

Annual Report 2016



Nordic Council of Ministers'
Office in Latvia



2016—a year of Baltic and Nordic Cooperation

“Even in the 25 years to come, our close, innovative, and flexible co-operation can help to strengthen our common position and role in a wider European and global context. This is a win-win situation for the Nordic and Baltic region.”

Dagfinn Høybråten

Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers

In 2016 we celebrated 25 years of successful cooperation between the Nordic and Baltic countries. Ever since the Nordic governments decided to open the Nordic Council of Ministers' offices in Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius in 1991, a strong bridge of values and networks between the Nordics and Baltics has been built.

We thank all our cooperation partners for providing us with support and inspiration!

In 2016 the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia strived for a balanced representation in all its mainstay fields: culture, social welfare, sustainable economic and environmental development. Activities have been intensified in such sub-sectors as bioeconomy, digital entrepreneurship and sustainable business. Support to good-quality independent media, initiated in 2015 and focusing on Latvian regions with significant minority populations, was continued.

Moreover, being an active participant in a number of local fora, the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia has reacted to the changing political sentiments by probing its way into a couple of new directions, such as societal security, societal cohesion and promotion of media literacy. In 2016 the office was especially active in reaching out beyond the capital city of Riga into other parts of Latvia.

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In 2015 the Nordic and Baltic ministers for foreign affairs called on public and private actors in all the NB8 countries to share the knowledge and join forces in defence of a pluralistic media landscape. Since then, the NCM Baltic offices have done their fair share of contributing to independent and balanced Russian-language media and the promotion of media literacy.

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"Many Latvian youngsters and students have mastered Nordic languages owing to the support of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office; creative personalities and researchers have received grants to implement their ideas while cultural practitioners and other actors have exchanged experiences. Owing to the support of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia, a number of Latvian cultural institutions, organisations and individual cultural practitioners and artists have found cooperation partners and associates in the Nordic countries, which has led to a multitude of international projects and successful joint utilisation of other international financial instruments as well." (Dace Melbārde, Minister for Culture of the Republic of Latvia, speaking at the opening of the Nordic-Baltic exhibition of contemporary art "(In)visible derams and streams").

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Good governance, transparency, democracy, societal solidarity and security have a positive effect on various aspects of policies, practices and plain good working relationships. The NCM Office strives to engage civil society, politicians and civil servants in a continuous discussion about these important key values.

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Social security and welfare is a wide range of fields spanning across the disciplinary boundaries of social and technical sciences, humanities and other sectors. By consolidating human resources across the Nordic-Baltic region it is possible to minimise the threats to our social security.

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A proper research and analysis of sustainable development of bio-economy is a crucial prerequisite for substituting fossil resources with bio-resources and creating products with high added value. In order to implement it, we need not only innovations and technologies but also skills and competences on grassroot level, as well as supportive policy frameworks.

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#NORDICBALTIC25



Nordic-Baltic cooperation over the last quarter of a century spanned a variety of fields, affecting nearly all aspects of societal development: democracy, human rights, sustainable development, social welfare, gender equality, anti-trafficking, environment, culture, media, and many more. Paying its due to such a wide spectrum, the NCM Office in Latvia celebrated its 25th anniversary with a wide range of activities.



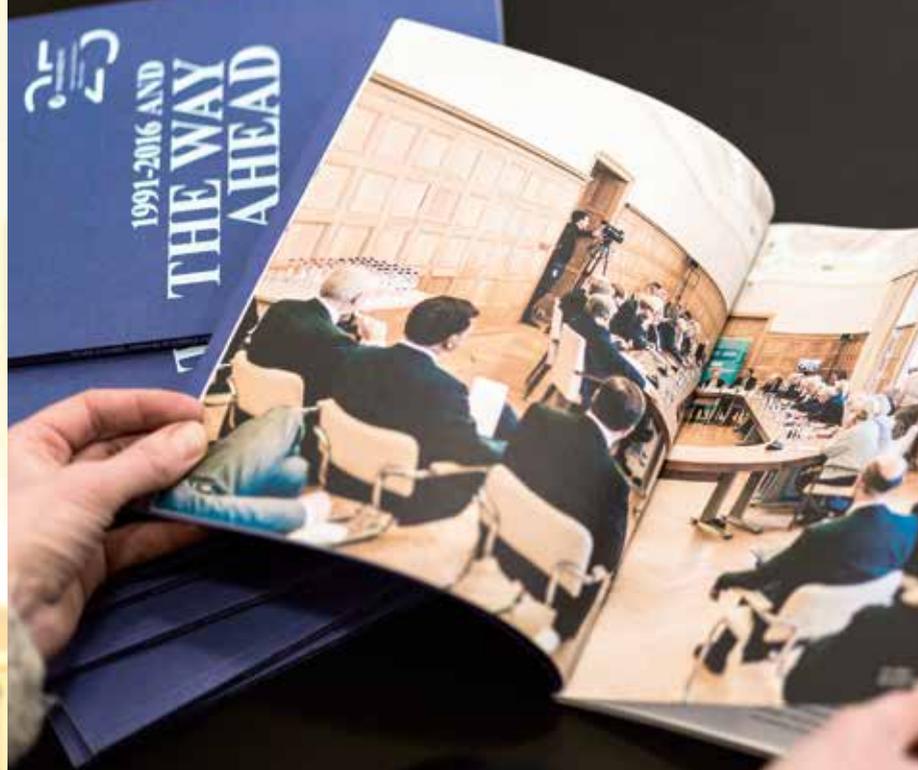
High-Level Roundtable on the 25th Anniversary of Baltic-Nordic Cooperation

A quarter of a century is an important milestone calling for reflection and evaluation: How far has the cooperation advanced? What is its track record? What achievements has it yielded? And, perhaps most pertinent of all, where do we want to go from here and how do we envisage our next 25 years together? A high-level roundtable "1991-2016 and the Way Ahead" was organized in order to highlight the historical aspects of the restoration of Baltic independence, the involvement of Nordic countries in it and the current challenges and the possible ways forward.

