

Finding our niches for sustainable local economic development

INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

Saldus
novads

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Integrated Action Plan - Saldus

The Integrated Action Plan of Saldus is a document that for the first time specifically targets the economy as well as the implications of the European Green Deal on a small rural Latvian town and has been developed as a result of cooperation between municipal institutions, the private sector, non-governmental organisations and representatives of several local communities. It aims to both strengthen existing and favour the emergence of new entrepreneurs, thus creating a dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The plan has been elaborated simultaneously with the new Development Program of Saldus Municipality and therefore aligned with the goals of it for the next 7 years, until 2028. Since the start phase of the URBACT project, our city has gone through an administrative territorial reform undertaken in 2021 where our municipality was merged with the neighbouring municipality and became one administrative territory, thus stronger and more resilient.

The ideas provided in this document were consulted and generated together with URBACT Local Group members, the local inhabitants and other relevant and knowledgeable parties and experts, to prepare and understand the future needs, current situation and needs from the population.





PART I

MUNICIPALITY OF SALDUS

Population: 27 110 (CSB, 2021) (decreasing)

Ethnic structure: Latvians 87%, Lithuanians 5%, Russians 4%, Others 4%

Area: 2 179,9 km²

Average Age: 42

Density: 13 persons per square kilometre (CSB, 2021)

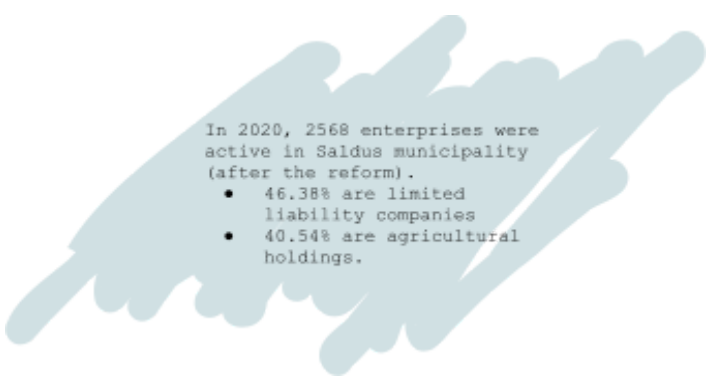
Unemployment rate: 5,7% (SEA, 31.12.2021.)

Average gross salary: 964 EUR (CSB, 2020)

Main industries: Forestry and wood processing, construction, agriculture, metal and food industries, retail and wholesale.

Saldus Regional Community is situated in the south-western part of Latvia – the green Kurzeme. It is surrounded by numerous neighbours: in the South it borders on the Republic of Lithuania, in the West – on the Dienvidkurzeme and Kuldīga municipalities, in the North on Tukums municipality, and in the East – on Dobeles municipalities. Saldus, a regional centre, is about halfway on the route from Riga, the capital of Latvia (120km), to the Western coastal city of Liepaja (100km). It is located in the historical Duchy of Courland that today is known as the Kurzeme Planning Region, which provides economic advantages for businesses, therefore has been growing and providing opportunities for various industries to be located in Saldus or Brocēni. It is an area with a history of allegiance to, or occupation by, the neighbouring empires. In particular it suffered from upheaval during the wars of the 20th century after being occupied by Germany or the Soviet Union on a number of occasions.


Courland was always a rural and agricultural region with a strong tradition of trade via the two strategically located ice-free ports in the Baltic, Ventspils and Liepaja. Saldus has historically been a market town and the hub of a food producing area. It has developed competencies in food processing, wood processing and construction. The unemployment rate ten years ago was 17.7% during the global financial crisis. Today it is 5% for Saldus and 4.5% for Brocēni. According to the Saldus District Development Association there were rarely in the history of Saldus one or two large companies or factories that dominated the local economy. This also meant that in an economical crisis of one of the companies, there are no major layoffs of local employees that could have a crippling effect on the entire local economy.



In 2020, 2568 enterprises were active in Saldus municipality (after the reform).

- 46.38% are limited liability companies
- 40.54% are agricultural holdings.

The main economic sectors are wood processing and agriculture, metal and food industries, as well as construction with many of the companies being small and medium size enterprises (SMEs). The number of active enterprises in 2019 was 2099 in Saldus and 476 in Brocēni. Saldus has a number of state agencies that assist business development with funding and training including the Saldus District Development Association (founder of new businesses in the rural economy), the Rural Development Service (local office of the Ministry of Agriculture) and Altum, an agency that supports more established businesses.



In the municipality entrepreneurs forms are registered as branches, joint stock companies, branches of foreign merchants and general partnerships:

- 167 sole proprietors,
- 140 sole proprietorships,

In 2021 the population of Saldus municipal area (two towns and 19 surrounding villages) was 27 110 inhabitants of which 79% or 21 438 lived in the municipality of Saldus and 21% or 5 672 lived in the then merged municipality of Broceni. The population

decline in Saldus is part of a demographic trend in Latvia where the population of the country declined by 7.3% from 2011 to 2021. The decline in the age cohort 15 to 24 years and the increases in the age cohorts 45 to 64 years and 65 years plus, show a pattern of an 'ageing' population similar to the national trend

The decision-making structure is represented by the city council, for which 15 deputies and a mayor are elected. The City Council appoints the members of four standing committees, which prepare issues to be discussed and decided in the council meetings:

Finance committee; Territorial committee;

Social affairs committee,

Education committee

Cultural Committee.

Saldus has many potentials to improve a wealthy and healthy development and in collaboration with all stakeholders of the town, this development process can be reasonably successful. This was one of the reasons, the municipality of Saldus has decided to take a really active part in URBACT's "iPlace" project where our partner cities are fellow travellers who are together seeking to find niches, appropriate "corners" supporting and fostering their cities. Identifying these niches and corners, deepens the understanding of the nuances that make our cities special and interesting, with the determination to use the gained knowledge and new ideas to sprout more sustainable local economic development.

Saldus's Integrated action plan is relevant and approachable in the near future. Furthermore, the European Union's ambition regarding its Green Deal initiative and its granted opportunities are required to plan and develop suggestions which are included in the Integrated action plan. With regards to the URBACT "iPlace"- project, the initial challenges for Saldus are stated below. These challenges include

INITIAL CHALLENGES

1. **Stakeholder cooperation** - There is an urgent need to improve the stakeholder cooperation, which in turn will improve the towns' general, internal and external communication.

