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## Rural-Urban Governance Arrangements and Planning Instruments

### Intra-regional coordination of amateur art

Tukums, Latvia

#### 1. Overview



Source: [www.tukums.lv](http://www.tukums.lv)

Participation in amateur art collectives (vocal, dance, instrumental groups, theatre etc.) is very popular in Latvia. It reflects the long and rich tradition of Latvian singing, dancing, and performance culture. The first Latvian Song Festival of amateur choirs was held in 1873, and since then the popular movement of the Song Festival has been growing and attracting an increasing number of participants. In Tukums municipality, there are about 96 amateur art groups with 1,566 members in total. Twenty-three groups are located in the town of Tukums, and 73 are based in rural areas. This cultural participation of citizens is seen as an important resource for local development, in rural areas in particular (Daugavietis 2015).

The popular song and dance movement is supported by national, regional and local level governments. At the national level, the movement is regulated according to the Law of the

Song and Dance festival<sup>1</sup>, which aims to preserve the movement, and defines the state's and regions' financial and organisational responsibilities. At the regional level, several institutions are involved in the governance of the movement: Tukums municipality council (the Department of Culture, Sport and Public relations, in particular), a regional coordinator of amateur art, parish administrations, local cultural houses and amateur collectives.

Tukums municipality council considers that better coordination of amateur art within the municipality is needed for the sake of better quality and more resources-efficient cultural life in the region. This requires better cooperation and exchange of experiences between rural and urban amateur art groups, their managers and local administrations, as well as an increased flow of amateur art "consumers" within the region. It is planned to address these issues in the regional cultural strategy, initiated by Tukums municipality and to be developed as part of ROBUST.

## 2. Main Challenges

The central challenge to be addressed as part of ROBUST is how to effectively manage and coordinate the currently fragmented, yet vibrant, bottom-up amateur art movement at the regional level. As indicated above, there are many amateur art groups in Tukums municipality. Financially supported by the region and the state, they are spread all over the region, most often attached to local cultural houses and schools. But there is poor coordination within the movement, with many competing groups and often overlapping events. Such fragmentation leads to an inefficient use of collective resources, limits intra-regional connections and cooperation, and hampers the development of a cultural community in the region. The municipal council wishes to introduce a more centralised approach to the governance of cultural life in the region, including better coordination within the amateur art movement. Local rural communities, in turn, prefer to keep their autonomy in deciding on and organising their amateur art groups.

## 3. Main Insights

### 3.1. Insights related to the broad area of “network governance”

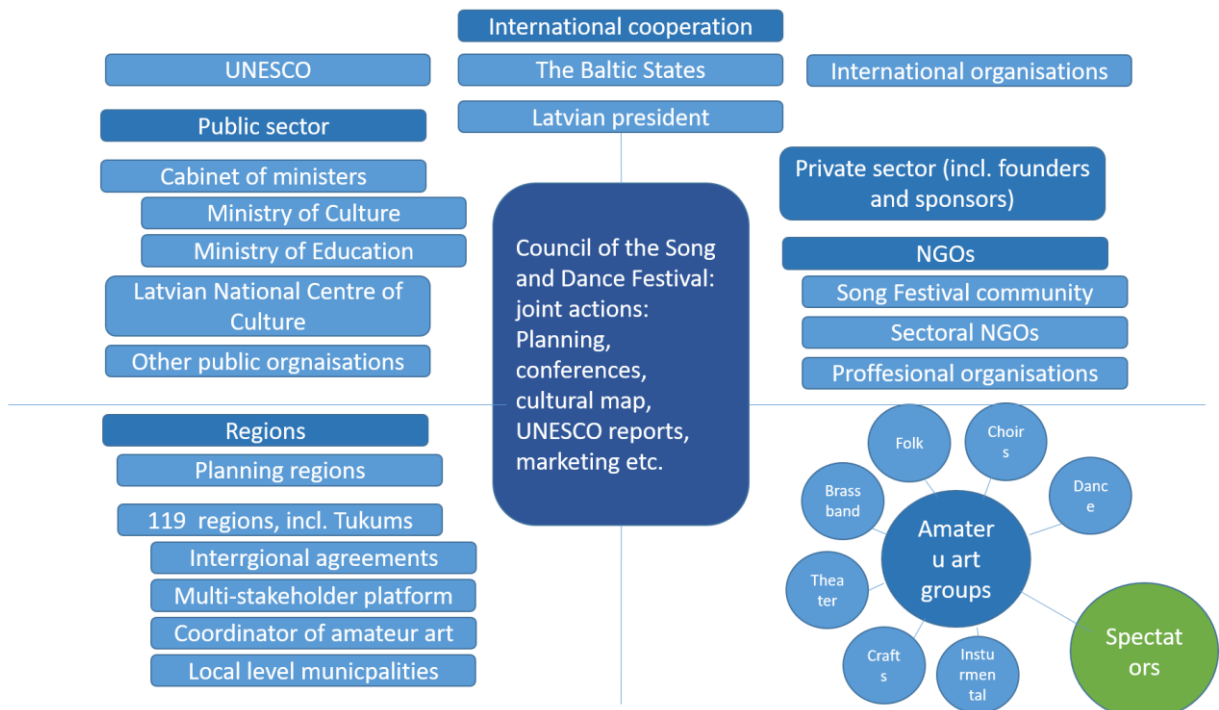
A wide range of actors from various public and private sectors are involved in the multi-level governance of amateur art in Tukums municipality (See Figure 1). At the local level, these include collectives from various amateur art sectors, their managers, as well as local administrative councils and institutions (i.e., cultural houses, schools), which provide organisational and technical support to amateur groups. At the regional level, the municipality provides financial support (e.g., salaries, transport, costumes, etc.) and organisational support (organises cultural events etc.); the song and dance movement's coordinators and a recently established multi-stakeholder group are also involved. At the inter-regional level, there are agreements between the regional councils about

