



AGENTS OF CO-EXISTENCE

**Integrated Action Plan
KEKAVA MUNICIPALITY**



URBACT



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Section 1

Context, needs and vision

Overall theme

The main challenge of K kava Municipality is to use the participation in the "Agents of co-existence and open government" (AoCE) network in order to embrace social innovation and inclusion in all fields of local governance by improving skills and capabilities of municipal staff and creating new organisational structures in order to further boost civic participation and create a more solid basis of democracy. As a result, empowered civil servants with proper skills and attitudes, and better organisational structures will encourage public service innovation.

By the end of the Activation stage, AoCE partnership agreed on focussing on the following themes:

Theme1 - Working together with citizens

Theme2 - Innovators coming into government

Theme 3 - Focus on staff, internal capabilities, and officials as innovators

Theme 4 - New working methods and rethinking the rules.

Inside each theme, partners have identified sub-themes, expressed their knowledge needs, and highlighted their good practices.

All partners are already applying different methods, tools, techniques, and approaches to citizen participation. At the same time, they are struggling **to find solutions to increase trust in local government institutions**, tackle polarisation issues and mobilise the silent majority of their population improving the participatory culture of citizens. Fortunately, some partners have well-elaborated systems for cooperating with young people or other specific groups of citizens represented by NGOs. Also, many partners have extensive experience with and tested **tools for participatory budgeting**.

We can safely say that the partners already have a deep knowledge about 'working with citizens' but they have a lack of knowledge on **how to embed the results of citizen participation into the daily work of the administration**. Another important element is the innovations and new ways of thinking that citizens can bring to the table. Generally speaking, civil servants (very often experts in their field) find it difficult to embrace citizens' ideas as possible solutions for the policies being discussed.

Moreover, they struggle to follow up on citizens' ideas, whether the idea has been taken into consideration or explain why it could not be implemented. They are also looking for new ways to communicate these decisions to citizens in such a way that they can easily absorb them. To sum up, partners want to know how **to create transparency in decision-making**.

As mentioned before, AoCE particularly focuses on **improving the skills and capacities of civil servants** (theme 3) to implement citizen participation processes more successfully. Partners found the **communication and facilitation skills** the most important skills of civil servants to be improved. Some partner cities need to improve their civil servants' knowledge of citizen engagement methods. Further, partners wish to focus not only on civil servants in general but focus especially on the leaders of the municipality, to **achieve participatory leadership** in tackling power relation issues. Almost all partners expressed their willingness to **make changes in the attitude, and mindset of their civil servants** to overcome fear and increase motivation for innovation and citizen participation.

On top of upskilling civil servants, partners would like to **explore and establish new working methods** for and rethink the rules of citizen participation (theme 4). As with theme 3, the main questions for partners in this theme are: how to increase cross-department collaborations involving all departments in citizen participation; how to set up and run an internal platform for civil servants being a safe place for innovating and mutual learning; and how to create a clear legal framework for working with citizens. Half of the partners have already set up a participation department or at least established a position for a participation officer. They will exchange knowledge about their working methods and support those partners who haven't created such a unit in their organisation yet but would like to do so in the future.

Ķekava Municipality will incorporate the lessons learned from the participation in AoCE network in its integrated Action Plan (IAP). The IAP includes the description of the identified capacity building measures to boost capabilities of municipal politicians and employees to conduct meaningful dialogue with citizens and encourage civic participation in Ķekava Municipality. It describes the identified steps how to activate different community groups to engage in structured dialogue with the local government and cooperate with other target groups living in the same municipality.

Current situation

Ķekava Municipality consists of three towns – Ķekava, Baloži and Baldone and three rural territories – Ķekava, Baldone and Daugmale. The three towns have different economic profile and different identity which resulted in different challenges also with regards to citizens engagement. Ķekava town is the administrative centre of the municipality and is located 18 km from the centre of Riga. The municipality mainly fulfils the functions of a "dormitory district" of Riga with 50% of the workers living in the area commuting to their workplaces in Riga on a daily basis.

The **Development Program 2021-2027** tries to target all of these challenges specifying priorities and actions such as further improvement of the municipality governance system, training of municipal staff, establishment of NGO council and its involvement in decision making process, elaboration and implementation of a cooperation model between the local government and NGOs, facilitation of the establishment and operation of neighbourhood associations and their involvement in decision making, supporting initiatives to develop neighbourhood (community) development plans and introduction of smart village concept etc.

Ķekava municipality has taken steps towards the implementation of their Program and already applies different tools and methods to interact with the local community:

For instance, they actively communicate with the Ķekava community through the City's **social media, webpage and monthly newsletter** providing information on the planned events and decisions to be taken ensuring openness of the local government. Openness is also increased by streaming the **Municipality Council meetings online** which anyone can follow. Moreover, local inhabitants and civic organizations are invited to participate and voice their interests at the **meetings with the political and executive leaders** of the municipality. These meetings such as public hearing meetings about development and planning documents and projects, the year-end meetings of the Chairman of Municipality Council and senior executives on the implemented projects are organized in different locations of the municipality to **reach out to the inhabitants closer to their place of living**.

On top of these, for several years the local government had been involving the community in the municipal budgeting process by asking to submit proposals, aggregating them and taking them into account within the

available financial resources. **Meeting with inhabitants on budget proposals** are organized in different locations of the municipality, online participation option is also provided.