The roundtable brought together distinguished politicians and guests with a solid commitment to Nordic-Baltic cooperation: H.E. Mr. Edgars Rinkēvičs, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia; Mr. Dagfinn Høybråten, Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers; Mr. Petras Auštrevičius, Member of the European Parliament, Lithuania; Mr. Carl Bildt, former Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden; Mr. Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Denmark; Mr. Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iceland; Mr. Jüri Luik, Director of the International Centre of Defence and Security, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defence of Estonia; Mr. Kimmo Sasi, former Minister of European Affairs and Foreign Trade of Finland; Mr. Michael Tetzschner, Member of Parliament of Norway.



The roundtable was followed by "Those Who Dare" – a documentary about the crucial role of Nordic allies in the lead-up to Baltic independence, with introductory remarks made by the film's screenwriter Ms Kolfinna Baldvinsdóttir. The day rounded off with a joint reception celebrating 25 years since the restoration of Nordic-Latvian diplomatic relations.



A roundtable transcript with the same title, "1991-2016 and the Way Ahead", capturing the memorable event in picture and print, will be published in 2017 and available upon request.

Cooperation partners: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, Embassy of Denmark, Embassy of Finland, Embassy of Norway, Embassy of Sweden.



Video Testimonials

Our countries are bound by shared goals, challenges and common values, but also people and special moments. In the last 25 years we have met a lot of interesting people pushing the Nordic-Baltic region forward. We asked them to share their personal memories and future visions related to the Nordic-Baltic cooperation and to reflect on what good neighbourly relations mean to them.

Personal insights were shared by the first director of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Information Office in Latvia, Richard Bærug; Head of International Projects at the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, Elita Cakule; Adviser to the Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Viktors Makarovs; Rector of the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, Anders Paalzow; film director, photographer and journalist Kaspars Goba; composer Ēriks Ešēvalds, and the former president of the Republic of Latvia, Dr.Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga.

All the video stories have been published on our Facebook, Twitter and Vimeo pages under the hashtag #NordicBaltic25.

vimeo.com/user3189070

Joint calendar 2016: *Together we are stronger*

In connection with our 25th anniversary a joint calendar of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Offices in the Baltic States was made in order to highlight some of the implemented projects, reveal some unknown facts and offer a glimpse of possible future endeavours.



The Nordic Day of 23 March

Nordic inter-governmental and inter-parliamentarian cooperation is one of the oldest and most comprehensive regional cooperation models in the world. The Nordic “constitution”, also known as the Helsinki Treaty, which regulates the official cooperation among the five Nordic countries, was signed on 23 March 1962 in Helsinki, Finland – since then known as the Nordic Day.

To mark this symbolic occasion, a panel discussion was organised, where the Nordic ambassadors residing in Latvia – H.E. Hans Brask from the Royal Danish Embassy; H.E. Olli Kantanen from the Embassy of Finland, H.E. Steinar Egil Hagen from the Royal Norwegian Embassy; H.E. Henrik Landerholm from the Embassy of Sweden – were asked to delve into the history of Nordic cooperation, its global uniqueness and the potential it holds for Nordic-Baltic cooperation as well. The discussion was moderated by Rita Ruduša of the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence.

Cooperation partners: Embassy of Sweden, Embassy of Norway, Embassy of Finland, Embassy of Denmark, Baltic Centre for Media Excellence.

Joint Nordic National Days' Celebration

In order to mark the 25th anniversary of Nordic diplomatic presence in Latvia, the Joint Nordic National Days' Celebration on May 31, was organised at the Dzintari Concert Hall in Jurmala. In their opening speeches the ambassadors and the director of the NCM Office in Latvia highlighted the key areas of Nordic-Baltic cooperation – culture, entrepreneurship and environmental protection – and reflected on future possibilities. The official part was followed by a concert performance featuring the renowned Latvian pianist Vestards Simkus and soprano Elina Simkus, completed with a reception where more than 500 guests could taste a variety of Nordic national dishes.

Cooperation partners: Embassy of Denmark, Embassy of Finland, Embassy of Iceland, Embassy of Norway, Embassy of Sweden.



Nordic Council Session 2016

"Northern Lights" – a video installation by Norwegian photographer Kjetil Skogli and Latvian composer Ēriks Ešenvalds – was part of the Nordic Council's prize ceremony in Copenhagen in 2016. The artwork is an attempt to convey all the magnificence of *aurora borealis* and the old beliefs and legends surrounding this natural phenomenon, accompanied by a multimedia symphony.

The project grew out of a mobility support granted from the Nordic-Baltic Mobility Programme "Culture" in 2011-2012.



Radio series "Known in the Unknown"

Radio series "The Known in the Unknown" attempted to discover yet unknown facts about Europe's Northern countries. The content was produced by Latvian Radio journalists and broadcast from March until December, each time reaching ca 66 000 listeners. The series covered a variety of topics: from culture to astronomy research, to Danish shopping habits and food waste, Icelandic horses and tourism, Norwegian salmon and iron ore mines in Sweden.

Cooperation partner: Latvian Radio 1.



Nordic-Baltic Contemporary Art Exhibition “(In)visible dreams and streams”

The idea to create this exhibition was born in connection with the 25th anniversary of the Nordic Council of Ministers' offices in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.

The project aims to highlight the recent and current processes of cooperation among the artists and culture operators in the Nordic-Baltic region. All three offices serve as local culture points and collaboration partners to the Nordic Culture Point in making the Nordic-Baltic Mobility Programme for Culture visible in their countries, as well as advising the potential applicants.

The exhibition presents 22 artists and art producers, all of whom have benefited from the Nordic-Baltic Mobility Programme for Culture.

The Nordic-Baltic Contemporary Art Exhibition “(In)visible dreams and streams” was exhibited at Bergs Bazaar in Riga, Latvia, from September 15 until October 4, 2016, and at the Vilnius Contemporary Art Center, Lithuania, from December 2 until January 15, 2017.

Cooperation partners: Nordic Council of Ministers' Offices in Lithuania and Estonia, Nordic Culture Point.

