



## Report on the social inclusion and social protection of disabled people in European countries

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### Background:

The [Academic Network of European Disability experts](#) (ANED) was established by the European Commission in 2008 to provide scientific support and advice for its disability policy Unit. In particular, the activities of the Network will support the future development of the EU Disability Action Plan and practical implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People.

This country report has been prepared as input for the *Thematic report on the implementation of EU Social Inclusion and Social Protection Strategies in European countries with reference to equality for disabled people*.

The purpose of the report ([Terms of Reference](#)) is to review national implementation of the open method of coordination in Social inclusion and social protection, and in particular the National Strategic Reports of member states from a disability equality perspective, and to provide the Commission with useful evidence in supporting disability policy mainstreaming.



## **PART ONE: SOCIAL INCLUSION PLANS (GENERAL)**

### **1.1 Please describe how and where disabled people are included in your country's published plans for social inclusion and protection?**

Disabled people are included in following documents for social inclusion and protection (concepts, plans and reports):

1. Conception "Equal opportunities for all" 1998.;
2. Latvian National Action Plan for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion (2004-2006);
3. Annual Information on Implementation on the Latvian National Action Plan for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion (last one in 2006.);
4. Main Policy Statement for Dimishing Disability and its Consequences 2005.-2015.;
5. Action Plan for Implementation of Main Policy Statement for Dimishing Disability and its Consequences 2005.-2015.;
6. National Report on Strategy for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006-2008.;
7. Information on Implementation of the National Report on Strategy for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006-2008. in 2006.

The basic attitude in preparing above mentioned documents is 'mainstreaming', except Conception "Equal opportunities for all", Main Policy Statement for Dimishing Disability and its Consequences 2005.-2015. and Action Plan for Implementation of Main Policy Statement for Dimishing Disability and its Consequences 2005.-2015.

Although people with disabilities are recognised as a risk group subjected to poverty and social exclusion, activities are planned using mainstream approach (Latvian National Action Plan for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion (2004-2006)).

Information about people with disabilities is included in Latvian National Action Plan for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion (2004-2006) Chapter 1. Major Trends and Challenges, Section 1.10.the situation of Social Exclusion Risk Groups, Sub-section 1.10.2.Disabled people, describing people with disabilities as social group at risk of social exclusion, subjected to several risk factors depending on types of disabilities, having difficulties in obtaining qualitative education, low employment level and insufficient number of social services for people with disabilities and their families aimed at the compensation of disability.

Chapter 3.Policy Measures, Section 3.14.Special State Support Measures for groups at Risk of Social Exclusion, Sub-section 3.14.2.Disabled People gives a description of Conception "Equal opportunities for all" which use an integrated approach and intends to implement an overall set of measures to eliminate barriers for the independent living of disabled people and their full participation in social life and Action plan for 2010. The chapter includes information about the draft "Law on Social Protection of Disabled Persons" which must define the main principles for the prevention of disability, widely used criteria in international practice for the determination of disability, and responsible institutions involved in assessment of persons' state and decision-making. It also includes information about the plans of Government to continue or broaden existing social services; for example, in vocational training, house adapting, technical aids.

In Chapter 5.Good Practice, Section Subsidised Employment Measures for disabled People gives information about implementation of subsidized employment measures for disabled persons in 2003, within the framework of the national central budget programme "Improvement of employability of unemployed" administered by State Employment Agency.

Action plans and National reports do not include specific actions for people with disabilities and measurement instruments or indicators for evaluation of achievements taking into account specific needs of people with different kinds of disabilities or age, or belonging to minorities.



The social situation of people with disabilities, problems and solution, necessary actions are not based on researches.

## **1.2 In reality, what major actions has your country taken and what are the positive or negative effects on disabled people? (policy or practical examples)**

In reality, after Conception "Equal opportunities for all" was accepted by Cabinet of Ministers in 1998, each of the involved ministries annually report about implemented activities, but basically those activities were not differing from every year planned activities which were closely connected to financial possibilities of state budget.

