VENTSPILS INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

VENTSPILS DIGITAL CENTRE
Ventspils, Latvia | 2022

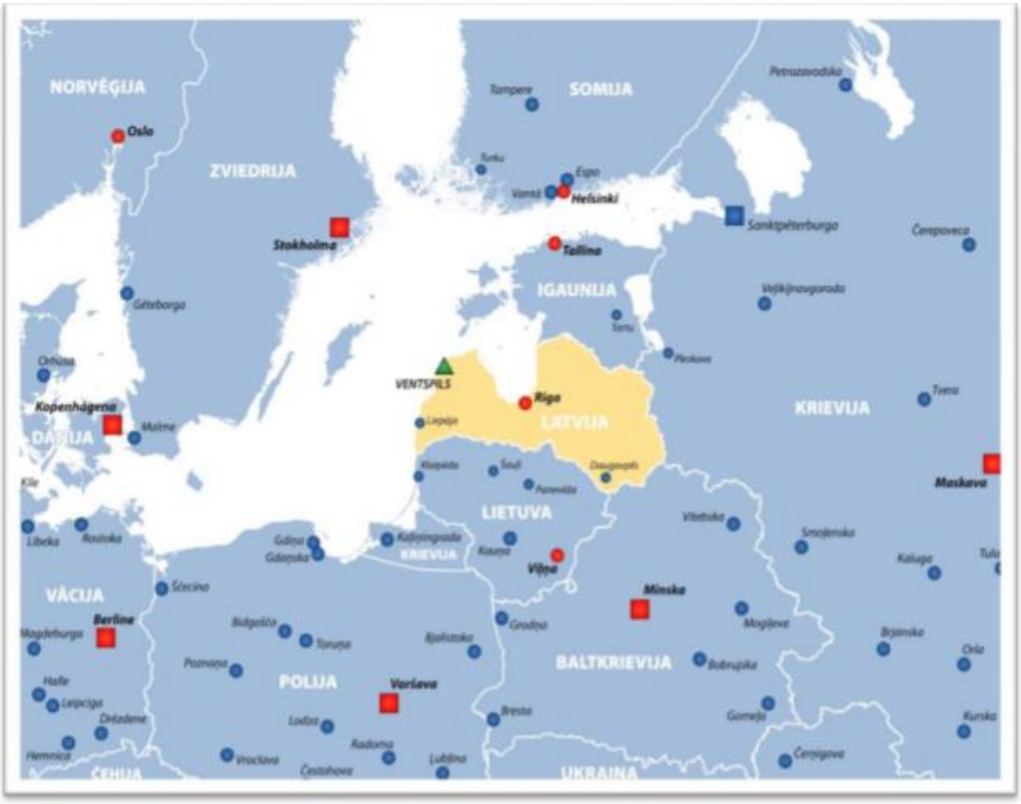
Content

1. Ventspils background

1.1. About the city

Ventspils is a city in north-western Latvia in the historical Courland region of Latvia and is the sixth largest city in the country. At the beginning of 2020, Ventspils had a population of 33,906. It is situated on the Venta River and the Baltic Sea and has an ice-free port. The city's name literally means "castle on the Venta", referring to the Livonian Order's castle built alongside the Venta River.

Figure 1: Location of Latvia



Modern and well maintained to the point of being immaculate, Ventspils is a family-friendly city where the comfort of Ventspils' resident families is considered and where families from other cities and countries are given an opportunity to pursue interesting leisure activities. Ventspils is special in a way, that here a modern port, innovative production facilities, and a beautiful beach coexist, the former being decorated by the Blue flag since 1999, a symbol of neatness and safety.

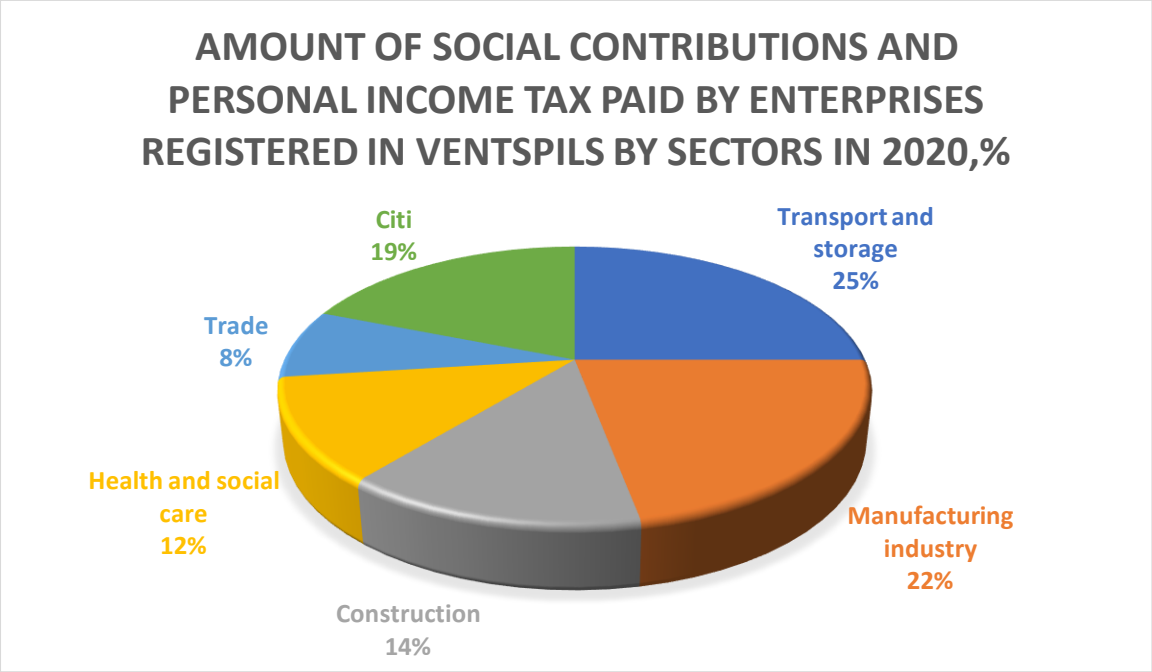
1.1.1. About the economy

On a European scale, Ventspils is defined as a micro-city. As a seacoast and port city in 1990s Ventspils was heavily dependent on port related logistics and transport business. However, by taking strategic decision in 2002 to adopt an industrialisation policy the city has made transition to the multi-sectoral economy.

The largest number of employees in Ventspils work in the manufacturing sector (18%), followed by the transport and storage sector (16%). Despite this, the largest payers of

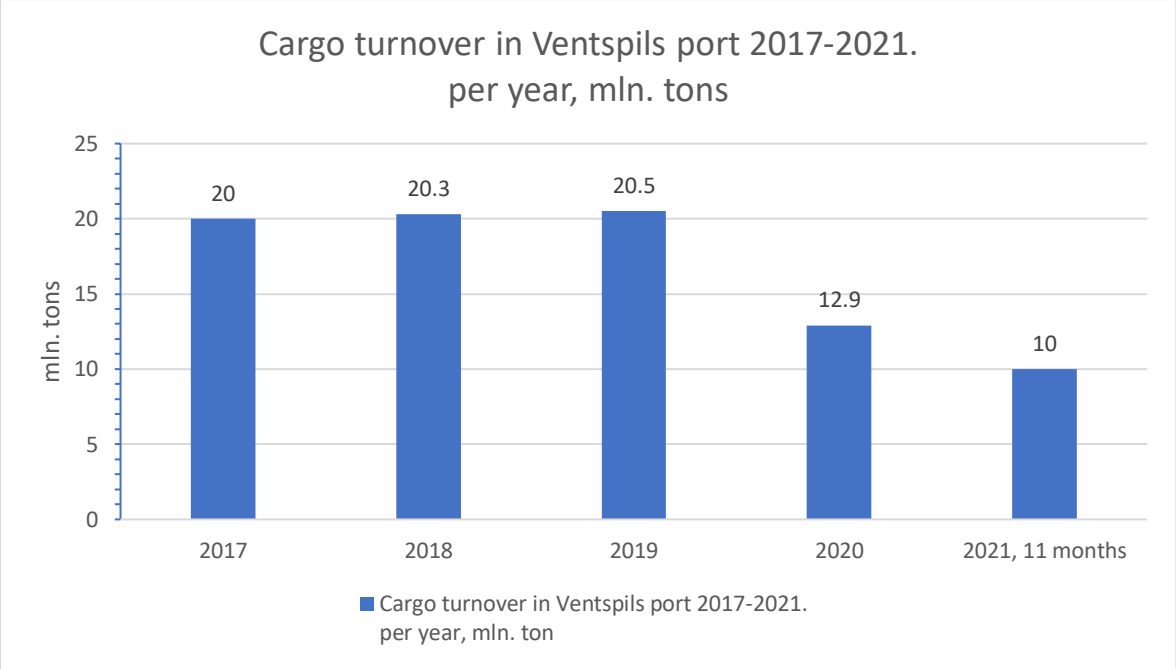
personal income tax by industry are the transport and storage companies of Ventspils City followed by the manufacturing industry.