To support community initiatives, the local government annually announces **grant competitions** where **NGOs, foundations and civic organizations can apply** for financial support to implement wide spectrum of infrastructure improvement and social integration, educational, healthy life-style, arts, culture and other activities.

Moreover, in 2023, Kekava municipality has introduced the **participatory budget** as one of the first local governments in Latvia - the new Local Government Law stipulates that at least 0,5% of the municipal budget must be allocated to the participatory budget starting with 2025. In 2023 the local government of Kekava municipality approved implementation of 6 project ideas submitted for participatory budget which reached the highest score of inhabitants' votes. Its total financing is EUR 170 000.

Relevant existing strategies and policies

Kekava Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 is a spatial development planning document that defines the vision, objectives, priorities and spatial development perspective of Kekava municipality in the long term; it is the hierarchically highest municipal development planning document. The Strategy determines that sustainable development contributes to shared well-being of society at large and empowers all people to live in a healthy environment, fulfilling their potential and capacities. The strategic goals of the municipality include modern local governance of the municipality in cooperation with inhabitants and high-quality municipal services across all territory of the municipality and corresponding to the needs of citizens. The strategy provides for long term priorities, including good governance (effective and rational governance, development of e-governance, increasing role of civic sector, NGOs), socially responsible action and policy (high quality and available to all municipal services in education, culture, sports, social care, health care and public safety areas)

The Development Program 2021-2027 is a medium-term planning document and, in order to implement the long-term vision set out in the Strategy. It specifies priorities and actions of the given period, such as further improvement of the municipality governance system, training of municipal staff, establishment of NGO council and its involvement in decision making process, elaboration and implementation of a cooperation model between the local government and NGOs, facilitation of the establishment and operation of neighbourhood associations and their involvement in decision making, supporting initiatives to develop neighbourhood (community) development plans and introduction of smart village concept etc.

There are a number of ways in which Kekava municipality government interacts with local community, informs and involves them in decision-making, and collaborates with local NGOs, organizations and other stakeholders. I.e. the local government is a member of the local action group "Partnership Daugavkrasts" and closely cooperates with Kekava Municipality Business Council (meetings, visits of the political and executive leaders of the local government to local entrepreneurs etc).

Problem identification

The URBACT Local Group (ULG) has been established and has started its work with the project. The ULG involves different local and regional stakeholders, including local politicians, municipality staff of different

departments, associations, regional and national organizations etc. its composition is flexible and new members have been joining it in the course of time. As of beginning 2024 the ULG had the following members:

Institution /group of interest	Role
Ķekava Municipality Council	First Vice Chairman
Ķekava Municipality	Head of Development and Building Department
Ķekava Municipality	Senior project manager, Development and Building Department
Ķekava Municipality	Agents of Co-existence project manager, Development and Building Department
Kekava Municipality	Business Communication Project Manager, Community Outreach and Marketing Division,
Ķekava Municipality	Agents of Co-existence communications manager, Community Outreach and Marketing Division
Ķekava Municipality	Territorial planner
Ķekava Municipality	HR department head
Local action group "Partnership Daugavkrasts"	Administrative manager
Neighbourhood association "Mežinieku apkaimes attīstībai" (For the development of Mežinieki neighbourhood)	board member
neighbourhood association "Pats sev saimnieks"	board member
neighbourhood association "Pats sev saimnieks"	board member
Riga Planning Region	Development Planning and Monitoring Officer
Riga Planning region	Head of Spatial Planning unit
Association of Seniors (Baldone town) "Sābri"	Board member
Katlakalns neighbourhood	citizen
Baldone town	citizen
Baldone town	citizen
Ķekava Municipality Business Council	Board member
Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments	adviser

During the first ULG meeting conducted in October 2023 during the City Visit the SWOT analysis of the municipality was conducted and the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were identified with regard to citizen participation:

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
✓ Willingness of the local government to have dialogue ✓ e-services (municipal, national) ✓ active citizens groups and neighbourhood associations ✓ LAG Partnership Daugavkrasts	✓ webpage of municipality (hard to find what you are looking for) ✓ poor knowledge and awareness among municipality staff why and how to cooperate ✓ no code of conduct (common values are not formulated)

✓ good computer skills of most people ✓ municipal funding competitions for NGO projects ✓ graphic identity of the municipality ✓ learning ideas from other cities ✓ infrastructure ✓ readiness to change ✓ the previous URBACT project initiated discussions ✓ many information channels, a lot of information ✓ meetings with citizens	✓ narrow interest groups / strong lobbyists ✓ lack of willingness of people to get involved ✓ local government does not have consultations with NGOs as part of decision making ✓ bad roads ✓ no clear long-term strategy or vision of the local government ✓ communication with residents outside Ķekava town should be improved ✓ the information is not targeted ✓ lack of connection between the strategy and action
<u>Threats</u> ✓ lobbyism ✓ no clear policies lead to chaos ✓ wrong time and wrong place interference of politicians ✓ no regular, on-going interaction with community, only “when needed” ✓ political priorities ✓ public political fights ✓ bureaucracy	<u>Opportunities</u> ✓ participatory budget ✓ neighbourhood associations ✓ URBACT project ✓ implementation of municipality’s strategy ✓ geographical location - close to Riga ✓ growing population- growing opportunities ✓ more communication with more remote locations of the municipality ✓ improved support to NGOs ✓ AI ✓ NGO consultative council - regular meetings, united opinion, cooperation ✓ citizen councils; ✓ co-working spaces ✓ app for communication with local government ✓ active communities ✓ development of new habits ✓ awareness raising among citizens

The SWOT analysis highlight assets what we have, yet it reveals also challenges to be addressed.