Businesses in the city recently came together to form an Association of Entrepreneurs. One of the reasons was that entrepreneurs want to be able to engage with the municipality and other stakeholders to look at the future development of the city, such as to influence the territorial reform and to hear what actual initiatives the municipality and other agencies are progressing. A number of entrepreneurs from different sectors point out that public agencies could improve their communication. Issues include clarity on regulations and requirements for operating their businesses (e.g. requirements related to wages of employees and environmental regulations).

2. **Workforce** - Local entrepreneurs for the sustainability of their businesses experience the shortage of labour. It is not specifically due to a lack of skills, but rather the availability of local labour, also reflected in the low unemployment rate.

At the same time, the opportunity exists to promote Saldus as a place to relocate for people who work flexibly and remotely. This will be advantageous as a place with a quality of life in a natural environment and lower cost of living than larger cities.

3. **Connectivity** - It is apparent that Saldus is relatively remote from larger population centres. It therefore has a local economy that is dependent on good transport and broadband infrastructure

There is a railway line connecting Riga to Liepaja with a station in Saldus. The main services are freight with only infrequent passenger services. The main roads linking Saldus to the two ports and to Riga are routes A9 (Riga - Liepaja) and P108 (Ventspils). These are not two-lane roads and have already now, after recently being renewed, reached their limits and are lacking serious capacity to serve the developing Kurzeme economy.

4. **Ecosystem for local entrepreneurs** - The ecosystem for local entrepreneurs, especially in rural peripheral regions of Europe, depends heavily on the support provided by public agencies. This is a plus, but it could also 'hide' the lack of talent development and investment by the private sector to initiate new business formations.

The ecosystem could also benefit from an infrastructure for new businesses such as incubators and co-working spaces. In this regard a number of buildings in the city centre are suitable for revitalisation and repurposing for new contemporary workspaces, encouraging co-working and flexible working. What improvements should be made to the local ecosystem to attract entrepreneurs and to encourage local people to start businesses. These could range from new facilities, to training programmes, to community activities, to better connectivity, to place promotions.

5. **Quality of life** - Is Saldus a place where people want to move to because it is a nice place to be and to live? Local ones believe that "although we cannot necessarily provide all the nice places for having tea and to eat, we do have a nice and safe place to live with beautiful nature surroundings. It is a town where there are no long queues to wait for good schools - although a longer period to get children into the kindergarten."

One of the most popular attractions is Saldus Lake right next to the city. It has its own beach and is especially busy in the summertime. The entertainment and tourism offer in the city is limited. There are only a few restaurants and only one hotel in the city, although there are several guest houses in the surrounding villages. The investments the municipality has made to improve sports facilities is an indication that the city is committed to improve the quality of life for its residents

THE DESIGNED INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN FOR THE MUNICIPALITY OF SILDUS AND ITS FOCUS IS DIVIDED IN TWO PARTS WHERE EACH OF IT SUPPLEMENTS EACH OTHER

FOCUS I - introduces a dynamic entrepreneurship environment through increased possibilities to support new and existing entrepreneurs. It focuses on networking and cooperation, financial incentives and data availability to:

- ★ Shorten the cooperation gap between municipality and other stakeholders
- ★ Promoting the growth of the number of companies through various support mechanisms like grants for new entrepreneurs, student enterprises, “Open Days” campaigns in companies etc.
- ★ Establish a transparent and strong systematic data collection available to relevant stakeholders to stimulate economic development.

FOCUS II - looks at Saldus potential as a “Green Town” and elaborates on that to strengthen a sustainable community development based on civic initiatives and their engagement to:

- ★ Strengthen the path towards an eco-friendly society and sustainable community development
- ★ Ecology as the driving force of the town with opportunities for the future - rural, healthy life and a space to experiment the future of the Green Deal with a small-town perspective.

The first focus was defined within the networking between the project iPlace partner cities and the generated ideas are the output of the Urban Local Group. The second focus was fixed within the implementation of small scale action for Eko-telpa and received response from the local community. All of the Small scale actions carried out were ideas developed by people in the first citizen engagement hackathon we organised in the project..

URBACT LOCAL GROUP

The multi-stakeholder group or “Urbact Local Group” (ULG) which brings together a selection of relevant local people and organisations, interested in or related to a chosen policy challenge and change. These stakeholders are engaged to collaborate and to participate in the design, development and implementation of local urban policies representing a variety of voices. They are the vehicle and a powerful tool to develop integrated and participative approaches to urban policies.

This project has provided a good background and starting point to be active and co-operative with the municipality of Saldus citizens, which has been one of the main purposes of this project. Urbact local group meetings were attended by approx. 10 different people in various stages of the project, and many others were contacted, asked for expertise and informed through newspapers about the project and integrated action plan

At the beginning of the project before the COVID restrictions, the ULG held meetings every two months; during times of COVID restrictions, the meetings occurred more rarely once in a quarter. In addition to that, workshops with youth were organised, consultations and informal meetings with individuals of various fields were considered when writing the Integrated Action Plan.

Core Urbact Local Group members:

Ilze Kļava

Head of the Saldus Jaunlutrīņi administration, Established first “Viedais Ciems”, project manager, teacher and active member in public life

Mārcis Broders

Entrepreneur. Board member of Saldus entrepreneurs' association

Sandra Fridihšone

Executive director of the Saldus district development association

Lana Radčenko

International project manager, iPlace project manager

Sarmīte Ozoliņa

Deputy executive director of the Saldus district development association

Ivars Skrebels

Entrepreneur. Board member of Saldus entrepreneurs' association

Ilze Tomanoviča Barone

Council member, spatial planner

Ilze Seminova

Tourism and Sport Center

Ginta Kožokara

Youth specialist

Iluta Kriškijāne

Entrepreneur specialist

Ilze Grundmane

ALTUM Kurzeme region manager

PART II

DEVELOPMENT OF an *Integrated Action Plan*

This Integrated Action Plan is a tool which could be relevant and useful, both to local inhabitants and the public authorities in order to improve, redesign and co-operate in the city development processes. To get the best connection between the needs of the town and the project goals, four focus areas were prioritised and included in the plan.

