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## Snapshot: Expressions of Urban - Peri-Urban - Rural Relationships

### Coordination of cultural events in Tukums municipality

Tukums, Latvia

#### 1. Brief Description

Tukums municipality is famous for the diversity and number of cultural events taking place in urban and rural settlements, including: town and parish festivals; professional and amateur art performances; culture and art days; traditional and new forms of celebrations, and many others. These events provide leisure and cultural education opportunities for urban and rural residents, and contribute to the image and recognition of the places in question. Various cultural events are organised and offered to the population by 11 cultural houses, 13 libraries, Tukums Museum (five branches), a sport school, 34 sport clubs, 59 NGOs, five religious confessions, and the municipal Department of Education. The organisations submit individual plans for cultural events to the local authority, and the Department of Culture allocates funding. In 2017, total municipal funding for culture, recreational activities and religious organisations was 1.38 million EUR. A broad range of cultural activities is considered by the municipal government to be a means of improving the quality of life of the population, stimulate social inclusion and mitigate the negative consequences of out-migration and depopulation. However, supply and demand of cultural events do not always align. There are periods when the town of Tukums and ten rural parishes organise activities simultaneously and compete for visitors, while there are other periods with considerably fewer cultural events on offer. The need for improved coordination of cultural events is clear, and Tukums municipality has identified the coordination of cultural events as one of the focus areas of a new municipal Cultural Strategy to be developed as part of ROBUST.

#### 2. Questions and/or Challenges

The challenge is to overcome the fragmentation of cultural activities and events and to establish a system of coordination. **The municipality has set an objective to develop a new system of coordination of cultural events in the region.** In order to achieve this, a digital cultural calendar has been created with the support from the Department of Culture. It offers an online platform where cultural houses and other organisations can enter and advertise their events and activities, and inhabitants can find information about cultural life in the

municipality. However, the problem is that the digital calendar is not used to coordinate events, and each organisation and parish builds its own cultural agenda. The head of the Department of Culture admits: “The cultural houses have become used to living separately and there is no practice that would urge the organisers to coordinate.” Municipal officials indicate various gains from an improved system of coordination: (i) better planning of cultural activities, more balanced offer and fewer or no overlaps; (ii) improved quality of cultural events; (iii) possibility to involve creative professionals (directors, designers) in event organisation; (iv) possibility to develop other services (tourism, educational, recreational activities) around cultural events; (v) better use of resources and financial savings.

### 3. Main Insights

The current situation of cultural activities in Tukums municipality is presented in **Table 1** which gives an overview of the main types of events, their number, the estimated number of visitors and distribution of events between urban (the town of Tukums) and rural (10 parishes) territories.

*Table 1. Cultural events in Tukums municipality in 2017 (Source: municipal cultural map)*

Type of event	Number	In urban areas (%)	In rural areas (%)	Number of visitors
National and traditional celebrations	76	38	62	22783
Town/region/parish celebrations	16	6	94	26066
Informative / educational events	76	25	75	5048
Concerts	111	43	57	87306
Theatrical performances	69	46	54	16127
Exhibitions	68	7	93	19934
Entertainment events	87	31	69	38189
Festivals	11	27	73	2242
Literary events	10	40	60	737
Art competitions	6	67	33	1345
Events of religious organisations	12	0	100	845
Cinema performances	23	17	83	2018

Some events, such as theatrical performances, concerts, thematic celebrations are organised predominantly indoors in cultural houses and other institutions. However there are a number of open-air cultural events (or ones that combine indoor and outdoor activities), such as town and parish festivals, art days, craft days and other celebrations. For example, *Rožu svētki* (Roses festival) which is an annual town festival of Tukums, represents a diverse mix of cultural, recreational, sports and educational activities lasting three days and attracting approximately 86,000 visitors, including those from outside the region; the annual Museum Night, organised by Tukums museum and composed of various activities (open access exhibitions, creative workshops, cultural street games, etc.), in 2017 gathered an audience of 9,000 visitors, which is more than one quarter of the people living in the region.

Thus, cultural events have the **potential to contribute to mutually beneficial relations** between rural and urban areas (in the opinion of municipal officials) such as: (i) branding and marketing of the region as a whole; (ii) flows of people to cultural events within and across regional boundaries; (iii) benefits for local traders, particularly small shops and small service businesses; (iv) strengthening regional attachment and regional identity (as visitors learn about other places while visiting events); (v) potential to boost the local economy by combining cultural events with a range of services (coordination of activities would help).

