



Youth Wiki national description

Youth policies in Latvia

2021

The Youth Wiki is Europe's online encyclopaedia in the area of national youth policies. The platform is a comprehensive database of national structures, policies and actions supporting young people. For the updated version of this national description, please visit <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki>

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Latvia

Youth Policy in Latvia

The ministry responsible for youth policy is the Ministry of Education and Science. Youth policy in Latvia is a set of targeted actions in all national policies that promote the full and comprehensive development of young people, their inclusion in society and the improvement of their quality of life. Youth policy is an interdisciplinary policy implemented by various public administration and local government authorities within their competence, as well as youth organizations and other natural or legal persons. Young people themselves participate in the development and implementation of youth policy.

When planning youth policy, youth problems are assessed, factors that hinder the implementation of youth activities are identified, and accordingly the goals, tasks and measures taken to eliminate them and create favorable conditions for the development of young people's personality and their participation in social, political, economic and cultural life are identified. According to the Youth Law, young people in Latvia are 13 to 25 years old.

Youth policy is based on seven principles:

- 1) the principle of participation;
- 2) the principle of availability of information;
- 3) the principle of equal opportunities;
- 4) the principle of respect for the interests of young people;
- 5) the principle of favorable economic preconditions;
- 6) the principle of integration of young people;
- 7) the principle of mobility and international cooperation.

At local level, the main players involved in youth policy are municipalities and municipalities subordinate institutions, as well as institutions subordinate to sectoral ministries and their local departments. One of the functions of local authorities is to work with youth, taking into account the main principles and documentation of the national youth policies. Under the Youth Law, local authorities are planning youth work at local level, drawing up documentation on local government youth policies (eg youth work strategy); local youth also participates in the development of such documents, priorities and tasks of a local youth policy should directly affect the daily life of young people and their activities in the local municipality for a long time perspective.

In the beginning of 2021 there were 232 386 young people age 13 to 25 in Latvia, which is 12% of the whole population.

1. YOUTH POLICY GOVERNANCE

Youth policy is a set of purposeful activities that can be implemented in all fields of state policy and which stimulates the valuable and comprehensive development of young people, involvement in society and improvement of life quality. Youth policy is an interdisciplinary policy, which is realised by various state and local government institutions according to their competency, as well as by youth organisations and other physical or legal persons. Young people also participate in the creation and implementation of youth policy.

By planning youth policy, youth problems and the obstructive factors for carrying out youth activities are evaluated and, consequently, aims and tasks are defined and measures are performed in order to preclude them and establish favourable conditions for the development of youth personality and participation in social, political, economic and cultural life. **According to Youth Law, young people in Latvia are persons from 13 to 25 years of age.**

Youth policy is based on seven principles: 1) partnership principle; 2) information availability principle; 3) equal opportunities principle; 4) observance of youth interests' principle; 5) favourable economical premises principle; 6) youth integration principle; 7) mobility and international cooperation principle.

1.1 Target population of youth policy

In the [Youth Law](#), the main target population is defined as young people aged between 13 and 25.

In Latvia, in 2021, there are 232 386 young people (aged 13 to 15), accounting for 21% of Latvia's total population. Data source - [Central Statistical Bureau](#)

Other significant figures:

- At the age of 15, 61% of young people continue their studies at secondary schools, while 34% study at vocational schools and 5% do not continue to study for young people.
- One fifth of all jobseekers is between the ages of 15 and 24.
- At the age of eighteen, 63% of young people continue their studies in higher education institutions, 6% - in vocational higher education institutions and 31% do not continue their studies.
- In the age group of 20-24, 63% of young people are economically active.

1.2 National youth law

Existence of a National Youth Law

A [Youth Law](#) is an official document addressing the needs and/or rights of young people and regulating the ways in which youth issues are addressed.

[The Youth Law](#) was adopted by the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia and came into force on the 1st January 2009.

Scope and contents

The main objective of youth policy in Latvia is to improve the quality of life of young people (persons aged between 13 to 25 years old) by promoting their initiatives, participation in decision-making and social life. Youth laws support youth work and provide children with easier transitions to adulthood.

Latvian youth policy development is framed by seven youth policy principles that can be clustered into three main dimensions.

1) The *vertical dimension* of youth political citizenship contributes to discussions of democratic power sharing, the facilitation of constructive youth involvement in decision-making and the definition of society. Youth participation and information (including the consideration of youth interests) are relevant to this dimension, along which youth policy (in a narrow sense) usually formulates its core agenda.

2) The *horizontal dimension* of youth socioeconomic citizenship promotes equality among young people living in different circumstances. Youth welfare, inclusion and non-discrimination are among the key principles characterizing this dimension, in which the

success of youth policy depends principally on co-operation with associated specialized policies.

3) The *reflexive dimension* of youth policy development emphasizes sensitivity to changes in youth preferences, as well as to changes in international best practice. This dimension, which is currently only outlined in Latvian youth policy development, requires further improvement and the consideration of additional aspects like youth research, the dissemination of results and understandings of good practice, and professionalization.

Youth policy principles include the following:

1. *Partnership principle* – to enhance the active participation of young people in the processes of the society.
2. *Information availability principle* – to promote the idea of providing young people with information that is relevant to their needs and interests, especially information which is necessary for active participation in all the processes of society.
3. *Equal opportunities principle* – to provide all young people, without any discrimination, with the potential to take part in all the processes of society and to be equal members of society.
4. *Observance of youth interests principle* – to take into account the interests, rights, needs and potential of young people whilst solving youth-related issues.
5. *Favourable social and economic premises principle* – to enhance the development of the social and economic conditions needed to provide all young people with the opportunity to become accepted and integrated members of Latvian society.
6. *Mobility and international co-operation availability principle* – to provide opportunities for youth mobility, allowing young people to learn new skills and knowledge outside their place of abode, and to promote the implementation of recommendations from other countries and the exchange and adoption of good practice into Latvian youth policy.
7. *Youth integration facilitation principle* – to facilitate youth integration into society (including minority groups), and to ensure multi-cultural dialogue at all stages of youth policy planning and implementation.

Revisions/updates

On the 18th June 2015, the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia (the Saeima) adopted the Voluntary Work Law, which came into force on the 1st January 2016. On the basis of this Volunteering Law, sections 9 and 10 of the Youth Law were amended.

On the 16th December 2015, the Saeima approved amendments to the Youth Law during the third reading, stating that a) youth volunteering shall be organized under the Volunteering Law (see Chapter 2.) and that b) youth organizations are entitled to receive state budget funding from the annual national youth policy program in order to receive organizational activity support. Until now, several rules and laws have regulated voluntary work. However, Latvia's Parliament adopted the Volunteering Law on the 18th June 2015, which now establishes a common legal framework for voluntary work in our country. The Volunteering Law will come into force on the 1st January 2016.

In this Law, volunteering work is defined as organized physical or intellectual work carried out by a natural person in good faith for the good of society. The Volunteering law states that volunteering work can be undertaken by a person who has reached 13 years of age. Persons aged between 13 and 16 years of age may only perform volunteer work with their legal representatives' written permission.

Similarly, the Saeima of Latvia supported amendments to the Youth Law that state that the youth organizations under the annual national youth policy program are entitled to receive state budget funding to support their activities and projects. Amendments were

required for youth organizations to receive unlimited government funding, and to allow additional access to other financial instruments offered by the state.

1.3 National youth strategy

Existence of a National Youth Strategy

In 2009, the Youth Policy Guidelines for 2009 – 2018 were approved (hereinafter referred to as “the Guidelines”). Guidelines has lapsed, because entered into force Youth Policy Implementation Plan 2016-2020.

On 12 April, 2016 Latvian Government approved [Youth Policy Implementation Plan 2016-2020](#).

Scope and contents

The Guidelines were developed as part of a 10 year policy planning document, which aims to create a coherent means of implementing and coordinating youth policy, whilst also identifying priority actions and policies that form a vision of development that relates to youth policy and young peoples’ quality of life. The guidelines identify the key challenges facing youth policy, as well the main actions, directions and operational results needed in the youth policy field over a 10 year period.

In 2013, the mid-term evaluation guidelines were carried out, identifying significant shortcomings developed within the document's structure and content. Therefore, it was decided that a new, medium-term youth policy planning document would be developed to overcome the identified shortcomings and integrate youth policy with EU level documents, as well as national development planning documents.

[Youth Policy Implementation Plan 2016 - 2020](#) (hereinafter - the Plan) is a medium-term policy planning document for the next five years, aimed to improve the quality of life of young people to make a coherent youth policy implementation and coordination at all levels, identifying priority lines of action and policy results. The plan sets out the basic principles of the youth policy, the values, the most significant challenges identified courses of action, the main tasks and results to be achieved in the coming years.

Youth policy objective in the Youth Policy Implementation Plan is improving young people's quality of life for young people in creating a supportive and inclusive environment, supporting their initiatives and participation, as well as strengthening young people's susceptibility, healthy lifestyle.

Having regard to the resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (Year 2010-2018) the youth policy of eight aspects: participation, education and training creativity and culture, social inclusion, youth and the world, volunteering, employment and entrepreneurship , and health and well-being an action plan.

Based on these aspects, taking into account the current situation in Latvian youth policy is developed following three courses of action:

- environment;
- participation;
- personality development.

Every year the [Ministry of Education and Science](#) (MoES) elaborates on its annual programme, which includes particular measures and activities for implementing youth policy within the [Youth Policy Implementation Plan 2016 - 2020](#). The funding allocated for the implementation of youth policy is then given based on the annual programme’s slice of the state budget.

Each institution within their field of competence drafts an annual work programme, which includes actions for specific target groups, including particular youth groups (drug abusers, unemployed young people, etc).

Responsible authority for the implementation of the Youth Strategy

The Department of Policy Initiatives and Development within the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) is primarily responsible for youth policies and issues. Its major tasks include promoting cooperation, implementing youth measures, organizing training for youth workers, and enabling access to information. Municipalities take responsibility for implementing youth policy through the creation of local youth policy planning documents. A Youth Advisory Council exists to promote a coherent youth policy and encourage youth participation in decision-making and public life.

Revisions/updates

Youth Policy Guidelines 2021-2027 is under development

1.4 Youth policy decision-making

Structure of Decision-making

Numerous actors are involved in the development and implementation of youth policy, including state administration authorities, local authorities, youth organizations, youth initiative groups (non-formal youth groups), youth associations and foundations, trade unions, employer organizations, religious organizations, youth researchers, and other operators carrying out work with young people. Given the fact that youth policy is a cross-sectoral cooperation policy, the youth policy co-ordination process is directly or indirectly connected with all public policies that have an impact on the youth. Youth policy coordination includes the following major tasks:

- 1) Involving different parties in youth policy development and implementation through cooperation and coordination actions (the horizontal aspect), including activities such as developing or improving the legislation, implementing measures, providing funding for activities related to youth policy, and providing better knowledge and understanding of youth issues.
- 2) Providing support for local youth work implementation (the vertical dimension), including state support and methodological support to local governments.
- 3) Developing a youth information system that ensures that information is shared between youth policy stakeholders and that young people's awareness is maintained.
- 4) Creating international forms of cooperation that provide Latvian youth policymakers with disseminations of the results of others, exchanges of good practice, and coordination with existing international youth policies.

Main Themes

Different activities are carried out regularly in Latvia to ensure that communication and consultations take place between policy makers and young people. Similar to other member states of the European Union, Structured Dialogue also takes place in Latvia, allowing young people to put forward issues at the national or European level. Furthermore, Coffee with Politicians sessions (an adapted communication method recommended by the [NGO "NEXT"](#) to allow non-formal dialogue between young people and policy makers) are organized regularly, to involve youth in decision making process, allow them to express their opinion and involve them in the development of their community (with events also taking place at the municipal level).

The National Agency for Youth

The Agency for International Programs for Youth (hereinafter referred to as the "[Agency](#)") is subordinate to the Minister of Ministry. The main objective of the Agency is to promote youth voluntary service activities and mobility (e.g. with the EU, Eastern Partnership, MEDA countries, etc.). The Agency implements non-formal learning, information programs and projects targeted at youth and those working with youth, whilst supporting the link between non-formal learning and lifelong education.

The Agency works according to the State Administration Structure Law and Regulations (issued by the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers in the year 2012, 11th of December, No. 863)

The Agency makes it possible for young people to write projects, spreads interesting and useful information for young people about the available opportunities in Europe, supports exchanges of experience, provides consultations about project writing and ensures that young people are consulted.

1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries

Mechanisms and actors

In Latvia, different line ministries offer different welfare and social services for young people within their field of competence via the agencies and institutions assigned to them. The main actors and their competencies are:

1. [The Ministry of Welfare](#) develops youth-friendly state policies in the sphere of social services and social assistance, oversees their implementation and ensures support to unemployed young people and job seekers by organizing active employment activities.
2. [The Ministry of Justice](#) is the leading state administration institution covering legal issues. It coordinates the public registers, the state policy on the penal system and criminal punishment, and the implementation of these policies. The State Probation Service is subordinate to the Ministry of Justice, and it organizes forced labour and public work for minors, as well as assistance to the youth after they have served their sentence.
3. [The Ministry of Health](#) organizes health care for the youth and promotes the development of a youth-friendly health care service.

1.6 Evidence-based youth policy

Political Commitment to Evidence-Based Youth Policy

[The Youth Law](#) stimulates that public institutions implementing youth policy should evaluate the impact of their relevant policy actions on the youth population. According to the Youth Law, local governments developing an institutional system that works with youth have the right to establish youth councils whose tasks should include collecting and analysing information about local youth problems, needs and interests. The evaluation of youth interests, rights, needs and opportunities is one of the main principles of the youth policy (the principle of observance of youth interests).

Cooperation between policy-making and research

In the Youth Law, it is prescribed that public institutions should evaluate the impact of the relevant field policy on youth (according to their competencies in terms of implementing youth policy). According to the Youth Law, local governments developing an institutional system that works with youth must establish youth councils, all of which must be tasked with collecting and analysing information about local youth problems, needs and interests.

The evaluation of youth interests, rights, needs and opportunities is one of the main principles of the youth policy (the principle of observance of youth interests).

As mentioned above, regular youth monitoring, youth research and analysis are also defined as significant tasks in the Guidelines.

Until 2009, Latvia was represented in the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP), participating in activities such as reporting on youth policy implementation in Latvia and elaborating on developments and activities in the field of youth research. In 2012, Latvia's participation in the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy was renewed. Two reports (Better Knowledge of Youth, and Youth and the World), as well as an informative report on youth policy, were also developed in Latvia in 2012. Additionally, in 2013, the Information sheet on the Social Inclusion of young people in Latvia was created. At the end of 2014, all the aforementioned reports were updated.

Until 2013, Latvia was also represented in the Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR).

National Statistics and available data sources

The Central Statistical Bureau collects all official statistics on the population of Latvia. Publications and databases are also available on the [Central Statistical Bureau's website](#). Unfortunately, young people are not treated a separate target group and are not displayed in statistical summaries. The Central Statistical Bureau publishes annual statistical yearbooks that include basic information on the youth population ([with the most recent available figures accessible in Latvian only](#)). The Bureau also publishes annual publications like [Children in Latvia](#), which gives in-depth statistical information on children in Latvia and their quality of life. Unfortunately, in these and other statistical data collected by the Central Statistical Bureau, the youth is most often defined in different age groups (mostly 15-24, sometimes also 18-24) than that which is defined in the Youth Law of Latvia (13-25). Therefore, it is difficult to carry out statistical data analyses of young people in Latvia within the age group defined by the law.

Budgetary Allocations supporting research in the youth field

Information support and research work in the field of youth from the state budget for youth is approximately 17000 EUR.

1.7 Funding youth policy

How Youth policy is funded

National level

[According to the 2018 Budget](#), the public expenditure allocated to the field of youth is 720 684 EUR: Direct allocations are listed in section below for specific youth policy measures.

During the previous years, the budget allocated for youth has been gradually increased:

2012 – 152225 EUR

2013 – 315856 EUR

2014 – 330520 EUR

2015 – 328520 EUR

2016 – 328520 EUR

2017 - 332 353 EUR

2018 - 720 684 EUR

Regional level

The municipal budget allocation for youth differs according to the availability of funding in each municipality. There is no estimated amount known, as no survey has been carried out to calculate the amount that is allocated in the field of youth at the municipal level.

As in many other countries, Latvian youth policy is funded by several ministries and it is not possible to put precise figures on each individual contribution.

Altogether, the budget for youth policy was continually increased, underlining the growing significance of this policy area. However, this amount needs to be considered relative to others, as the funds are supposed to cover (among many other things) cost-intensive activities like the establishment of youth initiative centres, as well as a youth information system and youth research activities.

What is funded?

According to annually [Youth programme](#) specific youth policy measures are:

Work with young people in municipalities – 167 000EUR, Support for youth organizations – 440 000 EUR, Information support and research work in the field of youth – 95 684 EUR, International cooperation – 18 000 EUR.

Financial accountability

The main responsible institution for the annual National Youth programme funding is Ministry of Education and Science.

From the National Youth Programme every year is provided support to local authorities, municipalities and youth organizations, the allocation of this money is responsible National Youth Agency.

The funding available to the youth field from other ministries and institutions, is in charge of each institution.

Use of EU Funds

Erasmus+ is the EU Programme in the fields of education, training, youth and sport for the period 2014-2020 and European Solidarity Corps.

Agency for International Programmes for Youth implements both these programmes.

[The State Education Development Agency](#) (SEDA; VIAA in Latvian) implement the national policy in the field of development of higher education and science, lifelong learning system, vocational education system and general education system and to implement and monitor projects financed by European Union (EU) Structural Funds, education innovation projects and EU programmes (Erasmus+) and projects and initiatives.

The State Education Development Agency and Agency for International programmes for youth is a direct administration institution which is subordinated to the Ministry of Education and Science.

1.8 Cross-border cooperation

Cooperation with European countries

The Ministry of Education and Science is represented in the Council of Europe's European Youth Action Committee (European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ)), which makes decisions on the Council of Europe's youth policy. The Parliament in the youth field provides a wide range of methodological support and a variety of informational materials, as well as a variety of training and information networks. Essential tools for the EP's cooperation in the youth field include EP international assessment reports on youth policy.

International cooperation

- International Youth Development Exchange Programme between Latvia and Japan

Since 2006, Latvian young people can participate in the International Youth Exchange between Australia and Japan. Exchanges take place between Japanese and Latvian youths, who undertake mutual visits with the aim of developing a better understanding and friendly relations between the two countries (among young people). Young people taking part in the international conference and the discussions in the form of visiting state and local authorities get to know Japanese and Latvian culture and history. More information: www.jaunatne.gov.lv

- Nordplus youth education programme

The Nordplus Junior program supports a variety of activities in the field of school education in the Nordic and Baltic region: student class trips with their peers, student practice, development of new projects, the exchange of teachers between schools, and other types of projects, all of which improves the quality of education and develops intercultural dialogue. For more information, please visit: www.viaa.gov.lv

- [Baltic States and Flanders](#)

This form of cooperation falls within the framework of the Protocol between Latvia and Belgium (Flanders), and provides for the exchange of experience workshops that cover the challenges of working with youth and young people in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Belgium.

1.9 Current debates and reforms

The following topics being developed currently:

- formal recognition of non-formal learning, defining non-formal education in youth work with a following budget;
- supporting strategic youth work at local level involving youth in decision-making;
- incorporate digital skills in training for youth workers.

2. VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

Voluntary work in Latvia is regulated by the "[Law of Voluntary Work](#)", which was adopted on June 18, 2015, and entered into force on January 1, 2016. The aim of the law is to promote voluntary work and foster participation of society in voluntary activities.

According to the law:

Volunteering is an altruistic activity where an individual or group provides services for no financial gain.

A **volunteer** is a person who is at least 13 years old. Persons who have reached the age of 13 – 16 have the right to perform voluntary work if their legal representative has given written consent. A minor shall, in his or her free time from studies, perform voluntary work appropriate to his or her age and safe for his or her safety, health and morals, which promotes the development of knowledge, skills, abilities and communication abilities. An employee shall not be replaced by a volunteer.

Voluntary activities can be organised and offered by:

1) associations and foundations, including trade unions and their associations; 2) state and local government institutions; 3) political parties and their associations; 4) social enterprises.

There is a written voluntary work contract foreseen in the “Law of Voluntary Work”

To promote voluntary work and raise interest in volunteering, as well as to celebrate International Volunteer Day every year a special event “Volunteer of the Year” is organised. Every resident of Latvia, a representative of a non-governmental organisation, state or local government institution can nominate candidates, whose volunteering or support was particularly exceptional. Nominations can be submitted on www.brivpratigie.lv. All nominees are evaluated by a jury, which consists of representatives of non-governmental organisations, municipalities and state institutions of Latvia. The jury takes into account the importance of the work carried out and its contribution to the society or someone's life, the skills acquired and their application, the amount or regularity of volunteering and other factors. Volunteers, volunteer-friendly non-governmental organisations and local governments all over Latvia are honoured. The nominees then are invited to the event that takes place in Riga in early December.

2.1 General context

Historical developments

Voluntary work is unpaid work or service done by individuals or companies. It is a globally recognized and popular way to involve people in community life, help to change and improve their own quality of life and those around them. Voluntary work is performed in both governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Although a global voluntary work tradition was launched more than 100 years ago a targeted and organised voluntary work in Latvia started to develop only as of 1998. Since then, regardless of age, gender, nationality, religion, political views and other social, physical or geographical conditions, volunteering provides opportunities for everyone:

- to become active in society and to influence social processes;
- to take part in various projects and fulfill one's ideas;
- to acquire new experience and improve competencies;
- to show off one's talents and skills etc.

In some areas, such as medicine and education, there are working, specially trained volunteers, all of whom can be involved in other areas if necessary (for example, in response to damage caused by natural disasters).

Main concepts

[The Law of Voluntary Work](#), which was adopted by the Parliament of Latvia on June 18, 2015, came into force on January 1, 2016. The law sets a comprehensive legal framework for volunteering, which might help to foster the development of voluntary work and involvement of the society in voluntary activities.

Understanding the importance of voluntary work in Latvia is strengthening its meaning, thus increasing the number of voluntary activities carried out in non-governmental organisations and municipalities every year.

2.2 Administration and governance of youth volunteering

Governance

The competent institution responsible for volunteering is the Ministry of Welfare while the [State Employment Agency](#), which is subordinated to the Ministry, is the main administrative body.

The Ministry of Education and Science, which is responsible for youth policy development in Latvia promotes youth volunteering by involving local authorities, municipalities, youth

and non-profit organisations that are offering various participatory and leisure-time facilities for young people.

The Agency for International Programs for Youth is a state institution subordinated to the Ministry of Education and Science. It provides support to the Ministry in the implementation of youth policy, incl. youth volunteering, The Agency, which since 1999 is a National Agency administrating the EU programmes for youth (including the Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps programs), has long-term experience and knowledge in the administration of European youth volunteering projects.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

One of the important ways of supporting volunteering is cross-sectoral cooperation between the state institutions, local municipalities and NGOs.

In 2020, the State Employment Agency implemented a measure “Development of Work Skills” aimed at young unemployed people aged 18 to 29. Within the measure various voluntary work opportunities were provided for young unemployed people, they could participate in activities organised by associations and foundations. Those young unemployed people who are enrolled in full-time higher education programmes could voluntarily participate in research and academic activities of higher education institutions. The common feature of all voluntary activities carried out within the measure is the benefit provided to the society.

There are different grant programmes implemented in a number of local authorities and municipalities. The programmes offer organisations funding opportunities for the projects tackling issues relevant to the particular municipality or local authority. Taking into account that the non-governmental sector is a very important actor in the volunteering system, grant support provided to these organisations is of utmost importance to enable the development of volunteering. Due to municipality budget cuts, the number of financial allocations to grant programmes for non-governmental organisations has significantly decreased,

Taking into account the knowledge of non-governmental organisations related to the implementation of voluntary activities, incl. European voluntary projects, there are municipalities that delegate their volunteering function to organisations to reinforce the development of the volunteering system within the municipality.

Many local authorities are practicing the yearly Welcoming of volunteers, which is organized on 5th December – on the International Volunteer Day.

Honouring of the volunteers and organisations, which ensure voluntary work availability, plays a significant role in the broadening of understanding of the importance of volunteering as well as motivates people to engage in voluntary activities developed for the sake of society.

Municipal youth affairs specialists who are responsible for the development and implementation of youth policy at the municipal level play a significant role in the development of the youth volunteering system there. Youth affairs specialists work closely with organisations hosting volunteers in order to improve the quality of activities in terms of attractiveness thus ensuring the involvement of a bigger number of young people in voluntary activities.

2.3 National strategy on youth volunteering

Existence of a National Strategy

Currently, there is no National Youth Volunteering Strategy.

The [Youth Policy Implementation Plan 2016-2020](#), which is the main policy planning document, highlights volunteering as one of the tools to ensure youth participation. The new youth policy-planning document for the period 2021-2027 is currently under

development, but it also will include volunteering as one of the priorities of youth work for the next planning period.

Scope and contents

The Youth Policy Implementation Plan 2016 – 2020 sets the following tasks related to the development of voluntary work: to popularize the benefits of volunteering especially voluntary work carried out in public benefit organisations, to promote motivation of young people to participate in volunteering, to develop information system on volunteering opportunities, to organise informative seminars on volunteering and other opportunities in Europe within the EU programmes.

Responsible authority

The competent institution responsible for volunteering is the Ministry of Welfare while the [State Employment Agency](#), which is subordinated to the Ministry, is the main administrative body whose responsibility is data collection and facilitation of voluntary work in Latvia.

In accordance with the [Law of Voluntary Work](#), the Ministry of Welfare has set a regulatory framework of the organisation and implementation of voluntary activities. Information on voluntary activities is available on the portal: www.brivpratigais.lv.

Revisions/ Updates

The Law of Voluntary Work adopted on 18 June 2015 was amended in 2017.

Article 3. Organisers of volunteering activities were amended as follows: The following have the right to organise voluntary work: 1) associations and foundations, including trade unions and their associations; 2) state and local government institutions; 3) political parties and their associations; 4) social enterprises.

Social enterprises were added to those that have the right to organise volunteering activities.

The law entered into force on April 1, 2018.

2.4 Youth volunteering at national level

National Programme for Youth Volunteering

There is no national programme for youth volunteering. Support to youth volunteering activities or development of youth volunteering system at the municipal level is ensured by the State Youth Policy Programme through project grants to youth organisations or municipalities implementing projects with a focus on this particular issue.

Funding

Within the [National Youth Policy Programme](#) financial resources (on average around 1 300 000 EUR per year) are channelled to the projects through which support is provided to local authorities and NGOs for the implementation of various activities, including voluntary work and its promotion.

Since 2021 national youth NGOs applying for the operational funding by the State Youth Policy Programme must ensure youth involvement in voluntary work.

Funding opportunities for the implementation of voluntary activities in Latvia also is provided by the two EU programmes "European Solidarity Corps" (from 2018) and "Erasmus+". By October 1, 2020, the Quality Label – organisation's entry ticket for organising and hosting volunteering activities was issued to 217 organisations.

To support the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, additional funding is available. Inclusion support costs cover expenses related to reinforced mentorship, i.e. the

preparation, implementation and follow-up of tailor-made activities for young people with fewer opportunities in volunteering projects.

Characteristics of youth volunteering

The figures for characterising the popularity of voluntary work are relatively high. According to the research "[Well-being of Young People in the Baltic States](#)", in 2018, 34,1 % of young people in Latvia participated in voluntary work at least once per year.

According to research "[Youth in Latvia 2008 – 2013: Activity, mobility, participation](#)", a young person aged 15-24 on average dedicates 49 hours of his/her time to volunteering activities every year. In general, people in Latvia on average devote 57 hours for voluntary work per year. Most often volunteers are 13-15 years old and approximately 2/3 of them carry out voluntary work at least once a year. However, significantly fewer are volunteers aged with only 2/5 them volunteering at least once a year.

During the last 5 years, no new researches have been carried out on youth voluntary work in Latvia, thus it is not known if / how the situation has changed.

Support to young volunteers

During 2011 – 2014 the State Employment Agency implemented a measure "Supporting Youth Volunteering" targeted at unemployed people aged 18-24. The aim of this measure was to encourage unemployed young people to engage in voluntary activities offered by associations and foundations for the benefit of society.

In 2020, the State Employment Agency implemented a measure "Development of Work Skills" aimed at young unemployed people aged 18 to 29. Within the measure, various voluntary work opportunities were provided for young unemployed people. They could participate in activities organised by associations and foundations. Those young unemployed people who are enrolled in full-time higher education programmes could voluntarily participate in research and academic activities of higher education institutions. The common feature of all voluntary activities carried out within the measure is the benefit provided to the society.

There are different grant programmes implemented in a number of local authorities and municipalities. The programmes offer organisations funding opportunities for projects tackling issues relevant to the particular municipality or local authority. Taking into account that the non-governmental sector is a very important actor of the volunteering system, grant support provision to these organisations is of utmost importance to enable the development of volunteering. Due to municipality budget cuts, the number of financial allocations to grant programmes for non-governmental organisations has significantly decreased.

Quality Assurance (QA)

The Youth Policy Implementation Plan 2016 – 2020 has set the targets and indicators to be achieved in the field of volunteering. A new policy-planning document for the period of 2021 – 2027 is under development, but also will include volunteering as one of the main elements of national youth work.

Target groups

The Law of Voluntary Work states that a volunteer can be a person who has reached the age of 13. According to the Youth Law youth in Latvia are young people aged 13 to 25, while the target group of volunteering projects of the "European Solidarity Corps" programme are young people aged 18 to 30.

2.5 Cross-border mobility programmes

EU programmes

Volunteering projects of the "European Solidarity Corps" programme are an opportunity for young people in Latvia aged 18 to 30 to contribute to the daily work of organisations that carry out solidarity activities. They can volunteer from 2 to 12 months for the benefit of communities where the activities are implemented. Volunteering enables young people to acquire useful experience, skills and competencies for their personal, educational, social, civic and professional development, thereby improving their employability and active citizenship. Volunteering activity can take place abroad or in the country of residence of a volunteer.

If volunteering takes place in a group or by a young person with fewer opportunities, then the volunteering activity can last from 2 weeks to 2 months.

Non-governmental organisations, state/local government agencies, local governments can host young volunteers from other countries, to help them implement their projects, familiarise the local community with their culture and broaden their horizons.

The "European Solidarity Corps" programme was implemented in Latvia for the period from 2018 till 2020. Before then, the "Erasmus+: Youth in Action" programme was implemented. In 2018, 48 European Voluntary Service projects were implemented while in 2019 – 43 projects. During a period from 2018 to 2019 more than 250 volunteers from abroad participated in volunteering projects in Latvia and more than 160 young people from Latvia undertook their voluntary work abroad. By October 1, 2020, Quality Label for Volunteering in Latvia was issued to 217 organisations.

Other Programmes

There is no information about other programmes.

Legal framework applying to foreign volunteers

Individual volunteers participating in the "European Solidarity Corps" programme can stay in Latvia no longer than one year. According to the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs of Latvia, if the citizen of the European Union stays in Latvia longer than 90 days within half a year's period, he or she should obtain a Union citizen's registration certificate.

The "European Solidarity Corps" programme provides also an opportunity for young people from non - EU member countries to participate in volunteering projects. In case the volunteer is not a citizen of the European Union, he shall obtain a visa before entering Latvia.

Before entering volunteering activities young people have to express their willingness to participate in the "European Solidarity Corps" programme by registering on the European Solidarity Corps Portal. The registration on the portal is possible already as of 17 years of age but volunteer must have reached 18 and must not be older than 30 at the start date of the volunteering activity.

2.6 Raising awareness about youth volunteering opportunities

Information providers

The Agency for International Programs for Youth, as well non-governmental organisations regularly organise training for volunteers, organisations and institutions that want to host volunteers, to raise awareness about the opportunities and benefits derived from the voluntary work carried out.

Similarly, the State Employment Agency provides training to organisations and institutions to promote cooperation and to attract young volunteers.

Key initiatives

The Agency for International Programs for Youth and Eurodesk multipliers disseminate information on volunteering opportunities at both the national and international levels. The Eurodesk regional coordinators and information points operate in different regions of Latvia to provide information about the programmes "Erasmus+: Youth in Action" and "European Solidarity corps" as well European mobility opportunities the programmes provide. Eurodesk Latvia is coordinated by the Agency for International Programs for Youth, which is the National Agency of the "Erasmus+: Youth in Action" Programme. To disseminate information a [Eurodesk Latvia Facebook page](#) was created.

In 2020, to raise awareness about youth opportunities in the EU, Eurodesk together with Regional coordinators and Information Points organised and/or contributed to 175 pieces of training or events with 11600 participants. Eurodesk also took part in one of the biggest festivals for young people "[ZZ Festival](#)" and the national conversation festival "[Lampa](#)". During the "Time to Move" campaign in October, there were 19 events organised by Eurodesk. In 2021 during the European Youth Week, 19 events for young people were organised.

2.7 Skills recognition

Policy Framework

As there is no formal system in Latvia for the recognition of competencies acquired in non-formal learning activities, two EU proposed tools – Youthpass and Europass, are currently used.

Short description and figures about the situation in Latvia see below.

Existing arrangements

Youthpass

On July 6, 2007, the programme "Youth in Action" approved Youthpass (Youth Passport) implementation. Youthpass is an initiative of SALTO Resource Centre, which aims to develop a Europe-wide document that facilitates the awareness and recognition of the skills and knowledge acquired within the EU's non-formal education program "Youth in Action".

Youthpass certificates are currently available for participants of youth exchange and volunteering projects and training courses. The project implementors are obliged to inform the involved participants about their rights to obtain Youthpass, as well as provide Youthpass issuance for each participant requesting it.

Youthpass projects may help young people to analyse their learning process and outcomes. The Agency for International Programs for Youth provides information on Youthpass (the use of the learning process in the organisation of projects, eight core competencies, Youthpass significance, etc.) during its various training activities. In Latvia young people's interest to obtain a Youthpass certificate is increasing each year.

So far in Latvia 12 931 Youthpass certificates have been issued within the "Erasmus+: Youth in Action" programme (2014 to 2020), from those 640 were issued in Volunteering projects and European Voluntary Service (data on October 2020). During 2018-2020 the European Solidarity Corps programme issued 288 Youthpass certificates, from those 210 were issued in Volunteering Projects (data on October 2020). The programme "Youth in Action" (2007 to 2013) issued almost 8700 certificates.

Information provided by National Agency for Youth.

Europass

Europass is an initiative launched by the European Commission with the aim to help people in an easy and understandable way reflect their education, knowledge and skills.

Europass offers 5 documents:

- **Curriculum Vitae** – helps to present skills and qualifications effectively and clearly;
- **Language Passport** – a self-assessment tool for presenting language skills and qualifications;
- **Europass Mobility** – records the knowledge and skills acquired in another European country;
- **Certificate Supplement** – describes the knowledge and skills acquired by holders of vocational education and training certificates;
- **Diploma Supplement** – describes the knowledge and skills acquired by holders of higher education degrees;

All 5 documents help EU citizens reflect their skills and knowledge when applying for jobs, internships, experience exchanges, or further education.

During the period 2005 – 2019, 14857 Europass Mobility certificates have been issued in Latvia.

Information provided by Europass in Latvia.

2.8 Current debates and reforms

New policy planning documents for the period 2021 – 2027 are currently being developed.

3. EMPLOYMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In order to promote competitiveness of entrepreneurs, the policy for entrepreneurship and employment in Latvia is developed and implemented by the Ministry of Economics, however, the issues under the competency of the Ministry of Economics do not set apart youth entrepreneurship as a separate category of entrepreneurship. The Ministry of Economics specifies that the age for starting entrepreneurship in Latvia is 18 years. State Employment Agency is an institution responsible for unemployment, including youth unemployment.

At the end of 2021 in the State Employment Agency were registered 8,3 thousand young people aged 15-24 as unemployed persons.

In 2015 an activation measure to reach young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) in municipalities has been launched by implementing different mentoring and motivation programs to help young people to understand necessity to return to studies or labour market, putting a special focus on young people facing difficulties.

3.1 General context

Labour market situation in the country

The unemployment rate of young people aged 15–24 has decreased in recent years, and it reached 14.9% in 2020 7.1% young people at the age of 15–24 on average were not in education, employment and training (hereinafter referred to as NEETs) in 2020 (EUROSTAT).

One of the main reasons of the high level of unemployment among youth is level of education that is insufficient for the labour market. According to Eurostat data regarding 2014, the difference between the unemployment rate of young people with higher education and young people with general secondary or lower education in Latvia may be up to 200% (15.3% and 29.4% accordingly).

Low level of education contributes to vulnerability of those young people in the labour market and increases the risk of discrimination. Current experience of the Employment State Agency (hereinafter also referred to as the SEA) and the State Labour Inspectorate shows that young people with basic education often are not familiar with aspects of the employment legal relationships, thus they are more exposed to the risk of undeclared employment.

The unemployed young people, who have acquired education or qualification, frequently lack work experience of good quality that is required in the labour market and often also the basic skills required in the labour market (communication, computer literacy, language skills, etc.). Not all young people have job-seeking skills and information about the skills, professions and vacancies required in the labour market.

Definitions and concepts

The following lines of action are developed in the Youth Policy Implementation Plan for 2016 – 2020: environment, participation and personal development.

The following tasks to be performed in the next few years in the field of employment and entrepreneurship have been determined for the line of action "Citizenship Improvement":

1. to improve and provide for an accessible financial, methodological and informative support mechanism for young people who wish to start commercial activity;
2. to ensure career support for young people, with the help of which it would be possible to determine the future profession most appropriate for the interests and abilities of a child and young person already at an early stage of development. The new youth policy-planning document for the period 2021-2027 is currently under development, but it also will include career support for young people.

The National Development Plan for 2021-2027 sets "Business Competitiveness and Material Well-being" as a priority – development of active labour market policies (programmes for unemployed, persons at risk of unemployment, the economically inactive, and support for regional mobility) and support for disadvantaged groups (including youth, people of pre-retirement age and people with disabilities), taking into account the specific needs of the individual and geographic area.

3.2 Administration and governance

Governance

In order to promote competitiveness of entrepreneurs, the policy for entrepreneurship and employment in Latvia is developed and implemented by the Ministry of Economics, however, the issues under the competency of the Ministry of Economics do not set apart youth entrepreneurship as a separate category of entrepreneurship. The Ministry of Economics specifies that the age for starting entrepreneurship in Latvia is 18 years.

As from the beginning of 2014, the Youth Guarantee programme is implemented in Latvia (information regarding the programme is available at jauniesugarantija.lv) to support NEETs. The Youth Guarantee is implemented in three directions in Latvia:

1. The Agency for International Programs for Youth (hereinafter referred to as the AIPY) will offer regular counselling and participation in skill development measures to the inactive young people aged 15–29 in cooperation with 119 local governments by implementing a programme of individual measures.

2. The State Education Development Agency (hereinafter referred to as the SEDA) will implement 12-month and 18-month vocational education programmes thus creating an opportunity to young people (aged 17–29) to acquire one of approximately 90 professions.
3. The SEA (State Employment Agency) will increase the number of implemented measures providing young people (aged 15–29) with information regarding work places available in Latvia, training programmes and skills necessary for work.

The aim of the Youth Guarantee is to promote the involvement of NEETs in the labour market or education. The target group of the Youth Guarantee is young people aged 15–29 (included) who are offered support in looking for a job, quality offer for acquiring further education, first work experience or a job (including education programmes, upon accomplishment of which a recognised professional qualification is acquired) within four months after registration in the State Employment Agency or submission of an application in an educational institution implementing 12-month or 18-month vocational education programmes depending on the skills acquired by the young person and their previous work experience.

The Youth Guarantee programme provides for a comprehensive approach to the inclusion of NEETs in the education system and labour market.

Main actors

The policy for entrepreneurship and employment is developed and implemented by the Ministry of Economics, however, the issues under the competency of the Ministry of Economics do not set apart youth entrepreneurship as a separate category of entrepreneurship.

The main line ministries involved in the youth integration into the labour market or education system are the Ministry of Welfare (MoW) as the institution in charge of the national policy for decrease of unemployment and the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) as the institution in charge of the development of the national policy in the field of youth and education.

The MoW and the MoES are responsible for planning, supervision and assessment of implementation of the Youth Guarantee measures, and coordination of the cooperation with the national and regional partners, organizations and institutions involved. Educational institutions, social pedagogues and youth affairs specialists thereof, social services of local governments and representatives of non-governmental organisations constitute the first institutional stage that deals with the problems related to school absenteeism and return of NEETs to educational institutions as well as increases the motivation of young people to pursue education and promotes dealing with the social problems of young people.

The support measures for NEETs implemented by the SEA are under supervision of the Ministry of Welfare, while the programmes administered by the SEDA and the AIPY are supervised by the Ministry of Education and Science.

Social services of local governments and social workers are responsible for the work with youth of social risk groups (young people who frequently are absent from school and have low academic success at school, offenders, young people with addiction problems, minor parents, young people from low-income families, young people with behaviour problems, etc.), and they are the main institution directly working and cooperating with young people from the risk groups and their families.

The social services of local governments play an important role in returning young people back to the education system or labour market, as well as in informing them regarding education, training and employment possibilities. According to the information provided by the social services of local governments, the absenteeism from educational establishments is one of the dominating reasons for young people becoming the target group of the social services.