The first meetings with the new ULG in Saldus were held in the first phase of the iPlace project in spring 2019, back then formed as a group of 10 persons. It was not a usual practice to have a group representing various sectors working together, especially on something that has to be co-created and co-developed. The composition of the ULG was mostly made of the public sector, but with a strong participation of the local entrepreneur's association and the Saldus development agency after we did the expert mapping in the town. In 2019 we managed to hold several meetings with very productive discussions and group works, the ULG activity was kicked off successfully even though we still didn't know which direction we are heading taking into account it was the first time Saldus participated in the URBACT programme. But following the global situation with the spread of COVID 19 all meetings starting from early 2020 till early 2022 had to be organised remotely by using different online tools. Hereby one of the fantastic tools we gained from URBACT suggestions was the use of online boards like Miro. Meetings organised remotely set new challenges and the need to adjust the agenda to shorter and more focused discussions. The ULG members managed to participate in some of the international online masterclasses, webinars and meetings and we all together learned how to organise a hackathon - something that had never taken a place in Saldus before. Hackathon that all of the project revolved around later on, was organised online and proved the strong commitment of the local community to improve things in the town. At the end of 2021 the ULG coordinator experienced that all the members were tired of the online environment and it was harder to attract all the ULG members to participate in the next online meeting.

To create, develop and produce the IAP our ULG went through a process of knowledge development and capacity building. At the beginning we started with analysing our city – historically and economically. We did a mapping of the local infrastructure and evaluated our economic ecosystem based on a tool developed by our project expert. We went on a walk with our ULG members and worked through the 4W's - all to discover our potential in the areas we hadn't considered. A huge part of the development was influenced by the partner cities of iPLACE network that inspired us to take or at least think over the good practices found out, as well as the project expert and URBACT within it's online events gave us many tools to use to facilitate the work on a local level. For us it was important to not only find a niche for our town, but hear the voices of entrepreneurs and start with the basic improvement planning within the entrepreneurial environment to make it more dynamic and accessible to then later on be able to develop a specific niche in our town. We could not disregard the concerns raised by our ULG members that the

entrepreneurial environment had to be established before moving on to further strategic visions and so we spent the rest of the project not only planning but implementing the activities as we went (throughout a project A business incubator was open in Saldus; a “Common space” as a physical space for networking among entrepreneurs, active citizens and municipality was opened up etc.)

After some time, in the process of developing our ideas, we lost some members of the ULG but also gained some new active citizens who co-created ideas and were involved in small-scale development actions. We say small scale, but in reality after we spent 4 months organising a local hackathon online (back then we still didn't know how the Covid will progress and had to make a call on Hackathon`s format) that attracted so many great ideas, we used another 12 months for the 3 of those ideas to be further tested in the small scale actions. That turned a page in the history of project implementation and development planning, because all of the ideas came from people participating in the hackathon and this project became an ambassador of those ideas proving that the local community can have a voice.

The learning path followed a sequence where the ULG members met with partners from other cities, participated in transnational (TN) exchange and learning activities during TN meetings and then shared and distributed their experiences at local level. We managed to connect the international project activities with the local ones to deliver the international touch to our ULG meetings.



HACKATHON

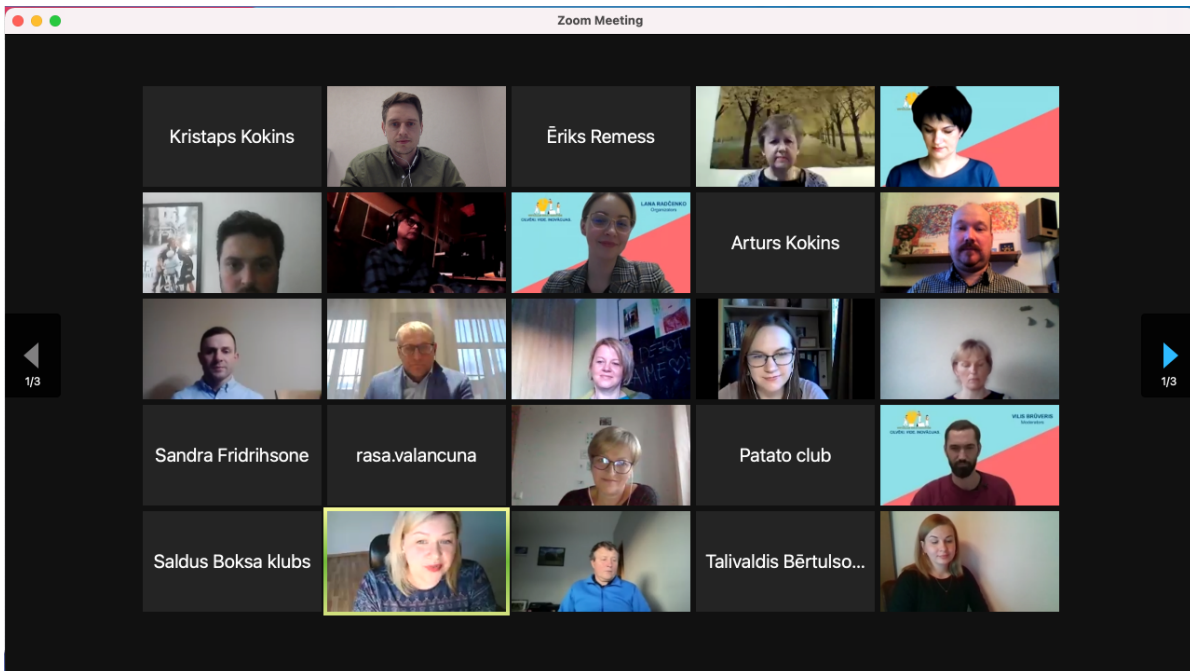
The hackathon initiative was something absolutely new for our city and a real challenge to be organised. It was again a co-process of organisational matters with our ULG members having countless of online meetings to work towards the main areas we would be targeting, format, guidelines etc.. At the end we decided to run an online format hackathon for 26 hours in one lovely spring weekend from Friday afternoon 26.03. till Saturday 27.03. evening with three main topics:

People / Environment / Innovations.

We must say because the term “Hackathon” was not well known around our city, and citizens had not used to publically engage and develop their ideas, we carried out an extensive “information” campaign - a webpage specifically devoted to the event was created (<https://hakatons.saldus.lv/>), we organized live events on Municipality channel on Facebook to respond to all of the questions concerning the event, built a promotion video and developed a unique hackathon visual identity, talked with the local press and contacted the mapped active citizens of Saldus to individually invite them to participate; created useful handouts with the process explained and helped with understanding of the platforms used.

At the end, the event gathered 16 teams with 16 unique ideas. Surprisingly all 16 teams also finished and stayed connected by the last minute working intensively to develop their idea. The event was filled with several challenges like a new format of event which is not that common in local society or connectedness in different social platforms (zoom, slack, whatsapp etc.). From an organiser's point of view, we received positive support among local entrepreneurs, non-governmental organisations and local

communities. In the end three teams also were awarded with cash prizes in a total value of 4450 EUR that for the record was never announced as we didn't want the funds to be the driving force for participation, it was a bonus announced only during the hackathon.



