



CREWS

CREWS collaboration focusing on women as the backbone of civil preparedness and civil cultural life

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Photo: Inese Vaivare, the Director of the Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation (LAPAS)

During the meeting between **Aija Lulle** and **Inese Vaivare**, we agreed to shape a shared agenda that places **women at the centre of civil preparedness and civil cultural life**. We emphasised that these two fields, preparedness and cultural/community engagement, are not separate spheres but mutually reinforcing pillars of societal resilience. Women already serve as the backbone of community cohesion, volunteer mobilisation, knowledge transfer, and everyday crisis readiness; in crisis situations they are the first responders in the families and communities sometimes without protective measures. Positioning them explicitly at the centre of civil preparedness strategies will significantly enrich the ongoing work of several major initiatives and whole-of-society approach in security.

This direction resonates strongly with the civil protection NGO agenda we are developing in Latvia, both within **Baltic Sea regional networks** and through broader international cooperation. Latvia is

in a uniquely strong position: our civil preparedness structures have been built from within, without large international NGOs, and have attracted positive attention from international partners who note that this kind of grassroots driven civil preparedness ecosystem is rarely seen elsewhere.

LAPAS approach demonstrates how civil society can strengthen itself because it is grounded in readiness to act and **values**, a crucial dimension, as crisis situations reveal that people's choices depend not only on knowledge but on the value orientations they carry into those moments.

Synergies

This agenda directly enriches three major initiatives:

LAPAS — Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation (Latvijas Platforma attīstības sadarbībai)

LAPAS is a national umbrella of 43 NGOs working on global partnerships, global citizenship education, just and sustainable development, and civic resilience. Integrating a women centred civil preparedness perspective would support LAPAS's longstanding work on community empowerment, active global citizenship, and crisis resilience capacity building.

CREWS (Interreg Baltic Sea Region)

CREWS within the Interreg Baltic Sea Region framework aims to strengthen community level crisis readiness and crossborder cooperation. It contributes to building volunteer networks, municipal level preparedness, and all region resilience. A women focused agenda would align perfectly with CREWS's emphasis on community empowerment and would help further articulate genders specific contributions to regional resilience.

Riga Stradiņš University Project Caring for Democracy: Life-Making Practices in Geopolitical Uncertainties (LALIFE)

The RSU LALIFE project analyses practices that sustain life in Latgale, focusing on seemingly distinct, resilient communities and groups: hunters, mothers, and youth activists.

Existing capacities and mobilisation potential

In parallel, LAPAS are already consolidating resources from different initiatives. Through the current work, in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, LAPAS are establishing a structure where each municipality will have a **volunteer coordinator**—trained, equipped, and capable of multiplying knowledge locally. A basic civil protection training is planned this spring, with additional modules later focusing on gender, inclusion, and community leadership, also in cooperation with other NGOs.

At the national level, the **NGO Civil Protection Group** under NGO umbrella Latvian Civic Alliance has been established. Under the LAPAS leadership it about 70 members from diverse types of organisations and geographical coverage—predominantly women. These active community members already create meaningful impact at regional levels, particularly in Latgale, where local women organise public events, attract high level officials to discussions, and shape local

preparedness agendas. This demonstrates how women's leadership in civic life can catalyse broader structural change.

Stronger together: It will strengthen the conceptual and practical dimensions of **LAPAS**, enhance the regional collaboration within **Interreg CREWS**, and deepen the academic contributions of **RSU's LaLife project**. We all aim for elevating women's roles, reinforcing community resilience, and advancing Latvia's leadership in citizen driven preparedness.

More: [CREWS - Interreg Baltic Sea Region](#)

[Caring for Democracy: Life-Making Practices in Geopolit | RSU](#)

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