The two main challenges of Kekava are connected to theme 4 and 1 of AoCE:

First, a **capacity building** need (skills, capabilities, awareness etc.) of all municipal employees has been identified providing wide **internal understanding** that everyone, both together and individually, can and should contribute to the dialogue between the local government and inhabitants (theme 4). Kekava needs to increase the understanding of municipal employees that it is **not only the responsibility of one specific department** to work with citizen participation issues. At the same time **a dedicated civic participation unit or a staff person** should be considered to coordinate engagement activities. Also, there is a need to strengthen individual capacities and skills of local government officials and staff for **better communication with citizens**.

Second, Kekava realized that there are **too few community associations or other forms of bodies representing citizens of various neighbourhoods** which may serve as legitimate representatives and be

able to voice the interests of the respective territorial community group in a pragmatic way not forgetting about the co-existence principle with other interest groups (theme 1). Thus, Kekava is looking for **tools to engage different community target groups** in a meaningful dialogue respecting different value. In parallel, they need to tackle the **challenge of dealing with lobbying** of very narrow interests. Co-existence and co-creation should be implemented balancing different interests across the whole territory of the municipality. It is especially challenging since 3 towns and 3 rural territories of the Kekava municipality have different size and profile with different needs and wishes. The Municipality's vision is that the active citizens of each settlement (town, village, neighbourhood) form associations which join in a network as the Council of Communities.

Vision

The vision of Kekava Municipality is to be a municipality with transparent and open governance, inclusive and structured participatory processes. The municipality's civil servants have the necessary capacity and skills to foster and maintain a cooperative culture with citizens, grounded in mutual trust. Citizens and other local stakeholders actively engage in co-creation processes in a meaningful dialogue respecting different values.

Main integration challenges

This chapter evaluates the main integration challenges, analysing the current situation and the potential improvements that can be achieved through the Integrated Action Plan (IAP). By addressing these gaps, the IAP aims to strengthen participatory governance, enhance cross-sectoral collaboration, and ensure that citizen input translates into real policy changes.

1. Stakeholder involvement in planning

Current situation: Kekava attempts to engage various stakeholders, including active citizens, neighbourhood associations, NGOs, businesses and regional institutions (public hearings, development of sectoral strategies, participatory budgeting etc.). However, participatory processes remain fragmented and occasionally formal.

Possible progress: The IAP will build on existing collaboration efforts by introduce some new measures, such as establishing a new positions in the central administration to coordinate and promote cooperation with the non-governmental sector and to work directly in more remote neighbourhoods of the municipality; establishment of Citizens Councils.

2. Coherence with existing strategies

Current situation: Strategic documents, such as Kekava Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 and The Development Program 2021-2027 point out good governance as one of the development priorities, acknowledging need to increase role of civic sector and NGOs and their involvement in decision making process.

Possible progress: The IAP will ensure better alignment between participatory initiatives and existing strategies, providing for more concrete actions regarding civic participation and embedding structured citizen engagement mechanisms into policy review and urban development planning.

3. Sustainable urban development

Current situation: The existing municipal strategic planning documents provide for actions addressing all three pillars of sustainable development in terms of economic, social and environmental objectives. There is growing awareness regarding green mobility, renewable energy sources, circular economy, social inclusion etc.

Possible progress: The IAP will encourage citizen-driven sustainability initiatives and support collaborative policymaking that integrates economic, social, and environmental objectives.

4. Integration over time

Current situation: Participation efforts are often short-term, there is lack of continuity and tracking impact in medium and longer terms.

Possible progress: The IAP will define concrete actions, helping to ensure that citizen involvement becomes a structured ongoing process.

5. Stakeholder involvement in implementation

Current situation: The involvement of stakeholders in implementation of the planned actions exists, yet it is rather limited (e.g. implementation of the NGO projects supported by the local government through the grant competition, organization of culture events in the neighbourhoods etc.)

Possible progress: The IAP will encourage participation of NGO and private sector in the execution of planned activities and their follow-up.

6. Sectoral Integration

Current situation: Participatory initiatives have been mainly focused on specific projects, with less cross-sectoral cooperation.

Possible progress: The IAP will expand participatory approaches across various policy sectors, fostering stronger coordination and involvement of different departments of the municipality administration (marketing and public outreach, culture, business development, infrastructure and spatial planning etc)

7. Territorial Integration

Current situation: There is certain coherence of actions and policies implemented by all municipalities in Latvia because civic participation is stipulated by the Law on Local Governments, (Chapter VI - Public participation in the work of local government). Yet level and forms of civic participation may vary from one city or municipality to another. A challenge for Ķekava municipality is to embrace equally entire territory of the municipality, including most remote neighbourhoods.

Possible progress: The IAP will strengthen balanced citizen participation across urban and rural areas of Ķekava municipality. Ķekava municipality will look into the best practise cases of other Latvia municipalities for potential experience transfer.

8. Integration of cross-cutting thematic aspects (digitalization)

Current situation: Digital governance is quite advanced in Latvia in general, including Ķekava municipality (wide use of e-signature, electronic document management, on-line meetings, including Council meetings, electronic public opinion surveys etc.). most of the developing, but digital participation tools are not widely used for civic engagement. Gender-sensitive decision-making is not systematically integrated, and environmental initiatives lack formal citizen engagement frameworks.

