

## **Guidelines for the Development of a Cohesive and Civically Active Society for 2021–2027**

### **I. Summary of the Guidelines**

The medium-term planning document of the previous period, Guidelines on National Identity, Civil Society, and Integration Policy 2012–2018<sup>4</sup> (hereinafter – the GNICSIP), was developed in 2011. The GNICSIP provided a new path of development of the integration policy covering a range of issues which had not been previously solved such as national identity, language and cultural space, information space, social memory, and also served as the basis for the development of new policy areas:

1) in fulfilling the task of the GNICSIP to increase the role of mass media of high quality, democratic information space in the integration, the need for the establishment of the Media Policy Division<sup>5</sup> was substantiated which in turn formed the basis for defining a continuous media policy area and developing media policy planning documents starting from 2016<sup>6</sup>;

2) the diaspora policy working group established by the board supervising the implementation of the GNICSIP the task of which was to coordinate the development of diaspora issues and the annual conference “Latvians in the World: Belonging to Latvia” laid the basis for the development of the Diaspora Policy Law (which came into force on 1 January 2019)<sup>7</sup> and substantiated the need for a separate unit that would be responsible for the development and implementation of the diaspora policy in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Measures for 2012–2018 were planned by both addressing the society as a whole and targeting specific audiences such as diaspora, minorities (including Romas), third-country nationals (including persons in need of international protection), children and youth, individuals involved in NGOs. Such approach ensured that the measures corresponded to the needs of different groups of the society, however, it also caused fragmentation of the goals and resources as well as complicated governance.

In 2017, the Ministry of Culture, in cooperation with the Centre for Diaspora and Migration Research of the University of Latvia and its involved experts, organised analysis and research work on proposals for the development of the policy in a subsequent period. Analysis of the implemented policy<sup>8</sup>, and also other studies and opinions expressed in public discussions which

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<sup>4</sup> Guidelines on National Identity, Civil Society, and Integration Policy 2012–2018 (approved by Cabinet Order No. 542 of 20 October 2011). Hereinafter – the GNICSIP. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/238195-par-nacionalas-identitates-pilsoniskas-sabiedribas-un-integracijas-politikas-pamatnostadnem-2012-2018-gadam>

<sup>5</sup> Par. 24–42 of the minutes of the Cabinet sitting of 22 April 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Mass Media Policy Guidelines of Latvia 2016-2020 (approved by Cabinet Order No. 667 of 8 November 2016). Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/286455-par-latvijas-mediju-politikas-pamatnostadnem-2016-2020-gadam>

<sup>7</sup> Diaspora Law, adopted by the *Saeima* on 1 November 2018, in force from 1 January 2019. Available: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/302998-diasporas-likums>

<sup>8</sup> Mieriņa I., Ose L., Kaprāns M., Lāce A. (2017). *Vienojošas nacionālās identitātes un Latvijas kultūrtelpas nostiprināšana. Priekšlikumi sabiedrības integrācijas plānam 2019.-2025.gadam. Ekspertu ziņojums* (Strengthening Common National Identity and Cultural Space of Latvia. Proposals for Social Integration Plan 2019–2025. Expert Report). Hereinafter – the Expert Report. Available: [https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/Sabiedribas\\_integracija/Petijumi/Ekspertu%20ziņojums%20vienojosas%20nacionalas%20identitates%20un%20kulturtpelpas%20nostiprinasanai.pdf](https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/Sabiedribas_integracija/Petijumi/Ekspertu%20ziņojums%20vienojosas%20nacionalas%20identitates%20un%20kulturtpelpas%20nostiprinasanai.pdf)

were organised in regions indicated the need to employ a different approach to the planning of the guidelines in the subsequent period, focusing on inclusive participation of inhabitants and development of a cohesive society.

Inclusive participation is a path to an open society where interests of all members of the society are respected and supported irrespective of their ethnic origin, legal status, health condition, or other differences which can or tend to become causes of exclusion (differences in treatment, stereotypes, discrimination).

The concept of a cohesive society appeared on the political agenda of Latvia upon adoption of the Preamble to the Constitution in 2014, and it essentially reflects the efforts the implementation of which was commenced along with the introduction of the GNICSIP.