Educational institutions are the first and most important information dissemination channel for young people regarding career planning. The MoES maintains the infrastructure of the vocational education institutions, provides the methodological basis, promotes cooperation among educational institutions and employers, youth organizations, the SEA, it facilitates functioning of career development support system in order to inform young people regarding the choice of profession and employment possibilities, etc. The career-related issues are included in the contents of general education subjects and are integrated in classroom activities, school subjects (interrelation of a school subject with the potential career path), activities beyond classroom activities (project weeks, thematic meetings, shadowing, excursions to enterprises), as well as counselling is provided (for students, teachers, parents). However, teachers currently lack professional competence to ensure high-quality career education within the educational system.

Social partners and sectoral professional associations are cooperation partners of the line ministries involved in the planning and implementation of Youth Guarantee measures, promotion of the compliance of the vocational education and active labour market policy with the needs of the labour market defining the needs of employers and participating in the development of training programmes, offering placement and first employment opportunities to young people, developing qualitative and quantitative order for training of workforce for sectors.

The SEA is the main institution responsible for the support of unemployed youth and job seekers in their transition from unemployment or economic inactivity to training or employment, providing career counselling, measures for promoting competitiveness and motivation, informing on employment and training possibilities, cooperating with employers in order to involve unemployed youth in the labour market,

as well as with educational and training institutions. The SEDA provides information on opportunities for education for all groups of residents in Latvia, ensures individual e-counselling to residents, maintains the national data base on educational opportunities – portal NIID.LV. The NIID.LV data base is connected to the Commission's portal PLOTEUS (Portal on Learning Opportunities Throughout the European Space), thus providing the residents of Europe with access to information regarding the opportunities for education in Latvia.

The AIPY – an institution for the implementation of the youth policy – envisages direct support to young people and persons involved in the work with young people through its programmes in the following main directions: a) improvement of the basic skills, knowledge and attitudes of young people (training, implementation of projects, YOUTHPASS); b) improvement of the quality of work with young people (experience exchange conferences/seminars, improvement of professional skills of youth affairs specialists, social workers, teachers and other persons involved in the work with young people); c) promotion of mobility; d) provision of information regarding the opportunities offered (counselling, the network of Eurodesk regional cooperation partners and information points, informative activities and materials).

The work with young people is mainly organized through *youth centres and youth affairs specialists* in local governments. Youth centre is one of the basic instruments of local governments in the work with young people, where the following activities take place: 1) young people are provided with options for using their leisure time efficiently, 2) acquisition of necessary knowledge and skills is facilitated beyond formal education and interest-related education, implementing different non-formal education activities, projects and programmes, 3) favourable conditions are created for intellectual and creative development of young people, 4) participation of young people in youth organisations, youth initiative groups and volunteering is promoted, 5) access to information according to the needs and interests of young people is provided, 6) inclusion of young people of socially excluded groups in the peer environment is facilitated, 7) intercultural dialogue among young people is promoted, 8) individual and group counselling for young people on topical issues is organized; 9) cooperation with the

persons involved in the work with young people at local, regional, national and international level is promoted, 10) inclusion of young people residing in the territory of a local government in youth activities, projects and programmes of local, regional, national and international level is promoted. The youth centre is a particularly significant stage between “inactive” and “active” young people; it is a place where young people with different interests and life experience have access to a friendly, open and supportive environment.

An important resource in the work with young people, especially those exposed to social exclusion risk, is *youth organizations* and other associations or foundations engaged in the work with young people. Non-governmental organisations ensure individual approach to each young person, understanding their needs and ensuring the most appropriate support. Participating in non-formal learning activities organized by non-governmental institutions, including volunteering, young people acquire knowledge, experience and skills, improve their communication and cooperation skills, develop creativity and initiative, try out ideas that can be developed as their business in future and acquire other practical skills that are a valuable asset in addition to the outcome provided by formal education.

Consultation of young people

In order to start planning the Youth Guarantee and identify opinions about the most important lines of action, challenges and problems, the MoW in cooperation with the MoES organized a range of activities and discussions, involving experts engaged in policy making and implementation of policies in different sectors – specialists of social services and education, SEA specialists, representatives of youth organisations, members of Saeima, representatives of ministries, social partner organisations and representatives of the Latvian Association for Local and Regional Governments. In cooperation with the social services of local governments, the information regarding the situation of youth in regions, problems identified by social services, existing institutional cooperation instruments for solution of youth problems and necessary improvements was summarised.

The implemented activities and consultations with social partners, as well as the conferences and seminars implemented in order to inform young people on the progression of documents of “Youth Guarantee” have been summarised below.

Consultations with Social Partners and Young People on the Preparation of Youth Guarantee Documents:

Date and time	Activities
25.07.2013	Conference “Youth Employment – Bottlenecks and Solutions” – government, ministries, youth NGOs, social partners and other.
7.08.2013	Technical meeting: The Ministry of Welfare (the MoW) and the State Employment Agency (the SEA).
8.08.2013	The MoW departments’ meeting.
8.08.2013	Technical meeting: the MoW and the Ministry of Education and Science (the MoES).
9.08.2013	Meeting with social partners: The MoW and the Student Union of Latvia.
16.08.2013	Meeting with social partners: the MoW, the MoES, Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia (LBAS), Latvian Employers' Confederation (LDDK), Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI).

26.08.2013	Participation in Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments' (LALRG) conference "Work with Youth" – discussions on Youth Guarantee implementation with municipalities.
30.08.2013	Meeting with social partners: the MoW and youth NGO "PRAKSE.LV".
4.09.2013	Meeting with social partners: the MoW, the MoE, youth NGOs.
5.09.2013	Participation in the Employment Policy Coordination Council: the MoW, the MoES, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Finance.
5.09.2013	Participation in seminar "A Guarantee for Youth – do You know your guarantees?", organized by the European Commission Representation in Latvia.
12.09.2013	Meeting with social partners: the MoW and Latvian Students' Union in Great Britain.
16.09.2013	Meeting with social partners: the MoW, the MoES, LBAS, LDDK.
19.09.2013	Meeting with social partners: the MoW and the Latvian Information and Communications Technology Association – LIKTA.
11.10.2013	Meeting with social partners: the MoW, the MoES, the State Education Development Agency (SEDA), Riga municipality.
11.10.2013	Technical meeting: the MoW, the SEA.
15.10.2013	LALRG Education and Culture Commission's meeting – the MoW discussion with municipalities.
17.10.2013 18.10.2013	Technical seminar of the European Commission in Brussels – the MoW, the MoES, the SEA.
1.11.2013	The MoW meets with municipal social workers in Talsi to discuss the Youth Guarantee concept and measures.
1.11.2013	Technical meeting: the MoW, the MoES, the Agency of International Programs for Youth.
7.11.2013	National Youth Policy Forum – the Youth Guarantee discussed with youth coordinators, youth NGOs, young people.
12.11.2013	The draft Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan is submitted to the European Commission.
14.11.2013	The national documents on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee submitted for approval and discussed in the EU Funds Monitoring Committee. Monitoring Committee is chaired by the Head of Managing Authority and it consists of representatives from the Managing Authority, Responsible Institutions, Co-operation Institutions, Paying Authority, Audit Authority, Certifying Authority, as well as social partners, non-governmental sector and regional partners.
15.11.2013	Written procedure: the national documents on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee sent to the social partners.

19.11.2013	Technical meeting: the MoW, the SEA.
28.11.2013	The Youth Guarantee discussed in the Youth Advisory Council.
29.11.2013	The MoW meets young people, including representatives of youth NGOs.
2.12.2013	The Youth Guarantee concept discussed with other Member States in Brussels (EMCO).
5.12.2013	Technical meeting: the MoW, the SEA, the SEDA.
5.12.2013	The national documents on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee repeatedly discussed in the EU Funds Monitoring Committee.
6.12.2013	EU Informant's Forum 2013 – the Youth Guarantee concept presented, the MoW, the MoES.
13.12.2013	National Conference "Youth Guarantee in Latvia" – government, ministries, actors involved in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, youth NGOs, social partners, municipalities, social workers and other.
17.12.2013	The national documents on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee approved by the Cabinet of Ministers.
20.12.2013	The National Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan submitted to the European Commission.

Policy monitoring and evaluation

The information on the Youth Guarantee implementation progress is submitted to and revised by the EU Funds Monitoring Committee. The Monitoring Committee is chaired by the Head of Managing Authority and consists of representatives from the Managing Authority, Responsible Institutions, Co-operation Institutions, Paying Authority, Audit Authority, Certifying Authority, as well as social partners, non-governmental sector and regional partners.

Additionally, the Youth Guarantee Advisory Board is created, involving representatives from the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, Latvian Employers' Confederation, Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments, National Youth Council of Latvia, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Education and Science, the State Employment Agency, the State Education Development Agency and the Agency of International Programs for Youth. The Board will be responsible for coordination, implementation and evaluation of the Youth Guarantee measures and preparation of proposals for the necessary changes in the implementation process.

3.3 Skills forecasting

Forecasting system(s)

Short-term forecasting in Latvia is carried out by the SEA. The SEA is aggregating monthly, quarterly and yearly labour market surveys, based on the available operational information about registered unemployed persons and the information obtained from employers' surveys. However, it is evident that the above mentioned information is insufficient for objective forecasting. Therefore, the list of occupations in demand on the labour market is developed and approved by a special Commission, involving the representatives of line ministries (Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Economics),

municipalities, social partners (Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, Employers' Confederation of Latvia), non-governmental organizations, the academic field, associations and other institutions. Short-term forecasts are available [here](#) (in Latvian).

The Ministry of Economics is the institution responsible for coordination of medium- and long-term labour market forecasting in the country. The Ministry of Economics also elaborates labour market development scenarios, as well as medium- and long-term forecasts. The Advisory Council for Labour Market Forecasts operates under the authority of the Ministry of Economics and comprises representatives from the involved institutions and social partners. The task of the Council is to ensure inter-institutional cooperation by assessing the prepared forecasts and searching solutions for further actions. Forecasts of the Ministry of Economics are available [here](#) (in Latvian)

The Ministry of Finance and the Bank of Latvia also participate in the strategic forecasting of the country's macroeconomic development, and the forecasts of international and EU institutions are taken in count while developing the national forecasts.

Skills development

In the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, great attention is paid to different training programmes (vocational training programmes implemented by the MoES or the SEA where one can acquire qualification and profession, as well as non-formal education programmes – language studies, acquisition of computer skills and other skills) that ensure acquisition of a future profession or professional qualification. The training programmes will be evaluated in order to ensure their compliance with the needs of the labour market and the demand of employers. Young people, who are not able to make an informed choice regarding their future profession, are involved in the programme "Youth Workshops" where they can try different professional activities in order to make a more informed decision about their future profession. Young people, who have acquired vocational and higher education, will be offered non-formal education programmes and an opportunity to gain first work experience in "First Work Experience for Youth" and "Development of the Skills Necessary for Work in the Non-Governmental Sector". If young people are interested, and if they wish, they would be given an opportunity to get involved in activities for entering self-employment and business start-ups.

The activity to employ students during summer holidays that was launched in 2014 was also pursued in 2015. The aim of the measure "Employment Measures during Summer Holidays for Persons Acquiring Education at General, Special or Vocational Educational Institutions" is to promote short-term employment during summer holidays in state co-funded work places for students aged 15–20 (included) if they acquire education at general, special or vocational educational institutions.

As a result, students acquire work skills, abilities and experience at the same time ensuring financial support to their families. In order to ensure employment opportunities for students, 50% of the minimum monthly salary were covered by the SEA, but the rest – by the employer. In the employment measure implemented during the summer holidays of 2015, employment opportunities were provided to 3802 children. Data [here](#).

Targeted support measures are planned for unemployed young people with disabilities and young people in disadvantageous situation registered with the SEA. They are offered subsidised employment measures, within the framework of which a workplace is established on the basis of an employment contract. Young people with disabilities and low level of education are involved in various training programmes (also e-training) in order to acquire professional qualification that is sought-after in the labour market. Young people with disabilities are also involved in other programmes of the SEA receiving subsidies for adjustment of their work place or training place, assistant's services and services of other experts that are necessary for a young person with a disability to successfully integrate in the labour market or learn.

Likewise, one of specific targets of the programme "Erasmus+" in the area of youth related to employment and entrepreneurship is to improve the most important skills and abilities

of young people, including youth having less opportunities, as well as to promote involvement of young people in the democratic life in Europe and labour market, active youth citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and solidarity, especially increasing opportunities for mobility of young people with the purpose to learn, persons who are actively involved in the work with youth or youth organisations, and youth leaders, and strengthening links between the youth field and the labour market.

3.4 Career guidance and counselling

Career guidance and counselling services

The following SEA support measures are available for young people free of charge in Latvia:

- job-seeking support measures, competitiveness-enhancing and career guidance measures that include the following activities: development of an individual job-seeking plan for an unemployed, profiling of an unemployed (classification for subsequent involvement in the active employment measures), determination of an appropriate job, informing about the job-seeking methods, control of fulfilment of the job-seeking obligation and other measures contributing to active job seeking that motivate unemployed young people to seek for job more actively and be included in the labour market;
- career guidance that helps in choosing the future field of activity or training area according to the interests, wishes of young people and the demand in the labour market;
- measures for enhancing competitiveness that include individual counselling and group activities (courses, seminars, lectures and other activities) in order to acquire job-seeking methods, psychological support and acquisition of basic skills and abilities sought-after in the labour market including skills related to the establishment of employment relationship, employment law and labour safety. The measure is provided for young people aged 15–29.

Funding

Career guidance for youth is financed from the funds granted for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee (national budget, ESF and Youth Employment Initiative funding).

Quality assurance

Several assessments of the active labour market policy measures were carried out from 2007 to 2013. The research "Mid-Term Evaluation of Implementation Efficiency of National Strategic Reference Framework Priorities, Measures and Activities in the EU Funds Programming Period 2007–2013" carried out by LLC "Agile&Co" notes that the general support measures for unemployed and job-seekers are considered to be adequate for the current economic situation in Latvia, as they provide for balanced support in order to decrease short-term social tension, ensuring involvement of unemployed persons in employment measures, and in order to develop employment in long term, promoting re-qualification of residents and acquisition of additional skills in training measures, as well as stimulating business start-ups. In the assessment of the SEA training measures carried out by LLC "Projektu un kvalitātes vadība", it was concluded that: - the majority of Active Employment Measures organized by the SEA consists of training measures that have been assessed as compliant with the needs of the labour market; - continuing vocational training and professional development are recognized as the most efficient types of training, and it is further concluded that individuals have found a job consequently more often after professional training measures than after the measures of non-formal education; - the idea to transform on-the-job training from a training measure into a full-fledged employment measure has been assessed as appropriate to the actual situation as in any case this form of training cannot be really compared to other training measures neither in terms of results, nor the form of organisation.

It is noted in the assessment of the services for employers performed by the SEA and LLC "Projektu un kvalitātes vadība" that employers more often are fully satisfied with the employment measures targeted at a specific audience, the measures for young people and practical on-the-job training, which can be explained by the close cooperation between employers and the SEA established within the framework of those measures, as well as by certain benefits provided to employers by the relevant employment measures.

It is noted in the study "Assessment of the Training Measures of State Employment Agency" that the SEA training measures are organised as campaigns, while the needs of the labour market are more linear. The deviations from linearity in the organisation of the SEA training measures are caused by the peculiarities of procurements (or a procurement that has been finished timely and has a result), the peculiarities of the coupon method (coupons are distributed in large amounts in order to manage to form training groups), and the working regime of training establishments.

Organizers of the said studies have noted that one of the most significant novelties of recent years in the SEA training measures is the implementation of the coupon method that has been assessed as rather convenient by customers. Data [here](#).

3.5 Traineeships and apprenticeships

Official guidelines on traineeships and apprenticeships

In the European Union, workplace-based training (WBT) has been recognised as one of the best ways to motivate a trainee to get into vocational education, to promote youth employment and to ensure the compliance of the training with the requirements of the labour market. WBT is a type of vocational training where a trainee acquires practical skills and knowledge in actual workplace in a company for at least a half of the training period, but theoretical knowledge is acquired in a vocational education institution. Successful implementation of WBT directly depends on the wish of entrepreneurs to take part in such a training model.

In Latvia, the procedures for organizing and implementing workplace-based training are established by the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 48 of 15 July 2016: "Procedures for Organizing and Implementing Workplace-Based Training".

The decisive role in Latvia in terms of apprenticeship and traineeship is the programme "Youth Guarantee", within the framework of which young people, within four months after registration in the SEA or reception of the status of a *Youth Guarantee* customer, are ensured a high-quality offer for a job, traineeship, apprenticeship as well as education, including education programmes, upon accomplishment of which a recognised professional qualification is acquired.

Youth Guarantee scheme and targets

The regulatory framework for IVET training in Latvia is based on the Vocational Education Law (1999). The content of the IVET programmes is defined by relevant national vocational education standards by the Cabinet Regulations "On the National Vocational Secondary Education Standard and the National Vocational Education Standard" (2008) and the relevant occupational standards. The regulatory framework for the apprenticeship in the craft sector is established in the Crafts Law (1993), which also defines a craft apprentice as "someone who has joined a craft company or an educational institution and signed a training contract".

The law provides for trade union involvement in the development and implementation of IVET in Latvia.

The Vocational Education Law states that sector skills councils, trade unions, and other public organisations have the right, *inter alia*, to participate in defining the occupational standards and educational programmes; and to participate in the provision and evaluation of the quality of VET. This work is done by the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-council of

Vocational Education and Employment, which is made up of equal numbers of representatives from trade unions, employers' organisations and Ministries.

Promoting traineeships and apprenticeships

In order to reach the initially planned outcome of the Youth Guarantee – 9700 supported, involved NEETs and the result indicator of 6500 NEETs, who have acquired professional qualification of the second or third level, several measures for involvement of the target group were implemented within the project in 2015 in order to increase the admission rate to the 12-month and 18-month vocational education programmes, with the measures based on the analysis of the previous project activities and results:

- the strategy for communication and visual identity has been developed; within the framework of which it is possible to create a more successful and recognisable publicity for the implementation of project measures that would complement each other for the implementing bodies of the project phase of both Youth Guarantee projects, and it would be possible to plan and carry out different advertising and publicity measures on the basis of it both in social media and when developing publicity materials more successfully than up to now; we plan to create Facebook, Twitter accounts on the basis of the common identity of Youth Guarantee;

- in order to motivate young people aged 17–29, who are not working and studying, to use the Youth Guarantee benefits, the SEDA implemented a socio-educational campaign "Atmet BEZdarbību!" (Give Up INactivity!) throughout Latvia from 13 August to 9 September 2015. (visual materials can be viewed [here](#))

Here the information on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee measures in the time period from 01.01.2014 till 31.05.2015 can be found – involvement of unemployed youth in the support measures, employment, regarding the [implemented training programmes](#) (in Latvian).

Recognition of learning outcomes

Section 1 Paragraph 4 of the Education Law establishes that "**education** is a process of systematic acquisition of knowledge and skills and development of attitudes, and result thereof. The educational process includes teaching and upbringing activities. The result of education is comprised of the totality of the knowledge, skills and attitudes of a person".

The use of the results of learning in the learning process is ensured by the national standards for education and professions, the system of state examinations, as well as licensing and accreditation of educational institutions and programmes.

In the vocational and higher education, there is a system for assessment and recognition of knowledge, skills and competences achieved beyond formal education.

To assess learning achievement, 10-grade system is used on the basis of the following criteria:

- The amount and quality of knowledge acquired;
- Skills and abilities acquired;
- Attitude towards learning;
- The dynamics of learning achievements.

Upon finishing primary school, students take centralised examinations, the number and contents of which is established by the MoES.

Students, who have been assessed in all subjects of the basic education programme both yearly and in state examinations, receive a certificate of basic education and a transcript of records. The assessment of school subjects, in which a centralised examination is held, is attested by a certificate of basic education. The documents attesting basic education entitle to continue education in any secondary-level education programme, also in a Youth Guarantee programme, that is described above.

Funding

Apprenticeship and traineeship for youth are financed from the funds granted to the implementation of the Youth Guarantee (national budget, ESF and Youth Employment Initiative funding).

Basic and secondary education in Latvia are free of charge.

Within the higher education programmes, the state covers the fee for acquisition of education for a certain number of study places according to the state order in the respective study year, the relevant students may (possibly) receive a state-awarded scholarship. For the rest of study places, each institution of higher education may determine a fee for acquisition of education.

Quality assurance

The most important suggestions for further changes in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee programme and related political initiatives are the following:

- necessity to improve the exchange of information among the schools and local municipalities regarding young people exposed to risk, in order to decrease even more the number of young people who have left school early;
- improve the relation between granting allowances and youth involvement in programmes;
- necessity to develop a high-quality workplace-based training system in close cooperation among schools and employers;
- necessity to strengthen and improve the availability of career guidance at schools in order to motivate students, who wish to leave school, to join vocational education programmes;
- interrelate the interest-based education system in Latvia with other social, healthcare and employment services, thus embracing a larger amount of young people exposed to risk;
- to strengthen the capacity of the SEA and social services of local municipalities, particularly with regard to counsellors who work with young people at risk of social exclusion;
- to expand support measures for acquisition of work experience for NEETs.

The Latvian Chamber of Crafts is solely responsible for vocational training in the crafts sector. Latest figures show that there were 29,855 young people involved in vocational training in Latvia in 2014/15. This represents a significant year-over-year reduction since the 2008/09 figures (38,819). 43% of them were women. Latest figures from the Latvian Chamber of Crafts show that approximately 50 craft apprentices passed the journeymen/women examinations in 2014 – a very significant drop since the late 2000s. The non-completion rate in IVET is high – 55%; 11,478 students started the 1st year of their courses (in 2010/11) but only 5,154 completed the 4th year (in 2014/2015).

IVET qualifications are classified at Level 2 and 3 in the Latvian Qualifications Framework (EQF Level 3 and 4). Craft qualifications are recognised in the crafts sector but not in the formal education system, therefore they are not incorporated in the Latvian Qualifications Framework. Craft apprentices enter into a training contract with employers, but not an employment contract, and are not considered workers and, based on this, they may not join a trade union. The issue of pay for craft apprentices and IVET students on work placements is not regulated. Evidence suggests that some of them are paid. The minimum monthly wage in Latvia (2015) is €360.

3.6 Integration of young people in the labour market

Youth employment measures

Since January 2014, young people aged 15–29, who have obtained the status of a registered unemployed in the SEA, in close cooperation with a career counsellor and other SEA specialists can find out their strengths, receive information regarding vacancies in Latvia, acquire new skills and their first work experience, engage in training, as well as receive a support for a business start-up. In total, 10 measures are available for young people, where participation is established on the basis of profiling results, including the previous experience of the young person in the labour market, acquired education, as well as the level of skills and abilities. In order to receive the support, young people may apply in 28 branches of the SEA throughout Latvia.

As from June 2014, the SEDA, in its turn, implements vocational education programmes in cooperation with 35 institutions of vocational education and colleges, in which young people may acquire vocational training in any of 72 professions during 12 or 18 months. Admission to the programmes takes place twice a year.

The main target group of the SEDA to be engaged in the initial vocational education programmes under the Youth Guarantee programme are young people aged 17–29 (included) who are not in education^[1], employment and who have not acquired previous professional qualification^[2] or have previous professional qualification that has been acquired at least 12 months before admission to the implemented educational programmes. At the same time, the support in the form of training programmes is offered to young people aged 15–29, who are not in education and employment, in detention facilities. Beyond the Youth Guarantee, the SEDA also involves employed young people in its initial vocational education programmes for acquisition of the second and third professional qualification level during one academic year or one and a half academic years (see information below).

In addition to the above, Agency for International Programs for Youth is implementing the project “KNOW and DO!”. The project is being implemented within the Youth Guarantee initiative aimed at young people aged 15–29 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and are not registered in the State Employment Agency (SEA) as unemployed.

The aim of the project “KNOW and DO!” is to develop skills of the target group of young people and facilitate their involvement in education, including vocational learning to master craftsman, Youth Guarantee activities implemented by the State Employment Agency or the State Education Development Agency, active employment or preventative unemployment reduction measures provided by the State Employment Agency as well as in non-governmental organizations or youth centre activities.

The provisional number of young people who are going to receive the support during the project is 3500. To achieve the set goal, the project is being implemented in close collaboration with local municipalities and their strategic partners, such as national and local governmental and non-governmental institutions, youth centres and other institutions engaged in youth work. To ensure quality of services provided to young people,

(¹) According to Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 207 of 28 April 2015, young people who study in an evening school or have undertaken distance learning in order to acquire secondary education, or partial-time study programmes specified in the Institutions of Law on Institutions of Higher Education in addition to participation in measures 7.2.1.1 or 7.2.1.2 may also be involved in the measures.

(²) Young people may be registered with the SEA as unemployed or job-seekers, while not being support receivers within a measure implemented by the SEA (except for young people involved in job-seeker support measures, competitiveness enhancement measures and career guidance) Mostly they are young people who have acquired basic education or general secondary education and had commenced acquisition of vocational or higher education due to different reasons, for instance, they wished to earn money, took care of children, but did not finish their studies.

the AIPY provides methodological support to municipalities by organizing trainings to the project implementation staff, evaluation meetings to exchange experiences and good practices as well as supervisory visits.

The project "KNOW and DO!" foresees several phases of youth engagement. During the first phase, young people of the target group are being identified and outreached to inform them about the opportunities provided by the project. This is being done by municipalities in close collaboration with their strategic partners.

During the second phase, young people are being profiled by experienced/trained specialists to identify what skills and competences the particular young person shall develop, i.e. personal, social, labour and/or others in order to successfully return to social and economic life. Based on the profiling results, an individual support programme of measures is being elaborated, which at a later stage of its implementation can be improved according to the young person's needs in terms of measures and programme duration. Those young people who have expressed readiness to actively participate in the process of job search or further education during profiling are directed to join Youth Guarantee activities implemented by the State Education Development Agency or State Employment Agency. The profiling process as such is based on an individual approach and support provided by qualified specialists including consultation about possible vocational opportunities.

The individual support programme of measures is elaborated to fit the particular young person's needs therefore it encompasses individual and group support activities such as consultations, formal and informal learning activities, volunteer and social work, leisure time activities and others. The implementation of an individual support programme is very significant therefore the mentor's involvement in the implementation of the individual support programme is obligatory.

The project is aimed at young people aged 15–29 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and are not registered in the State Employment Agency as unemployed.

Within the framework of the project, until the end of the year 2020, it is planned to achieve the following monitoring indicators:

- Output indicator – 3500 NEETs who are not registered in the State Employment Agency and have participated in the ESF supported measures.
- Result indicator – 2450 NEETs who are not registered in the State Employment Agency and have successfully completed their individual support programme within the framework of the ESF support.

Flexicurity measures focusing on young people

The aims of the solutions to many problems is to support young people at certain stages of life, to solve specific problems or to provide targeted support to certain groups of students, strengthening the elements of education and training system. It means that such solutions are limited in terms of time, they are based on individual projects or they deal with certain issues contrary to an activity within a common framework in terms of both strategy and tactics.

A teacher, a school, an organisation or an administrative authority alone cannot ensure everything required for a young person. When projects, activities and programmes are prepared within the strategic framework including systematic approach to career guidance support measures, young people can receive comprehensive support on their path to education. This increases synergy with other initiatives and external partners ensuring greater flexibility and responsiveness.

Reconciliation of private and working life for young people

Remote placement is still not widespread in Latvia, it is also not separately regulated by law or regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers. There is no separate regulation that would highlight youth as a group in Latvia.

The majority of employers look for employees in offices, at certain facilities. In terms of remote work, most often the following vacancies are published: freelance translators, data input specialists, editors, IT specialists, designers, accountants, active sales specialists and photographers.

In Latvia, distance learning becomes more and more popular; it is a type of correspondence education characterised by specially developed learning materials and webinars in e-environment, and an individual tempo of learning.

Distance learning is particularly suitable for employed, active and busy people; and it is an opportunity to combine work and family life, additionally acquiring a profession in distance learning. Distance learning would be impossible without a special e-learning environment that provides each student with a profile and an individual schedule for taking tests.

Within the framework of the Youth Guarantee, young people are offered opportunities to combine education with the acquisition of a profession/trade (see the previous chapter).

Funding of existing schemes/initiatives

The project "KNOW and DO!" is being implemented with a financial support of the European Social Fund and state funding. The overall budget of the project "KNOW and DO!" is 6,80 MEUR, 5.78 MEUR of which is the funding provided by the European Social Fund and 1.02 MEUR is the state provided funding. It is planned that 5,47 MEUR will be allocated to local municipalities to ensure direct support to the target group of young people. The amount of funds each municipality receives is calculated according to a quota principle.

Quality assurance

Within the framework of the project, until the end of the year 2020, it is planned to achieve the following monitoring indicators:

- Output indicator – 3500 NEETs who are not registered in the State Employment Agency and have participated in the ESF supported measures.
- Result indicator – 2450 NEETs who are not registered in the State Employment Agency and have successfully completed their individual support programme within the framework of the ESF support.

Individual support programme is considered to be successfully completed if, by the end of its completion, the young person of the target group re-enters education system including vocational training with a master craftsman, Youth Guarantee activities implemented by the SEA or the SEDA, active employment or preventative unemployment reduction measures provided by the State Employment Agency or joins the activities of non-governmental organizations or youth centres.

3.7 Cross-border mobility in employment, entrepreneurship and vocational opportunities

Programmes and schemes for cross-border mobility

Latvia is also a member of EURES network. EURES is a network of European Public Employment Services established in 1994 including the European Commission and Public Employment Services of the European Union Member States, as well as the countries of the European Economic Area – Liechtenstein, Island, Norway and Switzerland.

The mission of the EURES is to support free movement of the workforce of the European countries.

The tasks of the EURES:

- to provide job-seekers with counselling and information about the available employment, as well as living conditions and work conditions in European countries;
- to help employers to find the most appropriate workers;
- to provide cross-border job-seekers and employers with information and counselling.

Latvia became a member of the EURES after joining the European Union on 1 May 2004. Both job-seekers and employers can benefit from the participation of Latvia in the EURES. With the help of the EURES information network, each visitor may obtain on-line information on vacancies, living and work conditions in Latvia and other European countries. Job-seekers, who do not have Internet access, but who need a consultation, help or advice, are kindly invited to visit the State Employment Agency where EURES counsellors work, who provide counselling and help to find all the necessary information.

Employers are offered to publish information regarding vacancies in their enterprises in the EURES data base. Moreover, employers may use the EURES data base to search for employees in all European countries. Both of the above services are free of charge. Employers may find all current (operative) information, including Curriculum Vitae (CV) of potential employees that comply best with the vacancies placed by the employer in the EURES data base. Thus, the employer saves time and money that would be necessary for publishing vacancies in newspapers.

Participation of the State Employment Agency in the EURES network offers a wide spectrum of opportunities for a high-quality analysis of the labour market in both Latvia and Europe.

EURES gives an opportunity to offer and provide services to both job-seekers and employers more efficiently than before.

Legal framework

Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 129 "Regulations on Implementation of Measure 7.1.2.1 "Ensuring the Functioning of the EURES Network" of Specific Objective 7.1.2 "To Create a System of Anticipation and Management Restructuring in Labour Market, Ensuring its Connection to the Employment Barometer" of Operational Programme "[Growth and Development](#)" of 17 March 2015.

3.8 Development of entrepreneurship competence

Policy Framework

Young people can improve their business competences by getting involved in the projects of "Erasmus+" youth area implementing the following types of projects:

- Youth exchange projects (Key Activity 1) – these projects are based on a thematic idea, which the youth groups wish to implement together and which may be directly related to daily experience of young people. A youth exchange project has to be based on non-formal education principles and implemented through the methods of non-formal education. During youth exchange, participants with the support of group leaders jointly implement the work programme (a combination of workshops, practical assignments, debates, role plays, simulations, outdoor activities and other measures) that they have developed and prepared before the exchange. The youth exchange provides an opportunity to young people to develop various skills (including business-related skills and abilities). Youth exchange is based on a transnational cooperation between two or more involved organisations from different countries of the European Union or beyond;
- Mobility projects for youth workers (Key Activity 1) – this type of projects supports professional development of youth workers, implementing such measures as transnational/international seminars, training courses, networking measures, studies, etc. or carrying out "shadowing"/"observation" work in an organisation abroad that is an active participant in the youth field. All the measures are organised by organisations

participating in the project. Participation of youth workers in such measures boost the capacity of their organisations. It is necessary to disseminate the results achieved in the project;

- Strategic partnership projects (Key Action 2) – the projects of this type provide an opportunity to organisations operating in different fields (NGOs, governmental /municipal authorities, educational institutions, companies, non-formal youth groups, etc.) to cooperate in order to introduce innovative approaches to the work with youth, to solve issues topical to youth and improve the quality of work with young people. Strategic partnership projects are international projects, and a wide range of activities may be implemented within the framework of them (activities promoting cooperation of organisations and exchange of good practices in the youth field; activities that facilitate innovative approach and development, testing or implementation of methods for work with youth; activities that facilitate recognition and approval of knowledge, abilities and skills acquired in non-formal education; activities that promote the development of the work with youth at national and international level; international youth initiatives). The priorities of the strategic partnership projects are to promote development of high-quality work with youth, facilitate participation and active citizenship of young people, as well as promote youth entrepreneurship, especially social entrepreneurship.

Formal learning

[Section 1 Paragraph 21 of the Education Law](#) establishes that formal education is a system that includes basic education, secondary education and higher education levels, the acquisition of the programmes of which is certified by a state-recognized education or professional qualification document, as well as an education and professional qualification document.

Formal education is usually divided into levels of education and types of education. The combination of such a division determines further options of an individual within the education system and legal regulation that is related to the educational institution (for instance, the procedures for establishment and accreditation, education of teachers, the contents of education, etc.). The levels and types of education may significantly differ among countries therefore their mutual recognition is one of the issues of the education policy agenda.

There are following levels of education in Latvia:

- Pre-school education
- Basic education
- Secondary education
- Higher education

There are following types of education in Latvia:

- General education
- Vocational education
- Academic education

Formal education usually is a state-provided service with institutional base developed by the state. It is organised in specially accommodated premises. Teachers with a certain academic or vocational qualification help pupils or students to acquire socially accepted knowledge there.

Non-formal and informal learning

[Section 1 Paragraph 141 of the Education Law](#) establishes that non-formal education is educational activity organised beyond formal education in conformity with interests and demand.

Non-formal youth education is based on interactive learning – doing something that an individual likes and is interested in. The objective of non-formal education that is specified in Section 8 Paragraph 2 of the Youth Law is “to provide knowledge, develop skills, abilities and attitudes, as well as to promote comprehensive development of young people and active youth participation in decision-making and social life”.

Informal learning – learning that may take place consciously or unconsciously, acquiring new or supplementing the existing knowledge, skills, competences, attitude and values daily and at work that enrich and improve one's personality.

“Implementation Regulations for Activity 8.3.1.1 “Competency-based Approach to General Education Content Approbation and Implementation” of Specific Objective 8.3.1 “To Develop Competency-based General Education Curriculum” of Operational Programme “Growth and Development”” have been approved on 24 November 2015 ([hereinafter referred to as the Regulations](#)) The draft regulations have been developed in order to ensure approbation of general education content based on competency approach and implementation thereof at pre-school, basic and secondary education level, envisaging the development and approbation of the curriculum, models and methods for organization of learning process, diagnostic tools, contents of diagnostic work and pilot examinations, learning and methodological tools, as well as improvement of the professional competency of teachers for implementation of the contents of education in the learning process.

In 2015, the MoES established the “Work Group for Development of a Unified Model for Youth Non-formal Learning”, within the framework of which it is planned to develop a unified definition of youth non-formal learning, as well as to develop a unified definition of an informal education programme. The work group plans to develop written recommendations for the implementation of the above youth non-formal education programme in Latvia.

The competency-based approach is an approach that meets the demand of modern society that envisages the education process to include preparation of children (students, youth) for life in constantly changing circumstances. The competencies acquired within the process of education have to ensure the ability to react flexibly to changes and act successfully in order to reach personal and society's common objectives. The competency-based approach is based on the basic assumption that the ability of an individual to understand, forecast and react accordingly, use their metacognitive skills (to think about thinking), be independent (autonomous) in their thinking, be creative, be able to evaluate their actions and actions of others critically and take responsibility for their actions is significant for creative life in the modern world. The curriculum of the competency-based approach is characterised by the functionality, integrity and practical application of knowledge, explanation of the surroundings, universality of skills, creativity, problem solving etc. The learning process of the competency-based approach is characterised by acquisition of methods of activities (thinking, learning, etc.), basing in experience and acquisition of new experience, readiness to acquire further knowledge independently. The assessment of a student's academic success in the competency-based approach means dynamic assessment of the individual's competency at different stages and levels of education. The teaching aids for ensuring competency-based approach have to be interchangeable, open, transformable – all of which can be provided in digital format.

The most widespread youth non-formal education activities in Latvia are various camps, seminars and conferences, as well as organization of different activities, development and implementation of projects.

Educators support in entrepreneurship education

Pupil-Led Training Enterprise programme (PTE) is a special teaching method designed for pupils in grades 4–12. For pupils, it is an opportunity to acquire skills to establish and manage an enterprise, develop products and offer them to potential customers through actual work. On average, 22% of graduates of the programme have already engaged in business.

The MoES has recognised this method and recommends it to educational institutions as a teaching method that develops and improves business skills. The PTE does not have a legal status – in Latvia, they are represented only by Junior Achievement Latvia (JA Latvia) that holds a licence of Junior Achievement Worldwide programme. The licence also includes the Pupil-Lead Training Enterprise programme. Junior Achievement Latvia (JA Latvia) is a public benefit organisation and an expert on practical business education in the schools of Latvia. JA Latvia has been one of 37 members of the Junior Achievement Worldwide® network since 1991. The European Commission has recognised JA Latvia as the only positive initiative in Latvia that ensures long-term and systematic business education to young people. Each year, JA Latvia ensures practical business education programmes to approximately 60,000 pupils throughout Latvia at all levels of education; the programmes are approbated in Europe and accommodated to the needs of Latvia. The organisation ensures improvement of qualification and continuing education programmes to the teachers of its member schools both in Latvia and abroad.

In academic year 2015/2016, JA Latvia has registered 869 PTEs that is the best result during the history of JA Latvia.

In recent years, it is emphasized in Latvia that business education at all levels may be a very effective tool for motivating young people to decide upon launching their own business and developing a successful career. It is important to support the creativity of young people, their ability to take a risk and overcome failures, as well as development of responsibility.

3.9 Start-up funding for young entrepreneurs

Access to information

The Ministry of Economics has developed “Regulations on Support of Organisation of Training and Seminars to Business Start-ups” that have been approved in the Cabinet of Ministers on 2 September 2014. The said regulations determine conditions for granting support for contact establishment and communication measures, training and seminars or their series (hereinafter referred to as the measures) for business start-ups organised by merchants, associations or foundations registered in the Republic of Latvia (hereinafter referred to as the organizer of a measure), as well as sectors and activities not to be supported, the procedures for granting support and requirements for cumulation of support. The above regulations do not set apart youth as a specific group.

There is no unified ecosystem in Latvia that is necessary for development of new business start-ups. Lack of information regarding options to attract private investments to business start-ups is often the determining factor that limits creation and development of new and potentially successful ideas. Also the amount of private investment in Latvia is not large, and the lack of information regarding potentially successful investment opportunities is often the most important factor that slows down the increase of private investments. Only at the beginning of 2016, the Internet platform [Start-up Association](#) was developed; start-up ideas are summarised there in order to show them to the world, represent the ideas and interests, as well as promote understanding of business start-ups in Latvia.

The Ministry of Economics in cooperation with other institutions and Start-up Association Latvia has developed Business Start-Up Support Law that has been sent off to Saeima; it will be a small step towards putting the business environment in order, taking into account current trends in the world and also in Latvia.

In recent years, separate programmes for new entrepreneurs in Latvia have been developed, for instance, “Startup Pirates Riga”, “Junior Achievement”, “ALTUM” and others that facilitate the development of youth business activity with the help of various programmes and support instruments.

Likewise, the following measure is implemented within the Youth Guarantee programme in Latvia:

Support for Starting Self-Employment or Entrepreneurship: counselling and financial support measures for starting self-employment or commercial activity that help young people to start business activity or self-employment and operate successfully in the selected field for not less than two years.

The instrument is developed for young people aged 18–29, and it is financed from the national budget, ESF and the Youth Employment Initiative funding.

Access to capital

On 29 September 2016, *Business Start-Up Support Draft Law* developed by the Ministry of Economics was approved; the aim of the draft law is to promote the development of fast growing technology enterprises or start-up enterprises in Latvia, thus facilitating the development of innovative business activity and research in the private sector, as well as the commercialisation of research.

The draft law provides for the definition of a business start-up and its features, business start-up support programmes, the procedures for application to the said support programmes, conditions for defining and attracting qualified risk capital investors, the procedures for supervision of business start-up support programmes, as well as the obligations of a business start-up.

It is envisaged that business start-ups will have access to several support programmes:

- a fixed payment – final payment of the state social insurance monthly contribution that is made by employer on behalf of employee in the special budget of the state social insurance;
- a support programme for attraction of highly qualified employees – where employee does not agree that a fixed payment is made for them;
- in addition to certain provisions, a corporate income tax relief and personal income tax relief are planned.

It is planned that the law will come into force on and the said support to business start-ups will be available as of 1 January 2017.