The main goal of the Conception "Equal opportunities for all" was to create equal possibilities for people with disabilities, promoting the social rehabilitation, restore of working capacities, acquirement of education and involvement in labour market. The concept was dealing with problems in the fields of health, education, employment, accessible environment and social security and includes action plan till 2010. The problems stated in the concept remains the same and as the evidence are new policy documents: Main Policy Statement for Diminishing Disability and its Consequences 2005.-2015. and Action Plan for Implementation of Main Policy Statement for Diminishing Disability and its Consequences 2005.-2015. with difference that those documents deal only with problems in the field of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Welfare (employment, social security, disability expertise, social services).

Conception "Equal opportunities for all" was one of the first policy documents dealing with disability issues. It includes Action plan for 2010. The following policy documents: Main Policy Statement for Diminishing Disability and its Consequences 2005.-2015. and Action Plan for Implementation of Main Policy Statement for Diminishing Disability and its Consequences 2005.-2015. are logical continuation. Conception and new policy documents repeat the same policies with difference stated in paragraph above.

Main Policy Statement for Diminishing Disability and its Consequences 2005.-2015. proposed drafting of new legislation: Law on Disability and Law on Employment of Disabled People. Law on Disability was submitted to Saeima in 2007. The draft Law on Disability is directed to establishment of the new disability expertise system.

The draft Law on Disability was submitted to Saeima in 2007. Discussions are still going on and the Law was not accepted by Saeima up to this time. Eventually there could be a lot of changes in the text of Law, but the main changes foresee that disability expertise will be carried out by State Agency and instead of existing three disability groups, in future level of disability will be stated using only two groups. Law foresees to delegate to the Government many important tasks (for example, to prescribe disability criteria), thus creating dissatisfaction of NGO for and of disabled people.

In 2003 a new Labour Law came into force including articles against discrimination in the employment field.

According to the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers each legislative act or policy planning document must be evaluated by NGOs. Disabled people organisations are involved in drafting of new policy documents and legislative acts by participating in working groups' on drafting documents, submitting comments on prepared documents using web pages of the ministries or Cabinet of Ministers.

In 1994 the National Council for Disabled People was established. National level disabled people organisations as members of the National Council for Disabled People have rights and duties to comment new legislation, policies and action plans, as the Council is co-ordinating body for policies in the field of integration of disabled people into society.



### 1.3 What is the most recent research about disabled people's equality and social inclusion in your country?

The most recent researches in connection with disabled people were done during last (2005-2007) years in the field of employment (Report 2 –employment). A common purpose in all projects is to evaluate the possibilities of people with disabilities in labour market and possibilities of integration into society and labour market, to state main problems and provide suggestions. Nevertheless some of the researches deal with the problems of poverty and social exclusion. For example, Risk Possibilities and Reasons for Unemployment and Social Exclusion of People with Disabilities (2006).

#### Key findings:

1. Woman with disabilities are more subjected to financial risks, they have less resources (mobile telephones, cars, internet) necessary for integration into labour market (*Reasons of low employment level of people with disabilities and solutions for the problems, Riga, 2007, Integration of People with Disabilities – Wheelchair users into Labour Market, Riga, 2006*).

The studies do not provide any specific figures on above mentioned financial risks or poverty risks for woman or in comparison with overall population. The studies are mainly based on interviews with target group (in study *Reasons of low employment level of people with disabilities and solutions for the problems* it was ~1000 people with disabilities, *Integration of People with Disabilities – Wheelchair users into Labour Market*: ~ 30 wheelchair users).

In the study *Reasons of low employment level of people with disabilities and solutions for the problems* was stated that the level of income in families, where people with disabilities are working, is more higher that in families, where disabled people are not working. All interviewed people were divided into 5 groups according to income level for one person in the family: I - (3,5 – 54,0 LVL), II - (55,0 – 74,5 LVL), III - (75,0-99,0 LVL); IV - (100,0-127,0 LVL) and V - (130,0-425,0 LVL). 79% of families, where people with disabilities are working, belong to last three groups.

