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DEMOCRACY FESTIVAL

ARENDALSUKA

# INTRODUCTION

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**DEMOCRACY**  
festivals



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For more information on democracy festivals, visit: [www.democracyfestivals.org](http://www.democracyfestivals.org)

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## Introduction

This year we celebrate the existence of no less than eight Democracy Festivals in the Nordic and Baltic Sea Region. From Almedalsveckan in Sweden, celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2018, to the newly born Diskusijų festivalis „Būtent!“ in Lithuania this year, in 2017. The development of Democracy Festivals shows an aspiring and strong focus on participatory democracy in the region.

Until now, it has been difficult to get a comprehensive overview of the festivals in the region: not only due to language – but also on a deeper level, grasping the underlying cultural differences. We hope this paper will provide an introduction to the differences, similarities, challenges and opportunities of the various festivals in the Nordic and Baltic Sea Region. The purpose of this document is dual. It aims to help the festivals learn from each other, and to inspire other countries and democracy activists of all kinds to use these experiences in their work.

## Democracy Festival Platform

The festivals in the Nordic and Baltic Sea Region are now - for the first time - connected in a platform financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The platform is led by the Foundation for an Open Society DOTS (Latvia) and the Change Agency WE DO DEMOCRACY (Denmark).

The Nordic Council of Ministers has given us the opportunity to establish a network of Democracy Festival secretariats in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. Besides establishing a network, we have been visiting each other, conducting research and documenting all the festivals. This paper is a result of this collaborative mapping and learning process.

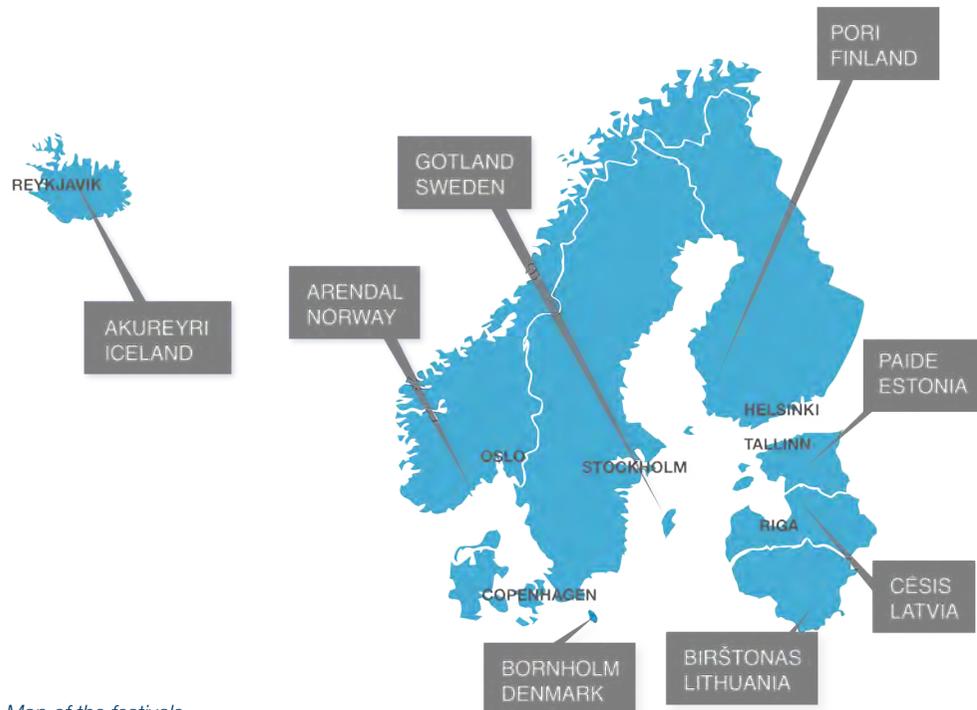


Photo: Sarunu Festivāls LAMPA

# The Phenomenon of Democracy Festivals in the Nordic and Baltic Sea Region

## A celebration of democracy

The fundamental principles of Democracy Festivals in the Nordic and Baltic region are based on the celebration of democratic culture. Thus, the overall aim is to support and strengthen democratic dialogue. This phenomenon started in Sweden, in 1968, in Visby, Gotland, where a political speech was given by Olof Palme, Minister of Education at the time, from the back of a lorry during his summer vacation. Gradually it became a tradition for the Social Democratic Party and within a few years, the remaining parties wanted to join in. Hereafter, this festival has been an inspiration to many people across the region and today we celebrate the existence of eight national Democracy Festivals in the Nordic and Baltic countries.



Map of the festivals



Photo: Arendalsuka

## Why a Democracy Festival?

Democracy is about much more than democratic institutions and sets of written rules and laws. Democracy is also a culture that has to be nourished and lived by the people.

The Democracy Festivals center on the desire to celebrate democracy. At the same time, they also represent a deep concern about the state of our democracies. Parliamentary democracy, the core model of governance in the Nordic and Baltic countries, is challenged in many ways. Crisis in democracy in Europe and beyond has been widely debated in recent years.

*Some of the challenges to democracy are:*

- Mistrust in politicians and the governance systems
- Inability to disagree in a constructive way
- Disintegration and intolerance
- Echo chambers in Social Media
- Distance between the parliamentary systems and civic society/activist participation
- Poor public discussion and dialogue culture
- Decreasing voter turnout

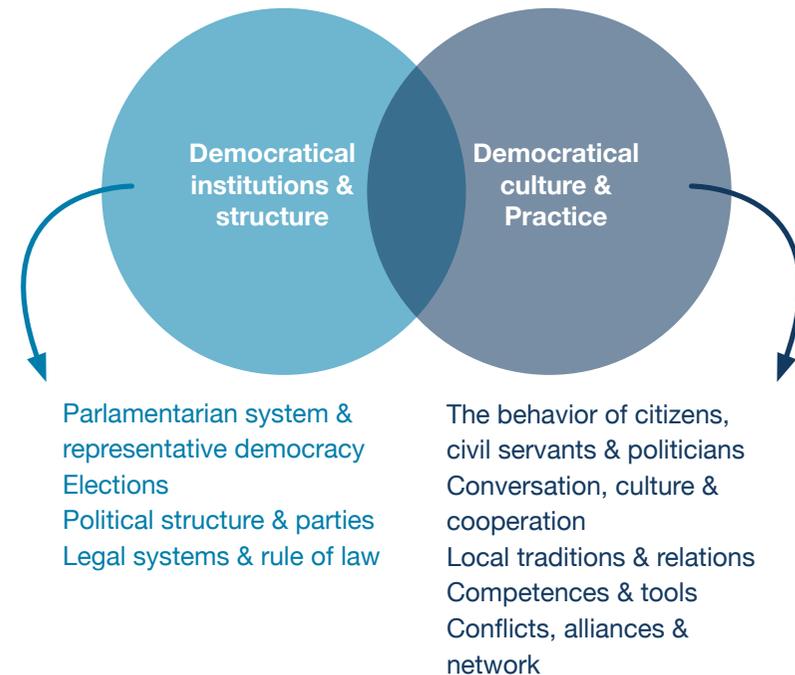
We believe the key to enabling a living democratic culture is the creation of spaces and platforms, where people can connect, get together, talk to each other, listen, get inspired, exchange opinions and debate their ideas. Engage in a constructive political dialogue across opinions, age, gender and hierarchy, creating a stronger open link between the formal decision-making structures and civil society, expressed through broader public movements and citizen participation.

## What is a Democracy Festival?

All the Democracy Festivals share a number of features: everyone can join the festivals, participation is free of charge and events must focus on subjects that are relevant to society.

*Criteria:*

- Nationwide
- Working for participatory democracy and societal benefit
- Free admission for participants and open to everyone
- Festival-like in shape and expression
- A participatory democracy philosophy
- Informal atmosphere
- Focus on conversations and dialogue



*Model: Institutions & Structures vs. Culture & Identity  
Developed by WE DO DEMOCRACY*

## What is the Power of Democracy Festivals?

Scale is an issue when it comes to democracy design! How do we combine room for individual participants on one hand and, on the other hand, how do we secure representation and input from large groups representing organised interests?

The traditional political system faces challenges in our nation states – but also on a regional and international level. There is a growing distance between what happens in formal political processes and our daily lives. There is a rising distrust in politicians' ability to represent all the citizens and to conduct societal leadership on a high level.