Possible progress: It is planned to introduce mobile app as a new communication tool with the local government. The IAP will support digital tools for participation, introduce gender-responsive civic policies, and strengthen community involvement in sustainability programs.

Section 2

Overall logic and integrated approach

Strategic objectives

The following strategic objectives of the integrated action plan of Ķekava Municipality have been identified:

1. **Enhance the awareness and capacity of municipal politicians and staff** to encourage civic participation in local decision-making

This objective aims to foster a shift in mindset among decision-makers and municipal employees, emphasizing that civic participation is a shared responsibility across all departments—not solely the task of one specific unit. Participatory governance should be seen not merely as a legal obligation but as a cornerstone of effective administration that builds trust, ensures transparency, and strengthens community engagement. Learning from best practices, both within Latvia and internationally, is crucial. To support this transformation, the municipality must offer targeted training and resources that equip staff with the necessary skills to facilitate inclusive and meaningful participation processes.

2. **Strengthen the knowledge and skills of diverse community groups** to engage in structured dialogue with the local government and collaborate with one another

Many residents lack the understanding and tools to effectively participate in local decision-making, including knowledge of their rights and responsibilities. To address this, the municipality will organize thematic networking and experience-sharing events. These activities will empower citizens to take an active role in participatory processes, initiate community-led projects, and contribute to solving local challenges. Equally important is fostering collaboration among NGOs, neighbourhood associations, and other active citizen groups to promote unified place-making across the entire Ķekava Municipality.

3. **Activate diverse participatory mechanisms and forms of cooperation** between the municipality and the community

To boost civic engagement, it is essential to provide various formats and levels of participation tailored to different community groups. A range of participatory tools and mechanisms—differing in intensity and structure—will be introduced or strengthened to ensure all residents have the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to local governance.

Actions

To achieve the strategic objectives, corresponding key areas of intervention have been identified, each comprising a series of actions that contribute toward reaching the objectives. Some of the actions are already implemented in Ķekava Municipality and will be continued, yet several of them are to be introduced anew.

The proposed actions are discussed within various departments of the central administration of the local government and members of Ķekava Municipality Council as well as local NGOs, community associations and active citizens.

1. **Actions to enhance the awareness and capacity of municipal politicians and staff to encourage civic participation in local decision-making**

The following informative, training and experience sharing activities for municipal politicians and staff on civic participation issues are planned:

- ✓ participation in and organization of national experience sharing events to share lessons learned by other cities and municipalities in Latvia how to foster civic participation. Although it is planned as a capacity building tool primarily for municipal politicians and staff, it is essential to invite also civic sector representatives (community associations, NGOs, citizen councils, active citizens) both as lecturers from other municipalities and participants from Ķekava municipality as it will contribute towards building mutual trust and common understanding of community involvement issues;
- ✓ in-person communication with citizens in their neighbourhoods. It includes regular meetings of the political and administrative leaders of the local governments with residents in neighbourhoods at least 2 times a year and additional on-site visits and meetings of municipality representatives to learn about actual challenges and operation of various associations in the location where they operate.
- ✓ Training for municipal staff and municipal politicians to increase the understanding of municipality employees and local politicians that it is not only the responsibility of one specific department to work with citizen participation issues, to strengthen communication capacities and improve skills.

2. Actions to strengthen the knowledge and skills of diverse community groups to engage in structured dialogue with the local government and collaborate with one another

The following measures and activities for already established NGOs, neighbourhood associations as well as active citizens are proposed:

- ✓ Participation in experience sharing events organized by Ķekava Municipality to share lessons learned by other cities and municipalities in Latvia how to foster civic participation. It will contribute towards building mutual trust and common understanding of community involvement issues;
- ✓ Annual NGO forum organized by the local government.
- ✓ Joint events for local NGOs and associations. Thematic networking events to facilitate collaboration between various organizations across the municipality. Funding offered by the local government through a municipal project call)
- ✓ Premises for NGO activities. Important aspect as signalled by non-governmental sector organizations which could support activities of non-governmental sector is availability of premises for their activities (meetings, trainings, organization of events). The local government will make the inventory of suitable premises in various neighbourhoods which could be offered for use of citizen councils free of charge and will look at legal possibilities how to offer the same to NGOs and associations. It is also planned to establish a NGO centre in the municipality which will focus on joint activities for non-governmental organizations from all neighbourhoods thus facilitating not only local place-making in separate neighbourhoods, but also united place making for Ķekava Municipality taken together.

3. Actions to activate diverse participatory mechanisms and forms of cooperation between the municipality and the community

It is planned to introduce some new measures and consolidate a few already existing mechanisms of cooperation and involvement, namely:

- ✓ Civic participation coordinator. A new position in the central administration established in 2025 to coordinate and promote cooperation with the non-governmental sector in Ķekava Municipality (citizens, non-governmental organisations, neighbourhood communities and citizens councils).