At the hackathon the participants developed different project proposals in previously defined challenges:

Environment and quality

How to promote the development of a creative living space in the Saldus region?

Entrepreneurship and innovation

How to motivate young people to start a business?

Attracting specialists and talents

How to promote the recognition of the municipality outside the territory of the county?

The jury consisted of 5 members that responded to our call: The Head of the Investment and Development Agency of Latvia (LIAA) at Jelgava Business Incubator, the Chairman of the board of “Cannelle Bakery”, the head of the Tourism, Culture and Sport organisation, the member of the board of “Kurzeme NGO Centre”, a local deputy from the previous election period. The expert panel had to evaluate and choose between very different projects; the task was not easy, as all the proposals had the potential for further development. Some ideas that were worked on was - *A strategy for cooperation between school and work environments; An app – SALDUS the most transparent municipality in Europe; A social village model for adults with intellectual disability; Smart Villages; Innovative platform for NGO and municipality cooperation; SPORTS FESTIVAL in Saldus; COMPOSTING APP for apartment living / Awareness, activities; Zoning of recreational park for entrepreneurs; ART DAYS in Saldus; Capitalization on highway potential by opening a local products shop; ECOINNOVATION CENTRE; Saldus – destination for freelancers etc.*

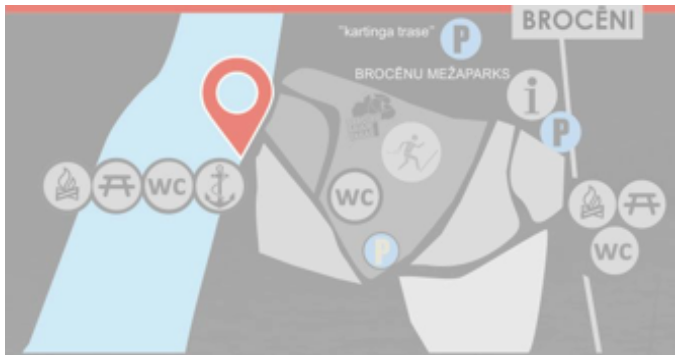


The evaluation process of 16 ideas within the miro board

As of the hackathon results, the ULG in their upcoming meetings went through all the 16 ideas and evaluated them according to the set of ambitions and challenges for the entrepreneur environment. With the selected four ideas the ULG decided to continue the process and to test the ideas with the available budget for Small Scale Actions (SSA).

SMALL SCALE ACTIONS

A Small Scale Action is experimentation which is being done for a limited time with limited budget. These 'trial runs' enable cities to prototype local solutions and de-risk future actions, while engaging local stakeholders in 'doing' as well as 'thinking' together to tackle urban challenges. For the municipality of Saldus three small scale action ideas were picked from the hackathon results. From the beginning the ULG had decided that the activities which needed to be tested as Small Scale Actions should come from



the hackathon results.

1. **Experimental recreational place “Ciecere port”** - a hidden area between forest and lake to address the needs of locals, boost recognizability and create opportunities for new entrepreneurs.

One of the Saldus challenges is its recognizability on a National level, as well as opportunities for new entrepreneurs. We decided to move forward an idea of zoning of the local park in Broceni and test if a recreational area between the forest and the lake could be part of the zoning of the park and what kind of concept would be best to fit into the overall vision, thus promoting new opportunities for new entrepreneurs operating in the area and meeting the needs of locals for more outdoor spaces, at the same time making them aware of the ones we already have.

The purpose was to test the viability of a place like this spot from various angles – demands by the local population, interests by people outside of Saldus, possible new entrepreneurs setting up businesses because more and more opportunities are given to reach their customers. The larger action is always to increase Saldus competitiveness when it comes to Quality of life for its people and entrepreneurs, thus engaging the local community, encouraging and opening a niche for entrepreneurs and marking Saldus on the map of possible places to live and work.

Four weekends from 31st of July until the end of August we set up tents, decorations, trailers etc. to make the area look cosy and inviting, and followed a programme aimed at various groups of people – kids, adults, seniors, families etc. We had brunch mornings on Sundays with workshops, hiking and activities for kids; joga, exercising and water equipment for adults. We had acoustic evenings on Saturdays with concerts and just hanging out, socialising, asking for an opinion. Potential entrepreneurs tested their possible business in the food sector using the trailer that was prepared for them. Saldus has a bigger offer than demand for economically active people and their weekend options, whilst families lack events, so **whenever the families were targeted, we had the best results**. We learned that **publicity (in all forms) is important and fewer people are reached via Facebook** which is the main channel used by Municipality in general and therefore new ways to reach people are to be found. Broceni is halfway from Liepaja to Riga and, therefore, could serve as a wonderful stop for people- therefore we must

work on recognizability on a bigger scale other than just one event. The area needs infrastructural improvements and **can be used also as a “green class” for schools and NGOs when carrying out their activities**. The small area as such can boost the overall attendance of the forest and lake thus encouraging people to be more outside.

II. *Laboratory of an Eco-innovation **centre** in a small town like Saldus.*

The idea was to support small, environmentally friendly activities such as waste sorting, fabric shopping bags, and composting. More sorting options, water taps, community composting, etc. are possible. See the interest and needs of green course 5 areas - Science (laboratory, researchers, technology), Education (workshops, reading rooms, mentoring, discussions, museum, easy-to-understand information), Community (community gardens, place to meet; intergenerational environment, exchange of ideas); Shopping / Food (vegan offers, zero waste, eco-friendly accessories and access, own dishes); Art (artist residencies, exhibitions, performances)

The purpose of the SSA was to test how the local community, companies reflect towards the green deal, what they are understanding, and look for inspirational ideas about what could be in our eco-innovation centre. At what stage we are as a local society in terms of green or sustainable living. Raise awareness about global problems in our tiny town. The POP up week was based on the idea of conceptualising the idea before several meetings to find a model and concept for collaboration.

Time frame of the pop-up week in the heart of the city centre from 18th to 25th of September every day from 8:00 to 20:00. Where the Pop-Up doors were open for every citizen, inviting them to share their thoughts on post-its about the EcoSpace concept, green and sustainable activities in their daily life with exchange of cakes and coffee.





Different sorts of masterclasses were organised within the week. We talked, discussed and argued about energy efficiency, sustainable materials from fungal mycelium, new entrepreneurship networking methods; student enterprises from schools were invited to inspire them towards green innovations as a potential for economic niches, applicable also to existing entrepreneurs. Student classes were invited in the morning sessions, masterclasses were held in the afternoon and even evening sessions.

