

December 2023 | Issue 9

# ABSL LATVIA NEWSLETTER

## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**BY MONTA IELEJA (EX.GEIDANE)**

It's been a considerable amount of time—over a year, to be exact—since our last newsletter update. Over this period, seasons have changed, and so too have the executive directors responsible for day-to-day activities at ABSL Latvia. Today, I'm back dedicating my energy and passion to furthering our work for greater industry recognition, fostering collaboration with universities, building even stronger knowledge-exchange platform, and bringing out other initiatives crucially acknowledged by the industry.

Truth be told, there has been a noticeable pause in our newsletter releases, stemming from the mistaken belief that everyone is already well-informed about the ongoing activities within the association. Internally, we engage in monthly board meetings where a multitude of issues pertaining to the association's everyday tasks are discussed. While a significant portion of this information is shared via social media, direct emails, or our website, we realize that this may not reach everyone. This realization prompts us to address our own information bubble, recognizing that our members might not be as aware as we had presumed.

During our recent board meeting, members emphasized the necessity of releasing industry newsletters summarizing all activities at least three times a year or every four months. Our commitment is to keep these updates as concise as possible, ensuring they are easily readable and don't demand too much of your valuable time.

A new feature we are excited to introduce is the opportunity for our members to contribute to the newsletter. Moving forward, we'll send emails to all members, inviting information about their organizations that they find interesting and worth sharing. This could include changes in office locations, updates in managerial roles, or innovative approaches initiated by the organization. We encourage you to share your news so that our members can stay informed about the latest happenings across all organizations without the need to navigate through various social media accounts. As always, we will structure the newsletter based on the five main responsibility pillars that we have: building the recognition of the industry, enhancing cooperation with universities, releasing annual business services report, ensuring a platform for knowledge exchange, and advocating for the needs of the industry, and from now on adding also news from our members.

We extend our heartfelt thanks for your continued trust and commitment to collectively developing and growing the industry in Latvia.

Monta Ieleja (ex.Geidane),  
Executive Director, ABSL Latvia



# Building Recognition of the Industry

Over the past 12 months, ABSL Latvia has actively engaged in various activities aimed at raising awareness of the industry, locally and globally.

As part of our annual tradition, we consistently participate in the CEE Business Services Summit & Awards, usually held in Warsaw.

Apart from that, this year we took part in events like ABSL Poland Summit, ABSL European forum in Berlin, World Latvian Economics and Innovations Forum, where our Chairperson of the Board, Alesja Kircenko, discussed talent availability, upskilling, and retention, SSC/GBS Conference in Vilnius where Rodion Shirayev (MSC Shared Service Center Riga) and Ieva Zirne (Circle K Business Centre) participated as speakers talking about recognition of the sector and the importance of DI within each organization.

We are excited to have a separate "GBS of the Year in Riga" category at the Rigas City Council awards event already for 3rd consecutive year.

While there are more potential events on our radar, capacity limitations prevent us from participating in all opportunities. Nevertheless, we strive to build awareness through conferences, events, and also by contributing opinion articles in the media.

Speaking of publication in media, this year we have managed to release two publications—one by Janis Atslens on the importance of learning Scandinavian languages and the other addressing the need to review the non-taxable amount for health insurance by Monta Ieleja, gaining coverage in various online media streams.

Recognizing the career opportunities within the industry, ABSL Latvia participated for two consecutive years in LU career days, providing students with insights about the industry in general. In 2024, we will join RTU career days for the second time.



# Cooperation with Universities

This section covers our diverse initiatives, with a focus on our successful guest lectures. In the 2022/2023 academic year, we delivered an impressive 53 guest lectures, dedicating 80 hours to educating students about the global business services industry. For the current academic year 2023/2024, we already have scheduled 45 guest lectures, led by 43 high-level industry professionals.

To enhance engagement, we have started to recognize guest lecturers annually, offering small presents from the association to all those lecturers whose lecture has been selected at least once. Last year, specially selected books were presented, while this year, two cinema tickets and certificates were given to those active in the 2022/2023 academic year.

