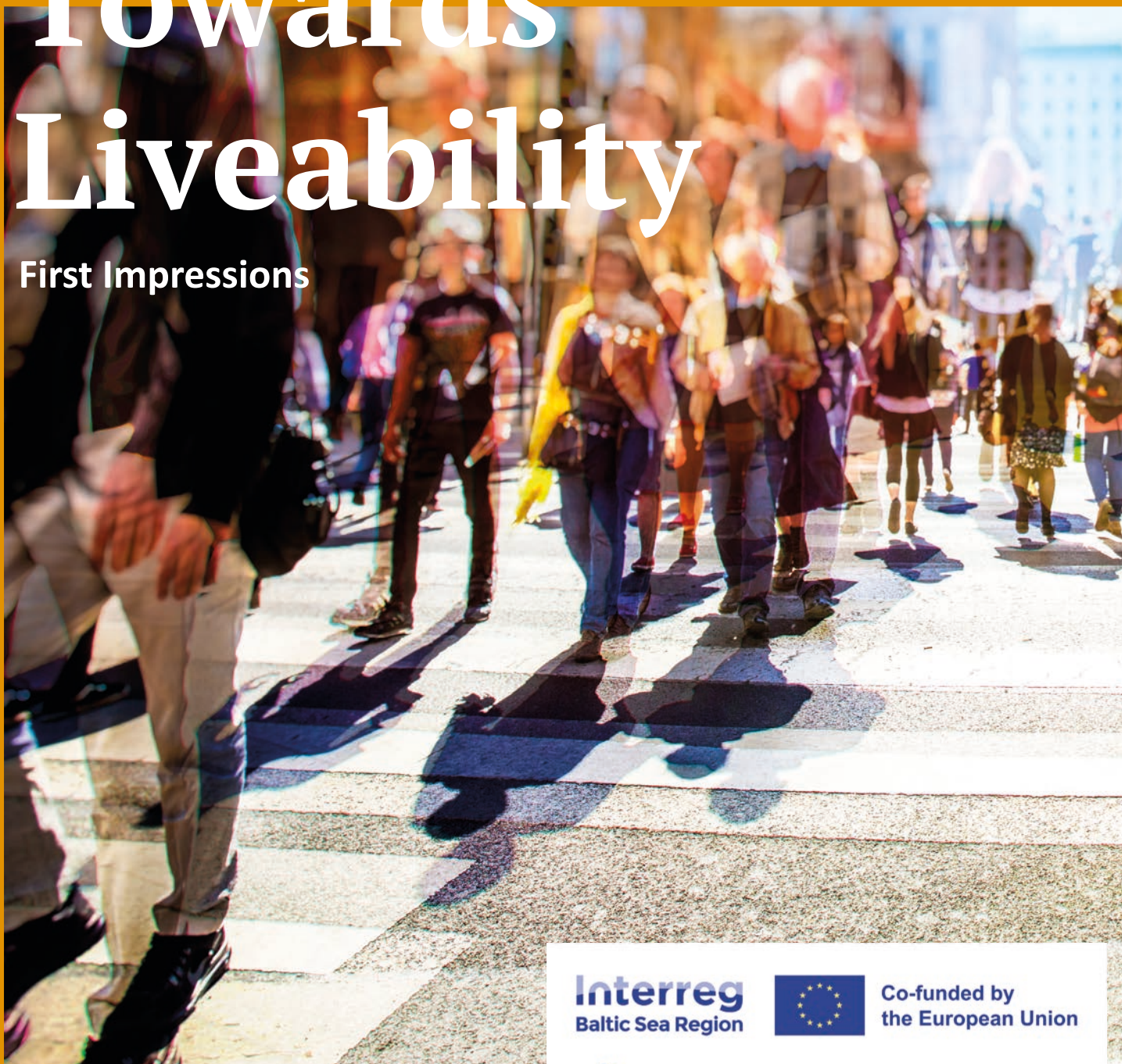


# The Journey Towards Liveability

First Impressions



**Interreg**  
Baltic Sea Region



Co-funded by  
the European Union



RESPONSIVE PUBLIC SERVICES

**Liveability**

# Liveability

Designing public services for resilient neighbourhoods

**How can cities manage transformation processes together with their citizens? What can city administrations do to increase their capabilities to act creatively, flexibly and transparently with the goal of making cities more liveable?**

