

ADDED
COMMUNITY VALUES



Example of good practice

NGO *Nāc līdzās!*

Come along!

Social Inclusion & Cohesion

SUMMARY

Name	"Nāc līdzās!" foundation
Summary description of idea and activities	Foundation "Nāc līdzās!" (<i>in translation – Come along!</i>) is a charitable organization that started its activity in 1998. The day-to-day activities of the foundation are mainly focused on the active cooperation of children and young people in the foundation's choir and instrument ensembles, which the members themselves visit every week, and socialize with their collective members. At the same time, the head of the foundation, together with cooperation partners and volunteers, often organizes various informative seminars, discussions, information campaigns, as well as participates in conferences in order to inform the society as a whole about the needs of the social inclusion of the specific target audience.
Country observed	Latvia
Year observed	2023
Programme area (Social inclusion/ Active Citizenship/Environmental sustainability)	Social inclusion
Specific topic	Amateur art
Beneficiaries of the activities	Children and young people with disabilities; Family members of children and young people with disabilities; Volunteers; Cultural sector overall.
Can these activities be applied to other beneficiaries: yes/no	Yes
What type of beneficiaries: ALL, or specific ones?	Vulnerable groups of the society
If specific ones, which?	E.g. imigrants

Social inclusion & cohesion with Nāc līdzās!

Foundation "Nāc līdzās!" (*in translation – Come along!*) is a charitable organization that started its activity in 1998. Its leader Sarma Freiberga says that her idea to establish the organization started when a child with mental disabilities joined the children's and youth dance group she was leading. By delving more and more into the topic of social inclusion, Sarma has realized that she wants to create a cultural space for more people with disabilities. Therefore, the focus of the foundation's activity is the inclusion of people with functional disorders, mental disorders, and disabilities in cultural participation activities. Children and young people from several Latvian cities mainly participate in these activities.

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The foundation mainly bases the activities on the principle of voluntary work - none of its creators are paid for it. Over the years, the head of the foundation, Sarma Freiberga, has attracted various assistants, who ensure the organization and management of events. The main source of funding for the foundation is donations. According to its leader, the foundation could not exist without them. Its existence is based on a sense of mission - Sarma Freiberga states that, in her opinion, it is necessary to provide a space, where people with functional or other disabilities can express themselves creatively, socialize and go outside the walls of their room. She highlights the problem that often such people do not want to be accepted in "ordinary" singing or dancing groups, so "Nāc līdzās!" is a place where everyone is accepted. At the same time, the organization provides an opportunity for the public to become more familiar with the activities of its members.

As one of the society's most recent informative and educational events is the project "Outsiders' art in Latvia". As part of it, people with physical or mental disabilities were publicly invited to submit their works of art - drawings, paintings, which were later collected in one exhibition that travelled to different cities of Latvia.



Photo: Foundation "Nāc līdzās!". Presentation of the exhibition "Outsiders` Art" in Jelgava.

On the other hand, as one of the most significant regular events of the foundation, is the integrative art festival "Nāc līdzās" - a big concert takes place every year in VEF Culture Palace, Riga. As part of it, children, young people, as well as adults and their collectives from all over Latvia are invited to perform and show their talents in dance, music, theatre, etc. to a wider audience.

Within the framework of the festival, regional trips to different Latvian cities are taking place, so that everyone who wants to perform is given the opportunity to do so.



Photo: Ruslans Antropovs, "Nāc līdzās" concert in 2022

On the one hand, the activities of the "Nāc līdzās" foundation provides an opportunity for the specific target audience to express themselves creatively both in everyday life and in specially designed, unique events. On the other hand, its leader states that the aim of the foundation is to show the "different", "unknown" and sometimes "incomprehensible" to the wider society.

According to her, it is necessary in this way to teach the general society to understand and accept people with functional and/or mental disabilities as "their own". Other smaller and larger-scale projects are also implemented within the framework of the fund, such as cooperation with general education schools, their students, trips to other countries, organizing and participating in annual holiday events, etc. In this way, it is possible to ensure not only the integration of the members of the foundation into society, mutual socialization, but also the wider society's understanding of the everyday life of people with functional and/or mental disorders. The head of the foundation, Sarma Freiberga, points out that in this work it is also important to see the participants themselves opening up to the world, to various activities. Often, the new members of the foundation are shy to participate in some activities, but with time it can be observed that, as their social abilities expand, their interest and opportunities to participate in other social activities, education, voluntary or even paid work, etc., also expand.

In general, it can be concluded that "Nāc līdzās" is one of the most important, serious players in the social integration, inclusion culture sector in Latvia. Its activities are regularly and widely presented in the media, conferences, etc. in public activities, highlighting the issues of social inclusion, integration, physical accessibility, which ensures an amazingly high recognition of the organization. At the same time, it is clear the success of the foundation is based on the activity of specific enthusiasts (volunteers, cooperation partners).

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