Communicating the Local Government Reforms (2009) to Inhabitants of Rezekne Municipality. Case of Latvia

Ms. Anna Jaudzema
Head of Development Planning Department of Rezekne Municipality, Latvia
Rezekne municipality: the biggest one in Latvia (according to territory)

**Territory:** 2524km²  
**Number of rural territories (villages):** 25  
**Population:** 29 772
01/07/2009 – major local government reform in Latvia

**Goal:** to simplify the territorial organisation and to create stronger municipalities with broader powers and political autonomy

**Results:**

- 26 districts, 586 villages and cities were replaced by 110 municipalities and 9 cities
- Uneven municipalities and unfavourable conditions:
  - According to territory:
    - 2524 km$^2$ – Rezekne Municipality
    - 48 km$^2$ – Saulkrasti Municipality
  - According to population:
    - 36 661 inhabitants – Ogre Municipality
    - 1188 inhabitants – Baltinava Municipality
Territorial reform in Rezekne Municipality (former Rezekne District Council)

**Before 2009**

- 28 rural territories (villages): first level municipalities with 181 elected politicians (Council members) and administration in each of them.

- Rezekne District Council: second level organization founded by rural territories to deal with education, health and social care, culture, sports and civil defense issues.

**After 2009**

- 25 rural territories with 17 politicians (Council members) in total.

- Almost all the rural territories expressed their wish to remain in the same territory and become first level Rezekne Municipality.
Reasons that made the rural territories unite in Rezekne Municipality (I)

- Regular (~10 years before the reform) communication with inhabitants and employees through mass media (radio, TV, press) and meetings in rural territories about collaboration possibilities with Rezekne District Council;

- Educated rural reporters and printed information leaflets in each rural territory (support of EU projects);

Information about the reform in local mass media
Reasons that made the rural territories unite in Rezekne Municipality (II)

• Strong and persuasive leader (mayor), support of many political followers;
• Promoted principle of equality between rural territories: no single administrative center, all the rural territories (including the ones with 300 or less inhabitants) have the development possibilities; the inhabitants can receive all the services in the rural territory;
• More possibilities to participate in EU funded projects (in 2009-2014 Rezekne municipality used 37 300 000 EUR from different EU funds). Bigger municipalities get more funding.
Communication today:
7 years after the territorial reform

• Transparency in decision making processes (recordings of political committees, information about the municipal decisions, vacancies, calls of proposals and grants in municipal webpage and mass media);

• Promotion of public participation (Advisory Councils and Youth Councils in the rural territories, regular meetings with administration and inhabitants);

• Openness to inhabitants’ proposals.

Meeting with inhabitants in Ozolaine rural territory
Welcome to Latvia!
Welcome to Rezekne Municipality!

More information:
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www.facebook.com/Rezeknesnovads

Ms. Anna Jaudzema
Head of Development Planning
Department of Rezekne Municipality,
Latvia
Anna.Jaudzema@rezeknesnovads.lv