Lessons learned.

We must say that we aimed too high and too complicated with our idea of an eco-innovation centre in Saldus and therefore had so many lessons learned that later on, it took us on a road to discover our niche. People couldn't take ownership of an idea and again - a pop-up week had never been organised before and therefore the participation could have been more had we explained it in a more simple way, but we did learn a lot.

Ecology has the potential as the driving force of a small town = rural, healthy life and a space of opportunities to experiment the future of the Green Deal with a small-town perspective. The municipality supports and carries out activities to mark Saldus on an "ecomap"; the city's image on the mental map of Latvia and an active local EKO TELPA ("Ecological Room") can serve as possible engines. This momentum creates the ground for a self-reinforcing dynamic in which citizens, associations themselves run the city in the green direction and also entrepreneurs have a supported "playground" to come up with their initiatives and ideas.

Another spectacular fact that both, individual inhabitants as well as corporate actors, the civil society and other municipal institutions and most of all schools, pupils as well as teachers have been highly appreciating the opportunity to find a socially and mentally „low-barrier“ or even „barrier free“ access to the very central located shop, the possibility to have an easy access to chat with other community engaged personalities without the need for any formal format.

Conclusions: People are thirsty for a place to exchange ideas. Associations need an umbrella organisation so that they are less dispersed and inaccessible. People want it more the easy way, yet, to be filled with interesting and valuable content. The initial format of cooperation was decided not to be feasible at that moment, but Saldus concluded from that, that we are still moving towards an **Eco** driven town.

III. Cooperation among local producers in Saldus municipality to support a created cooperative “**Provinces produkti**” as a new channel for sales and promotion of slow food concept

The idea was presented by the team “A9” uniting a couple of local producers and entrepreneurs during the virtual hackathon. It showed the necessity from local producers (especially food producers) for cooperation to find new ways for selling their production and representing Saldus municipality, highlighting the slow food concept. Initially the test idea was to create a pop-up shop of local producers nearby A9 highway, however due to challenges (finding the proper place, utilities) it was decided to create an online shop for selling food products produced by locals.



The purpose was to evaluate interest and potential of local producers to meet demands from buyers (including reality check for legal business aspects) and their willingness to participate in cooperative, plus understand also missing niches on the local level (as a possibility to develop the home production sector and settling up legal business), thirdly, to gain feedback from buyers and local producers how to improve the overall concept. Plus following the question whether there is a necessity for a local producers’ shop near by the A9 highway to promote sales. The “A9” team organised two seminars for local producers to explain legal matters in September 2021. The team edited as well a publication in the local newspaper “Saldus zeme” (October 15, 2021) and the team “A9” explained their idea and invited local producers to join and help them to develop the idea further on. As the testing phase of this idea is still going on, the overall conclusion will be drawn later. However, some learnings have been made already.

Lessons learned

- An interest by local producers, yet it is very hard to involve them to be part of the cooperative “Provinces produkti”, to help to develop the idea, partly related to legal

aspects, possibilities to meet demands of buyers, but also because the team doesn't have a clear understanding what the optional buyers interests will be;

- There is a positive vibe about this idea in local society;
- Gathering necessary information for creating the content for an e-shop is time-consuming;
- Cooperation is time-consuming and the process takes time with many different points of view and sometimes it is hard to agree on a common sense;

IDEA 1 - OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS AND SCHEDULE

IDEA 1 ACTION TABLE						
To improve business environment, support new and existing business growth and introduce a dynamic entrepreneurship environment through initiatives coming from relevant stakeholders						
Nr	ACTION	INTENDED RESULTS	RESOURCES / ASSETS	LEAD AGENCY	KEY PARTNERS	TIMESCALE
1	Grant program to support young entrepreneurs in Saldus municipality	New companies are willing to register in Saldus district New products and/or services developed in Saldus district	Municipality budget	Local Municipality, development department	Saldus municipality, Saldus district development association (SRBA), Business Incubator, if possible: Altum	First call to apply within the 2022nd budget. Yearly activity.
2	Create an environment for meetings and networking activities among existing and potential entrepreneurs	- Physical space developed - Feedback from entrepreneurs registered in meeting minutes - Strengthen community of new entrepreneurs - Bring together and encourage Student Enterprises	- A meeting place (possibility Strīku Str. 2, Saldus),	Local municipality, entrepreneurship specialist	Educational institutions, Business incubator, SRAB, Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), LLKC, ALTUM, The Rural Support Service (LAD), Saldus municipality, Society of Saldus entrepreneurs (SUB), Saldus business advisory council, SME, Kurzeme Planning Region (KPR)	2022
3	Design an economical profile for the investment attraction	- Attract 2 sustainability driven foreign investors to Saldus area to boost employment	Municipality resources	Local municipality,	LIAA, foreign partners, entrepreneur's association	2022/2023
4	Organise "Open days" within the local enterprises	-awareness of "Business Saldus" among different target groups (pupils, students, community) - recognition of local entrepreneurs	Municipality resources	Local municipality,	Society of Saldus entrepreneurs (SUB), Saldus business advisory council, Kurzeme Planning Region (KPR)	2023
5	Establish a transparent and strong systematic data collection	- Data based decision making and planning	Municipality resources	Local municipality	Society of Saldus entrepreneurs (SUB), Saldus business advisory council, Kurzeme Planning Region (KPR)	2023

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	RESULT INDICATOR			OUTPUT INDICATORS
		BASELINE	TARGET	
Improve business environment, support new and existing business growth and introduce a dynamic entrepreneurship environment through initiatives coming from relevant stakeholders	Lunch grant program to support young entrepreneurs in Saldus municipality	0	1	Number of young entrepreneurs applying for the program Number of new registered companies in municipality of SILDUS
	Create supportive environment for meetings and networking activities	0	1	Number of events organised in co-working spaces Perception of entrepreneur environments among local businesses and residents (perception measured through online satisfaction questionnaire disseminated to key databases and mailing lists) Number of entrepreneurs involved in networking events
	Design economical profile for the municipality investment attraction	0	1	Investment amount in municipality after development of economical profile Established connection with potential investors
Strengthen the local entrepreneurs and support them with data	Organise "Open days" with in the local enterprises on once in a year	0	1	Number of organised "Open days" Number of involved entrepreneurs
	Establish a transparent and strong systematic data collection	0	1	Number of infographics available A document with data based on needs

