

COOPERATION WITH DIASPORA PROFESSIONALS WORKING IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS AS A RESOURCE FOR DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract. The diaspora is increasingly seen as a potential resource for development and the ways in which the diaspora is involved in the development of the country of origin are becoming more diverse. Review of scientific literature shows that there has been little research on the perspective of highly skilled diaspora professionals on cooperation benefits for their homelands, as well as diaspora engagement for home country development and for diaspora diplomacy are rarely linked.

The article draws attention to the perspective of highly qualified Latvian diaspora professionals on cooperation with Latvia and the benefits to the country from such cooperation, linking cooperation for diaspora diplomacy and for development. The article will also examine whether the benefits of cooperation identified in other studies (mainly from the state viewpoint) coincide with the vision of diaspora professionals on such benefits.

The data used in the analysis is derived from the study "The involvement of Latvian professionals in diaspora diplomacy and the potential of network diplomacy" and further analysis is possible thanks to the State research programme "New solutions to study demographic and migration processes for the development of Latvian society". The main results illustrate the framework for cooperation between diaspora professionals and the public administration in Latvia, the most significant benefits of diaspora diplomacy and the benefits from diaspora engagement for development (the transfer of social capital, as well as the transfer of experience, knowledge, ideas and practices to the public administration and other sectors). The data reveals high readiness of highly skilled Latvian diaspora professionals to cooperate, and diverse benefits of cooperation for national development and international visibility of Latvia.

Key words: diaspora diplomacy, diaspora engagement, high skilled professionals.

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Introduction

A major new dimension in the development of society is the significant growth of international migration and the diversification of forms of mobility. A growing number of countries do not see their emigrants as lost taxpayers or "brain drain", but as "national assets", as a potential for development, and are seeking various ways how to engage their diasporas in the development of the country of origin (Kingsley, 2018; Kuznetsov, 2013). A quickly developing phenomenon is diaspora diplomacy, which is mainly addressed in scientific literature in the context of international relations (Birka, 2022; Stone & Douglas, 2018), but can also be seen in the context of the diaspora engagement (Boyle & Kitchin, 2013).

In Latvia, the issue of diaspora engagement as a resource for development is particularly topical due to high emigration rates, a lack of human resources and slow economic development. The Diaspora Law adopted in 2018 emphasizes that one of the policy tasks is to "promote the involvement of the diaspora in the development and promotion of the Latvian economy, exports and investments, knowledge and technology transfer, Public administration, research and development" (LR Saeima, 2018). It is noted that a broad set of measures is needed to strengthen the diaspora's relationship with Latvia's culture, economy, and science, as well as to promote the civil and political participation of the diaspora. Five years have passed since the adoption of the Diaspora Law, and what changes have happened: what is the diaspora's view on whether and how state has managed to promote engagement of the diaspora in development of the country? This is particularly relevant at a time when there is a global race to attract talent and high-skilled professionals who play a key role in economic development.

The article will therefore focus on the views of high-skilled Latvian diaspora professionals, who is working in international organisations, on cooperation with Latvia and on the benefits of such cooperation. Latvia is

a country with a shrinking population and the highest population loss is due to international migration, so it is very important to encourage return migration, or at least to engage diasporas in the state development processes (Bela & Mieriņa, 2018). This study on the views of diaspora professionals working in international organisations on the benefits of cooperation will form a conceptual link between the study of diaspora engagement and diaspora diplomacy, which is currently developing in parallel in migration studies and international relations studies. The article will also examine whether the benefits of cooperation identified in other studies (mainly from the state viewpoint) coincide with the vision of diaspora professionals on such benefits.

Scientific literature shows that there has been little research on the view of highly skilled diaspora professionals on cooperation benefits for their homelands (Stone & Douglas, 2018). Similarly, scientific literature on international migration and development focuses on the role of governments, that develop targeted institutionalised links with the diaspora and work to attract diaspora resources and promote cooperation (Kuznetsov, 2013; Pande, 2018). But existing research does not sufficiently address specific cooperation between the public administration and those working in international organisations from the perspective of professionals. Scientific novelty is based on in-dept analysis of views and initiatives of highly skilled diaspora professionals who cooperate with their homeland and the finding that diaspora professionals see their engagement in diaspora diplomacy and their contribution to national development as related.

The article is based on data from the study "The involvement of Latvian professionals in diaspora diplomacy and the potential for network diplomacy" (Bela, Mieriņa & Pinto, 2022), which uses a mixed study methods design, and data consist of five pilot interviews; document analysis on the experience of the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland and Slovakia in developing diaspora diplomacy; a quantitative survey of Latvian diaspora professionals working in international organisations (N = 150), six focus group discussions (further FGD) (N = 18) and four in-depth interviews with top level professionals. The article analyses only qualitative data obtained from the study (FGD and four in-depth interviews), and analysis is continued in the framework of the State Research Programme "New solutions to study demographic and migration processes for the development of Latvian society" (VPP-LETONIKA-2021/4-0002).

One of the biggest challenges in the implementation of this study was the identification and reach of the target group – Latvian diaspora professionals working in international organisations, because target group is small and specific. The article examines only the selection and recruitment of FGD and semi-structured in-depth interview participants. Selection and recruitment were carried out using information collected by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the Latvian embassies, and from information from the movement "Economic Cooperation and Investment for Latvia" (movement #esiLV) network, provided by co-founder of the movement Elina Pinto (she was also involved as researcher in the study "The involvement of Latvian professionals in diaspora diplomacy and the potential for network diplomacy"). #esiLV is grassroots organisation, aiming "to gather and represent Latvian diaspora entrepreneurs, professionals, investors and researchers and to build bridges of cooperation and knowledge transfer with partners in Latvia, in order to facilitate sustainable and dynamic development of Latvia and its regions" (#esiLV, n.d.). There were approximately 40 persons on each list, many of them overlapping. Approximately 30 persons were selected to invite in FGD, using both lists. The recruitment of participants focused on ensuring broad institutional and geographical coverage. Since the study participants represent very different institutions, to each focus group discussion were invited participants from one type of institutions (Table 1). Senior executives were interviewed individually, arranging the day and time of the interview according to their options. Each participant received an individual invitation send via e-mail. Very few invited professionals did not answer,

and some were not available at particular date and time. Fieldwork was carried out in the last week of June and first week of July 2022. Members of the target group live in different countries of the world, so the interviews and FGD were organised on-line using Zoom. Research participants were informed about research aim, objectives, recording, data storage, who will access data and how data will be used. Informed consent was obtained, including permission to use data for both above mentioned research projects (but not to re-use data for other projects). Given that some research participants agreed to expose their name and affiliation in publications, while others don't, anonymity is assured to all. As research participants are easily recognisable, even general information about their workplace is not disclosed.

Table 1

**Affiliation of research participants in focus group discussions
and semi-structured interviews**

Code	Affiliation
FGD1	International justice professionals (judges of the European Court of Justice)
FGD2	Professionals working in international intergovernmental organisations (UN, OSCE, WHO, PB)
FGD3a	Professionals working in EU institutions outside the EU
FGD3b	Professionals working in EU institutions inside the EU
FGD4a	Professionals working in international non-governmental organisations
FGD4b	Professionals working in international non-governmental organisations
I1	Senior executive working in European Commission
I2	Senior executive working in The Foreign Affairs Council
I3	Senior executive working in The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
I4	Professional working in United Nations Development Programme agency, NY

The theoretical framework of the article is shaped by the concept of diaspora engagement and diaspora diplomacy as a relatively new phenomenon in international politics and diplomacy. Cooperation with diasporas forms the basis for both diaspora engagement and diaspora diplomacy. The contribution of the diaspora may be interpreted as "diaspora capital" consisting of human, financial and knowledge flows and regarded as foreign resources available to the country, city, region, place or organisation of origin (Kingsley, 2018). The article will focus on social networks and social transfers between diaspora professionals and the public administration in Latvia. Diaspora diplomacy, on the other hand, refers to the involvement of the diaspora networks, talent, and goodwill in the pursuit of national interests (Cull, 2019). Diaspora diplomacy is an element of public diplomacy and includes five key components: listening (to understand others' opinions, understanding, vision); advocacy (to defend ideas and national interests abroad); cultural diplomacy (e.g., guest artists, promoting their country's culture); exchange diplomacy (e.g., student exchange, exchange of scientists); international broadcasting. Important elements of public diplomacy are nation-branding and reputation building (Cull, 2019). This study focuses on elements of listening and advocacy, as well as on nation-branding and reputation building.