2. As similar as people without disabilities, young people with disabilities have less problems for integration into labour market, more problems face people with disabilities in pre-pension age, but it is impossible to find a work for people with intellectual disabilities in cases when disability is evident or the cause of disability is mentioned in documents necessary for work.
3. People with disabilities with higher level of education have more possibilities to find a work, at the same time not all universities are interested in providing higher education for people with disabilities because of lack of adequate infrastructure and educational methods.
4. Best possibilities for integration into society have persons with education received in ordinary schools, but at the same time there is shortage of common attitude about necessity of integrated education. As main reasons are mentioned lack of financial resources and concern that level of education will be lower, if children with disabilities will attend the same class. There are cases, when children with disabilities are rejected form ordinary schools because of lack of accessible environment.
5. There is lack of information in society about people with disabilities, they problems and possibilities and lack of success stories in mass media.
6. Society is sceptical about integration of people with disabilities in society, because of they difference.



7. Latvia have a necessary legislation, political and planning documents, but have practical problems in implementation of them (*Reasons of low employment level of people with disabilities and solutions for the problems, Riga, 2007,*) At the same time legislation, policy and practice is not directed towards education and employment of people with mental disabilities. All people with disabilities are recognised as a single group and they specific needs stated by kind of disability are not taken into account (*Possibilities of People with Mental problems in the Labour Market, Riga, 2006*)
8. NGO have a great role in the field of employment, but at the same time the cooperation between different NGOs is weak.
9. Technical equipment for adjusted working places is not qualitative and does not support integration in society.
10. Lack of educated staff as social workers and ergo therapist (for adjusting working places).
11. Cases of discrimination in working places – refusal, lower salary, dismiss from work because of disability.
12. Lack of common data base, statistics about people with disabilities.

As most of the research were done in the employment field, mostly inequalities between different groups are stated in the employment field regarding possibilities to be employed, to get education (including vocational education and higher education), access of resources.

New research is needed in the fields of education, social security, accessible environment, discrimination. Specific researches are needed about equality and social inclusion of disabled people from childhood and people with different kinds of disabilities, disabled woman, older people and ethnic minorities.



## PART TWO: INCOMES, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

### 2.1 Research publications (key points)

Please tell us about recent research on poverty, income or pensions/benefits for disabled people in your country (e.g. including the poverty or income of different groups of disabled people, disabled women, older people, ethnic minorities etc.)

There are practically no important publications in Latvia in regards to research on poverty, income or pensions/benefits, as there has been no research (focusing only on disabled people) done on these issues. In the research that has been done, the mainstreaming principle is used.

Latvia is in need of all kinds of research in this field, including research on poverty of disabled people from childhood, income level or pensions/benefits for disabled young and older people, disabled women, researches on impact of disability pension to employment of people with disabilities.

### 2.2 Type and level of benefits (key points and examples)

*Disability pension; State Social Security Benefit; Supplement to the family state benefit for disabled child under 18 years of age; Disabled child raising allowance*

Situation on 1 January 2007:

Disability pension: Minimum pensions are based on the State Social Security Benefit of LVL 45 (€ 64) per month:

- Category I: 1.6 x State Social Security Benefit,
- Category II: 1.4 x State Social Security Benefit.
- The disability pension for category III is fixed at the amount of the State Social Security Benefit.

The Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers state that State Social Security Benefit is LVL 45 per month, but for people with disabilities from childhood: LVL 50.

*Disability pension* is calculated using 'ordinary' State Social Security Benefit (LVL 45), but if the disability pension will be calculated for person being disabled from childhood, then the used level of State Social Security Benefit will be LVL 50.

Disability is defined in the Law on Medical and Social Protection of Disabled People and is divided in to three groups: moderate disability (III group), and severe disability (I and II group). The level of disability is stated by State Medical Expertise Commission on Health and Working Capacities. The main criteria are working capacities, need of care and integration possibilities into society without or with support from other person.

*State Social Security Benefit* for people with disabilities: LVL 50 (€ 72) per month.

*Supplement to the family state benefit for disabled child under 18 years of age*: LVL 50 (€ 72) per month.

*Disabled child raising allowance*: LVL 50 (€ 72) per month.