The Democracy Festivals offer a large-scale participation platform that also enables micro conversations and individual participation. The platform creates space for relationship building, facilitates conversations and development across the silos, roles and layers of society.

<b>Countries</b>	All 8 Nordic and Baltic countries
<b>Amount of festival days</b>	29 festival days in total
<b>Estimated total number of participants</b>	Up to 450.000 event participants Up to 150.000 unique participants
<b>Estimated total number of official events</b>	8700 events in total
<b>Amount of festival days</b>	90% of all political parties represented in the parliament

*Model: The Democracy Festival muscle.  
Data collected in autumn 2017.*

## Collaborative Mapping Method

The methodological approach of this project is based on co-creation in both content and formats. We consider co-creation a philosophy, tool and a method.

The mapping was conducted by a combination of external teams of consultants and members of the different festival organiser teams. Every festival has visited one other festival and documented the characteristics for 2017 based on a mapping document. All the festivals have additionally provided information on their own festival.

The result of the paper is collaborative and based on the observations and documentation done by the different members of both the consultants and organiser teams – and, therefore varied in length and content.

## The festivals' most discussed topics in 2017



*Model: The Democracy Festivals most discussed topics in 2017*

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# PRESENTATION OF THE FESTIVALS

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# ALMEDALSVECKAN

SWEDEN [ALMEDALEN WEEK]

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# Almedalsveckan, Sweden

**Almedalsveckan is a democratic meeting place that everyone can join and co-create. The atmosphere is informal and relaxed, creating the feeling that everyone who matters is there. Chance meetings can lead to unexpected effects.**

## Purpose and vision

*“Almedalsveckan is Sweden’s, perhaps even the world’s, largest open political venue. Through democracy and openness, the week aims to give everyone who wants to debate social issues the opportunity to participate.”*

Almedalsveckan has become a phenomenon among political festivals and multiple countries have created similar venues throughout the years.

## Founder and year of establishment

It started in 1968 when Olof Palme, minister of education at the time, spoke from the back of a lorry at Kruttorget in Visby. Gradually it became a tradition for Olof Palme and the Social Democratic Party to make speeches at the central park “Almedalen” and he was the only speaker until 1974. In 1991 Almedalsveckan became completely disassociated from the Social Democratic Party and all parliamentary parties have participated in the festival ever since.

## Organisational structure

Almedalsveckan is a result of cooperation between the main organisers, the host and other co-organisers. The main organisers are the parliamentary political parties, via their local representatives in Gotland. The main organisers select a spokesperson from one of the political parties that speaks on behalf of the group. Spokesmanship shifts between the political parties each year. The Municipality of Gotland is the formal host and is responsible for coordinating the weeklong programme. They are also responsible for coordinating security, infrastructure, partner relations, the press, as well as the

processing of applications for the official programme. The festival is managed by a project office within the Municipality, which consists of four employees who are working between 20-100% on Almedalsveckan throughout the whole year. Two additional employees are contracted four months prior to the festival.

## Location and length

The 8-day festival is located in Visby, on the island Gotland, and takes place in the beginning of July. It lasts 8 days because each parliamentary party has one day at their disposal during the week. Visby is located 60 km and a boat-trip from Stockholm and has approximately 24.000 inhabitants.

## Size – number of participants and events

The festival’s own estimate of participants is approximately 40.000 unique visitors\*. The estimated numbers are based on ferry and airport tickets to the island during the festival. In 2017, there were 4062 official events and approximately 2500 unofficial events. It is only the official events, which are open to everyone, that are presented in the festival programme.

## People attending the festival

The festival’s target group is people interested in social issues. The festival defines the visitors as politicians, organisers, professional visitors and ordinary participants. Many of the visitors attend the week as a part of their holiday.

## Involvement of the political parties

All eight parliamentary political parties have Almedalen, the central Park in Visby, at their disposal for a whole day during the week. In many years, the parliamentary parties have been - and still are - the main focus. Since 1996, organisations and businesses have been allowed into the political arena. Almedalsveckan is highly prioritized by the parliamentary parties and they use

the platform to promote new policy proposals. During the week, politicians attended 1245 events. 30% of the 4062 events were arranged by the parties or other organisers.



*“Almedalsveckan was a great experience! It has the longest history of democracy festivals and it has really found its place in Swedish society. I met a lot of new people in Almedalsveckan and got plenty of new ideas to bring to my own festival” – Mari Haavisto, Chief Content Officer, the Finnish Democracy Festival, SuomiAreena.*

\* The method of counting participants differs from festival to festival. The numbers presented in this overview are based on the festival’s own estimate with the awareness that a cross-country comparison is difficult.

### Infrastructure and security

The festival began in the central park of Visby, Almedalen, but has increased in size during the years. Today the festival is integrated throughout the whole city. Cafes, shops, and private homes are used for festival events.

The Municipality of Gotland has, together with the police force, the responsibility to ensure that people can move around safely in the area. The police are highly visible during the festival and other forms of security, such as roadblocks, are used to keep the area secure. For safety reasons all motor vehicles are forbidden in the area close to Almedalsparken during the daytime.

### Spatial design and scenography

The municipality is responsible for designing the area around the Almedalen park. The area is designed to cluster exhibitions with others that have the same issues. The different exhibitors do not compete with each other; they attract the same kind of visitors. The organisers are allowed to design their spaces as they wish. The only rule is that the height of the tent/exhibition used is not more than 3,5 m.



Photos & map: Almedalsveckan

## Programme

Anyone can apply to organise an event at the festival as long as they adhere to criteria set by the main organisers of Almedalsveckan. The project group reviews all the applications and, if an application meets the criteria, it will be approved and published on Almedalsveckan's webpage, in the programme book and in their App. Almedalsveckan has no cultural programme and does not host any activities during the year. The festival is not responsible for the informal programme.

## The most discussed topics in 2017

- Sustainability
- Healthcare
- Construction
- Children and youth
- Digitalization

## Interaction

All event organisers have to apply with a specific event format for interaction. In 2017, 84% were categorized as seminars, which is defined as a kind of panel discussion or debate with different experts and with the opportunity for attendees to ask questions. 8% were categorized as conversations, in which a person is interviewed for a maximum of 30 minutes. 8% were categorized as a meeting place, which is similar to an exhibition, where for a period of 4 – 6 hours attendees can come at any time and discuss particular issues with a range of speakers.

## Business model

The Municipality of Gotland charges a fee for renting a place (square meters) in the park of Almedalen from 22 euro/m<sup>2</sup> to 12,5 euro/m<sup>2</sup> depending on the size of the area. The municipality's costs are financed by renting these places in the park and from participation fees charged to programme organizers for inclusion in the official programme.

The municipality (as host) has a turnover of around 70 000 euro. The income is mostly generated from renting plots for event space. 12 000 euro comes from fees charged for the official programme. The costs include the Almedals office, infrastructure and security, approximately one third of the budget each.

## Sustainability

Event organisers have to fill in a form delineating their environmental impact. The form consists of questions on the use of locally produced products, the use of tap water instead of bottles and others.

Almedalsveckan engages local manpower as much as possible, for example, event/tent companies, catering companies, hotels, and restaurants. The week is economically very important for Visby. Three years ago, the festival had a turnover of more than 25 million Euros.

## Communication platforms

Almedalsveckan has its own webpage and social media platforms – Twitter and Facebook. The webpage has newsletters mostly used to inform and guide the organisers, but there is no specific strategy for the different platforms.

## Evaluation and impact

Evaluation of events and content in 2017 can be found [here](#).

Evaluation of the Parliamentary Parties participation can be found [here](#).



Photo: Almedalsveckan



# SUOMIAREENA

FINLAND [THE ARENA OF FINLAND]

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# SuomiAreena, Finland

**SuomiAreena is the largest societal discussion event in Finland. SuomiAreena raises important topics and ideas for the whole society. In SuomiAreena's summer atmosphere, you can meet, mingle and exchange ideas with everyone in urban Pori.**

## Purpose and vision

*"The purpose of SuomiAreena is to be an arena for democracy and freedom of speech. SuomiAreena raises important topics and themes by discussing current affairs and societal issues. In SuomiAreena people can create a vision for what Finland and the world should be like in the future".*

## Founder and year of establishment

SuomiAreena was established in 2006 by initiatives from the Municipality of Pori and the Finnish Commercial Broadcasting Company MTV.