3.10 Promotion of entrepreneurship culture

Special events and activities

The National Centre for Education (hereinafter also referred to as the NCE) organizes vocational mastership competitions as a support measure for improvement of students' personality, skills and talents. Since 2002, NCE has been organizing a competition of business plans for students of institutions of vocational education. The competition is supported by business experts recognised in Latvia, successful enterprises and professional organisations, for instance SEB Bank, Swedbank, Europe Direct Information Centre, the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Urban Economy Department of Local Municipalities, Business Incubator, etc.

The aim of the competition is to facilitate the development of student's business skills and their interest about entrepreneurship, to improve business plan development skills of students, to acquire experience in development, presentation of a business plan and defending one's viewpoint, as well as to promote cooperation among teachers of institutions of vocational education, students and business partners and familiarisation with good practice examples.

Likewise, since 2006, the Duke of Edinburgh's International Youth Award programme has been implemented in Latvia that promotes youth employment, social inclusion, as well as participation (see also Chapter 4.4), and the pupil-lead training enterprise programme is actively implemented in schools (see Chapter 3.8).

Pupil-Led Training Enterprise programme (PTE) described in Chapter 3.9 is also a recognised and implemented teaching method in Latvia. For pupils, it is an opportunity to acquire skills to establish and manage an enterprise, develop products and offer them to potential customers through actual work. On average, 22% of graduates of the programme have already engaged in business.

Networks and partnerships

The Employers' Confederation of Latvia (ECL) in cooperation with its strategic partner, portal Prakse.lv provides any company with an opportunity of attracting trainees and giving their own recommendations and evaluations regarding the educational institutions and study programmes that are attended by future professionals. A young person, who has commenced studies in any profession, can soon become a young specialist. In order for the visions of employers, educational institutions and young people in Latvia to be unified, it is important for all interested parties to act together. Therefore, Prakse.lv provides an opportunity to exchange opinions, for employers – to find trainees with the potential of becoming a full-fledged employees, for young people – to get acquainted with the work environment in practice, to accumulate practical knowledge and to develop career in the selected branch. Finally, the cooperation among employers and youth may give worthy recommendations to educational establishments as to what exactly employees expect from potential specialists. Prakse.lv has been operating since 2008, and it is the largest career counsellor in Latvia. It is a platform where thousands of young people contact employers daily, in order to agree on the possibilities of traineeship and work. The aim of the portal is to help young people find options for traineeship and work possibilities, but for the enterprises – find the most talented young people. More than 78,700 young people, almost 4,000 employers and around 1,000 educational institutions have registered there. The portal is developed and maintained by the ECL's strategic partner – SIA "Prakse.lv". The mission of the portal is to prepare the young generation of Latvia for the requirements of the modern labour market, thus facilitating their successful integration in the economic life of Latvia and the world.

3.11 Current debates and reforms

In order to strengthen the supervision of the Youth Guarantee programme, in 2015, the MoW started cooperating with the experts of the International Work Organisation who plan organisation of educating seminars for policy implementers and social partners regarding the assessment of the Youth Guarantee results and other issues in 2016.

As the development of the entrepreneurship and its culture in Latvia is a new direction where rapid improvements have taken place in recent years, currently one can only wait for the first results, in order to make conclusions and set further aims for improving the youth entrepreneurship and employment.

4. SOCIAL INCLUSION

The [Social Services and Social Assistance Law](#) was adopted in 2002.

Social inclusion aims to provide the persons exposed to poverty risks and social exclusion with opportunities, services and resources that allow them to participate in economic, social and cultural life, as well as improve their living standards and welfare. It aims to ensure one's access to the person's fundamental rights and a possibility to participate in the decision-making process. This provision applies to all inhabitants of Latvia including youth and children.

Social inclusion requires education, welfare, economics, regional development, and health sector representatives to work together. The social inclusion success depends on the state

and municipal institutions, as well as the non-governmental sector's ability to co-operate and collaborate.

Social inclusion is a competence of the Ministry of Welfare, but if it refers to youth's social inclusion, it is promoted by the Ministry of Education and Science.

4.1 General context

Main challenges to social inclusion

The main policy goal of social inclusion is to reduce poverty and income inequality.

In 2020 25,1% of the population in Latvia was at risk of poverty or social exclusion. It was [the ninth-highest indicator among the EU Member States](#).

Poverty and social exclusion are also high among young people. According to the [data of the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia](#), in 2021 9,3% of young people aged 18-24 were at risk of poverty.

Inequality of income increases the risk of social exclusion. The risk of poverty is greater among families with one parent, as well as large families with more than 3 children.

Definitions and concepts

The [Social Services and Social Assistance Law](#) was adopted in 2002. **Social inclusion** aims to provide the persons exposed to poverty risks and social exclusion with opportunities, services and resources that allow them to participate in economic, social and cultural life, as well as improve their living standards and welfare. It aims to ensure one's access to the person's fundamental rights and a possibility to participate in decision-making processes. This provision applies to all population of Latvia including youth and children.

To support families with children, including young people, a family allowance is granted in Latvia. The family allowance is granted for each child aged 1-20, who studies in general education or vocational training institution and has not entered into marriage ([Law on State Social Allowances](#)). The monthly allowance for one children is 25 euro, for two children – 100 euro, for three children – 225 euro, for four and more children – 100 euro per each.

The Protection of the Rights of the Child Law (Section 10) establishes the rights of a child to decent living conditions:

- a child has the right to living conditions and a caring social environment that ensure his or her full physical and intellectual development. Every child must receive adequate nourishment, clothing and accommodation;
- a child with physical or mental disabilities has the right to everything that is necessary to satisfy his/her special needs;
- a child has the right to a permanent place of residence.

Provision of housing support is one of the autonomous functions of local governments they perform on the basis of the Law on Assistance in Solving Apartment Matters. The law establishes that local governments, first of all, rent out residential spaces to low-income persons, who live with and support at least one under-age child. Local governments rent out social apartments to low-income persons and persons who are orphans or persons without parental care and who are not provided with residential space. Local governments may establish preferential conditions to identify a person or family entitled to rent a social apartment.

According to the Law on Residential Tenancy (section 36.1, paragraph 1), a local government shall provide assistance to a low-income tenant if they live with and take care of at least one under-age child if:

- an event of eviction is due to failure to pay rent and basic services,
- a residential house demolition or capital repairs are planned;
- a house is denationalised or returned to a lawful owner.

If a low-income tenant is evicted due to failure to pay rent and basic services, and if he or she lives with and takes care of at least one under-age child, the execution of the court's decision regarding eviction from the residential space is suspended until the local government allocates the tenant another residential space appropriate for living.

If a tenant is evicted due to the demolition of the residential house, the renter (owner) of the house has an obligation to allocate the tenant and his or her family members another residential space equivalent to the previous one. Also, the owner of a denationalised house or the lawful owner, to whom a house has been returned, has an obligation to allocate another residential space in the event of capital repairs or the rebuilding of the residential house into a non-dwelling house.

With the help of the [Social Integration State Agency \(SISA\)](#), people with disabilities and expected disabilities may acquire state-funded education in educational institutions (secondary school and college). The main task of the educational programmes is to help people with disabilities to return to society as full-fledged members.

4.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The Ministry of Welfare is in charge of social inclusion issues at the national level, but the Ministry of Education and Science deals with issues related to youth social inclusion issues.

In 2007 the Ministry of Welfare established a [Social Inclusion Policy Coordination Committee](#), which replaced the Committee for Supervision of Implementation of the National Action Plan for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion that was established in 2004. In 2012, the tasks and the composition of the committee were updated. In the committee, the issues related to poverty, inequality of income and social exclusion are dealt with. Proposals for the development and improvement of policy planning documents are submitted, information regarding topical issues in the field of social inclusion are exchanged. The Social Inclusion Policy Coordination Committee is formed by representatives of ministries, regional agencies for the development of local governments and non-governmental organisations, the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments, the Central Statistical Bureau, the Social and Employment Matters Committee of Saeima, the Main Public Order Police Department of the State Police, as well as social partners.

Several line ministries within their competency ensure the welfare and social services to young people with the help of relevant agencies and institutions. Here are the main parties involved and their competencies:

- the Ministry of Welfare elaborates the national policy favourable to young people in the field of social services and social help, supervises its implementation and ensures support to unemployed youth and job seekers by organising active employment measures;
- the Ministry of Justice coordinates public registers, national policy on penal system and criminal punishment and its application. The State Probation Service is subordinated to the Ministry of Justice. It organises public work for minors and assists youth after they have served their sentence;
- the Ministry of Health fosters the development of youth-friendly health care services.

Many regional and local entities provide the population with various social and welfare services. Some entities provide services for young people. There are also government

programmes targeted at young people. For instance, there are two youth health care centres (in the cities of Dobele and Cēsis), which provide them with information on sexual and reproductive health, organise classes to discuss reproductive health and provide answers to their questions.

All social and welfare allowances received in cash are provided by the State Social Insurance Agency that operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Welfare and performs the public administration function in the field of social insurance and social services.

Local municipalities also provide social assistance benefits. Social assistance is provided based on the evaluation of material resources (income and possessions) of the person in need and his family.

Childcare institutions offer services to persons who are unable to take care of themselves due to poor health, they also provide shelter, full care and social rehabilitation to orphans and children left without parental care.

Childcare centres and **day-care centres** are for children without parental care till the age of 18 or till the age of 24 if they continue their studies.

In 2013, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted „Guidelines for the development of social services 2014 – 2020”, which strengthen three lines of action – deinstitutionalization, development of community-based social services and effective governance of the social services system. The guidelines stipulate that orphans and children left without parental care should be placed in a familiar environment – in a foster family or with a guardian and care institutions should be considered only when care in a familiar environment is not possible.

During the last 5 years, the number of children in institutional care has decreased. In 2018, 12% of children without parental care lived in long-term social care institutions, 20% lived in foster families, but 68% of children were under guardianship.

General distribution of responsibility:

At the national level responsible ministries (Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Culture) develop planning documents and support programmes on social inclusion issues.

At the regional level local authorities develop local planning documents and determine how the guidelines for the development of social services 2014 – 2020 will be implemented in collaboration with social services, educational institutions, youth initiative centers and other organisations.

At the local level organisations, initiative groups and authorities organise various events and activities and implement projects to promote social inclusion.

Cross-sectorial cooperation

The issues of youth social inclusion are dealt with by the Ministry of Education and Science in cooperation with local governments, local government institutions, the Agency for International Programmes for Youth, youth organisations, and community organisations that implement projects in the field of youth inclusion etc.

In order to ensure the coordination of youth policy, the Ministry of Education and Science has established a Youth Advisory Council, which aims to promote the implementation of coordinated youth policy and participation of young people in decision-making and community life. It consists of representatives nominated by the public administration bodies, local governments and youth organisations. The youth organisations constitute half of the members of the commission.

Local governments have to elaborate municipal youth policy planning documents in compliance with the basic principles of national planning documents and local policies.

4.3 Strategy for the social inclusion of young people

Existence of a National Strategy on social inclusion

Although there is no strategy for social inclusion of young people adopted, social inclusion issue as a priority issue is highlighted in a number of policy planning documents.

The Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 highlights four strategic principles - creative activity, tolerance, co-operation, and participation – which should serve as the basis for the future of society in Latvia:

- Creative activity – possibility to develop new ideas, forms of action or to link the existing ideas, concepts, methods and actions in a new way.
- Tolerance – ensures reduction of social exclusion and discrimination, including inequality of income, age and gender discrimination in the labour market, ethnic prejudices and linguistic institutional obstacles.
- Co-operation – horizontal and vertical co-operation among institutions and inhabitants.
- Participation – only with active participation of the society in the policy-making, culture and art and local community activities, it is possible to find optimal solutions to various situations, promote social cohesion and awareness.

The national Development Plan for 2021-2027 sets social Inclusion as one of the strategic directions under the Priority 1: “Strong Families, a Healthy and Active Population”. It aims to achieve that a personalised, human-centred social support is offered to all who need it or might need it. Concrete measures are planned in the National Development Plan. One of the measures focused on young people aims to create a family environment for children in out-of-home care by 1) improving the protection of the rights and interests of children living in out-of-home care, 2) improving support and services, 3) improving support services for young people after out-of-home care thereby facilitating social inclusion. It is planned to expand and strengthen the role and modalities of youth policy to facilitate the effective transition from childhood to adulthood.

New Youth Policy Guidelines for 2021 - 2027 are currently being developed where one of the strategic directions is inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities.

Scope and contents

The main aim of the above-discussed documents is to provide support measures and implement initiatives targeted at young people exposed to the risk of social exclusion.

Responsible authority

Social inclusion issues fall within the competence of the Ministry of Welfare, but the issues of youth inclusion are dealt with and supported by the Ministry of Education and Science in co-operation with other institutions and authorities.

[The Agency for International Programmes for Youth](#) supports inclusive youth work programmes and projects (see more information in the subchapters [4.4. Inclusive programmes for young people](#) and [4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion](#)).

Revisions/Updates

New policy planning documents are currently developed. Detailed information will be available in the second half of 2021.

4.4 Inclusive programmes for young people

According to the provisions of the [Social Services and Social Assistance Law](#), the state provides children who have suffered from violence a social rehabilitation. Social rehabilitation services are provided at children’s place of residence, in a counselling

institution or as a social rehabilitation course (up to 30 days or a complex rehabilitation course up to 60 days).

The state also provides social rehabilitation to children addicted to drugs, toxic and intoxicating substances.

To reduce early school leaving, from 2017 – 2022, the State Education Quality Service implements the European Social Fund project **“Support for the Reduction of Early School Leaving”**. The project promotes the development of a system of sustainable cooperation between the municipality, educational institutions, teachers, support staff and the parents in order to identify pupils who are at risk of dropping out and provide them with personalised support.

Teachers are provided with the opportunity to develop professionally and to strengthen their skills in working with pupils. Methodological tools have been developed within the framework of the project. A database has been created, which ensures the regular exchange of information at the level of the state, municipality and educational institution regarding pupils who have been identified with the risk of early school leaving, the preventive measures are taken and their results. The project also supports youth NGO initiatives to raise the issue of early school leaving among young people, to address learners through their peers and to engage them in activities. In the 2019 – 2020 study year, 94 local municipalities and 507 educational institutions (from those 33 vocational education institutions) were involved in the project. Until the 2019 – 2020 study year, support was provided to more than 23 000 pupils in Latvia. More about the project can be found [here](#).

Programmes specific for vulnerable young people

A project **“KNOW and DO!”** (2014 – 2021) is implemented in the framework of the programme “Growth and Employment” (2014 – 2020), whose specific objective is to promote the inclusion of young NEETs who are not registered in the State Employment Agency and to foster their involvement in education, labour and activities offered by NGOs or youth centres.

The project is implemented by the Agency for International Programs for Youth (AIPY) in close collaboration with local municipalities and their strategic partners, such as national and local governmental and non-governmental institutions, youth centres, and other institutions engaged in youth work.

The project is targeted at young people aged 15–29 who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) and are not registered in the State Employment Agency as unemployed.

The aim of the project is to develop young people’s skills and facilitate their involvement in education, including vocational learning, Youth Guarantee activities implemented by the State Employment Agency or the State Education Development Agency, active employment or preventative unemployment reduction measures provided by the State Employment Agency as well as in non-governmental organisations or youth centre activities.

The project foresees the following two phases of youth engagement:

Phase 1: Young people in the NEET situation are identified and informed about the opportunities provided by the project. This phase is carried out by the municipalities in close collaboration with their strategic partners.

Phase 2: The project participants are evaluated to determine what skills and competencies shall be developed, i.e. personal, social, labour and/or others to successfully return to social and economic life. Based on the profiling results, an individual support programme is developed, which can be improved according to the individual's needs. The individual support programme encompasses individual and group support activities such as consultations, formal and informal learning activities, volunteer and social work, leisure

time activities and others. The mentor's involvement in the implementation of the individual support programme is obligatory. Those young people who have expressed readiness to actively participate in the process of a job search or further education during profiling are directed to join Youth Guarantee.

From September 2014 till June 2020, 3238 young people in the NEET situation have participated in the project and 2023 of them have successfully completed the individual support programme.

Funding

The project "KNOW and DO!" is implemented with the financial support of the European Social Fund and state funding. The overall budget of the project is 7 560 330 EUR.

Quality assurance

The individual support programme is considered to be successfully completed if, by the end of its completion, the young person in NEET situation re-enters the education system including vocational learning, Youth Guarantee activities implemented by the State Employment Agency or the State Education Development Agency, active employment or preventative unemployment reduction measures provided by the State Employment Agency or joins non-governmental organizations or youth centre activities.

To ensure the quality of services provided to young people, the AIPY provides methodological support to municipalities by organising training courses for the project managers and evaluation meetings to exchange best practices and supervisory visits to provide individual mentoring. By the end of 2021 the following monitoring indicators will be achieved:

- 3885 NEETs will have received individual support.
- 2720 NEETs will have successfully completed their individual support programme and re-entered education or labour market as well as participate in activities offered by NGOs or youth centres.

4.5 Initiatives promoting social inclusion and raising awareness

Intercultural awareness

One of the tasks of the [Youth Policy Implementation Plan 2016 - 2020](#) was to promote the popularisation of Diaspora youth knowledge and experience in Latvia by organising diaspora youth meetings (conferences, idea laboratories, forums, etc.).

The Latvian Society Integration Foundation has implemented two state budget programmes focusing on participation and awareness-raising:

- **"Civic Participation Promotion Programme (Diaspora NGO activity support)"** aims at preserving Latvia's diaspora links with the country, to strengthen their national identity, to promote self-organisation of the diaspora, as well as to promote civic participation of the diaspora in the social and political life of Latvia; In 2019 the budget of the programme was 140 080 EUR which allowed to grant 16 projects.
- The programme **"Support for Diaspora and Latvian children's common camps"** aims at strengthening the national identity of the Latvian diaspora by supporting common summer camps and summer schools where children from the diaspora and Latvia participate. In 2017 and 2018, 11 non-governmental organisations each year received financing for organisation of activities for diaspora children. From 2016 to 2018 a non-governmental organisation "Trīs reiz trīs" (3x3) within the framework of a task delegated by the public administration implemented a summer school programme in Latvia and diaspora home countries to strengthen Latvian identity, promote co-

operation with diaspora youth and foster the acquisition of Latvian traditions. [The programme "3x3"](#) symbolises three generations of Latvia's diaspora that founded a movement of summer camps in the USA, in 1981. It helped Latvians all over the world to connect, affirm their ethnic identity and preserve their cultural traditions. Between 1981 and 2019, the movement has organised 257 camps with 38 625 participants from all over the world.

There are other initiatives. To promote co-operation with diaspora youth, in 2017, Strasbourg's Latvian youth together with the Latvian Youth Council organised the first European Congress of Latvians where co-operation opportunities, youth role in Latvia's and Europe's political processes were discussed. The Latvian Youth Council continues co-operation with the European Latvian youth. In 2020 the Society of the European Latvian Youth – European Youth was admitted as a new member of the Latvian Youth Council.

NGO Fund

The Ministry of Culture organises project calls for non-governmental organisations to promote the Latvian civil society initiatives and foster active participation, incl. the participation of minorities. In 2019, the Ministry of the Culture in co-operation with the Society Integration Foundation implemented a programme "[NGO Fund](#)". The main aim of the programme is to promote the sustainable development of civil society in Latvia. In 2019 the project budget was 400 000 EUR, which allowed to grant 48 projects.

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award is a voluntary, non-competitive programme that is available to anyone aged 14–24. In 2006, the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation provided the National Centre for Education with a right to implement the programme in Latvia and it has been implemented ever since. Within the programme young people, with help from Award leaders and/or activity coaches, design their own individual programme, set their own goals in 3 categories – Service, Physical Recreation and Skills. In a group of 4 – 7, young people undertake an Adventurous Journey to achieve a Gold Award. The only people they compete against are themselves, by challenging their own beliefs about what they can achieve.

To give an opportunity to every young person living in Latvia to take part in the programme, National Centre for Education trains Award leaders and sublicenses organisations. Training courses can be attended by people who work at schools, youth centres and non-governmental organisations. Award leaders are responsible for engaging young people in their Award programme, inspiring, guiding, and assisting them from the start to the completion.

During a self-development process, there are at least four people alongside an Award leader who support the young person. They verify that the young person has achieved his/her own individual goals.

In 2019, the programme was implemented in 3 cities of Latvia (Riga, Daugavpils and Rēzekne) and 39 municipalities. The opportunity to develop an individual Award programme was provided to more than 6582 young people in Latvia, and 120 joined the Award programme for the first time.

Young people's rights

Organisations, local governments, educational institutions and public authorities organise a variety of discussions and seminars on human rights issues. There are non-governmental organisations, which provide consultations to minorities on issues, including human rights relevant to them.

Shelter Safe House is one of the most popular organisations. Young people can get information on human rights from youth centers as well as educational institutions.

Baltic Human Rights Society is an organisation that has created a website for human rights - www.cilvektiesibugids.lv. During the period 2016 – 2019, the Agency for International Programmes for Youth in cooperation with 6 Erasmus+ National Youth

Agencies implemented a project “Youth for Human Rights”. The aim of the project was to foster social inclusion by making use of the full potential of youth work and human rights education in the context of young people’s non-formal education. To increase the competence of youth worker in human rights education, a series of transnational and national training courses were organised. In 2018 two national training courses on human rights education were organised for youth workers in Latvia. In 2019 networking event was organised on human rights education in the youth field. As a result, more than 50 youth workers in Latvia have increased their capacity to work with human rights education in the youth field.

In 2019 – 2020 specialists from the Ombudsman of Latvia were involved in the educational programme in schools of Latvia [“Ready for Life” \(Gatavs Dzīvei\)](#). It aimed to support teachers and assist students in learning a variety of subjects in order to gain an understanding of the application of school-based knowledge and skills. Within the framework of the programme, 2622 lectures were taught throughout Latvia. Specialists from Ombudsman provided lectures for pupils on children’s rights and general human rights. In 2019, the Ombudsman of Latvia prepared an informative brochure for children and young people “Law on the Rights of Child”.

Key initiatives to safeguard democracy and prevent radicalisation leading to violent extremism

In many Western countries, there are radicalised Muslim groups (mosques visitors, inmates, radical preacher followers). It is not widespread in Latvia. The Muslim community in Latvia is relatively small and its representatives comply with national laws and adopted values. However, some cases of radicalisation have been identified among Muslims living in Latvia.

The most important measures to combat radicalisation leading to violent extremism are related to raising awareness of institutions’ employees who work with persons at risk of being radicalised (schools, prisons, probation services, law enforcement agencies, social services), as well as the general public.

In Latvia, it is important to promote education and public awareness on radicalisation and violent extremism and to inform society about the need to report suspicious cases to the security authorities. The total number of people at risk of radicalisation is not large enough to implement certain, comprehensive de-radicalisation programs.

The responsible institution for monitoring the radicalisation process and implementing preventive activities is the Latvian State Security Service (2018 - 11:46).

4.6 Access to quality services

Housing

In 2020 the Ministry of Economy in cooperation with OECD implemented a project on the availability of housing in Latvia [“Policy Actions for Affordable Housing in Latvia”](#). In the framework of the project, the current housing situation was analysed and recommendations were prepared for improvements. The project concluded that there was poor housing quality; many households are overcrowded. A quarter of low-income families live in a house without basic facilities. The rental market is undeveloped; housing is outdated and does not meet modern requirements. The state supports only a small part of families with low income. The main support mechanisms are social housing and housing benefits. The state offers mortgage guarantees for families with children and young specialists until the age of 35. Around 44% of households are ineligible for public support for housing and cannot afford a mortgage. OECD has prepared a list of recommendations for the Latvian government to improve housing quality and availability.

According to data from the research "Well-being of Young People in the Baltic States (2018), 24% of young people aged 15-24 have very bad living conditions, in comparison to the EU average - 7 %.

According to the Ministry of Economy, it is planned to develop a comprehensive housing policy strategy by the end of 2021. The strategy will aim to develop support programmes for particular social groups, for example, families with children.

Social services

Social services and social assistance is provided after the evaluation of the circumstances of each individual. The evaluation of each individual's needs is carried out by social work specialists. Social assistance is provided on the basis of an evaluation of an individual's material resources – income and property. The purpose of social assistance is to provide material support to low-income persons and families in a crisis situation to satisfy their basic needs and promote the participation of the able-bodied persons in the improvement of their situation.

When an orphan or a child left without parental care stays at a long-term social care and social rehabilitation institution, the local government social service office and Orphan's court, in co-operation with the employees of the institution, take measures to promote the child's return to the family, to maintain contact between the child and parents or, if this is not possible, to seek a possibility to ensure care for the child in another family.

An orphan or a child left without parental care is ensured to receive support to start an independent life after out-of-home care. An orphan who is starting an independent life is entitled to receive help to solve housing issues, rental expenses until the solution of the housing issue is solved, money for starting an independent life, allowance for the acquisition of soft goods and household goods, monthly allowance. Upon presenting a certificate, a young person is entitled to use public transport free of charge in regional intracity and regional local routes.

From 2018 to 2020 the Ministry of Welfare financed two NGO projects focusing on the provision of individual mentoring support to young people after out-of-home care who are starting an independent life.

Information on the number of children in out-of-home care in Latvia can be found in Chapter 4.2. Administration and Governance.

Health care

[The Public Health Guidelines for 2014–2020](#) determined the overarching objective of the public health policy – to increase the number of healthy life years of the inhabitants of Latvia and to prevent premature death, preserving, improving and restoring health. The guidelines envisage measures for different public health target groups (including children and young people) to promote a healthy lifestyle, thus reducing the risk of chronic non-communicable diseases (obesity, insufficient physical activity, unhealthy diet, use of addictives, etc.).

One of the most important tools for the reduction of inequality is an investment in health promotion, disease prevention and provision of integrated health care services, focusing on the risk groups that are exposed to financial, geographic, etc. inequality. Social determinants have a significant role in the promotion of the population's health and the provision of health care. Thus, in order to reduce inequality and to promote social inclusion, it is necessary to implement measures that would educate inhabitants exposed to poverty and social exclusion risks regarding the possibilities to improve and preserve health (for instance, organisation of classes for interest groups, education of young people regarding habits promoting a healthy lifestyle, organisation of measures popularising certain actions or opportunities in local governments, etc.).

To promote the healthy lifestyle of children and young people in Latvia, it is planned to resume the World Health Organisation's (WHO) initiative – Health Promoting Schools

movement – to perform a range of health promotion measures and mobilise schools to participate in the movement. During 2016-2020, 101 schools received a [Health Promoting School](#) title. Furthermore, the [Eco-Schools programme](#) – the largest global sustainable schools programme that has expanded in some 59 000 schools in 68 countries across the globe – operates in Latvia. It aims to engage the next generation in action-based learning and produce sustainably-minded, environmentally conscious young people.

The programme in Latvia is implemented by the Foundation for Environmental Education and Friendly School movement and Friendly House movement under the supervision of the State Inspectorate for Protection of Children's Rights. More than 200 educational institutions are involved in the Eco-school's programme.

The Ministry of Education and Science developed a policy-planning document – the [Sports Policy Guidelines for 2014–2020](#) to ensure implementation of middle- and long-term priorities in the sports sector. The guidelines aim to increase the ratio of the inhabitants who engage in physical or sports activities at least 1–2 times a month. The measures for sufficient physical activity to preserve and strengthen the population's health are envisaged for every inhabitant, particularly students of general education institutions, vocational education, and higher education institutions, including children and young people with disability, as well as teachers and general practitioners.

Financial services

The state covers all emergency medical help services, treatment and planned help in the event of acute diseases, including general practitioners care and home visits until the age of 18, if a patient's place of residence is in the territory of the family practitioner's professional activity.

Quality assurance

In 2016 the Ministry of Health established a commission to foster achievement and implementation of the aims set in the Public Health Guidelines for 2014–2020 and to counsel the establishment, development and coordination of a network of healthy local governments in Latvia. In 2020 draft of new Public Health Guidelines for 2021-2027 was prepared.

4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion

Policy/legal framework

The work of local governments with young people plays a significant role in the development of the youth policy. According to Paragraph one Section 5 of the [Youth Law](#): "A local government, in executing the functions thereof, shall implement work with youth in compliance with the basic principles of the youth policy and state youth policy development planning documents. A local government plans work with youth, elaborating local government's youth policy development planning documents. A local government ensures the institutional system for the work with youth." As the youth policy at a national level is a comparatively new policy field, the youth work at the level of local governments is also at its initial stage of development. The Ministry of Education and Science pays particular attention to the development of youth policy at the local level, developing recommendations to local governments for youth work, providing methodological support to local governments, as well as supporting the elaboration of the local government youth policy development planning documents.

However, the information collected annually by the Ministry of Education and Science shows that youth policy is not always as an independent direction of strategic planning in all local governments of Latvia – not all local governments have appropriate strategic planning documents in place and not all of them have an institutional system established to ensure the work with youth (though, it has to be emphasized that the number of local governments which focus on the youth policy and work with young people increases

annually). In 2019 “Midterm Evaluation of the Youth Policy Implementation Plan 2016-2020” was done. The main conclusion of the evaluation – during last years there are positive changes in the development of the youth work system in local governments of Latvia.

There is an increase in the number of local governments with at least one youth work specialist (in 2018 in 109 local governments, in comparison in 2016 - 105), funding is allocated for youth work (in 2018 in 98 local governments, in comparison in 2016 - 86). Youth policy planning documents are developed in most of the local governments of Latvia (in 2018 – in 89 local governments, in comparison in 2016 -74).

Unfortunately, there are no changes in the number of youth centres in Latvia – in 2017 in 87 municipalities at least one youth centre existed (the same number as in 2016). There is a decrease in the number of non-governmental organisations implementing youth work (in 2016 in 93 local governments there were at least one NGO working with youth, in 2018 only in 81 local governments).

Main challenges of the youth work system indicated in the evaluation:

- lack of stable, long-term financing system for youth work;
- insufficient human resources, frequent staff changes;
- insufficient cross-sectoral co-operation;

insufficient infrastructure for youth work.

The Youth Law establishes that “youth work is a set of planned youth-oriented practical measures, which ensure implementation of the youth policy, development of values of young people and strengthening of human values in general.”

The basic tasks for youth work are as follows:

1. to support and foster youth initiatives, creating favourable conditions for their intellectual and creative development;
2. to provide young people with an opportunity of acquiring the skills, knowledge and competencies necessary for life through non-formal education;
3. to ensure young people a possibility to spend their free time efficiently;
4. to provide young people with access to information necessary for their development needs.

When assessing the existing practice of youth work in Latvia, it has to be concluded that the existing model is closer to the model of decentralisation when different youth work-related policies and activities are not planned, implemented and coordinated within a single institution, but they are implemented in the institutions responsible for the specific fields, and the Ministry of Education and Science as an institution in charge of the youth sector operates more as an institution that summarizes information and defines strategic development directions. Which of the approaches is more efficient – unfortunately, there is no single opinion regarding it.

In 2015, the Ministry of Education and Science established a workgroup “Work Group for Elaboration of Youth Development Model”, the main task of which is to develop a certification system for youth affairs specialists and youth workers that would also envisage the evaluation of skills and competences. The introduction of such a system in Latvia could serve, as a significant investment in the quality improvement of the work of youth affairs specialists and youth workers, and it would also clarify differences between the roles of youth affairs specialists and youth workers and the differences between the names of professions. In 2021 it is planned to renew the work of this workgroup.

Main inclusive Youth-Work programmes and target groups

To address issues regarding fostering of social inclusion, young people have an opportunity to get involved in the projects of the “Erasmus+: Youth in Action” Programme, implementing the following types of projects:

- **Youth exchange projects** – these projects are based on a thematic idea that the youth groups wish to jointly implement, and the idea may be directly related to the daily experience of young people. A youth exchange project has to be based on non-formal education principles and implemented through the methods of non-formal education. During youth exchange, participants with the support of group leaders jointly implement a work programme (a combination of workshops, practical assignments, debates, role-plays, simulations, outdoor activities and other arrangements) that they have developed and prepared before the exchange. The youth exchange provides young people with an to develop their skills, be informed about socially significant issues / thematic fields, to get to know new cultures, habits and lifestyles, mainly in the form of mutual learning, to strengthen such values as solidarity, democracy, friendship, etc. Youth exchange is based on transnational cooperation between two or more involved organisations from different countries of the European Union or beyond it;
- **Mobility of staff projects** – see information under Sub-chapter 3.8.

In 2019 agreements on the financing of 89 projects under the “Erasmus+: Youth in Action” programme were signed. A number of supported projects on social inclusion – 35. The number of young people with fewer opportunities who participated in projects – 1480 (27% from the total number of project participants), young people with special needs – 199 (3,6%).

There is an opportunity to realise the following types of projects under the European Solidarity Corps programme:

- **Volunteering** – individual Volunteering is a solidarity activity of a duration of 2 to 12 months. This type of solidarity activity provides young people with the opportunity to contribute to the daily work of organisations in solidarity activities to the ultimate benefit of the communities within which the activities are carried out. Volunteering teams are solidarity activities that allow teams of participants coming from at least two different countries to volunteer together for a period between 2 weeks and 2 months.
- **Traineeships and Jobs** – provide young people with opportunities for work practice or employment (in line with the national regulatory framework), helping them to enhance their skills and experience thus facilitating their employability and transition into the labour market.
- **Solidarity Projects** – an in-country solidarity activity initiated, developed and implemented by young people themselves for a period from 2 to 12 months. It gives a group of a minimum of five young persons the chance to express solidarity by taking responsibility and committing themselves to bring positive change in their local community.

In 2019 agreements on the financing of 71 projects under the “European Solidarity Corps” were signed. A number of projects on social inclusion – 19. The number of young people with fewer opportunities who have participated in projects – 95 (41,9%), young people with special needs – 8 (3,5%).

Likewise, youth social inclusion issues are being dealt with under the programme “KNOW and DO” (see Chapter 3.6).

Youth work providers in the field of social inclusion for young people

One of the quality indicators for the youth work is the number of persons involved in the work and consequentially the relative indicator of the number of young people on average for one person engaged in work with the youth.

Within the framework of the project “KNOW and DO”, a youth worker:

1. profiles young people identifying their skills, interests, acquired education, as well as determines the directions for development;

2. in cooperation with each young person, develops a set of individual measures based on the profiling results consisting of four mandatory components (learning pillars elaborated by UNESCO): personal growth, inclusion in society, "value of work", lifelong learning competencies;
3. enters into an agreement with a young person from the target group regarding implementation of the individual support programme within the project;
4. implements the individual support programme for a young person within the time period until 9 months, ensuring the measures envisaged therein; the measures may include the following activities:
 - individual support of a mentor on a regular basis (not less than 20 hours per month), where the mentor provides support to the young person of the target group in the implementation of the individual support programme;
 - formal and informal learning;
 - professional counselling (psychologist, career counsellor, etc., except for medical staff);
 - participation in events (camps, seminars, sports activities, cultural events);
 - volunteering activities;
 - engagement in the activities, events and projects of non-governmental organisations and youth centres;
 - familiarisation with professions, including visits to enterprises to choose a professional field or a craft to be acquired with a craftsman;
 - engagement in local community activities;
 - specific measures for target group youth with disability (with the help of a sign language interpreter, assistant, specialised transport).

Training and support for youth workers engaged in social inclusion programmes

A mentor of a young person in the target group within the project "KNOW AND DO" is a person of major age who acquires a training programme prepared by the beneficiary and provides support to a young person in the target group in implementing the individual support programme.

In the Latvian-Swiss cooperation programme (06/2011 – 03/2017) following training courses have been implemented within the framework of the Project:

- training for visually impaired youth about non-formal learning;
- training for persons involved in youth work about social inclusion.

The representatives of renovated multifunctional youth initiative centres take care of accessibility for disabled persons, as well as provide different activities for reducing the social inequality among young people.

The Agency for International Programmes for Youth participates in a long-term Strategic Partnership on Inclusion working with organisations that deal with young people with health issues and diverse abilities as well as providing activities for organisations working with young people in NEET situation. A range of international and national training and partnership building activities are implemented each year. In 2019 an informative seminar focusing on special schools and NGOs was organised. In February 2019 the Agency for International Programmes for Youth hosted an international networking seminar for organisations working or willing to work with young people with health issues or disability "Obstacle-opportunity". In June 2019 an international Project Lab was organized for experts working with young people in NEET situation and 2 days of national training for experts who work with young people in NEET situation.

In October 2019 the Agency in cooperation with SALTO Inclusion & Diversity organised a training course "Mobility Taster for Inclusion Organisations" which focused on Youth Exchange and Volunteering projects.

In March 2019 Power – Project Factory for Empowerment of Young People in and after Imprisonment was organized. This was an international training course for staff members of closed institutions (detention services, prisons), probations services and NGOs to explore non-formal education and to develop a project involving young people in and after imprisonment.

In 2020 two national Project Labs were organized for organisations working with young people with fewer opportunities. A cycle of 4 webinars for youth workers was organized on how to work with young people with disabilities and health problems. 2 days online training course was organized for youth workers how to work with young people in NEET situation.

Financial support

In 2020 in the sub-section 2.2.2. "Support for youth activities aimed at inclusion of young people into society by reducing violence and promoting the mental health of young people" of the National Youth Policy programme 6 projects were supported, the total amount of funding – 14 136,05 EUR.

In 2019 agreements on the financing of 89 projects under the "Erasmus+: Youth in Action" programme were signed, total funding amount – 2 527642 EUR. In 2019 agreements on the financing of 71 projects under "European Solidarity Corps" were signed, total funding amount – 1 231134. The source of the funding is the EU budget.

The total funding of the project "KNOW and DO!" during 2014 – 2021 is 7 560 330 EUR, including the funding of the European Social Fund of 6 426 280 EUR and the funding from the national budget – 1 134 050 EUR.

Quality assurance

The main principles and tasks of the youth work are defined by the Youth Law. Specific targets, actions and indicators were defined in the Youth Policy Implementation Plan for 2016 – 2020.

Local governments develop Youth policy planning documents (strategies) and monitor the implementation of these documents.

The Ministry of Education and Science provides training to youth workers and youth work specialists. Each year the ministry sends a questionnaire to monitor the implementation of the youth work at a municipal level.

Since 2016, the Agency for International Programmes for Youth participates in a long-term project "EUROPE GOES LOCAL – Supporting Youth Work at the Municipal Level". The aim of the project is to raise the quality of local youth work through enhanced cooperation between various stakeholders that are active at the municipal level. In the framework of the project "A European Charter of Local Youth Work" was prepared in 2019. The Agency for International Programmes for Youth has translated the document into Latvian and distributed it to municipalities. The project online toolkit "Changemakers Kit" includes good practice, policy documents, and an interactive tool for self-assessment that helps to raise the quality of youth work at the municipal level.

To support youth workers at local governments supervisions for 11 youth workers/ youth work specialists were provided during the project in 2019. Supervisions will be continued in 2021.

4.8 Current debates and reforms

New policy planning documents are currently being developed.

5. PARTICIPATION

Youth Law establishes that one of the basic principles of the youth policy is the principle of participation: 1) the principle of participation – to provide young people with an opportunity to engage in discussions regarding decisions that affect the youth policy prior to taking such decisions.

Young people have the right to participate in the development and implementation of the youth policy:

- 1) engaging in acquisition and provision of non-formal education and engaging in volunteering;
- 2) taking part in the work of self-governance bodies of educational institutions;
- 3) developing and implementing projects, as well as other initiatives;
- 4) participating in the activities of youth organisations, as well as other associations and foundations;
- 5) engaging in the national and local government decision-making process that affects the youth policy;
- 6) engaging in other activities, which are oriented towards the fostering of youth participation in the development and implementation of the youth policy.

5.1 General context

Definitions and concepts

Section 2¹ Paragraph 4 of the Youth Law establishes that one of the basic principles of the youth policy is the principle of participation: 1) the principle of participation – to provide young people with an opportunity to engage in discussions regarding decisions that affect the youth policy prior to taking such decisions.

Section 7 of the Youth Law establishes youth participation in the development and implementation of the youth policy:

Young people have the right to participate in the development and implementation of the youth policy:

1. engaging in acquisition and provision of non-formal education and engaging in volunteering;
2. taking part in the work of self-governance bodies of educational institutions;
3. developing and implementing projects, as well as other initiatives;
4. participating in the activities of youth organisations, as well as other associations and foundations;
5. engaging in the national and local government decision-making process that affects the youth policy;
6. engaging in other activities, which are oriented towards the fostering of youth participation in the development and implementation of the youth policy.

Four strategic principles have been highlighted in the [Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030](#), which form the basis for the future of society in Latvia: creative activity, tolerance, cooperation and participation. *Creative activity – the ability to create new ideas, forms of action or also to link the existing ideas, concepts, methods and actions in a new way. *Tolerance provides for reduction of social exclusion and discrimination of all kinds, including inequality of income, age and gender discrimination in the labour market, ethnic prejudices and linguistic institutional obstacles. *Cooperation is horizontal

and vertical cooperation among institutions and inhabitants. *Participation – each person is responsible for their own actions.

[National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021-2027 \(NDP2027\)](#) sets “A United & Open, Safe and Secure Society” as a priority – increasing skills and opportunities for networking and civic engagement, especially through youth civic education, participation in non-governmental organizations, trade unions and voluntary work.

Institutions of representative democracy

Latvia is a parliamentary republic, where the head of the state is a president, but the highest executive power is exercised by a Prime Minister and the Cabinet of Ministers. The highest legislator is the Saeima that consists of 100 members of parliament elected by the people for 4 years in general, equal and direct elections by secret ballot based on proportional representation.

