

Self-government interest is crucial to the choice of business as a business location

It is important for the entrepreneur to have a good day-to-day cooperation with the municipality, mutual interest and understanding. Similar to the state, including local governments, particularly before the elections, on paper declaring an interest in creating business opportunities in their administrative territory in order to attract new investments, which would accordingly contribute to the creation of new, well-paid jobs and an increase in the level of people's well-being.

However, business representatives point out that these expectations and expectations can only be filled if cooperation between the municipality and business is not in formal meetings, but in a mutually interested, close daily cooperation, fast and efficient and unnecessary bureaucracy, as well as in dealing with everyday-to-day issues, and in seeking effective ways to remove some unplanned barriers.

This is the result of the development of the local and regional tripartite social dialogue in Latvia of the project supported financially by the Norwegian State institution Innovation Norway, carried out by the Riga Business Society (RUB). Innovation Norway is the Norwegian Government's most important instrument for the development and innovation of Norwegian companies and industry, as well as the government's official trade representative abroad. The programme aims at strengthening trilateral cooperation between employers' organisations, trade unions and public administrations and promoting decent work.

"In the course of the project, we have carried out a series of different activities, have visited various Latvian municipalities, including Aizkraukle, Sigulda and Adažus, in order to discuss, together with representatives of the local government and businessmen, both what has been achieved and what remains to be addressed. It is relatively easy to see differences in relations between different municipalities and businesses – whether they are highly regulated by memoranda, contracts and are therefore formal and dry in some ways, or whether cooperation takes place in a very natural way without any commitment articles," says Edith Alkse, Vice-President of the RUB Board.

During the various discussions and exchanges of ideas, all stakeholders have recognised that it makes no sense to formally create, for example, a municipal business association only because they have been created in other municipalities, it must be done naturally at the initiative of the entrepreneurs themselves.

"The vast majority of municipalities are still in the process of change following the implementation of the administrative reform. However, it has already been noted that Members of many of the new municipalities have a desire to change the arrangements to date, including in cooperation with entrepreneurs. However, it must be acknowledged that it is difficult to predict how business cooperation with the new municipality, where three or even four municipalities have worked separately in the past, for example,"

Ms Alksne acknowledges at the same time that the Riga Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030 indicates that the municipality is conducting a dialogue with all business organisations. In turn, the Riga Development Programme for 2021-2027 projects indicate that the municipality will conduct a dialogue with the business organisations of the most important sectors of the capital economy. "This is not fair, because it is never possible to know which business organisation can come up with Riga, its residents and entrepreneurs with valuable proposals that could be realised in the daily lives of the city and residents. Therefore, it would be valuable if representatives of

companies working in neighbourhood areas were increasingly involved in various talks and discussions on the development of Riga neighbourhoods, which would promote mutual dialogue and understanding that the entrepreneur's aim is not to develop his business at the expense of residents, the environment and the city. If the inhabitants of neighbourhoods understand, at the level of the idea, the objectives of a specific project and the path of realisation, mutual confrontation will be significantly reduced".

Agnes Cimkina, Councillor of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Norway, recalled the overall objective of the project: one of the priorities of the Norwegian Government, both in internal policy and in foreign policy, is the promotion of workers' rights, and social dialogue is the main instrument for socio-economic development and good governance, which plays an important role in promoting fair working relations, working conditions, job creation, inclusive growth and competitiveness. In particular, decent work essentially means employment on the basis of the free will and choice of the person, in fair, safe and dignified conditions. "Decent work is not only an objective, it also plays a crucial role in the economy of a socially sustainable world. Social dialogue contributes not only to decent work but also to trust. The Nordic model includes a low level of inequality that strengthens public confidence. And this in turn strengthens economic growth, happiness index, innovation growth," she said. A. Cimkina expressed hope that the development of the project's Local and Regional Tripartite Social Dialogue in Latvia will increase both the understanding of employers and employees as well as the state institutions of how successful trilateral cooperation brings benefits to society as a whole, because the result of business is not just a product, service or workplace created. Business generates social cultural life as a whole, so any investment in business is an investment in promoting the wellbeing of society as a whole.

On the other hand, Ilze Garoza, executive director of the Norwegian Chamber of Commerce in Latvia, recalled that Norwegian businessmen have been the eighth largest investors in Latvia since the year XX. The early 90 s. Currently around 260 companies with Norwegian capital are registered in Latvia. Most of them – around 170 – operate in Riga or Pierga.