



Paula Anškēna
project manager,
Otra Elpa



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“The message we are trying to send is that the people to which we donate are not just poor folks that would put on anything you give them, they are human beings like us and they deserve to wear decent clothing, dignity is the most important aspect of charity.”

Paula is project manager at the second-hand shop Otra Elpa. She used to work in another NGO in the youth sector, but since she was very close to burning out she decided to leave and take a break. She went to the USA to visit her brother for some months and as soon as she got back she sent emails to her contacts and friends in the NGO sector to say that she was up and running again. She got her occasion when a girl that was working at Otra Elpa replied her and said that, as she was going to leave her job soon, so Otra Elpa needed someone to replace her. Paula already knew Otra Elpa, or what you can see of it from the outside, because she had been a client before. For this reason she knew what kind of things they did and decided that this was the kind of job that might give her the added value that she was looking for.

Otra Elpa is a charity platform that works with the mission to enable grant programmes for other NGOs to help them realize their social ideas. It all started about ten years ago, when Elina Neilande, the founder of the organization, one day came back from the UK with a great idea; in fact, she had been very impressed by a very popular charitable organization there, Oxfam, and realized that there wasn't anything like that in Latvia, and so she decided to create her own organization.

They are a team of 28 women and just one man (they like to say that they are completely women-run), all working in the same direction to make a difference for NGOs and people in need. They have four shops in which they sell second-hand clothing and items which they gather from citizens willing to give away things they no longer use. With all the money they make they organize grant programmes to which NGOs can apply: last year they made a record of 20000€ donated! In addition, they also donate in kind and reach about twenty NGOs per month. Their aim is to help organizations that struggle with funding, like to ones that don't manage to get EU funding or that have hard times with bureaucracy and paper-works.

Even though they Otra Elpa is facing problems, such as waste sorting

(in Latvia there is no textile waste management and recycle), storage, and communication with donors that sometimes use them as a place to dump the stuff they just cleaned from their attic, Paula loves this job, it gives her the possibility to deal with people's real problems, and to see with her eyes the results for which she struggles every day. Nowadays, after ten years of hard work, Otra Elpa is a consolidated reality in Latvia, and what they do can really make a difference for a lot of people.