Action Nr 1

Launch grant program to support young entrepreneurs in Saldus municipality		Action owner: Local municipality, entrepreneurship specialist		
Established 1-3 new companies in Saldus and/or developed new products and/or services in Saldus district; Increase quality and knowledge of teams participating at JA Student Enterprise Programme at schools	Stakeholders: Saldus municipality, Business Incubator If possible: Altum	Links to strategy: To improve business environment support measures		Risks: No one applies to grant program; the targets are not reached
		Finance and resources: 10 000 EUR are allocated in 2022 budget		
		Action readiness: medium, the financial resources are settled.		
	DATES	OUTPUTS	RELATED ACTIVITIES	BLOCKERS
Design the grant program rules and necessary documents	July - September 2022	Document package to lunch Grant program for young entrepreneurs	-Define sectors and priorities of local municipality as a focus for new entrepreneurs (e.g., waste management, eco aspect); -Cooperate and combine programs with LEADER funds/programmes financed by European agricultural fund for rural development (EAFRD).	Lack of time,
Set a round of meetings with ALTUM, Business Incubator and SRAB	August-October 2022	Collected list of ideas / initiatives how to better link municipality grant with existing state support programs	-Meeting with ALTUM -Meeting with Incubator - Collected feedback discussion with in the ULG -Integrate them in grant program rules	-Due to the covid spread, impossible to meet in person and current busy schedules of everyone
Call to apply	October- November 2022	Applications received	- Informative seminars and consultations - Publications	Lack of time; hard to reach people with new information; new initiative that might be hard to apply for at the

				beginning
Organise the publication in social media and local press	December 2022	One publication for each supported entrepreneur	Contact the representatives to create visual and meaningful publication	Lack of time resources to produce the publication

Action Nr 2

Create an environment for meetings and networking activities among existing and potential entrepreneurs		Action owner: Local Municipality and LIAA business incubator		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen local young entrepreneurs' community - Quarter meetings with young entrepreneurs; - Created supportive environment (a meeting place) in Saldus municipality; - Data and knowledge of needs of local entrepreneurs in Saldus municipality 	Stakeholders: young entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs, student enterprises, active citizens	Links to strategy: To improve business environment support measures / make municipality open for citizens	Risks: low budget	
		Finance and resources: municipality budget		
		Action readiness: high, the financial resources are settled.		
	DATES	OUTPUTS	RELATED ACTIVITIES	BLOCKERS
Opening of a physical space "KOPELPA"// "Common Space" in Saldus centre for co-working among entrepreneurs, idea generation, consultations, active engagement that is inclusive for families with children	May 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - physical space for stakeholders to meet - created concept and identity also on social networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - opening event - created social network channels - communicated the message in local press and elsewhere 	Time resources
Set a quarter meeting routine with young entrepreneurs to gather data and knowledge of the needs of local entrepreneurs	First meeting in Augusts 2022th Second meeting in November 2022th	Registered meeting minutes from discussions and calls to actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use newly opened KOPELPA space -Attract inspiring lectors, experts - communicate the inclusiveness of KOPELPA to everyone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of interest from new entrepreneurs -Social barriers to network
Design activities for activation and	September-November 2022	- yearly plan for Student	- cooperation with	Financial and human resource

involvement of Student Enterprises in schools		Enterprise support (a market, expert masterclasses, consultations, exhibitions)	schools implementing Student Enterprise programme - Group work with teachers to draft actions and implement them	
Promote Co-working space and networking in KOPTELPA	All year round	- social networking and cooperation among the community of young entrepreneurs	- networking events with topics current for entrepreneurs	Social barriers to network

Action Nr 3

Design economical profile for the municipality investment attraction		Action owner: Municipality		
Attract investment to Saldus in the amount of 2 new foreign direct investment	Stakeholders: Municipality departments (Development, Real estate, Building board) Entrepreneurs, LIAA	Links to strategy:		Risks: Time, human resource and budget
		Finance and resources: Municipality		
		Action readiness: low		
	DATES	OUTPUTS	RELATED ACTIVITIES	BLOCKERS
Decide the concept and what are the target sectors / region / niche/ location	November of 2022	Defined the frame for the economical profile	Set a round of discussions with in the municipality, entrepreneurs, LIAA	-
Collect necessary data for Saldus economical profile	May 2023	Collected data which well describes municipality and don't remain out of date during the year	Use as an example and information source iPlace materials	Difficulties to gather reliable and quality data

			For data collection use surveys, interviews, data analysis Define unique selling points	
Involve layout designer to finalise it in visually attractive profile	September 2023	Visually attractive economical profile in english and latvian languages	-	Money shortage Lack of designer
Create an overall promotional video	August 2022	Basic IA video of Saldus	- define concept - make a video - translate in respective languages	time

Action Nr 4

Organise "Open days" within the local enterprises		Action owner: Municipality resources and entrepreneurs		
Awareness of "Business Saldus" among different target groups (pupils, students, community) - recognition of local entrepreneurs	Stakeholders: Society of Saldus entrepreneurs (SUB),Saldus business advisory council, Kurzeme Planning Region (KPR)	Links to strategy:		Risks: Low attendance
		Finance and resources: Local municipality and entrepreneurs themselves		
		Action readiness: low		
	DATES	OUTPUTS	RELATED ACTIVITIES	BLOCKERS
Mapping and creating a list of enterprises to organise an open days at	January 2023	List of enterprises interested to participate	- define yearly sectors to visit - publish a call to apply - address individually	-

			potential candidates	
Creating a concept for open days in cooperation with the enterprises	March 2023	Guideline for Open Days to use on yearly basis	- meetings to discuss a concept	busy schedule of entrepreneurs
Organizing open days	October 2023	open days available for public	- events happening within Open days - Publicity both to public and schools, student enterprises	
Evaluation activity	November 2023	A know-how on what went well, what should we improve, what should we start and stop doing	- collect feedback from participants - collect feedback from visitors - evaluation exercise	sometimes feedback isn't that easy to get, need to ask the right questions and encourage

Action Nr 5

Establish a transparent and strong systematic economical data collection		Action owner: Municipality		
Data based decision making and planning	Stakeholders: Society of Saldus entrepreneurs (SUB), Saldus business advisory council, Kurzeme Planning Region (KPR)	Links to strategy:		Risks: Regular data collection to avoid old data
		Finance and resources: Local government		
		Action readiness:		
	DATES	OUTPUTS	RELATED ACTIVITIES	BLOCKERS

