



Ministry of Environmental  
Protection and Regional  
Development  
Republic of Latvia

# Effective public participation without significant resources – an overview of recent developments in Latvia

**Task Force on Public-participation in Decision-making  
1-2 March 2021**



# Areas of Regulation of the Public Participation in Decision-making

- I State Level The involvement of civil society in political and legislative processes→ The freedom of speech, which includes the right to freely receive, keep and distribute information; the freedom of assembly; the freedom of association.
- Example of Coastal Protection of the Baltic Sea with regard to human caused activities;
- Example of State level – the legislator competence to adopt legal framework on spatial/territorial planning **BUT** competence of municipalities to enforce it accordingly (large scale discretionary power);
- II Municipal Level Every citizen of Latvia can participate in state or local government representation. Everyone has the right to address submissions to state or local government institutions and to receive a materially responsive reply.



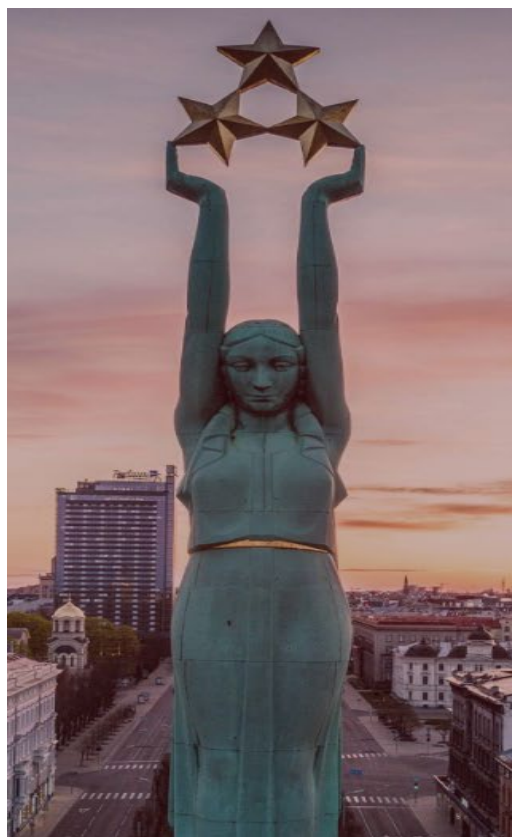
# United Portal for Draft Normative Acts, Normative Acts and Policy Documents

- Modernised and updated approach on the conduct of legislative procedures in environmental matters.
- The ultimate goal to reinforce public participation at a very early stage of a project, transparency and to facilitate access to relevant informations and data for the decision-making process for any member of public concerned, any interested party.
- The public will remain informed through public notice according to sectoral environmental regulations (on a public website and in a local newspaper), the Portal being a digitalised tool to provide cost-free access to legal, regulatory and policy documents.



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# TAP portāls



Valsts kanceleja

Pieslēgties TAP portālam ar

Latvija.lv

Vai

Lietotājvārds

VK\_Rudzite

Parole

••••••••

→ PIESLĒGTIES



# The advantages of the Platform

- It facilitates the engagement of the public society at a very early stage of legislative initiatives and policy making (comments/files received on behalf of public concerned will be uploaded in the Portal).
- Mandatory obligations for the policy makers/developers to assess properly views expressed by the public concerned.
- It provides free access to regulatory and policy documents within procedures pending before their approval.
- The cost-free access to documents/information increase awareness of environmental protection and environmental education.



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# Essential prerequisites for effective public participation

The cost-free access to information through the Platform will allow the public concerned to participate effectively in the consultation whereby in essence it will be informed of:

- ✓ timeframes to submit observations, recommendations, objections, comments;
- ✓ competent public-authority and responsible lead representative of State services responsible for the project;
- ✓ assessment and subsequent level of taking account of the outcomes of the public consultation.



# Case-study on challenges regarding effective public-participation in spatial/territorial decision making

- Legal representatives of the project developer for the mall construction project in the municipality neighbouring the capital city Riga submitted a proposition for amendments of the Article 21 of Law on the Management of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection obliging the developer in cooperation with the municipality to organise the public consultation on the spatial development planning documents and environmental review of the planning document in accordance with the regulations regarding the development of spatial planning documents and strategic environmental impact assessment and with the procedures specified for gathering only remotely.
- Law on the Management of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection in essence precludes even in the emergency situation such as spread of COVID-19 Infection to ensure public-participation in decision making through digital tools remotely only.
- The Ministry declined the proposal to initiate legislative proceedings for the amendments based on the assessment of the regulations in force and maintaining that any member of the public concerned should have rights to submit opinions/proposals/recommendations if their access to digital tool for remote communication is restricted.



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Thank you!

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