



**BRIDGES
OF TRUST**

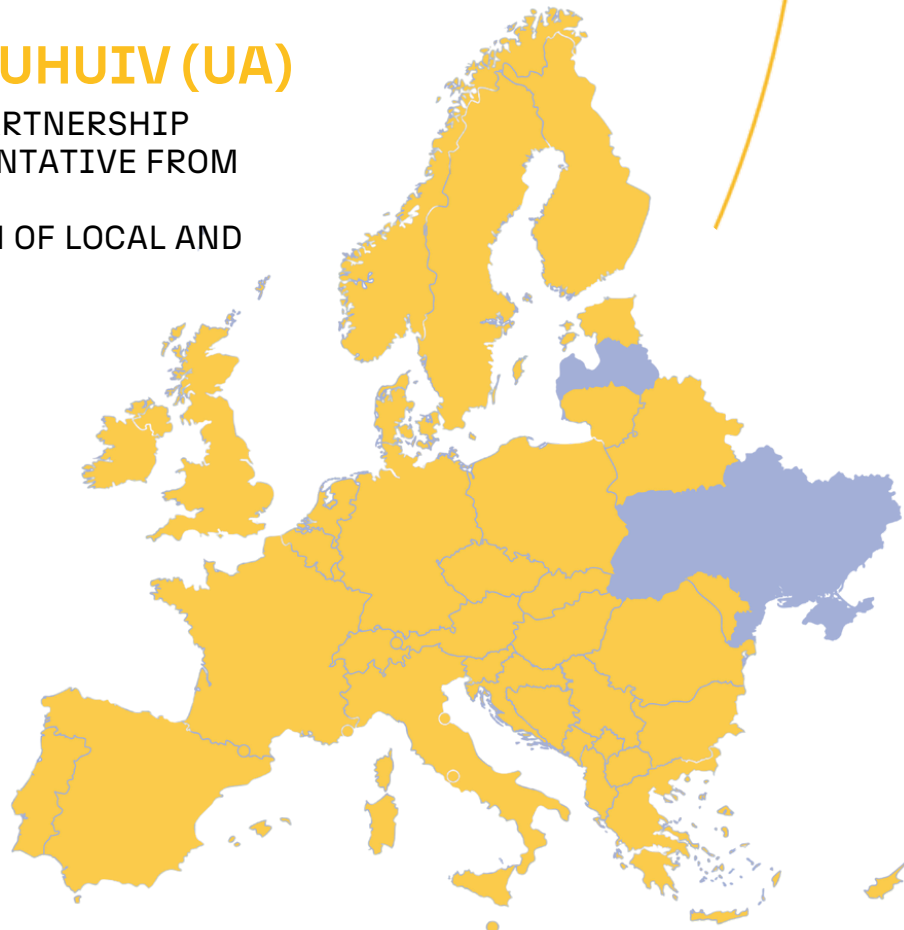
LATVIA UKRAINE

Empowering Cooperation with
Ukrainian Municipalities

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KULDĪGA (LV) & CHUHUIV (UA)

OVERVIEW OF MUNICIPAL PARTNERSHIP
INTERVIEW WITH A REPRESENTATIVE FROM
KULDIGA'S MUNICIPALITY
& THE LATVIAN ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL AND
REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS





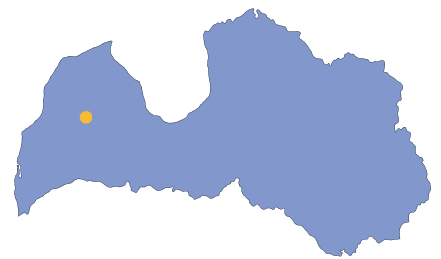
OVERVIEW

INTER-MUNICIPAL PARTNERSHIP

MARCH 2023

BILATERAL MEETING

On 7 March 2023, a bilateral online meeting between Chuhuiv municipality (Ukraine) and Kuldīga municipality (Latvia) took place, where both municipalities expressed their readiness to continue the cooperation that had been interrupted by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The municipalities had previously signed a memorandum of cooperation in 2021. During the meeting, they focused on areas of cooperation crucial to Chuhuiv's recovery, including the restoration of housing, educational institutions, and essential infrastructure such as water and heat supply. They also discussed energy-efficient solutions, renewable energy, and support for local businesses. As part of the Bridges of Trust initiative, the municipalities agreed to collaborate on joint projects aimed at securing international funding, which will help strengthen Chuhuiv's resilience and foster long-term development.