Nordic Days in Daugavpils

In order to mark the 25th anniversary of Nordic diplomatic presence in Latvia, the first Nordic Days in Daugavpils, Latvia's second largest city, took place in October 2016. The event featured discussions with entrepreneurs, a panel on sustainable political development, a conference on the role of education in bioeconomy, a lecture “The Secrets of Nordic Noir”, a workshop on food waste and screenings of Nordic films and exhibition displays at various venues in the city.

Cooperation partners: Embassy of Denmark, Embassy of Finland, Embassy of Norway, Embassy of Sweden, Daugavpils University, Daugavpils City Council.

Video Competition for Youth in the Baltic and Nordic countries

Upon the initiative of the Baltic Assembly, a Baltic-Nordic video competition **"Neighbours in the North: I am Nordic-Baltic!"** was organised for youngsters up to the age of 19. Its aim was to instigate the youngsters' interest in regional neighbourly relations and cooperation in Northern Europe.

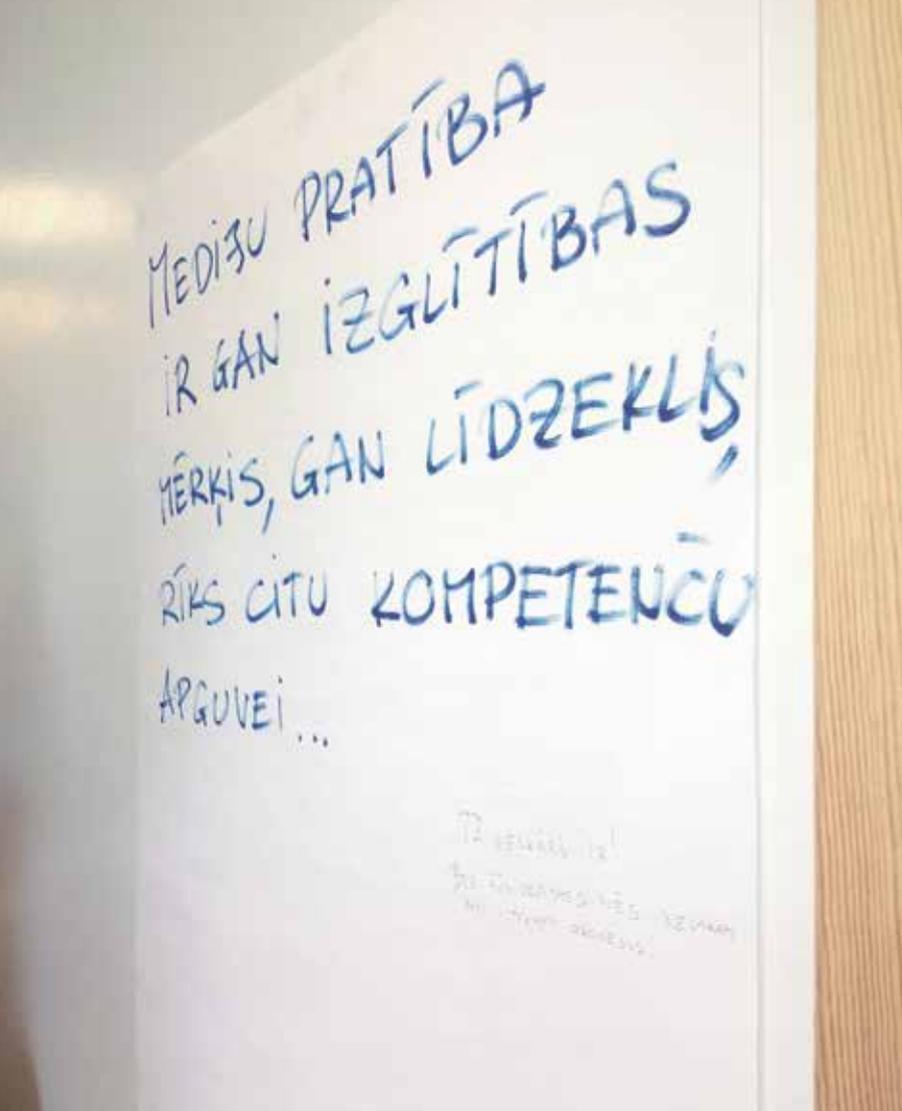
Out of the 31 contributions received, the winner was *"Mission Baltic Way"*, made by Lithuanian trio Naglis Jonas Kazlauskas, Ignas Kamarauskas and Domantas Kancleris. Their self-presentation stated the following: *"The last pages of the past century convinced us that the fierce desire for freedom and the unity of people were the key ingredients to regaining of independence. Remembering the 50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on August 23 1989, a live human chain stretching from Vilnius to Tallinn was made by the Baltic people. (..) So we decided to make a journey through the "Baltic way" visiting the inhabitants of the largest cities in the Baltic States, who will leave their signature on the Soviet car "Žigulys" - "LADA 21061" that we will be travelling with."*

The awarded video is available on vimeo.com/user3189070.

Cooperation partners: Baltic Assembly, Nordic Council of Ministers' offices in Estonia and Lithuania.

#INDEPENDENT MEDIA

In 2015 the Nordic and Baltic ministers for foreign affairs called on public and private actors in all the NB8 countries to share the knowledge and join forces in defence of a pluralistic media landscape. Since then, the NCM Baltic offices have done their fair share of contributing to independent and balanced Russian-language media and the promotion of media literacy.



Nordic-Baltic Media Meeting in Riga

The Nordic-Baltic Media Meeting was organized in April 2016 in order to discuss how Nordic media institutions could support the development of independent, high-quality media and journalism in the Baltic States. The meeting offered an update of the status quo, with briefings and reports concerning the media situation in the Baltics, with a special focus on Russian-language media in particular.

Seminar "Strengthening Media and Information Literacy Skills in Education"

Seminar "Strengthening Media and Information Literacy Skills in Education – Experience and Know-how in the Baltics" was held at Daugavpils University in August 2016. The aim was to highlight the importance of strengthening media and information literacy (MIL) skills in schools, and to exchange various experiences and best practices among the Baltic States, thus contributing to MIL policies on a national level.

Partners: Nordic Council of Ministers' Offices in Lithuania and Estonia, Daugavpils City Council Education Board and Daugavpils University.