Define the framework for needed data on a regular basis	january 2023	A framework/guideline to use for a regular data collection. Tables for data insertion created.	Meetings with respective stakeholders Research through other examples	time
Data collection for a year 2022	march 2023	Filled in tables with data	Communication with data agencies, collection of data	Some data might not be available
Creation of infographics for data display and presentation in public or in different materials	may 2023	Visual materials with data	Create visual materials with collected data in a comprehensive and easy to understand way Translate data to English	Data quickly gets old
Practical usage of data	all year round	Data used for decision making and planning	-Sharing of data with colleagues in the municipality -Seminar on practical data application in every day professional life	-

IDEA 2 - OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS AND SCHEDULE

	IDEA 2 ACTION TABLE
	Promote integration of the Green Course and innovations among the society and local entrepreneurs

Nr	ACTION	INTENDED RESULTS	RESOURCES / ASSETS	LEAD AGENCY	KEY PARTNERS	TIMESCALE
1	Rise knowledge capacity in society about green living	In different locations educational discussions, seminars, lectures are organised Different, workshops open laboratories, master classes are being organised Involve students of regional and national universities and use their capacity and knowledge to rise knowledge capacity and and explore local challenges in a scientific way	- funding for lecturers, networking events and trips, learning from others' experience, networking; - cooperation with partners, e.g., KPR, SRAB; Saldus TIKSC	Saldus municipality, ULG energy manager	Investment and Development Agency of Latvia (LIAA), ALTUM, LAD, Saldus municipality, entrepreneurs (including SUB, Saldus business advisory council), KPR	2022-2023
2	Promote locally produced sustainable food	Local producer products are offered in online and physical based shops. "Ražots Saldus novadā un Kurzemē", ir renewed and organised 1-2 times per year, with a new concept to attract more visitors outside Saldus municipality and giving a place for locals' producers to present themselves	- Possibility to attract LEADER funding; - Promoting local producers to create local tours and tasting places; - Supporting local producers - inviting them to create ideas and offers for souvenirs representing Saldus municipality (every 1-2 years new offer) - Promoting local producers for visitors and guests (bringing them on a guided tour/tasting places) from Saldus municipality side	Saldus municipality, Saldus TIKSC	Saldus municipality, Saldus TIKSC, cooperative "Provinces produkti", local producers, SME	2022-2023

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	RESULT INDICATOR		OUTPUT INDICATORS	
	BASELINE	TARGET		
Promote integration of the Green Course and innovations among	Rise knowledge capacity in society about green living and what benefits it can provide	0	4	-Number of young entrepreneurs applying for the program -Number of new registered companies in municipality of SALDUS

the society and local entrepreneurs	Easily available access for locally produced sustainable and slow food	1	2	-Number of local farmers involved in cooperative -Perception of local food availability local citizens (perception measured through one to one survey)
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Action Nr 1

Rise knowledge capacity in society about green living / sustainable lifestyle		Action owner: Local municipality - energy and environment specialists		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase overall awareness, knowledge level - Set the floor for communication, discussions, society involvement - Regular meetings with involved stakeholders - Improved environment, energy efficiency, use of resources 	Stakeholders: Saldus municipality, NGO's, Entrepreneurs If possible:, Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre (LLKC) Generally all inhabitants.	Links to strategy: Improve the life quality and sustainable economic development		Risks: Lack of citizen interest, Lack of financial resources,
		Finance and resources: Limited amount of funding, majority based on initiatives and could be done with few sponsors.		
		Action readiness: On the discussion level. After small scale actions the need for additional discussion, knowledge sharing were identified.		
	DATES	OUTPUTS	RELATED ACTIVITIES	BLOCKERS
Identification of locations and possible dates	September - October 2022	Set of dates, topics and possible locations for knowledge sharing events every quarter	Municipal energy management system and educational seminars	Lack of resources, time. Weather conditions can play an important role. Need for premisses
POP -UP EDUCATION	April 2023	Set the base and potential Research and Development in Saldus, like workshops and open laboratories;	Primary, Secondary, Vocational School involvement	Lack of interest, Already demanding time resources for pupils
POP-UP ENTREPRENEURS	May/June 2023	Educate, support farmers (for example, on how technology can be obtained).	The panel discussion, publicly showing how entrepreneurs can benefit.	Lack of entrepreneurial interest and availability, experts in the municipality

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		Finance and resources: Limited amount of funding, majority based on initiatives and could be done with few sponsors.		
		Action readiness: On the discussion level. After small scale actions the need for additional discussion, knowledge sharing were identified.		
How can green things help businesses?		Agriculture and forestry - key industries to involve	Sustainability - in agriculture, in industries - to talk about sustainability.	
POP-UP Society Get the ideas - from people, and people to gather ideas.	June - August 2023	Encourage people to do what they can - composting, landscaping, use sustainable transport - bicycles	Exchanging goods - volunteer work Events like: Sunflower planting - a labyrinth of sunflowers.	Weather conditions, lack of interest
Involve students of regional and national universities	January 2023	Developed master and bachelor theses for municipality development / problem -> solutions	Provide topics for bachelor and master theses, possibility to explore current topics for Saldus municipality and partners (SRAB, SUB etc.) deeper	Lack of student interests Universities have difficulties to collaborate with municipalities

Action Nr 2

Promote locally produced sustainable food		Action owner: Entrepreneurs with close municipality involvement		
Use the potential of online based and physical shops benefits to promote locally produced sustainable, slow food	Stakeholders: Local entrepreneurs, farmers, municipality	Links to strategy: Safe and sustainable environment		Risks: Lack of clients to cover expenditures and earn additional income; Small producers prefer to work in grey areas.
		Finance and resources: The seed funding was granted with small scale action, rest should come for business development		
		Action readiness: Developed web page / online shop for local producers		
	DATES	OUTPUTS	RELATED ACTIVITIES	BLOCKERS
Online platform, shop	2022 July	Working web page for local food producers, farmers	Established brand Developed the base of the web page https://provincesprodukti.lv Web page filled with the products	-
Renewed " <i>Ražots Saldus novadā un Kurzemē</i> " / "Produced in municipality of Saldus and Kurzeme region"	2023 summer	Organise event once in a year on regular bases	Creating a new concept to attract more visitors outside Saldus municipality Give a place for locals' producers to present themselves	-
Created physical local producer shop	2023/2024	Physical shop in the city center of Saldus Promote the existing local shop in Broceni	Give a place for locals' producers to present themselves Attract tourists	Lack of space Lack of funding Lack of local goods suppliers