KULDĪGA (LV)

MAY 2023

SOLIDARITY FORUM

On 8 May, the Latvian-Ukrainian Municipalities' Solidarity Forum was held at the European Union House in Rīga, focusing on the challenges and opportunities for local governments in the face of the war and Ukraine's EU accession process. The event featured presentations on municipal resilience, including the experiences of Chuhuiv and other Ukrainian municipalities, and explored funding opportunities for Latvian and Ukrainian municipal cooperation within European Union programmes. The Forum highlighted the importance of solidarity and cooperation in times of crisis, underscoring the role of municipalities in fostering sustainable growth and resilience. Both the study visit and the Forum reflected the ongoing solidarity between municipalities in Latvia and Ukraine, reinforcing their collective efforts to build a better future together.



CHUHUIV (UA)



OVERVIEW

INTER-MUNICIPAL PARTNERSHIP

MAY 2023

STUDY VISIT

From 9 to 11 May, representatives from Chuhuiv municipality in Ukraine visited Kuldīga municipality in Latvia, marking a significant step in their growing partnership. The visit fostered collaboration on key areas such as restoring infrastructure, advancing energy efficiency with renewable technologies, and supporting small and medium enterprises.

The program, hosted by Kuldīga's Chairperson, Ms. Inese Astaševska, featured insightful visits to the municipal cogeneration plant, Kuldīga Hospital, and local community organisations, offering practical examples of innovative governance and sustainable development. Highlights included a creative session at the Adatu fabrika co-creation space, where both municipalities brainstormed future joint projects to address reconstruction challenges and community needs. The exchange not only provided new skills and project ideas but also underscored the power of local partnerships in driving sustainable recovery and innovation.



Culture and
Heritage



Education



Innovation and
digitalisation



Energy and
Green Transition



STUDY VISIT, KULDĪGA, 2023





INTERVIEW 1/2

INSIGHTS FROM A REPRESENTATIVE OF KULDIGA

- INTRODUCE YOURSELF IN A FEW WORDS

My name is **Artis Gustovskis**, and I am the Director of Kuldīga Digital Innovation Hub and international projects' expert. Kuldīga municipality is located in the western part of Latvia having a rich historical and cultural heritage. The old town of Kuldīga is the UNESCO World Heritage Site and is known for its cultural traditions, as well as environmental initiatives, focusing also on sustainable development.



ARTIS GUSTOVSKIS





INTERVIEW

INSIGHTS FROM A REPRESENTATIVE OF KULDĪGA

1. WHAT MOTIVATED YOUR MUNICIPALITY TO PURSUE A PARTNERSHIP WITH A UKRAINIAN ONE?

The municipality of Kuldīga has always focused on sustainable development, community engagement, and cultural preservation, at the same time being interested to cooperate in these fields at the international level. This has served as a motivation for us to start the cooperation with the municipality of Chuhuiv, with which we are sharing similar goals, such as the preservation of cultural heritage, promotion of local art events, local sustainable development and digital transition.



KULDĪGA (LV)

2. WHAT SUCCESSES STAND OUT IN YOUR COOPERATION?

Our municipalities have signed the Memorandum of Understanding at the end of 2021 agreeing to cooperate in several fields, notably in culture and art, digitalisation and innovative technologies, as well as entrepreneurship. The war, beginning several months after the signature of the Memorandum, has changed our future plans for the common activities, however we have continued our cooperation during all these years adapting to the challenges and circumstances faced by the municipality of Chuhuiv. We have been pleased to welcome the delegation from Chuhuiv for the study visit organised jointly with the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments in the framework of the “Bridges of Trust” project in May 2023, sharing with the best practice experience in such fields as the provision of municipal services, the involvement of community and introduction of digital innovations in the everyday life of municipality. At the moment we continue to work jointly to plan the further common activities, and such kind of initiatives is making bilateral cooperation successful.