There are **factors that limit and enable beneficial relations** between rural and urban areas via cultural ties and events. The limiting factors (as identified thus far in interviews and group discussions) are: resistance of many cultural workers to change, unwillingness to coordinate cultural life in the region; difficulties in attracting young professionals to positions in cultural institutions due to relatively low salaries; and lack of public transport to (remote) places where cultural events take place. On the other hand, there are factors stimulating urban - rural links via cultural events, such as: good infrastructure for culture (11 cultural houses, 13 libraries, five museums and other cultural establishments) and modern material, technological equipment; small distances to cultural houses in rural parishes; availability of a digital cultural calendar; and readily available information on, and active advertising of, cultural events via various public and private channels.

### 3.1. Indications of the application of the new concept of 'New Localities'

In the opinion of specialists from the municipal government, cultural events may be deployed in the creation of a **multifunctional space** where culture would be interconnected with other business services and social activities thereby creating a stronger local market for cultural and service economies. Cultural events could serve as a platform for place recognition and introduce visitors to local businesses, products and crafts. For example, a **place-based basket of goods, services and activities** (e.g. a cultural event, a farmers market, local tourist services, educational activities) shaped on the basis of a rural festival could increase the flow of visitors and contribute to the local economy. It would also integrate a territory and the population at a wider regional and even supra-regional level.

A new multifunctional locality would be made available not only physically (e.g. by coordinating and planning public transport to cultural events) but also digitally by designing and operating a digital platform and tool for planning and monitoring cultural events. This

cultural digital tool would ideally be connected and synchronised with other digital platforms, such as those operated by Tukums Tourist Information Centre, which is already offering digital maps of tourist services.

The 'new locality' would imply a clustered and articulated offer of services, transparent and easy to navigate information about cultural and social activities. This information would be available to the population and ensure physical, social and digital access to a cluster of cultural goods and services. The creation of a new locality is therefore strongly related to digitalisation.

### 3.2. Insights related to the broad area of 'Smart Development'

Smart development is based on knowledge, research and innovation taken forward by various sectors of the economy, individual enterprises and individuals motivated by the goal of sustainability. Although the municipal development strategy outlines several directions of specialisation, the effective linkage between education, research and innovation, jobs and quality of life is still to be established at local and regional levels.

Several highlights epitomise smart development in the region. At times it is related and dependent on the influx of young professionals who bring in new competencies and visions. The cultural sphere seems to need an influx of professional managers, especially for the work in cultural houses. Libraries and museums take the lead in smart development, compared with other cultural institutions. They increasingly orient their work towards the younger generation and experiment with new forms of communication with the audience, such as creative workshops, competence developing museum activities, educational trips, digital guides and search of collections, mobile applications for libraries and museums, etc. These advances are particularly appreciated by children and young people. Archives, museum collections and library stocks are in the process of being digitised, and part of the digitalised resources relates the local history - personalities, artefacts, monuments, historical sites, etc.

Digitalisation is quite a complex issue for the work of cultural institutions, which are also meant to be places of direct face-to-face meetings and socialisation of people and communities.

Smart growth goes hand in hand with social inclusion; therefore social innovation might be a vehicle for both. For example, in 2018 the national government funded free tickets to concerts of the Song and Dance Festival for families with more than five children, whereas the local government subsidised transport to Riga. It is envisaged that in a well-coordinated system of cultural events in the future a free ticket system will be introduced for vulnerable groups of the population, thereby enabling their access to culture.

Digital planning and coordination of cultural activities is the technical core of the reform. Currently, the Digital Cultural Calendar is already in place and needs to be valorised and utilised much more efficiently as a tool for the coordination of cultural life. In addition to digital improvements, human resource training is essential to ensure good quality cultural

life in the region. Currently the municipality employs 119 specialists in cultural houses (of which 66 are half-time employees), 53 specialists in museum, and 39 librarians working in public libraries. The Department of Culture is organising monthly seminars and training of cultural workers. However, new forms of training and interaction are needed to bridge the gap between experience and effort, routine and innovation in the organisation of cultural events.

### 3.3. Other insights that could be relevant for further work

There are both good and bad practices to learn from in the field of cultural events coordination. Overlap of activities and poor coordination of cultural life are considered bad practices. By contrast, the elaboration and use of the digital cultural calendar, the collaboration between the municipal government and entrepreneurs in the organisation of festivals and the improvement of cultural infrastructure are considered assets for further development.

Although there are no precise data and studies available on the economic value of cultural events, and stakeholder opinions vary in this regard, cultural activities have beneficial **impact (actual, potential) for relations between rural, peri-urban and urban areas in the following ways:**

- > There is some labour mobility between town and country in cultural employment;
- > Town festivals have a positive impact on the revenue of service businesses (this is less pronounced in rural festivals);
- > Cultural events enhance mobility within and across regions;
- > There is potential to develop and market a basket of services (including cultural) for tourists;
- > The positive linkage between cultural events and farming activities (including provision of landscape and ecosystem services) has to be explored;
- > Culture has the potential to invigorate local identity and regional attachment which might be beneficial for the local economy and quality of life.