- ✓ Neighbourhood managers. New positions established in 2025 to work directly in more remote neighbourhoods of Ķekava Municipality. They will be the primary contact points for residents of respective neighbourhoods regarding daily maintenance issues of the area as well as be responsible for municipal budget planning in cooperation with local communities and citizen councils
- ✓ Establishment of Citizen Councils. It is a comparatively new form how citizens can interact with local government. The establishment and operation of citizens councils are described in the Law on Local Governments (2022). A citizen council is a body elected by the residents of a specific neighbourhood of a municipality in order to ensure the representation of the interests of the local community and to facilitate the cooperation of the inhabitants for their coordinated action for common good. The establishment of the citizens councils is advised but not mandatory. Currently in Latvia 17 local governments (out of 43) have adopted regulations of citizens councils. Also in Ķekava Municipality the attitude towards the establishment of citizen councils is not a clear-cut support neither between the municipal staff and politicians nor the inhabitants themselves. Yet a decision has been taken to proceed with the establishment of this new form of civic participation as there is a strong demand at least from one administrative neighbourhood – Baldone town.
- ✓ Establishment of consultative councils.
 - A Youth Council has been already established in autumn 2024 to strengthen cooperation between young people and the municipality, to ensure the representation of the interests of young people in the administrative territory of Ķekava municipality and promote their participation.
 - The Council of NGOs of Ķekava Municipality (is provided for in the Ķekava Municipality Development Program 2021-2027, however not established yet).
 - Other consultative councils might be established as well if such a need will be voiced
- ✓ Participatory budgeting has been started in 2023 in Ķekava Municipality as a voluntary initiative of the local government and will be continued – it is mandatory as of 2025 (the local government should allocate for that purpose 0,5% of the budget revenues from personal income tax and real estate tax)
- ✓ Annual municipal project calls – co-funding to support activities of non-governmental organizations will be continued as well.
- ✓ Improved communication channels with the municipality. It includes but not limited to a new mobile app for posting questions/receiving answers (planned in 2026); special chapter in local newsletter and municipal webpage dedicated to civic participation; social media account for civic participation, establishment of consultative WhatsApp groups on specific issues; e-mail contact list for those who are interested in receiving news regarding civic participation; central informational platform for NGOs to be created on a the municipality's Facebook account.
- ✓ NGO database. Publicly accessible database of local NGOs and community associations. Promoted cooperation and networking among NGOs within municipality's territory, as well as with neighboring municipalities — Olaine, Bauska, Salaspils, and Riga — by participating in cross-community projects.
- ✓ Volunteering of citizens at the events organized by municipality and non-governmental sector.

Section 3

Action Planning details

Section 3 presents detailed implementation framework for some of the actions described in Section 2. The framework has been developed for actions that have a higher level of readiness and a clear vision for execution, it outlines responsibilities, available resources, and implementation phases. The implementation framework description of the testing actions is supplemented with more detailed description of the activities and lessons learned.

Testing action title: <i>Experience exchange forum with other Latvian municipalities</i>		Action Owner: Ķekava Municipality local government	
Action summary: Presentation of various mechanisms and models of civic participation - exchange of practical experience and lessons learned from different Latvian municipalities.	Stakeholders: Municipal employees and municipal council members Community associations	Source of inspiration: Internal discussions, CNM in Gdansk	Finance and resources: URBACT project (1000 EUR)
		Links to strategy: Kekava Sustainable Development Strategy 2030. The strategic goals of the municipality include modern local governance of the municipality in cooperation with inhabitants, and increasing role of civic sector, NGOs,	Challenges-Mitigation Assessment of mechanisms which have been already tested, pros and cons, to decide on applicability for Ķekava Municipality
Action steps	Related activities	Timeframe	Outputs
Preparation	Selection of speakers	October 2024	Invitation of speakers
	Organization of the event	October 2024	contracts, invitations
Implementation	Experience exchange, discussions	29 November 2024	Event (program, presentations, video recording, attendance sheets)
Evaluation	Internal working group meeting for summing up the conclusions of the forum	December 2024	decisions on further implementation

The forum focused on the exchange of experiences with other Latvian municipalities regarding various civic participation mechanisms and models – to learn which forms of civic participation and cooperation mechanisms have been tested in other municipalities in Latvia and to assess their applicability to the needs of Ķekava municipality.

It brought together 40 participants, including municipal politicians and staff, as well as representatives of civil society - both from organizations and among active citizens. The forum began with a keynote presentation titled “The Role of Public Participation in Local Government”, delivered by a representative of Providus, Latvia’s leading public policy think tank. This was followed by practical case studies from four different municipalities, highlighting diverse forms of citizen

engagement and cooperation. Presenters included both municipal employees and representatives from the NGO sector. In the second half of the event, two panel discussions were held, each incorporating additional insights from two more municipalities. The panel topics were “Citizens’ Councils and Their Role in Local Government – What Do We Expect from Them?” and “NGOs, Neighbourhood Associations, and Other Forms of Citizen Participation and Cooperation”

The forum was live-streamed on the local government’s YouTube channel and a recording was made available for wider access.

The event was indeed an open dialogue, highlighting both success stories and lessons learned. The discussions proved to be a valuable source of inspiration and input for the development of new regulations for Citizens' Councils (adopted in 2025) and for proposals shaping the municipality’s integrated civic participation action plan.