Existing studies highlight the importance of the country's ability to position itself as close as possible to critical network centres in modern diplomacy and international policy making to increase its international visibility and influence. Mobilising, building and managing networks is therefore a vital source of power (Slaughter, 2012, quoted from Stone & Douglas, 2018). However, mobilising, building and managing networks is vital in every area, including public administration, the non-governmental sector and the economy. Networking is an important prerequisite for all diaspora engagement practices (Petkeviciene, 2016). Also, social transfers as transfers of experience, knowledge, contacts, ideas and

practices are not possible without networking and cooperation. The studies concluded that social transfers can contribute to the introduction of a new culture of work organisation, the exchange of experience, the development of civil society and democracy, the promotion of legislative initiatives and international cooperation in different areas and matters (Dimante, 2007; Brinkerhoff, 2012). The article focuses also on diaspora professional's awareness of the diverse benefits that networking and cooperation can bring to the country of origin.

Research results and discussion

1. Assessment of the cooperation framework

Latvian diaspora professionals working in international organisations view cooperation with Latvia as very important and necessary and highlight the importance of interaction between the state and professionals. Cooperation is seen as important in terms of nation-branding, increased international visibility and strengthening of influence, reputation building and advocacy, and the contribution of the diaspora to the transfer of social and intellectual capital. The limited human resources of Latvia are highlighted (for example, "we are too little to ignore the cooperation needs and potential benefits" (I2)), and all participants in interviews and FGDs confirm the need for cooperation and its positive benefits. The need for cooperation is also confirmed by quantitative data: 35% of professionals working in international organisations would like to cooperate in the future, and for 53% respondents, interest in cooperation depends to a large extent on the circumstances and offer. Only a few respondents have a completely negative attitude toward cooperation (Bela, Mierina & Pinto, 2022). Diaspora professionals working in international organisations see themselves as belonging to Latvia, as a resource that wants to be of use, they want to contribute to Latvia's development, to be noticed and recognized.

However, current cooperation is described as irregular and ad hoc, depending on people in office (e.g., Latvian ambassadors, heads of missions, specific public administration employees). Quantitative data also shows that only 10% have been in close cooperation with representatives of Latvia over the past five years, 46% cooperated irregularly or rarely, while 42% have not cooperated at all (Bela, Mierina & Pinto, 2022). Several participants see a positive trend in cooperation patterns; there is increase in interest, expanding forms of cooperation, and regularity in some sectors, but cooperation is still based mainly on individual initiative rather than on a systemic and strategic approach.

The study participants see value of the regular cooperation network as long-term strategic resource in strengthening Latvia's international visibility and influence in foreign relations. However, participants themselves were more interested to contribute to Latvia's development and to strengthen Latvia's visibility and influence in particularly EU institutions and decision-making.

It is recognised that cooperation requires an investment of human resources and time, and one of its preconditions is the development of a collaborative culture both in the public administration and in Latvian society as a whole. A second prerequisite for successful cooperation is a strategic approach: cooperation must be purposive and with a long-term perspective. This vision is entirely in line with the approach mentioned in scientific literature and with that of those countries developing diaspora diplomacy (Bela, Mierina & Pinto, 2022).