Despite of overall success, challenges do exist. Not all well-prepared lectures are selected by universities, while a few are being actively chosen, leading to an overload for specific lecturers. Additionally, the process itself requires significant administrative effort, especially in cases where guest lecturers cancel lectures at the last minute or maintain poor communication with university representatives. We welcome suggestions to address these issues.

Talking about building strong ties with universities, it's worth to add that ABSL Latvia actively participates in career days at major universities, showcasing opportunities within the industry and fostering awareness of career paths that industry offers for young talent.

In addition to our guest lecture program, we introduced a new 7-lecture cycle, "Introduction to Global Business Services." This pilot project was successfully integrated into study stream at the Transport and Telecommunications Institute, with plans to expand to other universities as it is already proven to be effective.

## ABSL 7-lecture cycle INTRODUCTION TO GLOBAL BUSINESS SERVICES

1. What is GBS? Rodion Shirayev, MSC Shared Service Center
2. The Governance of GBS. Alesja Kircenko, SEB Global Services
3. HR Shared Services. Nelda Dinga, Cabot Corporation
4. Finance & Accounting Shared Services. Tatjana Dombrovska
5. Customer Service - Serving the Globe. Ieva Aizvakara, Atea Global Services Ltd.
6. Procurement as a Shared Services Function. Ginta Ikauniece, Gunta Gorozniece, Circle K Business Centre.
7. IT Service Desk Within a Global Business Services Organization. Timurs Junusovs, Tietoevry TechServices Latvia.

EXCLUSIVE ONLY FOR TSI STUDENTS

## INTRODUCTION TO GLOBAL BUSINESS SERVICES

### 7 GUEST LECTURES CYCLE

What Is The Concept Of Shared Service Center, Global Business Services?  
The Governance of Global Business Service Center • HR Shared Services  
Finance and Accounting Shared Services • Procurement As Shared Services  
Customer Service • IT Service Desk

Meet Our Guest Lecturers

 <b>RODION SHIRAYEV</b> Managing Director MSC Shared Service Center Riga	 <b>ALESJA KIRCENKO</b> Deputy Head SEB Global Services Riga	 <b>NELDA DINGA</b> Employee Relations Lead EMEA HQ & HR Services: EMEA Cabot Corporation	 <b>TIMURS JUNUSOVS</b> Continual Service Improvement Manager Tietoevry TechServices Latvia
 <b>TATJANA DOMBROVSKA</b> Guest Lecturer with Broad Professional Background in Finance Shared Services	 <b>GINTA IKAUNIECE</b> Senior Procurement Manager Circle K Business Centre	 <b>IEVA AIZVAKARA</b> Business Area Manager: Procurement & Customer operations Atea Global Services	 <b>GUNTA GOROZNIECE</b> Senior Procurement Specialist Circle K Business Centre

More Information

 **NOVEMBER 7TH, 14TH, 21ST, 28TH**

 **12:00-16:00**

 **STUDENTS WILL BE AWARDED CERTIFICATES OF COURSE COMPLETION UPON ATTENDANCE OF ALL LECTURES**

 **ABSL**

# Knowledge Exchange Platform

Throughout the year 2023, ABSL Latvia has held 15 events, webinars to facilitate knowledge exchange. We truly believe that these activities help all our members stay informed about what's happening in other peer organizations, allowing them to adopt best practices and learn from each other. The association aims to have at least one physical event per month, although sometimes we manage to have more, especially if one, out of those two, is organized in a webinar format. During the Covid-19 pandemic, we primarily held all our knowledge exchange events in an online format. Nowadays, we are gradually returning to more physical events, which we believe are highly valuable for members to establish new acquaintances and friends within the industry. Nevertheless, we encounter situations when physical events are not as actively attended.

Recently, we launched the Facility Management Club by kicking off the first event at Valsts Nekustamie Īpašumi office. We still have many offices to visit, so we expect this club to sustain its activity. Throughout this year, the Procurement Club has become more active, thanks to Atea Global Services and their involvement in actively generating content. HR Club always remains active as we have so many topics related to personnel management.

The crucial aspect that needs to be understood is that every thematic club's activity is based on the activity from industry enthusiasts. If employees actively contribute content and are ready to present their experiences, we have a basis for keeping clubs active. If industry members remain silent without at least bringing the topics they are interested in, then nothing happens within one or another thematic club. We expect industry employees to actively participate in building these knowledge exchange platforms by contributing content (presentations) or suggesting good speakers from outside.