Answers to these questions are being explored in the project „Liveability -Designing Public Services for Resilient Neighbourhoods“. In this project, eleven organizations, including six municipalities in the Baltic Sea Region – Kiel (DE), Gdynia (PL), Guldborgsund (DK), Kolding (DK), Pori (FI) and Riga (LV), are jointly developing a user-centered approach that will be tested in a neighborhood in each partner city. Topics such as integration of refugees, the coexistence of different generations, inner city development, public services or offers and urban planning and urban planning processes are being looked at.

This brochure presents the essence of the project Liveability, providing an insightful overview of the project’s goals as well as the progress achieved thus far. Discover these first impressions and join us on this transformative journey towards making cities more liveable.

The „Liveability“ project is co-funded by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region (BSR) Programme 2021-2027.

„Liveability“ is a BSR core project under the priority Innovative Societies running from January 2023 to December 2025.

**Would you like to join the discussion and learn more about making cities liveable? Then visit our:**

[Website](#)



[Instagram](#)





**Anna Emil**  
Change Agent – City of Kiel

*„To me a liveable city, with its people, buildings, restaurants and more, is green, blue and diverse. It is a child-friendly place that inhabitants feel connected to. A place where people feel responsible for their surroundings and have the possibility to participate in decisions and contribute to shaping their city. It is a city where services are easily accessible and citizens feel supported in reaching their potential.“*

# What is Public Interest Design?

For tackling complex challenges of the 21st century, a deep rethinking of policy and programme planning is required so that meaningful interventions and public services can be developed.

Public Interest Design (PID) is a methodological framework that can be used to make cities, communities, and neighbourhoods more liveable. PID places the public interest and the collective well-being at the center of design processes related to urban planning

and public services. It takes into account dimensions that are necessary for improving quality of life – the physical, the social and the cultural dimension.

Here designing means problem solving. PID encompasses both concrete design approaches and a certain mindset, that has participation and citizen engagement always in the foreground.

The term „Public Interest Design“ itself features mostly in discussions around architecture and urbanism that involves citizens through social design, pop-up projects, or public service design but does not form a coherent school of thought or discipline. In the light of intensifying socio-ecological crises, a variety of similar terms have been discussed to underscore that design should not aim at private profits, including Planet-Centric-, Life-Centric-, Society-Centered-, Transition-, Regenerative- or Social Design. Taking a systemic design requires an integration of systems thinking theory with the practical methods of design thinking.

Considering the primary objective to improve the collective well-being and liveability of residents within urban settings, it might be effective to shift our focus on what PID does rather than what it is. Potentially, this supports the challenging undertaking to develop something that is inclusive enough to be widely used, but equally adaptable to fit to contextual issues within the different project partner cities.



# Liveability Partners

The project partnership brings together diverse and experienced organizations from the Baltic Sea Region with the common goal of making cities more liveable. The project is led by Heinrich Böll Foundation Schleswig-Holstein and consists of project partners from six BSR countries – Germany, Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Poland, and Estonia. Further, 15 associated organizations complements the partnership.

City of Pori (FI)

Estonian Academy of Arts (EE)

Riga City Council (LV)

Danish Cultural Institute (DK)

Business Kolding (DK)

City of Kiel (DE)

Guldborgsund  
Municipality (DK)

Heinrich-Böll-Foundation  
Schleswig-Holstein e.V. (DE)

City of Gdynia (PL)

Gdansk University of  
Technology (PL)

Politics for Tomorrow (DE)

**Associated Organisations:** Anykščiai District Municipality, Avoti Neighbourhood Association, Christian-Albrecht-University Kiel, Creative Bureaucracy Initiative, Liepaja city municipality administration, Living Streets, Ministry of Justice - European Affairs and Consumer Protection of Land Schleswig Holstein, Narva City Government, Porin kaupunkikeskusta NGO / Porikorttelit, Riga Living Streets, Riga Neighbourhood Alliance, Riga Urban Institute, Umeå municipality, Union of Baltic Cities, Urban Institute, UrbanLab Gdynia – Social Innovation Lab, VASAB – Vision and Strategies Around the Baltic Sea.