## Organisational structure

MTV and the Municipality of Pori are the owners of SuomiAreena and they produce the festival together. MTV is responsible for the programme and the Municipality of Pori is responsible for the infrastructure. MTV has 1 full time employee and Pori has 1,5 working on the festival. During the festival, the MTV team consists of 60 people and the Pori team has 90. A large number are volunteers. The festival steering group consists of the mayor of Pori, the CEO of Mediahub, the executive producer of SuomiAreena, the CBO Mediahub, the producer of SuomiAreena (MTV), and producer of SuomiAreena (Pori).

## Location and length

The 5-day festival is located in Pori and takes place in the middle of July. SuomiAreena is held simultaneously with one of the largest jazz festivals in Europe, Pori Jazz. Pori is located 245 km from Helsinki and is the 10th largest city in Finland with approximately 85.000

inhabitants. SuomiAreena originated in Pori because of Pori Jazz and because of the belief that participants in Pori Jazz would be interested in SuomiAreena as well.

## Size – number of participants and events

The festival's own estimate of participants is approximately 74 000 during the week. Due to SuomiAreena's organizational structure, it has not been possible to provide data on the number of unique participants. 300 organizers and 950 speakers attended a total of 170 events. The estimate of participants is based on an attendee count in each event. The numbers are, therefore, only based on the events and not the whole tent area of the central square Kansalaistori.

## People attending the festival

The people attending the festival range from locals from Pori and the surrounding area to Helsinki.

## Involvement of political parties

All the parliamentary parties have at their disposal a slot for one hour on the main stage, free of charge during the week. All parliamentary parties share a tent in the central square Kansalaistori. No events are run there, but visitors can take leaflets and talk with politicians present there. Almost half of the MPs and almost all ministers visit and attend discussions and tent meetings during the summer.

## Programme

Every year one overarching theme is identified. In 2017, the focus was on Finland's centenary as an independent country. Anyone can apply for organising events during the festival. The festival secretariat calls applicants and listens to the event organiser's ideas and, based on these conversations, the secretariat chooses the best applications and the theme of the year. Organizations can attend only if they have a societal interest, which is why attendance is negotiated case by case. Organi-

zations are not allowed to sell anything.

Discussion events are organized by both private and governmental organisations, as well as companies and other interest groups. Speakers range from politicians to musicians, from company leaders to sports stars. The central square, Kansalaistori, hosts about 70 tents, where different groups can present their own themes and ideas. In addition to discussion events, there are several other events such as sporting events (a golf tournament, tennis tournament), children's events, as well as open door events (city buildings, harbour, and airport). SuomiAreena also encompasses music, art, theatre, sports, architecture, etc.

SuomiAreena focuses mainly on the festival in July, but also has a concept called SuomiAreena Goes, which travels during the year. SuomiAreena Goes is 1,5 hour event with high-class discussion on varied topics. The latest discussion topics were education and food import.



*SuomiAreena is a fantastic gathering of people from different fields, ages, vocations, social status. Enjoying conversations is only a part of its charm, there's a lot happening on the side at events that are not part of the official programme. - Liis Kängsepp coordinator of international relations, The Estonian Democracy Festival, Arvamusfestival*

### Infrastructure and security

The festival consists of six main stages within Pori. SuomiAreena's infrastructure, i.e. main stages, closing streets, etc. is organised by the Municipality of Pori. In Kansalaistori, organizers are allowed to bring their own tents. SuomiAreena operates closely with authorities to ensure security.

### Spatial design and scenography

The stage scenography is designed with the SuomiAreena look. Event organisers are allowed to bring their own roll ups on to the stages. All tents are placed in the central square Kansalaistori, but no events are hosted there. Other activities, such as a truck with an interactive digital installation, a house built by an energy company and BMW car are also part of the festival.



Photos & map: SuomiAreena

### The most discussed topics in 2017

- Foreign policy
- Healthcare
- Education
- Gender equality
- Start-ups

### Interaction

The festival uses several event formats for interaction, for example, panel discussions, TV-formats, debate competitions, karaoke nights, concerts, and sports matches.

### Business model

The festival charges a fee to event organisers, depending on whether they want a slot on stage or a tent space. SuomiAreena offers a stipend for small non-profit organisations so they may get a slot on stage free of charge. The fee for organising is set as follows:

Slot on stage: 1100 euro + VAT, companies 2900 euro + VAT

Tent place for 5 days: 1200 euro + VAT, companies 3800 euro + VAT

Streaming: 1500 euro + VAT.

Due to SuomiAreena's organizational structure, it has not been possible to provide more precise data on the business model.

### Sustainability

SuomiAreena involves local manpower as much as possible, for example, to provide all the infrastructure of the festival. Local restaurants supply food and drinks for the whole festival, but there are no rules for them to follow regarding environmental impact.

The festival has brought increased tourism, more local jobs, a positive awareness, and positive thinking to the region in and around Pori.

### Communication platforms

MTV is a media company and SuomiAreena has its own webpage, social media sites - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and a press release system.

In 2017, MTV broadcast 22 hours of television programmes (morning show, special broadcast, Party Leader debate etc.) and streamed over 200 hours of discussions over their Katsomo-service. TV productions reached about 1,9 million viewers.

### Evaluation and impact

The festival does not have an external evaluation process, but has an evaluation and feedback form for internal use, where the whole team of 150 workers and 300 organisers complete a questionnaire. A self-evaluation takes place among the team and in the steering group.



Photo: SuomiAreena



# FOLKEMØDET

DENMARK [THE PEOPLE'S MEETING]

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# Folkemødet, Denmark

**Folkemødet provides the setting and the framework for interaction to make sure that the politicians not only engage with other politicians, but also with ordinary citizens – and by doing that Folkemødet believes that they can diminish the gap between the people in power and the people without power.**

## Purpose and vision

*“The purpose of Folkemødet is to bring people together. No matter whether you are a politician, lobbyist or ordinary citizen you are first and foremost included in the category “people”. When saying that we want to bring people together we emphasize that it is all kinds of people with all kinds of ideas and beliefs. By doing that we believe that we can strengthen our democracy and dialogue in Denmark”.*

## Founder and year of establishment

Folkemødet was established in 2011. Inspired by Almedalsveckan, a member of the Danish Parliament Bertel Haarder proposed the idea of creating a similar festival in Denmark. Winni Grosbøll, the Mayor of the regional municipality of Bornholm, took charge and soon after Folkemødet in Bornholm became a reality.

## Organisational structure

The festival was organised by a project secretariat within the regional municipality of Bornholm. In 2016 a decision was made to separate the festival from the regional municipality and the Foundation Folkemødet was established. The aim was to make the festival economically viable, to develop facilities for participants and to involve even more volunteers. The foundation was responsible for producing, developing and executing the festival for the first time in 2017. The secretariat of the foundation is located in Allinge and consists of three full time employees and a festival director. Four months before the festival another fifteen persons join the project group. In addition to the secretariat, the

festival has around 200 volunteers; 20% are locals and 80% come from Copenhagen.

## Location and length

The 4-day festival is located in Allinge, on the island of Bornholm and takes place in the middle of June. The idea of organising the festival on an island, away from the capital, was intentional. The aim was to create a camp vibe where the participants stay during the festival. Allinge is located 90 km and a boat trip from Copenhagen and has approximately 1600 inhabitants.

## Size – number of participants and events

The festival's own estimate of participants is approximately 40.000 unique visitors. Since the festival is located on an island, the numbers are based on ferry and airport tickets plus the police estimate during the festival. The secretariat agrees on an estimate taking into account these numbers and their own experience. 3200 events were held during the festival. The festival has some unofficial events but the secretariat is currently working on making sure that all events are included in their programme. So far, intense work has meant that only 2-3% of events are unofficial.

## People attending the festival

The people attending the festival represent different parts of Danish society. Almost 50% in attendance are ordinary citizens. Most of them are elderly, well-educated and with a specific interest in societal and political matters. Approximately 40 % consists of what are called the professionals: the lobbyists and the organisations who are there to work and the last 10% are volunteers, who are there to network.