**Inclusive and participatory governance** seems to be essential for success in the coordination of cultural events. Work on the Cultural Strategy has already been started and coordinated by the Department of Culture of the local administration and a Public Consultative Committee for Culture. In the forthcoming years of the ROBUST project the development of the strategy is envisaged as collaborative.

## 4. Data Sources and Indicators

Available sources of data identified so far include Tukums municipality planning documents and reports, the information obtained from Tukums Tourist Information Centre, sources from the Ministry of Culture and secondary data available from surveys and published studies.

Table 1 Data / Indicators for Example 1

Data / Indicator	Source
Data on public perception of the municipality and public services	<i>Pašvaldības darba vērtējums un pakalpojumu izmantošana</i> , <a href="http://tukums.lv/images/stories/2016.gads/Aktu%C4%81li/SKDS_aptaujas_rezult%C4%81ti.pdf">http://tukums.lv/images/stories/2016.gads/Aktu%C4%81li/SKDS_aptaujas_rezult%C4%81ti.pdf</a>
Type of cultural activities; number of activities; number of participants; geographical distribution of cultural events	Tukums municipality cultural map (data from 2017), <a href="https://kulturaskarte.lv">https://kulturaskarte.lv</a>
Number of exhibitions	<i>Tukuma muzejs: Darbības un attīstības stratēģija 2014.-2020. gadam</i> , <a href="http://www.tukums.lv/images/stories/Tukuma_muzeja_darbības_stratēģija.pdf">http://www.tukums.lv/images/stories/Tukuma_muzeja_darbības_stratēģija.pdf</a>
Data on tourism in Tukums municipality between 2004 and 2016	<i>Statistikas apkopojums - Tūrisms: Tukuma tūrisma reģions 2004.-2016.</i> , <a href="https://visittukums.kartes.lv/download2/491e18dc793a2c34e9247ec8b55524de.pdf:_Statistika_Tukuma_turisma_reģions_2004_2016_web.pdf">https://visittukums.kartes.lv/download2/491e18dc793a2c34e9247ec8b55524de.pdf:_Statistika_Tukuma_turisma_reģions_2004_2016_web.pdf</a>
Data about public libraries in Tukums municipality in 2017	<i>Tukuma reģiona bibliotēku 2017. gada darba pārskats</i> , <a href="http://dom.lndb.lv/data/obj/496578.html">http://dom.lndb.lv/data/obj/496578.html</a>

## 5. Critical Appraisal of Data Use

Statistical data on cultural events and activities are publicly available from Tukums municipality reports and strategic planning documents. Much of the data are disaggregated for rural and urban cultural institutions and specific activities. In addition, abundant data are available from the Ministry of Culture sources on amateur art activities in Tukums municipality. There are research reports and several PhD theses available which analyse cultural events and cultural consumption in urban and rural settings. As part of ROBUST, some new data will be collected and processed in a participatory way for the purpose of elaborating a new Cultural Strategy. The participatory data collection and assessment will include collaborative workshops and seminars with researchers, Tukums Department of Culture, the Consultative Council for Culture, specialists from cultural institutions and civil society representatives among others. The existing and new data will form the background for decisions regarding priorities and activities of the Cultural Strategy.

## 6. References

*Statistikas apkopojums - Tūrisms: Tukuma tūrisma reģions 2004.-2016. (Statistical overview of tourism in Tukums 2004-2016),*

<https://visittukums.kartes.lv/download2/491e18dc793a2c34e9247ec8b55524de.pdf> : Statistika Tukuma turisma reģions 2004 2016 web.pdf

Survey on the work of the municipality and public services, [http://tukums.lv/images/stories/2016.gads/Aktu%C4%81li/SKDS\\_aptaujas\\_rezult%C4%81ti.pdf](http://tukums.lv/images/stories/2016.gads/Aktu%C4%81li/SKDS_aptaujas_rezult%C4%81ti.pdf)

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Tukums municipality cultural map, data from 2017, accessed via <https://kulturaskarte.lv>.

Tukuma muzejs: Darbības un attīstības stratēģija 2014.-2020. gadam (Tukums museum development strategy 2014-2020),

[http://www.tukums.lv/images/stories/Tukuma\\_muzeja\\_darbibas\\_strategija.pdf](http://www.tukums.lv/images/stories/Tukuma_muzeja_darbibas_strategija.pdf)

Tukuma reģiona bibliotēku 2017. gada darba pārskats (Overview of libraries in Tukums municipality in 2017), <http://dom.lndb.lv/data/obj/496578.html>

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