There are 43 local governments in Latvia, 7 of them are regional cities, but 36 – municipalities (novadi). Local government councils are re-elected once every 4 years.

The councils are elected by a secret and voluntary ballot. Voting is carried out using ballot papers.

5.2 Youth participation in representative democracy

Young people as voters

According to the [“Survey of Voter Attitudes”](#) of the Central Statistical Bureau of 2014, the activity of young people aged 18–24 in the elections of the Saeima is significantly lower than that of other groups of population – in total, 74% of the residents of Latvia participated in the 12th Saeima elections, while only 65% of young people aged 18–24 voted. Youth participation in the elections of the Saeima during the last two elections' period has not changed, but in comparison to the 10th Saeima elections, it has dropped by 8%. At the same time, it has to be emphasised that only 42% of young people participated in the elections of the 9th Saeima, consequently, current rate of 65% shall be considered positive in general.

It is interesting that young people in general are more satisfied with the work of their local governments rather than that of the government of Latvia, however, the activity of youth in the elections of local governments is significantly lower than in the Saeima elections. Only 37% of young people participated in the elections of local governments in 2013, but in 2005 – only 27%.

Young people as political representatives

Paragraph 9 of Chapter II of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia establishes that “any citizen of Latvia, who enjoys full rights of citizenship and who is more than twenty-one years of age on the first day of elections may be elected to the *Saeima*”. In the 12th Saeima (the last elections of the Saeima took place in autumn of 2014), at the moment of its elections, there was one person, whose age corresponds to the age group of youth in Latvia – 25 years. However, there is a tendency in Latvia that most of the members of the Saeima are persons older than 25.

In the elections of local governments, every citizen of Latvia who has reached the age of 18 may be elected.

Youth political representation is implemented as the Youth Parliament in the Saeima (see Chapter 5.3).

5.3 Youth representation bodies

Youth parliament

The Youth Parliament is a project of the Latvian Parliament that provides young people with an opportunity to express and defend their ideas, as well as to get acquainted with the daily work of members of the parliament. Young people submit their ideas for elections and collect votes to support them. In 2016, such project was implemented already for the sixth time in Latvia.

Any young person permanently residing in the Republic of Latvia, who has reached at least the age of 15 as at the moment of announcing of the project and would not be older than 20 at the end of the project, has the right to stand for election. Under-age young people shall additionally submit to the Parliament a statement confirming the participation of the young person in the project signed by a parent or a guardian.

In order to stand for election in the Youth Parliament, a young person shall register their profile on the website according to the procedures specified in the Latvian Parliament project regulations. Upon registration of the profile, the young person confirms that they have got acquainted with the regulations and agree to the requirements and terms specified therein.

Each candidate stands for election individually, registering the idea he or she wishes to represent in the Youth Parliament.

Structure

A hundred of young people of the Youth Parliament, whose ideas have received the largest number of votes, gather in the Saeima building for one day in order to understand through their own experience the specific requirements of the legislator's work and to address their peers regarding topical issues from the Parliament podium.

For the purpose of the election of the Youth Parliament, Latvia is divided into five election district – Riga, Vidzeme, Latgale, Kurzeme and Zemgale.

There are 100 Youth Parliament members in the Youth Parliament, including Saeima Praesidium Members, co-chairpersons of commissions and tellers who have been selected from 100 elected deputies on the basis of the number of votes received in the elections.

A candidate who has complied with all requirements and pledges the following receives the mandate of the Youth Parliament: "I, assuming the responsibilities of a member of Youth Parliament X, solemnly vow to fulfil them honestly and in good faith. I confirm that I have been elected to the Youth Parliament X to work under the mandate thereof and exercise my powers according to the regulations of the project "Youth Parliament".

Composition

The Praesidium of the Youth Parliament consists of the Youth Parliament members who have received the most votes.

The co-chairpersons of the commissions of the Youth Parliament are four members of the Youth Parliament who have received the second largest number of votes.

The tellers of the Youth Parliament are four members of the Youth Parliament who have received the third largest number of votes.

Members of the Youth Parliament work in four sectoral commissions. In order to determine the commission, in which a member of the Youth Parliament will work, a priority commission specified by the candidate and the number of votes received are taken into account.

Role and Responsibilities

The declarations adopted by the Youth Parliament are recommendatory in nature, and they are submitted to the relevant commissions of the Saeima, all factions of Saeima and

members of the parliament not belonging to any factions, so that all members of the parliament can get acquainted with the contents of declarations and consider the option of bringing forward the ideas expressed therein in the work of the commissions of the Saeima.

Funding

The project Youth Parliament is funded from the budget of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia.

Youth councils and/or youth advisory boards

Founded in 1992, the National Youth Council of Latvia is an association of youth organisations and organisations working with youth up to the age of 30 that voluntarily unites associations and foundations, the regulations or by-laws of which provide for youth work as one of the aims and in which at least two thirds of members or the direct target group is persons below 30 of age or organisers and/or implementers of youth work. The National Youth Council of Latvia is founded to reach the aims specified in the said regulations or by-laws, and it has no purpose of gaining profit.

The main area of activity of the NYCL is representation of the interests of young people at national and international level with the aim of improving the standard of living for young people in Latvia.

The task of the NYCL is to participate in inter-institutional cooperation for the purpose of elaborating the youth policy; to support its members in implementation of the youth policy; to strengthen the cooperation among the members and build their capacity; to ensure expertise and implement research in the field of youth policy.

Structure

Any youth organisation or organisation working with young people registered with the Register of Enterprises of the Republic of Latvia may become a member of the NYCL. Also, a separate structural unit of a registered organisation (department, group, club, etc.) may become an associate organisation of the NYCL. The organisations that join the NYCL support the aims of the NYCL and comply with its regulations in their activity.

The Board of the NYCL is its executive body, consisting of five members of the Board:

- the President of the NYCL;
- the Vice-President of the NYCL;
- three Members of the Board.

At least one of the persons of the executive body is of the age specified in the definition of a "young person" in the Youth Law (the age from 13 to 25) and according to the Associations and Foundations Law.

The proceedings of the Board shall be valid if more than half of the Members of the Board of the NYCL participate in it.

Composition

Currently, the NYCL unites 34 organisations, 29 of them have been granted the status of a member.

Any association or foundation registered pursuant to the procedures of regulatory enactments of the Republic of Latvia (LR) may become a member of the NYCL if it recognises the aims of the NYCL, undertakes to comply with the regulations of the NYCL and decisions taken by it, and complies with the following criteria:

1. the actions of the organisation are aimed at the improvement of the quality of life for young people;

2. two thirds of the members of the organisation or its direct target group are persons under 30 years of age;
3. the organisation is registered pursuant to the procedures of the regulatory enactments of the Republic of Latvia and has been operating for at least one year.

The status of an associate member of the NYCL has been established so that associations or foundations that do not meet the criteria could engage in the activities of the NYCL in order to become its members.

Role and Responsibilities

The main area of activity of the NYCL is representation of the interests of young people at national and international level with the aim of improving the standard of living for young people in Latvia.

The task of the NYCL is to participate in inter-institutional cooperation for the purpose of elaborating the youth policy; to support its members in implementation of the youth policy; to strengthen the cooperation among the members and build their capacity; to ensure expertise and implement research in the field of youth policy.

The mission of the NYCL is development of youth work in Latvia in order to improve the quality of life for young people and representation of the interests of youth organisations and other associations and foundations that work with persons

under 30 years of age at national and international level.

The aim of activities of the NYCL is to create an environment where children and youth organisations can achieve their goals:

The aim of activities of the NYCL is:

1. to participate in the development of the youth policy at national and international level;
2. to represent the interests of members and associate members at national and international level;
3. to foster the development of youth work.

The tasks of activity of the NYCL are:

1. to participate in intra-institutional cooperation for the purpose of elaborating the youth policy;
2. to support members and associate members in development and implementation of the youth policy;
3. to strengthen the cooperation among the members and associate members and build their capacity;
4. to ensure expertise and implement research in the field of youth policy.

Funding

The budget of the NYCL is composed of membership fees and income from economic activity, as well as funding attracted under calls for financial projects for the purpose of implementing specific initiatives.

Higher education student union(s)

Structure

The system of the student self-governance bodies and the representation of the interests of students is determined in the Law on Institutions of Higher Education. It establishes that the student self-governance is mandatory for every institution of higher education. The Student Union of Latvia (hereinafter referred to as the SUL) represents the interests of students in national authorities. The SUL is a collegial union of the student self-

governance bodies of accredited institutions of higher education that deals with higher education issues at national level. The union provides statements regarding draft regulatory enactments, ensures student representatives in the Council of Higher Education and other institutions, ensures representation of the interests of Latvian students in the European Students' Union and deals with other issues related to students and their representation.

Composition

There are 3 main structural units of the SUL that ensure the work of the union – the Congress, the Council and the Board. The Congress and the Council are the decision-making bodies of the SUL, and delegates to those structural units are delegated and elected by the self-governance bodies of the institutions of higher education. The Board of the SUL is the executive body thereof.

The Congress is the highest decision-making body of the union that usually gathers once a year. Delegates of the Congress gather in order to elect the President of the SUL for one year, to approve the budget of the organisation and set guidelines for activities for the following year, and it traditionally takes place in the first quarter of the year. Currently, there are more than 200 members there, and each institution of higher education is ensured at least 3, but not more than 17 places in the Congress.

The Council is the decision-making body of the union where the representatives delegated by the student self-governance bodies – Councillors – gather not less than once in two months. Each self-governance body of students has at least one, but not more than five delegates in the SUL Council. The Council decides on the position of the SUL in issues affecting the interests of students at national and international level, as well as supervises the work of the Board and the President of the SUL and elects the Board Members of the SUL. The duties of the Councillors include active participation in discussions regarding draft decisions in-between the Council meetings. There are 53 delegates from the self-governance bodies of students in the Council of the SUL.

The Board is the executive body of the union elected by the Council of the SUL that ensures the activities of the SUL. Each year, a presidential candidate may propose their model for the Board, however, traditionally it consists of Board Members who are in charge of the academic, international and social dimension, as well as a Board Member who deals with topical issues of the self-governance bodies of students. The Board gathers not less than once in two weeks. The work of the Board is coordinated by the President of the SUL elected by the Congress; the President represents the association in communication with its cooperation partners, mass media and other public bodies and non-governmental organisations. The Board elections take place at the next meeting of the Council after the Congress. The Board Members and the President are elected for a period of one year.

The delegates to the Council and Congress are nominated from among the self-governance bodies of students on the basis of democratic elections – any student may nominate a candidate to be elected to the SUL. Any student may apply for the Board Member position subject to being nominated by any self-governance body of students; the respective decision-making body of the SUL votes for the candidates (the Council – in Board elections, the Congress – in presidential elections).

Role and Responsibilities

The main tasks of the SUL are related to representation of students' interests at national and international level. The direction of activities of the organisation is determined by the SUL Guidelines – a mid-term planning document that specifies the main issues to be solved by the Board and the Council of the SUL within 5 years. The tasks included in the guidelines are based on high-quality development of higher education, availability of higher education to all social groups, development of the international dimension of higher education and strengthening of students' movement.

The SUL represents students in all public authorities in the field of higher education (for instance, the Council of Higher Education, the Academic Information Centre, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Education, Culture and Science Committee of the Saeima, Latvian Rectors' Council, etc.) supervising the development of draft decisions that affect students, as well as submitting new proposals for successful development of higher education in the event of necessity.

Funding

The funding of the SUL is ensured from the funding of the self-governance bodies of students of higher education institutions. The Law on Institutions of Higher Education establishes that self-governance bodies of students are funded from the budget of institutions of higher education in the amount of 1/200 from their total budget. Self-governance bodies of students as the members of the SUL have to pay membership fees from the said income. The membership fee is re-calculated on annual basis, and it is based on the number of students in the relevant institution of higher education.

School student union(s)

Structure

Self-governance body of school students – an institution established by school students nominated or elected from the class for the purpose of representing the school students' interests, implementing new ideas, deciding on issues related to school life, organising entertaining and educational events, helping teachers with organising the learning process. (Explanatory Dictionary of Pedagogical Terms, 2000.)

Self-governance body of school students – an institution, where elected representatives of school students are engaged in.

Ideally, self-governance of school students should be an institution based on principles of democracy and freedom of choice as it will not be able to function effectively as a mandatory establishment. Moreover, self-governance of school students is an integral part of education process with a long history that gives a valuable investment in personal development. When we understand it, there are no more questions about the mandatory principle of the institution.

The regulatory enactments in the area of the educational system in Latvia do not include direct indications as to activities of self-governance of school students, however, its necessity is reflected in the provisions of several laws:

The Education Law (in force as of 1 June 1999)

Section 30. Head of an educational institution

(3) It is a duty of the head of an educational institution to ensure the creation of a self-governance body for the educational institution.

Section 31. Self-governance body of an educational institution

(1) The self-governance body of an educational institution is formed as a collegial institution that operates on the basis of the by-law thereof.

(2) Representatives delegated by the founder of the educational institution, students, their parents and employees of the institution operate in the self-governance body of the institution.

(3) The self-governance body of a basic and secondary educational institution:

- 1) elaborates proposals for the development of the educational institution;
- 2) ensures cooperation of the educational institution with parents of students;
- 3) submits proposals to the head of the educational institution regarding work organisation of the institution, budget allocation and implementation of educational programmes.

Similar provisions have been included in: the General Education Law (in force as of 10 June 1999) and the Vocational Education Law (in force as of 10 June 1999).

The Youth Law mentions self-governance bodies of school students and youth council of a local government

Section 5. Local government competence in the field of youth policy

(6) If a local government establishes a youth council, representatives of self-governance bodies of students, youth initiative groups and youth organisations are included in the composition thereof. The basic tasks of the youth council of a local government are as follows: 1) to participate in research and analysis of the interests and needs of young people, develop proposals for improvement of the quality of life of young people in the territory of the local government; 2) to foster cooperation and exchange of experience of local youth; 3) to facilitate cooperation between youth and local government, other youth councils, institutions and organisations; 4) to participate in the arrangements organised by the local government; 5) to disseminate information regarding opportunities for young people; 6) to engage in youth work of the local government and activities, projects and programmes implemented thereunder.

Section 7. Participation of young people in the development and implementation of youth policy

1. Young people are entitled to participate in the development and implementation of youth policy;
2. participating in self-governance bodies of educational institutions.

Composition

Taking into account that the laws and regulations governing the educational system in Latvia do not contain direct indications regarding the activity of self-governance bodies of school students, the structure and composition thereof has not been strictly regulated, each school establishes the self-governance body of school students on the basis of by-laws issued by the school; they are different for each school, however, the unifying features of self-governance bodies of school students might be:

1. The President of the council of school students;
2. The Deputy President of the council of school students;
3. The Secretary of the council of school students;
4. Members of the council of school students who work in different work groups (for instance, in the field of education, in the field of cultural events, etc.).

The meetings of the council of school students is chaired by the President thereof or during the President's absence – by the Deputy President.

Role and Responsibilities

Alongside provisions of the law, the tasks for the operation of self-governance bodies of school students have been set in several planning documents:

- Guidelines for the Development of Education for 2014–2020 (<http://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=266406>, in Latvian)
- The Youth Policy Implementation Plan for 2016–2020 (<http://likumi.lv/ta/id/281546-par-jaunatnes-politikas-istenosanas-planu-2016-2020-gadam>, in Latvian)
- Youth policy national programme for current year (approved by an order of the Minister for Education and Science)

The tasks set for the development of activities of self-governance bodies of school students: to promote and expand youth initiatives, creative and civic activity, activating the work of self-governance bodies of school students; to foster participation of young

people in decision-making, youth organisations and youth initiative groups, as well as engagement in volunteering, physical activities, sports and culture.

A direct reference to the necessity of establishing self-governance bodies of school students and their operation can be found in documents that are related to evaluation of the work of educational institutions.

Funding

There is no unified national model for financing of self-governance bodies of school students; it is determined by the approved budget of each school, activities implemented by students and attraction of other funding to such self-governance bodies of school students and their activities.

Other Bodies

Advisory Committees on Youth Affairs are institutions established by local governments with a particular function to implement youth policy and organize youth work.

Mostly, the tasks of such committees are to analyse, evaluate and draft proposals for youth policy, as well as to work on the strategy and implementation thereof in the municipality.

The objective of the committees is to attain cooperation and coordination of interests among local government and public bodies, educational institutions, enterprises and youth non-governmental organizations for drawing up targeted long-term youth policy and its implementation in the municipality. Members of the committees are usually representatives of local government and youth organizations, sometimes also representatives of youth initiative groups.

According to the Youth Law a *youth organization* is an association that is registered in the register of associations and foundations and in the list of youth organizations, where organizations meeting several criteria defined in the law are registered: (1) one of the purposes of activity specified in the articles of association of the association is the promotion of youth initiatives and participation in decision-making and social life; (2) the association carries out youth work and tasks of the association defined in the articles of association correspond to at least three main tasks defined in Section 2.1 Paragraph three of the Youth Law; (3) at least two thirds of the members of the association are children and young people or there are several associations, where at least two thirds of the total number of members are children and young people; and (4) participation of young people is ensured in the board of the association, and the procedures for this participation are specified in the articles of association of the respective association. Up to now, 26 organizations that meet the said criteria have been registered officially in the register of youth organizations of Latvia.

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5.4 Young people's participation in policy-making

Formal Mechanisms of Consultation

Structured dialogue: meeting of young people and youth policy makers is one of the types of projects within Key Activity 3 of the Erasmus+ programme in the field of youth. The aim of the structured dialogue projects is to promote civic participation of young people and foster discussions on the topics and priorities of the structured dialogue, as well as on youth policy. The structured dialogue is discussions between young people and youth policy makers in order to achieve results that are useful for policy-making. Debates are structured according to the topics and they must include events where young people can discuss the chosen topics among themselves and with decision-makers, experts and politicians in youth field.

The following activities may be organised within the structured dialogue projects:

- national and international seminars in order to provide young people with an opportunity to discuss the topics of structured dialogue or EU Youth Strategy with policy makers;
- national and international seminars in order to prepare for the EU Youth Conference organised by the country holding the EU presidency;
- measures aimed at promoting discussions and information regarding youth policy topics included in the activities of the European Youth Week;
- youth consultations in order to identify the needs of young people regarding issues related to participation in society (online consultations, surveys, etc.);
- meetings, seminars, informative measures or debates among young people and decision-makers regarding democratic participation;
- measures that stimulate the work of democratic institutions and roles of decision-makers.

The project activities are implemented by young people using the methods and principles of non-formal education.

Actors

Based on the Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010–2018), as well as Youth Policy Guidelines for 2009–2018, a specific national work group was established for the implementation of the EU structured dialogue. The Head of the work group is the president of the National Youth Council of Latvia, the Deputy Head of the work group is Deputy Director in the Youth Field of the Political Initiatives and Development Department of the Ministry of Education and Science, and the members of the work group are members of:

1. The Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia,

2. youth affairs specialists of several local governments,
3. the Centre for Zemgale NGOs,
4. youth departments of the Latvian Red Cross,
5. Association "Latvijas Mazpulki",
6. the National Centre for Education,
7. the Association for International Youth Programmes,
8. Association "Jauno līderu koalīcija",
9. Association "Latvijas Pašvaldību savienības",
10. the Students Union of Latvia,
11. the Sports and Youth Board of Education, Culture and Sports Department of Riga City Council,
12. the Political Initiatives and Development Department of the Ministry of Education and Science.

The main tasks of the work group:

1. to co-ordinate the implementation of the European Union structured dialogue process at the national level;
2. to engage young people in the consultation process of the structured dialogue and clarify their views on the priorities laid down in the relevant Presidency Trio of the Council of the European Union using certain methodology set within the structured dialogue;
3. to prepare recommendations for the national report on the process and outcomes of the structured dialogue within the relevant Presidency Trio of the Council of the European Union.

Information on the extent of youth participation

Information from the [Youth Policy Implementation Plan for 2016–2020](#)

In general, the participation of young people in Latvia is not high – only about ¼ of young people take part in social, community or interest activities on a regular basis (at least 12 times a year or at least once a month). The participation in cultural and entertaining activities (concerts, festivals, cinema, theatre, sports competitions, etc.) is a little higher – in total, 35% of young people take part in such activities at least once a month. 24% of young people participate in interest activities on a regular basis (hobby groups, interest groups and clubs beyond school). Only 10% of young people are active at school activities (self-governance bodies of school students or students, school events) and only 6% – in public and social activities (participation in non-governmental organisations, charity events, volunteering, litter clean-up activities, etc.). The activity of youth in political activities is the lowest (participation in the activities of political parties, political discussions, etc.) – only 2% of young people are engaged in such activities on a regular basis.

Over the last five years, slight changes have been observed in youth participation – the youth participation in cultural and entertainment, as well as interest activities has increased (+7% and +3% respectively), while the changes in participation in school, public and political activities are insignificant.

It is important to assess not only the active but also the inactive target group of young people, and, in this respect, it can be observed that there is a large proportion of young people who have not participated in any activities over the last year. Majority (60%) of young people have never participated in political activities, about 1/3 of young people – in school, public and social activities, but 1/4 – in interest activities. The proportion of young people engaged in cultural and entertaining activities is less than 1/10. At the same

time, it has been observed that the share of inactive young people has decreased considerably over the last five years. The most significant fall (20%) has been in the proportion of young people who are not engaged in public and social activities. Likewise, the proportion of inactive youth in interest, school and political activities has decreased by at least 10%.

The research data shows that the opportunities for youth participation currently are much greater than their interest to participate. For instance, 76% of young people appreciate that they have an opportunity to join thematic online groups of peers, but only 44% express their interest to participate in them. Likewise, 53% of young people have an opportunity to join youth centres or organisations, but only 38% of them would like to do it. The situation is similar in case of social, public, political and non-governmental activities. Interest has not been higher than opportunities in any of the research categories.

When evaluating the proportion of young people who have both opportunities and interest in participation, it was observed that the proportion of persons interested in different kinds of activities is not larger than 1/4 of young people residing in Latvia. At the same time, the opportunities provided by the Internet increase the participation by up to 40%. It does not mean that the interest of youth is actual participation – the actual level of participation is significantly lower than the possible level (for instance, in general, 8% of young people appreciate that they have both opportunities and interest to participate in political activities, while only 2% of them do it on a regular basis)⁵.

In order to increase the youth participation, it is important to understand reasons for non-participation and possible ways of mitigating them. The research data shows that approximately half of young people name lack of time as the obstacle for participation, and this could be a difficult-to-overcome factor in promotion of the participation. At the same time, a significantly high proportion of young people – 40% – state that they are reluctant to participate in different activities as they do not have a personal interest to participate. This means that young people do not see personal benefits in participation. It is important that, irrespective of high availability of information in traditional and new media, one in four young people specify that they do not have sufficient information regarding participation options, which, in turn, points at the problems and challenges related to the process of informing young people.

Participation of young people in youth and other non-governmental organisations is a significant indicator of youth policy. One of the opportunities for active youth participation is youth organisations and associations working with young people. Information regarding youth organisations and associations working with young people and their lines of action is available to young people, for instance, on www.jaunatneslietas.lv where one can find the list of active youth organisations with information on 75⁷ youth organisations and associations that work with young people. In order to introduce classification of youth organisations and divide youth organisations by the type of their activities, Cabinet Regulations No. 188 "Regulations on Data to be Included in the List of Youth Organisations and Procedures for Including Associations in the List of Youth Organisations" of 15 March 2011 have been elaborated and approved according to Section 6 Paragraph two of the Youth Law. Information on youth organisations can be found on the website of the MoES⁸.

According to the research data, around 1/3 of young people are members of an organisation or have been engaged in the activities of an organisation in another status. Over the last five years, the proportion of young people engaged in organisations has not changed significantly. Only 11% of young people participate in youth organisations. It is also important that only approximately 1/3 of young people can name a youth organisation.

One of the frequently mentioned reasons of low youth interest and activity in social, public and political activities is low trust in public and political institutions. It is doubtful whether that is the most important factor for youth participation, however, the trust placed in

institutions by young people indicates a certain correlation. In general, trust of young people in such institutions as the Saeima, the President, the Prime Minister, public bodies, local authorities is very low – the proportion of young people who place trust in the said institutions does not exceed 1/3. More young people place their trust in the Armed Forces of Latvia, youth organisations, EU and educational system, however, even in the case of these institutions, the trust indicator does not exceed 50%. The trust indicators are significantly higher among 13–15 year old young people, while young people aged 20–25 are significantly more critical in their evaluations. It can be also observed that the trust evaluations are more positive among youth in regions, but more negative – among youth in Riga.

Outcomes

On the basis of the research regarding participation conducted in Latvia, four essential problems encountered by youth in the field of participation are highlighted:

1. Low motivation of young people (lack of interest in available information) to participate in social, political activities and activities of youth non-governmental organisations and leisure activities both at the national and EU level.
2. Insufficient capacity of local government youth centres and youth non-governmental organisations in youth work.
3. Insufficient provision of culture and leisure activities (especially in regions and outside large cities) for the target group of young people.
4. Insufficient participation of youth in volunteering.

Large-scale initiatives for dialogue or debate between public institutions and young people

“Coffee with Politicians” is a method, the main aim of which is to foster the dialogue between youth and decision-makers (deputies, local government staff, heads of institutions).

When organizing a dialogue between young people and decision-makers of different levels, it is important to create an environment and space where open discussion of interested parties about the issues that are important for all participants is possible. “Coffee with Politicians” is a method of participation created in Sweden and adapted to the situation in Latvia; the aim of the method is to provide an opportunity to both of the interested parties – youth and politicians – to meet each other, get acquainted and discuss issues that are topical for young people. For young people, it is often the first opportunity to address decision-makers directly and immediately, tell them about important matters and ask questions, while for politicians, in their turn, it is an opportunity to hear about matters topical for young people from the “primary source” – young people themselves.

“Coffee with Politicians” is a specifically organised and prepared afternoon event where young people and decision-makers meet one another at a coffee and tea table to discuss a certain topic, listen to one another’s standpoint and develop new ideas or look for solutions to existing problems together.

“Coffee with Politicians” is a platform for informal talks in casual atmosphere where people talk to one another like people of the same rank. The talks are moderated (there is a single moderator) and structured (various discussion methods are used, for instance *world cafe*, *open discussion*, etc.).

Both youth and representatives of local governments are prepared by identifying and preparing topical issues. The topics of the conversation of youth and politicians may be chosen at the beginning of the event when participants agree upon them together.

Before each discussion, it is important to clarify the topics, which the participants would like to talk about and which are topical for them. It can be a very specific question or project in the relevant local government, for which the opinion and ideas of youth are necessary, for instance, elaboration of the development plan of the local government or

development of a Youth Home. Most often, young people wish to talk about youth employment, possible ways of spending their leisure time, infrastructure of the local government, outflow of young people.

As a result, young people participating in “Coffee with Politicians” become acquainted with the work of local governments and decision-makers, gain an opportunity to tell about important issues and ask questions immediately. Politicians, in their turn, gain insight into the actual situation and the needs of young people.

The method “Coffee with Politicians” is an excellent way for both young people and politicians to overcome stereotypes, gain positive experience of communication and working together. After discussions, young people often say the following: “I did not expect that we can also do something to get things better!”, while decision-makers conclude – “We did not know that young people in our municipality are so active and willing to participate!”.

“Coffee with Politicians” is an efficient method of overcoming the gap of prejudice and lack of knowledge, creating space and room for cooperation.

The National Youth Council of Latvia in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science and other stakeholders ensure implementation of European Commission structural dialogue in Latvia organizing national consultations with young people about priorities in the field of youth put forward by the Presidency Trio of the European Council. The National Youth Council of Latvia chairs a national work group of the European Commission structural dialogue.

The structured dialogue measures in Latvia gain popularity and recognition – it is an opportunity for young people to express their opinion and participate in decision-making.

5.5 National strategy to increase youth participation

Existence of a national strategy to increase young people's political and civil society participation

There is no strategy established in Latvia that would determine political and civil participation of young people, but other documents have been issued that establish promotion of participation in the field of youth work in the following years, for instance, see Chapter 5.1. Definitions and Concepts):

- The Youth Law;
- The Youth Policy Implementation Plan for 2016–2020;
- Four strategic principles have been highlighted in the Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030, which form the basis for the future of society in Latvia: creative activity, tolerance, cooperation and participation;
- The National Development Plan for 2014–2020.

Scope and contents

Information already specified in the description under Chapter 5.1.

Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

Information already specified in the description under Chapter 5.1.

Monitoring and evaluation

A regular monitoring research is being carried out under the youth policy since 2008 regarding the quality of life of young people, their engagement in volunteering, activities of youth organisations, access to information relevant for young people and other aspects of the youth policy. It provides an opportunity to evaluate the short-, mid-, and long-term

success of the implemented policy, as the measurements are carried out on the basis of similar methodology and instruments.

In autumn of 2013, collected articles "Youth in Latvia. Activity, Mobility, Participation. 2008-2013" were published, where the most significant conclusions of youth research conducted over five years have been collected providing contextual analysis in relation to the European Union Youth Strategy aspects and comparing the portrayal of young people in Latvia and other Member States of the European Union. In 2014, evaluation and update of the methodology of the monitoring methodology was carried out identifying the most important insufficiencies that have been observed by that time and possibilities for eliminating them. The monitoring research conducted in 2015 was carried out according to the research methodology and set of survey instruments developed within the said evaluation thus implementing unified methodology for all youth monitoring research to come; the next one is planned in 2017. Such monitoring ensures the possibility of identifying changes that take place along the implementation of the youth policy. The results not only help to obtain the data for the analysis of the policy impact, but also allow making conclusions on what directions and aspects of activity should be prioritised in the next policy planning stage.

Revisions/Updates

As there is no strategy established in Latvia that would determine political and civil participation of young people youth policy makers established The Youth Policy Implementation Plan for 2016–2020, to improve not only youth participation, but youth work as such.

5.6 Supporting youth organisations

Legal/policy framework for the functioning and development of youth organisations

Section 2.¹ of the Youth Law. Section 2.1 Paragraph 2 of the Youth Law "Youth Policy and Youth Work" establishes that (2) national youth policy is implemented by public administration institutions and local government institutions pursuant to their competency, as well as youth organisations and other natural persons and legal entities according to the agreement.

Section 6 of the Youth Law establishes: "Youth organisation and the list of youth organisations"

(1) Youth organisation is an association registered in the Register of Associations and Foundations and included in the list of youth organisations. An association is entered into the list of youth organisations if it complies with the following criteria:

(1) one of the purposes of activity specified in the articles of association of the association is the promotion of youth initiatives and participation in decision-making and social life;

(2) the association carries out youth work and tasks of the association defined in the articles of association correspond to at least three main tasks defined in Section 2.¹ Paragraph three of the law;

(3) at least two thirds of the members of the association are children and young people or it unites several associations, where at least two thirds of the total number of members are children and young people;

(4) participation of young people is ensured in the board of the association, and the procedures for this participation are specified in the articles of association of the respective association.

(2) The procedures for entering youth organisations in the list of youth organisations and information to be included therein are established by the Cabinet of Ministers. The Ministry of Education and Science is the holder of the list of youth organisations.

Public financial support

Section 12 of the Youth Law establishes:

(2) Youth organisations have the right to receive the financing from the State budget, which is envisaged for projects, the objective of which is the promotion of youth initiatives and participation in decision-making and community life, as well as projects for youth work.

(4) Under the annual national programme of youth policy, youth organisations have the right to receive the financing from the State budget also for projects of support of activity of such organisations, if they comply with the following criteria:

1. the youth organisation performs youth work in compliance with annual priorities of the youth policy;
2. the duration of activities of the youth organisation in carrying out youth work is at least three years;
3. the youth organisation is an organisation of public benefit;
4. the youth organisation ensures co-financing for the implementation of the project that may be also as an investment in kind or volunteering.

(4¹) For the support of a youth organisation, according to Paragraph 4 of this Section, a separate open call for projects shall be organised if not less than 500 members have joined the youth organisation or youth organisations have united therein, the total number of members of which is not less than 500, and they perform youth work in at least three planning regions according to annual priorities of the youth policy.

(5) The Cabinet shall specify the procedures for granting of financing from the State budget, which is envisaged for promotion of youth initiatives and participation in decision-making and social life, as well as for youth work and support to youth organisations, as well as the procedures for administration and supervision of supported projects and admissible proportion of co-financing of the project submitter that may also be an investment in kind or volunteering.

Every year, the Youth Policy national programme determines financing, which youth organisations are entitled to apply for, implementing various projects in compliance with the priorities set in the programme.

Total available funding for 2016 that the Agency for International Programmes for Youth can assign for projects approved under "Erasmus+: Youth in Action" is EUR 2,706,407. The source of the funding is the EU budget.

Initiatives to increase the diversity of participants

Main objective of Society Integration Foundation (SIF) is to financially support and promote integration of society. SIF implements state budget support programmes, programs of European Union policies' instruments, as well as funding made available under foreign financial assistance programmes. There are funds organized, where NGOs can get supported for their own capacity building, including with a view to making them more inclusive and open to every single young person or group of young people, including minority young people and young people with disabilities.

5.7 “Learning to participate” through formal, non-formal and informal learning

Policy Framework

There is no strategy developed and approved in Latvia that establishes acquisition of participation in formal and non-formal education, but there are several laws (see before – the Education Law, the Youth Law, the Youth Policy Implementation Plan for 2016–2020) or programmes where the support measures for promotion of participation are established.

Supporting Non-Formal Learning Initiatives Focusing on Social and Civic Competences.

European youth information network Eurodesk provides information on mobility and participation opportunities in Europe to every young person, youth worker and person engaged in work with young people. Thousands of young people throughout Europe use Eurodesk each year to search for information regarding non-formal learning, study, work, travel opportunities in Europe, as well as partners for their projects or participants for international events.

The overarching aim of the Eurodesk network is to raise awareness among young people on mobility opportunities and to encourage them to become active citizens. The network operates in all EU and EFTA states (Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, Switzerland), as well as Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine.

The network has national (state-level) coordinators and multipliers (regional coordinators and information points) that disseminate information in different regions of Latvia organising informative seminars and training thus reaching more young people in towns and spreading information on mobility and participation opportunities in Europe. In Latvia, the Agency for International Programmes for Youth coordinates Eurodesk network.

Formal learning

The aims of citizenship education in Latvia are implemented most directly with the help of school subject “social sciences”. However, it is important to mention that such knowledge is integrated in several school subjects, for instance, economics, history, geography, politics.

Teachers who are members of eTwinning school network foster civic education by using the project method. It is done facilitating several learning tasks and skills like international cooperation among school students of different countries, empathy, planning and implementation of practical projects topical for society. School students improve their understanding of environment that promotes understanding of sustainable use of resources in several eTwinning projects.

Non-formal and informal learning

Youth non-formal education is based on interactive learning – doing something that the individual likes and is interested in. The objective of non-formal education that is specified in Section 8 Paragraph two of the Youth Law is “to provide knowledge, develop skills, abilities and attitudes, as well as to promote comprehensive development of young people and active youth participation in decision-making and social life”.

Implementers of youth non-formal education are youth organisations, associations and foundations, in which young people participate, and any young person may be the most important implementer of non-formal education.

For more than ten years, youth organisations have been establishing and developing various youth non-formal education programmes. Non-formal youth education is a daily task of any member of a youth organisation in Latvia – all members of youth organisations have participated in various non-formal education seminars, work groups and meetings, as well as conferences and events in Latvia and abroad.

Promoters of non-formal education are youth workers and people who carry out youth work, for instance youth affairs specialists in local governments, youth workers, heads of youth initiative centres.

There are various places where young people may engage in non-formal education activities, and it is important to mention that they are available for anyone, including young people facing social exclusion and risk, for instance disabled young people. However, the very basis of non-formal education is youth organisations and youth centres (youth initiative centres) where practical work with young people is carried out on a daily basis. There are 182 youth centres operating in Latvia, and the aim of the centres is to foster initiatives, participation in decision-making and social life of young people residing in the territory of a local government on the basis of non-formal education.

Informal learning – education that may take place consciously or unconsciously on a daily basis and at work, acquiring new knowledge, skills, competences, attitude and values that enrich and improve one's personality or supplementing the existing ones.

Using non-formal and informal learning methods, a young person has an opportunity to improve their skills in a specific field, thus comprehensive development of youth is fostered.

Quality assurance/quality guidelines for non-formal learning

Non-formal education in youth work is carried out without regulatory systems. Non-formal education includes:

- volunteer Work and
- participation in NGOs
- sporting activities
- talent and development of interests
- skills and competencies development (learning by doing)
- informal learning (environment, books, people, family, socializing).

Activities implemented and ensure that NGOs and local youth centres who are themselves responsible for the quality and the recognition of learning outcomes.

Non-formal education, which is being implemented through the Erasmus + Youthpass include a framework that ensures both the quality and recognition of learning outcomes.

Youthpass is a tool that can be used in formal and informal education within youth work. YOUTHPASS helps each participant in the learning process. It can be used:

- Giving learning objectives (to understand what I want to learn and how best to do);
- To assess the learning objectives (understand what I have learned and the way in which it was easier to learn);
- To promote the member's own awareness of the lessons competences (competences Description / certificate-making process);
- For the recognition of competences acquired the employer / school, etc. (certificate received).

Educators' support

More than 600 000 teachers are members of eTwinning network with 6100 of them from Latvia. eTwinning Live platform provides teachers with an opportunity to find cooperation partners for joint projects and for sharing good experience and teaching aids. eTwinning also provide participants with built in project management tool Twinspace that is suitable for formal education projects and provide participants with necessary network security.

eTwining organises professional training courses for teachers at national and international level on a regular basis; within the training, teachers can acquire the methodology of project approach, as well as get information about different ICT tools. Most part of the training directly or indirectly fosters development of citizenship education in the country.

5.8 Raising political awareness among young people

Information providers / counselling structures

Public participation in policy decision-making is important in thinking about public policy. However, for the time being of youth civic participation is not extensive and active.

Young people do not always get involved in activities that they believe are the most effective ones. For instance, although a large part engages in discussions about politics, only slightly more often than the tenth young person also sees it as an effective form of having impact on political decisions. Interestingly, although 36% of young people write political comments on the Internet, only 8% believe that is an effective form of political participation.

There are participation forms that young people consider to be effective, however, do not take part in them. For instance, 41% of young people believe that strikes are effective, but only 10% have been on strike. 26% of young people believe that participation in political parties is effective; however, only 7% take part in them.

When participating in political activities, young people are not guided by what they believe is the most effective one, but rather by what they see as more accessible and more interesting for themselves, for example discussions with friends or expressing themselves on the Internet.

Eurodesk multipliers

Eurodesk Latvia has around 20 multipliers - local youth information providers that are regional or local organisations working with young people, delivering information on the Erasmus +: European Solidarity Corps and the European Youth Portal to promote such EU values as democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

Formal participation forms (fixed law and organized by the state or local government authority):

- pupils 'or students' self-government
- youth council
- Advisory Council / Commission
- youth forum
- structured dialogue
- Participation in elections and referendums
- voluntary work
- Participation in political meetings
- Participation in non-governmental organizations (such as the youth organization)

Informal forms of participation (informal dialogue with decision-makers and the public):

- Informal meetings with politicians (such as "Coffee with politicians")
- photo, video, theater and other creative methods of expressing the point of view
- expression of opinions via social media

- public promotions and campaigns

Youth center is a place where young people with different interests and life experiences are available in user-friendly, open and supportive environment. The Centre's objective is to create an opportunity for young people to gather, plan to spend valuable time as possible, receive information according to their needs and interests.

Youth centers will also include:

- To promote young people's participation in youth organizations, youth initiative groups and volunteer work;
- Ensuring young people's access to information that meets their interests and needs;
- To promote intercultural dialogue in the youth audience;
- To provide individual or group counseling to young people for them to topical issues.
- To encourage young people participation in local and national events, problem solving.

Youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and democratic values

Youth parliament

Youth Parliament is a Latvian parliamentary project that enables young people to express and defend their ideas, as well as to get to know the daily life of the Members. Young people apply for their ideas elections and collect their votes in support of the website www.jauniesusaeima.lv.

Youth parliament elected 100 young people, on whose ideas received the largest number of votes, one day meet at the Saeima building, so that through their own experience to understand the specifics and the legislature from the parliament rostrum reach their peers about current issues in society.

Operation Youth Parliament is closer to the real work of the Saeima - the law drafting process of committees and parliamentary hearings.

School program "Get to know the Saeima"

School educational program "Learn parliament" is an opportunity for young people to understand the work of parliament and interactive way to find out how the law affects their lives and how they themselves can influence the work of the Saeima.

The program aims - to interest young people in the political processes in Latvian, encourage them to follow up and to get involved, as well as educate about the parliament and its bodies, legislation, the work of Members, democracy and public participation.

Promoting the intercultural dialogue among young people

To promote the third strand of the animation and the promotion of mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue between the region's cultures, religions and people in 2005 is established Anna Lindh Euro-Med Foundation for intercultural dialogue. It is named after the former Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh, who during his life made a significant contribution to the promotion of cooperation in the Mediterranean region the occurrence of equal partnership, mutual understanding and the promotion of peaceful coexistence and 2003, tragically died in the attacks.

Objectives:

- Stressing the central role of the Fund in the Union for the Mediterranean, for its long-term goal set out to give people the opportunity to work together to promote intercultural dialogue and to create a Euro-Med region into an area of cooperation, mobility and peace.

