

The initiative “Online Dialogue: Connecting the Council Chair and Residents” implemented by the Smiltene Municipality, has been included in an international database

On June 17, 2026, the Smiltene Municipality received good news from representatives of the “Interreg Europe” program’s policy learning platform regarding the inclusion of the municipality’s “Online Dialogue: Connecting the Council Chair and Residents” initiative in the Good Practices Database. As part of the project “Sharing Goals, Actions, and Resources for the Mutual Benefit of Our Communities” acronym “SHARING” this initiative was highlighted as a best practice for local governments that could also be implemented in other municipalities outside Latvia.

The inclusion of the Smiltene Municipality’s initiative in this database means that it has been recognized at the European level as a transferable example of good governance and citizen engagement that can inspire other municipalities across Europe.

The Good Practice Database is an online repository that compiles and describes successful regional development practices from across Europe. It is managed by the “Interreg Europe” policy learning platform - a European Union - funded initiative aimed at supporting policy learning and the exchange of experiences among public authorities and stakeholders.

We would like to remind you that, since August 2025, the Smiltene Municipality has introduced a new format for engaging with residents - regular online discussions with municipal leadership, initiated by Council Chair Ervins Labanovskis. The goal of this initiative is to promote open and direct dialogue between the municipality and residents, providing an opportunity to ask questions, express opinions, discuss issues related to the municipality’s development, and receive answers from municipal leadership and specialists. The discussions take place once a month on the “Zoom” platform and are livestreamed on the municipality’s “Facebook” account, with each session dedicated to a specific topic. Leaders from the relevant fields participate in the discussions, while residents can ask questions in writing in the comments section during the live stream or submit questions in advance. This format strengthens resident engagement, fosters trust in the municipality, and provides everyone with the opportunity to gain direct insight into the municipality’s work and the decisions it makes.

Expert’s Laura Varisco opinion: “This is a good example of a transferable participatory governance practice because it shows how local authorities can create a simple but effective two-way dialogue with residents through accessible digital tools. Its value lies in moving beyond one-way communication by giving citizens direct access to decision-makers and experts, while allowing the municipality to respond transparently to concerns, reduce misinformation and better understand community needs. Its transfer potential is strong because the model relies on low-cost and widely available tools, such as Zoom and Facebook Live, and on an organisational format that can be easily adapted by other municipalities. The combination of live interaction, advance submission of questions, moderation and post-event summaries makes the approach particularly relevant for local administrations seeking to strengthen trust, transparency and citizen engagement without major financial or technical investment. The practice is also well aligned with EU policy frameworks, notably the European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles, which promotes a people-centred and inclusive digital transformation, and the broader EU agenda on digital public services and

interoperability, which encourages more accessible, user-oriented and responsive public administration.”

The database can be accessed via the “Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform” website:
<https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices>