

European Neighbours' Day 2008 in Riga

The European Neighbours' Day is a new project in the Riga City. In 2006 it was realized for the first time only in one district of the city – the Kurzeme District, but in spite of lack of experience it was very successful and inspired other districts of Riga to organize similar festivities. Therefore in January 2007 almost all the executive directorates of the districts of Riga informed the Riga City Council that they would be ready and willing to help with the organization of the European Neighbours Day if they saw initiative and support from the citizens. However in the Year 2008 for the first time all of the executive directorates of Riga showed their interest and in the end also great enthusiasm to organize European Neighbours' Day 2008 in their district.

The European Neighbours' Day 2008 was celebrated in all six districts of the Riga City: Central District, Vidzeme District, Kurzeme District, Zemgale District, Latgale District and Northern District. The main organizers of the event were the local authorities – the executive directorates of the districts in cooperation with the Riga City Council, which provided the financial assistance. Also in some districts the citizens and neighbours showed great initiative to organize the celebration.

The European Neighbours' Day 2008 in Riga was celebrated on May 24th in Kurzeme District, Zemgale District and Vidzeme District, and on May 27th in Central District, Latgale District and Northern District.

European Neighbours' Day 2008 in the Kurzeme and Zemgale District of Riga

On May 24th Kurzeme and Zemgale District (since they are neighbouring Districts) organized a joint event this year – on the Kalnciema Street – a street which separates both Districts and is also well known taking into account that every visitor of the Riga city who goes from the International Airport of Riga to the city centre gets the first impression of the city by driving down the Kalnciema street.

This years highlight was ancient and unique wooden buildings of the Riga City, reconstructed wooden buildings on the Kalnciema Street, the history and future vision of the street as a place which invites to join the green lifestyle, sport and recreation.

The Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Riga City Council, representatives of the Foreign Affairs Office of the Riga City Council and also Executive Directors of both Districts participated in the celebration. After the concert, speeches and wishes everyone was invited to visit the Green Market, to have some cheesecake, listen to the performance of the brass band and to participate in many other activities.

In general there were approximately 500 people attending the event on the Kalnciema Street.

European Neighbours' Day 2008 in the Vidzeme District of Riga

The European Neighbours' Day in the Vidzeme District of Riga City was also celebrated on May 24th. The initiator of the event was the local authority – the Executive

Directorate of the Vidzeme District with a help of local citizens. The citizens were generating ideas as well as taking an active part in the organisational process.

During the celebration the inhabitants of the local streets met at the event place and gave a short presentation of each street which they had prepared in advance. In the celebration there were many activities for all age groups. Kids were busy having fun on the inflatable features, drawing and participating in different creative workshops. At the lunch time everyone had a picnic together. After the lunch there was a concert.

All together there were approximately 1000 citizens attending the celebration in the Vidzeme District of Riga.

European Neighbours' Day 2008 in the Central District of Riga

On May 27th the European Neighbours' Day was celebrated in Central District of Riga, inviting inhabitants and entrepreneurs who live or work on Jana Street in the Old Town of Riga. The celebration was going on to let all the participants enjoy songs, dances and music together. Organizers provided everyone with food and drinks. During the event people could enjoy pleasant atmosphere, get to know each other closer and discuss topical issues. Representatives from the Riga City Council and Embassy of France also took part in the celebration. Also there was a special stamp issued by the JSC Latvia Post with a photo of Jana Street and text "European Neighbours' Day celebration, May 2008" under it.

In the end all of the participants came to a conclusion that all inhabitants of the planet Earth are actually neighbours not to mention the inhabitants of our small city – Riga.

There were about 60 people attending the celebration organised by the Central District executive directorate.

European Neighbours' Day 2008 in the Northern District of Riga

The European Neighbours' Day in the Northern District of Riga City was celebrated on May 27th. The goal of the event was to introduce inhabitants with culture of different European countries, to get to know each other as neighbours, who live on a common street, in a common district.

At the beginning of the event the place of celebration was decorated with balloons and childrens' drawings. Later on there was a competition of the drawings and the young artists got presents. For the kids there was also an amusement place settled. Creative workshops took place in the yard where also adults were welcomed to participate. Everyone could learn how to build a bird cage, how to make some bijouterie etc. There was a Latvian folk dance group giving their performance later in the evening.

When all the activities came to an end, at the conclusion all of the neighbours where given an air balloon to which they could attach a note with a special wish and let them fly. Let the dreams come true!

Although the programme of the event was full of interesting activities, responsiveness was rather small. All together there were approximately 100 people attending the celebration.

European Neighbours' Day 2008 in the Latgale District of Riga

The European Neighbours' Day in the Latgale District of Riga City was celebrated on May 27th. The European Neighbours' Day in the Latgale District was celebrated for the second time this year. The initiator of the event was the local authority – the Executive Directorate of the Latgale District but also the inhabitants of the District were really supportive. The

surroundings of the event place were cleaned by the inhabitants some days before the event and also the process of the celebration was considered together with the local inhabitants.

There was an informative journal "Our home –J.Asara Street 15" released with the help of inhabitants. There were publications about the history of the district, information and photos of former inhabitants and families who used to live in the area.

In the celebration there was performance of a brass orchestra „Auseklitis" and musical group "Trijatā". Afterwards the inhabitants joined together in different games, activities and competitions. There was a special programme for the smallest neighbours of the area. During the event everyone could enjoy dinner together, to meet their friends and get to know their neighbours.

The Neighbours' Day 2008 in the Latgale District was organized by local inhabitants with a help of the local authority. All together there were approximately 100 people attending the celebration.

Conclusion

In 2008 the European Neighbours' Day celebration in different districts of Riga was really successful. In some districts the Neighbours' Day was celebrated for the first time but we feel that not for the last time. And more and more with every year the inhabitants become active in organizational part of the celebration and that, as well feel, is one of the main goals of the European Neighbours' Day.

All together there were approximately 2000 inhabitants of Riga attending the celebration in May 2008. We hope that in the Year 2009 the number will be even greater.

As a capital of Latvia, Riga is the place where discussions about social solidarity and tolerance are held most often. Hopefully this exciting project will become a strong tradition and it will expand outside the capital of Latvia as well.