## Involvement of political parties

The parliamentary parties have their own tents during the festival. Furthermore, each party has the main stage at their disposal for half an hour during the festival. The

foundation Folkemødet decides the time slots, which rotate every year. In 2017, all the political parties from the parliament participated and 146 out of a total of 179 members of parliament participated.. Additionally, they have to pay a fee, as does everyone else, to get a tent etc.



*“Folkemødet is the largest of democratic festivals. Throughout its short seven years of activity, all social groups have been reached. The discussions begin in the early morning and end with evening festivities from dancing to singing national songs or just hanging out and sharing the emotions of debates. Folkemødet is a massive political festival, which is at the same time an unusually wild, crowded Danish summer gathering” – Maiko Keskula, Head of the festival area, The Estonian Democracy Festival, Arvamusfestival*



## Programme

Anyone can apply to organize events. The secretariat allows the events if they are seen as relevant and create dialogue, which means that almost all events are accepted. The programme is curated in the sense that they try matchmaking between various event organisers who present similar programmes. The Head of Programme meets up with the event organisers in order to get them to join forces. Folkemødet focuses on the festival in June and does not offer any activities during the year. Culture blends into the event in a significant way, with theatre, music, art and sports all part of the programme.

## The most discussed topics in 2017

- Digitalization
- Healthcare
- Refugees
- Fake news
- Disruption

## Interaction

The festival uses several event formats for interaction, for example, panel discussions, workshops, seminars and walking tours. The ordinary, well-known panel discussions are still the event organisers' preferred format.

## Business model

Folkemødet is based on three primary income sources:

- Rent: Every organisation attending pays rent. The rent is based on the area they want. The rent is used to pay for cleaning, sanitation, security etc.
- Sponsors: Folkemødet gets revenue from signing sponsor deals with breweries, large companies, communication agencies etc.
- Fundraising: Folkemødet sends out applications to large Danish Foundations every year.

In addition, Folkemødet charges a flat fee to food trucks selling food. Folkemødet has its own bars where they sell beverages.

The total turnover is 2 million euro.

405.000 Euro comes from sponsors, 215.000 euro from the municipality, 710.000 euro from rent and other funding and lastly 670.000 euro came from production (tents, electricity, sound).

## Sustainability

Folkemødet involves local manpower as much as possible, for example, local suppliers of food and beverage, as well as craftsmen. Bornholm is branded as the Bright Green Island, which means that the festival has an obligation to respect this and create awareness about the factors contributing to this brand. The festival makes sure that they are environmentally conscious and have special systems for garbage disposal and a focus on electric cars and other green solutions.

The festival has had an immense positive outcome for the entire island, contributing to rebranding the island, which means the enticement of newcomers, jobs and a better local economy, for example, for the hotels and restaurants.

## Communication platforms

Folkemødet has its own webpage and social media sites - Facebook and Twitter. The website is used for informing and for helping as much as possible with accommodation and travel information. Social media is used to illustrate the festival atmosphere and create hype. The festival uses newsletters to get in touch with two different target groups: one newsletter is for the event organisers, sharing upcoming deadlines, and the other newsletter is for ordinary people visiting Folkemødet.

## Evaluation and impact

Evaluation of Folkemødet 2017 can be found [here](#).



Photo: Folkemødet



# ARENDALSUKA

NORWAY [ARENDALE WEEK]

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# Arendalsuka, Norway

**For one short week in August, the city centre of Arendal turns into an arena for the big questions of today and tomorrow. Through shared ideas, reflections, discussions and debates, Arendalsuka aims to bring more understanding, with the hope that participants leave a little wiser than when they came.**

## **Purpose and vision**

*“Arendalsuka is an annual national forum where delegates from politics, NGOs, industry and the public meet to debate and develop politics for the present and the future. Arendalsuka is politically independent, and aims to strengthen a belief in politics, political debate and the power of our democracy”.*

## **Founder and year of establishment**

A group of corporate national leaders with connections to the city of Arendal brought the idea of a festival similar to Almedalsveckan to the Mayor of the Municipality of Arendal and the Governor of the region. The festival was established in 2011, but due to the attack in Utøya and the executive government quarter of Norway in July the same year, the festival was cancelled. The first festival was held in August 2012.

## **Organisational structure**

The Municipality of Arendal owns Arendalsuka and the leader is therefore always the sitting Mayor of Arendal, supported by the City Council. The administrative leader of the Municipality manages the secretariat, which consists of six people. The secretariat also has other tasks during the year, as they are municipal employees. Four months before the festival another four staff members join the team. In addition to the secretariat, there is a committee, which produces the main programme of the festival. This committee consists of three people: A former minister, a CEO of a regional cluster and a political journalist. The programme committee works separately on the main programme with help from the

secretariat. The festival also has an advisory board – the Council – that meets six times a year, and consists of political leaders of the southern region of Norway, regional heads from the workers’ union and employer organisation, and a representative from the regional university.

## **Location and length**

The 6-day festival is held in Arendal and takes place in the middle of August. Arendal is located by the sea, 260 km south of Oslo and has 45.000 inhabitants.

## **Size – number of participants and events**

The festival’s own estimate of participants is approximately 60.000 – 80.000, or 25.000 unique visitors. In 2017, 720 unique organisers participated and 2400 people had a role on stage in the different events. These numbers are based on head counts on site, but mainly on qualified guesses. There were 791 official events during the festival. 33 were part of Arendalsuka’s main programme.

## **People attending the festival**

Attendees include politicians, NGO’s, corporate representatives, media and ordinary people. The age range is 35 – 55 years, with a 50/50 male/female ratio. Attendees are mainly from the southern and eastern part of the country. Arendalsuka has a special youth programme, Arendalsuka Ung (Young) that attracts approximately 2500 children and young people between the ages of 4 and 19.

## **Involvement of political parties**

The secretariat meets with both regional and national political parties twice a year to evaluate and plan the week. It is important for the legitimacy of the festival to have support from these groups. Arendalsuka begins with a debate between the parliamentary party leaders, which is broadcast live on NRK (Norwegian Broadca-

sting Company). All parties have their own Arendalsuka coordinator. Some coordinate accommodation as well as which events the different politicians should participate in. All political parties have one hour at their disposal during the festival. They also have their own tents in the Political Fair. All parliamentary political parties attend the festival, including 60-70 members of parliament (out of the total 169 members). In 2017, there was also an increase in the number of regional politicians attending. All ministers from the government attended the event at some point during the festival week.

**ARENDAUSUKA** 

*“Arendalsuka has a buzzing atmosphere and people are engaged in meaningful conversations. You can easily walk between different sites and scenes and pick out events you are interested in” – Thuridur, CEO of MAK, The Icelandic Democracy Festival, Fundur Fólksins.*



## Programme

Arendalsuka arranges its own programme, referred to as the Main Programme. The programme is created by Arendalsuka's own programme committee and consisted of 33 events in 2017. The events from the main programme are held in the biggest venues of the festival. The programme committee invites the public to come up with ideas for the main programme during the year. The programme committee decides on the topics, partners and participants for the main programme based on the suggestions they receive. In addition to the main programme, anyone can apply to organise events, as long as they are based on criteria set by Arendalsuka. All events must be free of charge, open to everyone, and useful for society. The project group handles all event and exhibition applications. Arendalsuka meets with the target groups throughout the year to ensure the quality of the event and good collaboration between organizers. This includes meetings with politicians on a national and regional level, media, The Norwegian Children and Youth Council, etc. Every year, in January, Arendalsuka host an information meeting in Oslo, which gathers approximately 300 people. Besides the main programme, Arendalsuka has a special programme for youth, Arendalsuka Ung, that caters to the interests of children and youth, divided into different age groups, and encourages engagement in democratic issues

## The main topics discussed in 2017

- Healthcare
- Sustainability
- Education
- Gender-equality
- Innovation

## Interaction

The festival uses several event formats to encourage interaction, for example, panel discussions, workshops and seminars. The ordinary well-known panel discussions are still the event organizers' preferred format.

## Business model

The total turnover is 596.000 euro. 70% is financed by private sponsors and 30% by different government funds. The government funds are from the two counties in the southern part of Norway, as well as the municipality of the neighbouring city of Kristiansand. A small amount is also given by the organization Fritt Ord. Most private sponsors have links to the region, for example, local banks, several national companies with a branch office in the region, business-clusters, and a few national companies. Arendalsuka accepts only sponsors that support the idea of the festival, and turn down potential sponsors with other agendas. Arendalsuka's policy on choosing sponsors is based on their belief that the arena is a place for communicating democracy and freedom of speech, which overrides the need to "shine" as a contributor. The sponsors have no impact on the content of the main programme or the festival itself.