<u>Testing action title:</u> Collaborative events in neighborhoods		Action Owner: Kékava Municipality local government	
Action summary: Collaborative events in several neighbourhoods to foster interaction between municipal staff and neighbourhood communities in less formal and innovative way. The goal of the events is to facilitate cooperation, to better understand the values and challenges of residents in more remote areas, as well as to encourage collaboration between different neighbourhood associations and strengthen unified municipal identity.	Stakeholders: Neighbourhood associations, active citizens, municipal employees and municipal council members;	Source of inspiration: Study visit 4: 12th District of Budapest (Hegyvidék), on the top of the Normafa Hill Green transition & civic participation Previous URBACT project CITIES4CSR (2019-2022)	Finance and resources: URBACT project, own resources (9000 EUR)
		Links to strategy: Kekava Sustainable Development Strategy 2030. The strategic goals of the municipality include cooperation with inhabitants across all territory of the municipality, and increasing role of civic sector, NGOs,	Challenges-Mitigation: This action is linked to strategic objective 1 - to foster a shift in mindset among decision-makers and municipal employees, emphasizing that civic participation. Participatory governance should be seen not merely as a legal obligation but as a cornerstone of effective administration that builds trust, ensures transparency, and strengthens community engagement.

Action steps	Related activities	Timeframe	Outputs
<u>Preparation:</u>			
Pop-up Exhibition “100 Years of Daugmale”	Sending out invitation to participate	April 2025 , reminder - July 2025	Invitations to participate (to municipal employees , to other neighbourhood associations)
	Contracting and other organizational matters	May-July 2025	Working material from meeting in May Contracts with service providers
People and natural resources of Baldone – resource for community well-being”	Sending out invitation to participate	July 2025 , reminder - September 2025	Invitations to participate (to municipal employees , to other neighbourhood associations)
	Contracting and other organizational matters	August 2025	Contracts with service providers
Neighbourhood event in Katlakalns/Valdlauči	Sending out invitation to participate	August 2025	Invitations to participate (to municipal employees , to other neighbourhood associations)
	Contracting and other organizational matters	August 2025	Contracts with service providers
<u>Implementation:</u>			
Pop-up Exhibition “100 Years of Daugmale”	Networking and discussions	9 August 2025	Event (program, presentations, attendance sheets). Publicity

Community Event “Meeting of Three Villages”	Networking and discussions	31 August 2025	Event (program, presentations, attendance sheets). Publicity
People and natural resources of Baldone – resource for community well-being”	Networking and discussions	14 September 2025	Event (program, presentations, attendance sheets). Publicity
<u>Evaluation</u>	Internal working group meeting for summing up the conclusions of the collaborative events	September/October 2025	Minutes of the meeting

Collaborative events:

1. Pop-up Exhibition “100 Years of Daugmale” - neighbourhood association “Darām Daugmalei” and the Daugmale Primary School Museum invited municipality representatives to get involved in the creation of this special exhibition - a unique opportunity to get to know one of the municipality’s neighbourhoods more closely, help uncover and preserve its rich history, and present it to visitors attending the “Daugmalei 100” celebration in August 2025. Employees were invited (1) to attend the “Memory Evening” in May (to listen to personal stories shared by Daugmale residents, to help record and compile these memories, and prepare them for presentation in the exhibition; (2) to assist in exhibition setup (first week of August) – to provide technical support, help arrange materials and exhibits, and assist with the preparation of the exhibition space, or (3) to volunteer on the day of the exhibition on August 9: to help with tasks such as greeting guests, supervising the exhibition, and ensuring a smooth event experience for all visitors.
2. Community Event “Meeting of Three Villages” on August 31, 2025 - An event planned and implemented by residents of Katlakalns, Valdlauči, Rāmava neighborhoods, Katlakalns Culture center and the municipality. The goal of the event was to let the neighbors, local entrepreneurs, community members who live and work in this area to get to know each other better and encourage future cooperation. The event included variety of activities: workshops for children and adults, entertainment for children, orienteering and a quiz, market of local entrepreneurs, opportunity to voice the needs of local citizens etc
3. “People and natural resources of Baldone – resource for community well-being” - Educational excursion and nature hike in Baldone. It was a networking event offering participants an opportunity to explore the historical heritage of Baldone as a spa town, discover the town’s natural riches, today’s topicalities, future prospects. Baldone was previously an independent municipality which was merged with Ķekava municipality only in 2021. The event was planned and implemented by active members of Baldone community themselves (Seniors’ Association Sābri, Baldone Art association, local guides) in cooperation with the municipality. Citizens from other neighbourhoods of the municipality were invited to participate.

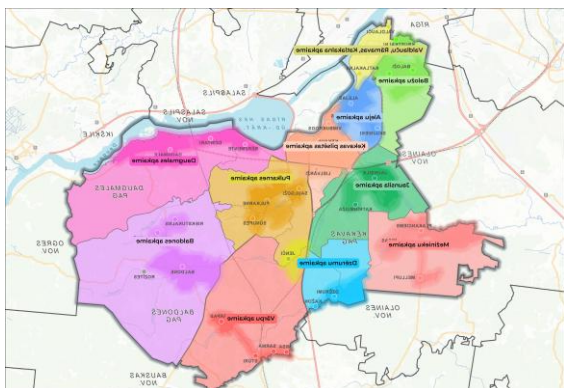
Impact of the collaborative events:

The collaborative events undoubtedly strengthened the civic engagement of local residents and encouraged active participation in joint efforts. The initiative also contributed to fostering shared municipal identity and promoting interaction and cooperation among the various neighbourhoods within the municipality:

1. The pop-up exhibition “100 Years of Daugmale” was one of the central events during Daugmale-100 festival (total number of participants – ca 2000), organized by Ķekava Municipality, the neighborhood association “Darām Daugmalei” and other active local residents. In total, more than 70 volunteers took part in organizing the event. As one of the organizers stressed, the celebration succeeded because people truly wanted it - they got involved in organizing and, most importantly, they were allowed to bring their ideas and dreams to life without having their wings clipped. The process of organizing this event reflected genuine collective participation - no single idea of what the celebration should be was imposed. If someone proposed an idea or suggestion, they also took part in making it happen. No one tried to convince everyone of their own opinion, all decisions were made democratically.
2. Despite very unfavorable weather conditions, the community event “Meeting of Three Villages” brought together approximately 500 participants of all ages from Katlakalna, Valdlauči, Rāmava, and other neighborhoods of the municipality. It was the first community event jointly organized by residents and the municipality in this area. Participants greatly appreciated the opportunity to connect with local people, learn about the community’s values, and engage directly with municipal officials. By the end of the event, there was a strong desire expressed to continue organizing similar community gatherings in the future.
3. The event “People and natural resources of Baldone – resource for community well-being” brought together more than 50 residents from various neighborhoods of Ķekava Municipality (the interest was higher but the registration for the event had to be closed due to limited number of participants which could be accommodated). The participants of the event emphasized that it was a great opportunity to get to know their own municipality better and to appreciate Baldone’s unique values presented through the eyes of its residents themselves.

Action title: <i>Establishment of Citizen Councils</i>		Action Owner: Ķekava Municipality local government	
Action summary: It is a comparatively new form how citizens can interact with local government. The establishment and operation of citizens councils are described in the Law on Local Governments (2022). A citizen council is a body elected by the residents of a specific neighbourhood of a municipality in order to ensure the representation of the interests of the local community and to facilitate the cooperation of the inhabitants for their coordinated action for common good.	Stakeholders: Municipality council Municipality administration Citizens	Source of inspiration: Internal discussions, experience of other municipalities in Latvia, testing action of the AoC network ("Experience exchange forum with other Latvian municipalities")	Finance and resources: Own resources - 5000- 7000 EUR/annually Cofinanced by URBACT project in the initial stage (2000 EUR)
		Links to strategy: Kekava Sustainable Development Strategy 2030. The strategic goals of the municipality include modern local governance of the municipality in cooperation with inhabitants, and increasing role of civic sector, NGOs,	Challenges-Mitigation: To give a new tool to the citizens how they can participate in local decision making representing the interests and needs of their neighbourhood.
Action steps	Related activities	Timeframe	Outputs
Preparation	Workshop organized by citizens – preparation of draft for regulations on establishment of citizen councils	January 2025	Draft regulations (proposal elaborated by citizens)
	Preparation of regulations for review at Municipality Council's committees	January 2025	Two draft regulations (elaborated by the municipality administration, including proposals from citizens)
	Public voting regarding 2 draft versions of the regulations	February 2025	Draft regulations
	Public consultations regarding draft regulations	March 2025	5 proposals received

	Approval of the regulations by Municipality Council	April 2025	Approved regulations
Implementation	Call for candidates to join the Citizens Council, the election process, and the formal establishment of the council	September-December 2025 (Citizen Councils in 3 neighbourhoods)	Publicity articles, meeting notes.
	Work of Citizen Councils	2025-ongoing	Minutes of the meetings
Evaluation	Internal working group meeting	January – February 2026	Evaluation of the establishment processes of first Citizen Councils; decisions on improvements for further implementation



The Regulations of the Citizens' Councils of Ķekava Municipality provide for the establishment of 11 neighbourhood citizens councils within Ķekava Municipality. Their purpose is to promote the involvement of local residents in addressing neighbourhood-related matters and to strengthen cooperation with the municipal administration.

The election meetings of the first Citizen Councils in three neighbourhoods - Jaunsils, Baldone and Dzērums – will be convened in early December 2025 when the citizens of the respective neighbourhoods will vote for the nominated candidates and the newly established Citizen Councils will start their work.

In other neighbourhoods the establishment process is still in early stages - the call for candidates is open till November 30, 2025. When sufficient number of candidates apply, the election meetings will be convened and the citizen councils will be established.

Action title: <i>Training for municipal staff and municipal politicians</i>		Action Owner: K�kava Municipality local government	
Action summary: Aim of training – to increase the understanding of municipality employees that it is not only the responsibility of one specific department to work with citizen participation issues. to strengthen communication capacities and improve skills	Stakeholders: Municipal employees and municipal council members	Source of inspiration Internal discussions:	Finance and resources: URBACT project (1800 EUR), own resources (500 EUR)
		Links to strategy: K�kava Sustainable Development Strategy 2030. The strategic goals of the municipality include modern local governance of the municipality in cooperation with inhabitants, and increasing role of civic sector, NGOs,	Challenges-Mitigation: Capacity building need of municipal employees and politicians
Action steps	Related activities	Timeframe	Outputs
Preparation	Defining the topic of training, Selection of speakers	Nov-Dec 2025	ToR for speakers, contracts
	Organization of the event	Nov-Dec 2025	Invitations, agenda
Implementation	training	Dec 2025	event
Evaluation	Feedback questionnaire,	Jan 2026	evaluation of results

Section 4

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Governance

As can be inferred from the actions proposed in the earlier sections of the IAP, many of them are **designed to continue beyond the end of the Agents of Coexistence project**. What we have outlined represents only initial processes, the starting point of longer initiatives whose exact duration is difficult to determine. Once the described activities are completed and the full-scale implementation begins following the pilot phase with target groups, it is crucial that the process does not remain without oversight.

To ensure effective implementation and integration of the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) within the municipal governance structure, the plan will be presented to the Municipality's Project Management Group and the Development Committee of the Municipal Council.