- Promoting intercultural dialogue Anna Lindh Foundation supports initiatives between Euro-Med countries in cultural, scientific and social fields, contribute to a better understanding among people, religions and beliefs, trying to eliminate stereotypes, xenophobia and racism and defend human rights and democracy.

Tasks:

- Support public organization Network (ALF member organizations network) operation.
- To act as an observer of dialogue and coexistence processes in the EuroMed region.
- Continuous dialogue closer together people and organizations from both shores of the Mediterranean in order to overcome the existing gap between them.

Promoting transparent and youth-tailored public communication

[Latvian Sustainable Development Strategy by 2030](#), strikes down strategical principles in various fields, including communication and participation.

Innovative Management and public participation

Create a public administration that is efficient, able not only to respond quickly to change, but also to anticipate and guide them in creating societal and services required in the future, and with the active participation of the majority of the Latvian society.

Civic Education and Social Integration

(433) In order to make the public participation process as possible a more constructive and effective, strengthen the Latvian population abilities and skills to participate in society, the implementation of civic education programs for both general education within and outside the - seminars, lectures and course form. In this way, civic education not only develop ability to participate in society, but also to promote the social integration of society.

5.9 E-participation

ICT Tools Used

Eurodesk provides contents for the European Youth Portal that offers comprehensive information to young people aged 13 to 30 on the following opportunities throughout Europe: volunteering, work, studies, participation, culture and creative activity, health, social inclusion, global thinking and travelling. It is a portal for every young person, based on the needs of young people, providing them with the necessary information that embraces different aspects of life. On-line counselling on youth policy issues that are important in Europe and at the national level takes place in the European Youth Portal.

The national work group for implementation of the EU structured dialogue in Latvia uses the European Youth Portal to counsel youth on-line.

EC owns the portal, therefore the data on use of the portal are sent by the Eurodesk headquarters in Brussels. The national Eurodesk coordinator has access to those data only when they are delivered to all states as statistics.

Policy Framework

The main aim of the Eurodesk and European Youth Portal is to inform young people regarding different options of the programmes, including the "Erasmus+" programme. This function is related to the Youth Policy Guidelines for 2015–2020, the Youth Policy Implementation Plan for 2015–2020 (Order No. 256 of the Cabinet of Ministers of 14 April 2016), EU youth strategy – to invest in youth, involve young people (the European Youth Portal has been particularly highlighted), the Youth Law (08.05.2008.), EU Strategy 2020 (basic initiative "Youth on the Move"), Regulation (EU) No. 1288/2013 of the Parliament and the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing "Erasmus+": the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport.

5.10 Current debates and reforms

According to the 2015's Youth Policy from monitoring in general only a small part of Latvian youth are actively participation - different kinds of activities regularly engage in no more than one quarter of young people. At the same time in the last five years of studies showing positive trends - inactive proportion of young people has fallen significantly. Although it is believed that information is now widely available to anyone big is the proportion of young people who appreciate that they do not have enough information about the opportunities to participate and engage in various activities. It makes judged hitherto used sources of information and to think about new ways of supplying information that are relevant to young people's communication habits. At the same time - the interest of young people to participate is significantly lower than the engagement. This shows that Latvian should be emphasized more than the possibility of extension, but a participation interest stimulation.

One of the explanations for low participation could be associated with low levels of social capital - almost 2/5 of Latvian youth expresses distrust of other people, which is a major obstacle to cooperation, common social and public activities, according to the 2015 's youth policy monitoring data. Extremely low it is also young people trust the state and local government institutions, which in turn is likely to undermine young people's interest and willingness to engage in political activities. Meanwhile, in 2015, carried out by the Youth Policy Monitoring showed that the EU is trusted by 47% of young people.

These are the problems and issues on the debate now. With the upcoming local government elections in June 2017, the participation of Young people in elections is now disused and debated about.

6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Latvian education system consists of pre-school education, basic education, secondary education and higher education. General education lasts 12 years in total, including mandatory 9-year basic education and 3-year secondary education. In addition, Latvia has mandatory pre-school education at the age of 5 and 6.

The degree of basic education includes general basic education (forms 1 to 9) and vocational basic education. The degree of secondary education includes general secondary education, vocational secondary education and vocational education. The degree of higher education includes both academic and professional study programmes.

According to the Education Law, non-formal education is defined as "educational activities that are not formal education-based on organized interests and demands". It thus provides the acquisition of skills and abilities that contribute to the integration of a person into society and the labor market.

Non-formal education develops life skills, such as ability to solve problems, unforeseen situations and conflicts, critically evaluate and make decisions, and others, and empowers everyone to individualize and prove themselves. The most common non-formal youth activities in the youth are various camps, seminars, conferences, as well as other events, the writing and implementation of projects, the exchange of local and international experience, volunteering, etc. The essence of all these measures is that they are voluntarily initiated, planned and implemented by young people themselves on topics that they find exciting and important for themselves.

6.1 General context

Main trends in young people's participation in education and training

In general, young people are positive about their education. An overwhelming majority (75%) believes that their educational experience is suitable for entry into the labor market. Only 17% of young people are critical of their education. The suitability of work for the education they received is clearly more positive. The market is valued by those who have completed higher education, while the more critical are those who have only completed secondary education.

Two thirds of young people are valued to acquire good education as a very important value. Among young people, good education is much more valuable than being able to hold a good job (59%), earning a lot of money (53%) or a prestigious occupation (50%). This leads to the conclusion that the value of education has generally not decreased and may have even increased. Of particular importance, young people appreciate the skills of working with computers (55%) and knowledge of the latest technologies (40%). At the same time, the attitude of young people towards foreign language learning should be negatively assessed: only about one in three young people (38%) consider a number of foreign languages to be of very high value.

Organisation of the education and training system

The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for education, science, sports, youth and state language policies in Latvia.

The Latvian education system consists of pre-school education, basic education, secondary education and higher education. General education in Latvia in total lasts 12 years consisting of compulsory 9-years basic education and 3-years secondary education. Additionally pre-school education at age of 5-6 is compulsory in Latvia.

Basic education stage comprises general basic education (grades 1-9) and vocational basic education. Secondary education stage comprises general secondary education, vocational secondary education and vocational education. Higher education comprises both academic and professional study programmes.

Source: <http://www.aic.lv/portal/izglitiba-latvija>

Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme is a European Union programme, which enables young people aged 13 to 30, youth employees and other persons involved in work with youths, in cooperation with foreign partners, to obtain new competences and experience creating and implementing projects themselves. Projects of the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme are mainly implemented using non-formal education methods. Erasmus+ programme is implemented from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2020 with the total budget of 14.7 billion euro, of which about 10% (1.4 billion euro) are available to the youth sector.

From 2011 to 2017, the Latvian and Swiss cooperation programme Support for the Development of Youth Initiatives in Peripheral or Disadvantaged Regions was implemented in Latvia, the supreme objective of which was to reduce social inequality and differences between developed and disadvantaged regions. A study on the impact of the activities implemented within the programme on local community was performed in 2016/2017. The study concluded that youths visiting a youth centre are more active both in the fulfilment of their initiatives and in cooperation with local governments, these youths get involved in councils and self-governance bodies of school students. Moreover, youth centres benefit not only youths, but also the local community. Therefore, the programme has promoted social inclusion of youths from disadvantaged regions.

eTwinning is a European school cooperation network, the purpose of which is to promote cooperation between educational institutions using information and communication

technologies (ICT). eTwinning is an Erasmus+ activity within the European Union programme in the field of education, training, youth and sport, which is implemented from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2020, using a project as a method in the training and rearing process and promoting further education of teachers in the field of ITC and languages.

Source: Agency for International Programs for Youth

According to the data of the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) the share of early school leavers aged 18–24 (having no secondary education or not continuing education) in Latvia is 10%. A distinct territorial and gender disproportion was observed in 2016: **15.5%** of ESL in rural areas (6.8% in cities); **13.7%** of man (6.2% – women).

The results of OECD PISA 2012 survey evidence that 22% of Latvian pupils have not attended school at least one school day over the last two weeks (questionnaire of pupils) (15% on average in OECD countries). Furthermore, the results of the study by the Latvian Facts Market and Opinion Research Agency in 2014 evidence that 20% of 15, 16 years old youths do not attend school “striking”, and the study of 2014 of the State Service of Education Quality “Non-attendance of pupils of general educational institutions and actions to prevent it” showed that 22% of pupils of forms 6, 9, 11 did not attend classes ≥ 1 class per week without any justification (pupil survey).

Several studies were conducted to study reasons and potential solutions of ESL:

- 1) Identification and analysis of new challenges and solutions that have influence on engagement and reintegration of early school-leavers (18-24 aged) in lifelong learning
- 2) Research of the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences of 2014 on reasons for and risks of early school leaving among youths aged 13 to 18
- 3) Research of SIA Aptauju Centrs and SIA Excolo Latvia of 2015 on the creation of alternative policies in solving the early school leaving issue.

The following conclusions were made in the study: main causes of ESL are:

- difficulties and lack of motivation in mastering disciplines;
- unfavourable social environment, health problems;
- adverse economic conditions;
- bad relationship with teachers and/or schoolmates;
- lack of parental involvement.

It was concluded in the studies that the most essential ESL risk factors are:

- regular absence from classes;
- average / low learning achievements;
- socioeconomic conditions.

The results of OECD PISA 2012 survey also evidence that the socioeconomic situation of pupils has effect on learning results.

Source: State Education Quality Service

Main concepts

The aim of the pre-school education programme is to promote the development of human and responsible individual personality, to encourage the formation of inquisitiveness towards individuals, environment and society and its diversity and unity. Pre-school education programmes are acquired by children from the age of 2 up to the age of 7. Preparation of five and six-year-old children for the acquisition of basic education is compulsory.

The basic education programme is acquired in grades 1-9. The acquisition of the basic education is compulsory. Partial acquisition of basic education is implemented in primary schools.

General secondary education programmes are implemented in secondary schools, gymnasiums, evening (shift) and extramural secondary schools. The study year consists of 35 weeks in general secondary education institutions. There are four profiles of the general secondary education programmes for grades 10-12 (General education, Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Technics, the Humanities and Social Sciences and professionally-oriented profile). Upon completion the mandatory demands of general secondary education students receive a certificate on general secondary education thus entitling the graduate to continue studies in any higher educational establishment or college.

The policy of inclusive education in Latvia helps every pupil, regardless of the school type or educational programme chosen, in preserving their ethnic identity and origin, in perfecting and developing their language and culture, and in treating the cultures, traditions and languages of other nationalities with respect.

The higher pedagogical education and corresponding professional qualification is mandatory for teachers working in any general secondary education institution.

Vocational education

Vocational education ensures practical and theoretical preparation for work in a particular profession, allows obtaining professional qualification and ensures further professional development.

Upon completion of basic education programme one can acquire vocational education in:

- vocational basic education programmes — students study 3 years and acquire a partial vocational secondary education only and professional qualification of the 2nd level. Upon completion of vocational basic education programme young people can start working as well as continue their studies to acquire the general secondary education;
- vocational secondary education programmes — students study 4 years and acquire vocational secondary education and professional qualification of the 3rd level. Upon completion of vocational secondary education programme young people can start working or continue their studies in higher educational institutions.

Several vocational institutions offer young people to acquire professional qualification after graduating the secondary school and qualification can be acquired in 1-year or 2-year long vocational education programmes.

The characteristic feature of vocational education is specialization in the particular professional area in order to acquire the corresponding profession. Therefore in vocational education institutions there are students from different counties of Latvia, and vocational education institutions offer their students possibility to live in hostels.

In order to ensure the conformity of vocational education to the needs of labour market the collaboration among vocational education institutions and the employers has been initiated and as a result, the possibilities for professional practice are guaranteed and common educational programmes are developed.

Higher education

There are three levels of higher education programmes in Latvia — Bachelor, Master and Doctor. Universities and colleges implement academic and professional higher education programmes as well as scientific activities, research and artistic creativeness. Colleges provide first level professional higher education programmes. Colleges can act as colleges established by higher education establishments or as independent educational establishments.

Academic higher education programmes are based upon fundamental and applied science. The aim of the academic education is to secure the acquisition of theoretical background and skills for scientific research gradually preparing for independent scientific research in the chosen scientific branch or sub-branch. The State Academic Higher Education Standard determines the education content and scope of academic higher education. Passing exams and the development of Bachelor's or Master's Paper are an integral part of the academic higher education. Upon successful completion of academic study programme students receive the degree of Bachelor or the Master's degree.

Professional higher education programmes are based upon fundamental and applied science that ensures opportunities to prepare for professional activities. The State first level professional higher education Standard and the State second level professional higher education Standard determine the content and scope of professional higher education. Passing state exams is an integral part of professional higher education programme. Upon completion of second level professional higher education programmes students receive the degree of professional Bachelor or the professional Master's degree and the corresponding professional qualification.

Bachelor's degree is awarded to the group of related branches of science. In Latvia students can receive the following Bachelor's degree: Bachelor of Science in Education, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor's degree in Social Sciences, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Engineering degree, Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, Bachelor's degree in Health Sciences, Bachelor's degree in Environmental Sciences.

Master's degree or its equivalent for completing higher education programme is required for admission to doctoral studies. Doctoral studies include advance studies of the subject in the relevant study programme and a scientific research and creative skills development. Doctoral thesis is an integral part of the Doctoral study programme to receive the Doctor's degree. Promotion Council awards Doctor's Degree after public defence of doctoral thesis. Doctor's degree certifies scientific qualification.

6.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for education, science, sports, youth and state language policies in Latvia.

Responsibilities:

- pre-school, basic and secondary education, including education in minority languages
- vocational, continuing education and life-learning
- informal and values education
- juvenile correctional education
- education for children and young people with special needs
- the field of higher education and research
- the national sports policy
- coordinating development and implementation of youth policy
- international cooperation in youth field
- promoting access of young people to their rights
- strengthening the status of the Latvian language
- promoting engagement in foreign language learning among the public

In order to pave the path to future success, Latvia has developed its Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027, which identifies key policy initiatives that are critical for skills development. The Guidelines outline how Latvia will equip its citizens with skills to flourish in work and in society. Evidence on the strengths and weaknesses of Latvia's education and skills systems has informed the prioritisation of relevant policies in the Guidelines. A wide range of Latvian actors across ministries, levels of government, education and training providers, employers, trade unions, the non-profit sector and learners have been involved in the development of the Guidelines, demonstrating their commitment to work together to implement these initiatives.

Cross-sectorial cooperation

The UNESCO Advisory Council "Education for All" has been operating since 2005 and aims to promote cooperation between ministries and other administrations, municipalities, the private sector, non-governmental and international organisations and concerted action to ensure inclusive, equal and high-quality education for all and promote lifelong learning. Three strands of action have been put forward to the Council:

- promoting access to lifelong learning at all levels of education, including by supporting the development of vocational and technical education, the recognition of skills acquired in non-formal education and informal learning, and the targeted use of information and communication technologies in education;
- promoting the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes to promote sustainable development through education, sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and respect for cultural diversity;
- promoting an inclusive education and development-friendly learning environment.

6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET)

National strategy

A growth model for Latvia: People First (approved in Saeima on 26 October 2005) is a long-term conceptual document, which sets a human-centred growth model for Latvia emphasising the knowledge, wisdom and abilities and making use of them as a growth resource. The priority long-term task is improvements in the education system, including ensuring that everyone is guaranteed the opportunity of getting secondary education.

The Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 (approved in Saeima on 10 June 2010) as a hierarchically highest national level long-term development planning document includes a consideration about the need to change the paradigm in education and stresses the need to reduce early school leaving, setting a target of less than 10% "share of early school leavers" for 2030.

The National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021–2027 (approved in Saeima on 2 July 2020) is hierarchically the highest national-level medium-term development planning document. It sets medium-term priorities also in the field of education, including the target of 5% share of early education and training leavers aged 18 – 24 years among the population in 2027.

The Education Development Guidelines for 2021-2027 (approved in Saeima on 22 June 2021) is hierarchically the highest education sector development planning document. In order to implement in practice the principles of inclusive education, it is planned to provide support measures for disadvantaged children and young people and preventive and intervention measures to reduce the risk of school leaving. It is planned to improve access to interest education and activities offered outside formal education, such as children and young people with special needs, as well as social risk groups.

Laws and regulations

On the basis of Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 871 of 04.08.2009 "Procedures for Registration of Children who have Reached the School Age" (hereinafter – CM Regulations No. 871) all 5 to 18 years old children are monitored, gathering information on those 5 to 18 years olds, who are in the Population Register, but are not registered in any educational institution.

Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No 89 "Procedure stipulating how an educational institution should inform parents, municipal or public institutions if a pupil is absent from the educational institution without a justified reason" of 01.02.2011 (hereinafter CM Regulations No.89) envisages monitoring of pupils for absence without a justified reason (pre-school programmes – longer than 3 school days, general and vocational education programmes – more than 20 classes) in pre-school general education (including, if the programme is mastered as distance learning) and vocational education programmes, stating reasons of absence, number of classes (days) not attended, as well as activities taken by the educational institution and the local government in the State Education Information System.

Formal education: main policy measures on ELET

From 16 March 2017 to 31 December 2022 Latvia will implement project No. 8.3.4.0/16/I/001 of the European Social Fund "Tackling early school leaving". The purpose of the project is to reduce early school leaving among children and youths by implementing preventive and intervention measures in 614 educational institutions for pupils of forms 5 to 12 of general education institutions, as well as for pupils of forms 1 to 4 of vocational education institutions and general education institutions, which implement vocational education programmes. The State Education Quality Service is the project beneficiary and implementer and the total eligible funding is 39,812,376 euro, including funding of the European Social Fund of 33,840,519 euro and state budget funding of 5,971,857 euro. During the project, individual financial and advisory support will be provided to pupils subject to the risk of early school leaving, systemic support for identification and registration of the risk group, creation of a supportive learning environment, professional improvement of teachers and youth initiative projects.

Addressing ELET through non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work

At the moment new cooperation model is being introduced, including local youth organizations.

Cross-sector coordination and monitoring of ELET interventions

When conducting monitoring of children of mandatory school age in educational institutions and monitoring of long unjustified absences and work with children, who are not registered in educational institutions or do not attend classes without a justified reason for long periods of time, interinstitutional cooperation is implemented. Cooperation is established between educational institutions, local government education administrations, social services, orphan's courts, municipal police, as well as state institutions – the State Inspectorate for Protection of Children's Rights, the State Police, the State Education Quality Service.

6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning

Non-formal education is an area that is equivalent but not equal to formal or interest education and is implemented in the context of specific activities addressed to specific target groups - in projects or programs.

Non-formal learning can be defined as a planned social and personal education program for young people with a view to raising their level of skills and competences beyond, as well as formal education programs. The development of a personality and the acquisition of personal experience are realized through action, participation in social processes and practical experience. Participation in these non-formal education programs is voluntary, programs run by trainers. The acquired knowledge can increase the competitiveness of young people in the labor market.

Non-formal education is carried out by various institutions, natural and legal persons, universities, NGOs, where one of the target audiences is young people.

The Education Development Guidelines for 2014 - 2020 set a high quality and inclusive education for personal development, human well-being and sustainable state development as a top priority for education development policy.

Tasks defined in the Youth Policy Implementation Plan 2016-2020:

- To develop a common model for the development and recognition of non-formal youth education at the national level, also promoting the use of non-formal education methods;
- Development of a unified definition of the program of non-formal education in the youth field and its incorporation into the regulatory enactments

Recommendation of the European Union on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning for the Member States, which stipulates that a measure for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning must be introduced no later than 2018.

The recognition of non-formal learning is just one issue from the tasks set out in the implementation plan. Nonetheless, recognition of non-formal learning is very important both for the development of non-formal education offerings and for those who engage in non-formal education and continue to increase their previous education.

Young people who are active in public organizations and have acquired organizational, presentation, collaborative, project development skills, speaking skills and experience in social and civic processes, and the acquired knowledge, skills and abilities will not be recognized. Thus, without gaining an advantage at the time of taking up a job (because the employer requires proof of experience) or at a university where the benefit is for socially active or creative students.

Failure to solve the problem of informal recognition is a risk that the quality of non-formal education may decrease over time, which may result in a decrease in the overall level of development of the company's competences

At the same time, unrecognized non-formal education causes dissatisfaction among young people, as well as a lack of trust between policy-makers and young people who want to be valued.

Tasks of the Youth Advisory Council Working Group on Uniform Modeling of Youth Non-formal Education (2015):

1. To develop a unified definition of youth non-formal education;
2. To develop a uniform definition of the youth non-formal education program;
3. To evaluate the possibilities of evaluating non-formal education;
4. To develop written recommendations for the implementation of non-formal education programs for young people in the Ministry of Education and Science in Latvia.

Work done so far:

1. A common definition of youth non-formal education was developed

A definition for non-formal education in work with young people has been established, which will complement the definition of existing non-formal education in the Youth Law.

"Non-formal education in youth work is a process based on, based on, and guided by a young person, which promotes the development of competences and which can be implemented by any natural or legal person."

Information and guidance

As in the Latvia at the moment does not have a formal skills recognition system, then usually are used two EU proposed tool's - Youthpass.

Short description and figures about situation in Latvia see below.

Youthpass

On 6 July, 2007, the commission of the program "Youth in Action" has approved Youthpass (Youth Passport) implementation. Youthpass is an initiative of SALTO Resource Centre, which main task is to develop a Europe-wide recognition of a document that facilitates the awareness and recognition of the skills and knowledge acquired within the EU's non-formal education program "Youth in Action".

Youthpass certificates are currently available for all the participants of the submitted projects of youth exchange and youth initiatives, as well as the participants of European Volunteering projects and training courses, under a condition that the project has been launched by 2007. The project implementers are obliged to inform the involved participants of the project about their rights to obtain Youthpass, as well as provide Youthpass issuance for each participant requesting it.

Youthpass projects may help young people to analyze their learning process and results. The National Agency for Youth implemented its various training provides information on Youthpass (the use of the learning process in the organization of projects, eight core competencies, Youthpass significance, etc.). Latvian young people's interest in obtaining this certification is increasing each year .

Latvian "Erasmus +: Youth in Action" (2014 to 2020) within the framework of so far issued 2,849 certificates Youthpass. The program " Youth in Action" (2007 to 2013) issued under the 8700 certificates. Information provided by National Agency for Youth.

Quality assurance

Professional competence obtained outside the formal education system is evaluated by accredited educational institutions or accredited examination centres, to which the State Education Quality Service has delegated this task. In order to obtain a certificate of professional qualification, a professional qualification examination consisting of a theoretical and practical parts should be passed at a certain time. Representatives of employers of the respective occupation are included in the examination commission, and it evaluates the applicant's compliance with the requirements set in the respective occupation standard and issues a document certifying professional qualification of the first, second or third level.

6.5 Cross-border learning mobility

Policy framework

Erasmus + learning mobility is an opportunity for students to study and experience abroad in education and training by going to an Erasmus + partner country in order to deepen their professionalism and bring back new academic, professional and life experiences to Latvia.

Between 2013 and 2020, all Erasmus + program countries will spend € 14.7 billion, and about 2/3 of this funding will be allocated to learning mobility, in which more than 4 million people from all over Europe will be able to participate.

In accordance with the European Commission's Decentralized Financing Administration Plan for the Erasmus + program, Erasmus + Program KA1 Project Grants may be awarded by 31 December at the latest for each tender.

Main cross-border mobility programmes for students in formal education

The Erasmus + program supports:

- 1) Studies at one of the partner higher education institutions;
- 2) Practice in foreign companies or other appropriate workplaces;
- 3) to implement a combined study and internship period abroad.

Study mobility:

Provides the opportunity for students to spend a certain period of study while studying in a higher education institution in another Member State;

Provides an opportunity for students to gain valuable academic, linguistic and cultural experience while studying in other European countries; promotes cooperation between higher education institutions and enhances the study environment of the host university; promotes the development of well-qualified and internationally-experienced young people - emerging professionals.

Practice Mobility:

Provides opportunities for students and recent graduates to gain practical experience in an organization or organization in another European country.

Helps students adapt to the demands of the EU labor market.

Provides opportunities for students and recent graduates to develop specific skills, including language skills, and improve understanding of economic and social culture; foster cooperation between higher education institutions and enterprises;

Promotes the development of well qualified, open and internationally experienced young people - emerging professionals.

A participant in learning mobility receives funding from the sending institution for the implementation of activities. Individuals can not apply for funding to the National Agency individually.

The role of the National Agency in Latvia is fulfilled by the State Education Development Agency.

Promoting mobility in the context of non-formal learning, and of youth work

Over 460,000 teachers, of which 5000 are Latvian teachers, work in the eTwinning network. eTwinning Live platform provides teachers with an opportunity to find international cooperation partners for joint projects and for sharing good experience and teaching aids. Over 300 international cooperation projects are started during a year. In 2017, the Move2Learn activity was started in the eTwinning network of teachers, within the framework of which authors of best projects are provided with the possibility to go to an exchange trip to project partners. In order to participate in the programme, youths together with a teacher should create an international formal education eTwinning project in school year 2016/2017. The project may be developed in cooperation with any of 36 eTwinning partner countries. This can be done independently of the subject being taught, however, only those young people, who have reached the age 16 before 1 August 2017, may participate in the mobility trip. Informative work is ongoing in a centralised way from the eTwinning Central Support Services and nationally. The information was sent to over 5000 teachers in Latvia using monthly leaflets. The National Support Services have drafted marketing materials, which are handed out during organised trainings and conferences.

As founders of the project are teachers, the information is distributed to this target group. In order to ensure the quality of eTwinning, projects are evaluated based on international evaluation criteria. The evaluation of projects lays special emphasis on social inclusion. Projects are evaluated in a combined way – by specialists of the eTwinning national and Central Support Services.

The following mobility activities are funded within the framework of key action 1 “Mobility of persons for learning purposes” of Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme:

1. Exchange of youths – (duration of mobility 5-21 days);
2. Mobility of youth employees – (duration of mobility 2 days – 2 months);
3. European Volunteer work - (mobility duration 2 weeks – 1 year).

Key action 1 “Mobility of persons for learning purposes” of Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme covers transportation costs, costs related to the implementation of the mobility activity (costs of accommodation, catering, materials, etc.), costs of language training, costs related to the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities, pocket money, and other costs. The information about the programme and its latest news is published on the website www.jaunatne.gov.lv, www.erasmusplus.lv, social media of the agency, different methodical materials are developed, as well as leaflets are sent out.

Quality assurance

No such systems

6.6 Social inclusion through education and training

Educational support

One of goals of Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme is to improve the most important skills and abilities of young people, including youth having less opportunities, as well as to promote involvement of young people in the democratic life in Europe and labour market, active youth citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and solidarity, especially increasing opportunities for mobility of young people with the purpose to learn, persons who are actively involved in the work with youth or youth organisations, and youth leaders, and strengthening links between the youth field and the labour market.

Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme promotes equality and inclusion, fostering access of participants from less favourable environment who have less opportunities in comparison to their peers when the disadvantageous situation limits or denies an opportunity to participate in transnational events due to the following reasons:

- disability (i.e., participants with special needs) – people with mental (intellectual, cognitive, learning abilities), physical, sensory or other disability;
- learning difficulties – young people with learning difficulties, early school leavers, adults with low qualifications, young people with low success at school;
- economic obstacles – people with low standard of living, low income, dependency on the social welfare system or homeless people, long-term unemployed young people or young people who live in poverty, people with debts or other financial problems;
- cultural differences – immigrants or refugees, or descendants of immigrants or refugees, people belonging to national or ethnic minorities, people with difficulties to adapt to language or integrate in culture;
- health problems – people with chronic health problems, serious diseases or psychiatric conditions;
- social obstacles – people who are discriminated on the basis of gender, age, ethnic origin, religious conviction, sexual orientation, disability and other reasons, people with limited social skills or anti-social or risky behaviour, people who are in an insecure

situation, (former) offenders, (former) drug or alcohol abusers, young and/or single parents, orphans;

- geographic obstacles – people from distant or rural areas, people living on small islands or in distant regions, people from problematic urban areas, people from regions with limited service infrastructure (limited public transport, insufficient services).

Youth employee mobility projects, which promote the development of competences of youth employees for work with young people from target groups of social inclusion are supported within the scope of the programme.

Social cohesion and equal opportunities

Lifelong learning is a lifelong learning process based on changing needs for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, experience to raise or change their qualifications in line with labor market requirements, their own interests and needs. Lifelong learning combines non-formal learning with formal education, develops innate abilities along with new competences.

Lifelong learning goals are:

to ensure access to lifelong learning for the population regardless of their age, gender, previous education, place of residence, income level, ethnicity, functional disorders. to provide adults with a quality education offer that provides sustainable competence for work, civic participation, personality development and promoting the development of a competitive knowledge economy and a democratic society based on high skills in Latvia. to create a coherent system of normative acts and efficient management of resources (including financial), taking into account the principles of shared responsibility and interaction of sectoral policies, the development of a unified lifelong learning system. The provision of competences takes place throughout the lifecycle of informal (everyday learning) (eg, mother tongue, learning to learn), and is ensured when a person engages in initial formal education (pre-school, elementary school, high school, university) and non-formal education (additional training in programs offers various state, municipal and private education institutions, eg language courses).

6.7 Skills for innovation

Innovation in formal education

1. Education environment: To increase the quality of education environment by improving the content and developing proper infrastructure

The quality of education environment at all education levels is determined by: (1) education content promoting the development and strengthening of knowledge, competences and skills of individuals, (2) professional and competent teaching staff which transfers this education content to students, (3) modern education environment and education process which promotes perception and mastering of content, (4) integration of the principle of inclusive education, which envisages equal opportunities regardless of needs and abilities, financial, social status, race, nationality, sex, religion and political beliefs, health conditions, residence and occupation of students in an available, respected and supportive environment.

2. Skills of individuals: to promote value education based development of professional and social skills of an individual for life and competitiveness in the work environment

Professional and social skills are improved in the most targeted way, when an individual chooses a proper path of professional development at the same time envisaging support mechanisms for school leavers and individuals having not completed their education, thus increasing the general level of education of the Latvian society and fostering employment,

with activities of formal education fostering civil responsibility and public activity of students, as well as strengthening the principle of lifelong learning.

3. Effective management: to improve the efficiency of resource management developing institutional excellence of educational institutions

The improvement of resource management efficiency at national, regional and local level developing institutional excellence includes introduction of supervision or monitoring of education quality, which enables all the interested parties to trace, evaluate and impact with consequences processes and results related to education, improvement of financing models, including consolidation of resources, ensuring of the availability of education and fostering of international competitiveness of education.

Fostering innovation through non-formal and informal learning and youth work

Informal forms of participation and learning implemented in local youth organizations and youth centers:

- informal meetings with politicians (for example, "coffee with politicians")
- use of photo, video, theater and other creative and innovative methods in expressing opinion
- expressing opinions using social media
- public campaigns and campaigns

6.8 Media literacy and safe use of new media

National strategy

On 8 November 2016, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the Mass Media Policy Guidelines of Latvia 2016-2020 and their implementation plan developed by the Ministry of Culture. These are the first mass media policy planning documents in Latvia.

Mass media policy guidelines include five action lines for strengthening of the Latvian mass media environment. One of those is devoted to the promotion of media literacy.

1. Diversity of the media environment;
2. Media quality and responsibility;
3. Education of professionals of the media sector;
4. Media literacy;
5. Securitability of the media environment.

The Ministry of Culture implements measures for the development of media literacy in cooperation with other institutions, non-governmental organisations and representatives of the sector. However, it should also be noted that the inclusion of the matter of critical thinking and media literacy in the content of formal education is within the competence of the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Centre for Education.

Young people and children are the focus for several activities of action line 4 of the guide implementation plan.

Measure 4.1.1 envisages to conduct a media literacy research in the society, including among young people from the age of 15. The research was implemented in 2017.^[3] Research results show that media literacy should be especially strengthened for youngsters in age group 15-24. Critical thinking should be developed towards evaluating media content. 1/5 part of all respondents has admitted that they share posts in social media without fact-checking, while 40% in age group 15-24 pointed out that they do so. 54% of youngsters believe that the information published in social media is trustful. In October 2018, State Chancellery in cooperation with Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Interior launched a communication campaign "Media are not comedia" against

(³) Summary of results in English is available here: https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/mediju_politika/petijumi/eng/Main%20conclusions_research_Media%20Literacy%20of%20the%20Inhabitants%20of%20Latvia_2017_ENG.pdf

dissemination of fake news, addressing mainly youngsters and seniors which accordingly to the research results are less critical towards information published in media, including social media.

In the end of 2017 Ministry of Culture carried out research focusing on media literacy of children and adolescents (9-16 years old).^[4] Results show the high usage of the Internet – it is used for no less than 3 hours per day by 57 % of the surveyed: a third (34 %) of the children aged 9-12 and more than two thirds (76 %) of the adolescents aged 13-16.

However, the majority of the activities done on the internet are for entertainment purposes or purposeless. Only a few read books on the internet or look for information for school or hobbies. 40 % of the respondents have indicated that they surf the internet and spend time online aimlessly every day, 32 % play different games on the internet and only 23 % look for information that is necessary for school.

The most popular internet platform of those that are used daily is YouTube: almost all of the respondents tend to use it and 78 % of them do it every day. The next most popular internet platform is E-klase, 69 % of the respondents use it every day. These platforms are followed by Google and WhatsApp that are used by 63 % of the respondents daily.

A lot of time is spent on YouTube. Almost a fifth (19 %) of the surveyed respondents have stated that they use YouTube for more than 5 hours per day. Moreover, another 38 % have indicated that they use YouTube for more than 3 hours per day.

Measure 4.2.3 envisages to organise media literacy trainings for local government specialists, and measure 4.2.4 plans to inform young people working in the field on media literacy. The information to specials of youth affairs in local governments has been given in the presentations of Ministry of Culture representatives during seminars organized by Ministry of Education and Science.

Measure 4.4.1 envisages to develop media literacy of pre-school age children and pupils of first forms, creating an audiovisual training tool to provide children of pre-school age and pupils of forms 1 to 2 or the elementary school with basic media literacy knowledge in the way appropriate for their age. In September 2017, the social campaign for media literacy and digital safety "Superheroes in internet!" was launched, which was organized by Ministry of Culture, State Police, Net-Safe Latvia, companies "Rimi", "Balta" and "Deepwhite". In accordance to order of Ministry of Culture, the methodological recommendations for pre-school and elementary school was elaborated to help teachers in practical usage of animated short films and other campaign materials in learning process. Information about the campaign, methodological recommendations and invitation to use them was sent by e-mail to ~1450 pre-schools and schools with elementary school programmes in Latvia, as well to 110 Latvian diaspora weekend schools abroad. The campaign had a wide publicity in media, and 4 regional seminars for teachers will take place till the end of 2018.

Measure 4.4.2 plans to organise activities popularising and educating about media literacy for pupils and young people, using the method of debates. Until now, two national debate tournaments (competitions) were organized. Pupils were preparing and debating on the issues whether information available in social media raises knowledge about political processes, and whether inhabitants of Latvia demand high-quality media content. Pupils from 20 schools from Latvia will meet on November 2018, when the regional national rounds of the tournament will take place this year.

In the end of 2017, Ministry of Culture created posters (A1 format) for media literacy development. 1800 copies of poster were disseminated to libraries, youth centres, schools, institutions of local governments.

(4) Summary of results in English is available here:

https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/mediju_politika/petijumi/eng/Summary_Research%20on%20the%20Media%20Literacy%20of%20Children%20and%20Adolescents%20Aged%209-16%20in%20Latvia_ENG.pdf

The implementation plan of media policy guidelines also envisages several measures focusing on education of information mediators (mentors) – media literacy training for teachers and librarians. According to survey results, librarians are one of those mentors, who provide children and young people with information on the internet and media. In cooperation with National Library of Latvia and UNESCO Chair of Media and information literacy in University of Latvia, 274 librarians and 191 teachers were educated in media literacy issues during year 2017. Training course is being continued in 2018.

In an intermediate way, youngsters are addressed by teaching tools and methodological materials elaborated for teachers. Ministry of Culture in 2017 has supported creation of 3 teaching materials which are available online for everyone who is interested in self-development in media literacy field, for parents and teachers. In 2018, representatives of Ministry of Culture have given lectures on media literacy issues for Officers of Youth affairs in State Police (introducing with research results and risks revealed in youngsters' answers on research questions about their experience and practice in digital environment), as well for students of various universities.

In cooperation with NGO "Latvian Debate Association" (Quo tu domā?) Ministry of Culture organized 3 public debates on media literacy issues (for example, whether media should be financially punished for disseminating fake news; whether anonymous commentaries in the internet should be allowed; whether restrictions on use of smart phones in teenagers' audience should be made). At least 2 participants of debates under 30 years was a necessary condition of the event. Usually youngsters were represented by debaters under age of 25 years.

Summing up, Ministry of Culture works on media literacy development in 5 action lines: 1) research and analysis; 2) training and ensuring methodological materials for media literacy mentors – teachers, librarians, specialists of youth affairs in local governments etc. 3) addressing school pupils (and even pre-school children) and youngsters; 4) raising awareness in wider society; 5) coordinating and building capacity of media literacy stakeholders in Latvia.

For more information on media policy Latvia, [see here](#).

[Mass Media Policy Guidelines of Latvia 2016-2020](#)

[Implementation Plan of Mass Media Policy Guidelines of Latvia 2016-2020](#)

Media literacy and online safety through formal education

The objective of the project Online4EDU is to support teachers in applying more digital media in everyday school life. Online collaboration tools can thereby enrich teaching and learning in all school subjects, and help teachers to find, create and organize new and up-to-date learning materials. The project Online4EDU therefore create a blended learning concept that facilitates online collaboration tools for school teachers of primary, lower and upper secondary and vocational schools. The blended learning concept will also prepare teachers for the ECDL Online Collaboration certification test.

[This curriculum](#) provides concepts and skills with regard to online collaboration tools such as storage, productivity applications, calendars, online learning platforms, web meetings and social media. Who is addressed? The curriculum addresses especially teachers from all schools forms (primary, secondary, vocational) and focuses on providing skills regarding the use of online collaboration tools in school practice. Course in Online4EDU project The project provides a blended learning course which is organised in three units (Unit 1: technical aspects, Unit 2: methodological aspects, Unit 3: practice) that are each based on different methodological concepts according to the content that is facilitated. The overall structure of the units is similar in order to provide participants with a consistent learning experience.

Promoting media literacy and online safety through non-formal and informal learning

The Ministry of Culture is cooperating with the Agency for International Programs for Youth of the Ministry of Education and Science. As envisaged by measure 4.4.3 of the Implementation Plan of Mass Media Policy Guidelines of Latvia 2016-2020 information of media literacy, its meaning is provided as a part of an informative seminar on an annual basis and it is proposed to use the opportunities offered by Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme in the development of international non-formal education projects focusing on media literacy.

The National Library of Latvia trains users, including children and young people, in search and evaluation of information. It also develops and organizes the professional development training for the librarians of public and school libraries of Latvia who directly work with young library users.

Also non-governmental organisations get involved in the promotion of media literacy of children and young people in the field of non-formal education within the framework of different projects, for example, NGO "Avantis". Young people develop their debating skills (including on media literacy matters) within the framework of the Quo tu domā? association. Support to different media literacy strengthening activities was also provided by international partners, for example, the British Council, the Nordic Council of Ministers, the German Embassy in Latvia, etc. For example, with support of the British Council public mass media are implementing the project "Full thought" (Pilna doma), the purpose of which is to develop critical thinking of Latvian teachers and pupils and to promote their media literacy. Moreover, Latvian Radio with support of the British Council is implementing the project "Clean facts" (Tīri fakti), one of target audiences of which are young people.

Raising awareness about the risks posed by new media

The main objective of the Latvian media policy is the creation of a strong, diverse, professional, transparent, sustainable and stable media environment in which nationally, regionally and locally the top quality, content relevant to the Latvian public interest and common good contributes to the reflection of the basic values fixed in the Constitution and its introduction in the national media space, the priorities of the Latvian language are balanced interests of the industry, the audience has access to independent and reliable information and knowledge to use it.

The aim of the media policy guidelines is to create conditions conducive to media activity, ensuring and developing media diversity, improving the education of professionals in the media sector, raising the quality and accountability of the media environment, promoting media literacy and promoting a media and media environment for the individual and society.

Policies are:

1. The diversity of the media environment.
2. The quality and accountability of the media environment.
3. Media education professionals.
4. Media Exercise.
5. Reliability of the media environment.

6.9 Awareness-raising about non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work

Information providers / counselling structures

[The website of the Agency for International Programs for Youth](#) provides all the latest information related to latest news in non-formal education and programmes, trainings, seminars and other possibilities. Also, the information related to non-formal education and

youth work is published online in social media accounts – [on Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Youtube](#). In addition to distribution of printed and digital information, the AIPY also issues a “Youth” (Jaunatne) magazine, the main target audience of which are youth employees and young people, it summarises the latest information on the field of non-formal education, methods of non-formal education implemented in Erasmus +: Youth in Action projects, which allows young people to better know non-formal education and stimulates them to get involved in its activities at national and international level.

On an annual basis, the Agency also issues several methodical materials, which help to understand preparation and implementation of non-formal education projects. They are available as hard and soft copies – <http://jaunatne.gov.lv/lv/informativie-materiali-0>

AIPY administers the European Information Network for young people, which is operating in 34 European countries, answers to questions of young people about and around Europe – also about non-formal education and international projects in the field of youth.