Figure 2: Amount of social contributions and personal income tax paid by enterprises registered in Ventspils by sectors in 2020,%



During the last three years, when the municipality participated in the management of the Ventspils Freeport (from 2017 to 2019), the cargo turnover at the Freeport of Ventspils was stable (20 million tons per year), but it has fallen after state taking over the port of Ventspils from January 2020. In the first 11 months of 2021, there are 52% decrease in the first 11 months of 2021 compared to the first 11 months of 2019, which has also had a significant impact on the unemployment rate in the city. The port activities are forecasted to decline in a 20–30-year period due partly because the Russian Federation's own new port projects and due to sanctions EU imposes on Russian and Belarusian economy. On the other hand, the Ferry Line Cargo has increased steadily from 2000 and 2011. However, there is a stagnation in its development (in tonnes) since 2011.

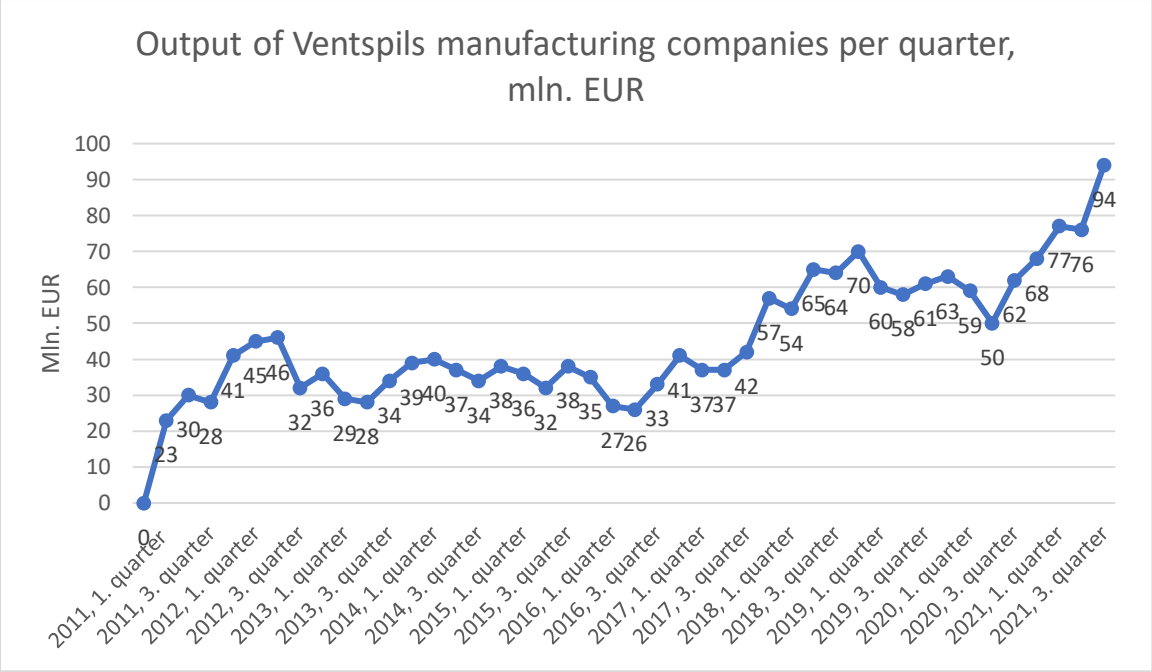
Figure 3: Cargo turnover in Ventspils port 2017-2021. per year, mln. tons



Due to the change in cargo turnover visible in Figure No. 3, it is necessary to reprofile the economy of the city.

Ventspils City has the first highest result in terms of manufacturing output per city per capita. In the first 9 months of 2021, the volume of manufacturing output in Ventspils city has been the largest so far - 247 million EUR. Most of the production of Ventspils city manufacturing companies - 81% - was exported. This is the second highest share of exported products among other cities and higher than the average in Latvia (66.5%).

Figure 4: Output of Ventspils manufacturing companies per quarter, mln. EUR



In the period from 2002 to 2021, 12 production buildings were built, more than 20 production companies were established in Ventspils, which created more than 3,000 new jobs. Manufacturing growth rates in Ventspils are currently among the highest in Latvia, allowing Ventspils to occupy a stable position among the region's industrial centres.

The main key business challenge in these sectors is to turn the lack of the human resource capital by a sustainable access to human resources:

- One of the solutions is to optimise business processes by implementing automation solutions to compensate lack of human capital. Ventspils High Technology Park actively works to develop Ventspils as Digital Innovation Hub with focus on agile manufacturing and automatization competencies by creating a cluster of competent organisations and local companies.
- Another important solution is attraction of new talent. Municipality works on educational programme developments to facilitate needs of local businesses and prepare young specialists from early ages, with great focus on ICT sector. With hope to attract more new talent to ICT sector Ventspils Business Support Centre plans to launch IT retraining courses for young and established professionals who are ready to change career paths and learn basics of programming. There are programmes for both secondary and university levels, and the vocational education and City's Digital Centre's digital skill development for adults to this end. The city sees ICT both as a goal per se, and as a cross-cutting horizontal technology driver for all industry sectors in the region.
- Alternatively, the City has put in place tax incentives and increased investment in education and schools and digital support services for both companies and individuals to attract companies to Ventspils, however another main challenge is housing. There are several plans to build new houses to facilitate new and skilled work force.

For the third time, Ventspils has been recognized as one of the ten best European micro-cities in terms of foreign direct investment (FDI) attraction strategy issues, this time winning third place. The top is published in the British newspaper Financial Times fDi Intelligence.
According to the country development principles stated in the Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia "Latvia 2030", Ventspils city is a Baltic Sea Region Level and Latvia's National Interest Development Centre. Which is why Ventspils development processes are therefore more widely viewed than in the urban context alone, as well as the strategy should include development challenges that reach across the administrative borders of the city and have a positive impact on the surrounding areas and regions as a whole.
According to "Latvia 2030" the city of Ventspils is set to become a centre of logistics, education, science and innovation, which will be one of the leading drivers of the country's development with increasing international potential. Together with Liepāja, cooperation will be established with Kuldīga, Talsi and Saldus to ensure that the cities will specialise in an efficient transit and logistics business, as well as in technologically modern food production, fishing and tourism.
Based on the provision of Ventspils logistics and multimodal transport services, educational opportunities, scientific and research potential, geographical location and its role in the development of the country, "Latvia 2030" plans the following development objectives for Ventspils city:

- Ventspils City needs to be reprofiled as a hub for economic growth and knowledge creation, an engine for economic development;
- The city of Ventspils should strengthen itself as a competitive partner in the Baltic Sea region's national urban network, while performing the role of an international development centres in transnational and cross-border cooperation;
- The city of Ventspils should become an innovation, high value added industry and engineering sector (especially in the field of electronics, information and communication technologies), as well as a logistics and transit development centre in the Baltic Sea region.

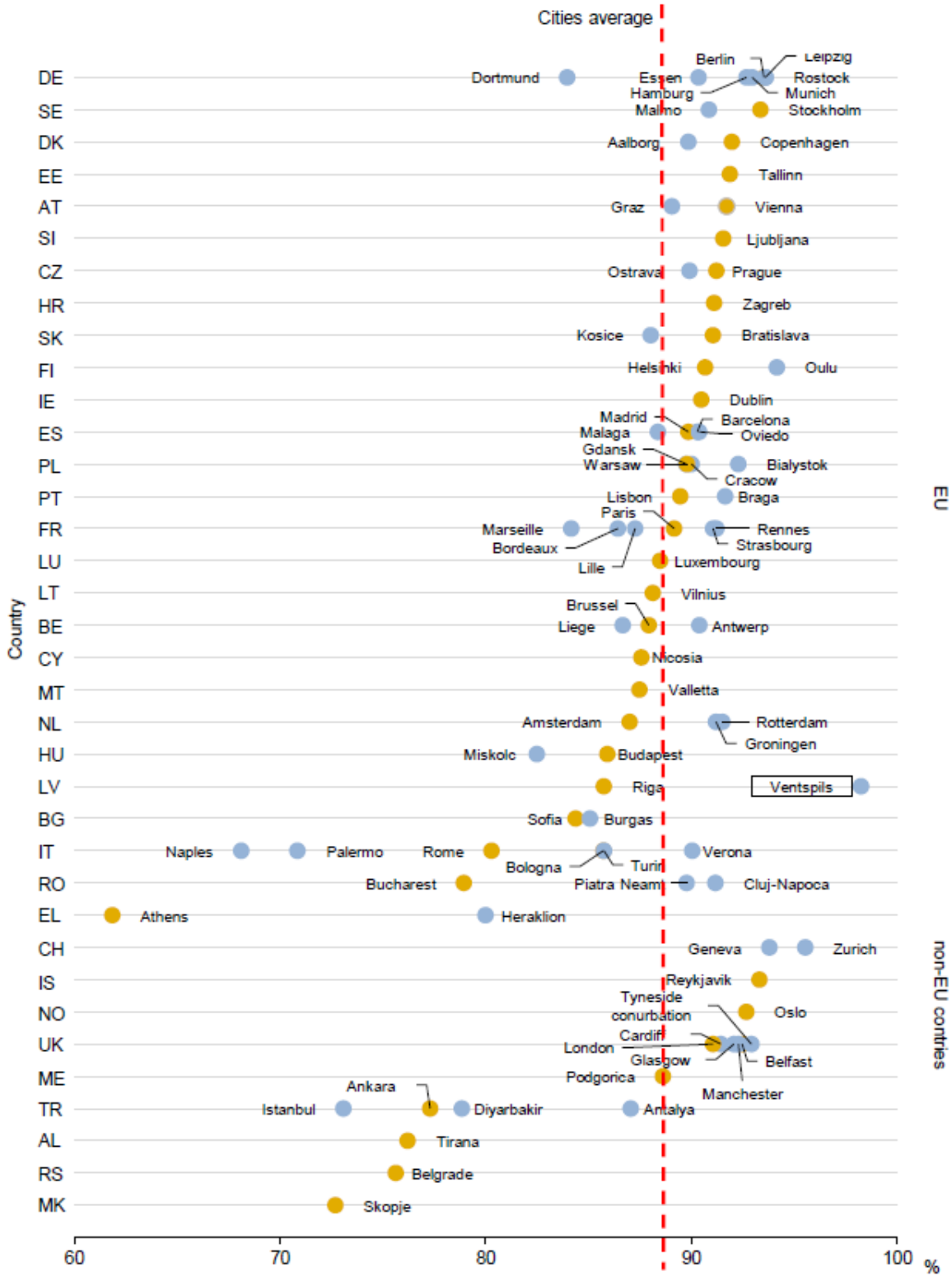
1.1.2. Ventspils Position in Global Rankings