Digital Freedom Festival 2016

In November 2016, Riga hosted the technology and start-up conference Digital Freedom Festival (DFF), which brought together over a thousand technology and start-up entrepreneurs, experts, policy-makers, investors and inspirational speakers from all over the world. The central theme of the festival was the digital revolution and its effect on business, politics and people's lifestyle.

The NCM Office in Latvia contributed to several activities:

- "Females in ICT" workshop with Riga TechGirls community and global #femtech representatives was arranged to discuss what can be done in order to grow the #femtech community and support more women joining the IT/digital sector worldwide;
- NCM Office hosted the DFF opening reception, with the keynote address "The Future of Leadership and Innovation – Through Diverse Tribes" given by Anna Lithagen (Sweden), founder and the CEO of Talent Tribe – the Creative Diversity Agency;
- DFF Cybersecurity Panel, moderated by Dr Anke Schmidt-Felzmann, researcher of the Swedish Institute of International Affairs.

Cooperation partners: Digital Freedom Festival, Riga Tech Girls.



Trainings for Journalists in Latvia

Several training courses were devised in order to help local journalists and Russian-speaking journalists in practical situations. The training course *Safety Training for Journalists in Latvia* provided journalists working in armed conflict zones with proper tools and skill sets for self-protection and the protection of their families and sources. The training course *News Verification for Journalists in Latvia* provided the know-how and the tools necessary for easy and quick verification of news and information.

Cooperation partner: Centre for Media Studies at the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga.

Balanced and Tech-Savvy Media in Latvia's Regions

The series of seminars aimed at strengthening regional media in Latvia on multiplatform content production, content communication and media ethics. The new skills acquired are expected to aid local journalists in the production of attractive, compelling, audience-centred and locally-relevant content. The project also aimed at setting up groundwork for introducing effective codes of ethics in local media.

Cooperation partners: Baltic Centre for Media Excellence.



Data Hackathon

Data Hackathon is an opportunity for open data activists in Latvia to incorporate open data principles and easier access to public data sources in their fields of work. All outputs are open for everyone to use and re-use.

Cooperation partners: School of Data, infogr.am.

#CULTURE

"Many Latvian youngsters and students have mastered Nordic languages owing to the support of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office; creative personalities and researchers have received grants to implement their ideas while cultural practitioners and other actors have exchanged experiences. Owing to the support of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia, a number of Latvian cultural institutions, organisations and individual cultural practitioners and artists have found cooperation partners and associates in the Nordic countries, which has led to a multitude of international projects and successful joint utilisation of other international financial instruments as well." (Dace Melbārde, Minister for Culture of the Republic of Latvia, speaking at the opening of the Nordic-Baltic exhibition of contemporary art "(In)visible derams and streams").



Culture for Sustainable Development

Culturability BSR Phase II – Culture for Sustainable Development in the Baltic Sea Region is one of the flagships under the EU Action Plan for the Baltic Sea Region. The goal of the project is to build knowledge on the three themes: urban social inclusion/cultural planning, sustainable cultural tourism/innovation and gaming/digital tools for sustainability and their interrelations. Through sharing knowledge of practices, experiences and ideas in relation to the above-mentioned themes, the project will build a platform for further cooperation on culture and sustainability in the Baltic Sea Region.

In 2016 Culturability BSR was also present at the EUSBSR Forum in Stockholm, where cultural gaming was put forth as an innovative and interactive tool for modelling smart, inclusive and sustainable regions. The workshop explored a possibility of creating a Minecraft mini-prototype of the Baltic Sea Region (Minecraft BSR) and its potential use in various sustainable development agendas central to the BSR 2030. Culturability BSR Phase II will be followed by several workshops and a final meeting in 2017.

Cooperation partners: Ministry of Justice, Cultural and European Affairs of Schleswig-Holstein, Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of Poland, ARS Baltica, Region Skåne, Danish Cultural Institute and several other ministries and partners across the Baltic Sea.



Faroese singer Eivør visiting Riga

In May the NCM Office in Latvia organised a musical evening with Eivør Pálsdóttir – a famous Faroese songwriter, performer and vocalist endowed with a rare and powerful voice. She held an artist talk and performed together with Latvian contemporary folk musician Laima Jansone. In 2015 Laima visited the Faroe Islands as part of her trip supported by the Nordic-Baltic Mobility Programme "Culture".

Cooperation partners: World Music Festival "Porta", Renovation Center of Wooden Architecture "Wooden Riga".

"Into the Wind" – an exhibition of Nordic children book illustrations

Exhibition "Into the Wind!" is a collection of children book illustrations by 17 artists from Åland, Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Sápmi. "Into the Wind!" pays tribute to the diversity of Northern European landscape, the long and deeply anchored tradition of visual narrative and the unwavering Nordic position that children and young people must be treated with respect. Nordic children literature and illustrations inspire young readers to think independently and imaginatively, encouraging them to be brave, free and wild – just like the wind.

Cooperation partners: Kulturkind, Nordic House in Iceland, Danish Arts Foundation, Swedish Arts Council, Latvian National Library.



Nordic Writers Crossing Borders

The project piloted in 2015 and developed further in 2016, yielding a whole series of writer visits in Latvia.

In April the Finnish poet **Heli Laaksonen** and Estonian poet **Leelo Tungal**, together with the Latvian poet and publisher Inese Zandere and poet and translator Guntars Godiņš, toured around Latvia to meet readers not only in Riga but also small-town libraries and schools:

Limbaži, Zvejniekiems, Kuldīga, Talsi and Saldus. Leelo Tungal's joyful wordplays were published in Latvian in 2014 while Heli Laaksonen's first book for children, "Aapine", was published in Latvian in 2015.

In October the Icelandic writer and professor of art history **Auður Ava Ólafsdóttir** visited Riga and Daugavpils, which is Latvia's second largest city and the centre of East-Latvian region with a sizeable non-Latvian population of ca 80%. She had a meeting at the Latgale (Daugavpils) Central Library and held a lecture on Icelandic art and culture at Daugavpils University.



A special guest of the Nordic Library Week in November was Swedish writer and animator **Henrik Tamm**, who introduced his book "Ninja Timmy and the Forgotten Childhood" – recently translated into Latvian. He had successful visits in Riga and Cesis.

