LATVIA

[Yes] I.1.1. If the Convention has not been ratified yet

No

Yes

No

Does your country plan to ratify this instrument?

[No] I.1.1. If the Convention has not been ratified yet

The Supreme Council of the republic of Latvia on 4 May 1990 fulfilled all the necessary national procedures, which qualifies as ratification, to accede to the Convention. On June 12, 2009, Instrument of acceptance was deposited with the UNESCO. After receiving the instrument, UNESCO issued a notification declaring that it has received the instrument and that the Convention in respect of Latvia will come into force starting September 16, 2009.

No

Yes

Does your country plan to ratify this instrument?

No

[Already ratified] I.1.1. If the Convention has not been ratified yet

Yes

Does your country plan to ratify this instrument?

Please indicate the stage of ratification process reached by your country

The provisions specified in the Convention with respect to discrimination in education have been incorporated into the national Constitution and domestic law.

Constitution of the Republic of Latvia
Available: http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=57980
Date: Adopted: 15.02.1922.Enetred into force: 07.11.1922.
Aims: Article 112 of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia states that anyone is entitled to education. The State shall ensure that anyone may acquire primary and secondary education without charge. Primary education shall be compulsory. At the same time, Article 99 provides that anyone is entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
Please briefly explain which are the obstacles or difficulties encountered in completing the ratification process and the means of overcoming them

[Yes]

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I.1.2. If the 1962 Protocol instituting a Conciliation and Good Offices Commission to be responsible for seeking the settlement of any disputes which may arise between States Parties to the Convention against Discrimination in Education is not ratified yet:

Does your country plan to ratify this instrument?
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[No]

The provisions specified in the Convention with respect to discrimination in education have been incorporated into the national Constitution and domestic law.

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Education Law
Available: http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=57980
Date: Adopted: 29.10.1998. Entered into force: 01.06.1999.
Aims: The purpose of this Law is to ensure that every resident of Latvia has the opportunity to develop his or her mental and physical potential, in order to become an independent and a fully developed individual, a member of the democratic State and society of Latvia.

The Guidelines for Education Development Strategy 2014-2020
Available: http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=266406
Date: Adopted 22.05.2014. Entered into force: 22.05.2014.

The Guidelines is the only one sectoral policy planning document that has been adopted on the constitutional level. The Guidelines provides synergy at the national level between all relevant processes in the education policy planning and implementation. Main goal of the education development policy is high-quality and inclusive education for personal development, human welfare, and reaching sustainable national growth.

Linking Education Development Guidelines 2014 – 2020 with the main development planning documents:

The Growth Model for Latvia: People First (approved by the Saeima on October 26, 2005)
A long-term conceptual document defining the human-oriented development model for Latvia, with an emphasis on knowledge, wisdom, and ability to use them as a resource for growth. As a priority long-term task, the following improvements are defined in the education system: 1) everyone has guaranteed access to secondary education and provided opportunities to obtain high-quality higher and vocational education, 2) drastically increased preparation of higher qualification specialists (masters and doctors), increase in the proportion of technical knowledge and natural science at all levels of the education system.

Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia till 2030 approved by the Saeima on June 10, 2010)
"Latvia 2030" is hierarchically the highest national long-term development planning document that includes a conclusion of the necessity of a paradigm change in the education. The education must be of high-quality, accessible throughout the life, and creativity-oriented that allows to respond to challenges of the global competition and demography, and is one of the prerequisites for changing the economic model. The priority long-term lines of action: education accessibility and changes in the organisation of the educational process, school as a social networking hub, contextual education, and change of the teacher profession, e-school and the use of information technologies, lifelong learning.

Latvian National Development Plan 2014 – 2020 (approved by the Saeima on December 20, 2012) NDP 2020 is hierarchically the highest national medium-term development planning document. It determines the medium-term priorities also in the field of education and science, with an emphasis on such lines of actions as competence development and improvement of research, innovations, and higher education. Some of the main tasks that are defined includes high-quality pre-school education; inclusive education; improvement of the learning content; support for talent growth; training and attraction of creative and qualified teachers; development of vocational education in accordance with the labour market trends; accessibility of higher education, exportability, competitiveness and consolidation; youth involvement in the non-formal education and voluntary work; the promotion of youth employment incl. development of career education system; improvement of educational institutions incl. retention of small rural schools by supporting their function extension emphasising the service basket principle set for the territorial deployment of the educational service in the NDP 2020. For fulfilment of these tasks, MES has planned a series of measures that are also reflected in Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020.

