



**Artūrs Jansons**  
Head of  
"Homo ecos" (he:)



Artūrs says that homo ecos was created by expanding an idea. Many years ago Artūrs and his friends went to Estonia and saw a box with paper bags for collecting garbage in the nature placed at a petrol station. With the help of Latvian State Forests this idea has been implemented at Statoil petrol stations also in Latvia. This idea was the beginning of the association "Dabas draugiem.lv" [Friends of Nature]. The association started working on several projects, the team expanded, a volunteer movement participate and after some time the European Volunteer Work initiative was also attracted to the project. Five years passed since foundation of the association and only then institutions in Latvia providing public financing for such activities started perceiving homo ecos seriously – Artūrs is thankful that during this period the association could operate by using private resources of the founders of the association. Artūrs concludes that the success stories of homo ecos are the result of the effort of their wonderful team.

The association tries to focus on the people's daily actions. Although the association is an advisor to legislators in advisory groups, the focus on the change of people's habits in the daily life is most important. The cooperation proposed to

<http://www.homoecos.lv/>

**"Our contribution to IAM 13 consists of changes via changes in the consumer behaviour. This is a long and thankless way, still somebody needs to do this and, while somebody is working on important stuff by changing laws, somebody else will go to schools to speak about it."**

– ARTŪRS

organisers of the youth song festival in 2012 that would reduce the volume of produced waste seemed hopeful, however, the organisers changed their minds and expressed the wish "to postpone it for the next event". The same excuse was used every time, including the festival in 2018 where cheese slices for participants were packed in plastic bags and water was only supplied in plastic bottles.

While a person is subject to an image dictating how one should look and what items one should buy, it is necessary to work with the mind-set that helps to filter that. Artūrs refers to the visit to Salacgrīva secondary school as a good example – thanks to installing water filters accessible to everybody in the school, students are now carrying their own reusable bottles.

People are consuming what they are told to consume and change of habits does not happen overnight. The global focus on environment issues has increased considerably – in the 1990-ies nobody in Latvia knew about waste sorting and now 40% of people do it on daily basis. Ten years ago there were only few cyclists in Riga, now the number of cyclists has multiplied both in winter and summer. Some changes happen also in the legislation and the emission restrictions applicable to cars, as well as recyclability of their parts can be referred to as an example.

Artūrs is happy to say that the direct work with consumers and the target audience provides immediate feedback, which helps to continuously improve their own work. He admits that, when we speak about changing habits, the Latvian values are often overshadowed by stereotype thinking and the inability to look at a process from another perspective. The agriculture sector is a good example in this regard, because it causes pollution, however, at the same time it is emphasised everywhere that Latvia is a very "green" country. The same applies to forestry. The only positive cultural feature is attitude to food waste, in particular, bread.

At present homo ecos is active almost only in the virtual environment because they are facing unexpected difficulties in a large-scale project, in the result of which all the costs need to be cut.

