



# AUGUST 2024

**Dear readers,**

We are happy to announce that the first UNESCO Chair in Biosphere and Man of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences newsletter in English has been created in the charming end of August, in order to spread the news to a wider audience. Have a great reading, get involved and by all means – share the news!

## Have you relaxed in Latvian nature? Tell us how it was!

The [LIFE LatViaNature](#) project invites people to take part in a public survey until 31 October to find out their attitudes, knowledge and understanding about the conservation of natural diversity and nature protection in Latvia, as well as the most important things about recreation and travelling in nature. The survey is open online and the results will be used to improve nature conservation policy, nature management and nature education.

The questionnaire for foreign visitors of Latvian nature can be completed online until 31 October here: [https://ej.uz/tourists\\_EN](https://ej.uz/tourists_EN). The survey is anonymous and will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. All information collected will be used only in aggregate form and will provide meaningful data for researchers. The survey will be administered, compiled and analysed by one of the LatViaNature project partners – Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences.

"We invite you to share this questionnaire with your foreign friends, acquaintances and colleagues who have visited Latvia and been out of the cities in the last year," says Andris Širovs, Acting Director General of the Nature Conservation Agency of Latvia. "Nature is an asset for society as a whole, ensuring a sustainable future, human wellbeing and a healthy economy. Preserving and protecting it is in our common interest. Given that the nature conservation system in Latvia has historically been fragmented and piecemeal, there is room for improvement and room for development. Public opinion can help us move towards a Latvian nature conservation system that is well functioning, scientifically sound, stable and understandable for everyone, so I encourage everyone to take part in the survey."



## Periodic review of the North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve approved at the 36th session of the UNESCO MAB

The 36th session of UNESCO MAB in Morocco approved the North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve's periodic review for the period 2012–2022. The Advisory Committee, having examined the submitted report, concluded that the site meets the criteria set out in the Statutes of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. The development and adaptation of the Action Plan 2019–2025 for the North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve, which includes more than 30 actions, was also welcomed. The preparation of the periodic report was also carried out in cooperation with the research team of the UNESCO Chair "Biosphere and Man" at Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences.

The Periodic Review of Biosphere Reserves is prepared every 10 years. This was the second periodic review for the North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve. It aims to improve the quality of biosphere reserves and their functioning as a testing and demonstration site for sustainable development approaches. UNESCO MAB defines this process as an opportunity to undertake a qualitative review of the activities implemented and their results, to assess the progress made by the Biosphere Reserve.

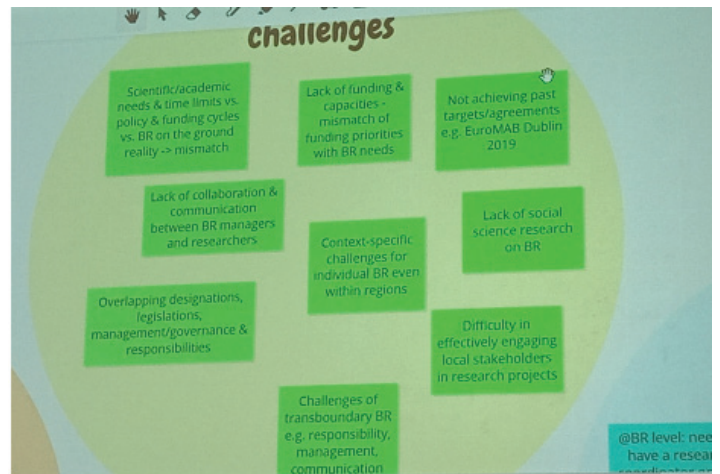
[North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve's periodic review for the period 2012–2022](#) available [HERE](#).

# Participation in the International Workshop on Biosphere Reserves in Eberswalde, Germany

From 13 to 16 February Prof. Agita Livina, Director of the UNESCO Chair "Biosphere and Man", took part in the International Workshop on Biosphere Reserves in Eberswalde, Germany. Hosted by the Institute for Biosphere Reserves at the University of the Eberswalde in Germany, an international workshop on Biosphere Reserve (BR) research brought together 33 participants from 16 countries.

The workshop programme also included an educational walk in the nearby Schorheide-Chorin Biosphere Reserve, which is close to the Eberswalde and Berlin. The International Master in Biosphere Reserve Management has 78 students from 24 nationalities. Vera Luthardt from the Institute stressed that biosphere reserves are model areas for sustainable development. The students carry out research in biosphere reserves, for biosphere reserves with a thorough immersion in the problem.

Prof. A. Livina underlines that, in general, the reports we have heard show many similar problems, but at the same time very different management practices, very different ranges in the number of staff involved in different countries, and the most important problems to be solved. At the end of the workshop, a LinkedIn group Biosphere Reserves Research Group was set up from the talks to the papers, which interested parties can join.



Photos: A. Livina

## The relationship between nature and human: is it a win-win?

Andris Klepers, professor at Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, leading researcher in the field of tourism, Inga Dreimane, clinical psychologist, expert in addiction prevention, as well as Zane Dāvidsone, pediatric rheumatologist, chief of rheumatology at Children's Clinical University Hospital, assistant at the Department of Paediatrics at Riga Stradins University, took part in the Latvian Radio 1 programme "Zināmais nezināmajā". During the conversation, answers were sought to questions such as how nature allows us to experience what we cannot experience anywhere else, and are these feelings still necessary for modern man? What does science and everyday experience tell us about this relationship between nature and man, and is it mutually beneficial? Does nature need human and is human a visitor, a nuisance or a stranger when goes to nature?



Photo: Latvian Radio

# Student research results – locally and globally significant

Annija Uskaure, Student of the bachelor study programme Business Management at Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences.

"I have been studying Business Administration at VIA for three years now. Although there are no separate courses on sustainability or circular economy, several lecturers include these topics in their courses. I have been interested in both sustainability and circular economy since I was in high school, when I became interested in the zero waste lifestyle and how I can minimise my negative impact on the planet. There are still areas where I find it difficult to follow sustainability principles myself, but in many aspects of life, they are a part of everyday life.

In 2015, the UN set the Sustainable Development Goals, and since then the topic has become more and more topical, which is why I decided to do my own research on it, "Consumer Attitudes towards the Integration of Sustainability and Circular Economy in the Fashion Industry in Latvia", choosing an area that is topical for everyone. We all wear clothes every day and that means we buy them. In my research I found that the majority (90%) of respondents know what sustainability and circular economy are, but not as many (58%) pay attention to this topic when buying clothes. In general, price and quality are the most important factors for consumers. The survey shows that price is more important among young people, while quality is more important for people aged 36+.

In my interviews with experts, I found that there has been a sharp increase in interest in sustainability issues among legal entities in recent years – from just 2% 3 years ago, it is now around 20%. Of course, the number is not high in the overall national context, but it is growing rapidly and is expected to continue to grow due to EU regulations.

With my research, I want to focus on long-term thinking, which is at the heart of sustainability. When buying clothes, it would be important for people to pay more attention not only to the price or the look of the product, but also to the quality and the ability to last for a longer period of time. At the end of a product's life cycle, it is important not to choose the quickest option, but to recycle it in an appropriate way – for example, I choose to put it in a textile container or give it to a charity shop if it is useful. By paying attention to the product not only at the time of purchase, but also throughout its life cycle and beyond, we will get to a sustainable environment faster!"



Photo: A. Uskaure

## Upcoming events

"Ceļotāju dienas" or Traveler Days are exciting activities exploring nature and cultural history, discovering natural and cultural values, culinary heritage and modern traditions. In the North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve, Traveler Days is an annual event that has been organized since



2017, offering various activities such as hiking, cycling, car photo orienteering, etc.



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