided by The British Chamber of Commerce in Latvia, Microsoft, Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Zane Caune, Mihails Kuklins and Aiva Viksna.

3. Support to new teachers at school. Inspired by Teach for America — the successfully implemented educational programme in the USA, Teach First in the United Kingdom and as of last year also Noored Kooli in Estonia, Partners in Ideas Fund in cooperation with Hill&Knowlton develop a social change programme in the field of education, starting in November of 2007. Within the framework of the programme motivated and talented graduates are selected to become teachers in a school for two years.

The aim of the programme is to bring in young, talented graduates with leadership potential and academic achievements into the educational system. The talent and energy of these youngsters will help spur positive and progressive environment in schools, raise the prestige of teacher's profession and the pupils motivation to learn.

The programme was developed and is being implemented thanks to the support of Cube Ltd., Diena, Domino Ltd., Fontes Ltd., Hansabanka, Hill&Knowlton Ltd., Klavins&Slaidins Ltd., Lattelecom, Ministry of Education and Science of Republic of Latvia.

Evaluation of the Good practice

Good practice's economic and social impact and potential

The Foundation is an employer and tax payer. Their economy activity is mainly for social aims — to meet needs of different disadvantaged social groups.

Transformative impact on the territory and beyond

The Foundation with their activities is having transformative impact to peoples thinking mode and attitude in following way:

- Purchasing in second hand shops is trendy, environmental friendly, and recourses saving,
- Donate is solitaire, ecological and ethical way to get rid from the unnecessary things,
- Donation is way of helping people. In that way the donation culture and habits to donate is implemented into society,
- Reselling and recycling is ecological and sustainable way of consumption,
- Ecological and solidarity modes of thinking is introduced to the social praxis of city inhabitants.

Policy impact of the Good practice

Thanks to the initiative of the foundation the concept of social economy, social entrepreneurship has been implemented into politic planning documents. The foundation and charity shops are one of the best practice examples in Latvia in the domain of social economy. Clarification work and precedent done by the foundation is the good and solid basement for decision makers to consolidate business praxis with legislation. The Foundation together with 4 other organization in the beginning of November, 2015 established The Association of Social Entrepreneurship in Latvia. The Association acts as political lobby to promote legislation and normative basis for regulation of social enterprises in Latvia.



Sustainability of the practice

Their business is not an industry so they are not having destructing impact to natural resources, nature and environment. The Foundation`s business is based on the best intents and aspirations of human beings so the idea of reselling donated second hand items and channelling income to the charity is simple, humanitarian, ecological, economical and therefore sustainable.

Evaluation of the stakeholders on the Good practice

The Foundation was not proposed by interviewed 5 stakeholders but by several actors in the non-governmental and academic sector. The charity shop Second Breath is also used as good practice example in several published and unpublished researches on social entrepreneurship.

Learnings from the described Good practice

The lessons can be learnt:

- Latvia is short of institutions and persons who can convert things into money. We need more those who have competence to do this job, not only collect and distribute things. It is better to convert them into money and then distribute to people who have needs.
- The ladies who started up the business were very persuasive, target oriented; they didn't stop and worked away, never give up. That is a lesson to learn.

Success factors:

- The crucial point is enthusiasm, the idea come before profit.
- These are people and their initiative to work, to do things, to sacrifice themselves, to do charity work and to serve society.
- Successful business model, they can join good job with good business conditions and functions.
- Business philosophy which matches to social benefit, to societal wishes and needs. The Second Breath is pronouncing and living out sustainable lifestyle and they can help other organizations to do good job.
- Loyal employees.

Individual story

We are not an old organization. We are non-profit organization and we didn't have any funds. We wanted organize soup kitchen and we need some seed money. The first support we get from Teterevi foundation (charity foundation). They also teach us to search for other funding sources as well. We just called to the Second Breath and asked whether they can help us with thermoses for carrying soup. They replied that we even don't need any proceedings; they can give us thermoses right now. Of course we were very happy. Next time we enter the competition for the grant and got refrigerator and freezer. Then we applied for next grants. But we develop very proper proposal for the announced big grant — 3000 EUR and got it as well. It was hard work because the winner is appointed by shop customers not by the foundation itself. We also promote the foundation and advertising Skrunđa people to purchase in the Second Breath shops. We are very proud that the Second Breath already is well known between charity organizations.

The beneficiary

Anda Vitola,

The association MINI SD, Skrunđa, Kurzeme region

Additional information

Websites of the foundation

<http://www.otraelpa.lv>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Otra-Elpa-344592298711/?ref=ts>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/Otra_elpa

Contact details of the reference person

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Links to publications, press reviews

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