During the past years Ventspils City has put certain efforts to enhance the positions of Ventspils in two global rankings: Quality of life in European cities survey that focuses on quality of life and satisfaction with various aspects of urban life, such as jobs, public transport and pollution and Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI), which tracks the progress made in EU Member States in digital competitiveness in the areas of human capital, broadband connectivity, the integration of digital technologies by businesses and digital public services.

Questions and data are designed to be comparable with surveys conducted at national and EU level.
The table below illustrates the answers of respondents who are generally satisfied with the neighbourhood in which they live, showing the position of Ventspils, Latvia and also Riga City in comparison with other cities.
In general, Ventspils residents are satisfied with life in Ventspils and feel safe there. Most

respondents have indicated that they feel generally satisfied that they live in Ventspils (97%), feel safe,walking alone at night in the city of their place of residence (79%) or walking alone at night in Ventspils (75%).

Figure 5: Respondents who are generally satisfied with the neighborhood in which they live



Most respondents generally agree that information and services provided by local authorities can be easily accessed online (77%), the procedures used by local authorities are simple and easy understandable (70%), the fees charged by local

authorities are reasonable (62%), satisfied with the time needed for local authorities to resolve the requests submitted (57%).
Compared to other European cities included in the study, Ventspils has high level of satisfaction with the time needed for local authorities to resolve the requests submited simplicity and ease of procedures used by local authorities comprehensibility and the fees charged. In Ventspils, a relatively large proportion of respondents agree that information and services from local authorities can be easily accessed online.

Figure 5: Pocedures used by the city's local public administration are straightforward and easy to understand

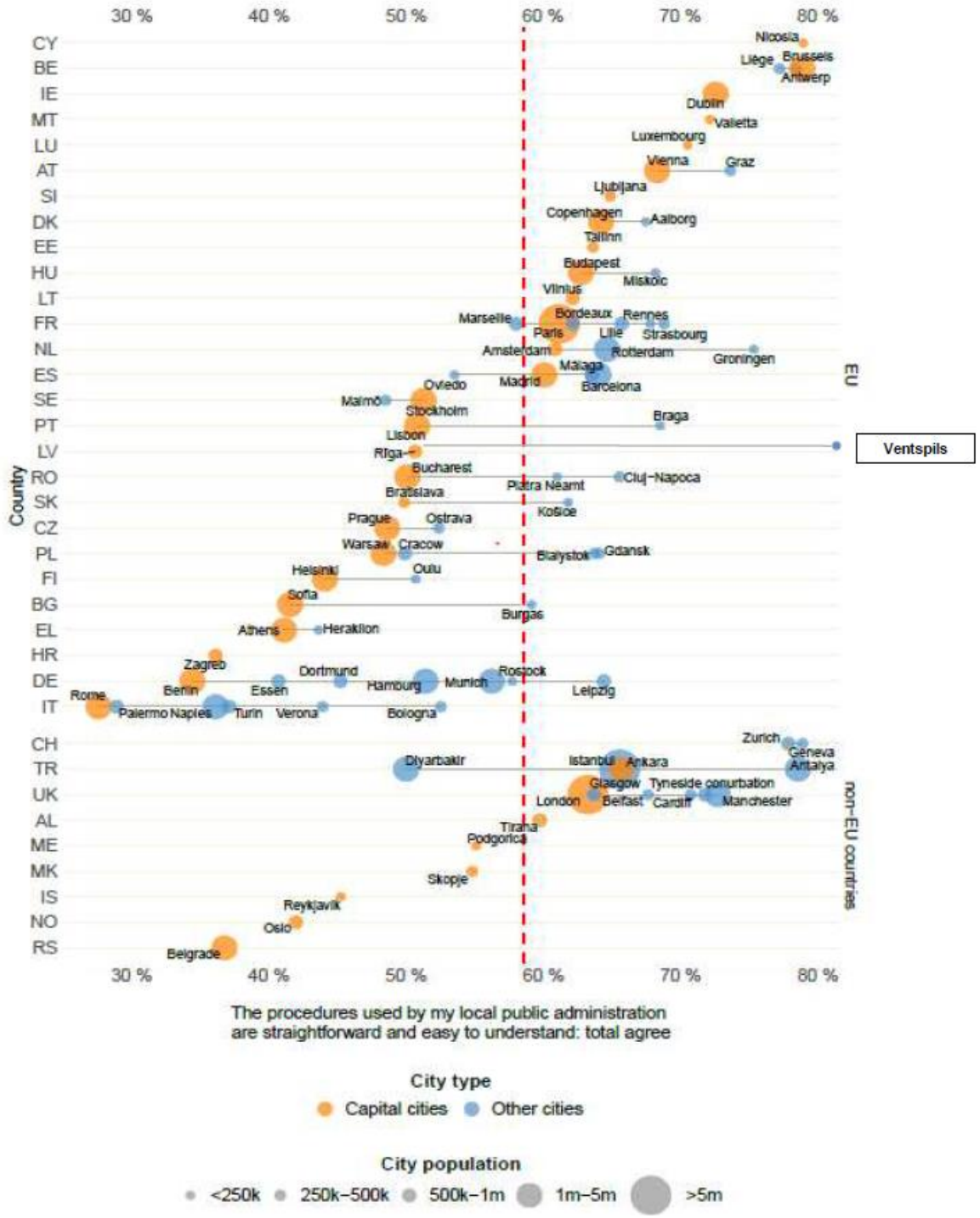
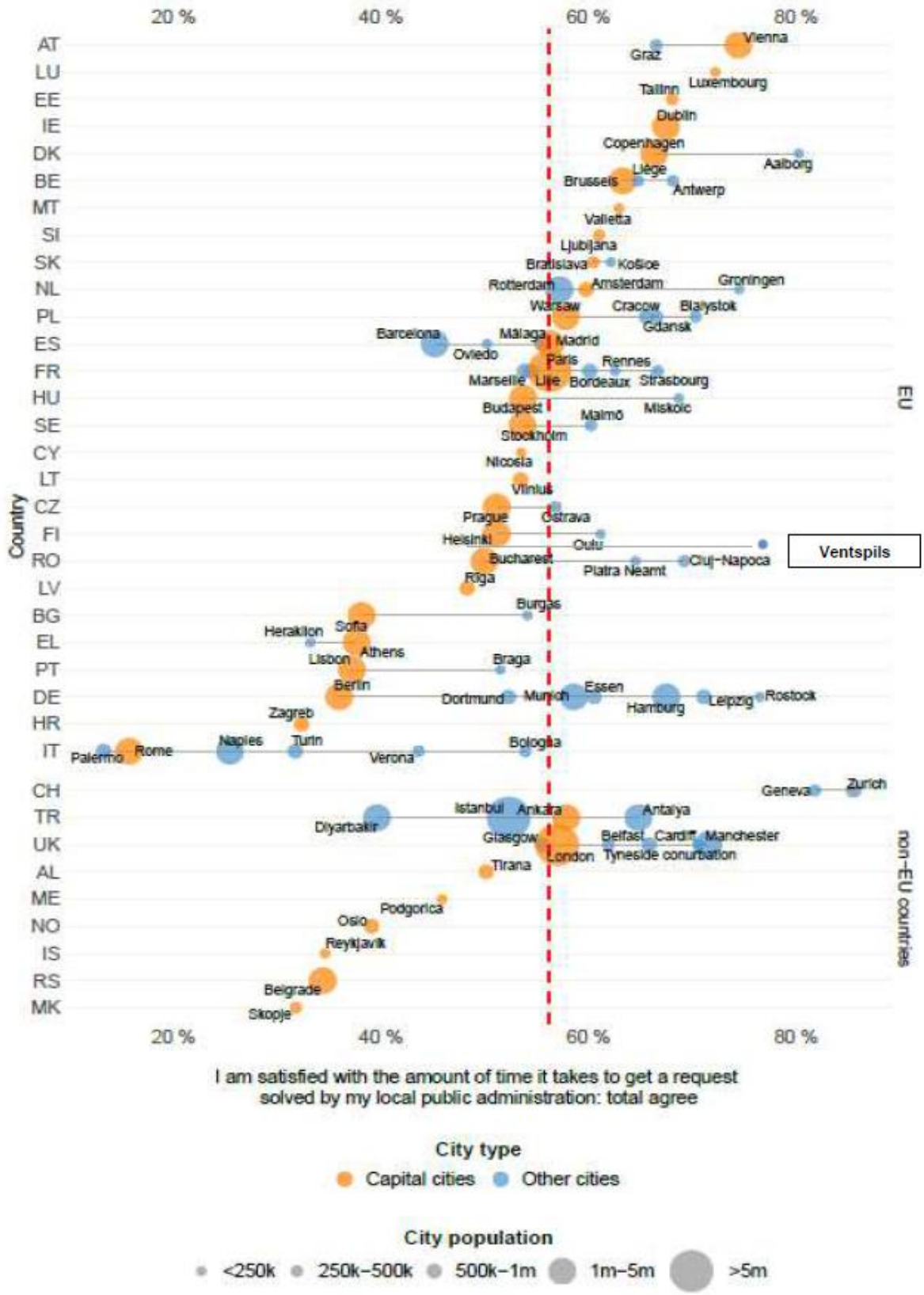
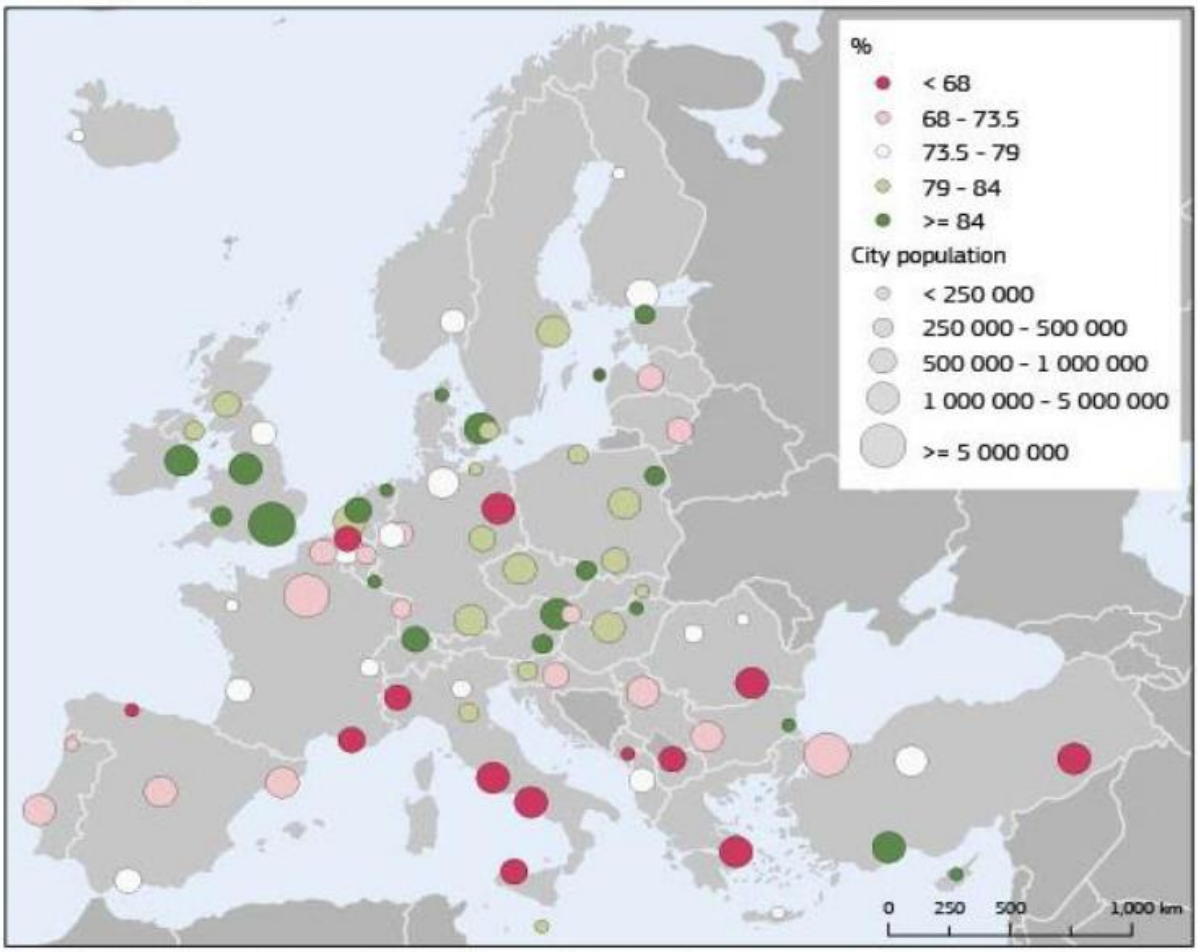