The Preamble to the Constitution provides a vision of the statehood of Latvia, defines values and basis for the development of a cohesive society – “Latvia as democratic, socially responsible and national state is based on the rule of law and on respect for human dignity and freedom; it recognises and protects fundamental human rights and respects ethnic minorities. The people of Latvia protect their sovereignty, national independence, territory, territorial integrity and democratic system of government of the State of Latvia. Since ancient times, the identity of Latvia in the European cultural space has been shaped by Latvian and Livonian traditions, Latvian folk wisdom, the Latvian language, universal human and Christian values. Loyalty to Latvia, the Latvian language as the only official language, freedom, equality, solidarity, justice, honesty, work ethic and family are the foundations of a cohesive society. Each individual takes care of oneself, one’s relatives and the common good of society by acting responsibly toward other people, future generations, the environment and nature.”<sup>9</sup>

The Constitution and the hierarchically highest development planning documents of national level (Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030<sup>10</sup>, Latvia’s NDP2027<sup>11</sup>), and laws outline the strategic margins of the guidelines. An additional roadmap is determined by the European Union (hereinafter – the EU) and international commitments to democracy, human rights, anti-discrimination, gender equality, and integration of third-country nationals (see Annex 2).

In 2016, Latvia became a full member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. According to the definition of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, a cohesive society is a society which works towards the well-being of all its members, fights social exclusion, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and provides its members with upward social mobility or increased opportunities of participation and action irrespective of their social status<sup>12</sup>.

EU and other international studies link the social cohesion to a sense of togetherness, resilience of society, and orientation towards the common good. Social cohesion is also closely related to economic growth and well-being of countries<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (in the wording of the Law of 19 June 2014 which comes into force on 22 July 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 (adopted by the *Saeima* on 10 June 2010). Hereinafter – the Strategy2030. Available: <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/documents/3323>

<sup>11</sup> NDP2027

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/dev/inclusivesocietiesanddevelopment/social-cohesion.htm>

<sup>13</sup> Eurofound (2018). *Social cohesion and well-being in Europe*, Publications Office of the European Union. Luxembourg. Available: [https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef\\_publication/field\\_ef\\_document/ef18035en.pdf](https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef18035en.pdf)

The concept of a cohesive society defined at the EU level encompasses three closely linked dimensions (see Image 1, p. 7):

1) mutual relations among citizens – mutual trust, social networking, acceptance of the diversity of society;

2) taking roots or belonging – trust in public authorities, understanding of justice, and close connection with the State;

3) understanding of the common good – sense of responsibility of inhabitants for fellow human beings and their willingness to help or solidarity, respect for general public rules, and civic/political participation<sup>14</sup>.

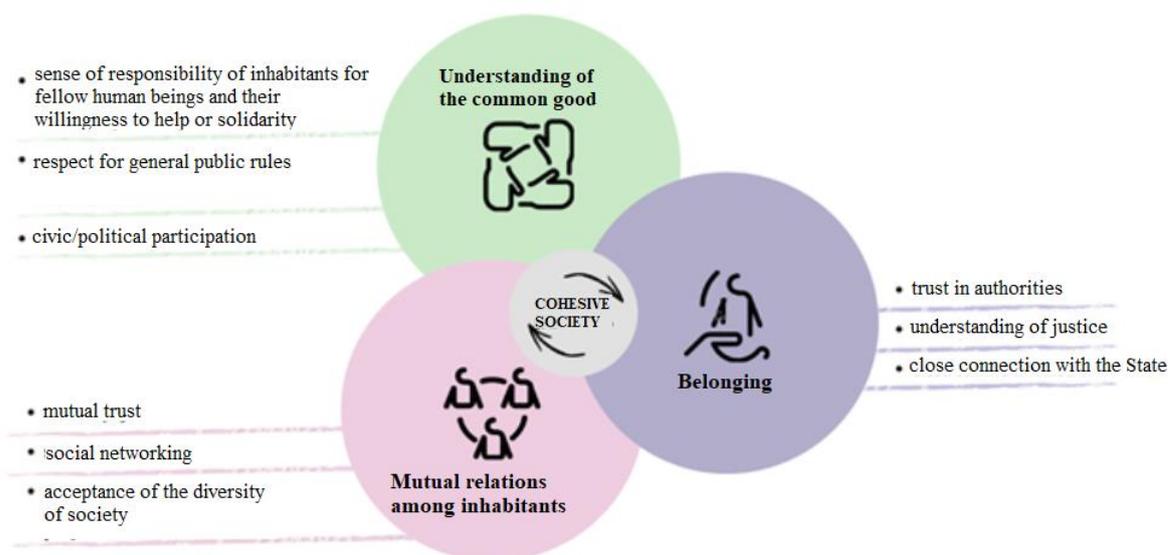


Image 1

One of the highest level priorities identified in the NDP2027 is trust.<sup>15</sup> Mutual trust of inhabitants is closely linked to cooperation skills and interaction skills, in particular in the development of civic education and public awareness of democratic processes within a country, including the decision-making procedure and the role of the civil society in a democratic country. A strong, knowledgeable, and active civil society forms the cornerstone of a democratic country and human securitability.<sup>16</sup> Whereas public trust in the State, and also an active and cohesive society create preconditions for the capacity for self-organisation and effective action of the civil society.<sup>17</sup> Inhabitants are getting involved and create communities that are able to cooperate towards common goals, thus strengthening and increasing the common good for sustainable development of the society and the country. Mutual trust