# Official Start

Our journey towards more liveable cities in the Baltic Sea Region began in February 2023 in Kiel, Germany, where all eleven partners met to kick off this project. The first important task was to generate a common understanding of liveability and public interest design as the underlying concepts of the project.

What makes our cities liveable right now? How do we imagine the liveable city of the future? What do we understand by public interest design? How do we frame it in this project? Fast forward to 2026. What could be a newspaper headline or hashtag on the Liveability project? These were questions being discussed.

A joint vision for the project began to materialise during the meeting and has since further been developed by the project partnership.



# Capacity Building

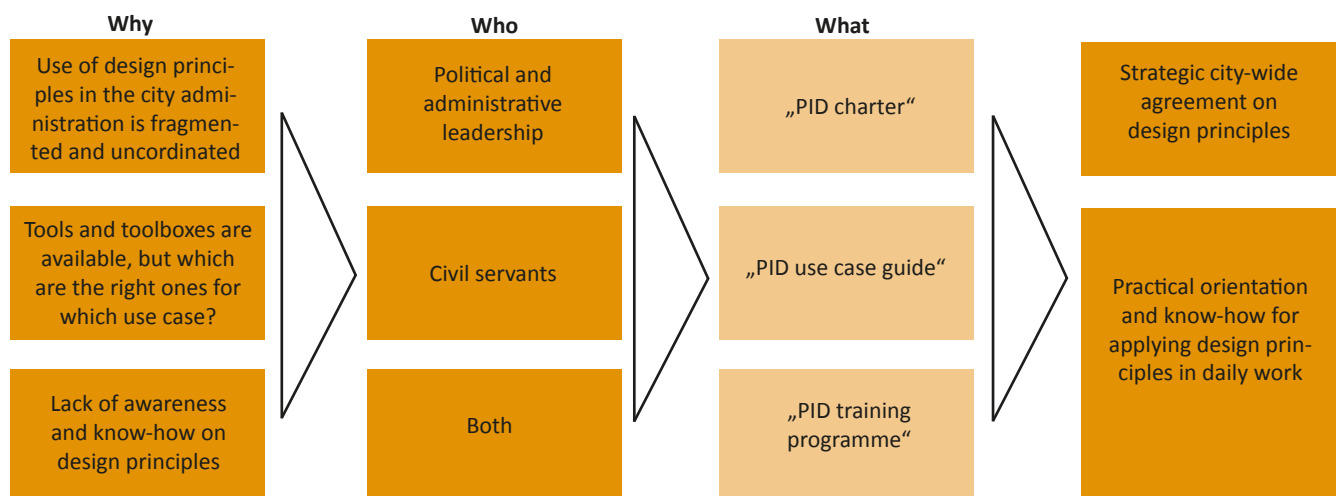
In order to find solutions to the current crises and challenges and become more liveable for their citizens, cities should become closer to the citizen, more public and more agile.\*

This can be achieved by applying systemic design principles in urban planning and provision of public services. Yet in most cities, this has happened only in singular pilot projects, if at all.

The ambition of the Liveability partnership is to prepare local public authorities for using design principles broadly and throughout the city administration. This means engaging in a dialogue with leaders on how public interest design can be anchored in city-wide strategies, but also providing guidance for civil servants working on concrete solutions for challenges in the cities' neighbourhoods. Both these aspects will be addressed by the capacity building programmer for public interest design that is developed, piloted and transferred by the Liveability partnership.

\*Näher, öffentlicher, agiler – Eckpfeiler einer Post-Corona-Stadt. Source: Wuppertal Institut, 2020

## Our solution: A PID Capacity Building Programme



# Change Agent and Implementer

In the Liveability project, we identified two key roles for fostering the change processes within the partner cities: The PID Change Agent and the PID Implementer. These two persons will have a key role in the piloting of the PID capacity building programme. They will serve as an interface between the existing settings and structures (regime) and alternative approaches tried by actors inside and outside the city administration (niches).