Figure 6: People satified with the time it takes to get a request solved by the local public administration, by city



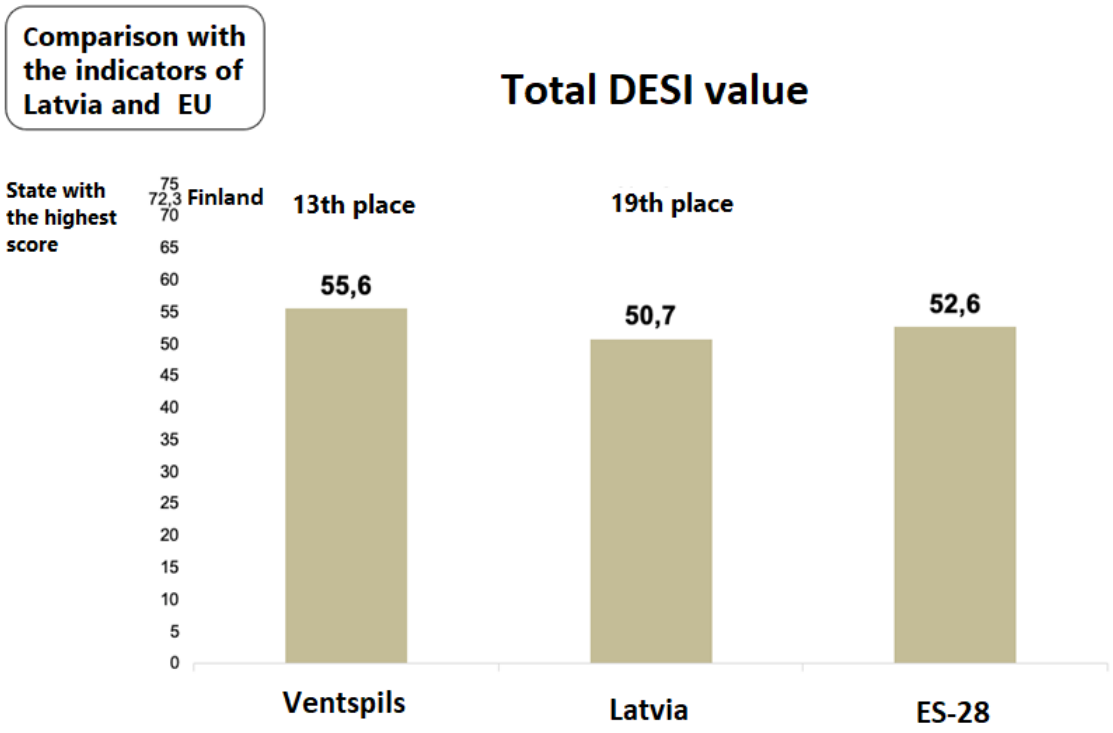
igure 7: Local public administration's information and services can be easily accessed online



In order to find out the satisfaction of Ventspils residents with various aspects of life in Ventspils city, as well as the Digital Economy and Society Index (hereinafter - DESI), which reflects the type of Internet connection used and available, different e-services and Internet usage habits, digital skills in the field, etc. an evaluation was performed using the common methodology of the European Union, thus providing an opportunity to objectively compare the situation in Ventspils with other countries and cities.

DESI is defined annually for all countries in the EU, and its indicators are used to measure the progress of the implementation of EU planning documents and the progress of national digital development. Although the EU conducts this assessment only at the state level, given its importance and widespread use in measuring digital development, it was decided to carry out such an assessment in Ventspils. DESI helps to determine the habits and level of development of the population in the use of digital opportunities and services, as well as the availability and use of Internet connections. Ventspils digital economy and society index is higher than in Latvia and the EU average (Ventspils DESI - 55.6, Latvia - 50.7, EU - 52.6, the highest index has Finland - 72.3). Ventspils ranks 13th and Latvia 19th (28 EU member states and Ventspils are included in the DESI study).

Figure 8: What if Ventspils was a state? -DESI index total



Ventspils also has higher digital and software skills than Latvia, but they are slightly below the EU average. An overwhelming majority of Ventspils residents (94%) have indicated that they have access to the Internet and use it almost every day, for example, to access Internet banking, e-mail, social networks, obtain information about necessary services / products, use various communication options, listen to music. etc. About a third of respondents have used the Internet in the last three months to access online learning materials or courses.