**ABSL**  
**Deloitte.**  
**GBS Maturity Report**  
 Oct 18 | 3-5 PM |  
 New Hanzas Biroji  
 Mihails Tals Street 1

**SPEAKER**  
**ELINA PUTNINA**

Panel Discussion: Reflecting on Deloitte Conference in Copenhagen

Panelists:  
 Polina Reizenova (Deloitte), Arturs Andrians (Circle & Business Centre), Aleksa Kircenka (SEB Global Services), Inese Vaideniece (Tatler)

**Finance Club**

**ONLINE WEBINAR**  
 Automation in Finance & Accounting Shared Services

Speakers: Kim Leandersson, Hans Hesselgren, Kailash Ravindran

OCTOBER 26, 2023 | 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM RIGA TIME

**ABSL** | **cognizant**

Register Now

**HR CLUB Meet-Up**  
 HR TRENDS 2024 & SELF-LED LEARNING

Speakers: ANITA KALNIŅA, LINDA MARTINSONE, EVIČA CELMA

29 November, 2023 | 10:00AM - 12:00PM | Miera Street 15, Circle Services & Solutions Rīga

**ABSL** | **FranklinCovey**

**ABSL**  
 FACILITY MANAGEMENT CLUB KICKOFF  
**Public Sector Office Case Study for GBS Success**

Speakers: Andris Vārņa (Board Member, State Real Estate), Edite Kalniņa (Head of HR), Ģirts Zālītis (Real Estate Expert, State Real Estate)

Hosted by VALSTS NEKUSTAMIE ĪPAŠUMI | September 14, 2023 | 10:00 am - 12:00 pm | Taloja Street 1, Rīga

**ESG REPORTING PRACTICALITIES**  
 Indre Kulikauskaitė  
 Baltics Sustainability Manager  
 at **Deloitte.**

Register now!  
 May 11 | 15:00-17:00

**ABSL**

**ABSL**  
**EVENT BY EXPERTS**  
**EMBRACING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND DIGITAL INTEGRATION**

Speakers: TIMURS JANUSOVIS (Continual Service Improvement Manager at Tietevy ServiceDesk), KASPARS RAMINS (Global Process Manager, Data & Reporting Services at SEB Global Services)

THURSDAY AUGUST 31ST 3PM-5PM | HOSTED BY: **SEB**

**ABSL LATVIA EXPERT DISCUSSION**  
 AI in GBS: practical improvements & ethical challenges

Speakers: Beata Kozmina (Head of Research), Pauls Šteins (Practice & Development Officer)

Register now! June 8 10:00-11:00 | Hosted by: **DNB** and **ATEA**

**ABSL**

**ABSL**  
**EMPOWER YOUR TALENT THROUGH EDUCATION**  
 AUGUST 30TH (3PM-5PM)

Speakers: Rihards Čerāns, Alexander Ilkin, Curšars Logins

Hosted by: **MERCURI international** and **CIRCLE BUSINESS CENTRE**

**KIC**

**ABSL LATVIA EXECUTIVES CLUB MEETING & ANNUAL INDUSTRY REPORT PRESENTATION**

June 13 | 13:00-15:00 | Business Complex Verde | Roberto Krišs iela 1, Rīga

Speakers: Rihards Čerāns (Chairman), Aleksandrs Ilkins (Chairman), Rihards Čerāns (Chairman)

Hosted by: **ABSL** and **SEB**

**ABSL LATVIA PROCUREMENT CLUB MEETING**  
 HOSTED BY: **ATEA**

Register now!  
 MAY 25 | 15:00-18:00 | Atea Global Services | Mūkusalas iela 15, Rīga

**ABSL**

# Advocacy of the Industry

This pillar has been somewhat inactive throughout 2023, but we have plans to address few key topics in the coming months.

One pressing issue is the background security checks for high-level IT professionals. Few members have questioned why employers in Latvia are not legally allowed to check employees' criminal background, especially for those with access to crucial IT infrastructure. This poses a substantial risk, and organization headquarters have expressed concerns about growing operations in Latvia due to this risk. While other countries, like Poland, allow employers to conduct background checks for potential employees, in Latvia, it is only permitted by banks and organizations whose operations are connected with critical infrastructure. We've decided to organize a roundtable for industry members to share practices and determine the way forward..



