



CoP Public Infrastructure and Social Services

Example of Good Practice

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Online broadcast facility on the municipality's webpage

Living Lab Tukums, Latvia

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1. Introduction

The online broadcast facility on the website of Tukums municipality allows residents of both urban and rural areas to watch council meetings or cultural events that are taking place in the city of Tukums. This example illustrates how the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) can increase the transparency and inclusiveness of the decision-making process and allow for the participation of residents who would not otherwise be able to travel to Tukums city to attend council meetings or cultural events. This can strengthen the connection between urban and rural areas, though it must be noted that the broadcast facility improves access in general, so the benefits are not limited to urban-rural synergies.



Figure 1: Administrative division of Latvia (Tukums in orange)



Figure 2: Tukums municipal council building

2. Project Intention / Background information

Tukums municipality was established in 2009. It is located in the Western part of Latvia. It is part of the Zemgale historical and cultural region and the Pierīga statistical region. The total number of inhabitants (as of 1 January 2020) is 29 943. However, the number of people living in more remote parts of the municipality of Tukums has declined, and this has made the maintenance of infrastructure and provision of public services in these areas costly and inefficient. Nonetheless, one of the goals outlined in the municipality’s sustainable development strategy is to maintain connections between, and provide services to, communities located in different parts of the municipality irrespective of whether they live in cities or any of the parishes.

Compared to other municipalities in Latvia, Tukums has been active in the deployment and use of ICTs in official contexts. A survey carried out in 2016¹ found that just under half of all respondents (45%) used the official website to obtain information about the work being done by the municipal government, and a similar share of respondents (49%) noted that they would be happy to receive public services online (SKDS 2016).

The online broadcast facility is fully funded by the municipality, and the intended users of the facility are the residents of Tukums, though anyone can access the archives. One of the reasons why the online broadcast facility was introduced was to increase transparency of the decision-making process in the council. This is fully in line with the requirements of Latvia’s *Freedom of Information Law*. However, the law only requires an audio recording of council meetings², while Tukums municipal council provides video recordings.



Figure 3: Video archive on Tukums municipality webpage

¹ This was a statistically representative survey. A total of 405 inhabitants of Tukums above 15 years of age were interviewed about the way they interact with the municipality.

² The meetings take place at least once a month.

The municipality also provides livestreams of cultural events (e.g. concerts, local festivals) and conferences (e.g. business forums). Only a select number of public events are broadcast, based on their perceived importance and popularity, such as the Rose Festival³.



Figure 4: Poster for the Rose Festival 2020

According to representatives of the municipality, this facility has been positively received by the inhabitants of Tukums, though no particular socioeconomic group stands out among the userbase. Recordings of council meetings and other events are kept in an archive, and the municipality notes that recordings are routinely watched, especially the recordings of cultural events. Overall, it could be argued that the facility has been accepted and is used by the residents of Tukums, though this claim is based on the judgement of municipal employees, rather than data.

3. Main Description

The online broadcast/archive facility refers to several services that allow the inhabitants of Tukums (though not exclusively) to watch events online.

All Tukums municipality council meetings are broadcast on the webpage of the municipality and Facebook. The content is managed by employees of the municipality. The broadcasts of council meetings have been available since 2013. The intention is to inform residents and answer their questions in a transparent manner. There is a question and answer session each Thursday, where people can ask questions and receive answers online. This has been available since 2018. The records are available on the Tukums webpage and the associated Facebook account.

³ A festival dedicated to roses with a vehicle parade, a large crown of roses and concerts, which started in 2008.



Figure 5: Marriage Games 2019

Several significant cultural events are also broadcast (e.g. Marriage Games). This is done to allow more people to watch and experience them online. The solution was implemented by two of the municipality's departments - the IT department and the Department of Public Relations, though external help is engaged for important cultural events, as the municipality lacks the necessary equipment.

While this solution has no direct impact on the three classical pillars of sustainability, it may contribute to improved trust in municipal institutions (transparency), thus contributing to the long-term prospects and attractiveness of the municipality. The possibility to view and experience cultural events online can also strengthen cultural connections between urban and rural areas in the municipality. What is more, it allows Tukums to share its cultural offer with a wider range of people – including those who have not visited the municipality.

The issues that the municipality has to contend with are technical and financial in nature. Specifically, good quality broadcasts require expensive equipment and a good internet connection. While the overall quality of network connections in Latvia is good, the limitations of the equipment owned by the municipality means that the opportunities for the broadcasts are limited. This is not a problem for council meetings, but the presentation of cultural events can suffer as you can only experience the event from one vantage point (where the camera is placed). As indicated above, bigger events require the involvement of private companies who can provide the necessary equipment and assistance. This is something that should be borne in mind in attempting to implement similar solutions in other municipalities.

4. References

SKDS (2016) Apkopoti iedzīvotāju aptaujas rezultāti (2016), [A summary of the results of the survey], available at:

http://tukums.lv/images/stories/2016.gads/Aktu%C4%81li/SKDS_aptaujas_rezult%C4%81ti.pdf