Also, most respondents who have access to the Internet have confirmed that they have used the websites of the state, municipalities or public service providers for personal purposes to obtain information (81%) and to fill in online forms (72%). As expected in the current situation, the purchase of products or services on the Internet is also one of the most popular purposes for using the Internet.

DESI clearly shows the return on Ventspils City Municipality's investments in the city's optical data transmission network, open access WiFi network, school digitization and provision of information and communication technologies to students, teachers and residents. The achievement of Ventspils Internet service usage dimension - 78 points is the highest in Europe (58 points), far exceeding the indicator of Latvia in this field (54 points).

Figure 9: What if Ventspils was a state? - DESI use of Internet

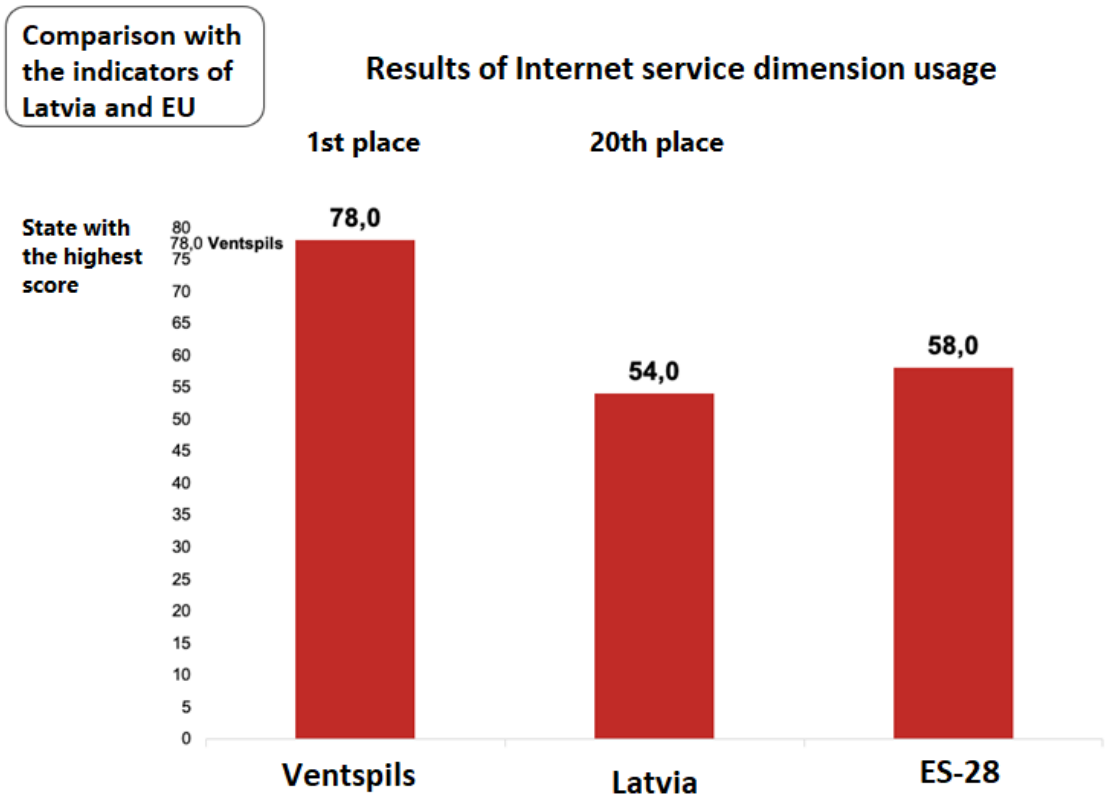
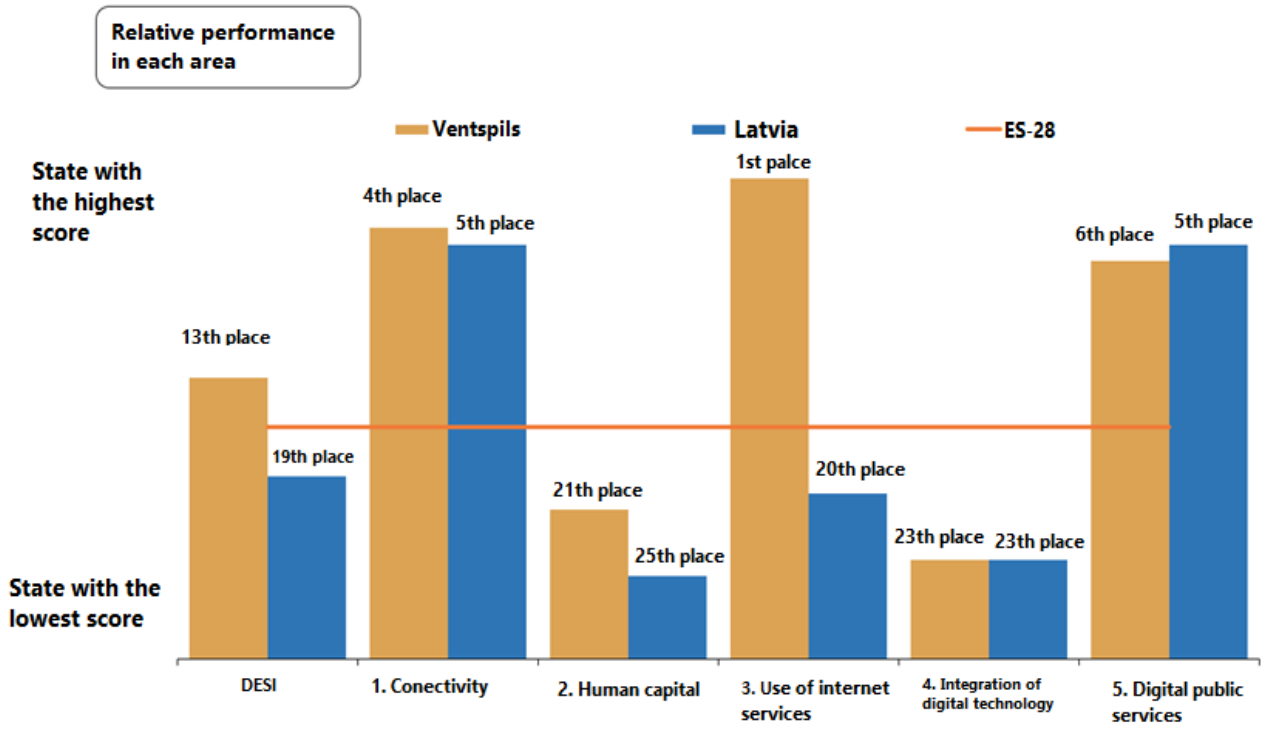


Figure 10: what if Ventspils was a state?



1.1.3. ICT Sector in Ventspils

With the intention of making Ventspils a centre of smart technologies, a memorandum of cooperation was signed between 18 institutions and organizations “On the Development of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Sector in Ventspils” on 2013 and Ventspils ICT Sector Development Strategy with the vision: Ventspils - the best choice for living, education, science and business in the ICT sector was developed.

In 2017 the Ventspils Business Support Centre (hereinafter - VBAC) was established to support for ICT sector entrepreneurs as a priority. Ventspils City Municipality also provides support to entrepreneurs of ICT companies and start-ups providing a 100% discount on the rent of premises in the first year of operation in Ventspils City at VBAC premises.

In the autumn of 2019, the implementation of activities in the project “Small Cities of the Next Generation of Europe” in the initiative “Innovative Actions of Cities” of the European Commission was started. The project is being implemented in cooperation with the city of Valmiera and will run until the autumn of 2022. The aim of the project is to address the shortage and attraction of skilled labour, especially in the ICT and engineering, the insufficient use of educational technologies and innovation in schools. Since June 2019, the project team has organized training for the acquisition of ICT skills and 119 people have completed the ICT retraining program.

In May 2019, the LivinVentspils – a contact point for young people started working in Ventspils, where anyone who has recently moved to Ventspils or plan to do so can get information on matters such as education, health care, etc. By the end of October 2021, 103 families have been moved to Ventspils City. Also, a website

www.livinventspils.lv was launched, providing opportunities for job search, education, housing, business support and other services. The site is also intended for placing housing advertisements.

The construction of the Ventspils Science and Innovation Centre was started in 2019, with the aim to draw interest to science, innovation, the field of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and to inspire not only Ventspils residents, but also the guests of the city from Europe and other parts of the world. The Science Centre opened its doors for visitors on 18th June 2022.
Ventspils Science and Innovation Centre "VIZIUM" visitors have access to 7 interactive galleries – Sports, Smart Technology, Physics and Mathematics, Geography and the World, Human and Self-perception, Children's Gallery, as well as a simulator area. Total of 81 exhibits has been manufactured and designed so that visitors of all age groups have an educational, interesting, and meaningful experience while visiting the Science and Innovation Centre. The exhibits are linked to 20 different educational programs for STEM, of which 16 are developed for children and young people, and 4 are developed to improve the knowledge and competence of teachers to teach STEM subjects to young people.
To make the Centre a unique object a partnership with Ventspils University College and the science center "Vilvite" (Norway, Bergen) is established. These experienced partners have also been involved in the development of the Centre. In cooperation with the Science Centre "VilVite" various experience exchange activities are implemented, while in cooperation with Ventspils University of Applied Sciences a Centre for young natural science researchers has been developed in the premises of Ventspils Science and innovation Centre, with the aim to convince young people that science can be very interesting and understandable and encourage them to choose studies in this field.
In order to gain experience from other science centers in the world, Ventspils Science and Innovation Centre has become a member of the Nordic Association of Science Centers (NSCF) and the European Network of Science Centers and Museums (ECSITE).