Arendalsuka does not charge a fee for event organisers and they offer cheaper alternatives for small non-profit organisations. The cost of labor is not included in the budget, because the Municipality employs the secretariat. Arendalsuka has some income from exhibitions in the Political Fair, but most of this is used to pay for infrastructure.

## Sustainability

Arendalsuka is certified as environmentally competent (Eco-Lighthouse certification). Environmental questions are given high priority. The festival undergoes a certification process every three years. Local restaurants and cafes are the food suppliers for the festival. The festival urges them to consider their environmental impact but has no formal rules for this. Arendalsuka devotes a lot of time before and after the festival to discuss practical matters with the local trade association and the venues, such as pricing, availability, amount of supplies, and improvements for disabled access.

Overall, the festival has had a positive outcome for the entire city of Arendal. It has significantly stimulated the local economy, as well as drawn politicians' focus to local business issues.

## Communication platforms

Arendalsuka has its own website and uses several social media platforms - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, with specific strategies for each platform. The website is used for event registration, press, programme and practical information. Social media is used for spreading information and sharing stories, while YouTube is the home for all events in the main programme.



Photo: Arendalsuka



# ARVAMUSFESTIVAL

ESTONIA [OPINION FESTIVAL]

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# Arvamusfestival, Estonia

**Arvamusfestival is an open and inspiring meeting place for different opinions and new ideas, where discussions and debates on important topics come to life.**

## Purpose and vision

“Arvamusfestival is an open and inspiring meeting place for different opinions and new ideas, where discussions and debates on important topics come to life. Our mission is to bring together all societal groups, to empower people and through this – improve the culture of discussion”

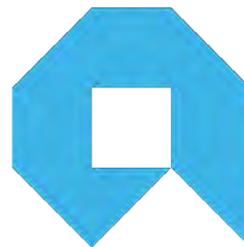
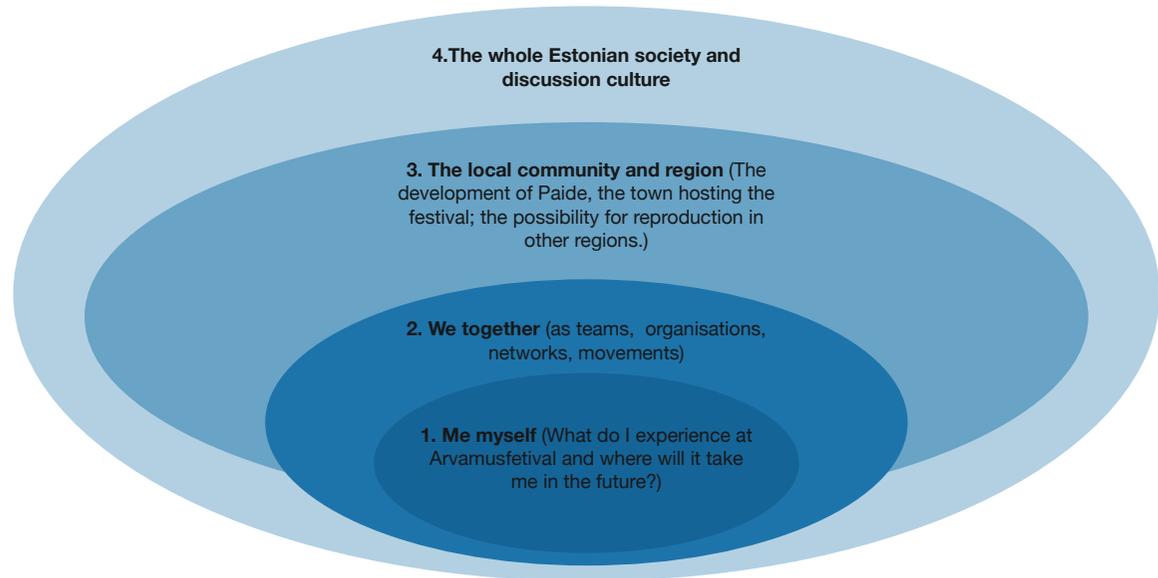
The festival has made a 4-level Impact Model of the change they want to achieve. The festival believes that they influence first and foremost each individual participating. All big changes in the world begin with little flickers of thought or emotion inside a person. The festival creates a place that offers those inspirational moments that get people on the path to becoming more informed, inspired, open, brave, and active – to build a better discussion culture and stronger democracy in Estonia.

## Founder and year of establishment

Arvamusfestival was established in 2013. The festival was founded as a civic initiative, in a climate of growing distrust towards politics and disillusionment in public discussions. The idea was to team up to establish a platform for open discussion, a new kind of experience through meaningful and engaging debates.

## Organisational structure

Arvamusfestival is owned by the non-profit organisation MTÜ Arvamusfestival and relies almost completely on work done by volunteers and support from sponsors (state, local, business, private). Since 2013, three different festival leaders have been in charge. Festival policy is to change the leader and core team leaders on



arvamus  
festival

*“Arvamusfestival is unique. The setting in a small city far from the hassle of the big cities makes the festival atmosphere special. The setting itself asks the visitor to think about all aspects of the society we live in; in this case, that democracy is not only something conducted in the big cities and in the parliament - democracy is also everyday democracy in the small cities ... and that can so easily be forgotten” – Mads Akselbo Holm, CEO, The Danish Democracy Festival, Folkemødet.*

a three-year rotating basis. The festival team structure has changed over the years due to the rapid growth of the festival, and the workload for each of the volunteers has to be thoughtfully managed. In 2017, the core team consisted of nine people with concrete areas of responsibility, including communication, marketing, development, environment, and finance. The core team curated the programme and consulted with organisers with help from five additional volunteers. Everybody had 1-3 stages to manage and coordinate in addition to their role as team leaders. In 2017, there were three paid workers to secure the basic planning and development processes and approximately 250 volunteers.

#### **Location and length**

The festival is located in Paide and takes place for 2 days on the 2nd weekend of August. It was located in Paide because people in Paide saw the potential of Arvamusfestival and offered tremendous volunteer support. The festival is located 90 km from Tallinn and the town has approximately 8350 inhabitants.

#### **Size – number of participants and events**

According to the paper wristbands handed out to all participants, the festival's own estimate of unique participants is approximately 9000. In 2017, there were 25 stages, 166 open discussions and 35 events on the culture programme.

#### **People attending the festival**

Although the festival is open to all, based on feedback from questionnaires (429 responses in 2017), the festival mostly attracts young and middle aged people who are interested in societal questions, or in the development of a certain field:

- Gender: 60% women and 40% men
- Age: 40% 20-29, 23% 30-39, 15% 40-49, 3-8% others.
- Geographical area: 51% from capital, Tallinn or Harju County, 18% from Tartu County, 16% Järvamaa County (locals).

#### **Involvement of political parties**

Each of the six parliamentary parties has their own 1-day stage at their disposal and they organise 3-4 discussion events during the festival. They are expected to put together their own programme and finance everything with their own funds. In 2017, 14% of the discussions were organised by parties. The festival traditionally ends on Saturday evening with a debate of the leaders of the parliamentary parties.

#### **Programme**

Anyone can apply to organize an event. There is an open call for preliminary ideas for discussion topics. The core team analyses and evaluates the ideas and, based on similarity and synergy of topics, groups them on shared “theme” stages. Organisations are expected to organise the discussions and stages themselves (15 such stages in 2017). The festival core team consults on the process and keeps the organisers on track. In 2017, there were approximately 95 organisations organising discussions, including: 40% non-profits, 18% public sector institutions, 17% businesses. Arvamusfestival builds and pays for only a few important stages, for example, the discussion stage for the children. The rest is organised by partners. The event organisers that have been grouped together decide amongst themselves the division of costs.

2017 was the first year when the number of discussions had to be limited and the programme curated, with the aim of improving the quality of discussions. Only 35% of the event ideas from open call were approved. The main principles were to offer a wide variety of topics, to include some important evergreen topics, to avoid duplication, and to offer varied (more engaging) discussion formats. Only media channels and political parties have the advantage of having their own stage and not having to go through the open call. However, the festival team works closely with them to ensure fresh content.