The Administrative Department of the municipality's administration will be designated as the coordinating body responsible for monitoring progress, aligning stakeholders and ensuring that the IAP remains a living and adaptive document implemented in close collaboration with the key stakeholders – NGOs, neighbourhood associations, Citizens Councils, active citizens and other departments of the local government's administration.

Regular stakeholder meetings will be organized to ensure continuation of participatory processes.

Monitoring framework

The IAP will be subject to regular review (1-2 times a year) to reflect the evolving situation and progress, ensuring alignment with the municipality's strategic development documents for the relevant planning period. This iterative process will allow for adjustments and updates to maintain the plan's relevance and effectiveness in achieving the municipality's development objectives.

The IAP aims to reach the following results aligned with the strategic objectives of the IAP:

Action	indicator	Baseline value in 2023	Target value in 2028
Actions to enhance the awareness and capacity of municipal politicians and staff to encourage civic participation in local decision-making			
National experience sharing events	number of municipal staff and politicians with increase knowledge on civic participation	30	100
In-person communication with citizens in their neighbourhoods	number of municipal staff and politicians involved	30	90
Training for municipal staff and municipal politicians	number of municipal staff and politicians trained	50	150
Actions to strengthen the knowledge and skills of diverse community groups to engage in structured dialogue with the local government and collaborate with one another			
Experience sharing events	number of citizens with increased knowledge on civic participation	50	150
Annual NGO forum	events	0	1 event/annually
Joint thematic networking events for local NGOs and associations	number of citizens involved	50	200

Actions to activate diverse participatory mechanisms and forms of cooperation between the municipality and the community			
Establishment of Citizen Councils	citizen councils	0	11
Establishment of consultative councils	consultative councils	1	2
Participatory budgeting	annual call for project ideas	1 call annually	1 call annually
Annual municipal project calls	annual call for project ideas	1 call annually	1 call annually

Overall timeline of the planned activities:

Action	Q4, 2025	Q1-2, 2026	Q3-4, 2026	Q1-2, 2027	Q3-4, 2027	Q1-2, 2028	Q3-4, 2028
Actions to enhance the awareness and capacity of municipal politicians and staff to encourage civic participation in local decision-making							
National experience sharing events							
In-person communication with citizens in their neighbourhoods							
Training for municipal staff and municipal politicians							
Actions to strengthen the knowledge and skills of diverse community groups to engage in structured dialogue with the local government and collaborate with one another							
Experience sharing events							
Annual NGO forum							
Joint thematic networking events for local NGOs and associations							
Actions to activate diverse participatory mechanisms and forms of cooperation between the municipality and the community							
Establishment of Citizen Councils	3	5	3				
Establishment of consultative councils	as required						
Participatory budgeting							
Annual municipal project calls							
Improved communication channels with the municipality	e-mail list	mobile app	as required				
NGO database							

Funding strategy

The resources necessary for the implementation of the IAP will be provided through the municipal budget, ensuring a stable foundation for planned activities. In parallel, a proactive approach will be taken to identify and secure external funding opportunities to enhance and expand civic engagement initiatives. Potential

sources include the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) – cross border cooperation Interreg programs for thematic exchanges and policy improvements in governance and participation, Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme for civic engagement and inclusion activities Norway Grants, EEA Grants, and other European or international funding mechanisms.

Furthermore, additional funding avenues will be explored, such as national and regional support programs, grants offered by non-governmental organizations, and initiatives specifically designed to foster civic participation, community involvement, and social innovation.

By combining municipal resources with strategic external funding, the IAP aims to maximize impact and ensure sustainable, inclusive, and participatory local development.

Risk assessment

The analysis identifies possible risk analysis, reports impact level of particular risk (low, medium, high) and measure for actions to decrease likelihood of the risks.

Risk	Risk type	Impact	Mitigation activities
Low and fragmented prioritization of cooperation with the non-governmental sector by the local government	operational	medium	- Ensure proactive involvement of Municipal Council members to maintain consistent political support, - Engage additional municipal departments and staff in cooperation activities providing robust support the civic participation coordinator - Maintain regular dialogue
Balancing the interests of diverse stakeholders across the municipality to ensure equitable development of the entire territory.	operational	medium	- Organize regular networking events involving NGOs and neighborhood associations to align interests and priorities.
Overall cuts to the municipal budget are reducing the funds available for civic participation activities.	financial	high	- Seek additional external funding sources. - Align and implement activities in synergy with NGO projects that have secured external financing.
Limited availability of premises for civic sector activities in some municipal neighbourhoods (e.g., Citizens Council meetings	technical	low	- Organize online meetings when suitable. - Arrange outdoor meetings where conditions allow
High workload among municipal staff may lead to delays in task completion.	staffing	low	- Conduct careful planning and prioritize tasks effectively. - Ensure equitable distribution of responsibilities among departments. - Streamline internal procedures to minimize bureaucratic delays
Expectations of Citizens Councils may exceed reality, risking decreased citizen engagement	operational	medium	- Conduct preparatory and explanatory work before establishment, clarifying the scope of authority, responsibilities, and expected outcomes of the Citizens Councils. - Provide ongoing consultancy and support from the municipality and national experts
Legal constraints may limit the support measures proposed or requested by civic activists	Legal	low	- Maintain continuous dialogue with local communities to manage expectations and ensure compliance - Engage regularly with national authorities