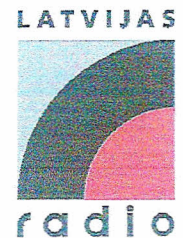


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**Baltic-American Freedom Foundation (BAFF)**

Valdemara Centrs

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### **Project Report**

The aim of this report is to provide information about the Baltic-American Dialogue program project "Journalism Today: Baltic-American best practice exchange seminar" funded by BAFF/CIEE. The report is prepared according to an agreement signed between Latvian Radio and BAFF/CIEE.

Holly Kernan, award winning journalist, lector and News Director at San Francisco public radio station KALW, visited Latvia between July 24 and July 28, 2013 to give a seminar for Latvian media professionals on current journalism trends in the US. A three-day event consisted of following parts:

- **July 25<sup>th</sup>** – professional exchange with Latvian Radio journalists in small groups and private conversations (including meetings with Latvian Radio News Department employees and Latvian Radio board member), interviews for two Latvian Radio channels as well as working lunch with Latvian Radio board member and press attaché of the US Embassy in Riga.
- **July 26<sup>th</sup>** – main seminar day attended by 46 participants (total number of applicants – 55). Such a high participant number exceeded the original expectation of a group of 30 journalists. Among participants were media professionals from various radio, TV and internet outlets as well as journalism students from three Latvian universities. Six journalists working in various Latvian regions outside Riga applied for the seminar and were accepted. Two of them - a radio reporter from Liepāja and Rēzekne - attended. A seminar offered a rich insight into current trends in the US media, especially recent public radio developments, that was of a main interest for the majority of attendees. Over the course of the seminar, participants had several lively discussions among themselves and with Kernan. Discussion topics ranged from the future of media at time of digital disruption to potential crazy and innovative ideas journalists would like to implement at their work place. Ample amount of examples from audio stories produced by various American radio stations offered food for thought and ideas for potential stories and creative approaches that could be used in Latvian media. At the end of the seminar, participants who were planning to attend the following day received a homework on creative use of audio, namely to bring a 30 sec sound clip that characterises the sound of Riga. An event continued with informal exchange over the glass of wine.

- **July 27<sup>th</sup>** – continuation of the seminar for a smaller group of radio professionals attended by 21 person (original estimate – 15 people). This day offered a more indepth conversation on radio journalism techniques and creative approaches. Majority of attendees represented a so-called core group of journalists who participated during both days of the seminar. Some of the journalists who could not attend during the previous day, joined in as well. Like the previous day, a lot of audio examples from the US public radio programs were used to foster discussion on creative writing, journalism techiques, the use of various sounds in the radio production etc. Participants also received several practical tasks during the seminar and brought in their homework that was discussed by the group and a speaker.

### **Evaluation**

At the end of the seminar a core group of journalists who attended both days of the seminar was asked to fill out evaluation forms. Survey results show that an overwhelming majority of them was very pleased with the seminar. Most of the attendees gave 4 out of 4 points on all criteria (e.g. the choice of topics, legths of the seminar, speed of the seminar, the work of the guest lecturer etc.). Some of the participants told that they would have liked to have a longer and more in depth training on issues discussed. Others expressed an intention to apply some of creative practices discussed in their daily work in Latvia.

### **Publicity**

Before the seminar Latvian Radio, Baltic Center for Investigative Journalism Re:Baltica and Latvian Association of Journalists issued a press release about the upcoming seminar, followed by an invitation a week later. The information was also sent out to all members of the Latvian Association of Journalists and published at the websites of Latvian Radio ([www.latvijaszurnalisti.lv](http://www.latvijaszurnalisti.lv)), Re:Baltica ([www.rebaltica.lv](http://www.rebaltica.lv)) and Latvian Association of Journalists ([www.latvijaszurnalisti.lv](http://www.latvijaszurnalisti.lv)).

On August 3, 2013 Latvian Radio 4 (Russian language channel) broadcasted an interview with Kernan where she talked about public radio journalism in the US and the perception of Latvia and other European countries among Americans. An interview was broadcasted during morning news show at 9:05 AM.

A day later, on August 4, 2013, Latvian Radio 1 (Latvian language channel) Sunday show "Radio about Radio" at 9:30 AM offered a story about the seminar and a fragment from the interview with Kernan. A comment about the seminar from Latvian Radio journalist and main seminar organizer Artjoms Konohovs was also offered on the show.

The pictures from the seminar were uploaded on Twitter and Facebook accounts of Latvian Radio (<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.626246654054017.1073741836.117059818306039&type=3> ; <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.628155317196484.1073741837.117059818306039&type=3>). A short video about the seminar was also produced and posted online on Latvian Radio YouTube page. ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVFARJpI\\_zY&feature=youtu.be&a](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVFARJpI_zY&feature=youtu.be&a)).

### **Conclusion**

A higher than expected interest from media professionals as well as an overwhelmingly positive evaluation serves as a proof that a seminar organized by Latvian Radio, Re:Baltica and

Latvian Association of Journalists was a success. Many participants expressed the desire to continue such professional exchanges. A number of attendees particularly applauded the fact that simultaneous interpretation and a written translation was provided during the seminar. Otherwise, they would not have been able to participate at the seminar. A hands-on approach and a dialogue instead of lecture insured a lively conversation and exchange of opinions between journalists from Latvia and the US. Several ideas from the seminar were also discussed during recent Latvian Radio News Department staff conversation on potential adaptations of the morning radio news show.

In turn, Kernan said that she was very satisfied with event and a dialogue she had with Latvian colleagues. She would also like to continue similar cooperation in future. It is important to stress that such event would not be possible without a financial support of BAFF/CIEE since Latvian media still feel the impact of financial crisis.

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In the name of organizers,

Jānis Siksnis  
Member of the Board