



### Jānis Brizga

Chairman of the Board of "Zaļā Brīvība" [Green Freedom], Researcher at the University of Latvia (LU)



"Zaļā Brīvība" developed on the basis of the "Zaļās Bibliotēkas" [Green Library], and the main reason behind the change having taken place 20 years ago was the revelation that the association started working with a broader range of topics. Moreover, the „library” was associated by people with reading books instead of action and involvement. Therefore, the change of the „brand” took place simultaneously with the change of the name.

Jānis described "Zaļā Brīvība" (ZB) as an organisation working with environment issues and always trying to view them within the global context. Therefore, the organisation has been an active member of the association „Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation” for several years. Among the many directions that the organisation deals with, Jānis emphasises that ZB implements protection of interests and defence both on the local and international level. The deposit system, introduction of which in Latvia has been attempted by ZB for one and a half years, is the most important recent topic. Jānis is satisfied with achievements because it looks like the deposit system could be introduced in the near future. At the same time, approval of the infrastructure is delayed by the change of the Saeima [Parliament of Latvia] and the final decision will have to be adopted by the new Members of the Parliament.

Prior to joining the team of ZB, Jānis had gained experience in environment and development organisations. It is important for him to work in the field of environment because Jānis considers that the society and the state underestimate their role in environment matters and live by an illusion that they

<http://www.zalabriviba.lv/zalais-celvedis>

do not cause any environment impact. In the result, people speak much about the importance of the environment, however, at the same time they are prepared to do very little by themselves. Jānis thinks that it is important to bridge this gap between our values and practical action both on the individual and society level: by including change of people’s habits and arrangement of the infrastructure. Therefore ZB tries to balance the responsibility of an individual, businesses and the state in their activities.

An initiative which is worth mentioning is a summary of detailed advice and alternatives in the book "Zaļais Ceļvedis" [Green Guidelines], the first version of which was published in 2008 and experienced revival in the publication of 2017. This book is of great assistance in each person’s daily life, as it helps to understand one’s impact on the world, explains the current situation in detail and suggests alternatives that are less harmful to the health, the environment and the society (the electronic version of the guidelines is accessible here: [ej.uz/ZalaisCelvedis](http://ej.uz/ZalaisCelvedis)) Jānis reveals that in the course of preparing the first publication he found that the situation had improved in some areas, for example, harmful chemicals as a threat to our health is less topical. The guidelines have received an award from the Latvian Medical Association which is no surprise because environmentally friendly and healthy

**“At the same time we understand that all the responsibility may not be imposed on an individual. Businesses and the state have a great shares of responsibility as they actual create the external environment where we exist as s society.”**

– JĀNIS

lifestyle usually go “hand in hand”.

Jānis is actively trying to introduce environmentally friendly principles in both his own and the organisation’s daily life. At the same time, in order to go to conferences abroad planes should be used for reaching destinations – this means of transport may suppress the positive impact created by other environmentally friendly habits.

To Jānis it is clear that achievement of the change of the general views in the society is most important – in the perfect world the society could move away from materialism and individualism which currently prevails people’s values, thereby becoming the society based on cooperation and joint benefit values. Jānis praises various interest groups and individual initiatives which are trying to disseminate such values, however, according to his opinion there is no such global change taking place. Jānis hopes that these little groups may “explode” and take over the world, as it sometimes happens with ideas.

13 CLIMATE ACTION