<sup>14</sup> European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2014). Working conditions of young entrants to the labour market. Dublin. Available: <https://relocal.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2017/01/fulltext.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> NDP2027

<sup>16</sup> See, for example: Ozoliņa Ž. (2014). *Ziņojums par cilvēkdrošības koncepcijas ieviešanu kopienu līmenī* (Report on the Introduction of the Concept of Human Security at Community Level); <https://civilresilience.net/en/democratic-resilience-csos-as-key-actors/>;

<sup>17</sup> Piotrowski G. (2009). Civil society, un-civil society and the social movements. In: *Interface: a journal for and about social movements*, Vol.1 (2), 2009. pp.166-189.;

Theocharis Y., Vitoratou S., Sajuria J. (2017). Civil Society in Times of Crisis: Understanding Collective Action Dynamics in Digitally-Enabled Volunteer Networks. In: *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Vol.22, 2017. pp.248-265.

promotes solidarity and confidence also in public authorities. Thus promotion of trust has been identified as the highest level priority in the guidelines.

Issues to be addressed in the guidelines have been coordinated with the tasks identified in the Priority 6 of the NDP2027 “United, safe, and open society”, and their framework has been designed by taking into account the sectoral guidelines envisaged for the implementation of the NDP2027 the impact of which refers to the formation of a cohesive society<sup>18</sup>, so that individual planning documents do not overlap but rather are complementary.

As already stated in the NDP2027, achievement of the goal of the Priority “United, safe, and open society” is inextricably linked to a positive family environment, childhood experiences, emotional well-being and personal self-confidence, satisfied basic needs, including sufficient income and financial stability, quality education and self-actualisation opportunities at work, in culture and sport. A society cannot be united, safe, and open without strengthening social inclusion and developing empathy<sup>19</sup>.

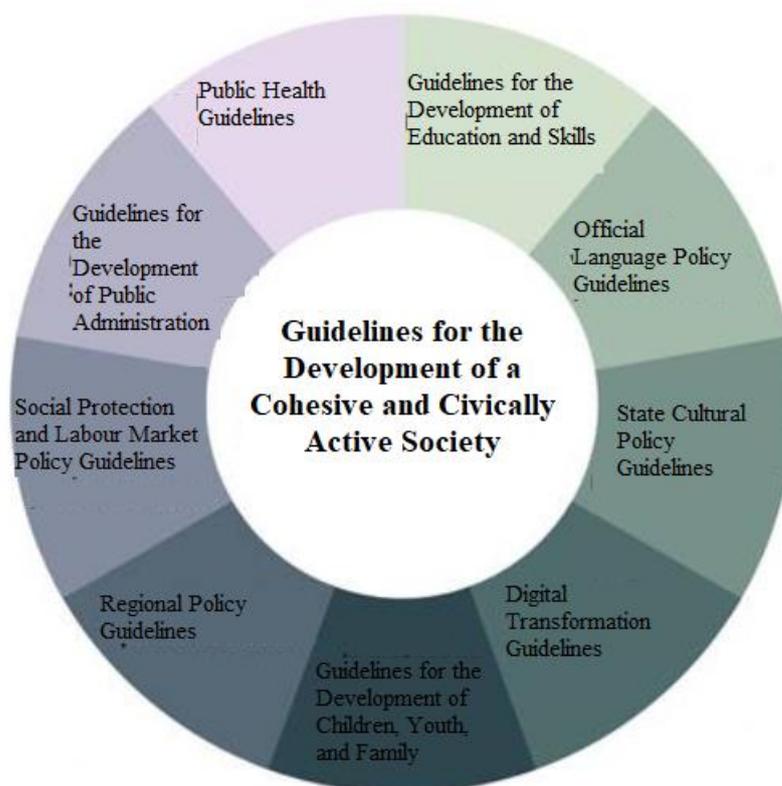
At the same time, individual issues related to the impact of joint measures of different sectors on the development of cohesive society should be solved horizontally through cooperation among different sectors (see Image 2, p. 9).