Systemic and strategic cooperation is seen in conjunction with the development of professional careers and can be interpreted as targeted development of the social networks between the state and its professionals abroad. This issue is less addressed in previous studies but appears in the approach of countries working to strengthen their representation in the European Union (e.g., Denmark, the Czech Republic, Ireland). Cooperation should start with targeted support for young professionals (e.g., by first

recruiting them to work in public administration, then helping to build a competitive CV through secondments and other tools for advancing international experience, motivating application for posts in international organisations and supporting competition for these posts). At this stage, the state may invest more than it receives in return. Once people have gained jobs and are climbing the career ladder, the country needs to maintain regular cooperation. One FGD participant stated that the public administration is very often helpful and supporting during the competition, but afterwards is no longer interested in the particular professional (hence a lost opportunity, potential that is not being used). This is also confirmed by the figures of the quantitative survey – 71% of respondents have never felt an interest from Latvian state institutions in their professional activities. If cooperation exists, the benefits are balanced between the two sides at this stage. It is noted that only after 15-20 years, when professional have reached the highest point of his or her career, the Latvian state will gain more than the professional from cooperation. Perhaps for the professional the most important are symbolic and emotional benefits – “that there is a feeling that someone knows you and that you are appreciated. That someone is ready to listen to you” (I1).

2. Benefits of cooperation for public diplomacy

The study participants see a wide range of benefits for the country or origin, which is in line with the components of the diaspora diplomacy mentioned above: strengthening of visibility and establishing reputation; strengthening public influence and persuading others; supporting information and knowledge transfer for better understanding of other countries and regions. In the classical sense, professionals working in international organisations strengthen the influence and visibility of the Latvian state in the countries and organisations where they are located. Less explored in previous research is the fact that professionals working in international organisations are willing to provide tools for the public administration of their home country, thus helping it to achieve better results in the representation of state interests and increasing the influence of their homeland.

The contribution of professionals working in international organisations to strengthening state visibility and establishing reputation can be seen in relation to the statement of some FGD's members that in international organisations and professional circles attention is paid to where each person comes from, and therefore being from Latvia also promotes the name of Latvia. Professionals in very high positions and outstanding specialists in specific sectors significantly raise Latvia's visibility and reputation; their performance in professional activities, in conferences, in events, makes others think that talented people can come from this country. People with outstanding knowledge in a sector or field contribute to the notion that this sector or field is strong in their country of origin.

The study participants see the benefits of strengthening state influence and persuading others. Professionals working in an international organisation have the possibility to better listen to employees of the Latvian public administration – a person from Latvia is more receptive to Latvia's arguments. And he/she will also, because of his/her international experience, be able to explain the position of Latvia or to inform the representatives of other countries in the relevant organisations in a way that is more easily perceived. In this way, it is possible to influence processes, policies, decision-making in Latvia's preferred direction. It was also noted that the interests of the EU member states are also important in the EU's common interests. Professionals from Latvia can help to reach a compromise so that Latvia's position is better placed in the EU's compromise position. The rebuttal of disinformation about Latvia could also be a significant benefit because professionals in high positions are listened to and trusted.

The benefits of counselling (which could also be considered as one of the components of the transfer of professional intellectual and social capital) are essential in terms of strengthening national influence. Whether it would be a matter for the Latvian Presidency in the EU or a candidate for the UN Security Council, Latvia needs a vision, a plan, and priorities that Latvia wants to achieve. Professionals working in international organisations can advise on international developments, comment on issues (plan, campaign etc.) from a specific organisation or industry perspective, or from a wider scale of global trends. Counselling can certainly be seen more broadly, for example in relation to Latvia's development priorities, sectoral development issues, etc. Establishing and maintaining a community of professionals working in UN agencies and organisations would be very valuable in terms of counselling on development cooperation. Involving professionals not only from United Nations offices in New York, Geneva, Washington, but also from regional centres (such as Addis Ababa, Dakar, Istanbul, Bangkok, Panama) as well as people working in the countries of the particular programmes, can raise a deeper understanding of development cooperation needs in a broad range of countries. It can help to formulate strategies for Latvia to engage in multilateral development cooperation projects and thematic directions of interest of Latvia. Professionals working in international non-governmental organisations from Latvia may also be a resource for development cooperation, as these organisations aid countries with middle and low incomes and can therefore play an advisory role on the situation.