Prose Readings is an annual literary event in Latvia, organised every December since 1995 and presenting an opportunity of get-together to Latvian writers and their readers. It also usually features celebrated writers from abroad, who participate in discussions and masterclasses.



Prose Readings in 2016 featured writers from Estonia, Finland, Lithuania and Slovenia. A meeting with Finnish writer **Emmi Itäranta** and a discussion "A Message to the Future Writers" with Finnish **Kjell Westö** and Estonian Rein Raud was supported by the Nordic Writer Crossing Borders, a project initiated by the Norden Association and coordinated in Latvia by the NCM Office.

Cooperation partners: Poetry Ride, publishing house "Liels un mazs", Estonian Culture Capital Foundation, Finnish Literature Exchange and Rozentals-seura in Finland, Embassy of Finland, publishing house "Zvaigzne ABC", publishing house "Jānis Roze", Latvian Writers' Association.



Comics exhibition "Tempora mutantur"

"Tempora Mutantur" is the anniversary exhibition of Finnish contemporary comic association "Kutikuti". The colorful combination of large-print comics reflects the diverse styles and narrative methods of Finnish comics in 2015.

"Kutikuti" is one of the internationally best-known phenomena in the Finnish comic scene, currently having 39 comic artists as its

members. In 2016 their 10th anniversary exhibition "Tempora Mutantur" was shown in Riga, Cēsis, Daugavpils and Ventspils. All events were accompanied by workshops, led by Finnish and Latvian artists and well-attended by school children and young people.

Cooperation partners: kuš! comics magazine, Embassy of Finland.

Nordic Comics Art

Artist talk with Mikkel Sommer

Danish comic book artist and illustrator Mikkel Sommers is the author of "*Limonchik*" – a comic series recently published by the Latvian magazine *kuš!*. In February 2016 he came all the way from Berlin to Riga, to talk about his drawings and meet with the local artists and other adepts of the genre.

Cooperation partner: kuš! comics magazine.

Long Night of Museums 2016

The Long Night of Museums is a social experience allowing its participants – museum visitors – to deep-dive into an array of fascinating subjects. The NCM Office in Latvia took part in the Museum Night in Latvia with two activities: opening an exhibition of Finnish comics art, "Tempora Mutantur", at the Naive Art Museum, and screening "Angels of the Universe" by Fridrik Þór Friðriksson at the Museum of Riga Centre of Psychiatry and Addiction Disorders.

Cooperation partners: kuš! comics magazine, Floating Art Gallery NOASS, Museum of Riga Centre of Psychiatry and Addiction Disorders.



European Film Week "Where to? Where from?"

The topic of the European Film Week 2016 was migration, since it has become a reality in every country in Europe, bringing along different challenges and consequences.

Eleven films were screened, representing different countries, and a public panel discussion was organised focusing on the impact of sociopolitical changes on different forms of art and culture.

The event was organised by the network of the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) in Latvia.

Nordic Library Week: "The Future in the Nordics"

Celebrating its twenty years of existence in the Nordic countries, the Nordic Library Week was held in Latvia for the 19th time. This year's theme, "The Future in the Nordics", garnered participation from more than 350 libraries, schools and community centers in Latvia.

Partners: publishing house "Zvaigzne ABC", Latvian National Library, 350 libraries across Latvia.

NORDIC HIGHLIGHTS



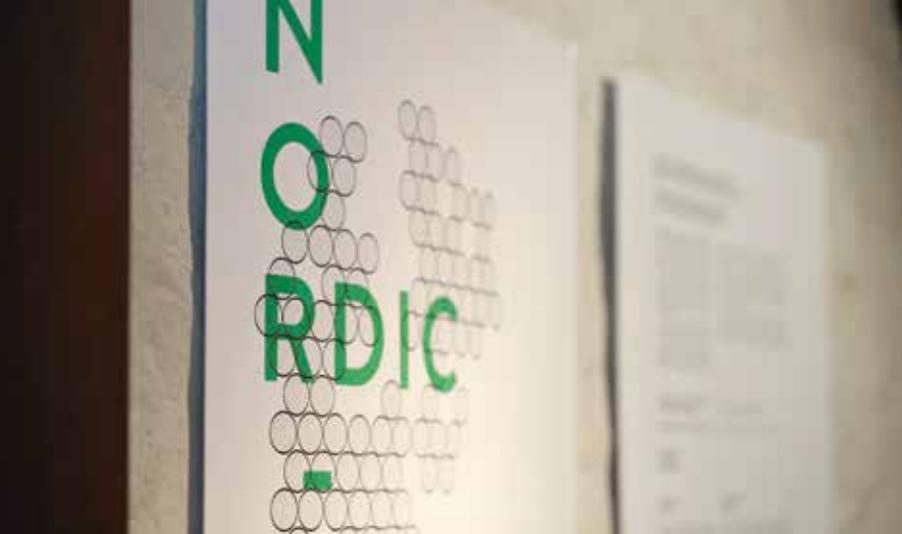
NORDIC HIGHLIGHTS at Riga International Film Festival

In 2016 the Riga International Film Festival consisted of eight film programs, including a series of Nordic films NORDIC HIGHLIGHTS. It was already the second time that RIFF dedicated a special programme for the Nordic films. Recent films by both internationally acclaimed and new directors from Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Iceland revealed a contemporary view of the particularly Nordic way of doing film, representing the Nordic storytelling, cinematography, psychology and spirit characteristic to the region. The festival also hosted an international competition as well as numerous analytical and creative workshops for film students, discussion panels, national premieres, parties, Q&As, lectures on film and culture.

"Nordic Highlights" raised great interest both from the audience and media. A number of Nordic film professionals attended the festival both introducing the films as well as participating in the various industry events. Riga IFF 2016 was attended by 14996 people, Nordic Highlights screenings – by 2057 people.

Three of RigaIFF Awards went to Nordic titles- Trond Nilssen, leading cast in *Pyromaniac* was considered the best choice for the Honourable Mention. Short Riga International Jury awarded *Moms On Fire* by Joanna Rytel as Best short film. And Children's jury short film of choice was *Lili Brushes Her Teeth* by Danish filmmaker Siri Melchior.