Issues of the Latvian language environment and civic education (the Ministry of Education and Science), issues of social inclusion of foreign citizens (the Ministry of Welfare) are closely related to the field of education, while educating the society about the foundations and values of a democratic state and coordination of participation in respect of the issues within the competence of the Cabinet (the State Chancellery), and also involvement of the society in solving local and regional development issues, strengthening of geographical communities and digital skills (the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, the Ministry of Economics, the Ministry of Education and Science, and the Ministry of Welfare) play an important role in the field of public participation. The National Security Concept identifies aspects of both internal and external security which are relevant to the development of a cohesive and civically active society. The Diaspora Law (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) the implementation of which is related to culture, education, regional development, and other areas ensures involvement of all nationals who have left Latvia and their connection to Latvia. Image 2 (see p. 9) reflects how the policy is linked to other sectors.

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<sup>18</sup> CSCC Informative Report on Sectoral Policy Guidelines for the Planning Period 2021–2027, Annex 1: Indicative List of Sectoral Policy Guidelines for the Planning Period 2021–2027.

<sup>19</sup> NDP2027, p. 85.



*Image 2*

It is planned in the guidelines to promote strengthening of the sense of national identity and belonging, increase in inclusive participation and civic literacy<sup>20</sup>, to strengthen quality and safe space for democratic involvement and information space, to promote the participation of foreign citizens living in Latvia in the society, and also to mitigate such attitude towards different groups of the society which is based on negative stereotypes.

The guidelines envisage action in three directions – strengthening of national identity, development of civil society, and integration. Taking into account that society evolves through interaction of inhabitants, and also the fact that the best results are achieved through interaction in practice, all three directions defined in the guidelines should be viewed in interaction.

Free will and involvement of inhabitants form the basis for the achievement of the planned goals, thus results depend, to a large extent, on the motivation and possibilities of the inhabitants of Latvia to participate and to acquire new knowledge, skills, and attitudes. At the same time the vision of the NDP2027 should be taken into account, namely “public administration is a two-way process where every citizen or organisation can propose and achieve new improvements. State and local government institutions proactively cooperate with society and enjoy its trust due to effective solutions, cooperative attitude, and excellent reputation”<sup>21</sup> which is also related to the understanding of State and local government institutions of efforts and

<sup>20</sup> According to the goal “Social and civic literacy” identified in the field of social and civic education within the scope of the project *Skola2030*, students should be able to think and act responsibly, being aware of the consequences of their actions and respecting life as a value, they have formed robust, favourable social habits in communication and contact with fellow human beings, they have developed national, historical, and civil awareness and understanding of public and economic processes. See <https://www.skola2030.lv/lv/skolotajiem/macibu-jomas/sociala-un-pilsoniska>

<sup>21</sup> NDP2027

needs of inhabitants, establishing of an independent and open dialogue, respectful attitude, and mutual cooperation for the achievement of the goals of a cohesive society. In order to ensure an equal partnership, investments in its development are necessary, ensuring targeted development of a civil society and creating a basis for a civic dialogue<sup>22</sup> and civil initiatives – voluntary work, philanthropy, protection of interests, etc.

A detailed description of the current situation, and also research-based facts and data have been appended in Annex 1. In turn, the report on the link to the documents of national and international level has been appended in Annex 2, while the list of literature and data sources has been appended in Annex 3.

## **II. Objective of the Policy for the Development of a Cohesive and Civically Active Society**

**The overarching objective of the cohesive society policy is a national<sup>23</sup>, joint, open, and civically active society the existence of which is based on the democratic values and human rights laid down in the Constitution, the Latvian language, and the Latvian cultural space.**

The general principle for achievement of the overarching objective of the guidelines: inclusive participation which provides everyone with possibilities of engaging in public administration and ensures an extensive representation of the society in all its diversity, forms the basis for acquisition of knowledge and skills in order to strengthen national identity, the Latvian language, social trust, solidarity and cooperation of inhabitants.

Thus, it is important, at the level of tasks, to both preserve the focus of objectives and to take into consideration the following thematic transversal priorities as substantive framework:

- national identity;
- the Latvian language;
- trust;
- solidarity;
- cooperation.

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<sup>22</sup> In approving the National Development Plan for 2021–2027, the *Saeima* has indicated in its statement that, “[...] in determining an approach equivalent to the dialogue with a civil society – a social dialogue in all decision-making stages, thus strengthening democracy, increasing mutual trust of inhabitants and their confidence in the State.” See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/315879-par-latvijas-nacionalo-attistibas-planu-2021-2027-gadam-nap2027> Introduction of such principle should be solved at the level of an action policy not only within the scope of these guidelines but also in other development planning documents.

<sup>23</sup> Within the meaning of this document, it is a society which respects and is motivated to preserve the national values of Latvia under conditions of increased diversification of society (diversity of cultures and languages caused by migration).