3. Benefits of cooperation in the transfer of knowledge, professional and social capital

The benefits focused on promoting the development of Latvia and the strengthening of the public administration were most mentioned in discussions. Also, the transfer of social capital, international experience and knowledge in various areas and sectors were mentioned frequently. Because there are not even two million people in Latvia and limited human resources, "we need to use absolutely all people who can be of help to Latvia. Latvia has this added value and Latvia should try to regain these brains if only for half an hour".

First of all, the transfer of professional capital covers the "knowledge of processes, the knowledge of policies and the knowledge of people". Professionals working in international organisations may inform about processes, procedures, decision-making progress, and "backstage" discussions, which in turn helps the Latvian public administration to act more appropriately or make better decisions. The word "inform" is only partly applicable. It was noted that often employees of Latvia's public administration have insufficient knowledge of decision-making processes, policy development processes, procedures and methods in international organizations or EU institutions, and diaspora professionals can provide this knowledge, which, in turn, would allow the public administration to work more effectively. It was stressed that all professionals should respect certain conditions of employers, which include neutrality, equal treatment of all member states, non-disclosure of inside information outside the organization, etc. It should be noted that open lobbying of Latvia's interests cannot be allowed in professional activity as it is incompatible with the requirements of neutrality and equal treatment of member states. It was noted that it could be beneficial for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or sectoral ministries to maintain contacts at least at informal level to ascertain, for example, contextual information on current events, more efficient application completion, etc. The main benefit here is that informal contacts and sharing of information could help to make better and more informed decisions.

Knowledge transfer, expertise in certain areas and issues can be of benefit to public administration, civil society, higher education, the economy and elsewhere. For example, it is valuable for public administration, students, NGO employees to learn how to work with one or another topic or issue in different international

organizations, because in each it is handled in a slightly different way. Whether it's the EU, NATO or the UN, similar issues and common challenges are faced, but each institution pays attention to different aspects, so comparing and knowing how similar issues or challenges are handled in different international organisations is very valuable. Knowledge transfer and exchange is essential both for professionals working in international organisations among themselves, and for those working in public administration and NGOs in Latvia. In one group, it was emphasized that everyone has expertise or highly specialized professional knowledge, which they would be happy to invest in Latvia, especially in areas where Latvia has fewer resources.

The transfer of knowledge and expertise between professionals from different fields and industries within Latvia and outside can be considered. The vision of international NGO's would also be useful in order to look at the position or decision of Latvia (or the lack thereof) in a wider international context – providing feedback on how the position or decision of Latvia (or lack thereof) on any issue look internationally. A number of FGDs and interviews have highlighted that professionals working in international organisations can provide a view from the outside, fresh ideas, a different point of view. Suggestions may not be followed, but they could be listened to and the existence of this differing view could be taken into account that such a view is also possible. Critique from the outside can also encourage a broader view – "What is the highest standard we could achieve in this area. It is necessary to help the country to strive for the highest standard possible" (FGD4a). In several FGDs, it was pointed out that it would be preferable for those working in public administration to familiarize themselves with the world's best experience in a particular field or issue, rather than simply reproduce the existing "order of things".

The transfer of knowledge is illustrated by the cooperation between Latvian judges working in the European Union's justice courts and judges working in Latvia and other professionals in the field of justice (FGD1). Individual appeals come before the EU General Court, in which companies or Latvian citizens want to oppose a decision of the European institutions, and it is therefore important that Latvian judges are informed about General Court topicalities. Latvia, as an EU member state, must also apply in its judgments the EU laws that are in force in Latvia as in each EU member state. The main contribution of those working in the EU courts is that they can explain laws and rules, demonstrate, and share techniques. They are also very interested in understanding how Latvian justice works, because this, in turn, provides a better contribution to discussions with colleagues at the EU level – there is always an example to build on. However, the benefits can be broader, as judges not only have highly specialised legal expertise at the European Court of Justice, but also an expanded knowledge of other EU legal systems. It is pointed out that it would also be too narrow to look at cooperation as a mere cooperation between judges or cooperation with the Latvian public administration. The judges pointed to the need to strengthen the private sector's knowledge and understanding of the EU legal system. The benefits of both sectoral and cross-sectoral cooperation and exchange of experience were also noted in other discussions. One discussion highlighted that it is very rare to find specialists who are equally familiar with both legal issues and the specific sector (FGD2). So, cooperation in this direction would have great added value.