Latvia and Ventspils have one of the highest average internet speeds globally Ventspils is connected to the international telecommunication network with two independent optical submarine cables as well as four major terrestrial optical lines. All major parts of Ventspils are connected with 100Gbit/s optical data network and a data centre is set up to accommodate needs of all municipal institutions and companies. Free public Wi-Fi network with more than 600 base stations has been set up for the needs of the citizens and entrepreneurs.

2. Analysis and problem areas

2.1. Ventspils Development Programs

To ensure balanced and sustainable development of the city, Ventspils City Municipality has developed and approved planning documents - “Ventspils City Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030”, Ventspils City Development Program 2021-2027 and “Ventspils City Development Program 2014-2020.

2.1.1. Ventspils long-term vision, goal and priorities

The long-term vision of Ventspils city development is defined in Ventspils City Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030 document. This document is the hierarchically highest planning document at the municipal level. Ventspils long-term vision is defined as follows:

Ventspils is a thriving European seaside city with a high quality of life.
A safe, attractive, innovative and humane-friendly urban environment, convenient services and a responsive, vibrant economic environment that is favourable to both enterprises and individuals working from home or on remote workplaces ensure an increase in the population of Ventspils. The city society is formed by both Latvians and other nations.
Ventspils is an important hub of the global transport TEN-T network in Europe with a modern industry.
Ventspils is an essential element in the international network of educational and scientific institutions, as well as cultural, European-level smart technology centre.

Summarizing the results of the SWOT analysis on the current challenges of Ventspils, external expertise and the opinion of development planning specialists involved in the development of Ventspils City Development Program 2021-2027 document, the strategic long-term goal is population increase in Ventspils. The development of Ventspils until 2027 shall be based on the “Population Increase Triangle” approach, which includes the following medium-term priorities:

2.1.1.1. Knowledge and skills

The future vision of Latvia and Ventspils is based on people's skills, as the global development trends are affected by every sector experiencing increasingly rapid changes in relation to digitisation, adaptation to climate change, etc. In these circumstances, it is crucial for every citizen and company to implement innovative and smart economic change. To make this possible it is important to provide high-quality and diverse educational and skills opportunities, which encourage the awareness that staying or moving to Ventspils rather than elsewhere, is the most appropriate choice to achieve the objectives. Any educational activity should focus on increasing the economic activity and productivity of the population in the form of employment or their own business, so that they are able to generate the income further necessary to ensure the quality of life.
This priority is very high for young people, whose mobility is driven by the vision of the world's wide range of opportunities and also for older people, who need to adapt to the ongoing transformation of economic sectors.

2.1.1.2. Citizen participation

When organising various events, meetings, competitions for residents, Ventspils municipality regularly faces a passivity of inhabitants – such opportunities are usually referred to by a limited number of people, while the rest of the population is difficult to reach. Activation of citizens is a long-term process in which one of the essential preconditions is to strengthen trust between citizens and municipalities. On the other hand trust, as well as a sense of belonging, are essential conditions which affect the desire of the passive population part to live in a particular municipality and encourages the ones who have moved to the municipality to stay. In a situation where even a relatively high-income resident does not have a feeling of belonging to the place of residence, makes it easier to decide to move to live elsewhere. Every citizen needs to feel his or her role in the life of the local government and the local community, therefore it is necessary to provide the high-quality local government services they receive in exchange for taxes paid, as well as to ensure the freedom to express their proposals and recommendations. Participation and feeling of belonging also consist of citizens' involvement in social, cultural and sport activities: the wider the possibilities to work with the municipality and other citizens, and the more proposals materialize in real life, the more each citizen feels himself as part of an existing public life and the desire to move elsewhere decreases. This is important, because relatively small investments are able to deliver high returns: the implementation of the ideas of some citizens can contribute significantly to their membership of the municipality and society.

2.1.1.3. Environement

Researches define that the quality of life and the behaviour of the population are being shaped by their physical and psychological condition, which determines their behaviour accordingly. It is affected by both the health and social situation and economic conditions and the quality of the environment. Therefore, the World Health Organisation recommends seeking a wider view of the environmental dimension, including not only, for example, pollution and the use of natural resources, but also housing, transport, healthcare, tackling social inequalities, etc.

This means it is important to include both physical and emotional needs in the “Environment” concept, because improved urban infrastructure, solutions to health, social inclusion, public order issues and qualitative housing meet the physical needs of the citizens on a daily basis, while in the long-term providing emotional security, satisfaction with life and confidence in their future. The provision of these circumstances contributes to the motivation of citizens to choose their place of residence. Similarly, an arranged and secure environment is the key element to ensure that the maximum effect of the remaining medium-term priorities are achieved, since an arranged and high-quality environment contributes to business productivity, as well as favourable conditions for attracting people and carrying out participation activities. The most important issues in Ventspils are providing quality housing for city residents, promoting health prevention measures, and supporting socially vulnerable population groups.

2.1.2. Key Performance Indicators

Table 1: **Performance indicators of the objective “Save the population in the city”**

No.	INDICATOR	CURRENT VALUE (2019 OR MOST RECENTLY AVAILABLE)	2027. ANNUAL OUTCOME	DATA SOURCES
1	***2***	***3***	***4***	***5***
1.	Population, people	37 538	More than 35 000	Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs
2.	Average salary for insurance contributions, EUR	EUR 966 +1,3% against the national average	More than 1 200 +5% against the national average	State Social Insurance Agency
3.	Citizen satisfaction with the overall functioning of the municipality (positive score,%)	October – 82%	More than 80%	City Population Survey

Table 2: **Priority – Skills (P)**

No.	INDICATOR	CURRENT VALUE (2019 OR MOST RECENTLY AVAILABLE)	2027. ANNUAL OUTCOME	DATA SOURCES
1	***2***	***3***	***4***	***5***
1.	Number of employees in the city (main employment), thousand people	17,23	More than 18	Central Statistical Bureau
2.	Unemployment rate	6,0% (31st December 2020.)	Less than 5%	State Employment Agency
3.	Breakdown of the number of workers by sector	Transport– 19% Industry – 22% (2018)	Transport – More than 15% Industry – More than 23%	Central Statistical Bureau
4.	Number of ICT workers	545	More than 800	Lursoft (database of enterprises)
5.	Economically active companies in the market sector	2 239	More than 2,2 thousand	Central Statistical Bureau, SRG030
6.	Number of merchants per 1 000 inhabitants	35	More than 35	Central Statistical Bureau
7.	Proportion of population with higher and vocational education	Higher education – 28,7% Vocational education – 33,70%	Higher education – More than 30% Vocational education – More than 35%	Central Statistical Bureau

No.	INDICATOR	CURRENT VALUE (2019 OR MOST RECENTLY AVAILABLE)	2027. ANNUAL OUTCOME	DATA SOURCES
1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
8.	Average pension (with premiums)	445 EUR	More than 550 EUR	State Social Insurance Agency
9.	Ratio of the number of students selected for vocational education and general secondary education	37:63	40:60	Ventspils Education Board
10.	Number of patents and licensing contracts	2	More than 5	Ministry of Education and Science
11.	Proportion of people who believe they would not have problems finding jobs in Ventspils (%)	4,9	More than 10	Regular survey of city residents
12.	Foreign direct investment per 1 capita relative to average in Latvia	+1% vs average in Latvia (3 771 EUR)	More than 1% vs average in Latvia	Lursoft, Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs

Table 3: **Priority – participation (L)**

No.	INDICATOR	CURRENT VALUE (2019 OR MOST RECENTLY AVAILABLE)	2027. ANNUAL OUTCOME	DATA SOURCES
1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
1.	Total number of own-initiative projects from different population groups	37	More than 85	Social Service, Sports Administration, Culture Centre, Youth Home
2.	Long-term migration balance of the population	-235	-150	Central Statistical Bureau, IBG100

No.	INDICATOR	CURRENT VALUE (2019 OR MOST RECENTLY AVAILABLE)	2027. ANNUAL OUTCOME	DATA SOURCES
1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
3.	Percentage of the population aged 15-29,%	15%	More than 14%	Central Statistical Bureau
4.	Sense of belonging to Ventspils City,%	79%	More than 80%	Regular survey of city residents
5.	Satisfaction of residents with cultural life in Ventspils in general (% satisfied, rather satisfied)	89% (2018)	More than 85%	Regular survey of city residents
6.	Satisfaction of residents with sports life in Ventspils in general (% satisfied, rather satisfied)	86% (2018)	More than 85%	Regular survey of city residents