CHUHUIV (UA)





INTERVIEW

INSIGHTS FROM A REPRESENTATIVE OF KULDIGA

3. WHAT HAVE BEEN THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN MAINTAINING THIS PARTNERSHIP?

I will not hide, that we are facing some challenges in our bilateral cooperation taking into consideration the challenges the municipality of Chuhuiv is experiencing during the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. As the biggest ones I could mention the opportunities for regular face-to-face meetings, the access to up-to-date information on funding opportunities for joint projects, as well as the involvement of local stakeholders in international cooperation activities.



4. WHAT HAS BEEN THE REACTION OF YOUR CITIZENS TO THIS PARTNERSHIP?

The inhabitants of Kuldīga are highly engaged in different municipal projects. Likewise, various events and activities in support of the Ukrainian people have taken place in Kuldīga municipality. Our community, institutions and entrepreneurs express their support for the Ukrainian people in different ways and through various initiatives, beginning from the participation in support activities and ending with humanitarian aid.

“THROUGH CULTURAL EXCHANGES, SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES, AND SHARED DEVELOPMENT GOALS, MUNICIPALITIES CAN BUILD STRONG TIES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO PEACE AND COOPERATION ON A GLOBAL SCALE.”





INTERVIEW

INSIGHTS FROM A REPRESENTATIVE OF KULDIGA

5. HOW HAS THIS PARTNERSHIP BEEN BENEFICIAL DURING THE TIME OF CONFLICT?

Such a partnership is particularly beneficial in sharing the best practice in the field of renovation, as well as the municipal preparedness for the crisis and continuity of municipal services during the crisis. The focus on resilience, as emphasized in Kuldīga's development plans, would be real asset in such challenging times.



6. HOW DO YOU SEE THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY?

Kuldīga's efforts to promote sustainability, cultural heritage, and community involvement show that local governments can play a crucial role in fostering international diplomacy. Through cultural exchanges, sustainability initiatives, and shared development goals, municipalities can build strong ties that contribute to peace and cooperation on a global scale.





INTERVIEW 2/2

INSIGHTS FROM THE LATVIAN ASSOCIATION OF
LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION

The Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments (LALRG) was selected to be a part of the **Bridges of Trust initiative** and mobilised three Latvian municipalities to start the cooperation with Ukrainian peers for the joint work on reconstruction projects. Being the contact point for the municipalities, the LALRG is coordinating a set of activities defined by the initiative with the aim of rebuilding Ukraine through international municipal cooperation.



- *INTRODUCE YOURSELF IN A FEW WORDS*

My name is Agita Kaupuža and I work in the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments being adviser on EU Issues and Head of the Representation in Brussels. During the last several years we have implemented various activities to succeed mutually beneficial cooperation between Latvian and Ukrainian municipalities.



AGITA KAUPUŽA





INTERVIEW

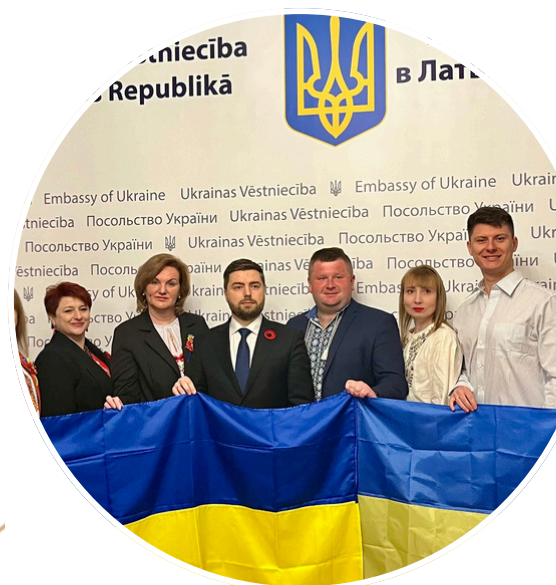
INSIGHTS FROM THE LATVIAN ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

1. HOW WERE THE MUNICIPALITIES IN YOUR COUNTRY CHOSEN FOR THIS INITIATIVE?

First of all, we have offered motivated municipalities not having twinning municipalities in Ukraine yet, to start the cooperation. Afterwards with the support of “Bridges of Trust” team and the Association of Ukrainian Cities the respective Ukrainian municipalities were chosen, taking into consideration the amount of inhabitants in both municipalities, as well as the desired areas of cooperation.