*Disability pension* - All the persons below state pensionable age who are recognised as disabled persons and who have paid social insurance contributions or on whose behalf contributions have been calculated: including employees and self employed persons.



State Social Security Benefit – those people with disabilities from age 18, who have no rights to disability pension.

Supplement to the family state benefit for disabled child under 18 years of age.

Disabled child raising allowance provided to persons who are not employed and are raising disabled children with severe physical and functional disturbance under 18 years of age.

According to the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers Supplement to the family state benefit for disabled child under 18 years of age is paid to parent who has child with disability and disability is recognized by State Medical Expertise Commission on Health and Working Capacities. Supplement to the family state benefit for disabled child under 18 years of age in 2008 is LVL 50.

If the disabled child have severe physical and functional disturbance and it is recognised by the same Commission, the parent has the rights to receive additional allowance. In 2008 Disabled child raising allowance is LVL 150.

Number of recipients - Data (end of 2006):

Disability pension - 88192

State Social Security Benefit - 10 803

Supplement to the family state benefit for disabled child under 18 years of age - 10 592

Disabled child raising allowance – no data

More information can be found through:

<http://www.vsaa.gov.lv>, <http://lm.gov.lv/text/151>

### **2.3 Policy and practice (summary)**

The question of the financial income of people with disabilities is important for disabled persons but not for politicians. The question is actual in relation to low rates of state pensions.

During last year inflation rate is growing, pensions remain on the previous level.

The State social security benefit level for disabled persons from childhood is LVL 50 (€ 72) per month and these persons are living under relative line of poverty, which according to the data of Central Statistics Authority was LVL 88 in 2006.

There have been no important changes or modernizations of policies in Latvia. The last changes were in relation to increase level of state pensions for older people with high length of service.

People with disabilities are recognised as a risk group subjected to poverty and social exclusion in Latvian National Action Plan for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion (2004-2006), but activities are planned using mainstream approach. Disabled persons mainly are not treated as a separate group, there are no specific income policies for disabled and non-disabled people, with exception that minimum level for disability pension is stated by the Law.

The other difference is that Law on State Social benefits defines few social benefits for disabled persons, for example for compensation transportation expenses for people with mobility reductions.

The level of benefits and disability pension not only encourage but force young people to try to find paid employment (with lot of problems described in report 2-employment).

Pensions and benefits in Latvia do not encourage older disabled people to stay in paid employment. The level of disability pension and minimum salary are nearly the same. Plus older disabled people face problems in finding employment.



The accumulation of disability pension with earnings from work is allowed and there is no upper ceiling or other limitations for receiving both - disability pension and earned income at the same time.

There is absolutely no sustainable income for those disabled persons who receive a state social security benefit and are dependent on relatives.

Those who receive the minimum level of the disability pension are in the same situation, as disability pension level is based on the state social security benefit.

The number of disabled persons is not increasing so quickly. State policy mainly is targeted to support potential disabled people with medical rehabilitation and vocational rehabilitation services, in such way returning back people into ordinary lives and minimizing the number of people with disabilities. There is no evidence that financial system could not cope with problems of disabled person. It is political willingness to decide problem of income level for disabled persons from childhood who have no possibilities to work.





## SECTION THREE: CARE AND SUPPORT

### 3.1 Recent research publications (key points)

No specific reports or researches or publications, except publications in mass media after tragedy in one of the specialized social care centres, where lot of people with mental disabilities lost their lives after fire.

After tragedy the Ministry of Welfare organizes a special group including NGOs representing disabled persons and this group draft recommendations.

Key recommendations suggest development of different kind of alternative services (day care, short-term care, home care, assistants) near to living places of disabled persons instead of development of traditional long-term care in the institutions.

Latvia needs research done about possibilities on building partnership between public and private institutions for the development of personalized social services for disabled persons, barriers, financial possibilities. Researches about financial aspects of social care services, barriers in the development of alternative social services, public attitude to disabled people with need of high level of support are also needed.