Another issue on our agenda is the availability of Nordic languages in schools. With significant changes in the education system, the Russian language is being removed from school programs, leaving a gap that needs to be filled. The government has confirmed that any EU language can be taught in schools based on demand and teacher availability. Norwegian language has gained equal status to all EU languages, but we believe it's essential to emphasize the importance of teaching Nordic languages. Currently, schools are considering replacing Russian with French or Spanish due to popularity among pupils and ease of finding teachers. However, teaching these languages doesn't meet the needs of employers, particularly investors from Nordics who frequently seek Scandinavian language speakers. ABSL Latvia, in collaboration with Swedish and Nordic chambers, plans to update information on Scandinavian language speakers and address this with the Ministry of Education to promote Nordic language classes over Spanish or French, where the demand in the labor market is not as high.



# Releasing Annual Industry Report

As the year comes to a close, our focus turns to the annual report, a vital tool for gathering information on organizational growth metrics on yearly basis. If you have suggestions for improving the annual report questionnaire or you have specific questions in your mind beneficial for exploration, please share them with us. This comprehensive 360-degree survey, conducted annually, relies on your participation to provide precise data. The more respondents (organizations) we have, the more realistic and insightful will be the results, offering a holistic perspective on the industry's growth and development in Latvia, including key issues. All questions pertain to achievements/metrics in the outgoing year, 2023, and some touch on future plans for 2024. The report findings will be presented in Spring, ensuring you have the necessary insights into the industry's growth in Latvia. But before that, we expect you to be responsible member and take part in this survey.

## Other News from ABSL

### ABSL EXPERTS MOVEMENT:

Many may wonder about the status of the Experts movement since there was no communication from the association lately. Due to changes in Executive Directors, the movement was temporarily deprioritized. However, after discussions with board members, we've decided to relaunch it in January 2024. The movement aims to identify the most active individuals within the industry, contributing to its growth. To attain ABSL Expert status, candidates need to fulfill three tasks: give a lecture in a university, participate as a speaker in one of ABSL events, and speak at a conference in Riga or worldwide or at least one publication. If a candidate finds any task challenging, it can be easily replaced with other forms of assistance that the association may require, such as helping organize the ABSL Volleyball tournament or the ABSL Summit in Riga.

## Other News From ABSL

### ABSL Latvia Summit finally to happen:

During one of our recent year-end board meeting, we made a bold decision. In September 2024, ABSL Latvia will for the first ever time organize its inaugural Summit in Riga. This event aims to bring together the entire industry, partners, and university representatives under one roof. Attendees can expect engaging speakers from the industry to elevate the experience.

### ABSL Latvia Summer Fest:

Looking ahead to 2024, ABSL Latvia plans to organize a Summer Fest during one of the Summer months. This unofficial event will revolve around an outdoor volleyball tournament, complemented by great music, street food vendors, team support, and an opportunity to spend quality time with industry peers. Get ready for a fantastic summer gathering!

Moreover, an indoor volleyball tournament is also planned for the Spring season, following the success and high interest it garnered from industry employees last year.



# Other News from ABSL

## Roche Services & Solutions Riga Enters the Market:

Roche, one of the world's largest biotechnology companies, expanded its presence into Latvia in early 2023 with the establishment of Roche Services & Solutions (RSS) EMEA in Riga. This addition complements its existing Pharma and Diagnostics divisions.

RSS is Roche's Global Business Services Organisation with main sites in Budapest (Hungary), San José (Costa Rica) and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), offering customer-centric solutions to its partners within Roche in more than 150 countries. The Riga office is a part of the Roche Services & Solutions EMEA organization.

You can find more information here:

<https://bit.ly/46Fj00M>



## EPAM SYSTEMS JOINS ABSL LATVIA:

ABSL Latvia welcomed its newest member organization EPAM Systems in late Spring this year. Since 1993, EPAM Systems, Inc. has leveraged its advanced software engineering heritage to become the foremost global digital transformation services provider – leading the industry in digital and physical product development and digital platform engineering services.