2. HOW DO YOU FACILITATE THE COOPERATION BETWEEN MUNICIPALITIES FROM YOUR COUNTRY AND THEIR UKRAINIAN COUNTERPARTS?

We are supporting the municipalities involved with the information on the possibilities to submit common project proposals, as well as organising study visits of Ukrainian municipalities to Latvia, as we consider, that it is essential not only to exchange online, but also to meet, discuss and see the best practice examples in municipalities in real life. Live discussions, meetings and exchanges can be compared with the profound basis to build the next levels of cooperation and spread it to different thematic areas.





INTERVIEW

INSIGHTS FROM THE LATVIAN ASSOCIATION
OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

3. WHAT ARE THE KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN THESE PARTNERSHIPS?

We are glad, that three out of four pairs of municipalities have already signed the Memorandums of Understanding, and the signature of the fourth one is already scheduled. It means, that there is both a political will to foster sustainable cooperation between the municipalities involved and motivation from the side of municipal employees to work on common activities and projects to make the life in the respective communities better.

4. WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU FACED IN FACILITATING THESE COOPERATIONS DURING THE WAR?

We have to take into consideration, that Ukrainian municipalities have been living in constant crisis during the last several years and adapted the activities to their circumstances. However, I would not like to call it as a challenge, but would rather choose the term “adaptation to real life”. In order to adjust the activities to be implemented, regular meetings and discussions are prerequisite for success. We are confident, that the municipalities of both countries – Latvia and Ukraine – can learn from each other and benefit from this cooperation, as we are all interconnected at global scale.



**MUDITE JUHNA ,
SECRETARY GENERAL
(LALRG)**

***“MUNICIPALITIES OF BOTH COUNTRIES – LATVIA
AND UKRAINE – CAN LEARN FROM EACH OTHER AND
BENEFIT FROM THIS COOPERATION, AS WE ARE ALL
INTERCONNECTED AT GLOBAL SCALE.”***





INTERVIEW

INSIGHTS FROM THE LATVIAN ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

5. WHAT IS NEEDED TO ENGAGE MORE CITIES IN THE PROJECT?

At the moment almost all the municipalities in Latvia have twinning municipalities in Ukraine. The ones, who don't have, are cooperating with Ukrainian municipalities in different ways, through support activities or projects. Thus, I would consider, that now we should not put as a priority the quantity, but the quality of the partnerships already established. I see this as a multilevel cooperation involving not only municipalities, but also the "support team": associations of municipalities of both countries, the embassies, and, of course, "Bridges of Trust" as a framework. If we look back at the successes in the development of bilateral cooperations between Latvian and Ukrainian municipalities, we can see, that such "fellowship" provides more opportunities for the bilateral cooperations, e.g., by providing opportunities to receive regular updates on funding opportunities, being involved in the study visits or international seminars. One such example is the bilateral cooperation between Kuldīga municipality in Latvia and the municipality of Chuhuiv in Ukraine, which we have been accompanying from their very first on-line meeting in 2021.

***"ALMOST ALL THE
MUNICIPALITIES
IN LATVIA HAVE
TWINNING
MUNICIPALITIES
IN UKRAINE."***

6. WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS FOR THE BRIDGES OF TRUST PROJECT MOVING FORWARD?

Kuldīga's efforts to promote sustainability, cultural heritage, and community involvement show that local governments can play a crucial role in fostering international diplomacy. Through cultural exchanges, sustainability initiatives, and shared development goals, municipalities can build strong ties that contribute to peace and cooperation on a global scale.



ABOUT

BRIDGES OF TRUST PROJECT & CEMR TEAM

As a part of the Bridges of Trust Initiative supported by the U-LEAD with Europe Programme, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC) are implementing activities that foster peer-to-peer relationships between Ukrainian and EU municipalities with the help of 14 participating National Local Self-Government Associations (LGAs) and other relevant networks representing Local Self-Governments.

WHAT WE AIM TO

- Fostering partnerships building with Ukrainian municipalities with the ambition to have at least one partner municipality from EU countries.
- Deepening cooperation between existing partner municipalities by capacity development in preparing joint activities to strengthen resilience and reconstruction efforts in Ukraine.
- Supporting the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine.
- Develop and promote Bridges of Trust Initiative into the future Bridges of Trust Community.

DISCLAIMER

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