### 3.2 Types of care and support (key points and examples)

Please tell us more about the state-of-the-art in care and support for disabled people in your country. What is available? What are the big changes in policy and practice? For example, in:

Care in the institutions is more traditional form of care in Latvia. Only during last 10-12 years day care services in day care centres were developed for persons with intellectual disability. With financial support from European Structural Funds within the framework of several projects administered by the Ministry of Welfare new forms of services were developed during last few years – half-way homes for disabled people living in the specialized social care centres, specialized workshops.

Personal assistance schemes were started by NGO and some municipalities. Main Policy Statement for Diminishing Disability and its Consequences 2005.-2015. and new Law on Disability foresee availability of personal assistant services for disabled people in near future, but again, people with intellectual disability are excluded.

In accordance with the Law on Social Services social care services for disabled persons are paid services (except long-term care in specialized care institutions). At the same time availability of temporary care services is unsatisfactory – lack of staff, institutions providing such form of care.

In some way state foresee help with housing (in legislation), practically help does not exist. Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers foresee financial support for adaptations of housing, but disabled persons face problem in receiving credits (loans) from banks because of low income level. Riga municipality provides municipal social benefit for adaptations of flat or house (and again except people with intellectual disability). Some of NGO establish first group homes and flats in Riga for people with intellectual disabilities. In general help with housing is unsatisfactorily.

Development of vocational rehabilitation services are of high importance in Latvia. With financial support from European Structural Funds within the framework of several projects administered by the Ministry of Welfare new forms of services were developed during last few years, new training programmes developed and introduced, infrastructure improved.



There are two main forms of support: adaptation of the car for disabled people with mobility reductions and social benefit for compensation of transportation expenses for people with mobility reductions. In addition some of the municipalities (for example – Riga municipality) allocates additional benefit.

The current system of care and support limits the choices of where a disabled person and also their families or relatives, can live. Main reasons; paid social care services, lack of personalised services, lack of specialists, careers, low level of service quality. And as the care services in the institutions are also paid services, lot of disabled people can't receive needed care services.

Can disabled people choose to manage their own finance for care and support? (e.g. using personal assistance budgets, direct payments, allowances to individuals or their carers, etc)

In regards as to whether or not disabled people can choose to manage their own finance for care and support, it depends on the place where and with whom disabled persons are living. In the social care institution disabled persons receive only 15% from the disability pensions or social benefits and can use them according to they wishes. The other part is used to cover service costs. Those disabled persons who lived with their families or relatives are free in using finances for care and support, except intellectually or mentally disabled people. In those cases family members are mainly those, who use the finances.

The quality and support depends on the financial resources of the individual or their family to large extent. The service costs are expensive, level of social benefits or pensions is low. The income level in family with disabled person decreases.



## **PART FOUR: SUMMARY INFORMATION**

### **4.1 Conclusions and recommendations (summary)**

New policies and legislation are developed during last years, but the current situation does not ensure inclusion and social protection to disabled people, in particular people with intellectual disabilities. Latvia has lack of finances for development of new kind of services and rising of social benefits. The situation during last 10 years remains the same, with the same problems stated in Conception "Equal opportunities for all" (1998). Disabled people are considered as a common group and there is no attention to the different needs of people with different kinds of disabilities or representing different other groups – young/old, women/men, low/high skilled, people with multiple disability, etc. There are a lot of problems for young intellectually disabled persons.

