



Ilze Skuja,  
foundation  
"Palīdzesim.lv"



ILZE SKUJA has chosen to dedicate her life to helping kids and youngsters with special needs.

The support of the Latvian government offered to families and kids with such needs is negligent, and this is exactly why Ilze, together with Elina Meinarte, decided to found "Palīdzēsīm" [Let's help] more than nine years ago. Its aim is to help at least part of the kids and the families in Latvia that just aren't lucky enough to have a normal life. Now, after years of tireless effort, they finally have a space where they can host the more than 500 children and youngsters they help each year. But it hasn't always been like this: in the beginning it was very hard to find some funding to invest in their activities, they started from zero, they worked from anywhere: from home, cafés, even from their car.

[www.palidzesim.lv](http://www.palidzesim.lv)

They organize different kind of activities, like summer camps, hikes, skiing, marathons, classes and activities with professionals (actors, drama, psychologist, etc.). This is meant to distract the kids, improve their psychological situation, make them feel part of society and community. It makes them more positive and confident. They started a new project one year ago with the mums of the kids. They stay with their kids and take care of them so that the mums can have some time for themselves and relax – when mums are happy children are happy. Sometimes just a few hours for themselves can make a difference.

But it's not always easy and quick to see the results and the impact of what she does. It takes many years before one can see the kids grow up and maybe find a job or start studying. This is because they mainly work on



their mental well-being and personal attitude, or on serious physical problems, especially on individuals with health and mental issues. It is difficult to measure the results, and these are long term goals that can't be reached with one activity. Notwithstanding this, to see kids that used to be fragile and shy coming back after years talkative and confident is all that matters for Ilze and her team. It is a hard job, but helping even five, ten, or thirty kids makes all the difference in the world, and it gives them the energy to keep going.

When Ilze told us her story her eyes were shining with pride; what she manages to give these kids every day of her life makes her happy.



1 NO POVERTY