Partners: Riga International Film Festival, Nordic embassies in Latvia, Danish Cultural Institute in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.



“Nordic ID”: an exhibition of Nordic contemporary architecture

Nordic Contemporary Architecture Exhibition “Nordic ID” tries to decipher what the modern Nordic identity is all about and how it is reflected in architecture. The exhibition shows 25 different architecture projects which in various ways reflect the qualities of contemporary Nordic architecture: its high professional standards, respect for nature, simplicity and modesty. In 2016 the exhibition was shown in Narva, Estonia.

Cooperation partners: Latvian Museum of Architecture, Embassy of Norway, Embassy of Sweden, Embassy of Finland, Embassy of Estonia, NCM Office in Estonia (Narva branch).



Traveling photo exhibition “Liv & Ingmar”

The exhibition consists of 19 photographs displaying personal and professional relationship between the Norwegian actress Liv Ullmann and Swedish director Ingmar Bergman. In 2016 the exhibition was showcased in a number of Latvian regional libraries: Ventspils, Rīga, Alūksne, Rēzekne, Valka and Liepāja.



Nordic-Baltic Mobility Programme "Culture" in 2016

The overall objective of the Nordic-Baltic Mobility Programme "Culture" is to enhance cultural and artistic collaboration in the Nordic and Baltic countries by supporting travelling, networking activities and artists' residencies. Interest about the programme is growing, manifested by the large number of applicants. In 2016 Latvian applicants submitted 110 applications, of which 14 were granted support. All in all Latvian applicants received EUR 72 380, divided in the following way: 11 individual or small group mobility grants, 2 short-term network projects, 1 artists' residency. In addition, participants from Latvia are involved in two short-term network projects and two long-term network projects submitted by other countries.

kulturkontaktnord.org

#DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Good governance, transparency, democracy, societal solidarity and security have a positive effect on various aspects of policies, practices and plain good working relationships. The NCM Office strives to engage civil society, politicians and civil servants in a continuous discussion about these important key values.



"Nordic Cooperation – a European Region in Transition"

Dr. Johan Strang from the University of Helsinki gave a key address on the history and current realities of Nordic cooperation. His recently published book *"Nordic Cooperation – a European Region in Transition"* analyses Nordic cooperation in the European perspective and argues that this unique transnational cooperation has been crucial in the development of the Nordic Welfare Model. *"The Nordic region has unique cultural and political preconditions for forging transnational solutions, which can serve as a prototype for all – European solutions and as a model for other regions in the world."*

Extrapolating the book's premise onto the wider Nordic-Baltic context, Latvian academics and politicians were invited to discuss the various aspects of this regional cooperation, ranging from economic to cultural and beyond.

Cooperation partners:

Latvian Institute of International Affairs, Embassy of Finland.



LAMPA Conversation Festival – it's all about trust, sustainability and diversity

Trust, sustainability and diversity – these three principles are at the heart of the LAMPA conversation festival. It celebrates democratic culture and provides an open, engaging and joyful environment for vigorous and enthralling conversations for everyone who cares about Latvia and the world.

The NCM Office played an important role in its establishment back in 2015, and supported LAMPA also in its second year of existence in 2016 by arranging a set of targeted activities:

- "House of the Future" workshop-simulation, where people were encouraged to find various solutions for the integration of people with special needs in society;
- a comics workshop with Finnish illustrators and member of the feminist comic authors' group, Emmi Valve. The workshop turned into a conversation, where people worked together to visualize their experiences and views;
- a discussion on Future Cities brought together six local government leaders – trendsetters, visionaries and doers from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Latvia – to talk about innovations in their cities and regions and their visions of the future. A two-hour discussion offered examples of good practices and focused on possible synergies between the local communities and municipal governments for the needs of the future. The municipalities of Cēsis and Valmiera (Latvia), Bornholm (Denmark), Aust-Agder Region (Norway), Pori (Finland) and Motala (Sweden) were represented.

The discussion is available on vimeo.com/181762678.



Nordic-Baltic Mobility Programme for Public Administration in 2016

In 2016 the Nordic-Baltic Mobility Programme for Public Administration supported 68 applications from civil servants and other public sector representatives, of which 17 applications from Latvia were supported. The program's overall purpose is to foster harmonisation of work practices in public Administration in the Nordic-Baltic region.

nb8grants.org

Nordic-Baltic NGO support program in 2016

Out of the 16 project applications in Latvia, five were supported, covering such wide-reaching topics as sustainable consumption, children's wellbeing, social entrepreneurship and the relatively new concept of "citizen science". A project exploring the anti-corruption policies and practices in the Nordic countries was also supported. The study resulted in a list of recommendations for Latvia, disseminated via printed and online media outlets and compiled in a publication. NCM office assisted in disseminating the results.

The Nordic-Baltic NGO program aims at fostering cooperation between Nordic and Baltic NGOs, strengthening the civic society and providing support to new sustainable initiatives.

#SOCIAL WELFARE AND SECURITY

Social security and welfare is a wide range of fields spanning across the disciplinary boundaries of social and technical sciences, humanities and other sectors. By consolidating human resources across the Nordic-Baltic region it is possible to minimise the threats to our social security.



International Workshop on Societal Security Research

Societal security is a concept that refers to the capacity of society as a whole to prevent, manage and recover from various threats. How do we foster research collaboration in the region? What are the themes to focus on? What research methods should be encouraged and what research infrastructure is needed? Experts from the societal security field discussed the needs and challenges from the stakeholders' perspective, reflecting on the possible ways an NB8 research cooperation can fill these gaps.

Cooperation partners: NordForsk, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Anti-trafficking programme 2015-2018

The Anti-trafficking programme aims to implement tangible initiatives for the prevention of trafficking, prosecution of traffickers and protection of victims. In 2016 four training seminars were held in Riga, Tallinn, Helsinki and Stockholm, in order to foster networking, cooperation and trust among the NB8 officials and professionals, also including Northwest Russia. It resulted in three thematic training modules based on the transnational child protection guidelines and three contact lists for the use of national focal points within law enforcement, child welfare and NGOs/child rights advocates. The transnational child protection guidelines were also updated.