Eurodesk has a database with descriptions, documentations and contacts of over 150 European financing programmes, the *Eurodesk* database is available on the central [Eurodesk website](#), as well as on the [AIPY website](#).

Questions can be asked here: <http://jaunatne.gov.lv/lv/tavs-jautajums>

To make the information on non-formal education, the Erasmus+ programme and European mobility opportunities available also in Latvian regions, regional coordinators and contact points of the agency are operating in different Latvian cities.

Eurodesk contact points (CP)

Eurodesk contact points are organisations (state, local government or NGO, but not private persons or profitable organisations), which distribute information on Erasmus+: Youth in Action, *Eurodesk* and the European Youth portal. Any organisation wishing to cooperate may become a contact point by [submitting an application](#). The organisations organise different information events on the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme, *Eurodesk* and the European Youth portal, consult young people. The organisations have the possibility to receive handouts, representation materials of the agency (the organisations place them on stands, as well as at informative events), participate in trainings, as well as receive agency news.

Eurodesk regional coordinators (RC)

Eurodesk regional coordinators are organisations (state, local government or NGO, but not private persons or profitable organisations), which distribute information on Erasmus+: Youth in Action, *Eurodesk* and the European Youth portal. These organisations have a special access to the *First Class* system, where they can network and contact coordinators of different EU countries. Regional coordinators are identified through procurements, which are announced at the beginning of each year. The organisation organises different information events on the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme, *Eurodesk* and the European Youth portal, consults young people. The organisations have the possibility to receive handouts (the organisations place them on stands, as well as at informative events), representation materials, participate in trainings, receive agency news, as well as receive funding for the implementation of activities in the region to the extent possible.

The AIPY also administers the [European Youth Portal](#), when young people can search for useful information, including on non-formal education and its activities, in English and in the national language.

Awareness raising initiatives

In order to facilitate cooperation between the parties involved in the implementation of youth policy and support youth work in local governments, promoting the understanding of work with young people, within the framework of the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments, a Youth Support Network (hereinafter network) of the Latvian Municipalities has been established covering all 119 municipalities in Latvia.

In order to coordinate the network activities, a team of coordinators of the Latvian municipal youth affairs network has been set up, which regularly meets in person (hereafter the working group), which consists of 26 municipalities working with youth workers, 5 representatives of planning regions, 1 representative of the Ministry of Education and Science, 1 Latvia Representative of the Union of Local and Regional Governments.

Within the coordination group, various videoconferences are organized on topics that have been identified as essential by the members of the coordinating working group, local government schemes for youth with members of this group have been established, various information on various training, seminars, conferences and coordinating work. The group provides its comments, opinions, if necessary for the FTA's work in youth affairs.

6.10 Current debates and reforms

The following topics being developed currently:

- formal recognition of non-formal learning, defining non-formal education in youth work with a following budget;
- Starting from school year 2018/2019 in schools and preschools (from 1.5 to 18 years) will begin a gradual transition in Latvia to the improved content of education and the corresponding change of teaching approach, with the result that pupils will develop knowledge, skills and attitudes important for life in the 21st century. The National Curriculum agency (VISC) project, "A Competency Approach to Learning Content", provides for the creation of support mechanisms for schools and teachers, municipality and parents to successfully change the teaching approach within five years.

7. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Smoking, the use of alcohol and drugs, the consumption of unhealthy food and obesity as a consequence of unhealthy lifestyles are some of the most important EU-level priorities in the field of youth health. Although overall, the health status of young people in the EU is considered good, questions about the availability of health services and quality of life in selected youth target groups - low income families, out-of-home care young people, unemployed young people, young people in rural areas and others - are topical. etc.

Although an overwhelming majority of Latvian youth assess their health status well, about half of young people are considered to be sedentary or inactive individuals physically active who do not spend more than 2.5 hours a week on physical or sporting activities. At the same time, most young people have a variety of opportunities to do sports: running, using the gym, playing team sports games. Limited possibilities for young people to take a swim are limited, although about 1/2 of the young people are also available. However, despite the availability of opportunities, only a small proportion of young people in Latvia are active sportspersons or physical activity performers. At the same time, the tendency to increase the proportion of young people who eat healthy food on a daily basis is a positive trend - an increase of 10% over the last six years. The provision of good health care, the provision of sports activities and the combating of youth addiction are areas that should be given increased attention in planning youth health and wellness activities.

7.1 General context

Main trends in the health conditions of young people

In order to evaluate the current status of public health in Latvia, studies on habits affecting health are conducted on a regular basis. One of the most comprehensive ones is the [study](#)

[of Health Behaviour among Latvian Adult Population](#) (conducted every 2 years). The results of 2020 indicate that the number of young people (15-24 years old), who evaluate their health as good, has grown in recent years (52,3% of men and 46,0% of women). Compared to the previous period, young people are paying more attention to healthy eating habits. For example 19,9% of young men and 33,8% of young women eat fresh vegetables 6-7 days a week

The data of the study of 2020 indicate that is 26.3% of men and 14.6% of women aged 15 to 24 have overweight and obese. In addition, an [the 2017/2018 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children \(HBSC\) survey](#) is conducted, where 11, 13 and 15 years old children are the target group, and it includes different matters regarding health habits, obesity, oral health, prevalence of addictive substances, injuries and mental health. Overall, it can be concluded that healthy lifestyle habits should be promoted in young people, as well as the use of highly fatty food, food with extra sugar and salt on a daily basis should be reduced.

As to the area of addiction, Latvia periodically organises a study named "[Habits and trends of use of addictive substances among pupils](#)" (ESPAD), which is happening every four years. To determine the overall trend in students' experiences of trying any addictive substance, ESPAD calculates an overall indicator of abstinence from any addictive substance, including cigarettes, alcohol, illicit drugs, inhalants and tranquillizers, or non-prescription sedatives. In 2019, 7.6% of Latvian students had completely abstained from trying any addictive substances, more often boys (9.1%) than girls (6.0%). Since the 2015 survey, there has been an improvement in the situation in Latvia, in the form of an increase in the proportion of students who have experienced abstinence from trying any addictive substances, for example, comparing 2011 and 2019, the indicator has a positive dynamic by 5 percentage points. However, despite this positive dynamics, Latvia's results lag significantly behind the ESPAD average of 18% in 2019.

With support of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, a "[Study on unfavourable experiences gained by Latvian young people in childhood](#)" was implemented in 2010 and 2011, the purpose of which was to become aware of the prevalence of unfavourable experiences of Latvian young people in childhood. The target population of this study were pupils of form 12 of general education schools (secondary schools) and students of year 3 and 4 of vocational educational institutions. Overall, 16.9% of young people (participants of surveys) have not experience any of factors of unfavourable experience in their childhood, while 26.9% gained unfavourable experience.

Main concepts

The main policy planning document in the health sector are the [Public Health Guidelines for 2014-2020](#), which are based on the WHO European Region Strategy Health 2020, and has been developed to increase the number of healthy life years of the Latvian population and to prevent premature death by maintaining, improving and restoring health. The guidelines provide for health promotion and disease prevention measures in the following directions – reduction of the risk of non-infectious diseases, improvement of health of pregnant women and children, reduction of the effects of injuries and environmental risks on public health and prevention of infectious diseases, special attention is also devoted to the persons subject to the risk of social exclusion and poverty, including young people. On the basis of main action lines, the guidelines include measures in the fields of promotion of healthy diet, physical activities, mental (psychic) health, sexual and reproductive health and substances and the reduction of the prevalence of processes causing addiction. At the same time, in order to stimulate equal health opportunities for all the Latvian population, partnership and interindustry cooperation is promoted, involving sectors also outside the health sector.

The new public health planning document is currently under development.

[The National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021–2027](#) (approved in Saeima on 2 July 2020) is hierarchically the highest national-level medium-term development

planning document and is an action plan for the Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 (Latvia 2030), which should serve as a roadmap for the development of state in the medium term. It focuses on popularising of active lifestyle, healthy diet, physical activities (including in national sports), reproductive health and prevention of injuries and targeted implementation of measures in the society.

7.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The [Ministry of Health](#) is the leading national regulatory authority in the health sector. The health sector including public health, health care and pharmacy areas. Furthermore, the institutions subordinated to the Ministry of Health, for example, the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, the State Sports Medicine Centre, Riga Stradins University and others, implement the state policy in their fields of competence, which is applicable also to the matters focusing on health of young people.

Sport includes all types of individual or organised activities for preservation and improvement of physical and mental health, as well as achievements in sport competitions. The purpose of the state sports policy is to form healthy, physically and mentally developed personalities. The [Sports Law](#) sets out general and legal basis for sports organisation and development in Latvia. The Ministry of Education and Science is the national regulatory authority in charge of the sports sector.

The main policy directions are:

- Children and youth sports;
- Sports for all;
- High achievements sports;
- Adapted sports.

Cross-sectorial cooperation

The Ministry of Health is operating according to the defined core values and principles and in order to improve health policies, community participation is implemented in cooperation with other ministries, non-governmental organisations (for example, the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments, the Latvian Medical Association, youth of the Latvian Red Cross, the Latvian Family Planning and Sexual Health Association "Fern Flower" (Papardes zieds), and other), different institutions and community groups, organising public consultation. Interinstitutional work groups and advisory councils have been created and are operating, whose work also affects health matters of young people, for example:

- Food Council, the purpose of which is to promote the implementation of food policies, analysing public health problems related to food and submitting proposals for the resolution of these problems.
- Mother and Child Advisory Council, which is an advisory and a coordinating institution, the purpose of activity of which is to involve non-governmental organisations in shaping and implementation of the health policy and in matters mother's and child's health, which includes health care of pregnant women, women in labour and newborns, as well as sexual and reproductive health.
- National Alcoholism Reduction Council, the purpose of which is to reduce alcohol consumption and its consequences, including for young people.
- The purpose of Strategic Council for Health Care is to participate in shaping and implementation of the health policy and to foster information exchange between the Ministry of Health, partnerships of the health sector, state and local government institutions.

- The purpose of the Smoking Restriction State Commission is to enforce the rights of people to clean air, free from tobacco smoke.
- The commission for coordination of the National Healthy Municipalities Network (hereinafter referred to as NHMC), which strengthens public health within the framework of the NHMC programme at local level, emphasising equality in health matters, solidarity and the need for actions aimed at the prevention of factors having unfavourable effects on health, including on young people.
- The Council of the National Health Promoting Schools Network (hereinafter referred to as the NHPSN), where the purpose of the programme is to unite schools, which see a health promoting school environment as one of the purposes of school operation, providing them with the possibility to share experiences and get new ideas about health promotion practices at schools, to support schools in the implementation of activities promoting health and, integrating health promoting activities in school's daily work and learning process, to promote health of pupils and school staff.

7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity

National strategy(ies)

The main law regulating the sport sector in Latvia is the **Sports Law** (adopted on 24 October 2002), which sets general and legal foundations for the organisation and development of sport, sport organisations, mutual relationship and main tasks of state and local government institutions in the development of sport and sport financing foundations, as well as principles to be observed in the international sport movement. However, apart from the Sports Law, essential matters of the sports sector are resolved in international laws and regulations and in policy planning documents of other sectors.

Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people

[Public Health Guidelines for 2014-2020](#) include measures for the promotion of physical activities in the society, especially in the population groups subject to the risk of social exclusion and poverty. Based on the guidelines, within the framework of the 2014-2020 programming period of European Union funds (hereinafter referred to as the ESF programming period) there are plans to promote healthy habits in the population, implementing national and local level health promotion and disease prevention measures in four priority (cardiovascular, oncological, care in the perinatal and neonatal period and psychic (mental) health), incl. with regard to the promotion of physical activity, as well as feed, prevalence of use of addictive substances and processes, sexual and reproductive health, psychic (mental) health. Public awareness-raising campaigns will be organised, as well as short training films and information materials (posters, brochures, booklets, etc.) will be developed, public health surveys and other measures will be implemented. Local governments will play a significant role in the implementation of these measures.

Measures for promotion of physical activity are also included in the Sport Policy Guidelines for 2014-2020 developed by the Ministry of Education and Science. One of the main sports policy lines is children and youth sports for the purposes providing every child and young person with the opportunity to get involved in sport classes, adapting types of physical activity according to their physical preparedness and interests.

Top-level policies, programmes, projects and initiatives encouraging young people to engage in physical activity

The Centre for Disease Prevention and Control implements the public health policy in the country, including constantly organises different campaigns, for example, Active Every Day! (Aktīva ik diena!), as well as creates informative materials in the area of physical activities and participates in informing of young people about their meaning in health promotion.

The State Sports Medicine Centre also promotes cooperation in the field of physical activities, including by informing specialists and the society about topical matters. In addition, an informative material on "[Prescription of physical activity by a family doctor's practice](#)" and a "[Physical activity prescription](#)" form have been developed for the purposes of motivating family doctors to consult patients on changes in their lifestyle and proper physical activities, including for youths.

Local governments play a significant role in ensuring the availability of health care to the society, as well as promoting healthy lifestyle and sports among the population. In order to support local governments, the "Guidelines for local governments on promotion of health" have been developed, and an NHMC currently involving 94% of local governments has been created. In addition, NHPSN is involved in popularising of physical activities among young people.

Physical education in schools

In Latvia, the mandatory number of subjects in "Sport" is two lessons per week and 2 – 3 minute long dynamic breaks for the development and strengthening of posture of learners may be included in lessons according to regulatory enactments.^[5]

Furthermore, any general secondary education programme must have 315 lessons in "Sport" in 3 years. ^[6]

Collaboration and partnerships

Top-level policy measures supporting the formation of partnerships between schools, youth workers, health professionals and sporting organisations

In shaping of the health policy, incl. the matters affecting young people, the Ministry of Health cooperates with other ministries, local governments, non-governmental organisations, implementing the "health in all policies" principle. Also, the operation of NHMC and NHPSN also fosters partnership in the field of physical activities among the youth population.

7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition

National strategy(ies)

Public Health Guidelines for 2014-2020 include measures for the promotion of healthy lifestyle (healthy diet, physical activities, sexual and reproductive health, prevalence of substances and processes causing addiction, etc.) in the society. Based on these, within the framework of the ESF programming period the plan is to implement measures aimed at improving the availability of health promotion and disease prevention services to all the Latvian population, especially to the inhabitants subject to the risk of territorial, poverty and social exclusion (incl. young people). The plan is to promote healthy habits in the population according to the set priorities (see Paragraph 7.3 on Public Health Guidelines for 2014-2020).

Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people

Normative regulation in the field of public health is constantly updated in Latvia. For example, the normative regulation was improved in the field of food for the purposes of ensuring the quality of catering services in educational and medical institutions, long-term

(5) Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No 468 "Regulations Regarding the State Standard in Basic Education, the Subjects of Study Standards in Basic Education and Model Basic Educational Programmes" of 12 August 2014

(6) Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No 281 "Regulations Regarding the State Standard in General Secondary Education, the Subjects of Study Standards in Basic Education and Model Educational Programmes" of 21 May 2013

social care and social rehabilitation institutions, and also those products are specified, which can be distributed in general and vocational education institutions in addition to fixed and optional meals.^[7] In order to promote healthy eating habits in the population, the regulations on maximum permissible content of trans fats in food were approved in 2016. These regulations restrict the content of trans fats in food produced in Latvia or imported from other countries and envisaged for distribution in Latvia (mandatory requirements from 1 June 2018).^[8] Also, it is prohibited to sell energy drinks to persons under the age of 18 and these persons are not allowed to buy them, and also it is prohibited offer them to these persons at tastings, as a gift or as a compensation for purchasing other product or receiving other service. At the same time, several restrictions are set on advertising of energy drinks regarding their addressing to persons under the age of 18 and involvement of these persons in these advertisements.^[9]

With regard to matters to reduce addiction among the young, it is stated that it is prohibited to sell alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, herbal products for smoking, electronic smoking devices and liquids thereof to persons younger than 18, as well as to persons aged from 18 to 25 are obliged to show a personal identification document, when purchasing the above mentioned goods.^[10]^[11] Moreover, since 2013 employees of the State Police may involve minors above 15 in control purchases in order to control trading restrictions on alcoholic beverages, tobacco products and so on set in the laws and regulations.^[12] There is also a ban in place on sale of alcoholic beverages in hostels of educational institutions and restrictions on retail sales of alcoholic beverages in the premises of state and local government institutions, as well as outdoor advertising of alcoholic beverages is prohibited, etc.^[13]

At the same time, there is a normative regulation in place, which prohibits to provide persons under the age of 18 the cosmetic tanning service, except in exceptional cases,^[14] as well as before the provision of a tattooing and piercing service to a person under the age of 18 the service provider should make sure that the child has receive a permission of at least one parent or legal representative for such a service.^[15]

In addition to normative regulation, other documents for the promotion of health of the society, incl. young people have been developed. For example, in order to reduce advertising of non-alcoholic beverages focused on children, thus promoting partnerships

(7) Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No 172 "Regulations Regarding Nutritional Norms for Educates of Educational Institutions, Clients of Social Care and Social Rehabilitation Institutions and Patients of Medical Treatment Institutions" of 13 March 2012

(8) Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No 301 "Regulations on Maximum Permissible Content of Trans Fats in Food" of 17 March 2016.

(9) Law On the Handling of Energy Drinks

(10) Handling of Alcoholic Beverages Law

(11) Law on the Handling of Tobacco Products, Herbal Products for Smoking, Electronic Smoking Devices and Their Liquids

(12) Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No 619 "Procedure of Performance of a Control Purchase" of 20 August 2013

(13) Handling of Alcoholic Beverages Law

(14) Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No 834 "Regulations Regarding Hygiene and Harmlessness Requirements for the Cosmetic Tanning Acquisition Service and Procedures for the Supervision of such Requirements" of 7 September 2010

(15) Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No 172 "Regulation Regarding Hygiene Requirements for the Provision of Tattooing and Piercing Services and Special Requirements for the Tattooing Products" of 14 April 2015

and intersectoral cooperation, the Ministry of Health has concluded a cooperation memorandum with manufacturers of food.^[16] In order to promote healthy diet habits, *Recommended Energy and Nutrient Doses for the Latvian Population* were developed, which will be improved in 2017 according to the latest studies and food science results, taking into account dietary recommendations of Northern Countries. In addition, healthy diet recommendations for different ages have been developed.^[17] In order to foster healthy diet principles in educational institutions, the Ministry of Health in cooperation with the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control has developed "Recommendations for Organisation of Procurements of Catering Services and Deliveries of Food to Educational Institutions in order to ensure the availability of healthy, fresh and qualitative food to children".^[18]

Providing support to local governments in the promotion of health, the "Guidelines for Local Governments on Health Promotion" have been developed, which summarise all the good practices of other countries and recommendations for different initiatives for the promotion of events and activities in local governments in health promotions fields (incl. in the field of food, addiction and reproductive health) for different age groups, including for young people.

Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools

In basic education, health education matters are integrated in the content of education. General secondary education provides an optional subject "Health Science" to pupils.^[19] The Ministry of Health has also cooperated with the National Centre for Education and the Ministry of Education and Science, making a contribution to the development of methodical material "Health science in general secondary and vocational education", as well as a unified training course (module) "Safety of the Society and a Man", which lays down the content of health science that must be learned and the amount in hours in all vocational education programmes (24 lessons in vocational secondary education programmes, 20 lessons in vocation education programmes) starting from school year 2016/2017.^[20]

Peer-to-peer education approaches

Also non-governmental organisations, for example, "Fern flower" (Papardes zieds), are involved in education of young people on matters of healthy lifestyle.

Collaboration and partnerships

See Paragraph 7.3

^[16] http://www.vm.gov.lv/images/userfiles/phoebe/ministrija_sabiedribas_lidzdaliba_ab75e1a6c38b637dc22573d800293aaa/vm_sadarbibas_memo_lpuf_lbdua_150911.pdf

^[17] http://www.vm.gov.lv/lv/tava_veseliba/veseligs_uzturs/

^[18] "Recommendations for Organisation of Procurements of Catering Services and Deliveries of Food to Educational Institutions in order to ensure the availability of healthy, fresh and qualitative food to children" (approved by order No.177 of the Ministry of Health 2 December 2015)

^[19] Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No 281 "Regulations Regarding the State Standard in General Secondary Education, the Subjects of Study Standards in Basic Education and Model Educational Programmes" of 21 May 2013

^[20] Cabinet Regulation No 211 "Regulations regarding the State Vocational Secondary Education Standard and the State Industrial Education Standard" of 27 June 2000

Raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and on factors affecting the health and well-being of young people

In order to support and promote healthy lifestyle, as well as foster the achievement of the goals set in the Guidelines, the Ministry of Health and [the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#) constantly organise different campaigns, programmes and educating events in different areas, for example, in the area of addiction – Free (Brīvs), “Truth about a drop of water” (Patiesība par ūdenspīpi), “To make it clear” (Lai būtu skaidrs); in the area of diet – “Love your heart” (Mīli savu sirdi), “My teeth are clean” (Man ir tīri zobu). In addition, they have developed informative materials on healthy diet, for example, “Water – Don’t Forget to Drink” (Ūdens – neaizmirsti padzerties!), “Fruit and Vegetables in your Diet” (Augļi un dārzeņi uzturā) and “Choose Healthy!” (Izvēlies veselīgo!), and also an informative material on reproductive health Relationships and Health are My Responsibility (Attiecības un veselība – mana atbildība!), etc.

7.5 Mental health

National strategy(ies)

See Paragraph 7.3 on Public Health Guidelines for 2014-2020.

Improving the mental health of young people

The Centre for Disease Prevention and Control implements the public health policy in the country, including constantly organises different campaigns and informative materials for the promotion of mental health, for example, “Do not Look Aside” (Nenovērsies), Suicide Risk Factors (Pašnāvību riska faktori) on signs and factors for teenagers, etc.

[Population Survey on Income and Living Conditions 2021](#) carried out by the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) of Latvia show that more than half (54.6 %) of the Latvian population aged 16-24 believes that the Covid-19 crisis had a negative impact on their mental health. 43.7 % of the population believe that it had no impact, while 1.7 % of the population was positively affected by the Covid-19 crisis.

7.6 Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks

Policy framework

With regard to the risk and health risks to early setting mechanisms, for example, in relation to the prevention and restriction of incidence of infectious diseases, the [Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#) organises different events, including events in the population groups, which are subject to an increased risk of infections or belong to special risk groups, as well as organises planning, purchasing, storage, registration and distribution of drugs and medical devices to ensure the work of HIV prevention points. There are 19 HIV prevention points operating in Latvia in 2017, of which 16 conduct testing. In addition, minor persons are examined for HIV based on a personal request, request of parents of the minor person, request of a guardian or a county court or a written request of a law enforcement agency.^[21]

(21) Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No 628 “Organisational Procedures for Restriction of the Spread of Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection (HIV) and AIDS and the Treatment of HIV-Infected Persons and AIDS Patients” of 4 November 2003

The problem of circulation and use of new psychoactive substances is as topical in Latvia as in other countries. According to survey^[22] results, 9.5% of 15 year olds have tried a Spice mixture at least once in their life. In order to resolve this problem, a generic system for the inclusion of new substances of lists of controlled substances has been in place in Latvia since 2013. And there is also the so-called temporary ban system, using which a new substance may be quickly subjected to control for a period up to 1 year. These initiatives have allowed to reduce circulation of new substances, thus reducing subjection of young people to health risks.

Stakeholders

The Center for Disease Prevention and Control (hereinafter referred to as the Center) is a direct administration institution under the Ministry of Health.

The Center's objective is to implement public health policies in the areas of epidemiological safety and disease prevention and health policies in the subcategory of health care as well as to ensure the implementation and coordination of health promotion policies.

Guidance to stakeholders

The Public Health Guidelines for 2014-2020 is a medium-term policy planning document developed in accordance with the Latvian National Development Plan 2014-2020, the World Health Organization's European Region Strategy "Health 2020" and the European Union Funds 2014. -2020 scheduling period. It is designed to continue the implementation of the public health policy launched, as well as to update new development goals and directions for their achievement, preserving, improving and restoring the state of health of the population of Latvia, in particular socially marginalized and at risk of poverty, in the next seven years.

Public Health Guidelines 2014-2020.

The overriding goal of public health policy is to increase the number of healthy life years of the population of Latvia and to prevent premature death. By the year 2020, it is planned to increase the number of healthy life years (for men reaching 57 years and 60 for women) by 3 years, as well as a 11% reduction in the number of potentially lost life years.

It is intended to be implemented by promoting equal health opportunities for all citizens by reducing the risk factors for non-communicable diseases, improving the health of pregnant women and children, reducing the impact of traumatic and environmental risks on public health, ensuring the prevention of communicable diseases, and developing a quality health care system and equal health availability of services to the citizens of the country.

Cross-sectoral cooperation is essential for the development of the Public Health Guidelines 2014-2020, as well as for the further implementation of the document, ensuring the principle of "health in all policies". Consequently, the Ministry of Economics, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development and the Ministry of Agriculture have established the responsible institutions for the implementation of the tasks specified in the guidelines.

The main causes of death in Latvia are non-communicable diseases: mainly cardiovascular diseases, malignant tumors and external causes of death. The development of non-communicable diseases is largely influenced by lifestyle-related factors - unhealthy diet, lack of physical activity and harmful habits (smoking, alcohol and drug use). The most

(22) "Habits of use of addictive substances and their trends among pupils". ESPAD 2015. Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. www.spkc.gov.lv/upload/Petijumi%20un%20zinojumi/Atkaribu%20slimibu%20petijumi/espad2015_ziojums.pdf

effective prevention of non-communicable diseases is smoking cessation, regular physical activity, a healthy diet and adequate body weight maintenance.

Target groups

The Disease Prevention and Control Center organizes public awareness campaigns each year to improve the health of the population. Campaign themes are selected by analyzing public health statistics.

Funding

To implement the measures, each year by 2020, the Ministry of Health needs additional budgetary resources that will be required when drawing up the state budget for the current year. It is planned that in 2020 the health care budget should reach 4% of GDP.

7.7 Making health facilities more youth friendly

Health promotion and disease prevention measures planned within the framework of the ESF planning period focus on all the Latvian population, especially the inhabitants subject to the risk of territorial, poverty and social exclusion (incl. young people) for the purposes of improving the availability of health promotion and disease prevention services.

7.8 Current debates and reforms

Not topical right now.

8. CREATIVITY AND CULTURE

Cultural involvement is seen as an essential factor in the growth of young people's personalities, including the sense of belonging to local and global communities. The European Commission's (EC) involvement in cultural activities is associated with the development of active citizenship.

The ability and opportunity to realise young people's talents and to express creativity is an essential factor in acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary in the labor market. The European Commission puts great emphasis on the use of new technologies and new media as well as cooperation between the cultural and creative industries in order to provide young people with creative platforms. Particular emphasis is placed on the development of intercultural dialogue, promoting young people's tolerance, incl. social tolerance, openness to other cultures and traditions.

The European Agenda for Culture defines culture as a catalyst for creativity and innovation, as an essential contribution to regional development as a whole and to the development of certain sectors of the economy.

In 2009, the European Commission launched the "Access of Young People to Culture" study, which evaluated young people's opportunities and practices in cultural participation and analyzed examples of good practices in the EU Member States in promoting cultural activities. The study identified significant barriers to the participation of young people in culture - lack of finance, geographic availability, and lack of time. In turn, the possibilities of participation in cultural activities were mainly available through digitization and the use of new media.

In addition, it should be concluded that the creative and cultural theme as a permanent and independent policy direction is maintained only on the agenda in individual EU member states, mostly evaluating the topic of participation.

When it comes to young people in Latvia, they actively consume culture (as viewers/listeners), but they are less active in participating in cultural activities. Over the last five years, cultural consumption among young people has grown faster than participation in various other activities. Nevertheless, young people in Latvia are particularly interested in language learning and non-formal learning activities, which are fully ensured for young people.

Cultural involvement is limited by the opportunities available to young people - the desire to participate in different types of events is greater than the opportunities currently available, especially for popular or mass cultural events. In addition, the availability of culture in regions, especially outside large cities, is insufficient - young people are offered a limited number of cultural activities.

8.1 General context

Main trends in young people's creativity and cultural participation

According to the research "[Study on the Impact of Cultural Consumption and Participation](#)" carried out in 2018, young people, aged 15 to 24, are significantly more active in cultural consumption than other social demographic groups. According to the study, in 2017, the majority of young people participated in such activities as visiting a parish, city, or county festival (85%), attending cultural events at a local cultural center (67%), attending popular music concerts (66%), visiting cultural and historical sites (62%), visiting museums (60%), libraries (59%) and amusement parks (59%).

The data also show that there are activities in which young people participate more than others, and there are activities that are consumed less. Significantly more often than other social demographic groups, young people tend to visit libraries, watch movies in the cinema or open-air cinema screenings, attend local festivals and popular music concerts. But they are less likely to attend events for children or families with children, watch cultural programs on television, attend classical music concerts, or attend opera and ballet. Equally actively, compared to the general population, young people attend theatre performances and attend various festivals.

According to the research, more than half (56%) of the surveyed young people, aged 15-24, would attend cultural events more often if there were more free events or if they had more funds available to attend the events (52%). Half of the surveyed also mentioned more free time as a factor for attending cultural events. Significant factors that would also motivate young people to attend cultural events, is a company with which to attend events, a wider choice of events, and "more events for people like me". These data indirectly show that the current cultural supply does not always meet the wishes and demands of young people.

More information on the research can be found [here](#).

Main concepts

Folk art and intangible cultural heritage Basic information of the sector by the Ministry of Culture and Latvian National Centre for Culture.

The tasks of the Ministry of Culture and Latvian National Centre for Culture in the sphere of folk art and intangible cultural heritage are:

- to elaborate the policy and strategy in the area of Latvian intangible cultural heritage and folk art,
- to elaborate in collaboration with a competent state administration and municipal and private structures a policy planning document and drafts for legislative instruments in the area of intangible cultural heritage and folk art and submit them to the Cabinet of Ministers,

- to coordinate the implementation of commitments under the Convention on Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage,
- to establish partnerships and collaborate with competent state, municipal and private non-governmental institutions on issues pertaining to the intangible cultural heritage policy and folk art,
- to provide methodological and consultative assistance to municipalities and non-governmental institutions working in the field of intangible cultural heritage,
- to ensure participation of the Ministry of Culture in international networks ensuring collaboration in the area of intangible cultural heritage, to coordinate co-operation with competent state institutions of other countries, including the Baltic States, on issues pertaining to the implementation of the Convention on Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage,
- to ensure the preparation and organisation of the Latvian Nationwide Song and Dance Festivals.

8.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia is a state governance institution, which creates and coordinates the state cultural policy, develops state policy in the field of social integration, as well as develops the policy of mass media. The Ministry of Culture operates taking into account the Regulations of the Ministry of Culture, the Action Strategy of the Ministry of Culture, the Declaration of the Cabinet of Ministers, and the State Cultural Policy Guidelines.

There are three departments ensuring the overall work of the Ministry of Culture: the Cultural Policy Department, the Social Integration Department, and the European Union Funds Department.

In addition, the Ministry of Culture has the following permanent divisions: Public Relations Division, Archive, Library and Museum Division, Copyright Division, Budget Division, Document Management Division, Book-keeping and Accounts Division, Internal Audit Division, IT Division, Investment and Projects Division, Legal Division, Media policy division, Personnel Division, Procurement Division, International Cooperation and EU Policy Division.

The Ministry of Culture supervises the following sectors and intersectors: libraries, museums, music, visual arts, design, theatre, literature, film art, cultural education, copyright and related rights, architecture, cultural monuments, intangible cultural heritage; digital cultural heritage; archives, social integration, and media policy.

Cross-sectorial cooperation

On September 14, 2011, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Education and Science signed a [Memorandum of Cooperation](#). The purpose of the Memorandum is to exchange information on diaspora issues including young people living abroad.

The Memorandum has contributed to developing close and coordinated cooperation with the diaspora in order to maintain its link with the Latvian language and Latvian cultural space, the sense of belonging to the Latvian nation.

8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people

Existence of a national strategy

Cultural Policy Guidelines 2022-2027 “Culture Country”.

[The Cultural Policy Guidelines 2022-2027](#) is a medium term policy planning document, which set state cultural policy goals and priorities for the time period until 2027 and foster the achievement of the goals set in state long-term and medium-term policy planning documents.

Scope and contents

a sustainable and publicly accessible culture for human growth and the development of the nation-state, while addressing both the issues of access to culture for society and the sustainability of culture, and affirming that culture is an essential resource for both national development and personal growth.

Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

Responsible authority for implementation of Cultural Policy Guidelines 2022-2027 is Ministry of Culture. Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, the Ministry of Economics, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Finance as co-responsible institutions, which, according to their competence, ensure the implementation of the tasks specified in the guidelines.

Revisions/updates

Not related

8.4 Promoting culture and cultural participation

Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture

Free cultural activities are available in libraries and museums (where events, creative workshops and similar activities take place), as well as there are discounts for certain demographic groups in theatres and in concert organisations.

Libraries provide free internet access to everyone, including children and young people. They also provide possibilities to read the latest periodicals and provide other services, as well as organise thematic exhibitions and events involving children and young people in educating, intellectual and creative classes on a regular basis. Access to the internet in libraries enables the use of not only Latvian digitised information resources, but also those of other countries. Children and young people actively use these digitised Latvian and foreign information and knowledge resources. In these new technological conditions, libraries should take charge of information literacy work among children and young people, create a supply of qualitative diverse information resources, a search and selection system. Every year, public libraries receive state budget co-financing to ensure free access to the internet, computers, and generally available information resources to their readers.

The National Library of Latvia has been implementing activities related to the promotion of reading for several years. Since 2001, the reading promotion programme “**Children and Youth Jury**” of the Centre of Children’s Literature of the National Library of Latvia has been implemented. In 2007, the programme spread to the Latvian diaspora centres and weekend schools abroad. But since 2012, a special Parent’s Jury was put in place helping to involve families in strengthening reading traditions.

Since the launch, the programme has attracted around thousands of readers. In 2018, the programme had about 20,000 readers from 630 Latvian libraries and schools, as well as 57 Latvian diaspora centers all over the world.

The programme has improved children's literacy skills and substantially developed children's literature in Latvia. The best and most exciting books are distributed in the libraries that participate in the programme. Latvian experience with this reading promotion program has been mentioned in the list of the best European reading promotion projects.

The programme consolidates government and municipality financial support for reading promotion. More about the programme "Children, youth and family" can be found [here](#).

The National Reading Competition is a competition for 11-12 year old 5th and 6th grade students, where reading-aloud-champion is determined. The competition takes place in three stages - a competition at a school or local library, a regional final and a national final at the National Library of Latvia. The aim of the competition is to improve children's skills to choose suitable and interesting literature for reading aloud, to stimulate interest in reading and books, to unite children in joint reading activities, as well as to promote the joy of reading.

In 2017, during the first year of the competition, there were around 7000 participants.

It has been inspired by the National Reading Aloud Competition in the Netherlands.

The reading-promotion programme "Book Start" in Latvia is patterned after the United Kingdom's "Bookstart", which is a similar programme for preschool-aged children. The programme is aimed at 3-4 year olds and their parents in order to acquaint pre-school age children with the library and arouse interest in books and reading. The programme has been created by the Children's Literature Centre at the National Library of Latvia and is implemented by the National Library Support Foundation in cooperation with public libraries. During 2017, 47 libraries and 2000 children were involved in the programme.

34 Latvian museums offer visits to individual expositions and exhibitions free of charge to all visitors – 8 museums in Riga, for example, the Latvian War Museum, the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, Žanis Lipke Memorial, Museum "Jews in Latvia", Popular Front Museum (unit of National History Museum of Latvia) etc., as well as 26 local government museums and specialised museums in regions, for example, the Museum of Liepāja, the Jūrmala City Museum and both of its structural units, Balvi Municipality Museum, Ogre History and Art Museum, Pastariņš Museum (unit of Tukums Museum), the Museum of Energy of Latvenergo Group, Latvian Road Museum, etc.

In 2017 accredited Latvian museums implemented 9183 classes of pedagogical museum programmes, most of which (5961 classes) were intended for pre-school age children and students of different age groups. The supply of pedagogical museum programmes is updated on an annual basis, taking into account interests and needs of museum users.

In September 2016 an interdisciplinary programme „Latvian School Bag” was launched as a pilot project. The implementation of the programme was included in the Museum Strategy 2014-2020. In 2017, 105 museums and archives participated in the programme, implementing 579 activities.

The most ambitious event of the museum sector in 2017, the Museum Night, in most museums included creative workshops, concerts, games, plays, competitions and other activities for children (including pre-school age children) and families. Museums can be visited free of charge during Museum Night. Every year, state theatres, the Latvian National Opera and Ballet and state concert organisations, as well as other cultural institutions offer events specifically prepared for the children and youth.

Disseminating information on cultural opportunities

The most extensive research conducted in 2016 confirmed that one – fifth of Latvian students had not been to any cultural or local event outside their school – transportation costs and ticket prices were recognised as the biggest obstacle to getting to know cultural

and natural heritage. Moreover, extracurricular activities, including learning of culture and history, were largely dependent on the teacher's knowledge or their level of initiative. The project "Latvijas skolas soma" ("Latvian School Bag") aims to solve these issues by providing funding and offering a methodically accurate, educative range of events for pupils to attend.

National initiative „Latvian School Bag“

In 2018, as part of the centenary celebration of Latvia, a project "[Latvian School bag](#)" was launched. The project aims to provide an opportunity for all school-age children and youth (1st to 12th grade, including vocational programmes) to get acquainted with Latvian art and culture (performing arts, music, visual arts, literature, dance, architecture, design and cinema) by attending cultural events during the academic semester.

Conceptual framework of the project is based on four pillars: 1) promoting citizenship, sense of belonging to the state and national identity; 2) improving the quality of education in the sense of the 21st century; 3) raising cultural awareness and expression competence; 4) decreasing the social inequalities.

Educational institutions can receive state funding for the purchase of entrance tickets to the event, payment for the event, as well as transportation expenses for students and accompanying persons to and from the event venue. So far more 240 000 children and young people have taken part in the programme.

In the academic autumn semester of 2020/2021, funding was more than EUR 1.67 million euro. During the four-year period, some 13 million euro or 40% of the funding was allocated extra to the Centenary National Plan of Activities.

With the support of the programme of the State Culture Capital Foundation of Latvia "Creation of the content of "Latvian School bag"", new high-quality offers are being created, which are available to schoolchildren throughout Latvia.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme has looked for new solutions, and has gathered information on free online cultural events. It includes virtual tours of museums and exhibition halls, access to literary works, online theater performances and concerts, a rich range of films, recordings of radio and television programs on current topics that allow to feel that culture is all around us, also penetrating the content of academic content. Information about these resources is collected and regularly sent to the program coordinators in the counties of Latvia. More information about the programme "Latvia's school bag" can be found on www.lv100.lv/skolassoma.

Knowledge of cultural heritage amongst young people

Cultural canon

[Latvian Cultural Canon](#) was established in 2008. The Latvian Cultural Canon, similarly to other European countries, has been established as a totality of the most remarkable works of Latvian art and culture, reflecting the most important cultural achievements of the Latvian nation. It includes works in seven cultural fields: architecture and design, cinema, literature, music, performing arts, folk traditions, visual arts.

The Cultural Canon serves as a foundation of cultural experiences of any Latvian, ensuring the sense of belonging to Latvia. Cultural Canon is not a full representation of all the Latvian cultural highlights, yet it serves as an entrance door to the wholeness of the Latvian culture for building further knowledge on Latvian cultural heritage.

Over the years various activities, processes and traditions have evolved around this initiative. In 2017, a website was launched to provide as much information and lead users to diverse canonised cultural artefacts held in the repositories and archives of various Latvian cultural institutions which are related to the Culture Canon. It is an encyclopaedic resource on all the Cultural Canon artefacts including digitised materials, expert videos, textual materials, concise summaries as well as guidance for further research in Latvian

memory institutions and their archives. The website is available in both Latvian and English.

Various contests for students, workshops in libraries, schools and museums have been organised on Culture Canon, there have been interactive games at the National Library of Latvia, as well as awareness raising campaigns on individual Cultural Canon artefacts.

Workshops on Latvian Cultural Canon since 2013 have become a reliable tradition in many libraries and schools in Latvia – by organising meetings with various experts or animators, workshops raise awareness and also discussion on Cultural Canon as a tool for cultural policy, on individual canonised artefacts, on multiple learning tools for understanding the Latvian cultural values by taking advantage of heritage in Latvian memory institutions, on contemporary creativity that is enabled through and by the Canon.

Since 2017 the National Library of Latvia offers individuals or groups to play Orientation game at the National Library of Latvia on Latvian Cultural Canon – by following a sequence of tasks on Cultural canon, a visitor not only learns about the canon and individual artefacts but also experiences the diversity of the collections of the National Library of Latvia and many ways to unlock the Cultural canon – not only through books and reading but also through works of art, original manuscripts, sheet music, audiovisual files, posters, postcards, newspapers, etc.

Since 2012 the Latvian Academy of Culture involves Latvian schoolchildren in the discussion on Latvia's national identity, heritage of cultural values and intergroup solidarity by organising a Latvian Culture Canon competition for 10th – 12th grade students of Latvian general education schools and senior students of art and music schools for secondary school students in all Latvian regions. Since 2012 the Latvian Academy of Culture has organised the Culture Canon Competition for School Youth. The competition is being changed due to current cultural life. Every year a new task is given at the competition, encouraging its participants to research and creatively represent the current events of Latvian culture and art in connection with the Latvian cultural canon from various sources. The competition is currently supported by the Social Cohesion Commission of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Science and the leaders of Latvian cultural life. The information on all the before mentioned activities is available here: www.kulturaskanons.lv.