Table 4: **Priority – Environment (V)**

No.	INDICATOR	CURRENT VALUE (2019 OR MOST RECENTLY AVAILABLE)	2027. ANNUAL OUTCOME	DATA SOURCES
1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
1.	Residents' assessment of the work of Ventspils City Council regarding city improvement (% is quite satisfied, rather satisfied)	98%	Over 90% positive rating	Regular survey of city residents
2.	Residents' assessment of the work of Ventspils City Council regarding maintenance of streets, road infrastructure (% is quite satisfied, rather satisfying)	95%	Over 90% positive rating	Regular survey of city residents
3.	Residential fund (m^2 per 1 capita)	35	More than 36	CSP
4.	Self-assessment of their health status,% (very good, rather good)	50% (2018)	55%	Regular survey of city residents
5.	Number of road accidents with pedestrians per 10,000 inhabitants	5	0	The Directorate for Transport Safety
6.	Residents' assessment of the work of Ventspils City Council regarding the environmental quality, % (fully satisfied, rather satisfying)	77%	More than 75%	Regular survey of city residents

No.	INDICATOR	CURRENT VALUE (2019 OR MOST RECENTLY AVAILABLE)	2027. ANNUAL OUTCOME	DATA SOURCES
1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
7.	Access to centralised water and sewer services (% of the population)	98,5%	More than 98,5%	self-government limited liability company "ŪDEKA"
8.	Residents' assessment of the work of Ventspils City Council regarding ensuring public order,% (quite satisfying, rather satisfying)	92%	More than 85%	Regular survey of city residents

2.1.3. Initiatives

2.1.3.1. Knowledge and skills (P)

P-1 Offer of professional, higher and lifelong learning in line with market demand, development of science and research

Vocational education, higher education, adult education and non-formal education provide the acquisition of competencies and skills necessary for participation in further education and the labor market. Raising skills contributes to productivity growth, and today's economy is based on knowledge-based jobs and workers. If such opportunities are not provided, certain members of society (residents without a partner, young people with a high level of education / qualifications) emigrate to larger cities.

Strengths:

- Ventspils Digital centre interest education groups are free for students, and adult education courses are offered according to the market demand.
- Ventspils Digital centre and Ventspils High Technology Park offer educational courses in the field of ICT for residents of all ages at the initiative of residents or companies.
- A wide range of services are offered in the field of lifelong learning (including the ICT sector) provided by the Lifelong Learning Center of the University of Latvia, Ventspils Digital Center, Ventspils Technical School, etc.

Opportunities:

- Improve IT-related curricula in line with labor market needs.
- Development of software-based industries, such as IT games.
- Diversifying forms of lifelong learning, also providing distance learning opportunities.
- Develop strong ICT retraining programs.
- EU support for the development of ICT education infrastructure.
- Possible financing of EU structural funds, state budget and other financial instruments for digital transformation activities.

Weaknesses:

- Teachers' capacity and qualifications in adult education.
- Ineffective informing of the citizens about lifelong learning opportunities in Ventspils.

Threats:

- Lack of good IT specialists in the industry.

Main tasks:

- Continue to develop the economic profile of the city in the ICT sector by targeting and developing the related educational opportunities in line with the needs of the labor market.
- Develop the offer and quality of adult education.

P-2 Modern and sufficient pre-school, general and interest education

Modern pre-school education, general education and special interest education are the basis for people's desire for lifelong learning, which lays the foundations for the development of competences and skills. This ensures successful integration into society and competitiveness in the labour market. With a declining population, maintaining the quality of education services at current levels may become increasingly difficult financially.

Strengths:

- Action Programme for Improving the Quality of Learning in Ventspils City General Educational Institutions 2019-2021;
- Computer skill training is provided to students of Ventspils City Municipality educational institutions.
- The number of pupils attending after class activities offered by Ventspils Digital Centre is high and increasing every year.
- Wide range of interest education adapted to different children and their needs.

Opportunities:

- Purchase of interactive and educational equipment for Ventspils Science and Innovation Centre and schools.
- Identifying and attracting EU funds to develop education services, human resources, material and technical base and infrastructure.
- Providing distance learning, developing learning at all stages of education.

Weaknesses:

- High proportion of older teachers in Ventspils education institutions, especially in science subjects.

Threats:

- Shortage of new teachers in exact sciences.

Main tasks:

- Organise support and information activities to attract students and young people which are willing to pursue their careers in Ventspils.
- Develop modern, well-equipped and high-quality interest education;

- Develop modern, high-quality science and innovation interest education.

P-3 Cooperation between education, science, research and business to develop science-intensive enterprises.

Knowledge transfer ensures adaptation to a shrinking population, as cooperation can provide jobs for locally educated people, as well as innovative solutions for digitizing public services, managing resources more efficiently, engaging the public, etc. Any of the products and services developed could be in demand at both national and international level. One of the objectives of the cooperation can be to help create the conditions for local talented people to carry out their goals and ideas and to develop entrepreneurship in Ventspils.

Strengths:

- Modern infrastructure for educational institutions.

Opportunities:

- ICT sector development in Ventspils.

Weaknesses:

- Insufficient supply of traineeships.

Threats:

- Insufficient funding for science.
- Redistribution of resources in favour of education and science development in Riga.
- Declining prestige of science in the country.

Main tasks:

- To define, through dialogue, the priorities for the transformation of Ventspils society and economy in cooperation between education, science, research and business, so that the institutions involved can take more targeted action to develop them.

P-5 ICT sector development

The ICT sector has become one of the fastest growing and best paid industries worldwide. ICT and digitalisation helps to adapt to the declining population trend, with the increasing prevalence remote work, which means that more and more people can live outside of the big cities and still earn a high income and achieve a higher quality of life. In the future, ICT solutions will help to meet the needs of the elderly population and to develop the medical field by ensuring preventive action, timely diagnosis and patient autonomy.

Strengths:

- Business Incubator, Ventspils High Technology Park, including Ventspils Business Support Centre, Ventspils Digital Centre and other support provided by the municipality.
- IT study opportunities open to the public at different levels.

Opportunities:

- City marketing capital to enhance Ventspils' visibility and reputation in ICT.
- Increase in the number of users of e-services.
- Potential funding from EU Structural Funds, national budget and other financial instruments for digital transformation activities.

Weaknesses:

- Insufficient human resources for the ICT sector.

Threats:

- Adverse demographic trends and emigration of human resources to other countries.

Main tasks:

- Continue to follow the needs of ICT enterprises and their evolution, providing relevant support through various programmes and planning for the future development of the sector.
- Encourage ICT companies to collaborate with other businesses and local authorities to create new types of digital services and products.

P-6 Business development in the city;

Strengths:

- A wide range of education opportunities is available in the city, helping to prepare the human resources needed for entrepreneurship.

Opportunities:

- ICT sector development in the city.

Weaknesses:

- Shortage of skilled labor.
- Insufficient housing stock to attract professionals.
- Low activity of the population, including students, in setting up businesses.

Threats:

- Monocentric national development focused on the Riga region.
- Negative demographic trends and emigration of human resources to other countries.
- Constraints to limit the spread of the virus.

Main tasks:

- Developing infrastructure to support entrepreneurship.

P-7 Tourism development;

Tourism development is an important element of the "Resistance" strategy to population decline, contributing to the availability of jobs, increased incomes and increased municipal revenues.

Strengths:

- Various leisure activities (facilities, events) – Science Centre “VIZIUM”.

Opportunities:

- Development of Science and Innovation centre.

Weaknesses:

- Seasonality of tourist leisure opportunities in the city

Threats:

- National policies on tourism, e.g. travel restrictions, tax changes on tourism and catering.
- Ageing of existing leisure facilities infrastructure.
- Restrictions to limit the spread of the virus

Main tasks:

- Conduct marketing activities targeted at specific target groups.
- Ensure and support the development and expansion of tourism infrastructure, including mitigating seasonality, in order to contribute to economic transformation and productivity growth.
- Contribute to increasing hospitality in the city.

P-8 Fast and modern communications and infrastructure needed to operate ICT and smart technologies.

Fast, modern communications and ICT infrastructure provides citizens with the technical resources they need for convenient and efficient public administration, stimulates the city's economy and serves the needs of citizens'. Technical infrastructure will contribute to the attractiveness of business areas for investors, business development, communications, information, media, electronic services, work, leisure, etc.

Strengths:

- Wide coverage of optical and wireless data networks.
- Fast and high-quality services provided by Ventspils Digital centre for local authorities and related businesses.
- Work is underway to connect Ventspils ICT infrastructure to the national data network.

Opportunities:

- Extending optical network coverage in the city.
- Development of the e-services environment.
- Actions to improve the digital skills of the citizens.
- Financial support at both European and national level for the development of the digital connectivity and internet environment.

Weaknesses:

- Insufficient number of public communications service providers and quality of internet access in some areas of the city.

- Insufficient number of computer service providers in Ventspils.

Threats:

- Slow change in people's behaviour towards e-services.

Main tasks:

- Ensure the achievement of ICT targets and indicators set in EU planning documents (Common EU broadband targets for 2025, Digital Single Market Strategy, etc.) on the availability of data networks.