Cooperation partners: Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Welfare, CBSS, Nordic Council of Ministers' Offices in Lithuania and Estonia.



Employment of Persons with Disabilities: Moving into Labour Market

In October an international seminar titled "Employment of Persons with Disabilities: Moving into Labour Market" highlighted major challenges in the field of employment for people with disabilities and showcased best practices of involving people with disabilities in the labour market. The seminar also discussed how people with mental disabilities and handicapped persons can integrate into the labour market with the help of social entrepreneurship initiatives. Experts from Finland, Norway, Denmark and all the three Baltic countries took part.

Cooperation partners: Ministry of Welfare, Embassy of Finland.

Practice in Nordic Institutions

The program funded a mobility visit of a lecturer from University of Latvia, Faculty of Social Sciences, to the Nordic Information Centre on Gender (NIKK). Through the Practice in Nordic Institutions program, Nordic Council of Ministers' Offices in Latvia contributed to the establishment of a new Master's level study course "Gender theory and policy" at the University of Latvia. The course aims to introduce Nordic gender equality/gender mainstreaming approaches, methods and instruments in Latvia.



Regional activities in Liepāja and Tukums "Aim Speak Act: 16 Days against Gender Violence in Latvia"

Two training seminars for combating violence against women and children were organised in Liepāja and Tukums, along with the training courses on human rights, gender equality and diversity specifically aimed at professionals working with young people. The overarch-

ing purpose was not only to equip the specialists working with victims and perpetrators with the necessary skills but also to empower women, as well as to enable schools to combat discrimination and raise awareness about women's objectification.

Cooperation partners: NGO Resource Centre for Women MARTA, Ministry of Welfare, local partners in Liepāja and Tukums.

Training seminars "Alternative (non-verbal) communication with children with autism and other special needs"

Five practically oriented two-day seminars were run in Rīga, Kuldīga, Daugavpils and Madona, led by the habilitation specialist and special education teacher Inger Lilja from Sweden.

The main objectives: to equip healthcare professionals, teachers, family members and volunteers of various backgrounds with practical pedagogical methods of alternative (non-verbal) communication with children with functional disorders and to strengthen interdisciplinary cooperation for the benefit of the children. The seminars also aimed at strengthening empathetic and respectful communication between family members and professionals, promoting teaching skills necessary for the integration of children with special needs in local schools and promoting childrens' rights to schooling and everyday life at home instead of being institutionalised.

Cooperation partners: NGO Velki Foundation, NGO Centre for Deaconal Work at the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Latvia (LELB) and LELB Sunday Schools' Working Group.

Conference "Effective Measures to Combat Violence against Women"

By discussing the practical examples of solving and preventing family violence cases, the international conference "Effective Measures to Combat Violence against Women" aimed to highlight positive and not so positive aspects alike, more broadly aiming to improve the efficiency of help services, to strengthen cross-institutional collaboration and bolster the capacities of the specialists involved. Experts from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Norway and the Netherlands shared their experiences in practical application of legal protection, support and assistance provided to the victims as well as perpetrators of violence, cross-institutional cooperation as well as prevention measures, which are of utmost importance in combating violence.

Cooperation partners: Ministry of Welfare, State Police, Embassy of Finland, Embassy of Netherlands, NGO "Resource centre for women "Marta"".

#BIOECONOMY AND GREEN GROWTH

A proper research and analysis of sustainable development of bioeconomy is a crucial prerequisite for substituting fossil resources with bio-resources and creating products with high added value. In order to implement it, we need not only innovations and technologies but also skills and competences on grassroot level, as well as supportive policy frameworks.



Contribution to Bioeconomy Strategy Development in Latvia

In 2016 the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia, in collaboration with several cooperation partners, organized a series of events contributing to the development of national bioeconomy strategy, due by June 30, 2017.

In April an international conference **"Is Biotechnology Development Attractive for Nordic Countries and Baltic States?"** was held at Riga Technical University. Jukka Teräs, Senior Research Fellow of Nordregio, spoke about bioeconomy in the Nordic countries – its overall characteristics, regional insights and national policies.

In August a workshop **"Contribution to Bioeconomy Strategy Development in Latvia. Finding Focus and Transferring Best Praxis Examples from the Nordic Countries"** was organised in order to discern the strategy's focus areas and activities necessary for its implementation, as well as to transfer Nordic best practices into Latvian context. Two Nordic participants shared their experience: Arne Bardalen from the Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO) and Mika Aalto from the Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy.



In September an international conference **“Bioeconomy-Based Forestry: Opportunities and Challenges in the Century of Climate Change”** was organized. The 21st century is special for the forest sector not only because of technological developments underway but also because of the global environmental changes affecting the field. The conference sought to answer questions on Latvia’s path of development in this sphere, as well as analyse the latest forestry experiences in the Nordic countries. Several experts from the Nordic countries represented opportunities and challenges the forest sector will face in the coming years: Agnetha Alriksson from the Division for Forest and Climate of the Swedish Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, Marja Kokkonen from the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Sinikka Västilä from the North European Regional Office of the European Forest Institute EFINORD in Sweden, Juha Ojala from the Work Efficiency Institute in Finland, Tomas Lundmark from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and Hans Andren from the City of Växsjö in Sweden.

In December a conference **“Knowledge-Based Bioeconomy in Agriculture and Food Production”** was hosted. Its main goal was to introduce the concept of bioeconomy to researchers, private sector representatives and state and non-governmental actors, and to push for their involvement in drafting a bioeconomy strategy of national scope. The conference also aimed to share Nordic best-practice examples, which was done by Jukka Teräs (Sweden), Senior Research Fellow of Nordregio, and Mads Wolff (Denmark), Director and Senior Adviser at International Centre for Creativity, Innovation and Sustainability.

Cooperation partners: Latvia University of Agriculture, Riga Technical University, Ministry of Agriculture, NGO “Green Homes”, Forest Support Foundation.