In 2021 EPAM opened a new Engineering and Delivery Hub in Riga, joining the company's network of 15+ Engineering Hubs in the European Union. Read here why EPAM choose Latvia by [Linās Grīnevičs](#), General Director of EPAM Latvia and Lithuania.

## ABSL Latvia Elects New Board Members:

On March 28th, 2023, ABSL Latvia held its annual general meeting, during which we re-elected former members Kim Leandersson, Ieva Zirne, Alesja Kircenko. Additionally, two new industry representatives were elected - Ilona Valdmāne (Tietoevry) and Svetlana Kocerova (DNB Bank ASA). Alesja Kircenko (SEB Global Services) was re-elected as Chairperson of the Board for the second term.

### ABSL LATVIA BOARD MEMBERS



Alesja Kircenko  
SEB Global Services



Ieva Zirne  
Circle K Business Centre



Kim Leandersson  
Cognizant Latvia



Ieva Aizvakara  
Atea Global Services



Ilona Valdmāne  
Tietoevry



Rodion Shiryayev  
MSC Shared Service  
Center Riga



Svetlana Kocerova  
DNB Bank ASA

"Latvia has gained global recognition for its advanced ICT ecosystem and diverse pool of skilled professionals. EPAM expanded into Riga more than a year ago to enhance our European Platform Engineering and Delivery hubs network, augmenting our capacity to create solutions for complex digital and business transformation challenges for our global clients across different industries, from Automotive to Healthcare, etc.

With a team of more than 130 talented local IT experts, we intend to employ hundreds of specialists over the next five years, creating new career prospects for local professionals. Furthermore, we remain dedicated to empowering and nurturing the local community. EPAM Latvia has already partnered with universities in Riga, providing free training programs for students and career changers, supporting, and engaging with local community groups."

### Linās Grīnevičs

General Director of EPAM  
Latvia and Lithuania



# News From ABSL Members

## ATEA

Atea Global Services "Make Every Step Count" initiative, in collaboration with Walk15, took place from September 8th to October 8th. This challenge went beyond mere steps, providing an opportunity for their employees to boost their activity levels, engage in friendly competition, and positively impact the world while fostering healthier habits collectively.

By opting for walking over polluting transportation modes, AGM employees not only enhanced their physical and emotional well-being but also contributed to cleaner air, greener cities, and an improved quality of life.

For every 25,000 steps collectively taken by AGS, Atea committed a one-euro donation to a charitable cause. Participants were grouped into twelve teams, fostering friendly rivalry across AGS. A total of 235 Atea members astonishingly walked 50,832,725 steps throughout September, resulting in a generous donation of 2033.31 euros.

Their unity as a team is evident in shared values, including staying active outdoors and contributing to charitable causes. This walking challenge embodied both aspects, encouraging them to maintain their activity levels for an entire month. The company's pledge to donate 1 euro for every 25,000 steps motivated them to cover an impressive distance of 36,309 kilometers.

As a united team, they also faced the second task – deciding collectively on the charitable cause to support with this donation. Through two rounds of voting, AGM employees ensured that the choice resonated with their shared values and goals.

## MSC

In the summer of 2023, MSC Shared Service Center embarked on an enriching journey by participating in NVA (State Employment Agency) programme "Skolēnu vasaras nodarbinātība," providing 30 secondary school pupils with the opportunity to explore the dynamics of working in an international environment. Besides, this year MSC Shared Service Center proudly achieved the Family-Friendly Workplace certification from the Society Integration Foundation of the Republic of Latvia. This recognition involved evaluating various aspects of their workplace, including the working environment, work-life balance offerings, learning and development opportunities, and even their communication practices.



### SEB Global Services Moved to New Office:

SEB Global Services center in Riga has relocated to the newly constructed GUSTAVS business center at Gustava Zemgala gatve 73 in late Summer 2023. Developed by real estate company GALIO Group, the new office spans approximately 11,000 square meters across six floors, designed and built in accordance with the sustainability standards of the BREEAM Excellent Certificate. Congratulations to SEB Global Services on their new home—worth seeing it in real life!

You can find out more in this press release:

<https://bit.ly/3uxkM1R>

