

## **PARTICIPATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE STUDENTS IN AN OPEN DISCUSSION „RIGA – EUROPEAN GREEN CAPITAL”**

### **VIDES ZINĀTNES STUDENTU PIEDALĪŠANĀS ATKLĀTAJĀ DISKUSIJĀ „RĪGA - EIROPAS ZAĻĀ GALVASPILSĒTA”**

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#### **Introduction**

In the beginning of year 2010 a nongovernmental organization “Association of Latvian Environmental Science Students” was established. The main aims of the association are:

1. To represent the rights of environmental science students of Latvia,
2. To promote environmental science as a scientific field in Latvia,
3. To consider and to stand up for principles of sustainable development,
4. To promote the level of knowledge about environmental issues, paying special attention to youth education, and
5. To stand up for human rights regarding to global climate change.

Several projects have been realized within a frame of these aims, one of which is an open discussion “Riga – European Green Capital”, where environmental science students were involved.

#### **The discussion**

Discussion is a conversation between two or more people, which allows for people with different views on a topic to learn from each other. Discussion is a teaching method as well. It is an effective method how to get the students to think constructively while interacting with the rest of the group. Furthermore, it is proven, that students are more motivated, and internalize material more effectively when they participate actively as learners in the classroom. Despite all the merits of discussion method as a teaching tool, in Latvia it still hasn't been employed widely enough, especially in the engineering and technical sciences. Therefore it was decided to involve students from Riga Technical University in the discussion “Riga – European Green Capital”. The aim of the discussion was to develop suggestions for Riga city council on how to win the title “European Green Capital” and in general to promote

the collaboration between the students and Riga city council in terms of environmental thinking. Starting from year 2010, one European city is selected each year as the European Green Capital of the year. The award is given to a city that has a consistent record of achieving high environmental standards, and is committed to ongoing and ambitious goals for further environmental improvement and sustainable development, as well as can act as a role model to inspire other cities and promote best practices to all other European cities. Riga has participated in the competition, but did not fulfill the conditions, therefore students were involved in the discussion to give their vision on what is needed for the city to comply with all the criteria of the competition.

Before the discussion all the students were divided into five groups and provided with basic information on the competition, evaluation criteria, environmental indicators, as well as on the existing situation in Riga. Each group had a specific topic to work on:

1. Local transport,
2. Waste production and management,
3. Air quality and mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions,
4. City environment,
5. Water consumption and waste water treatment.

The task was to determine the existing status of the criteria in the city, to look at experience in other European cities and to provide ideas on how to make improvement of the criteria in Riga. Each group prepared a presentation, showing the developed ideas.

The discussion was held in Riga town hall. There were a lot of participants invited, including minister of environment, representatives from Riga city council, as well as scientists and academics. The representatives from corresponding department of Riga city council were also asked to make a presentation on the topics. After each presentation the discussion on related topics was made, promoting the brainstorming on environmental issues within the students and representatives of Riga city council and other participants.

As a result of the discussion was prepared a nine-page letter of suggestions to Riga city mayor on how to develop the city in a sustainable manner and what benefits would outcome if Riga got the title. However, the most important outcome of the discussion are the skills which students gained from the experience of presenting their ideas and discussing them with specialists of the specific field. It should definitely help in further studies and work, as well as in personal life. The discussions were also as a starting point for further collaboration between the Riga city council and students from the Association of Latvian Environmental Science Students.

***Dace E., Berzina A., Ozolina L., Lorence I., Participation of Environmental Science students in an open discussion "Riga – European Green Capital"***

*Association of Latvian Environmental Science Students is a new nongovernmental organization. It has organized an open discussion "Riga – European Green Capital", where environmental science students in discussions with such participants as minister of environment, representatives from Riga city council, scientists a.o. specialists had a great opportunity to provide their ideas for sustainable improvements in the city. Students gained an experience, which will help in further studies and work.*

***Dāce E., Bērziņa A., Ozoliņa L., Lorence I., Vides zinātnes studentu piedalīšanās atklātajā diskusijā "Rīga – Eiropas Zaļā galvaspilsēta"***

*Latvijas Vides zinātnes studentu apvienība ir jauna nevalstiskā organizācija. Savas darbības ietvaros tā organizēja atklāto diskusiju „Rīga – Eiropas Zaļā galvaspilsēta”, kur vides zinātnes studentiem diskusijās ar tādiem pasākuma dalībniekiem kā vides ministrs, Rīgas pašvaldības pārstāvji, zinātnieki u.c. speciālisti bija lieliska iespēja izklāstīt savas idejas uzlabojumiem pilsētas ilgtspējības veicināšanā. Studenti ieguva pieredzi, kas noderēs turpmākajās studijās un darbā.*