A PID change agent is an employee of the city administration that has the capability and mandate to work with both city leadership and civil servants across departments of the city administration. The PID change agent should have good understanding of organisational processes and workflows in the city administration.

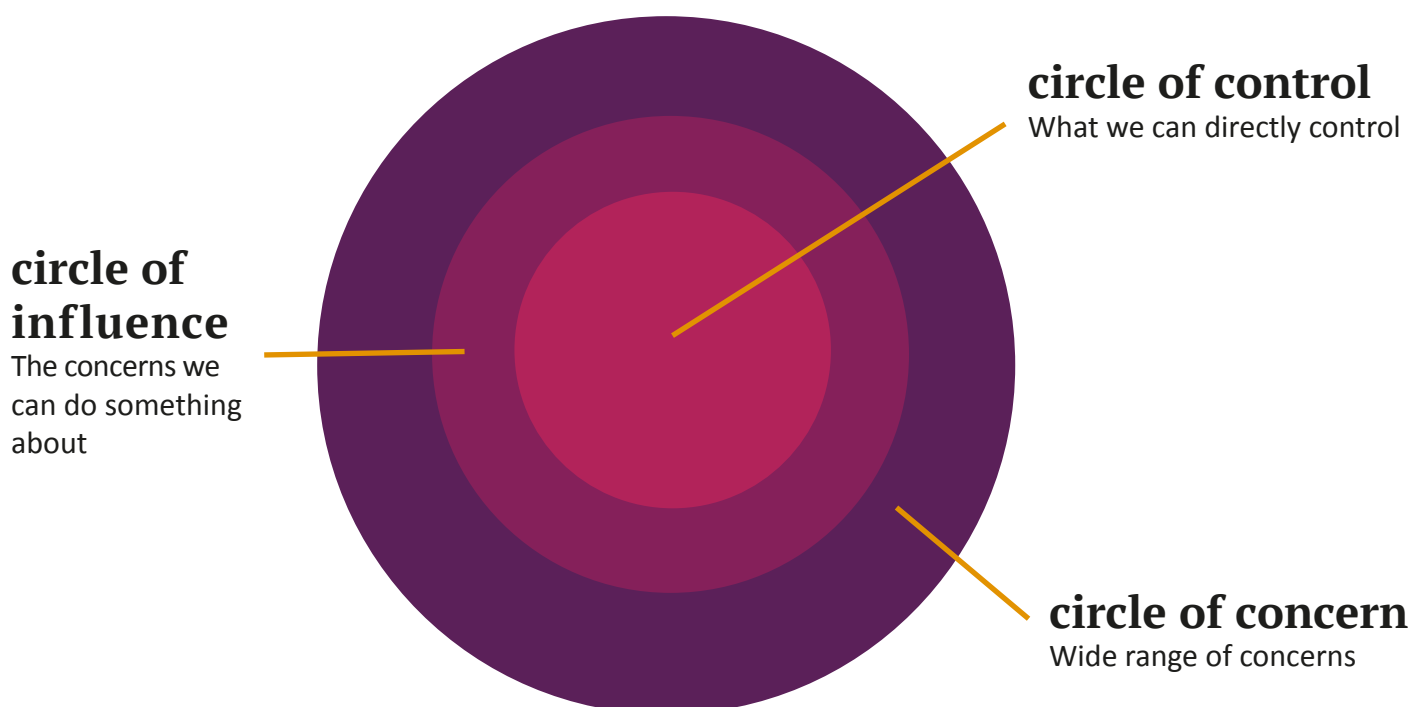
Additionally, every partner city of the Liveability project appoints one so-called PID implementer. The PID implementer has a key function in the piloting of PID in a neighbourhood testbed, developing or improving public services and urban planning processes. Hence, the PID implementer directly engages with citizens and neighbourhood organisations, and has the role of facilitating the co-creation of the public service to be developed.