Another benefit of the transfer of professional and social capital is illustrated through link between mobility and the 'brain return', which cooperation can facilitate. Some participants of the study are considering the idea of returning to Latvia and working in public administration (the survey data also show a sufficient proportion of such professionals). Also, it is pointed out that in today's rapidly changing world, public administration requires completely new knowledge, which until five years ago civil servants did not need, both at EU and the member state level (I1). It is therefore important to ensure a balance between stability, continuity and heritability, and the new realities of today's life, which require new approaches and

new knowledge. Nowadays, in any organization, in order to remain competitive, it is necessary to ensure a good balance between the possibilities of growing those people who already work in these organizations and the arrival of "new blood", which contributes to a new perspectives and new ideas. This cannot be achieved by people just "moving" between ministries, people must come in from outside as well. By "outside" can be understood both people with work experience in international organisations and the EU institutions, as well as from other areas.

As regards the benefits of mobility in the transfer of knowledge and experience, various forms of cooperation were mentioned. The consideration of the transfer of experience as a benefit would be incomplete without mentioning the benefits of relatively short-term mobility. Both the FGDs and the interviews emphasize that Latvia should more actively use the opportunities to share staff and existing internship programs – limited mobility allows to gain experience and knowledge about the institution, as well as establish contacts, which, upon returning, provide added value to Latvia through the knowledge, experience and contacts acquired in the international organization. Hosting and traineeships appear in different contexts, including in relation to the possibility of a professional gaining international experience, which in turn then allows him to apply for positions in international organizations and potentially emigrate. This benefit can turn into a loss for the state – "brain drain" – if at least "brain circulation" or knowledge transfer is not achieved through cooperation and various forms of diaspora involvement back to the country of origin or return after a period of service abroad.

The recommendations made in FGDs and interviews confirm that today's networking practices cannot be confined to just one area, it demonstrates the multilateralism of cooperation and the close interlinkages between the different fields (Ho & McConnell, 2019; Stone & Douglas, 2018), as well as echoing the findings of talent migration researchers on the importance of "brain circulation" – it is essential to restore the knowledge and experience of those who have left to their country of origin (Supule, 2020).

Increase and transfer of social capital is essential both in increasing the influence of the state (especially in decision-making processes) and in the better-informed decision-making in Latvia. A wider range of social contacts ensures wider access to more diverse information, and personal contacts facilitate the exchange of such information. Several FGDs emphasized that it's much easier to call someone you know personally, and it's also possible to do so after official business hours. Just one participant interpreted the role of personal contacts negatively, associating it mainly with "being relatives and friends" and the risks of corruption in the Latvian public administration, emphasizing the importance of formal procedures in solving any issue. However, in most cases, in addition to formal procedures and a hierarchy in the handling of certain issues, it was noted that informal communication and social contacts are of paramount importance – "the whole of Brussels exists due to everyone talking to each other, mostly informally" (FGD4a).

Social contacts of professionals working in international organizations can help the transfer of professional capital by attracting high-level experts or renowned lecturers to top-level events and international conferences. Professionals working in international organizations themselves can also share their knowledge with colleagues in Latvia and students of Latvia's higher education institutions. Several FGD and interviews mentioned guest lectures in Latvia's higher education institutions as a form of cooperation that provides several benefits – young people see international career prospects in their chosen field and gain an understanding of the work specifics of international organizations, which is impossible to obtain only from theory or a person who has never worked in such an organization himself; knowledge transfer takes place (I2, FGD1, FGD2). "For example, how one manages a large organization. There are not so many large organizations in Latvia where we can practically learn how to run them. Therefore, inviting people to give guest lectures would be welcome" (I2).