Fashion and textile in Riga

World-famous manufacturers, popular labels and promising new entrepreneurs and young designers came together at the biggest textile industry fair in the Baltics – “Baltic Fashion & Textile Riga 2016”, held in Kipsala International Exhibition Centre in Riga in April 2016. The fair brought together more than 170 companies from 16 countries, offering a three-day programme of fashion shows.

Entrepreneurs, designers, fashion and textile design students, lecturers, stylists and other interested parties were invited to the international seminar “Fashion and Design”, which acquainted with the current trends in the industry. The seminar aimed to boost the export capacity and competitiveness of Latvian fashion designers and textile industry companies by offering part-educational and part-informative program based on foreign expertise.

A panel discussion on the key success factors of European fashion industry consisted of distinguished speakers, one of whom was Margareta van den Bosch with a presentation “What are the key success factors driving the fashion design industry? Top 10 lessons based on a long-term experience in fashion retail.” Margareta van den Bosch also chaired the jury panel of “Habitus Baltija 2016” – a competition for young fashion designers, bringing together the most talented young fashion designer, experts and academic staff members from more than ten countries. Margareta van den Bosch is the creative consultant and a long-term chief designer at H&M, currently in charge of H&M collaboration with the biggest fashion houses.

Cooperation partner: International Exhibition Company BT1.



Climate Launchpad: Latvia Finals

Climate change solutions and innovations take up an important part of Nordic co-operation, with an increasing participation of the Baltic States.

On August 9, the most promising cleantech innovations from Latvia were chosen to star in the ClimateLaunchpad European Finals: the *CompHeat* with an idea for industrial composting, the *Bee In* with their natural beeswax and cotton cloth alternative for food storage, and the *Farmair* – a drone providing smart orchard monitoring and misting solutions.

ClimateLaunchpad is the world's largest competition of cleantech business ideas, with a mission to unlock Europe's cleantech potential and address climate change.

More information: climatelaunchpad.org

Cooperation partners: Green Technology Incubator, Climate-KIC, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, BDO Latvia, Reihmanis & Partners and Exigen Services.



Responsible Food Consumption in Schools

Project "Responsible Food Consumption in Schools" was implemented in four Latvian vocational schools where future cooks are trained. The project encouraged youngsters to make observations about the reasons for food being wasted in different food consumption venues, and to compete in a best-recipe contest where only local and seasonal products were allowed. The final event gathered 20 of the most active participants from Daugavpils, Jelgava, Valmiera and Riga. These young cooks prepared local and seasonal meals together with the "Valmiermuiža Embassy" chef and the European Region of Gastronomy 2017 ambassador in Latvia, Dzintars Kristovskis. Social anthropologist Agnese Bankovska, in a video lecture from Helsinki, shared the latest observations on global food consumption trends.

Cooperation partner: NGO "homo ecos:".

Workshop on Food Waste Management in Municipalities and Schools

Workshop on food management in municipalities and schools, "Zero-waste welfare society?" raised several important questions for a public discussion: What is the role of cities in food waste governance? How do we measure our food waste? What can we conclude by studying food waste in municipality schools? What are the options for reducing food waste in municipal educational institutions?

Cooperation partners: Nordic Innovation, Baltic Studies Centre, ZAAO, Ministry of Environment Protection and Regional Development, Homo Ecos, Investment and Development Agency of Latvia.



Nordic Co-operation

Denmark
Finland
Iceland
Norway

Nordic-Baltic cluster cooperation

In a move to strengthen Latvian-Nordic regional cooperation, the first two clusters have been chosen to represent Latvia in the Baltic Sea Region cluster support program BSR Stars Innovation Express: Latvian IT Cluster with the project "Opening CIS markets for smart technology SMEs from Latvia and Sweden" and Latvian High Added Value and Healthy Food Cluster with the project "Cross-sectoral collaboration for efficient and sustainable food value chains in the Baltic Sea Region".

Latvian clusters will collaborate with the Fiber Optic Valley AB cluster from Sweden and food industry cluster FoodNetwork from Denmark, thus facilitating innovation, export growth and internationalisation of SMEs. Participation of Latvian clusters in this program is supported by the Latvian Ministry of Economics and the Nordic Council of Ministers, with a joint allocation of 48 000 EUR.

The "Innovation Express" cluster support program is designed to facilitate international cooperation among SMEs by implementing cluster initiatives and promoting mutual transfer of innovative technologies and expertise between the Nordic and Baltic countries. In total the "Innovation Express" support program received applications from four Latvian clusters, covering various sectors: environmental and green technologies, food manufacturing and information technologies.

Cooperation partner: Ministry of Economics of Latvia.

Miscellaneous

New visual identity

The Nordic swan – a joint corporate logo of the official Nordic co-operation – underwent transformation in November 2016. Designed by Bo Linnemann (Denmark), it pays due respect to the original model (created by Kyösti Varis (FI) in 1985), but this time in a simpler, clearer and modern version. The flying swan has been the symbol of both the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers since 1985.

On the move

During 2016 the NCM Office operated in a stand-by mode. We left our old premises of Marijas 13/3, where the Office had been located since 2000, while waiting for the new and more spacious Office on the first floor of Marijas 13/2-3 to be ready in January 2017. The Office library, available for public visitors, is expected to open its doors again in 2017.

As of 15 November 2016, head of the NCM Office in Estonia, Christer Haglund, has been appointed Acting Director of the NCM Office in Latvia.



In memoriam

Most tragically, the year also turned out to be the last in the NCM Office's director Jan Widberg's life. He passed away on 16 November 2016.

Jan dedicated much of his working life to international and Nordic cooperation, with particular focus on the Baltic Sea Region. His major assignments were carried out at the Nordic Council, the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference and most recently – at the Nordic Council of Ministers. Jan also received a Baltic Assembly Medal for promoting cooperation between the Baltic and Nordic countries – a fine recognition for his deep and genuine interest in the region and in Latvia as his last host country in particular.

Jan's contribution to the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office is hard to overestimate. We will always be grateful for what he has done over these two years and what he has meant for each and every one of us both professionally and personally. We will remember Jan as an intelligent, energetic and kind-hearted human being and colleague, who managed to exhibit these qualities in a most dignified and admirable manner until the very end. He will be sorely missed.

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