8.5 Developing cultural and creative competences

Acquiring cultural and creative competencies through education and training

The professional cultural education system in Latvia is created by the national government, local governments and private educational establishments, implementing vocational, professional secondary and higher education programmes. It ensures the education of professional artists and designers, musicians, dancers, specialists of cultural sectors and teaching staff.

The policy of the sector is developed by the Ministry of Culture, and its implementation is coordinated and managed by the Latvian National Centre for Culture.

Professional cultural education is the way for a child or young person to develop their creative potential, to spend free time, gain new experiences and skills. After graduation from professional vocational music or art secondary school, music or art academy students receive a professional diploma with a qualification.

Objectives of professional cultural education are:

- to develop children's and youth's abilities and talents;
- to provide opportunities to realize creative self-expression, to develop individuality;
- to provide opportunities to spend free time;

- to promote preventive work for the prevention of negative trends in young people's behavior;
- provide guidance in career choices;
- to provide additional education, suitable for practical work and life.

The fields of professional cultural education are music, dance, visual and visual plastic art, design, theatre, etc. It covers both classical and popular fields in music and dance, and computers and other modern technologies are widely used in visual art education programs.

Action forms

The forms of activity used in professional cultural education can be very diverse: for example, group and collective classes, individual work, creative camps, master classes by famous artists and musicians, events, contests and quizzes, competitions, engagement in various creative projects and exchange education programmes, etc.

Specialised training for professionals in the education, culture and youth fields

Since 2009 the Ministry of Education and Science has organised trainings for youth affairs specialists according to the Regulations No. 1047 of Cabinet of Ministers of December 16, 2008, "Procedure for the Training of Youth Specialists." The regulations stipulate that in order to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for the performance of professional duties, a youth work specialist shall, within two years from the first day of employment, acquire a basic training for youth affairs specialists for at least 80 academic hours.

In Latvia, requirements regarding education and training for teachers of hobby education and the improvement of professional qualifications and professional qualifications of pedagogues are set by the Regulation No. 662 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia of October 28, 2014 "Regulations on the Education and Professional Qualifications Necessary for Teachers and the Procedure for Improving the Professional Competence of Teachers". It states that the teacher is responsible for the improvement of his professional competence. The training is carried out in less than 36 hours in three years and is planned in cooperation with the head of the educational institution in which the teacher performs the pedagogical activity. The teacher can acquire the professional qualification by mastering programme "A" - the teacher improves the existing knowledge and skills in the field of his/her subjects or programme "B" - the teacher acquires the right to: teach other subjects or work at another level; to work as a teacher in a special education institution; to perform pedagogical activity if the person does not have a professional qualification of a teacher.

The improvement of the professional competence of teachers is financed by the municipality.

Providing quality access to creative environments

Concert organisations and theaters in which the Ministry of Culture is a state capital shareholder every year conclude a financial agreement with the Ministry of Culture. In order to promote the availability of cultural services for various target groups, it is planned to realise a certain number of low-cost tickets for students, pensioners, families with children and other disadvantaged social groups as well as to distribute a certain number of free tickets for charity purposes every year.

8.6 Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture

Developing entrepreneurial skills through cultural activities

"Radām novadam" ("Create for Region") is a competition for university student teams, during which each team in a municipality of their choice tries to create the greatest possible

economic value by creating new jobs and attracting funding for various business and social projects.

The purpose of the competition is to give an opportunity to young people of Latvia to prove themselves as entrepreneurs by developing and implementing various business projects in the regions of Latvia. The participants are young people who have a business experience of less than months. Realising business ideas should create the greatest possible economic value by creating new jobs, attracting investment, while promoting economic and social development in these regions.

The competition was launched in 2014. Just two years later, in 2016, it was recognised by the European Commission as the best business promotion project in Latvia and one of the best business promotion projects in Europe.

The competition was implemented within the framework of "Erasmus+: Youth in Action" programme and the State Youth Policy Programme of the Ministry of Education and Science. The competition was organised by the association "Radām novadam" in cooperation with the news portal "Delfi".

BENEFITS FOR PARTICIPANTS

Benefits for young people. The participation in the competition did not require any investment. The teams gain publicity opportunities, better conditions for cooperation with local authorities, additional trust and reputation in the eyes of potential investors and partners, and additional funding that allows them to achieve the main benefit of implementing their business idea.

Benefits for the municipalities. The competition enables the municipalities to attract new ideas and energy for their development, helping young people implement business projects in their territory and creating economic benefits for the region. Participation in the competition also allows the municipality to position itself publicly, as a place where young people are supported in their pursuit of their business ideas.

Benefits to higher education institutions. Higher education institutions are a great opportunity to show the public how well they can prepare young people for real life and how useful the knowledge and skills are they acquire when studying.

Support young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors

The Creative Industries Division of the Ministry of Culture is responsible for creative industries which helps to implement and initiate different interdisciplinary projects. Young people are the main target audience in projects like DEMOLA and in the creative partnership programme RaPaPro.

The Creative Partnership Programme (RaPaPro) is a programme initiated and funded by the Ministry of Culture to establish new partnerships in vocational secondary cultural education institutions (art, design, music and dance secondary schools), involving teachers, students, municipal representatives, entrepreneurs, social groups and other local community representatives. In 2016 the coordination of the RaPaPro project was taken over by the Latvian National Cultural Center.

A creative partnership in interdisciplinary activities unites various partners to participate on equal basis: they equally contribute and equally benefit from participation.

Creative partnerships are formed between various target groups: music education students cooperate with the media industry, design education students can find partners among business education schools and ceramics companies, dance education students cooperate with design education students and craftsmen, art education representatives cooperate with the Prison Administration and involve socially marginalised groups (women in prison) in the project. As a result of various collaborations design products - souvenirs, industrially produced dishes, clothes for a certain group of users, contemporary tourism tools, new musical instruments, social design and social art works have been created.

Partnership formula: PARTNER X + PARTNER Y + PARTNER Z = RESULT

Example of one of the implemented projects: Project "From Letter to Sound" (2016) implemented in the city Rēzekne – a fully equipped bus stop with the creative design, name of the stop, improved bench and solution for lighting were created as well as the newly designed 20 bus schedules with route plans and the 6 sound compositions announcing 6 bus stops in the public buses were developed to improve accessibility for people with sight problems, the elderly and children to the public transport in Rēzekne city.

From 2014 to 2018 29 RaPaPro projects were implemented, as a result of which new skills and knowledge were acquired, a contribution was made to solving economic and social issues and a transfer of cultural creativity to other areas was promoted. Teachers in cooperation with project partners developed a wide range of partnership ideas, which were further realised by students and resulted in concrete, applicable results.

New skills and knowledge obtained during RaPaPro projects have contributed to the resolution of social issues, and promotion of culture-based creativity transfer to other industries.

"SKOLNIEKS PĒTNIIEKS PILSĒTNIIEKS" ("STUDENT RESEARCHER TOWNSMAN") is a programme started in 2009 and aims to enhance the understanding of young people – future adults, consumers and legislators – about architecture and principles of urban development, because a harmonious urban environment can only be developed by a well-informed society.

It teaches children and young people to think in a structured, systematic and spatial way about the art of creating urban environments. The most extensive result of the project is a [non-formal education](#) course about the build-up environment for teachers, parents and businessmen.

The project is implemented by the Association of Young Architects, which is the newest structural unit of the Association of Latvian Architects, the only professional architecture organisation in the country.

Project activities included:

- training methodology for different target audiences;
- cooperation with various organisations;
- link to the Latvian Education System;
- international experience plus alternative pedagogics;
- training and visual aids;

DEMOLA Network

[Demola](#) is an international innovation challenge platform that brings together students and leading brands. With Demola, global and local organisations challenge university students to create a better future. Today the network brings together over 50 universities, 750,000 students and the leading companies from around the world.

Demola Global was established in Tampere, Finland. Now Demola operates in 18 countries: Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Spain, France, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Portugal, Mexico, Namibia, South Africa, Slovenia, Japan, China, Nepal and Tunisia.

Demola innovation challenges are designed to solve real future challenges and create new service concepts and demos. With Demola, a multidisciplinary team of university students and company's experts work together in an innovation challenge set by the company. During an eight-week process, the team co-creates solutions to the given theme.

In 2014, the IT cluster as a partner of the Baltic Sea Region StarDust project, by overtaking DEMOLA Network experiences, trained employees on the creation of the platform and preparation of the training programme, and undertook the lead to introduce the DEMOLA

Network experience in Latvia, promoting interdisciplinary training for students and new, innovative products and services in all industries. On 31 December 2014 the DEMOLA LATVIA platform was successfully created and by autumn 2016 DEMOLA LATVIA solved problems, offered by 30 companies, state governmentance institutions and organisations. Overall, 159 students participated in training courses and a broader student audience participated in related events, reaching more than 2000 participants in total.

Demola Latvia facilitates co-creation projects between university students and companies, either locally or internationally, with the aim to find innovative solutions to the needs of companies, institutions and organizations that are seeking for the spark of creativity, design thinking and new products.

Demola Latvia was launched by Latvian IT Cluster with the support of the Ministry of Economics and Investment and Development Agency of Latvia. Until December 2015 Demola Latvia was financially supported through the Motivation programme of the ERDF implemented by the Investment and Development Agency of Latvia. In autumn 2016 Riga Technical University and University of Latvia took over the operation of Demola in Latvia. Investment and Development Agency of Latvia supports Demola operation via a Motivation programme.

Multidisciplinary Demola student teams during 4 months (two seasons per year – Spring and Fall) work on real-life cases together with their partner companies. For instance, teams (formed of students from different fields, faculties and universities) create and refine business concepts, develop new products, or build demos and prototypes. Demola ensures that the process is formatted and facilitated; work is systematic and runs on schedule and yields meaningful results. The partner company can purchase or license the team's creations, so it is a possibility for students to earn money, too. Students own the intellectual property rights for results of each project. Partners may also want to continue the project for further development.

Benefits for partners:

- possibility to relatively simply and without financial risk obtain new, creative solutions as a fresh perspective developed by students under the guidance of professionals;
- getting to potential hires or know offer traineeships to young talented people;
- possibility to be seen as open, innovation-oriented and student friendly employers.
- possibility to implement and develop project ideas further after the end of DEMOLA season by continuing cooperation with the best students and teaching staff and utilizing research facilities of universities.

Benefits for students:

- unique experience to create new products, services and process creation in a multidisciplinary team;
- new skills (creative thinking and design process, presentation skills, teamwork) and talent discovery;
- practical experience working on a real-life challenges provided by partner organisation and getting useful insight into the specific field of the project;
- business contacts and remarkable CV record;
- opportunity to commercialise the idea and get rewarded by a project partner if the case solution is high quality;
- making new friends, meeting new people and creating strong connections for future;

8.7 Fostering the creative use of new technologies

New technologies in support of creativity and innovation

In 2013 Samsung Electronics Baltics launched an initiative "[Samsung Skola nākotnei](#)" ("[Samsung School for the Future](#)"), which aims to provide future opportunities for children and young people by offering programmes that provide greater access to technological skills and opportunities. Initially, the programme were aimed at teachers, and through technology training more than 235 teachers gained new skills to help improve the daily lives of more than 50, 000 students.

In 2017 the programme changed its focus from training teachers to training the youth. A survey conducted by the programme indicated that young people were stuck in the field of entertainment and only a little over half felt that their presence in the digital environment was meaningful. The survey showed that 57% did not know what cloud services were, and admitted that they would benefit from additional programming (88%), cloud computing (71%) and MS Excel (66%), information evaluation knowledge (64%), use of keyboard shortcuts (60%), MS Word (50%) and MS PowerPoint (45%), as well as tips for finding information (40%).

Therefore a unique online programme "Student Digital IQ" was launched to expand the knowledge of young people and promote meaningful use of technologies. Five training courses were developed, each of which was dedicated to a specific topic - digital content creation, online communication, basic computer skills, democratic participation through digital tools, critical thinking and assessing online information. The program is free of charge and available at www.skolanakotnei.lv.

In 2018 the programme focused on the online behaviour of young people. A "Latvian Youth Netiquette" was created with 16 points of good online behaviour and was presented to the Ministry of Education and Science, as well as sent to all Latvian schools and distributed to youth organizations. In 2019 the main goal of the programme was to promote healthy family communication online and through various digital tools, as the survey conducted showed that 70% of young people face problems online without the help of adults but parents often do not understand the digital environment in which young people live every day.

In the past 4 years the programme has developed free of charge educational materials, good online behaviour aka netiquette guidelines, a family digital health test, guidelines for parents on family's online behaviour, short video for young people and their family. All the materials can be found [here](#).

Facilitating access to culture through new technologies

The draft "Plan for Digitalisation, Preservation in the Long-Term and Ensuring the Availability of Cultural Heritage for 2016-2020" was drafted for the purposes of implementing the digital heritage industry strategy "Digital Cultural Heritage Development Strategy for 2014 – 2020" of the Cultural Policy Guidelines 2014 – 2020 "Creative Latvia" and marks events, which help to implement the priorities set in Creative Latvia and policy goals in the field of digitisation of cultural heritage, preservation in the long term and availability of cultural heritage in the digital environment. Paper documents (pictures, collections, notes, documents), audio/video materials (documentaries, audio records, Latvian Television programmes), cinema and immaterial cultural heritage have been and continue to be digitised within the framework of this project.

According to the [Central Statistical Bureau in 2020 89.7% of households had the Internet](#), while in 2010 only 52.6% of households had the Internet. Consequently, the Internet and especially smartphones are a new and fast-growing platform for audience reach and communication.

According to the research "Study on the Impact of Cultural Consumption and Participation" carried out in 2018, the Internet and new media provide new opportunities for cultural

consumption and participation in culture, and can be seen as complementary, rather than a substitute. Those who use cultural content on the Internet are also more active in consuming culture in real life, therefore the development of the Internet, digital culture environment provides a new and wider platform for reaching the audience.

The study shows that 62% of the population use the Internet for various cultural activities but the use of the Internet for cultural activities is very different in different age groups and the most active socio-demographic group is youth aged 15 – 24, where 90% of the surveyed use the Internet for such purposes.

Although the Internet and social networks are an environment where people spend a significant amount of their time daily, the study shows that only a small number of people use the Internet to search for information on cultural activities (22%). In addition, even though the overall indicator of cultural activity on the Internet is high (62% of the population), it should be emphasized that most enjoy foreign films and music online (entertainment culture), but there is less Latvian content consumption and interest in Latvian cultural offerings. The most common cultural activities on the Internet among the population are: watching foreign films online (34%), listening to online music (32%), buying tickets to cultural events (23%), looking for information on cultural events (22%), watching cultural broadcasts on the Internet (19%).

The study also shows that 91% of regular Internet users in Latvia at least once have used Latvian cultural heritage materials in digital format. More than half (55%) have used a small number of materials (up to 6 different types of materials).

8.8 Synergies and partnerships

Synergies between public policies and programmes

The most active interdisciplinary cooperation partners of the Ministry of Culture are the National Culture Council, the Federation of Latvian Cultural Workers' Unions, the Council of Latvian Creative Unions, the Association for Contemporary Culture Non-Governmental Organisations (LKNVOA) and the Society for Time Culture.

In 2007 the [Association of Contemporary Culture Non-Governmental Organizations](#) founded the leading contemporary culture NGOs in Latvia - Center for Contemporary Art, the New Theater Institute of Latvia, the New Media Center for Culture RIXC, the interdisciplinary art group SERDE, the cultural project NOASS, the Culture and Information Center K @ 2. At present, the association has 20 organisations and individual members, and it is still open for admission.

The aim of the association is to develop and activate the activities of non-governmental organisations in the field of culture and to improve the environment for the activities of cultural NGOs; to represent interests of cultural NGOs in the state and local government cultural policy; to develop and support innovative cultural processes in Riga and regions of Latvia as well as internationally; offer advice and expertise, as well as research and analysis of the industry.

So far, the [Association of Contemporary Culture Non-Governmental Organisations'](#) activities have been mainly focused on the exchange of information and experience between member organisations and identifying problems of NGO activities, both in the cultural sector and in general.

Partnerships between the culture and creative sectors, youth organisations and youth workers

The 100th Anniversary of the Latvian Republic is a national event in Latvia celebrating the country's 100th anniversary since its 1918 establishment. The main celebrations were held on 18 November 2018, and other commemorative events are set to take place from 2017-2021.

To ensure the implementation of a coherent work with young people in the planning and implementation of the Celebration Programme, as well as to promote youth initiatives, participation in decision-making and organisation of celebration of the centenary of the Latvian state the Latvia 100 years Youth Committee of the Republic of Latvia was established.

The State Century Youth Action Committee or the Celebration Rota is a pair of extra hands and hearing ears from the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra's Office of the Ministry of Culture that helped jointly create a special day for the celebration of Latvia's birthday. It is a bridge helping to unite young people in Latvia. It informed about events planned by the young people in the capital of Riga and regions.

Project [TUESI.LV](#) (YOUARE.LV) tells stories about young and inspiring people in different places in Latvia who with their work and example, make Latvia better. The project believes that young people are a great resource for Latvia. The project's goal was to tell 100 inspirational stories about young people in Latvia's regions as a gift on Latvia's 100th birthday back in 2018.

[TUESI.LV](#) tells stories about young and inspiring people in different places in Latvia, who, with their work and example, make up a better Latvia. We believe that young people are a great resource for Latvia.

Our goal is to give 100 inspirational stories to young people in Latvia's regions in Latvia in the 100th birthday in 2018.

8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture

Fostering equality and young people involvement through cultural activities

The Ministry of Culture supports activities according to the [Guidelines on National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy 2012-2018](#) (hereinafter referred to as the Guidelines). It supports those events in the Action Plan of the guidelines, which cannot attract foreign funding from other financial resources due to limited availability of funding.

Ambassadors of Latvian culture

The Latvian cultural ambassador programme has been implemented with the support of the Ministry of Culture since 2012 by the Latvian National Cultural Center. The Latvian cultural ambassador training model is based on two international British Council programmes – “Intercultural Navigators” and “Active Citizens”. In cooperation with various ethnic communities, the programme has provided training for Latvian cultural ambassadors on ethnic Latvian culture and its interaction with ethnic minority cultures.

Trainees develop knowledge of cultural diversity, identity and societal cohesion, which serves as the basis for establishment and development of various partnerships (Latvians and ethnic minorities), as well as gaining the initiative for further work.

After completing the training programme, cultural ambassadors use the acquired knowledge to become multipliers and organise training for local communities and non-governmental organisations about shaping better living conditions and favorable environments in their own village, town or region.

“European Traces in Latvia” project

The project “Eiropas pēdas Latvijā” (“European Traces in Latvia”) has been organized since 2014. It aims to encourage cooperation between children and youth (especially ethnic minorities) in a creative, modern and interactive way and to help identify Latvia as part of the European cultural space, where its historic cultural heritage (art, architecture, music, cuisine, etc.) has left its mark and its presence can still be felt today.

Children and youth who were involved in the project created videos about evidence of European culture, or traces, in their city and region, as well as participated in erudition competitions about the European Union. In a geocaching race participants of the project team attracted more than 300 students from various Latvian schools. Using geocaching principles, hiding geocaches and searching for other team geocaches, project participants searched for and marked Europe's traces in Latvia.

In the academic year of 2019/2020, high school 10th and 11th-grade students were invited to participate in the escape game "State. Support. Sweet." It is a modern form of learning in which young people take an active role as players and carry out missions. The missions were designed not to test, but to improve knowledge and understanding about the country, its structure, current events, forms of participation. The content of the escape game included various fields of study.

By promoting European cultural values and an appreciation for diversity, the project „European traces in Latvia” promotes minority culture belonging to Latvia and Europe, as well as strengthens youth minority participation in building a democratic society.

Awareness of the Latvian immaterial cultural heritage – tradition of the Song and Dance Festival

The tradition of the Song and Dance Festival is a thankful environment for human creativity and collective action. The festival does not distinguish between professionals and amateurs, adults and children, Latvians and foreigners – everybody participates (belonging means participation). Participation of representatives of minorities in the All-Latvian Song and Dance Festival is evaluated as a good example of integration.

The [Latvian National Cultural Centre](#) ensures active cooperation with national minority formations also in between Song and Dance Festivals, involving national minority formations in the folklore festival "Baltica".

Latvian Forum of National Minorities

Since 2014, the Ministry of Culture has gathered representatives of national minorities, non-governmental organisations (NGO), state institutions, experts and interested persons in the annual forum of national minorities.

The forum promotes cooperation of national minorities, and especially national minority NGOs, representatives and information about the latest and important public processes. Within work groups, experts, representatives of national minorities and state institutions and other interested persons update problem matters and search for solutions of the matters of importance for national minority communities in Latvia (for example, national minority education, preservation of culture, ensuring activity of NGOs, etc.).

Pynu, pynu sītu (Pinu, pinu sietu) festival of cultures

In July 2017, the first festival of Latvian cultures "Pynu, pynu sītu" (Pinu, pinu sietu) was held in Daugavpils and all over Latgale (one of the four historical and cultural *regions of Latvia*), gathering over 500 participants from all over Latvia. Participants of the festival confirmed that the unique Latvian cultural space promoted reinforcement of national identity, maintains, reinforces and unites the sense of belonging to Latvia in conditions of globalisation. The festival of cultures, while preparing for the Latvian centennial anniversary, represented the diversity of national minority culture and its contribution to the Latvian cultural space, as well as promoted awareness of shared values (freedom, rule of law, solidarity, etc.). The Ministry of Culture, the German Federal Foreign Office supported the festival financially and the Daugavpils City Council also provided its support.

"Regional NGO support programme"

77 NGO projects were implemented in 2017 aimed at promoting civil society initiative and participation of the population, providing support to regional NGOs and promoting their mutual cooperation, fostering the implementation of the supreme goal of the Latvian state centennial anniversary "to strengthen the national identity of the Latvian society and the

sense of belonging to the country, stimulating self-organisation processes and cooperation”, supporting activities aimed at the involvement of local people in the improvement of conditions and quality of life of their community, fostering growth and sustainability of the individual, the community and the state, involving local governments, libraries, cultural centres, museums, educational institutions, the formation of statehood, research of the history of development and preservation and modern communication of its results in the neighbourhood, awareness of talents, excellence, entrepreneurship and achievements of Latvian people and inspiring from them and strengthening the link between generations, children and young people assuming equal initiative and responsibility.

Combating discrimination and poverty through cultural activities

Creative camps for national minorities

After active participation of national minority formations in the All-Latvian Song and XV Dance Festival in 2013, the matter of significance of cultural exchange for consolidation of the Latvian multinational society was formed. The Latvian National Cultural Centre with support of the Ministry of Culture, organised Creative camps for national minorities in 2014 to educate leaders of Latvian national minority formations on issues related to the improvement of capacity and artistic performance as well as prepared them for the next All-Latvian Song and Dance Festival in the context of the centennial anniversary.

The camp programme included lectures by experts (incl. from foreign countries) on Latvian and national minority cultures, especially focusing on common aspects and differences between different cultures. During the programme masterclasses and demonstrations were organised to provide an opportunity to master the stage culture, Latvian national traditions in a creative way.

Latvian Roma Platform

The implementation of the Latvian Roma Platform project promotes Roma population cooperation with local governments. It organises events to encourage more active involvement and participation of Roma children and youth in the society, especially in education, enhancing cooperation between Roma families and educational institutions as well as other local government authorities.

The project is implemented by the Ministry of Culture within the framework of the European Union programme “Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme for 2014-2020”, section “Grants to support the establishment of national Roma platforms.” Moreover, in order to increase understanding of the society about Roma culture, history and social matters as well as about the negative impact of prejudices and stereotypes on the status of Roma, the NGO Latvian Centre for Human Rights in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture is planning to continue the implementation of activities of the DOSTA! Campaign of the European Council – Enough! Go beyond prejudice, meet the Roma! The events will be implemented according to the political objective of the Guidelines on National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy (2012-2018) – to promote the inclusion of socially excluded groups in the society and to prevent discrimination.

In addition, the Regional Expert Network in Roma Integration Matters created by the Ministry of Culture in 2014 is developed in order to promote a regular exchange of information and experience between local government specialists in Roma integration matters and to develop cooperation between the Ministry of Culture, local government authorities and Roma community for effective implementation of the Roma integration policy.

8.10 Current debates and reforms

There are no current debates and reforms.

9. YOUTH AND THE WORLD

One of the youth policy principles stated in the Youth Law is the “mobility and international co-operation principle”.

International cooperation is essential for the implementation and strengthening of youth policy in accordance with international standards. Good international cooperation ensures the defense of Latvia's interests, development and implementation of international youth policy, promotes the recognition of the Latvian youth policy results and attracts foreign financial resources for further youth policy implementation.

9.1 General context

Main concepts

[The National Development Plan for 2021-2027](#) (NDP2027) is Latvia’s highest national-level medium-term planning document. It has been developed in accordance with the [Latvian Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030](#) (Latvia2030) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) so that the quality of life improves for each individual, and society as a whole over the next seven years. Latvia2030 defines Latvia's long-term development vision. It is the highest national level long-term development document and the main planning document that defines the spatial development perspective - an integrated view of the country's balanced and sustainable development.

Youth interest in global issues

The new Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027 have been developed defining goals and sub-goals for Latvia’s education system. One of the strategic goals is the provision of modern and high-quality education. In general education particular emphasis is on a competence-based approach, where global education and global citizenship are included transversally.

A National Action Plan to design the process of implementation is being developed, as well as a new educational reform is being planned. Ministry of Education and Science supports the implementation and activities of the global movement “Education for All” and implementation of development cooperation in education by annually allocating funding to the UNESCO Latvia. The paradigm of global education and education for sustainable development is reflected in Latvia’s new competence-based general education curriculum. The learning process is built on attitudes and values for responsible citizenship - ability to express one’s position on social, economic and political processes, take responsible decisions and have a positive impact on welfare locally and globally, including recognise injustice and act to prevent it, treat with tolerance different cultures and their heritage.

Term “Global education” is not included in the curriculum for secondary school content, however, it is presented as an outcome of general level of learning. For example, ability to assess the impact of territorial change and modernisation of society in order to explain the development, causes, consequences and role of supranational organisations in addressing economic and political issues. Curriculum includes competences such as critical thinking, civic responsibility, problem solving, tolerance, among others.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 study included Global Competence. The PISA 2018 Global Competence study showed the following results for Latvia:

- 93% of students use two or more languages on daily basis;
- 53% of students would like to explore other cultures;
- 75% of students are aware of global challenges, for example, famine and poverty;

- 72% of students are aware of gender equality challenges in different parts of the world;
- 75% of students are aware of causes of climate change;
- 76% of students are aware of the effect of economic development on environment.

9.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for youth policy development in Latvia.

The Agency for International Programs for Youth is a governmental institution subordinated to the Ministry of Education and Science. The goal of the Agency is to promote youth voluntary service, activities and mobility. The Agency implements non-formal learning and information programmes and projects targeted at youth and those working with youth, as well as supports the link between non-formal learning and lifelong education. It is responsible for the administration of the programmes „Erasmus+: Youth in Action” and “European Solidarity Corps”. These programmes support youth exchanges, voluntary work and youth participation initiatives at the national and international level. More information on “Erasmus+ Youth in Action” and “European Solidarity Corps” projects can be found in 2.5. Cross-border mobility programmes and 4.7. Youth work to foster social inclusion.

The **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** is responsible for foreign policy development and implementation. The main responsibilities of the Ministry are:

- regional policy, building relations with the member states of the European Union (EU);
- coordination of the EU policies, development of relations with the third countries;
- representation of Latvia’s interests in international organisations e.g., United Nations (UN), Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Council of Europe, etc.
- implementation of the development cooperation policy;
- informing the public about the EU and Latvia’s membership in the EU;
- supporting the Latvian diaspora abroad.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs supports the development of the UN Youth Delegates Programme in Latvia, as co-operation with Latvian youth diaspora.

What is Club "House"?

Club "House" is a non-governmental youth organisation that aims to popularise the idea of a united Europe, to promote democracy, tolerance and human rights while informing and educating youth.

The organisation promotes the idea of European unity and its values - democracy, tolerance and respect for human rights. Club “House” organises workshops, lectures, conferences, camps, contests, thematic tea-parties and other events for young people to educate them about European history and culture, traditions, social and political processes, as well as work of the European institutions. They also organise activities on the Europe Day.

Club "House" is a member of the pan-European organisation "Young European Federalists" (JEF Europe) that had been operating continuously since the end of the Second World War, making it the oldest pro-European and only federalist youth organisation. JEF is composed by its members working together to promote the creation of a democratic European federation as a guarantee for peace and a more free, just and democratic society. It currently has member organisations in 27 countries.

Club "House" also coordinates the United Nations Youth Delegates Programme in Latvia, as well as the annual campaign "Back to School", which is implemented in co-operation with the Representation of the European Commission to Latvia, and aims to promote the EU before and after the Europe Day. The EU experts visit schools to introduce pupils to their work.

Cross-sectorial cooperation

To ensure coordination of youth policy the Youth Advisory Council has been set up, which replaces the Youth Policy Coordination Council as of January 1, 2009.

The Youth Advisory Council is an advisory body that aims to ensure a coherent development and implementation of youth policy at different levels (municipal, national and European Union), as well as to support youth participation in decision-making.

The tasks of the Youth Advisory Council are:

1. to participate in the development of youth policy planning documents and regulatory enactments;
2. to assess whether the implementation of youth policy complies with the provisions of youth policy development planning documents and the National Youth Policy Programme, and to provide recommendations to the Ministry of Education and Science on the youth policy priorities and measures for the next year;
3. to make recommendations to the state administration body in order to ensure the effective implementation of youth policy, including: - on the need to implement measures, projects and programmes and to carry out research on youth, while implementing the youth policy; - on the need to make amendments to regulatory enactments and policy planning documents or to develop new regulatory enactments and policy planning documents related to the implementation of youth policy;
4. to make recommendations to local government institutions for the implementation of youth policy at municipal level;
5. to make recommendations to non-governmental organisations targeting young people and develop recommendations for youth work.

To develop recommendations, the Youth Advisory Council may set up working groups, request the necessary information from the Ministry of Education and Science, and invite experts and officials with advisory rights to the meetings.

Representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Health, Agency for International Programs for Youth, National Centre for Education, associations – Latvian Youth Council, Latvian Student Union, Latvian Free Trade Union Confederation, Latvian Employer's Confederation, Latvian Union of Local Governments, Latvian Association of Large Cities and youth organisations are represented in the Council. According to the Youth Advisory Council provisions, not less than 10 youth organisations should be represented in the Council.

9.3 Exchanges between young people and policy-makers on global issues

Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the domestic level

Within Structured Dialogue at local level, every year happens more than 20 consultations with young people.

Method used: Coffee with politicians – meeting of young people and decision makers

What is it?

"Coffee with politicians" is a method whose main purpose is to promote the dialogue between young people and decision-makers (Members, local government officials, heads of institutions).

Creating a dialogue between young people and decision-makers at different levels is essential to create an environment and an area where an open and engaged dialogue is possible on what is essential for everyone involved. "Coffee with the politicians" is a Swedish-based, participatory approach adapted to Latvia, which aims to give young people and politicians an opportunity to meet, meet and discuss issues that are of interest to young people in a prudent and pleasant environment. For young people, this is often the first opportunity to directly and directly address decision-makers, tell about issues of importance to them and ask questions, while politicians have the opportunity to hear about the youth of the "primary" - the young man himself.

How is it going

"Coffee with the politicians" is a specially organized and prepared afternoon where young people and decision makers meet on coffee and tea cups to discuss a particular topic, listen to each other's views and create new ideas or solutions to existing problems together.

"Coffee with politicians" is a platform for informal talks in a free atmosphere, in which everyone speaks with each other as similar to a similar one. Negotiations are moderated (one leader) and structured (various discussion methods are used, such as world coffee, open discussion, etc.).

Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the international level

The **European Youth Forum** is a platform of youth organisations in Europe. The forum represents over 100 youth organisations, which bring together tens of millions of young people from all over Europe. The Forum aims to empower young people to participate actively in society to improve their own lives by representing and advocating their needs and interests and those of their organisations.

The Forum aims to:

- involve a large number of youth and youth organisations in social projects and decision-making processes;
- impact policies affecting young people and partners within international partners such as the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations;
- encourage policy-makers to take into account young people's concerns in all policy fields;
- build sustainable, independent youth organisations, both nationally and internationally, by insisting on adequate funding;
- encourage young people living in different countries and in different environments to listen to each other and to appreciate the ideas and experiences they express;
- support the understanding of different cultures, democracy, dignity, diversity, human rights, active civic participation and solidarity;
- promote youth work elsewhere in the world.

The National Youth Council of Latvia is a full member of the European Youth Forum. In 2019 and 2020 the National Youth Council of Latvia participated in four European Youth Forum member meetings.

EU Youth Dialogue

The EU Youth Dialogue (previously called the Structured Dialogue) aims to make young people's voices heard in the European policy-making processes. The goal is to create a dialogue between young people and youth organisations with policy- and decision-makers, as well as experts, researchers and other members of civil society.

9.4 Raising awareness about global issues

Formal, non-formal and informal learning

"Back to school"

In 2007, the "[Back to School](#)" campaign was started in Germany, which at that time held the Presidency at the Council of the European Union. The campaign was successful. In 2008 it was implemented in Latvia for the first time. The campaign is organised by the European Commission Representation in Latvia in cooperation with the youth organisation "Club House". Every year European affairs experts, representatives of governmental institutions, local governments and NGOs visit schools to share their knowledge on the EU and current issues. In 2019, 121 experts from 62 institutions visited 120 different educational institutions. The campaign reached out to 7000 young people.

Youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues

What is the European Club?

The European Club is a non-formal programme implemented in schools. Within the framework of the European Clubs, young people organise different activities and events aimed at exploring Europe. The clubs aim to improve knowledge on issues of the European Union or the Council of Europe, as well as the geography, culture, history and economy of different European countries.

By participating in the activities of the European Club young people acquire practical skills in project management and teamwork as well as improve communication skills and knowledge of foreign languages.

There are more than 14 European Clubs in different regions of Latvia. Since 2010 the project is coordinated by the organisation "Club House".

European Parliament Ambassador School Programme

Since 2005, the European Parliament Office in Latvia offers an opportunity for young people and schools to participate in the international European Parliament Ambassador School Programme. The Programme is a network of schools across the EU raising awareness of European parliamentary democracy and European citizenship values. The aim of the programme is to increase awareness about Europe, democracy and political choice among young people across the EU. There are more than 70 schools involved in this programme in Latvia.

Information providers

The Eurodesk regional coordinators and information points operate in different regions of Latvia to provide information about the programmes "Erasmus+: Youth in Action" and "European Solidarity corps" as well European mobility opportunities the programmes provide. Eurodesk Latvia is coordinated by the Agency for International Programs for Youth, which is the National Agency of the "Erasmus+: Youth in Action" Programme. To disseminate information a [Eurodesk Latvia Facebook page](#) was created.

Eurodesk Information Points

Eurodesk information points are organisations (at national, municipal or NGO level) that disseminate information and organise various informative events about the programmes "Erasmus+: Youth in Action" and "European Solidarity Corps", Eurodesk and the European Youth Portal. Organisations have the opportunity to receive agency handouts and presentation materials, participate in training courses, and receive news from the agency. In 2021, 24 regional information points operated in Latvia.

Eurodesk Regional Coordinators

The Eurodesk regional coordinators are organisations (at national, municipal or NGO level) that also disseminate information and organise various informative events on the programmes “Erasmus+: Youth in Action” and “European Solidarity Corps”, Eurodesk and the European Youth Portal. The regional coordinators are identified as a result of procurements that are announced at the beginning of each year. Organisations have the opportunity to receive funding for the implementation of activities in the region, receive the agency's handouts, representation materials, participate in training, receive news from the agency. In 2021, there were five regional coordinators in Latvia.

In 2020, to raise awareness about youth opportunities in the EU, Eurodesk together with Regional coordinators and Information Points organised and/or contributed to 175 pieces of training or events with 11600 participants. Eurodesk also took part in one of the biggest festivals for young people “[ZZ Festival](#)” and the national conversation festival “[Lampa](#)”. During the “Time to Move” campaign in October, there were 19 events organised by Eurodesk. In 2021 during the European Youth Week, 19 events for young people were organised. Eurodesk also promoted both EU initiative “Discover EU” calls.

9.5 Green volunteering, production and consumption

Green volunteering

The Foundation for Environmental Education Latvia (FEE Latvia) is one of the largest organisations in Latvia that promotes young people's participation in environmentally or nature-friendly initiatives. The activities of the FEE Latvia are related to the implementation of the programmes of the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE International), the world's leading environmental education organisation. The aim of the organisation is to promote sustainable development through environmental education.

In Latvia, the foundation has been able to provide and support the entire FEE International programmes since 1998 – “Eco-Schools”, “Young Reporters for the Environment”, “Blue Flag”, “Green Key” and “Learn Forests”.

The FEE Latvia has developed and implemented diverse national environmental education activities and projects, working closely with organisations and institutions interested in environmental protection and promoting cross-sectoral co-operation for sustainable development.

In 2020, the FEE Latvia in cooperation with other partners started a new international project “Youth Eco Hub”. The project aims to empower co-operation between Eco-Schools of the Baltic Sea region that are interested to raise awareness about climate change, biodiversity and circular economy. The main idea is to give space and time to young people to get inspiration, develop and carry out their ideas according to their age and needs. “Youth Eco Hub” focuses on developing new competencies of young people such as entrepreneurship, leadership and citizenship as well as finding an active role in the community on a local and international level.

In 2020 the [World Wide Fund for Nature in Latvia \(WWF Latvia\)](#) started a new non-formal education programme for young people called the “Protection Academy” (“Aizstāvības akadēmija”). 20 young people aged 15-25 in cooperation with mentors and experts developed their skills in advocacy work to minimise climate change and natural crisis. The WWF Latvia coordinates also voluntary work in the field of nature-friendly initiatives.

In 2020 the Latvian Fund for Nature organised a summer school for young people “Game on Climate Change” within the project “Game On: Don't let climate change end the game!”. The summer school aimed to raise awareness about climate change among young people and introduce specific climate-friendly actions. At the end of the summer school, the participants presented the ideas of climate-friendly initiatives that the young people are planning to develop further. The Latvian Fund for Nature also organises programme

“Nature and Climate School for Young People” that offers online courses on issues about climate change and sustainable development.

Green production and consumption

Fascination "homo ecos:" brings together contemporaries who have an important balance for human and planet development.

The aim of the association is to strengthen the social movement, whose members support green ideas and which change or improve their everyday habits in order to be environmentally and people-friendly.

The association has a wide range of cooperation partners and friends: citizens, informal groups, associations, companies, state and municipal institutions.

HOMO ECOS: "EDUCATED, INTRODUCED, INTRODUCED AND INTENDED THAT THEY NEED FOR THE FOLLOWING MONEY:

- **educate** - NGO organizes events to inform and educate the public on topical environmental topics - "homo ecos:" Workshops, discussions, movie theaters and other events take place on the green floor and resource storage with useful materials is available, the association creates a radio broadcast "Green Thursday" The Society organizes social campaigns for the StarFM radio, to the general public
- **involve** - "homo ecos:" involves the target audience of the society in updating and solving environmental issues, the association organizes volunteering, participates in workshops and events involving the public. One of the initiatives of the association is the use of the fitoremediation method for the development of degraded and contaminated sites, which was started in spring 2013 with the creation of the Soul Garden in Sarkandaugava.
- **inspire and encourage** - "homo ecos:" creates space and time to meet people who want to change their everyday habits to get inspiration and encouragement for eco-friendly solutions for everyone to exchange ideas and experiences.

At homo ecos: search for information, engagement, inspiration and encouragement for climate change, green habits, green packaging, waste-free, Latvia - the greenest country in the world and sustainable activities.

9.6 Intercontinental youth work and development cooperation

Intercontinental youth work and development cooperation

UN Youth Delegate Programme

In 2019, the youth organisation “Club House”, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Science, established the United Nations Youth Delegates Programme in Latvia. The United Nations Youth Delegates Programme is a UN initiative that aims to promote the participation of young people in the State’s foreign policy. The UN Youth Delegate represents his/her country's delegation to the UN events, as well as represents Latvian youth in other UN-related activities.

The goal of the Latvian UN Youth Delegates Programme is to educate young people about the issues on the UN agenda, to ensure national and global citizenship activities in Latvia, and to develop youth leadership skills. The main objectives of the programme are:

- involve young people in the country's international and national official delegations;
- educate young people on UN agenda and multilateralism;
- promote the practice of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals at the national and international level.

The role of the young people who participate in their national delegation is to provide a vision on youth-related issues, as well as to develop cooperation with young people from other countries.

To promote young people's understanding of UN agenda issues and their impact on everyday life the UN Youth Delegates Program has also organised two national conferences in Latvia. In 2019 a conference "Youth and Foreign Policy" was organised, but in 2020 – a conference "Human Rights and Health".

Intercontinental youth work cooperation

Youth camp movements created by diaspora Latvians

[Youth seminar 2x2](#) is a camp for Latvian youth, both for those living abroad and in Latvia. During the camp young people participate in projects, discussions, lectures, excursions, dances, singing and many other joint activities.