Social transfers, consisting of the transfer and exchange of knowledge, skills, values, ideas, and attitudes should be considered as a benefit within the broader context of promoting changes in society and the development and strengthening of democratic values. It is precisely on these issues that the most significant contribution can be made by those working in the international NGO sector, who, as the main beneficiaries of their contribution to the state, saw an opportunity to improve good governance, strengthen good governance practices in public administration, create a space for discussion and more confidently express critical opinions, attract internationally renowned experts, transfer the experience of democratic countries of the "old" Europe on how the non-governmental sector cooperates with the state. In democratic societies, elected officials, civil servants and public sector employees are accountable to those whose interests they represent, and NGOs represent a mechanism that enables the public to verify that policies and decisions have been taken in the public interest and are being properly implemented. It was pointed out that the role of the diaspora professional provides "the advantage that you are one of us, but not a local. You can say things more directly" (FGD4a). The function of NGOs is to hold the public administration and elected politicians accountable, as well as to form a critical discussion about the decisions, policies, achievements or, on the contrary, inaction taken in public administration on an issue. It's an awkward role – everyone likes to be praised, but it's unpleasant to hear criticism. When expressing a critical opinion, there is a risk of spoiling the relationship. Latvian society is small, and these risks are high. The dual outsider and insider position allow criticism to be expressed more directly, as well as to view local processes in an international scope (FGD4a, FGD4b). It is also necessary to learn how to formulate and listen to constructive criticism in order to achieve a result that is more in the public interest – "The view from the outside should not be seen as painful criticism, but as a common desire to strive upwards" (FGD4a). It was also pointed out that civil society appears to be represented in dialogue with the state – for example, for a long time, Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Employers' confederation of Latvia have been the main partners of dialogue also on social issues, however, both these organisations do not represent socially vulnerable groups, whose interests are mostly underrepresented in policy making and discussions. Therefore, professionals from Latvia working in international NGOs point to the need to strengthen the NGO sector in Latvia and encourage it to defend the interests of all groups of society more actively and promote dialogue in policy making, not only perform the function of a constructive critic. It must ensure that policy and decisions are taken in the public interest and properly implemented. Latvia still must learn how to create a culture of discussion between the state and the non-governmental sector and see diversity of opinion as a resource – "one can discuss with one's own why there is one or another position" (FGD4a). It is pointed out that now there is often a lack of substantiated arguments why a particular wording, norm or order is enshrined in any policy, law or Cabinet regulation. Professionals working in international non-governmental organisations believe that they could also provide support to Latvian NGOs in attracting international cooperation projects, which would significantly strengthen the capacity and resources of NGOs.

Conclusions

- 1) Diaspora professionals working in international organisations consider regular and purposeful cooperation between them and the public administration, NGO sector, education, and economic sector in Latvia as a long-term strategic resource that allows to contribute to the development of Latvia and also to strengthen Latvia's international visibility and influence, especially in EU institutions.
- 2) In the field of public diplomacy, diaspora professionals working in international organisations are strengthening the influence and international visibility of the Latvia in the organisations and countries

where they are located, as well as they are willing to provide instruments to the Latvian public administration in order to help it achieve a better result in representing the interests of the state and increasing the international influence thereof.

3) The significant benefits of cooperation are also transfer of knowledge, professional and social capital. Diaspora professionals often emphasise the important role of personal and informal contacts in the exchange of information and for the decision-making. It is believed that the influence of Latvia would be greater if the public administration had better knowledge of decision-making processes, policy development processes and procedures in international organisations and EU institutions. Professionals working in international organisations see themselves as a resource that can advise also on global trends and views on any issues from the positions of specific international organizations.

4) The results of the study confirm that Latvian professionals working in international organisations see equally diverse benefits from cooperation with the public administration and other sectors in their homeland, as identified in studies conducted so far. They are also very interested not only in strengthening the international visibility and influence of Latvia (contribution to diaspora diplomacy), but also in providing their knowledge to Latvia's development (contribution to development).

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