The Latvian National Reform Programme for the Implementation of "EU 2020" Strategy (approved by the protocol decision of the CM meeting on April 26, 2011)
To ensure achievement of the goals set in the "Europe 2020" strategy, it includes the measures that facilitate implementation of the lifelong learning principle, structural changes in vocational education, modernisation of higher education, development of the potential of scientific activity, modernisation of the material and technical base of the higher education institutions and raising efficiency of the use of resources, provision of equal access to higher education, improvement of the quality of studies and scientific activity, provision of the basic and secondary education, introduction of modern teaching methods.

Convergence Programme of Latvia 2013-2016 (approved by the protocol decision (Prot. No. 25, Clause 1) of the CM meeting on April 29, 2013)
In order to achieve the general objectives of the government's budget while ensuring conditions for economic growth in the medium term, the Latvian government continues to implement structural reforms incl. in education and science. There is an emphasis put on provision of accessibility to basic and secondary education, structural changes in vocational education, modernisation of higher education, increase in the proportion of those having obtained higher education, attraction of foreign students, and consolidation of national scientific institutions.

Development Concept for Latvian Higher Education and Institutions of Higher Education 2013-2020 (developed in accordance with Paragraph 1 of Section 70 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education)

The measures foreseen in the Guidelines in the field of higher education are based on the "Development Concept for Latvian Higher Education and Institutions of Higher Education 2013-2020" elaborated by CHE which contains solutions to problems that will be evaluated in the further discussions with industry representatives in order to agree on a common vision regarding the most essential issues.

Youth Policy Guidelines 2009-2018 (approved by the order No. 246 of the CM of April 20, 2009)

The measures set in the Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020 are binding to the objectives of youth policy foreseeing improvement of the quality of youth life by promotion of their initiatives, participation in decision-making and public life and support of work with youth, and provision of an easier transition from a child to adult status. Underlining the connection with the education system, within the implementation of the Youth policy, the emphasis is put on support for the youth employment incl. promotion of integration of the unemployed youth (incl. the disabled) in the labour market by improvement of their basic skills; as well as opportunities for the practice of youth at the employer and practice quality development. At the same time, participation of youth, voluntary work development, mobility facilitation, as well as engagement in physical activities and sports life are promoted.

Guidelines of Optimisation of Vocational Education Institutions Network 2010-2015 (approved by the order No.5 of the CM of January 6, 2010)

Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020 are related to the Guidelines of Optimisation of Vocational Education Institutions Network 2010-2015 which aims to provide further implementation of structural reforms of the vocational education system by optimisation of a number of vocational education institutions and their placement in regions, as well as by carrying out their differentiation, to create a modern material and technical provision of vocational education that corresponds to contemporary requirements, to promote more effective use of resources of all types increasing quality and availability of the vocational education. As a result, a differential network of vocational education institutions that corresponds to the demographic tendencies will be established in the State; a balanced offer (in the regional and national level) of the opportunities to acquire vocational education programmes will be provided in order to prepare the number of specialists needed for the labour market and ensure the conformity of the education offer with the employment structure; as well as the process of optimisation of vocational education institutions will comply with the cooperation principle between public institutions, local governments, and industry associations to ensure flexible and effective use of resources of all types, as well as the ability to quickly respond to the changes in the market demand.

Asylum Law

Available: http://likumi.lv/ta/id/278986-patveruma-likums

Date: Adopted: 17.12.2015.Entered into Force: 19.01.2016

Aims: The Asylum Law states that the Cabinet of Ministers shall determine the procedures by which a minor asylum seeker shall be provided with opportunities for acquiring education. On the basis of the foregoing, the Cabinet has issued Regulation No 174 of 23 February 2010 "Procedures for the Provision of Minor Asylum Seekers with Opportunities for Acquiring Education".

I.1.2. If the 1962 Protocol instituting a Conciliation and Good Offices Commission to be responsible for seeking the settlement of any disputes which may arise between States Parties to the Convention against Discrimination in Education is not ratified yet:

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Yes

Does your country plan to ratify this instrument?

With respect to ensuring equal opportunity in education in the Republic of Latvia, the legislature and the government have passed all the requisite legislation that prescribes identical and equally applicable national requirements and rules for compliance with and the implementation of the Convention.