# Circle of Influence

When we set out on the journey of Liveability it was crucial to understand how we can increase self-efficacy for developing and delivering public services. An exercise the partners did at the kick-off meeting, together with the change agents and PID implementers, was to explore the „circle of influence“. We used the model by Stephen R. Covey to help us facilitate a discussion on which matters we can influence to achieve our project objectives. First, by identifying the concerns that we can do something about, and then establishing an additional „circle of concern“, that includes any issue relevant to bring about change. It becomes clear as we examine the issues in our „circle of concern“ that some are within and some beyond our direct control. We jointly looked into the different issues, and discussed the importance of striving for pragmatic solutions within one’s own sphere of influence, or the possibility to align with others to widen one’s sphere of influence. This pragmatic approach guides us and makes it much easier to increase the effectiveness for fostering change.



# The Liveability design Approach

The Liveability project undoubtedly will not produce ready-made „solutions“, but will promote a Public Interest Design approach that can make administrative structures „closer“, „more public“ and „more agile“. A key for tackling systemic problems is to enhance the Futures Literacy for civil servants. This is the ability to understand how to work with futures thinking and systemic design approaches when developing public services for resilient neighbourhoods.

Supporting the understanding of problems, uncertainties and facilitating discussions about the way forward – towards collective well-being and public interest – will help to build up anticipatory governance a preparedness is crucial for public administrations to achieve their goals while navigating through uncertain circumstances. The PID capacity building programme’s core objective is to identify and share design approaches and tools that help public administrations co-creating cities becoming more liveable.

The capacity building programme consists of three components which will be explained on the next pages:

- 1. A PID charter**
- 2. A PID use case guide**
- 3. A training programme in PID**