The festival puts a lot of effort into spreading the idea of an open and friendly atmosphere for discussion, which is why the festival supported the organisation of two pre-festival events in different areas of Estonia during 2016 and 2017. Furthermore, they have organised four open discussion nights called Arvamusfestival Club in Tallinn.

The festival has devoted more and more attention to cultural expression during the festival. Over the last 2-3 years, the festival has focused on recreating public space in small towns, represented by Paide. This year the festival included several art exhibitions and light shows in and around old abandoned houses. However, the greatest success story in 2017 was a 1-month urban space experiment in the town square, taking the square back from cars and traffic and returning it to the people and pedestrians. The square was closed to traffic and, in cooperation with architects, the people of Arvamusfestival built a volleyball court and areas to hang out. For a month, local people organised different cultural programmes in the square.

#### **The most discussed topics in 2017**

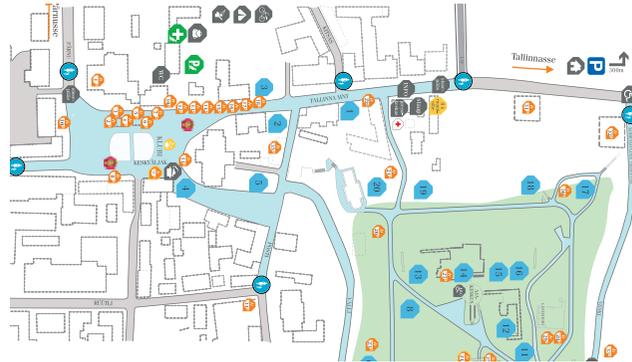
- Education
- Values
- National security
- Gender-equality
- Healthcare

#### **Interaction**

The festival uses several event formats for interaction, for example, panel discussions, workshops, seminars, sports games and living library events. The majority of events are panel discussions. In 2015, a series of workshops were designed especially for event organisers, focusing on different discussion formats and inclusive practices to promote an interactive debate culture.

### Infrastructure and security

The festival consists of approximately 20 stages; some located in the park and others on streets to offer different settings for events. All discussions take place outdoors. There are cafes in the park and a food area is located in the City Square and Main Street. Cultural events take place both outdoors and indoors all around Paide. The whole city of Paide is integrated in the festival through the cultural programme. The infrastructure is built in cooperation with the local municipality and with the help of volunteers. The festival site is secured by a private security team to keep both festival attendees and festival property safe.



### Spatial design and scenography

One of Arvamusfestival's mantras is: Good design means good atmosphere and good atmosphere means everything. The festival puts a lot of time and thought each year in to creating a visual look for the whole festival. Partners organising discussion events have caught on to this idea and are also looking for ways to build attractive spaces for discussions. The festival believes that the setup for discussions sets a tone and thus should be designed to support the goals of interaction and inspiration.



Photos & map: Arvamusfestival

### Business model

The festival is established as an NGO and relies mostly on volunteer work, but receives also considerable support from a number of funds and companies. The largest supporters are the local government, local county government, Foundation of Civil Society, and companies, like Swedbank.

The space for discussions, incl. electricity and water, is free for organisers. However, the organisers (mostly) have to build their stages themselves (get a tent, sound equipment, chairs, design elements, a stage name sign etc.). The average cost for a stage is approximately 2500-6000 euro for 2 days.

Arvamusfestival's income from 2017 was 108 000 euro and consisted of: 14% State funds, 13% European institutions, 32% Local municipalities, 17% Sponsors, and 24% Earnings. This represents only the income that goes through Arvamusfestival budget and accounts. It does not reflect estimates for volunteer work, or the costs incurred by partners building the 15 stages. Only three people in the steering committee are paid (not for fulltime jobs) and those costs account for approximately 29% of the budget. Many organisers are volunteers and are not paid extra to get their organisation's topics represented at Arvamusfestival. There are 1-3 people engaged out of all 80-100 partnering organisations. Most of the stages are put up by Arvamusfestival partners as well – so the budget does not reflect costs for advertising (e.g. media channels own space), tents and decorations, sound and recording systems, streaming, nor costs for transportation and housing of partner organisation staff. A conservative estimate of the added contribution by partner organizations (not including labor) would be around 53 000 euro.

### Sustainability

There have been some positive socio-economic outcomes for the entire town but the most positive effect is an empowered community and a newfound energy to develop the town. There are active culture houses, a theatre; a new gymnasium has been built. The mayor is practicing open government and involves the community more and more. Many of the festival volunteers are from Paide and are a big part of the development of both the festival and the town. Besides the festival uses as much recyclable materials as possible, but has not set up any rules for that.

### Communication platforms

Arvamusfestival has its own webpage and social media sites with a specific strategy for each platform. The webpage is used for the programme, news, archive, blog, and practical information. Social media is used to introduce different discussion topics to different target groups. The communication strategy changes every year due to changing levels of interest in the festival and incorporating the communication team leader's vision.

### Evaluation and impact

Arvamusfestival gathers feedback from participants to keep improving the programme and atmosphere each year. In 2017, visitors characterized the festival as a very fun way to spend their time (77%), as a place to gain new knowledge from discussions (71%), as an inspiration and nudge to action (49%). The festival also conducted personal and focus group interviews with their partners who organised stages and discussions and systematically observed the discussions to understand better what actually goes on and how different formats work.



Photo: Arvamusfestival



# SARUNU FESTIVĀLS LAMPA

LATVIA [CONVERSATION FESTIVAL LAMPA]

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# Sarunu Festivāls LAMPA, Latvia

**Stellar events, thoughtful discussions, and hot topics. The Conversation festival LAMPA has become a meeting place to exchange ideas and to seek understanding between people of diverse opinions, political viewpoints and expectations.**

## Purpose and vision

*“The purpose of the festival is to strengthen democratic conversation culture in Latvia, to foster civic engagement and active involvement in social and political processes and to encourage a lust for lifelong learning in an ever-changing world”.*

## Founder and year of establishment

LAMPA was established in 2015. The idea was hatched and nurtured by the Foundation for an Open Society DOTS in cooperation with its partners – Swedbank Latvia and the Sustainable Change Agency SPARK from Denmark.

## Organisational structure

The Foundation for an Open Society DOTS is the main driving force of the festival. The Executive Director of the Foundation Ieva Morica is also the director of LAMPA. Co-organisers of the festival are the advertising agency “Armadillo”, communication management agency “Deep White”, Swedbank Latvia, the Municipality of Cēsis and the British Council Latvia. Representatives of these organisations form the core group of the festival. Everyone is employed or receives remuneration. Four full-time employees from DOTS work on the festival all year around – fundraising, programme coordination, communication, financial management and secretariat. A few months prior to the festival another five persons join the team: producer, technical director, volunteer coordinator, assistants to producer and technical director. “Armadillo” assists with social media communication, webpage development and administration, design and production of publicity and advertisement

materials. “Deep White” is responsible for the general communication – strategy, media relations, PR. Swedbank Latvia, Municipality of Cēsis, and British Council Latvia take part in the strategic decision-making and contribute financially. In addition, Swedbank Latvia curates a stage on education issues and promotes the festival using its communication channels – ATMs, social media, newsletter, outdoor advertisement etc.

LAMPA relies on the assistance of volunteers prior to and during the festival. Usually more than 50 volunteers join the festival organising team.

## Location and length

The 2-day festival is located in Cēsis and takes place at the end of June or beginning of July. Cēsis is located 90 km from Riga. The venue of the festival was chosen due to proximity to the capital, good location (castle park) and helpful municipality.

## Size – number of participants and events

In 2017, more than 10.000 people from all over the country attended the festival. The estimate is calculated based on the number of wristbands given to festival visitors and the estimate provided by the security company. In 2017, the programme featured more than 200 events. There is no unofficial programme. In addition, up to 40 events were broadcast live on LMT Straume and major online news portals, thus reaching a much broader audience – 67 000 unique viewers in 2017.

## People attending the festival

Although the majority of festival visitors are in the 20-45 age group, coming from Riga, Cēsis and other locations in the Vidzeme region, the festival is also attended by people of different age groups, social groups, ethnicity and gender coming from different parts of Latvia.