The Latvian state has a unified educational system, uniform standards for academic subjects and sample curricula for all educational institutions. The standard for each academic subject includes questions relating to civic education and value education, tolerance and respect for difference. The Ministry of Education and Science supports the implementation of various educational programmes in order to meet the needs of every student, while observing the prohibition of discrimination based on gender, age, race, citizenship, ethnic origin and religious persuasion.

General requirements regarding the prohibition of differential treatment in education have been laid down in Section 3.1 of the Education Law.

Education Law (Section 3, Paragraph 1) states that the following persons are entitled to education: 1) a citizen of Latvia; 2) a non-citizen of Latvia; 3) a citizen of the European Union, a citizen of the European Economic Area or a citizen of the Swiss Confederation; 4) a permanent resident of the European Community who has a valid residence permit in the Republic of Latvia; 5) a stateless person who has a valid travel document of a stateless person issued in the Republic of Latvia; 6) a citizen of another state, other than a citizen of the European Union, the European Economic Area or the Swiss Confederation or a stateless person who has a valid residence permit in the Republic of Latvia; 7) a refugee or a person who has acquired alternative status; and 8) a person who has received temporary protection in the Republic of Latvia.

In addition, Section 3 Paragraph 2 states that a minor child of an asylum seeker and a minor asylum seeker is entitled to basic education and secondary education, as well as the right to continue the commenced education after reaching the age of majority. Pursuant to Paragraph three of the same Section, a minor third-country national or a stateless person who has no legal basis to reside in the Republic of Latvia is entitled to acquire basic education during the time period specified for voluntary exit or during the time period for which the expulsion is suspended, as well as during his or her detention.

In the Section 3, Paragraph 3 of the Education Law the Prohibition of Differential Treatment in Education has been elaborated.

(1) The persons referred to in Section 3 of this Law have the right to acquire education regardless of the material and social status, race, nationality, ethnic belonging, gender, religious and political affiliation, state of health, occupation and place of residence.

(2) Differential treatment towards a person due to the conditions referred to in Paragraph 1 of this Section shall be permitted, if it is objectively substantiated with a legal purpose, the means selected for the achievement of which are proportionate.

(3) An educational institution established by a religious organisation is entitled to base on the person's religious affiliation, readiness and capability to act in good faith and loyalty in relation to the dogma (doctrine) of the particular religion, as well as a set of moral and behavioural norms, principles and ideals, which form the basis of the conviction of the believers thereof.

(4) It is prohibited to cause directly or indirectly unfavourable consequences for a person, if he

or she maintains his or her rights with a view to prevent differential treatment.

(5) If in the case of dispute a person points to factors which could have been the basis for his or her direct or indirect discrimination due to conditions referred to in Paragraph one of this Section, the implementer of the educational programme has a duty to prove that the prohibition of differential treatment has not been violated.

(6) If the prohibition of differential treatment or the prohibition to cause unfavourable consequences is violated, a person has the right to request elimination of the violation, to receive legal assistance in accordance with the Ombudsman Law, as well as to bring an action to the court. A person has the right to request compensation for losses and remuneration for moral detriment. In the case of dispute the amount of moral detriment shall be determined by the court upon preference thereof.

(7) The prohibition of differential treatment in relation to teachers and other persons employed in the education system shall be governed by other laws.

(8) The term "discrimination" used in this Section and types thereof shall comply with the terms used in the Consumer Rights Protection Law.

As it was previously stated, Section 3, Paragraph 8 of the Education Law contains the provision that "discrimination" and types thereof shall correspond to the terms used in the Consumer Rights Protection Law. Section 3.1, Paragraph 6 of the Consumer Rights Protection Law states that direct discrimination is an attitude towards a person which on the basis of his or her sex, disability, race or ethnic origin in a comparable situation is, was and could be less favourable than towards another person. Indirect discrimination is a seemingly neutral provision, criterion or practice that creates or could create an unfavourable outcome on the basis of sex, disability, race or ethnic origin of a person, except for the case where such provision, criterion or practice is objectively substantiated with a legal purpose, for the achievement of which proportional means are chosen. As the aforementioned provisions of the Education Law are binding in the implementation of education at all its levels and in all types of education in accordance with Paragraphs 5 and 6 of the Education Law, as well as in the application of the norms of the General Education Law, the Vocational Education Law and the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, one could conclude that the Convention is being complied with in the implementation of the national educational policy.
[Already ratified]