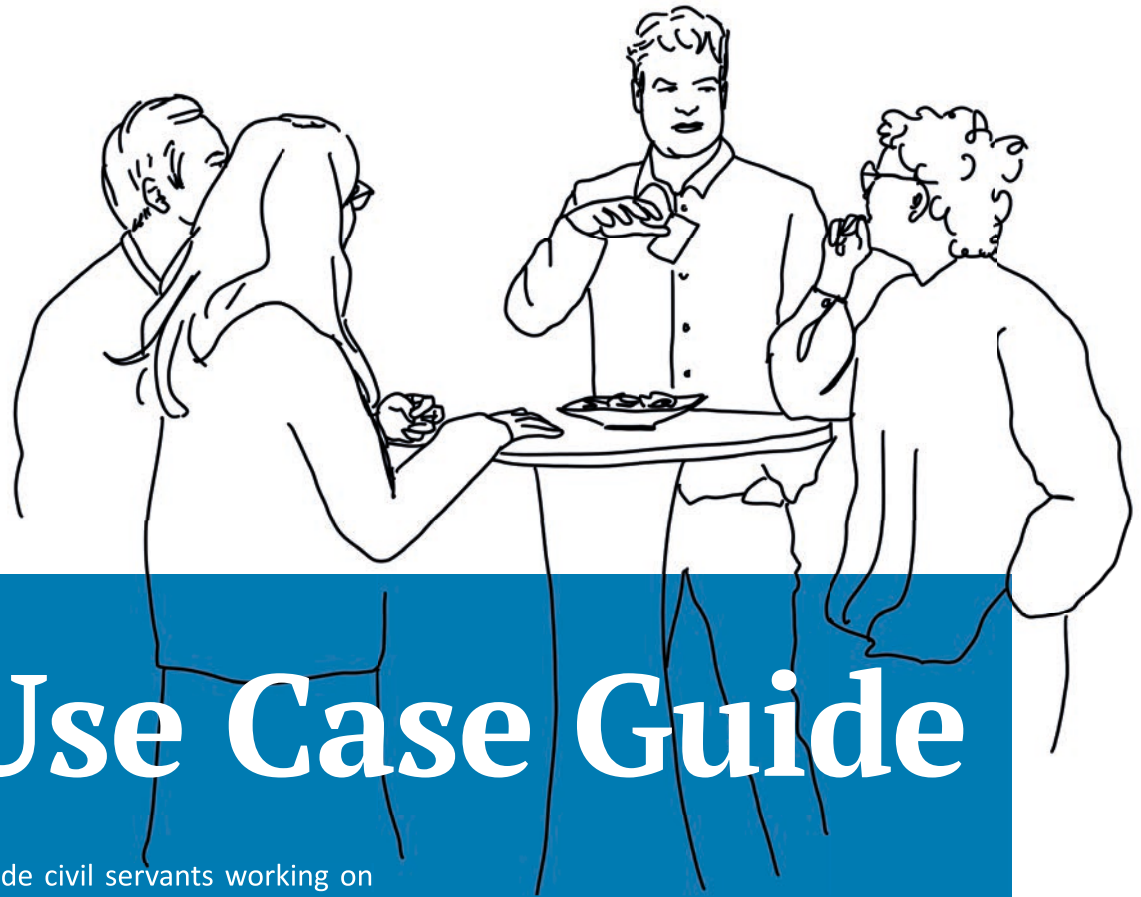
# PID Charter

The first component of the PID capacity building programme addresses the political and administrative leadership of cities. The partners are developing a charter for designing the liveable city that aims at inspiring administration (and beyond) to tackle the wicked problems in an efficient, transparent and creative way with appropriate tools and methods. Civil servants, citizens and other stakeholders are empowered and engaged in creating a (their) liveable city.

The charter will identify and include commonly accepted principles of public interest design for the liveable city and a set of strategic guidelines. The principles and guidelines serves as a foundation for the entire city administrations' work.

For the leadership of the city administrations, adopting the principles of the charter is a way of stimulating innovative mindsets among employees, strengthening the effectiveness and user-friendliness of public services throughout the city and signifying to residents as well as social, economic and cultural actors that the city strives to become more "liveable". It fosters a more adaptive and engaging leadership, which can help build up anticipatory governance in the cities.





# PID Use Case Guide

The PID charter will provide civil servants working on the ground in public service delivery or urban planning (e.g. in the cities' neighbourhoods) basic orientation on the principles of public interest design, but it alone does not enable them to apply these principles in their daily work. What they also need is guidance in preparing a use case for PID, i.e. the application of design principles in the development or delivery of a concrete public service or urban planning process in a given neighbourhood. This use case might for instance concern the integration of refugees, the coexistence of different generations, inner city development or other public services, offers or urban planning processes.

A city that aspires to be liveable should also give space for new things, to try, to reflect and thus to learn from real experiences. In the Liveability project, there are so-called „testbeds“ - implementation projects in the partner cities in which the PID methods are concretely tried out, tested and evaluated.

# PID Training Programme

The last component of the capacity building programme that complements the PID charter and use case guide and addresses both the leadership and the employee level is a PID training programme. This training programme will be based on the results and learnings in the project. The training addresses a) the PID change agents as multipliers of knowledge in the city administrations (train-the-trainers), b) political and administrative decision-makers and c) the PID implementers and other city administration staff working with public services and urban planning in all departments. The training is first piloted with employees of the partner cities' administrations. Later on, it will also be offered to other cities in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond.





**Mārtiņš Eņģelis**  
Change Agent – Riga City Council

*„What interests me a lot is the obvious next level of democracy. We all know what democracy is. It means we have rights to express ourselves. And then the next level is civil society. I am very fond to see how people and different communities understand that. To take things in their own hands and organize their own activities. Creating their own projects to make their lives better.“*

# Outlook

Through this ‚Journey towards liveability‘, we hope to create a transnational community of practice and network around public interest design and the “Liveability approach”. Our aim is to facilitate the understanding of problems and uncertainties and to encourage discussion about the way forward within city administrations, which will help to build up anticipatory governance and collaborative problem solving – towards collective well-being and liveable cities.

Besides functioning as a platform for knowledge exchange for enhancing Liveability through public interest design, the network also strives to serve as an engine behind the continued promotion and transfer of the three components of the PID capacity building programme, for instance by organising online train-the-trainer seminars and awarding a “liveable city” label. How this will be rolled out in the future will be shared with you in the next issue of „The Journey Towards Liveability“.

If you are interested to know more about the project and join the journey, feel welcome to contact us.

[info@liveable-cities.net](mailto:info@liveable-cities.net)





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„**Liveability** – Designing public services  
for resilient neighbourhoods“

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