2.1.3.2. Citizen participation (L)

L-1 Close to society and modern city administration

Modern public administration is public administration with a customer-oriented approach. Local government should strive to deliver its services to citizens and businesses in the most convenient way possible. Today, convenience and efficiency are unthinkable without e-government and e-services, while at the same time maintaining traditional modes of engagement and communication.
The City of Ventspils does not exist in isolation, so cooperation with both neighbouring municipalities and with municipalities of common interest, as well as with municipalities abroad, is important for all parties and will be strengthened. Only a continuous dialogue with the public enables the municipality to explore the needs and opinions of different groups. The professionalism and competence of municipal staff is the basis for high quality governance. A well-managed shrinking population makes it possible to turn challenges into opportunities and to build a more compact, greener, innovative and modern administration and public service delivery.

Strengths:

- High score in the Latvian Local Government rating for e-Index.

Opportunities:

- European and national financial support to improve local government.
- To improve and develop the municipality's e-government, promoting the use of e-services among both citizens and municipal institutions.

Weaknesses:

- Insufficient use of e-government and citizens' computer skills.

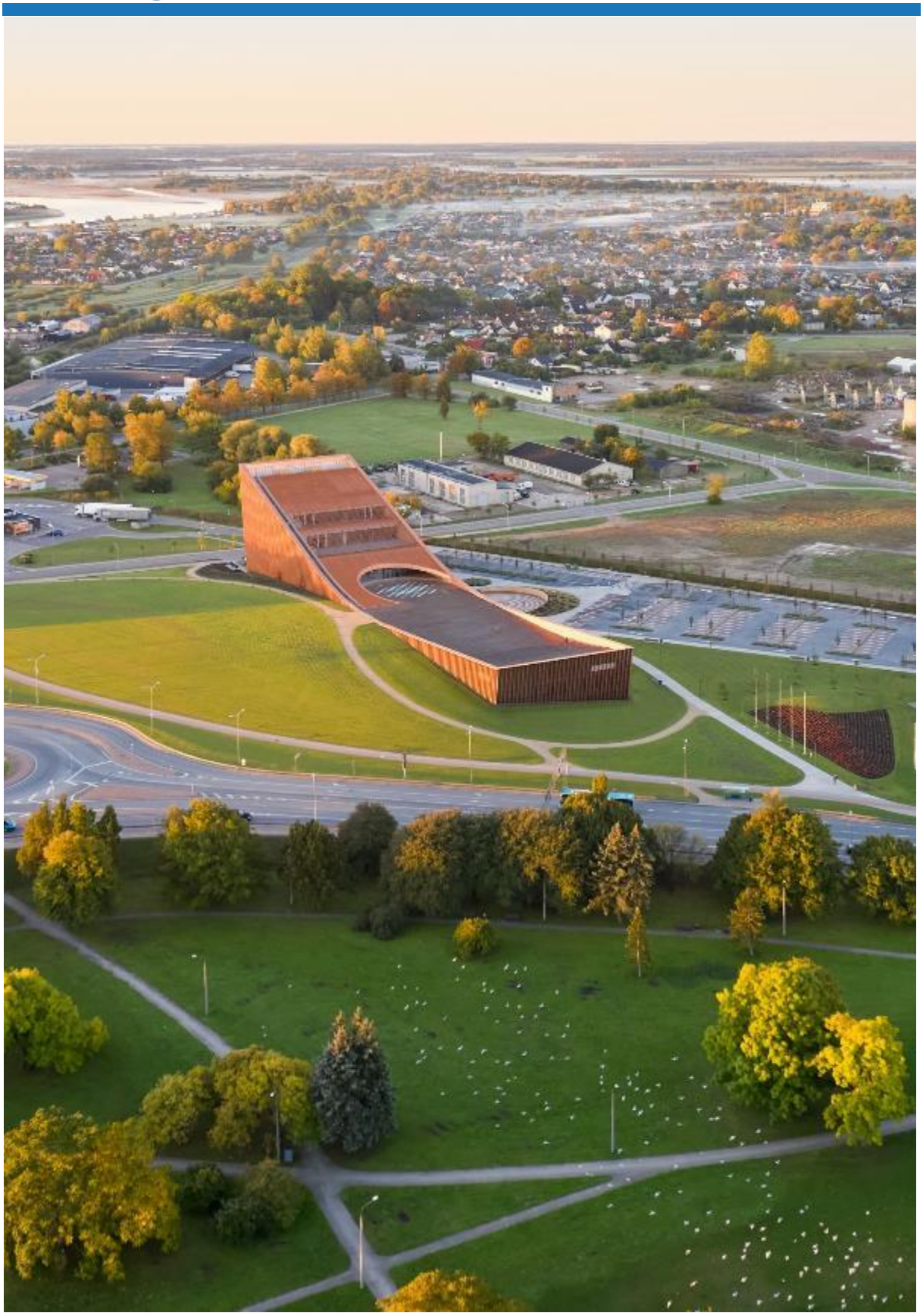
Threats:

- Citizens' lack of digital skills and reluctance to use e-services.

Main tasks:

- Support and develop e-government tools.
- Promote the use of e-services among different groups of society.
- Improve the infrastructure of local government institutions for citizens.

3. Digital Action Plan



The set of objectives for digital transformation are defined by national plans “Digital transformation guidelines 2021-2027.”, “Implementation plan for Digital transformation guidelines 2021-2027”, “Ventspils City Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030” and Ventspils City Development Program 2021-2027.

The following table lists each objective with subsequent activities and defines institution responsible for implementation of the activity.

Nr.	Activity	Responsible institution
1	Digital skills and knowledge	
1.1.	Development of society's digital skills	
1.1.1.	An expanded range of learning materials and technical infrastructure for the development of digital skills	Ventspils Digital Centre (VDC) /Education Board (EB)
1.1.2.	The general education curriculum expanded with information technologies related content, increasing the number of digital skills lessons in primary education from 2 to 8 and including a programming module	VDC/EB
1.1.3.	Expanded opportunities to learn programming and digital technologies at the level of general secondary education, increased provision of in-depth and special courses (from 210 to 420 and more study hours).	VDC/ EB
1.1.4.	Increased number of learners who will choose to take higher level exams in general secondary education level "Programming II" and "Design and technologies II"	VDC/ EB
1.1.5.	Digital literacy is included in the curriculum as one of the six cross-cutting skills at all levels of general education from preschool to secondary education. The compulsory learning content of general education includes the learning of DigComp 2.1 skills: - Primary education graduates have acquired at least the 3rd DigComp level; - High school graduates - at least 5th DigComp level.	VDC/ EB
1.1.6.	Provided methodological support for coordinators of technology learning and for the inclusion of educational technologies in the learning curriculum	VDC/ EB
1.1.7.	Implemented training (at least 8h module) for preschool and school teachers on the use of the skolo.lv platform in the learning process	VDC/ EB
1.1.8.	The learning environment of preschool and general education institutions is provided with the necessary information and technology equipment and other digital solutions. Provision with computers as teaching tools, reaching at least a 1:3 ratio of devices to the number of students 1th-3th grades, at least 1:2 ratio of devices for students of 4th-6th grades and 1:1 ratio of devices the number of students 7th-12th grades	VDC/ EB
1.1.9	Municipality assistants have educated/advised 10,000 people who need support to receive electronic services	VDC/ EB
1.2.	Improved public services	VDC/ EB
1.2.1.	Developed social innovations, incl. digital and technological solutions in the provision of social services, as well as improved digital skills of social service providers in the use of ICT solutions	VDC
1.2.2.	A digital skills development competence program for local government employees as well as a digital learning platform necessary for this purpose has been created and implemented	VDC
2.	Digital security	
2.1.	Documentation related to IT security has been maintained and the measures provided for in them have been implemented	VDC

2.2.	Measures to restore the operation of information systems (after crash or malfunction) have been developed and implemented	VDC
2.3.	Municipal services are available with cross-border means of identification (eIDAS regulation)	VDC
3.	Availability of telecommunication services	
3.1.	A very high-performance (at least 100 Gb/s) city-level computer network infrastructure has been installed	VDC
3.2.	Implemented IPv6 addressing	VDC
3.3.	A publicly available computer network for M2M and IoT solutions has been created	VDC
4.	Digital transformation	
4.1.	The data at the disposal of the municipality are integrated into European data spaces in accordance with the European data strategy	VDC
4.2.	The circulation of electronic invoices is integrated into a single system - a secure electronic delivery platform (e-address) and an e-address connection has been established with the delivery system that ensures cross-border receipt of electronic invoices (Pan-European Public Procurement On-Line - PEPPOL)	VDC
4.3.	Implemented Geospatial Data Management Solution, connected to National Geospatial Data Exchange and Distribution Platform	VDC
4.4.	Digitization of customer service and record keeping processes	VDC
4.5.	Chronicles of Ventspils - an information system integrated with the Latvian cultural heritage platform developed for the long-term preservation and distribution of audiovisual content	VDC
4.6.	The Ventspils city portal www.ventspils.lv and the visitventspils.com portal also provide access in voice/audio format	VDC
4.7.	A language technology data repository with multimodal language data resources has been created	VDC
4.8.	The number of digitized and digitally created cultural heritage objects has increased	VDC
4.9.	Municipal data ontologies have been created, incl. semantic web	VDC
4.10.	At least 5 shared services for municipalities have been developed and implemented	VDC