## Involvement of political parties

Political parties do not have their own tents, although they have been informed about the possibility. Event organisers invite politicians to take part in events, and some politicians attend the festival without speaking at any of the events.



*“Entering the Conversation festival LAMPA brings you to a different dimension. In a quiet secluded beautiful garden, surrounded by ruins, you can engage in lectures and discussions that cover the big questions of today. A relaxed atmosphere, but still with room for difficult discussions that encourage the audience to participate in the conversations.” – Tone Skindlo Taraldsen coordinator, the Norwegian Democracy Festival, Arendalsuka.*

### Infrastructure and security

A green park surrounds the festival. LAMPA believes in shared infrastructure and provides five stages and two tents, a stage for the Latvian public broadcaster (Radio & TV) and places for other tents/stages/installations. In 2017, there were 30 venues in total. Security is ensured by a private company in close cooperation with the municipal and state police.

### Spatial design and scenography

The festival organisers take care of the festival area – decorate, build shared infrastructure, organise lounge areas, put up signs and maps and make visible “rules of the game” on how to hold a democratic conversation.



Photos & map: Sarunu Festivāls LAMPA

## Programme

Anyone can apply to organise an event or several events at LAMPA. The core group (DOTS and co-organisers) reviews and approves the applications based on the festival manifesto and criteria: the event must respect the Conversation festival LAMPA manifesto and promote the development of democracy in Latvia (but it can do this in a multitude of formats), participants must be engaged and diversity of opinions ensured. Service or product marketing is not allowed.

The programme is co-created with many organisations and individuals from the private and public sector, including state institutions and media. LAMPA provides a 1,5 h spot on the shared infrastructure (stages/tents) or an opportunity to build their own infrastructure and organise a two-day programme.

The festival organises several warm-up events prior to the festival to reach out to new audiences and to advertise the festival. In 2017, LAMPA had two warm-up events – one in Cēsis and another in a Rīga suburb.

## The most discussed topics in 2017

- Education
- IT/start-ups/innovation
- Media literacy
- Regional development
- State development & security

## Interaction

The festival uses several event formats for interaction, for example, debates, panel discussions, theatre performances, living libraries, workshops, lectures, political roast, stand-ups, walking tours, cognitive experiments, games, contests, confessions, brain bank and installations.

## Business model

The main donor is the Foundation for an Open Society DOTS (secretariat throughout the year and core team).

In-kind contributions are provided by partners: advertising agency “Armadillo” and communication management agency “DeepWhite”. One of the biggest donors is Swedbank Latvia. DOTS fundraises from the business community and applies for grants. The festival asks for a co-payment from event organisers and charges caterers for providing services. The amount of co-payment for a 1,5 hour event varies from 200 euro + VAT to 2500 euro + VAT according to the size of the /tent/stage and time slot. Costs for a place to build a tent/stage range from 400 euro + VAT to 1500 euro + VAT (according to the number of days, size of the spot). The festival organisers offer stipends to cover the co-payment (exemption from co-payments) to a limited number of applicants (non-governmental organisations, individuals).

The income from 2017 consisted of:  
Grants: 63,06%  
Donations: 17, 68%  
Co-payments: 12,8%  
Cēsis municipality: 4,75%  
Other: 1,71%

## Sustainability

The festival organisers try to make things (banners, garlands, deco elements) for multiple uses. The Municipality of Cēsis is the co-organiser of the festival. A local activist curates the regional programme of the festival. There are no specific rules for the food and beverage suppliers, but the local suppliers are preferable and welcome. The festival boosts the local economy (hotels, catering) and promotes the city’s brand in Latvia and beyond.

## Communication platforms

LAMPA has its own webpage and pages on major social media – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Draugiem.lv, with a specific strategy for each of them. LAMPA has several information partners: Latvian Television, online media platforms Tvnet.lv and Apollo.lv, National Information Agency LETA, magazine IR, social media platform Draugiem.lv. In

addition, outdoor stands and online advertisements are used to promote the festival.

## Evaluation and impact

The festival has various evaluation methods. The attendees of the festival are invited to respond to a questionnaire on the spot (gathering their feedback about the festival, specifying where they come from and their suggestions for the next festivals). In 2017, more than 200 attendees responded to the survey. A separate set of questionnaires is filled out by the coordinators of the shared tents and stages about the flow of events and audience engagement. The organiser of the festival hosts meetings with separate event organisers to seek feedback and ideas for the next festival. In addition, students from various universities in Latvia assess LAMPA as a case study in different fields of studies (e.g., communication and outreach, etc.).



Photo: Sarunu Festivāls LAMPA



# FUNDUR FÓLKSINS, ICELAND

ICELAND [THE PEOPLE'S MEETING]

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## Fundur Fólksins, Iceland

**The festival is in its start-up phase but has already created inspiration for future festivals. Participants enjoy face-to-face conversations and sharing ideas, which, in the current political climate, is a great need as the polarization of society is reinforced daily via social media.**

### Purpose and vision

*“Fundur Fólksins wants to support and strengthen democratic dialogue in Iceland. The festival aims to build trust in society between different societal groups. The festival creates a framework for meetings and discussions between decision-makers on all political levels as well as being a platform for interest groups to share their ideas and thoughts on how to improve our society”.*

### Founder and year of establishment

The Nordic house in Reykjavik is the founder of the festival, which was established with the aim of strengthening the political debate in Iceland. The first festival was held in 2015. The festival has been developing since its inception and the organisational structure has changed with every festival. As of 2018, the festival will be called LÝSA.

In 2015, the Nordic House was in charge of the festival, supported financially by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The umbrella organization Almannaheill (Society for NGO's) supported the first festival by volunteering one member to serve on the steering committee. In 2016, it was decided that Almannaheill would produce the festival, with help on infrastructure issues from the Nordic House. Both festivals were held in Reykjavik at the Nordic House. In 2017, Almannaheill and MAK (Cultural Institution) partnered up to produce the festival together at the initiative of MAK and moved the festival to the city of Akureyri.

### Organisational structure

Almannaheill (Society for NGO's) and MAK (Cultural Institution) produce the festival together. MAK is the host and producer of the festival that applies for funding and promotes the festival. Almannaheill supports the festival by applying for funds and using their network to promote participation among its member organisations. MAKs regular staff works for the festival during the festival days. The festival has no fulltime employees. The board of Fundur Fólksins has two representatives from MAK, one from the municipality of Akureyri and one from Almannaheill.

### Location and length

The 2-day festival is located in Akureyri and takes place in the beginning of September. The festival takes place in Hof Cultural House in Akureyri, which is a part of the institution MAK. The venue is primarily used as a conference house consisting of many halls of different size. The festival is an indoor festival due to the unstable climate. The location was chosen because of the distance away from the capital and Akureyri is the town known to be a good place for conferences and smaller meetings and events. It was the organisers' belief that, in order for the festival to reach its full potential, it had to move outside of the capital Reykjavík, since the participants would engage more in the festival if they had to travel to get there.

### Size – number of participants and events

The festival's own estimate of participating guests is approximately 300 individuals. 50 organizations participated in the programme and organized around 60 events. Participating organizations were counted via the registration form required to get a spot in the programme.

### People attending the festival

The festival's target group is stakeholders in Icelandic society, politicians, lobbyists and members of the general public who take an interest in societal matters. An estimate of the types of guests is: lobbyists 30%, politicians 20%, people working in public institutions 30%, general public 20%.

### Involvement of political parties

Political parties are invited to participate, as are all other organisations. They choose themselves to host debates and meetings or participate in events organized by others. The festival contacts every parliamentarian and talks to the staff of each party to encourage them to attend. A meeting is held with the leader of parliament and staff to make sure the agenda is clear for the festival days.



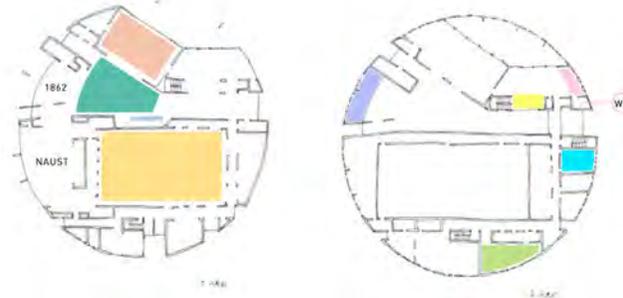
*“Fundur Fólksins has great proximity and informality. The place creates a moody setting and the commitment of both visitors and participants is very significant. Everyone is involved and discussing, the issues and topics raised are engaging” – Mia Stuhre, project manager, the Swedish Democracy Festival, Almedalsveckan.*

### Infrastructure and security

The festival takes place inside the Cultural House Hof consisting of eight venues, ranging from a 509-seat auditorium to a sofa corner seating 10 people. Most events take place in conference rooms of different sizes. Smaller more informal events take advantage of the sofa corner. Questions of security are not of great significance for the festival.

