

BNN offers a summary of this week's topical news in a variety of categories: Fight; Future; Decline; Criticism; Recklessness and Change.

**FIGHT:** problems in nursing homes and social care centres are associated with lack of funding  
Problems in nursing homes and social care centres are largely associated with lack of funding, because it is not possible to perform high-quality work using currently available resources. This is the responsibility of ministries and the government, as ombudsman Juris Jansons mentioned in an interview to Latvijas Radio. This is also true for Rauda nursing home, where the ombudsman had recently reported violations. The manager of the institution is not able to get by with available funding. Because of that, there are too many open vacancies and turnover of employees is very high. Jansons believes the main problem is that clients of aforementioned centres are not treated with respect. Often the reason for this is the lack of employees and the lack of knowledge among existing employees – most of the time employees do this kind of work because they have «no alternatives».

During multiple visits to Rauda nursing home, representatives of the ombudsman's office had noted a number of violations of established acts and even human rights.

The report on the case revolving around Rauda nursing home mentions that workers of the Ombudsman's office visited the nursing home four times – 13 May 2016, 20 May 2016, 18 January 2017 and 6 June 2017. After surveying living conditions, representatives of the ombudsman's office concluded that approximately half of the rooms provided to clients are smaller than what is required by Cabinet of Ministers regulations. This is because of existing nursing home construction standards, which allow rooms with two beds to have an area of 11.8 m<sup>2</sup>. The report also mentions that administration of the nursing home believes increasing room size would result in a reduced number of clients, which would inevitably lead to the institution's insolvency or increased prices. Because of that, it is not possible to provide living conditions compliant with regulations to all clients.

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**FUTURE:** Finance sector's development council supports prohibition of shell companies

On Wednesday, 21 March, Latvian Prime Minister Māris Kučinskis' managed Finance Sector's Development Council supported initiative on prohibiting shell companies, as confirmed by the prime minister.

«We have reached an agreement on prohibition of shell companies in Latvia,» said Kučinskis, adding that the government plans to review this matter on 3 April, and the Saeima – on 8 April.

Finance Minister Dana Reizniece-Ozola says that the goal behind prohibition of shell companies is making sure Latvia's financial sector is stable, sustainable, secure and able to offer services that provide support for the national economy, not create risks. 'We have agreed on a plan of actions. A total of 22 proposals submitted by the regulator, finance ministry, Association of Latvian Commercial Banks and non-government organizations, the main goal of which is reducing the proportion of risky clients in the country's banking sector,' she said.

The minister is also confident that new measures will help sort out the financial sector.

At the same time, Pēters Putniņš, head of the Finance and Capital Market Committee, mentioned that banks have been ten days to come up with strategic plans on future operations, specifically how they intend to cover losses caused by rejection of shell companies. «We expect this process to be relatively rapid. Because of that, it is highly important for stability's sake to give banks some time to think things over,» he said.

FCMC had previously reported that among clients of Latvian banks are 26,081 shell companies, including two based in Latvia. The proportion of shell companies in all Latvian banks is 36.57%. Their proportion in the foreign clients segment is 44.5%.

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**DECLINE:** Minister: Latvia is far behind its neighbours in terms of digitization and e-skills

In terms of digitization and e-skills, Latvia is far behind its neighbouring countries and the rest of Europe, said Latvian Economy Minister Arvils Ašeradens in an interview to Latvijas Radio.

Although Latvia's economy has become more competitive in recent years, growing from a small economy to part of OECD and European Union, Lithuania and Estonia remain ahead. This is particularly true when it comes to digitization and e-services, the minister said.

He mentioned that Latvia managed to grow its economy by 4.5% without increasing the number of employed people. This means productivity has grown considerably. «Introduction of innovations is Latvia's largest problem. Although the country has made some progress, many other countries are far ahead already,» said Ašeradens.

He emphasized that it is important to continue investing funds in education and re-qualification opportunities for people. «Future economy will be based solely on knowledge,» said the minister.

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**CRITICISM:** Farmers in Latvia dissatisfied with resolution of electricity-related problems

Two months have passed since farmers in Latvia had received unjustifiably large electricity bills. Countless meetings and discussions have taken place in those two months. Unfortunately, no decisive measures have been undertaken to resolve the problem. Farmers are confused with dec

ision-makers' incisivness in a matter important to the national economy, as noted by the Farmers' Saeima. «In the past two months we have held multiple discussions with representatives of Economy Ministry and industry representatives to find appropriate solutions for this problem. On top of that, we have sent letters with proposals that would be optimal and acceptable for electricity consumers with a clear seasonality. Unfortunately, no solution has been found so far. The proposal from Economy Ministry and Public Utilities Commission is a formal one and will not help resolve the problem,» the association continues. Farmers' Saeima chairman Juris Lazdiņš says: «The problem with power output needs to be resolved at its core. There is no room for cosmetic repairs. Public Utilities Commission's and Economy Ministry's proposal would resolve the problem only for a small number of farmers, which is unacceptable for us. In about two weeks from now farmers will receive the third wave of unjustifiably large electricity bills and will be forced to once again pay for officials' poorly performed work.»  
Full article here

**RECKLESSNESS:** Ventspils beach high in popularity this week; Lembergs gets spotlight time as well Ventspils city ended up in the spotlight in an unusual way this week: seals washed up on the beach in Ventspils. Animal Freedom association emphasizes that human contact with baby seals would hurt them. Residents are asked to maintain at least 50 m distance from them. In spite of recommendations, however, the suspended Mayor of Ventspils Aivars Lembergs decided to take photos with baby seals and publish them on his Facebook profile. Of course, Lembergs is not the only one who decided to post photos on the internet. However, while other residents received harsh words for coming close to baby seals, Lembergs has received nothing but praise for his actions. People continue voicing their surprise on social networks. However, while some people are happy, this whole situation creates a great deal of stress on baby seals.  
Full article here

**CHANGE:** Life after 25 May: is this the end for free publication of photo galleries from events? Many of us like to check out photos from concerts, conferences or sport events on gallery portals and social networks to have a look at guests of those events. However, after 25 May, when General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) comes into force, the situation will no longer be the same. Unless the poster receives permission from the person depicted on photos to be posted, it will not be allowed to publish them on different resources. This is not expected to apply to publication of photos for journalistic needs. «No, GDPR does not mean people will not be allowed to take photos and publish them. Because the regulation's goal is protecting people's privacy, organizers of different events will have to take into account several conditions, including the context of events and permission from participating people for the publication of photos,» says attorney Ieva Andersone from Sorainen law firm. GDPR will affect all companies – creative, media and communication industry are no exception. Sorainen law firm's attorney Ieva Andersone and Squalio IT company productivity solutions specialist Kristaps Sedols explain the factors organizers of public events will have to take into account:  
-First of all, images to be made publicly accessible must not allow viewers to identify specific people. For example, panorama views, group photos, pictures of event locations, arms holding cups, etc.;  
-Secondly, photos depicting event managers, moderators, lecturers, musicians are allowed to be published if those people provided permission for that. People associated with organization of concerts or their broadcasting know very well that world-famous musicians do not permit photos to be taken of the entire event. They often establish specific rules in accordance with which people are allowed to take photos. GDPR requirements are similar. The only difference is that they apply all visitors, explains Andersone;  
-Thirdly, it is allowed to publish photos if people depicted on them have given their permission;  
-Lastly, requirements for the use of photos for journalistic needs, if it is done with intention of publishing information in the interest of society, remain unchanged. This exception is provided by the Personal Data Protection Law, which specifies GDPR rules in Latvia. Other exceptions are planned for data processing for academic, artistic or literary needs.  
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<http://bnn-news.com/bnn-summary-of-the-week-ban-on-shell-companies-irresponsible-behaviour-and-electricity-bills-for-farmers-182353>