

# RiseUp

## “Open Dialogue”: Fostering Youth Entrepreneurship through Policy Co-Creation *Local Event in Latvia*

Project No: 2023-3-EL02-KA154-YOU-000184073



PYLON ONE



DAGNE



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# INTRODUCTION

The Open Dialogue event in Latvia was the second local activity of the RiseUp: Redefining Youth Employability: Navigating Futures project. Organized by Jauniešu biedrība “Dagne” in the Latgale region, the event gathered young entrepreneurs, policymakers, educators, and community representatives from across the country. Set against the backdrop of Dagda’s active youth community, the event created an inspiring environment where young people could exchange ideas about the challenges and opportunities of youth entrepreneurship. The Latvian event placed particular emphasis on the importance of dialogue between youth and institutions, promoting collaboration as a key driver of social and economic innovation.

# OBJECTIVES

- Empower youth to become active contributors in shaping entrepreneurship policies.
- Promote entrepreneurial thinking among young people as a path to employability and innovation.
- Foster cooperation between young entrepreneurs, policymakers, and business leaders.
- Identify barriers faced by young people in launching and sustaining businesses.
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- Develop actionable policy recommendations for better access to funding, training, and mentorship.
- Encourage youth-led initiatives that strengthen local and regional economies.





# OPENING SESSION AND WELCOMING REMARKS

The event opened with a warm welcome from the organizers of Jauniešu biedrība “Dagne,” who introduced the RiseUp project and its alignment with EU Youth Goal #7: Quality Employment for All. Representatives from local government and youth organizations gave short introductory speeches, highlighting the importance of youth-led entrepreneurship for regional development. The participants were encouraged to view entrepreneurship not only as a career path but also as a form of civic engagement, a way for young people to contribute to the local economy and create solutions for social challenges. This welcoming session helped set a positive and empowering tone for the day.

THE EVENT AIMED TO ENCOURAGE YOUNG PEOPLE TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES AS ENTREPRENEURS OR ASPIRING INNOVATORS AND TO CO-DESIGN POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS THAT COULD STRENGTHEN YOUTH EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN LATVIA AND THE BROADER EUROPEAN CONTEXT. SPECIFIC GOALS INCLUDED PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURIAL THINKING, IDENTIFYING OBSTACLES YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS FACE, INCREASING AWARENESS OF EXISTING EU AND NATIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS, AND DEVELOPING PRACTICAL PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVING ACCESS TO FUNDING, MENTORSHIP AND TRAINING.





# PRESENTATION ON YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN LATVIA

A keynote presentation followed, offering an overview of youth entrepreneurship trends in Latvia. Experts from the Latvian Investment and Development Agency (LIAA) and local business mentors shared insights on how young people are shaping the country's start-up ecosystem. They discussed opportunities available through national programs and EU initiatives, such as Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs and Youth Start Latvia. The presentation also outlined key barriers young entrepreneurs encounter — including limited access to capital, a lack of mentorship, and rural-urban disparities in opportunity. This session provided participants with a realistic understanding of the entrepreneurial landscape and inspired discussions on how to make it more inclusive.



# GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND EXPERIENCE SHARING



After the keynote, participants were divided into interactive discussion groups. Each group focused on a specific theme, such as access to finance, digital entrepreneurship, sustainable business models, or social innovation. Young entrepreneurs shared their personal experiences of starting businesses, including the challenges of bureaucracy, market competition, and balancing innovation with financial risk. These discussions created a supportive atmosphere where participants learned from one another and identified shared concerns. Mentors and facilitators guided the sessions, helping participants translate their experiences into structured recommendations.

# POLICY DIALOGUE WITH DECISION-MAKERS

A key feature of the event was the Open Dialogue panel, which brought together local policymakers, representatives from business associations, and youth delegates. This dialogue was the heart of the Latvian activity, an opportunity for youth to present their insights and directly engage with those shaping economic and employment policy. Participants raised questions about youth access to start-up funding, tax incentives for young entrepreneurs, and the need for stronger links between education and business development. Policymakers listened attentively, acknowledging the value of youth perspectives and committing to explore ways to integrate some of the proposed ideas into local development strategies.



# WORKSHOP ON ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS AND INNOVATION

In the afternoon, the program continued with a hands-on workshop focused on entrepreneurial skills development. Trainers from local NGOs and business incubators led activities on creative thinking, teamwork, problem-solving, and pitching ideas. Participants were tasked with designing a small-scale business concept that addressed a local issue — such as sustainability, tourism, or community services — and presenting it to their peers. The workshop helped participants strengthen both their entrepreneurial mindset and their ability to collaborate effectively. Many described this session as one of the most inspiring parts of the event, as it turned theoretical discussions into practical action.

## Outcome:

- The dialogue fostered mutual understanding between youth and policymakers.
- Local stakeholders expressed interest in continuing cooperation with youth networks for future initiatives.





# DEVELOPING POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the workshops, participants gathered to summarize their findings and craft policy recommendations based on the day's discussions. With the support of facilitators, they outlined concrete proposals to improve youth entrepreneurship policies in Latvia. Key recommendations included simplifying administrative procedures for start-ups, expanding micro-grant programs for young founders, integrating entrepreneurship education in schools, and creating mentorship networks connecting students with local business leaders. These proposals were later compiled into a report that will contribute to the overall RiseUp policy paper shared at the project's final symposium.





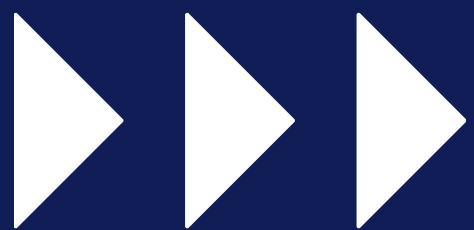
# NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES

The event also provided a valuable opportunity for networking and partnership-building. Participants exchanged contacts, shared project ideas, and explored possibilities for collaboration with local institutions and European networks. Several youth participants expressed interest in developing joint ventures or community-based initiatives following the event. Representatives from municipal authorities also offered to include some participants in future youth policy consultations at the regional level. The networking session successfully reinforced the idea that collaboration and communication are essential components of youth empowerment and sustainable entrepreneurship.



# CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

The Open Dialogue event concluded with a reflection circle where participants shared their key takeaways and future aspirations. Many expressed gratitude for having the chance to speak directly with policymakers and for being part of an initiative that values youth voices. The organizers from “Dagne” emphasized that this event was only the beginning of an ongoing effort to connect young people, institutions, and business communities in Latvia. The outcomes of the Open Dialogue will feed into the RiseUp network’s broader mission to advocate for inclusive employment policies across Europe. By the end of the day, participants left not only with new knowledge and contacts but also with renewed confidence that their ideas can influence real change.



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