### Spatial design and scenography

The festival curates the overall visuals and organisers are advised to use the visuals in connection to their events.



Photos & map: Fundur Fólksins

## Programme

Anyone can apply to organize an event. The only criteria are that the events are relevant to society, free of charge and open to everyone. The project manager arranges the programme depending on topic, and depending on the target audience: the general public, stakeholders or professionals. The venue hosts a number of big and small events as conferences, concerts, and theatre.

## The most discussed topics in 2017

- Healthcare
- Environmental issues

## Interaction

The festival uses several event formats for interaction, for example, panel discussions, workshops, lectures, and speakers.

## Business model

The festival charges a fee of 200 euro for event organisers. Festival income from 2017 included 30% funding from MAK, 40% from Almannaheill via the Ministry of Welfare, 10% from Akureyri Municipality and 10% from the event organisers' fee.

## Sustainability

The festival considers the use of materials, for example, recycled materials were used in the children's area. The main rule for food suppliers is that nothing is sold at the festival and sustainability should be the theme for food service. An example of this is the "disco soup", which was created by local chefs working with big supermarkets, using food past its sell-by date that has been removed from store shelves.

Since 2017 was the festival's first year in Akureyri, it is difficult to measure impact and local outcomes, but a positive awareness towards the festival has been created, and the organisations are more aware of what the festival is about and how they can benefit from it.

## Communication platforms

Fundur Fólksins has its own webpage and social media platforms - Facebook and Twitter. Participants likely to attend are located and introduced to the concept of the festival through e-mail, telephone conversations, and introduction meetings. The platforms are used to target different groups; e-mail and telephone conversations are mostly used to reach media to promote the festival. Introduction meetings are crucial to reach out to participants and to advertise the festival and recruit new organisers for the upcoming festival. Social media is used to reach the public to promote the festival and organisers participating are asked to encourage people to attend the festival.

## Evaluation and impact

The festival was evaluated by questionnaires directed to all participants. The questions were mainly focused on an evaluation of the festival but also asked for suggestions for improvement of the next festival. The board holds at least one evaluation meeting after the festival with key stakeholders.



Photo: Fundur Fólksins



# DISKUSIJŲ FESTIVALIS "BŪTENT!"

LITHUANIA ["MAKE SENSE!"]

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# Diskusiju Festivalis "Būtent!", Lithuania

**BŪTENT is an annual assembly in a cosy open-air area of Birštonas with a festival-type atmosphere, where people from political, business, academic, cultural and non-governmental organizations discuss important topics for the development of the state, share ideas and forge new collaborations.**

## Purpose and vision

*"The festival's mission is to contribute to the development of the democratic welfare state and united and advanced society by developing the culture of discussions, creating common ground and promoting tolerance. The festival aims to become the main discussion platform in Lithuania – the place for consideration, opinion-forming, consensus-building, for the development of a common vision of the welfare state".*

## Founder and year of establishment

BŪTENT was initiated in 2017 by the Lithuanian non-governmental body "Visos idėjos", which was established in the same year with the goal of being the founder of the Lithuanian Democracy Festival.

## Organisational structure

Several private individuals run the non-governmental organization "Visos idėjos", which currently doesn't have permanent full-time employees and is operating on a voluntary basis with strong support from all main organisers and partners. In 2017, the festival was organised by the Lithuanian Open Society Foundation, the British Council, Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Lithuania, and Swedbank.

## Location and length

The 2-day festival took place in the beginning of September in a resort town Birštonas, located in the middle of Lithuania, about an hour's drive from Vilnius and Kaunas. Birštonas has approximately 2700 inhabitants and is famous for its traditional and newly opened spa

hotels and recreational facilities. Birštonas was selected due to its convenient location, easily accessible from all parts of Lithuania, due to its facilities, enabling the town to host a large number of participants in local hotels and due to the positive approach of the local municipality.

## Size – number of participants and events

The first festival in 2017 had approximately 3000 unique participants during both days. There were more than 70 events and 200 speakers and panellists. Participants were counted by distributing participant-cards with a map of the area. All the organisers' and partners' events were included in the programme and there were no unofficial events.

## People attending the festival

BŪTENT is a meeting place for public-spirited citizens, leaders and active participants from political, business, academia and non-governmental organisations. The organisers estimate that approximately two thirds of the participants came from the capital city Vilnius and represented various organisations including decision-making bodies. One third of the participants were local citizens and people from other towns of Lithuania.

## Involvement of political parties

All the political parties have a time slot at their disposal in the programme for a debate during the festival. Politicians also participated in several of the discussions organised by others. The main event of the festival was a political debate with all parliamentary parties. The political parties didn't have their own tents. The organisers estimate that approximately 100 politicians attended.

## Programme

There is an open call to the public inviting all interested parties to participate by suggesting topics for speakers and discussions. In 2017 a substantial portion of the topics and discussions were provided and organised

by the main organisers and partners of the festival. The evening programme was followed by concerts and theatre performances and a special programme was dedicated to children.

## The most discussed topics in 2017

- Education
- Economy
- Migration
- Finance
- International politics



**BŪTENT!**  
DISKUSIJŲ FESTIVALIS

*"Inspiring festival of discussions and ideas in a great, accessible and scenic location. A promising start! Good cooperation between civil society and government organizations" - Ilze Klimaševska, Foundation for an Open Society DOTS*

### Infrastructure and security

The festival is organised in a green park close to the centre of Birštonas, housing the main stage and several discussion areas. In addition, there was a joint networking area, lounge area, and kid's area. Both the local municipality and a security company hired by organisers were in charge of security during the festival.

### Spatial design and scenography

The main organisers are responsible for setting up the main stage and main discussion areas. There were several additional tents set up by the main partners. Most of them were branded with the festival's visual identity and were named as "Open Lithuania", "Creative Lithuania", "Smart Lithuania", etc. The rest of the tents were set-up to meet the standard of the main tents and there were no tents or other facilities for commercial purposes, except for food trucks.



Photos and map: Diskusiju Festivalis "Būtent!"

### Interaction

The festival uses mainly panel discussions, speeches and lectures as formats for interaction. A large networking area with a festival vibe was designed for personal interaction for all participants.

### Business model

The festival is free of charge for all the participants as well as for all organisations represented by their speakers or panellists.

Four main organisers as well as several partners are the main financial supporters of the festival. In 2017, approximately 80% of the budget came from these sources. The remaining 20% consisted of additional donations from private and governmental organisations that participated in the event. Additionally, the festival partnered up with the local municipality, thus enabling the festival to avoid some local infrastructure costs, such as electricity, water supply, etc.

The festival infrastructure, such as stages, tents, sound and video equipment, electrical generators, made up 70% of the costs. The remainder consisted of communication costs, hotels, transport, etc. The festival secretariat and other manpower needs were taken care of on a voluntary basis.

### Sustainability

Since the festival area was in the park territory of the resort town, the municipality required supervision over environmental issues. The festival, therefore, took environmental issues into account when selecting suppliers, but no formal rules were set.

The festival created a positive awareness of both the festival itself, and the city of Birštonas, but impact and other local outcomes have not been measured, since 2017 was the first year of the festival.

### Communication platforms

BÜTENT runs its own webpage, social media platform on Facebook and direct newsletters with a strategy set to mobilize organisers, speakers and participants.

### Evaluation and impact

Partners and other organisations participating in BÜTENT evaluated the festival to help make decisions about the setup for 2018. As only a small number of participants registered via the website of the festival, it was not possible to follow up with them by distributing a survey. For 2018, organisers plan to encourage registration via the website in order to get more detailed information about the participants – and to have the opportunity to get feedback from them as well.



Photo: Diskusiju Festivalis "Bütent!"



**DEMOCRACY**  
festivals