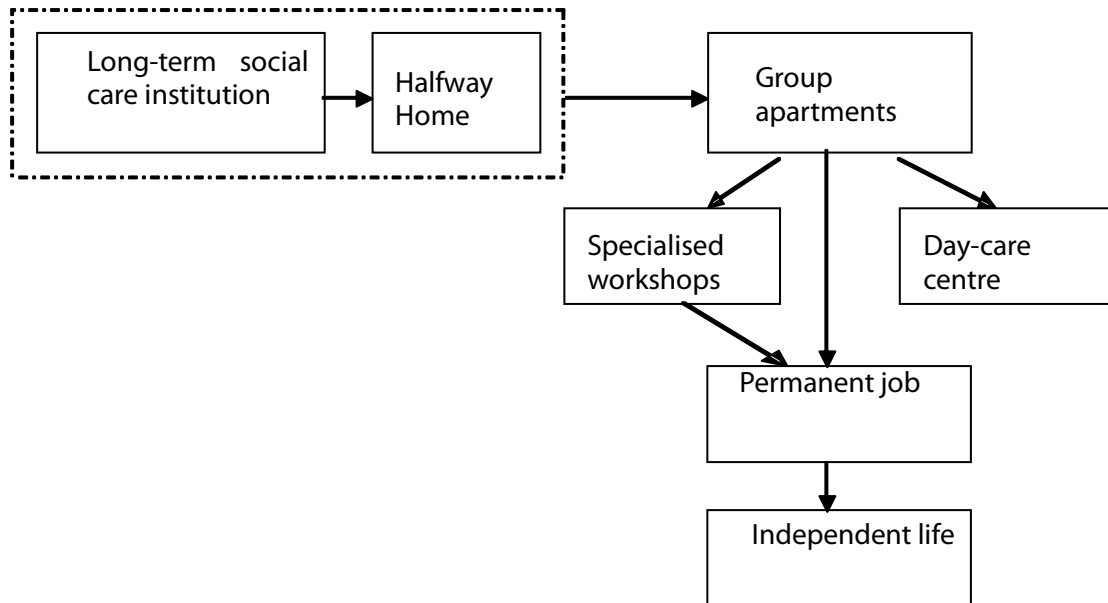
As the key objectives in the field of social inclusion in the National Report on Strategy for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006-2008. provide improvement of accessibility of education and labour market services to children and young people subjected to the risk of poverty and social exclusion, improvement of the access to resources and services for families, especially large and single-parent families, and for retired persons under risk of poverty, especially those living alone, no improvements could be envisaged for people with disabilities during period covered by National Report.

First of all there is a need for targeted researches in the disability field. It must be ceased to recognize disabled persons as common group. Different needs of people with different kinds of disabilities or representing different groups' - young/old, women/men, low/high skilled, people with multiple disability, etc. must be recognised and taken into account in drafting legislation and policies. As priority groups must be recognized young intellectually disabled persons and disabled persons from childhood, disabled woman, pre-pension age disabled persons, people with multiple disabilities.

### **4.2 One example of best practice (brief details)**

In order to create a basis for development of social services system and ensure provision of services corresponding to the individual needs and promoting inclusion, Ministry of Welfare at the end of 2004 launched implementation of the National Programme "Improvement of infrastructure and equipment of social care and social rehabilitation institutions". This National Programme envisages modernisation and adjustment of state social care and social rehabilitation institutions in order to enable provision of complex employment-oriented services corresponding to the need of clients at regional level.

The programme contains one joint cooperation project of local government and state social care and social rehabilitation institutions from each of the regions (5 projects in total). Each of the projects envisages provision of the clients of particular long-term social care institutions with additional services, such as halfway homes, day-care centres, social rehabilitation, skill (including vocational skills) development, specialized workshops, short-term care, group apartments, etc., in order to provide the clients staying in these institutions yet not in need of long-term social care a possibility to return for permanent residence in their local government and to join the labour market if possible (see the scheme):



Implementation of these projects will result in provision of the necessary support to those able to live and work on their own, whereas long-term social care will be provided to persons actually in need of it and pending on the waiting list for receipt of the service.

Thus, the social service network will be optimised in the respective area, accessibility and conformity of the service to quality requirements will be ensured, resources will be cost effective, and persons with mental disorders and their family members will be engaged in the labour market. The total costs of the programme amount to LVL 5.099.822 (EUR 7.256.392), with LVL 3.791.817 (EUR 5.395.269) of the sum co-financed by ERDF. <http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/549>

There is no specific information about results of this initiative or how many individuals benefit from it.



### 4.3 References

Latvian National Action Plan for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion (2004-2006)  
<http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/549>

Conception "Equal opportunities for all", Riga, 1998  
Available in Latvian <http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/61>

Main Policy Statement for Dimishing Disability and its Consequences 2005.-2015.  
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