RESOURCING

Nr.	COSTS CONNECTED TO YOUR SELECTED ACTION	SOURCE OF FUNDING 1 Urbact	SOURCE OF FUNDING 2 Municipality	SOURCE OF FUNDING 3	SOURCE OF FUNDING 4	TOTAL OF FUNDS THAT ARE NEEDED FOR EACH TYPE OF COST
1.	Launch grant program to support young entrepreneurs in Saldus municipality		10 000,00 EUR			10 000,00 EUR
2.	Create supportive environment for meetings and networking activities		10 000,00 EUR	3 000,00 EUR		13 000,00 EUR
3.	Design economical profile for the municipality investment attraction	1500,00	2000,00 EUR			3500,00 EUR
4.	Organise "Open days" with in the local enterprises		1500,00	2000,00 EUR		3500,00 EUR
5.	Establish a transparent and strong systematic economical data collection		2000,00	5000,00		7 000,00 EUR
6.	Rise knowledge capacity in society about green living / sustainable lifestyle		500,00 EUR	2 500,00 EUR		3 000,00 EUR
7.	Promote locally produced sustainable food			50 000,00 EUR		50 000,00 EUR
	PROPOSAL BUDGET	0,00 EUR	26 000,00 EUR	62 500,00 EUR	00,00 EUR	88 500,00 EUR

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring of specific indicators are mandatory tools for following up the progress and adjusting the targets (same as municipalities are monitoring energy management systems).

In the Integrated Action Plan specific indicators have been identified by the Municipality of Saldus and ULG members for each action of the action plan. The monitoring and evaluation plan requires as a minimum to be followed up once a year to evaluate the indicators and record the progress.

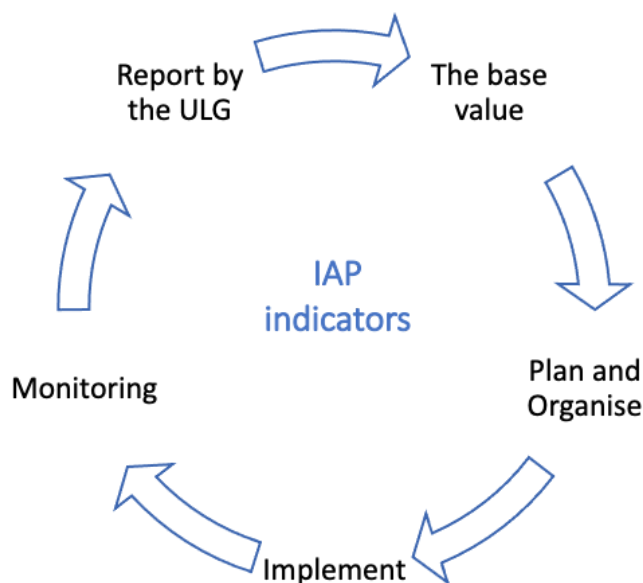
Monitoring and evaluation of outputs of the overall Integrated Action Plan rely on the following key objectives for **IDEA 1**:

Objective 1 - Improve business environment, support new and existing business growth and introduce a dynamic entrepreneurship environment through initiatives coming from relevant stakeholders.

Objective 2 - Strengthen the local entrepreneurs and support with attraction of new specialists to live in Saldus.

Key objectives for **IDEA 2**:

Objective 3 - Promote integration of the Green Course and innovations among the society and local entrepreneurs.



These indicators are included in the internal report based on the tables on specific objectives which are documented by the ULG. The indicators in this table were identified with the support of the iPlace network and the ULG.

RISK ANALYSIS

The process of risk analysis and mitigation strategies has been refined by the municipality with the aim of analysing the Action Plan in order to identify: strengths and weaknesses as internal factors, opportunities and risks as external factors, strategies for amplifying and intercepting strengths and opportunities and strategies for mitigating weaknesses and risks.

Possibility / Impact	Critical	Significant	Average	Minor
High	Red	Red	Orange	Orange
Average	Red	Orange	Orange	Green
Low	Orange	Orange	Green	Green
Minimal	Orange	Green	Green	Green

Risks to be avoided

Lack of financial support from the European funds and municipal budget — **the possibility is high and the impact is critical**. Even though several activities do not require a demanding amount of financial investment, the designed plan could also be partially implemented using the current municipal assets and citizen engagement. Activities are taken step by step in the long run, hence we can try to allocate supportive financing in further budgets.

Risks to be evaluated and considered

Uncoordinated implementation of action by the competent institutions and lack of cooperation with other stakeholders — the possibility is high and the impact is average. To prevent this risk, the ULG has to continue to meet on regular bases and to engage other target groups/local stakeholders.

Lack of municipality human resources for further activity coordination — the possibility

is low and the impact is significant. The project aims at engaging the local entrepreneurs and civic society with the possibility to improve the business environment and quality of life with small-town perspectives.

Insufficient information for the public — the possibility is average and the impact is minor. This risk would not affect the project significantly, as those who are interested always have a chance to find out more about the ongoing process by using various communication means.

Risks not affecting implementation of the plan

Municipal employee rotation on four year cycle - Possibility minimal and impact minor. As times go by and will increase the ULG activities, the higher involvement and the elaborated ownership of ideas and actions will not significantly disturb the implementation of activities.

SUMMARY

This *Integrated Action Plan* (IAP) is designed specifically to suit the needs of Saldus as a town and a community. The project has been developed in a tight cooperation between active local stakeholders and international partners and includes various recommendations - among others: continue developing a pro-active business environment; supporting new and existing businesses; introduce a dynamic entrepreneurship environment through initiatives coming from relevant stakeholders.

Another important activity is in focus to promote ecology as the driving force of the town with an opportunities for the future - rural, healthy life and a space to experiment the future of the Green Deal with a small-town perspective.

Last, but not least the IAP is a call to develop community engagement (citizen based idea ownership) for citizens which are willing to be part of a creative generation and ready to implement the process.

In addition, the authors added possibilities to attract European grants supporting the successful implementation of the recommendations stated in this *Integrated Action Plan*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

On this great occasion of accomplishment of our project within the URBACT network of iPlace we would like to sincerely express our gratitude to representatives of the other participating cities, our lead partner Amarante and our lead expert and involved experts for sharing inspirational stories, project coordination and support through the completion of this project. We would also be thankful to everyone who was involved for providing all the required facilities, time and resources in completion of this project. Finally, we would like to appreciate all our Urbact Local Group members for their support, knowledge sharing and genuine involvement, with collaboration and teamwork we will achieve more in our future endeavours.