RAF 2025 - LATVIA IS A FAST-PACED, SOLUTION-FOCUSED, AND BUSINESS-FRIENDLY COUNTRY - INTERVIEW WITH ZIGMARS VESTFALS

News / Events / Festivals

Organizing an event is rarely easy. Organizing an international aviation event is even more challenging. I admit that I have experience in organizing and running aviation events, and I take my hat off to the entire team and Zigmars Vestfals for the Riga Aviation Forum. Well done, perfect organization, speakers with really interesting presentations, the industry community coming together to discuss and find solutions.

It's an incredible job to determine the most important topics, find the right speakers, organize the logistics, and so much more. RAF 2025 was a fast-tempo event (it was an excellent idea to put the timer on the monitors), full of observations, information, and proposed solutions. I had to "take" Zigmars out of the auditorium so we could talk for a few minutes. Here are the most important

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points from our conversation:

T.O. So Zigmar, as the very responsible one, as the organizer of brilliant event, thank you for welcoming us at RIGA Aviation Forum 2025. Was it easy to organize?

Z.V. Thank you very much. No, it was not easy like always. But it's And I'm not the only one who is organizing this. I have a small team behind all the activities. The team who is working also on a daily basis, of course for the airport, for the airlines. We are hosting this event since 2016. And topics we have are quite important not only Latvian airline industry, is also very important for Lithuania, for Estonia. And today I've seen also the colleagues from Scandinavian countries and also from France.I mean issues and topics we have, they are quite common.

T.O. I've experienced some of your events and I would say that, I mean in my opinion you need to see bigger because you are becoming a very important Northern Europe event. It's not only about Baltics. You're bigger because people are willing to understand why Baltics are so fast. As you told, it's not about being small country, it's being fast.

Z.V. Exactly.

T.O. In France we would have to spend some years trying to push some initiatives. In Latvia it is possible. And I'm always trying to say that if you have an idea, come I will say exactly who's responsible and who's the best person to talk within the ministry. And within a month you have a decision and you can start to innovate, to try what businesses you would like to get to Latvia, to Baltic, from Europe, from all Europe, let's say what kind of aviation businesses you would need now or yesterday.

Z.V. Basically all of them. And yes, you're right. It's not about the size of the country, it's about the speed of the country. And, and the Baltic people, we are so happy and lucky and to be back in Europe. The society is enjoying the. The traveling, enjoying the possibility to work with Europeans, with the global companies. We have young people who are speaking languages. We have educated people and willing to travel, willing to learn. Maybe this is the answer why we are maybe a bit faster. And we are glad to welcome even more businesses here. If there are new technologies which need to be tested new way of working environment is here people are here, education is here. We can discuss with universities in Latvia, which is also happening by the way. They also here today. And we can find solutions in the right way. As I said before, we have a very short ways to our governmental institutions. And they are Hearing. They are hearing us. Not always of course, but In most of cases they are our partners. Yes.

T.O. You told about something that was one of my questions. Do you think that as Baltic countries we invest a lot into advertising? Because I'm living in France since a very long time and I'm working in a way as PR agent for my birth country – Latvia. I'm explaining why and what. And people have no clue. Even If French people now could geographically point the location of Baltic countries they don't know about proficiency, activity, all the opportunities. Do you think that aviation community should educate, should advertise and that would be a door to attract more investors and more partners to come.

Z.V. Yes, of course. As I also stated this morning aviation is the industry connecting economies and cultures, and people, bringing also of course new businesses into the country. Yes, we should advertise more. Specifically not only airlines, not only airports. This is again kind of the common work of all of us together. That's why today we also having here representative from ministries : transport minitry, ministry of foreign affairs, ministry of economics. This is also the way. I'm always trying to emphasize that we need to advertise more because in as you called it old Europe. I would

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say not old Europe but the rest of the big Europe. In the summertime we have wonderful weather here. We have nice temperatures. We have a very nice nature. Baltic Sea. Our culture since centuries. We have a lot of things to show and to offer to the tourists from all the Europe. Of course we would like to see more businesses to come here. I think there is a way to let businesses discoiver our contry. I will give you an example – one of my golleagues was comming here for an event. I suggested him to see different cultural things. It was my way get himinterested to discover something more. One year later he came for holidays. Small thing maybe, but giving an idea what to discover we can attract more.

T.O. In that case I have another question. One of the event I'm always suporting since a very long time is CARIBAVIA. Caribbean experience. It's a challenging place. There are so many islands and working together is something we're still learning in that part of the world. But they're organizing it as an experience. It's a 3 days this year event. It became a CARIBAVIA family of industry thinkers. Do you think that you should think for the next Riga Aviation Forum maybe to change the date and to bring people before they start planning vacation ? To bring them to Baltics, to show them the nature and to motivate them to come for vacation exploring business opportunities as well ?

Z.V. Yes, this would be a nice combination indeed. We need to think about it.

T.O. Sometimes changes are for good.

Z.V. Yes, sometimes changes are for good.The development is possible because of changes. Of course. Thank you for the nice idea. I will definitely brought it to the table.

T.O. Would make speakers come with families, stay. Within the country, explore the country. So, we will contribute to the economic growth.

Z.V. And that's why Riga Aviation Forum is organized in Thursday. And as far as I know, some of the speakers are staying until Sunday.

T.O. That's perfect. Thank you very much. I will jump to the next session and listen. And I hope to see you next year.

Z.V. Absolutely, I also hope to see you newt year ! Thank you so much!

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