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<sup>1</sup> The Song and Dance Festival is the central event of amateur art movement in Latvia, taking place every five years. The event is UNESCO Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

cooperation in the preservation of song and dance traditions. There is a range of actors and regulative frameworks, and cooperation at national and international levels.

Figure 1. Governance actors of amateur art



Source: adapted from The Cabinet of Ministers (2016).

At the national level, the movement is quite well coordinated with an established formal regulative and administrative structure. There is room to manoeuvre at the regional level, and each regional municipality contributes to the amateur art movement “according to its possibilities”. Nonetheless, intra-regional governance of amateur art remains fragmented. The stated preference for autonomy expressed by local groups and collectives on the one hand, and attempts to organise cultural life centrally on the other, have hampered the establishment of collaborative governance arrangements at the regional level.

### 3.2. Insights related to mechanisms of cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation

The municipal council wishes to maintain, develop and increase accessibility to regional cultural heritage, including amateur art, for educational, recreational and socio-economic purposes. Vibrant amateur art is one of the key elements of the region’s attractive cultural life, which is listed among the regional development priorities (Tukums region development programme). The amateur art movement contributes to the quality of life as it diversifies access to cultural experiences and provides opportunities for residents to express their own cultural creativity. In rural areas in particular, amateur art groups might be the only space for cultural entertainment and civic participation (Daugavietis 2015). By feeding into a range of cultural events in the region, the amateur art movement contributes

to attracting visitors and is involved in the co-creation of the region's image. The increased number of visitors, in turn, is beneficial for local businesses and the regional economy.

The amateur art movement is well integrated with the educational sector. Educational institutions are involved in the maintenance of the amateur art movement. There is a national equivalent to the Song and Dance festival for children and young people. Tukums municipality schools have their amateur groups for children and young people. Regional song and dance events are organised for school children.

Participation in the amateur art movement and/or attending Song and Dance Festival events is also considered to be a means of improving social inclusion and social integration. There are several state and municipal initiatives implemented in order to improve accessibility for people from a wide range of socio-economic groups and territories, including more remote ones. This includes funding, free tickets for families with more than five children, providing transport, public events, broadcasting of events etc.

### 3.3. Insights related to the role of (actual, potential) social, organizational, institutional innovations

In addition to the formal centralised structure of amateur art management, bottom-up governance with a broader stakeholder participation is also developing. In June 2018, a joint working group brought together the managers of Tukums amateur groups, local council leaders, managers of local cultural houses, and Tukums Dance Region and Tukums Song Region managers for the first time. They discussed various aspects of amateur art in the context of the Song and Dance movement, and set aims and tasks for further work.

The Department of Culture at Tukums city has launched an online platform, created for sharing and coordinating cultural life in the municipality. However, the calendar has not yet gained popularity as a collaborative tool.

There is potential for cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination: a better coordinated amateur art movement would allow other services (tourism, educational, recreational activities) to be developed around cultural events, and involve creative professionals in the organisation of these events.

## 4. Effectiveness Indicators

The regional council is fulfilling its functions, outlined in the national Law of Song and Dance Festival, and provides financial and organisational support to amateur art groups in the region. The number of groups and participants in the region remains high and has been increasing. Furthermore, a recent survey found that people living in Tukums are generally satisfied with the level of support to amateur art that the municipality provides (SKDS 2016).

However, the inability to organise cultural life in a manner that satisfies the needs of both local communities (i.e. autonomy) and the municipality (i.e. efficiency through centralisation) may have a negative effect on the quality of urban-rural connections. The fragmented nature

of cultural life restricts flows of, and the formation of links between, people from different parts of the region. A collaborative governance arrangement based on a consensus position would allow for a more effective governance of cultural life.

## 5. References

Daugavietis, J. (2015) Amatiermāksla Latvijā: kopienas attīstība un kultūrpolitika. PhD thesis. [https://www.szf.lu.lv/fileadmin/user\\_upload/szf\\_faili/Petnieciba/promocijas\\_darbi/promocijas\\_darbs\\_Janis\\_Daugavietis\\_FIN.pdf](https://www.szf.lu.lv/fileadmin/user_upload/szf_faili/Petnieciba/promocijas_darbi/promocijas_darbs_Janis_Daugavietis_FIN.pdf)

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