The "2x2" camp was established in the sixties by Latvians in North America. The goal was to strengthen the Latvian identity among young people who were born outside Latvia, without losing ties with those who left Latvia as refugees during World War 2. Since summer 2015, "2x2" takes place also in Latvia, continuing the fifty-year tradition of Latvian camps in the USA. In 2019 two camps were organised – one in Canada and the other one in Latvia.

[The camp movement 3x3](#), symbolising three generations, was established by the Latvian diaspora in the USA, in 1981. The movement helped Latvians all over the world to connect, affirm their ethnic identity and preserve cultural traditions. Between 1981 and 2019, the organisation has organized 257 camps with 38 625 participants from all over the world.

International Youth Development Exchange Program between Latvia and Japan

The International Youth Development Exchange Programme aims to promote mutual friendship and understanding between Japanese youth and youth from overseas countries and to broaden the international perspectives of youths, as well as to foster the spirit of international co-operation and develop their ability to put into practice. Since 1994 the Agency for International Programs for Youth has organized 8 youth exchanges between Latvia and Japan. The last youth exchange was organised in 2018.

9.7 Current debates and reforms

New policy planning documents for the period of 2021-2027 are currently being developed.

10. YOUTH WORK

The youth policy is the purposeful set of activities in all the fields of state policy to promote the wholesome and versatile development of young people, their inclusion in society and improvement of life quality. As a result of implementing the youth policy, stakeholders (state and municipality institutions, youth organisations, etc.) promote the initiatives of young people, their participation in the decision-making processes and social life, support youth work and provide children with an easier transition to adult status envisaging corresponding activities for personal development of young people. The basis of the youth policy is youth work — a planned practical set of activities developed for young people (events, projects, programmes) in order to improve their life quality.

The everyday practical work with young people is carried out by **local governments**, setting up an institutional framework for the youth work at local level – appointing a responsible institution, recruiting youth affairs specialists and other employees,

establishing a youth centre and performing other activities. **Non-governmental organisations** are also an essential resource for the youth work.

10.1 General context

Historical developments

1990 - 1998

The first attempts to define youth as a separate target group of the national policy took place in the mid-90s. Several conferences were held between 1995 and 1997 aiming to harmonize the activities of the public sector and non-governmental organisations in the youth field. Whereas, targeted efforts to develop the youth policy in Latvia were launched in the late-90s, when stakeholders involved in the youth field began to realise that youth policy is not only related to interest education but includes many other important areas. The non-governmental sector had a major role in developing youth policy during this time period. In March 1998, the Cabinet of Ministers took note of the State Programme on Youth Policy for 1998-2002, which can be considered as the first youth policy planning document in Latvia.

1999 - 2001

Calls for more attention to the youth policy and the need to put it forward on the political agenda were announced in the Public Council of Youth Affairs, which sought to develop the youth policy as an independent national policy area. One of the proposals of the Council was to establish a position of the minister for youth affairs. The need for the development of the targeted youth policy was also mentioned in the Latvian youth congresses. In the First Congress (in April 1999), the youth policy was highlighted, while in the Second Congress (in May 2001) general youth-related issues like youth awareness, opportunities for the development of youth organisations, crime, health, social integration, education were discussed.

2002 - 2004

In 2002, the leading role in the development and the promotion of the Youth Law of Latvia was undertaken by the National Youth Council of Latvia setting up the Coordination Council (uniting representatives of ministries, the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments, the largest non-governmental organisations) and the so-called "Shadow Cabinet" (ensuring the participation of young people in the development of the Youth Law). At the beginning of 2002, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the State Programme on Youth Policy for 2002-2003 and the National Youth Policy Concept, where young people are defined as a demographic group aged 15-25 years and the youth policy defined as an independent national policy area. In the following years, both broad public and more narrow working groups' discussions were organised on the future Youth Law, in order to reconcile views and needs of different target groups. At this time, the Ministry of Education and Science was responsible for the development of the youth policy. In the second half of 2004, with the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers the youth policy area was placed under the responsibility of the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, establishing the Department of Youth Affairs. With Latvia's accession to the European Union (on 1 May 2004), there was a need for the integration of the European Union's common youth policy objectives into the national policy planning documents.

2005 - 2007

In 2005, the active work on the development of the Youth Law was taking place, which, however, did not yet succeed. According to the National Youth Policy Concept, the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs developed the State Programme on Youth Policy for 2005-2009. The programme aimed at creating a favourable environment which would help young people to start an independent life as a responsible member of society. In 2007, a group of international experts designated by the Youth and Sports Directorate of the

European Council conducted the international evaluation on the youth policy of Latvia, with in total more than 30 recommendations for the development and the implementation of the youth policy in Latvia.

2008

On 8 May 2008, after almost ten years of elaboration and harmonisation the Parliament adopted the Youth Law (entered into force on 1 January 2009), where young people are defined as persons aged 13 to 25 years. The Law aims at improving the quality of life of young people, promoting their initiatives, working virtue and patriotism, participation in decision making and in public life, and supporting youth work. Shortly after the Law was adopted, the Ministry of Education and Science undertook the task of the development and the coordination of the youth policy from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs. To ensure the coordination of the youth policy, the Youth Advisory Council was established aiming to promote the development and implementation of the coherent youth policy and to facilitate youth participation in decision-making and in public life. Representatives of public administration, local governments and youth organisations are represented in the Council.

2009 - 2011

Almost simultaneously with work on the Youth Law, the first long-term youth policy programming document – the Youth Policy Guidelines for 2009-2018 had been developed replacing the National Youth Policy Concept adopted in 2002. Consequently, based on the Youth Policy Guidelines, the State Programme on Youth Policy for 2009-2013 was developed. The programme is defined as the medium-term development planning document and it determines action directions of the youth policy and its performance indicators. In line with the programme and in light of the priorities of the European Union Council Presidency in youth policy, the annual programme had been also elaborated envisaging activities to be implemented in a one-year period. As youth policy planning documents have been developed in different time periods, they are only partly linked to the European Union level youth policy planning documents. For example, the objectives and thematic blocks defined in the EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018) are wider than those included in the Latvian Youth Policy Guidelines. In turn, indicators developed by the European Union in the youth field only partially overlap with the result indicators of the youth policy of Latvia. At the same time, the EU recommendations on youth policy are implemented as a cross-sectoral approach (involving representatives of different line ministries, as well as local governments and non-governmental sector), as well as in particular emphasizing youth research and regular evaluation of youth policy results. Since 2008 the youth policy monitoring has been carried out every year, surveying young people and obtaining their assessment on the most pressing problems among young people.

2012 - 2015

In 2012, the Ministry of Education and Science initiated the development of the youth policy implementation index and conducting the first pilot study. The youth policy implementation index was conceived as a multidimensional indicator that provides an opportunity to evaluate the results of the implementation of the youth policy in eight thematic blocks defined in the Youth Strategy of the European Union. However, two years later it was decided to cancel calculations of this index due to its complexity and restrictions for applying it. In 2013, by request of the Ministry of Education and Science, a mid-term evaluation of the Youth Policy Guidelines for 2009-2018 was carried out. The evaluation identified significant shortcomings in this planning document, and therefore it was recommended not to continue its implementation, but to develop a new planning document.

2016 - 2020

In 2014, the work on the development of a new youth policy planning document was launched and in 2016 the Youth Policy Action Plan for 2016-2020 entered into force. It aims to improve the quality of life of young people by achieving the implementation of the

coherent youth policy and its coordination at all levels, identifying priority actions and policy results. The plan defines fundamental principles, values, key challenges for the youth policy, identifies actions, main tasks and achievable results for the next years. Since 2016, the Ministry of Education and Science has been pursuing the an annual contest “Youth Capital City of Latvia” with a view to promoting youth work in municipalities. There are extensive and multilateral events of the youth field with participation of young people taking place in the winning municipality. So far, this status has been awarded to: Jelgava, Liepaja, Madona, Ikšķile and Olaine municipalities. Since 2017, increased attention has been paid to the development of the youth policy at local level – within the framework of the state programme on youth policy, based on project calls funding is available for local governments for implementation of the youth policy at a local level and for creation of a system of the youth work at a local level.

National definition or understanding of Youth Work

In Youth Law, youth work is defined as a set of planned youth-oriented practical measures that ensure the implementation of youth policy, the development of value orientation of young people and the consolidation of the values of the common human being.

The basic objectives of youth work that are defined in [Youth Law](#) are:

1. to support and promote initiatives of young people, creating favorable conditions for their intellectual and creative development;
2. to provide young people with the opportunity to acquire life-skills, knowledge and competences through non-formal education;
3. to enable young people to make effective use of their free time;
4. to provide young people with access to information relevant to their needs.

10.2 Administration and governance of youth work

Governance

Youth policy and youth work are defined by [the Youth Law](#) (in force since 2009). It defines the responsible authorities, their competencies, the order for allocation of funding, the opportunities and principles of the participation of young people, and other important regulatory matters. The youth policy directions, activities, result indicators, involved and responsible institutions are detailed in the Youth Policy Action Plan for 2016-2020. Besides, the youth policy in specific thematic aspects is also defined in the planning documents of line ministries (education, social sector, health care, regional development, etc.) – in Latvia youth policy is explicitly cross-sectoral policy, with a very broad range of involved institutions. The Ministry of Education and Science, responsible for the youth policy elaborates an annual state programme on youth policy setting the annual priorities of the youth policy, activities to be implemented, and the funding allocated for that. All these documents define the youth policy at the national level. Whereas, local governments plan youth work at the local level, elaborating local planning documents of the youth policy development and providing an institutional framework for the youth work.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

The implementation of youth policy is influenced by several aspects because the life of young people is connected with the majority of state policy fields, therefore this is the inter-sectoral policy that has to implement particular tasks of youth policy; support youth initiatives, non-formal education, opportunities for useful free-time activities, access to information.

In order to ensure the youth and youth workers, as well as the policymakers on the state and municipality level with the information connected with youth affairs, the Ministry of Education and Science administers the Youth Policy and Youth Opportunities Portal www.jaunatneslietas.gov.lv.

According to their functions, the municipalities carry out youth work taking into consideration the basic principles of youth policy and the state policy planning documents in the field of youth. Municipal youth affairs specialists work with youth and collaborate with persons involved in the implementation of youth policy, come up with suggestions for the development of youth policy, implement and coordinate informative and educational events, projects and programmes in the field of youth policy and other activities that promote the improvement of life quality of young people.

Main actors:

National level

Ministry in charge of youth – the Ministry of Education and Science

Other ministries: the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Offices: [State Agency for International Programmes for Youth \(National Agency\)](#)

The Agency for International Programmes for Youth is subordinated to the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia. The objective of the Agency is to promote youth voluntary service, activities and mobility (e.g. with EU, Eastern Partnership, MEDA countries). The Agency implements non-formal learning and information programmes and projects targeted at youth and those working with youth and supports the link between non-formal learning and lifelong education.

Local (municipal) level

On the local level, the main actors in youth policy are the municipalities and the institutions subjected to them. One of the local government's functions is planning and implementing youth work, by taking into consideration the basic principles of youth policy and the documentation for the planning of state youth policy development. According to the Youth Law, local governments plan local work with the youth, creating the documentation of local government youth policy (for example, youth work strategy).

Each local government creates its own institutional system for youth work, by appointing the responsible institution or responsible employees for implementing youth work. A local government is authorised to recruit a youth affairs specialist and establish a youth centre, Advisory Committee on Youth Affairs or Youth Council.

In accordance with the information of the Ministry of Education and Science, in 105 of 119 municipalities, there is at least one staff member working with young people (in Latvia in total there are 328 such employees (on average in Latvia there is one youth worker for 800 young people)), in 93 municipalities there is at least one NGO that performs youth work, in 87 municipalities there are youth centres, only 40 municipalities have youth councils, and in only 27 municipalities is there a youth advisory committee.

In order to promote the implementation of youth work in municipalities according to the long-term national planning documents the general criteria to assess youth work in municipalities were developed. There are 105 general criteria grouped in 10 thematic sections that can be used to assess the current situation in youth work.

The National Youth Council

The [National Youth Council](#) of Latvia was founded in 1992 as a public youth organisation whose members are youth organisations and youth organisation associations. In 2019 they have 28 member organisations. Members of the National Youth Council of Latvia identify and try to solve a variety of youth-related questions and enable the participating organisations to intervene on young people's needs and growth, ensuring the flow of information and their support.

The National Youth Council of Latvia provides information to the public and promotes civic participation of young people, encouraging them to engage in youth organisations. It

organises non-formal education activities and represents the youth organisations. Its tasks are to represent the interests of young people in Latvia and in international institutions, as well as to gather the views of young people, explore their options, preferences in different regions of Latvia and to help them implement the various youth initiatives. Thus the mission of the National Youth Council of Latvia is to promote youth organisations, development, and comprehensive co-operation, to motivate young people to get involved.

Furthermore, the National Youth Council of Latvia is a member organisation of the European Youth Forum and organisations in Latvia such as the Civil Alliance Latvia.

Youth and youth work NGOs

According to the Youth Law, a youth organisation is a society that is registered in the register of associations and foundations and on the list of youth organisations, that meet several criteria defined in the law: (1) one of the purposes of activity specified in the statutes of the association is youth work, the promotion of youth initiatives and participation in decision making and social life; (2) the association carries out youth work and the tasks of the association defined in the statutes correspond to at least three main tasks defined in the third part of article 2.1 of the law; (3) at least two-thirds of the members of the association are children and young people, or associations where in total at least two-thirds of the members are children and young people; and (4) the participation of young people is ensured in administrative institutions of the association, and the procedures for this participation are specified in the statutes of the respective association.

At beginning of 2022, 42 youth organisations that meet the criteria have been registered officially in the register of youth organisations of Latvia. A full list of organisations can be found [here](#).

Not all youth organisations are registered in the register (as not all are motivated to do so) – data from a [survey of municipalities in 2018](#) showed that there are more than 250 NGOs in municipalities that do youth work. But representatives of municipalities also mention that only a small part of them are active in the youth field. One of the main obstacles to more active work is the lack of financing.

10.3 Support to youth work

Policy legal framework

The Department of Policy Initiatives and Development within the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) is primarily responsible for youth policy and issues. Its major tasks include promoting cooperation, implementing youth measures, organizing training for youth workers, and enabling access to information. Municipalities take responsibility for implementing youth policy through the creation of local youth policy planning documents. A Youth Advisory Council exists to promote a coherent youth policy and encourage youth participation in decision-making and public life.

Funding

National level

The main responsible institution for the annual National Youth Programme funding is the Ministry of Education and Science. The National Youth Programme provides yearly support to local authorities, municipalities, and youth organisations. The National Youth Agency is in charge of this process. Any additional funding available to the youth field from other ministries and institutions is directly managed by each institution.

Regional and local level

The municipal budget allocation for youth differs according to the availability of funding in each municipality. There is no estimated amount known, as no survey has been carried out to calculate the amount that is allocated in the field of youth at the municipal level. It

is also very complicated to collect financing data as there is no particular methodology as to what budget lines should or should not be considered as relating to youth work (especially regarding the education, culture, and sports fields).

International funding

Whereas the state funding for the youth field is rather small, opportunities for international funding are crucial for the development of youth work in Latvia. International financing for the youth field in Latvia is coordinated by the State Agency for International Programmes for Youth. The most significant sources of international funding are "Erasmus+: Youth in Action"; the Latvian-Switzerland co-operation programme (ended in 2017); and the European Union funds for the programming period 2014-2020.

Cooperation

The Youth Law defines – the Ministry of Education and Science ensures the development of a single national policy in the youth field and its coordinated implementation, including the cooperation of involved institutions in the implementation of the youth policy. The development and the implementation of the coherent youth policy and the participation of young people in decision-making and in public life is facilitated by the Youth Advisory Council – an advisory body established by the Cabinet of Ministers, comprising delegated representatives of public administration, local governments, and youth organisations. However, in everyday practice the youth policy is decentralised in Latvia – each of the involved institutions is co-ordinating the activities of the specific area, but the Ministry of Education and Science defines the overall objectives and actions to be achieved. Line ministries and subordinate institutions define and implement sectoral policies (health – the Ministry of Health, social affairs – the Ministry of Welfare, employment – the State Employment Agency, etc.). The implementation of Latvian, the European Union, and other international programmes, projects and initiatives for youth work is provided by the Agency for the International Programmes for Youth (under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Science). The Agency gives young people the opportunity to elaborate projects, disseminates interesting and useful information to young people about their opportunities, facilitates exchanges of experience and provides advice on project writing. The everyday practical work with young people is carried out by local governments, setting up an institutional framework for the youth work at the local level – appointing a responsible institution, recruiting youth affairs specialists and other employees, establishing a youth centre and performing other activities.

In Latvia, different line ministries offer different welfare and social services for young people within their field of competence via the agencies and institutions assigned to them. The main actors and their competencies are the following:

- 1) The Ministry of Welfare develops youth-friendly state policies in the sphere of social services and social assistance, oversees their implementation and ensures support to unemployed young people and job seekers by organising active employment activities.
- 2) The Ministry of Justice is the leading state administration institution covering legal issues. It co-ordinates the public registers, the state policy on the penal system and criminal punishment, and the implementation of these policies. The State Probation Service is subordinated to the Ministry of Justice, and it organises forced labour and public work for minors, as well as assistance to the youth after they have served their sentence.
- 3) The Ministry of Health ensures health care for the youth and promotes the development of a youth-friendly health care service.

Although based on the interdisciplinary approach, several and various national, regional and local level institutions are involved in youth work, yet the co-ordinated action among these institutions is still a big challenge in Latvia. Each institution performs activities within their competence; only in rare cases are activities consulted on and co-ordinated with other institutions.

10.4 Quality and innovation in youth work

Quality assurance

There are no quality standards for youth work and youth workers, but there are occupational profile standards for youth affairs specialists and youth workers. Standards define needed competencies, education, and experience for those working in these professions.

Training for Youth affairs specialists (**responsible for the implementation: Ministry of Education and Science**)

[The regulations of Minister Cabinet No. 1047](#) states in the "Procedures for Training for Youth Affairs Specialists" that: "For the purpose of acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for the performance of professional duties, a specialist in youth affairs shall, within a period of two years from the date of taking up or taking up his or her duties, acquire a training program for a specialist in youth affairs (hereinafter referred to as "the training program") in a minimum of 80 academic hours."

European Charter on Local Youth Work (responsible for the implementation: National Agency)

Latvian National Agency was one of the partners in Erasmus+ strategic cooperation project "Europe Goes Local", this project produced the [European Charter on Local Youth Work](#) as one of its main outcomes.

Quality Criteria for youth center work (developed by organization Baltijas Reģionālais Fonds, popularized by **Ministry of Education and Science**)

A national organization "Baltijas Reģionālais Fonds" participated in project developing "High Quality for Youth Centers" with partners from Estonia, Latvia, Hungary and Spain.

The four partners of this project (CJCV, BRF, EDELA EESTI and ISOS) worked for 24 months team to design an [ideal youth centre-space manual](#), with presence both online and offline.

Research and evidence supporting Youth Work

Once a year the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia studies the situation in municipalities (surveying municipalities), asking representatives of municipalities to send information about youth work at local level – institutions involved, planning documents developed, NGOs active in the field, main statistical data about youth, etc.

Information about youth policy and other related information, as well as statistical data and researches on different youth issues, is published on the website of the Ministry of Education and Science.

Website of the Ministry of Education and Science: [in Latvian](#) | [in English](#)

The portal serves as a guide where wide-ranging information on youth policy is available. Information and links to access necessary and interested information on different themes, such as youth employment possibilities, education, involvement, culture, sport, etc. are also available in the portal. Additionally, there are a youth organisations database and a youth affairs co-ordinators database that include contact information.

Portal of youth issues: [in Latvian](#) | [in English](#)

The database of researches and publications collects all studies, publications and methodologies of public institutions starting from 2000. Besides, a list of perspective studies, publications and methodologies planned for the two years ahead is also available in the database.

Database of researches and publications available on the [website of the State Chancellery in Latvian](#)

Statistical databases about social, economic, environment and other issues are freely available on the website of the Central Statistical Bureau. Although youth statistics are not grouped as a separate category of the database, by selecting data by age parameters, it is possible to obtain varied information about youth target group.

Databases of the Central Statistical Bureau: [in Latvian](#) | [in English](#)

Participative Youth Work

Section 7 of the [Youth Law](#) on the "Participation of Young People in the Development and Implementation of Youth Policy" states that Young People have the right to participate in the development and implementation of youth policy by:

- 1) engaging in non-formal education and volunteering;
- 2) acting in self-government groups in educational institutions;
- 3) developing and implementing projects as well as other initiatives;
- 4) participating in youth organizations, as well as other associations and foundations;
- 5) being involved in the state and local government decision-making process that are influencing implementation of youth policy ;
- 6) engaging in other activities aimed at promoting the participation of young people in the design and implementation of youth policy.

Smart youth work: youth work in the digital world

In order to enable young people and those involved in youth work to take full advantage of the benefits of digital youth work, much attention is being paid to issues such as digital and media literacy in the country. The knowledge and skills of youth professionals and youth workers is an important resource for developing media literacy among young people. Taking into account that the training of youth specialists and youth workers is provided by the Ministry of Education and Science, since 2018 the Ministry of Education and Science has included media literacy in the training of these specialists. The mentioned training is provided in cooperation with the support of specialists of the Ministry of Culture.

Media literacy issues are included in the content of both formal and non-formal education. For example, in April 2018, pupils in grades 3 and 6 were given the opportunity to perform diagnostic work, organized by the Latvian Safer Internet Center and the National Center for Education, dedicated to assessing pupils' knowledge and skills in Internet safety and media literacy. In addition, in 2018, media projects managed by the Society Integration Fund and the National Regional Development Agency supported 20 projects in categories such as lie deconstruction, promotion of media literacy and media criticism.

In order to develop young people's creative technical thinking and change their role from technology consumers to "critical" creators, Latvia is focusing on STEM programs at all levels and levels of education, including both formal and non-formal education.

For example, various social education projects aimed at developing digital skills among young people have been established and are successfully operating in Latvia. One such project and good practice in the area of cooperation between public and private entrepreneurs is the [Start \(IT\) project](#) implemented by the Start (IT) Education Foundation. The aim of this project is to develop pupils' digital skills and to promote advanced computer and digital skills in schools. The Foundation is one of the successful examples of cooperation between the private and public sectors, showing that companies in the country are interested in engaging in the development of state-of-the-art curricula. The Start Foundation (IT) offers everyone the opportunity to learn free computer science and programming, which is currently used by more than 24,000 teachers and students across Latvia. This portal provides students, students and teachers with digital curricula and educational materials. The materials developed by the Foundation are used by both educators and students in more than 300 schools in Latvia.

The Foundation has produced and offers materials for active use such as Introduction to Programming, Computer Security, Virtual Reality, Android Mobile Application Development, Robotics, 3D Modeling and Printing. With the help of the project, employees of the largest IT companies in Latvia have the opportunity to become school mentors. These mentors lead guest lectures on trends, challenges and innovations in the IT industry, and help teachers incorporate technology into the learning process. In 2018, UNESCO has included Start (IT) in the list of top 12 IT education projects among 195 UNESCO member states.

10.5 Youth workers

Status in national legislation

Once a year the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia studies the situation in municipalities (surveying municipalities), asking representatives of municipalities to send information about youth work at the local level – institutions involved, planning documents developed, NGOs active in the field, main statistical data about youth, etc.

There are no other regular youth work research activities.

According to the [survey done at the beginning of 2019](#), in total 356 persons involved in youth work (youth affairs specialists, youth workers and others) are employed in local municipalities.

There are no quality standards for youth work and youth workers, but there are occupational profile standards for youth affairs specialists and youth workers (at the start of 2020 the standards will be renewed). Standards define needed competencies, education, and experience for those working in these professions.

The education and training of persons engaged in youth work in Latvia is regulated by the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 1047 "Procedure for Training of Youth Affairs Specialists" (hereinafter - Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 1047) and the objectives, which are aimed at education and qualification of persons involved in youth work, are defined in the Youth Policy Implementation Plan 2016-2020. year.

A youth affairs specialist is a person who plans, carries out and coordinates youth work. He works with those involved in youth policy. Develops proposals at the local level for the development of youth policy, implements and coordinates information and education activities, projects and programs in the field of youth policy, promotes civic education of young people, promotes youth volunteering and participation in decision-making and public life, advises young people, the development and implementation of projects and programs, and contributes to the personal development of young people. **A youth worker** is a person who works with youth, involving young people in the implementation and evaluation of youth work; provide activities and useful leisure activities for young people at the local level; participates in the implementation of international events and projects, advises young people on topical issues; ensure the availability and circulation of information on youth policy issues.

Education, training and skills recognition

The Youth Law states that to obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for performing his professional duties, a youth affairs specialist shall, within two years from the day he has taken up employment or been recruited, take a training programme for a youth affairs specialist for a minimum of 80 academic hours. The content of this training programme is defined in regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers (issued under the Youth Law). However, as the financial capacity of the Ministry of Education and Science is restricted, not all youth affairs specialists have the opportunity to enter this training programme.

According to the data of the Ministry of Education and Science, the following number of youth affairs specialists have completed mandatory training:

- 2010 – 25 youth affairs specialists
- 2011 – No data
- 2012 – No data
- 2013 – 43 youth affairs specialists
- 2014 – 20 youth affairs specialists
- 2015 – 18 youth affairs specialists
- 2016 – 23 youth affairs specialists
- 2017 - 23 youth affairs specialists
- 2018 - 26 youth affairs specialists
- 2019 - 24 youth affairs specialists

At the end of 2018, a new training program for Youth workers were developed and 24 of them finished the training program in 2019.

At end of 2019, 20 youth workers started the training (they are supposed to finish the program in mid of 2020).

Numerous local experience-sharing seminars provide a similar contribution to the professional development of youth workers. Such seminars are another way of ensuring the professional development of those involved in youth work. For example, the Youth Capital of Latvia has the task of organizing an experience exchange seminar with youth actors in its municipality each year to set a good example, promote the development of competencies and networking among youth workers.

Mobility of youth workers

Youth Workers' Mobility Projects aim to promote the professional development of youth workers in an international environment, thereby enhancing the capacity of the organizations involved and enhancing youth work. Youth workers' mobility activities are based on the principles and methods of non-formal education, incl. using the Youthpass learning assessment tool in the learning process. At the end of the project, each participant has the opportunity to receive a Youthpass certificate.

In addition, between 2017 and 2019, the National Agency for International Programs for Youth has provided long-term, individualized support to 29 municipal youth practitioners and youth workers on developing a youth work planning document and improving the quality of youth work. In 2019, support through the process of supervision was provided for 11 municipal youth affairs specialists.

In 2018, the National Agency has provided 1100 youngsters and youth workers the chance for to participate in 90 national and international events on topics such as social inclusion, youth work in municipalities, human rights education, intercultural education, volunteering, youth participation, etc.

10.6 Recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work

Existing arrangements

As Latvia at the moment does not have a formal system for the recognition of competences, two EU proposed tool's - Youthpass un Europass, are usually used.

On 6 July 2007, the commission of the program "Youth in Action" has approved Youthpass (Youth Passport) implementation. Youthpass is an initiative of SALTO Resource Centre, which main task is to develop a Europe-wide recognition of a document that facilitates the

awareness and recognition of the skills and knowledge acquired within the EU's non-formal education program "Youth in Action".

Youthpass certificates are currently available for all the participants of the submitted projects of youth exchange and training courses, as well as the participants of Volunteering projects. The project implementers are obliged to inform the involved participants of the project about their rights to obtain Youthpass, as well as provide Youthpass issuance for each participant requesting it.

Youthpass projects may help young people to analyse their learning process and results. Agency for International Programs for Youth implemented its various training provides information on Youthpass (the use of the learning process in the organization of projects, eight core competencies, Youthpass significance, etc.). Latvian young people's interest in obtaining this certification is increasing each year.

In 2019 almost 20,000 project participants have received Youthpass certificates in Latvia since the introduction of Youthpass. Under the program "Youth in Action" (2007 to 2013) in Latvia under 8700 certificates were issued.

Skills

The Key Competencies evaluated are:

1. Multilingual competence
2. Personal, social, and learning to learn competence
3. Citizenship competence
4. Entrepreneurship competence
5. Cultural awareness and expression competence
6. Digital competence
7. Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology, and engineering
8. Literacy competence

10.7 Raising awareness about youth work

Information providers

Information about youth policy and other related information, as well as statistical data and researches on different youth issues, is published on the website of the Ministry of Education and Science. Website of the Ministry of Education and Science: [in Latvian](#) | [in English](#).

The portal serves as a guide where wide-ranging information on youth policy is available. Information and links to access necessary and interesting information on different themes, such as youth employment possibilities, education, involvement, culture, sport, etc. are also available in the portal. Additionally, there are a youth organisations database and a youth affairs co-ordinators database that include contact information. Portal of youth issues: [in Latvian](#) | [in English](#).

The database of researches and publications collects all studies, publications, and methodologies of public institutions starting from 2000. Besides, a list of prospective studies, publications and methodologies planned for the two years ahead is also available in the database. Database of researches and publications available on the [website of the State Chancellery in Latvian](#).

Statistical databases about the social, economic, environmental and other issues are freely available on the website of the Central Statistical Bureau. Although youth statistics are not grouped as a separate category of the database, by selecting data by age parameters, it is possible to obtain varied information about the youth target group. Databases of the Central Statistical Bureau: [in Latvian](#) | [in English](#).

Key initiatives

To promote Youth work since 2016 the Ministry of Education and Science has organised an annual contest, "Youth Capital City of Latvia". As a result of this contest, a local government is selected and declared as the Youth Capital City for the next year. Throughout the year, different youth events and initiatives of youth work and youth participation take place there. In 2016 the winner was the city of Jelgava, in 2017 – the city of Liepaja, in 2018 – the city of Madona, in 2019 – cooperation between the municipalities of Ikšķile and Olaine, in 2020 – the city of Ventspils.

The Ministry of Education and Science also organises an annual contest, "The Best in Youth Work", whose aim is to express the appreciation of the Ministry of Education and Science to the local governments, to persons who are involved in youth work, as well as to youth organisations and associations that perform youth work investing in improving the quality of life of young people.

Efforts to reach youngsters

Today's trends indicate that one of the most popular activities for children and adolescents is following various Internet "celebrities" - video story-makers and influencers on the YouTube platform. Therefore, taking into consideration the Internet usage habits of young people and in order to reach an even wider audience of Latvian youth, the Ministry of Education and Science has collaborated with Youtube.com video story makers - young people who are popular with their peers. As a result of this collaboration in 2018, a total of five video stories were created and published on various topics relevant to youth work.

In order to inform a wider group of young people about current issues in youth policy, participation opportunities, voluntary work, youth center initiatives, etc., the Ministry of Education and Science disseminated information on the above-mentioned issues topical to young people through Latvian radio pieci.lv. Radio pieci.lv is a public media that is especially popular among youngsters, as it brings together different opinion leaders between young people. As a result of the cooperation, events were organized in the regions in, as well as different podcasts about issues in regards to European Youth Goals were created in 2019 and the collaboration will continue in 2020.

National Agency for International Programs for Youth

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Latvian youth participation in or participation in international European youth exchange, initiative, solidarity or volunteering projects. Overall, around 100,000 young people in Latvia have taken advantage of these opportunities, according to data compiled by the Agency for International Programs for Youth. To promote the opportunities Europe offers to young people, National Agency invites young people and youth workers to a photo exhibition "The Moment", which will be on view from December 6 to 20 at the Latvian National Library (M floor).

The photos included in the exhibition are different moments of photography from different projects implemented by young people in Latvia and abroad. "With this exhibition, we want to show young people in Latvia how vast their opportunities are across Europe and how great and lasting an impact can be even with a project that lasts only a few days. At the same time, we would like to remind that "Erasmus+: Youth in Action" and "European Solidarity Corps" projects are open to all young people in Latvia, regardless of their place of residence, knowledge of foreign languages, grade level at school, the financial status of the family or other factors. It is planned that this exhibition of JSPA will visit all regions of Latvia in 2020, visiting Kurzeme, Vidzeme, Latgale and Zemgale.

10.8 Current debates and reforms

At the end of 2021 a national working group for updating the occupational profile standards for youth affairs specialists and youth workers was renewed and it will work

towards updating the professional standards for youth work field professions and creating according to education paths in Educational institutions.

In 2021 a National working group on the development of a common model for non-formal education for young people resumed work on formal recognition of non-formal education.

In 2019 [Intermediate Evaluation Of Youth Policy Implementation Plan 2016-2020](#) was ordered and carried out to strengthen the work on new Youth Policy Implementation Plan development for 2021 – 2027. [Intermediate Evaluation Of Youth Policy Implementation Plan 2016-2020](#) identified key challenges in youth work and youth policy. Summarizing the views and evaluations of the target groups expressed in quantitative surveys, interviews and discussions, as well as various previous studies and evaluations, several important problem areas in youth policy and youth work can be defined:

Human resources

Human resource scarcity has been highlighted for many years as an essential issue for the full potential of youth work. For example, although the number of municipalities with at least one youth worker is increasing, this does not in itself indicate that youth work is successful and meaningful. Most often, this work is done by one person (sometimes part-time), acting as both a youth specialist and a youth worker. In addition (and in this respect, the issue of funding comes up again), this is most often a low-paid job. The long-term effects are the high turnover of youth workers - about 1/3 of those involved in youth work only 2-3 years before the change of job. Not only does this have an impact on human resources as such, but also on the sustainability of the youth work system - while the sector is undergoing extensive and diverse training and capacity-building work, with high staff turnover, existing human resources are not sustainable and efficient, if a large number of people leave the sector in the next few years. This is also indirectly confirmed by the fact that one of the essential topics of the training required is the acquisition of the basic principles of youth work. In an ever-changing workforce, a lot of resources need to be invested in providing basic knowledge and competencies, thus not contributing to the sustainability of the sector.

Interinstitutional cooperation

Youth policy and youth work are highly inter-institutional and intersectoral. Although it is possible to set up youth councils at the municipal level, experience to date suggests that their work is mostly formal and irregular. At the same time, it is not possible to state unequivocally that the problem is precisely the reluctance of the institutions to cooperate (although it is often observed); rather, there is a lack of understanding, directly and indirectly, of the specific and practical activities each of the context. In this respect, one can also talk about recognizing youth work as such. It would be important to have a clear and practical definition of exactly what activities are (or are not) carried out within the framework of youth work, which would also allow for more 'Competition' with the general education sector & recognition of non-formal education.

The issue of 'competition' between formal and non-formal education is still being addressed. This is particularly true in smaller municipalities, where there is a "competition" between children and young people between educational institutions and between educational institutions and other youth work institutions. In addition, there is also a need to recognize non-formal education. Understanding of non-formal education in different target groups is still low and its role and contribution to youth development is often not understood even by those directly involved.

National and local responsibility in youth work

The Youth Law defines the rights of municipalities in youth work, but does not define obligations. This makes it very difficult to update youth work and its practical implementation and implementation. At the same time, the formal imposition of duties does not contribute to meaningful youth work; This is also implicitly stated in the results

of the survey conducted in the framework of this evaluation, where the target groups indicate that they would like more political understanding and support.

Funding models

Although the number of municipalities receiving funding for youth work has increased in recent years, as well as national funding in the youth field, underfunding remains one of the major barriers to the development of youth work. There are three aspects to funding availability.

Firstly, funding for long-term and sustainable youth work. The project funding approach has led to a situation where youth work is almost exclusively within the reach of project funding. While specific projects are funded, youth work is ongoing, but when projects end or project funding periods are completed, youth work is interrupted without succession.

Secondly, it is essential to separate funding for the maintenance of the youth work system and funding specifically for youth initiatives and to ensure both. At present, it is often the case that municipalities provide funding for infrastructure and staff remuneration, but do not provide any funding for the implementation of activities, including not always municipalities are responsive to co-financing projects. As a result, formal infrastructure and staff are often maintained, but there is little or no real youth work.

Third, the funding model as such. There is currently no clear and transparent system for who and what is funded in youth work. There is a relative breakdown: state budget funding, municipal budget funding, EU, etc. financing of programs. However, it is not logically structured and transparent. For example, it is not possible to identify specifically the funding allocated to youth work by municipalities, as each municipality has different practices in accounting for and allocating funding to specific sectors (education, culture, sport, etc.). On the other hand, there is no clear definition of what kind of activities are funded from one or another source between national and municipal funding.

GLOSSARY

Apprenticeship: Systematic, long-term training alternating periods at the workplace and in an educational institution or training centre. The apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage or allowance). The employer assumes responsibility for providing the trainee with training leading to a specific occupation. In French, the term '*apprentissage*' relates to both apprenticeship and the process of learning. The German 'dual system' is an example of apprenticeship. (Cedefop 2008 p.29)

Career guidance and counseling services: specific services, special courses and contacts with the world of work aiming at young people's development of career management skills.

Cross-sector cooperation: coordination and integration of measures across different policy sectors. Horizontal coordination between different actors and vertical coordination through different levels of government are equally important.

Early school leaving (ESL) refers to all forms of leaving initial education and training before completing the upper secondary level.

Europass is an initiative which aims to help people make their skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood in Europe, thus facilitating the mobility of both learners and workers. Specific Europass documents have been designed in such a way as to help people chronicle their skills and competences in a coherent manner, whether they are planning to enroll in an education or training programme, looking for a job, or getting experience abroad. Europass consists of a portfolio of five documents. Two documents which individuals can complete independently: Europass Curriculum Vitae (CV) and Europass Language Passport. Three documents which are completed by the competent organisation

on behalf of the individual: Europass Mobility, Europass Certificate Supplement and Europass Diploma Supplement.

Financial exclusion: a process whereby people encounter difficulties accessing and/or using financial services and products in the mainstream market that are appropriate to their needs and enable them to lead a normal social life in the society in which they belong (European Commission, 2008).

Flexicurity measures/policies: Flexicurity is a strategy to enhance both flexibility and security in the labour market. There are four policy components:

- flexible and reliable contracts through modern labour laws, collective agreements and work organisation (from the perspective of both the employers and workers);
- comprehensive lifelong learning to ensure the continuous adaptability and employability of workers, particularly the most vulnerable;
- effective active labour market policies to help people cope with rapid change
- modern social security systems including broad social security provisions that help people combine work with private responsibilities.

(Eurofound 2012 and European Commission 2007)

Formal education: education provided in the system of schools, colleges, universities and other formal educational institutions that normally constitutes a continuous 'ladder' of full-time education for children and young people, generally beginning at the age of five to seven and continuing up to 20 or 25 years old. In some countries, the upper parts of this 'ladder' are organised programmes of joint part-time employment and part-time participation in the regular school and university system: such programmes have come to be known as the 'dual system' or equivalent terms in these countries (Eurostat 2006, p. 13).

Formal learning: is defined as learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment (i.e. in an education or training institution or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time and resources). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to validation and certification (Cedefop 2008, p. 85).

Informal learning: intentional learning, but less organised and less structured than non-formal learning. It may include, for example, learning events (activities) that occur in the family, in the work place, and in the daily life of every person, on a self-directed, family-directed or socially directed basis (adapted from Eurostat, p. 13). Informal learning is learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective (Cedefop 2008, p. 133)

Information and communication services: refers to any of several types of voice and/or data information and communications systems, typically incorporating digital technology, that allow people to access, place and store information through the aid of devices such as personal computers, cellular mobile, and Internet applications.

Labour market/skills forecasting system: a system analysing future labour market trends. Most typically, skills supply and demand is forecasted in order to help different labour market actors – employees, employers, students and parents, social partners, policy makers – to take informed decisions and appropriate action concerning the labour market (Cedefop, 2012).

NEETs (Not in Employment, Education or Training): young persons between 15 and 24 years of age, who are not in education/training or in employment.

Non-formal education: any organised and sustained educational activities that do not correspond exactly to the above definition of formal education. Non-formal education may therefore take place both within and outside educational institutions, and cater to persons

of all ages. Depending on country contexts, it may cover educational programmes to impart adult literacy, basic education for out of school children, life-skills, work-skills, and general culture. Non-formal education programmes do not necessarily follow the 'ladder' system, and may have a differing duration (Eurostat 2006, p. 13).

Non-formal learning is defined as: learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designed as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view (Cedefop 2008, p. 93).

Traineeship: A work practice including an educational component (either as part of a study curriculum or not) which is limited in time. The purpose of these traineeships is to help the trainee's education to work transition by providing the practical experience, knowledge and skills that complete his/her theoretical education (European Commission 2012, p.4)

Youthpass is a tool for participants of projects funded by the Youth in Action Programme to describe what they have done and to show what they have learnt, through Youthpass certificates.

Youth work refers to a diverse range of activities, topics and measures provided by a range of actors in assorted fields and settings. Not all countries have a formal definition of youth work and amongst those that do, there is a variety of definitions. However, three core features define youth work distinct as distinct from other policy fields: a focus on young people, personal development, and voluntary participation. (GHK on behalf of EACEA & DG EAC, 2014)

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3. [Initiative “Latvian School Bag”](#)
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5. [Agency for International Programs for Youth](#)
6. [Ministry of Culture](#)
7. [Ministry of Foreign affairs of the Republic of Latvia](#)

ARCHIVE

Information from previous years can be accessed and freely downloaded through the PDF files below.

2020

[Latvia_2020.pdf](#)

2019

[Latvia_2019.pdf](#)

2018

[Latvia_2018](#)

2017

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