I.1.2. If the 1962 Protocol instituting a Conciliation and Good Offices Commission to be responsible for seeking the settlement of any disputes which may arise between States Parties to the Convention against Discrimination in Education is not ratified yet:

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As it has been stated in the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, any person or group of persons should have equal access to education of any type or at any level. The government of the Republic of Latvia guarantees equal access to all level of education, starting from pre-school cycle. Pre-school education is regulated by the Education Law (1998), the Law of General Education (1999) and other related legislation and resolutions. Funding for pre-school education at public schools comes from national and local budgets according to procedures defined by the Ministry Cabinet. Parents usually pay only for meals and expenses resulting from special programs such as foreign language instruction in kindergarten. Children from poor or large families may receive assistance with these fees if the local government is in a

position to offer such assistance.

In addition, some municipalities have not found solutions to provide supervision services for all children, therefore in 2013, the financial state support to private preschool educational institutions (the PPEI) and private providers of child supervision services (the PCSS) was launched on condition that municipalities would find a solution to solve the preschool accessibility issue in the period from September 2013 until December 2015. Upon expiration of the given time, certain municipalities had not yet been able to find a solution. Therefore, the state budget support period was extended until 31 May 2016 to ensure continuity and give to the municipalities additional time to restructure. Meanwhile, the municipal support to private preschool educational institutions is being calculated using a new method starting from 2016. According to the information gathered, the amount of support to children attending private preschool educational institutions will generally increase in all municipalities.

Compulsory basic education and upper secondary education is free and costs to households are low due to policies such as free school meals for Grades 1 to 4 and free transport for children in remote areas. Though Latvia has made good progress in expanding access and improving learning outcomes, the data suggest there still are considerable disparities in learning opportunities. Despite a range of policies, from compulsory participation in early childhood education and care for 5-6 year-olds to ensuring free basic and upper secondary education, there are marked differences in student performance between rural and urban schools. To ensure access to equal and quality education, especially in rural area, it is important to recruit the best teachers. As it has been stressed in UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/4, education quality improves when teachers are supported – it deteriorates if they are not. Therefore, in 2015, work on a new teacher's wage calculation model and wage raising schedule continued. The model prescribes a raise in teachers' wages, while fostering increase in teachers' work quality, and ensuring an efficient use of financial resources.

As stated in the Convention, education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality, therefore it is crucial to provide values, knowledge and skills for personal and professional development. In this regard, the government of the Republic of Latvia has taken measures for improvement of career support accessibility for students in both general and vocational education institutions. Programmes will be implemented using financing from the EU funds programming period 2014-2020. In addition, European Social Fund support is planned for the students in order to develop their talents, improve their performance in the country in general, as well as inclusive education, including providing the necessary support to students with learning disabilities and special needs to facilitate their integration in general education institutions. The total expected financing is EUR 37.6 million, including ESF financing of EUR 31.9 million.

Interest-related education is the term used to describe hobby-based education. Interest-related education in Latvia is implemented and funded according to programme principle. Interest-related programmes are mainly implemented by separate education institutions for interest-related education and by general education schools. Fulfilling the individual educational needs and desires of people regardless of age and previously acquired education, interest-related education is a type of non-formal education. Taking into account that traditionally interest-related education programmes in Latvia are organised for children and youth, the regulatory framework requires pedagogical qualifications for teachers in such programmes, and sets out the procedure for funding. The most common extracurricular programmes of interest-related education are dance, music, art, drama, folklore, technical innovation, environmental education, sports, etc.

The Convention declares that education shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. To achieve this goal, the development of financial models, infrastructure, provision of financial incentives to teachers have to be supplemented with fundamental changes in curricula. For this reason, the government of Latvia is planning approbation and implementation of competence based-approach education content. It is assumed that

gradual approbation will be launched in the academic year 2016/2017 providing for a consecutive implementation (starting from the 1st, 4th, and 7th grade) to be launched in academic year 2018/2019. Development of both educational and methodological materials is planned, including for students with special needs and learning disabilities, as well as improvement of teachers' professional competence in the context of implementation of the new content.

Does your country plan to ratify this instrument?

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Please indicate the stage of ratification process reached by your country

The Latvian government is committed to implementing the principle of "inclusive education" which it defines as a process in which the diverse needs of all learners are met by increasing the opportunities for every learner to participate in the learning process, culture and various communities and reducing the chances of exclusion from education and the educational process. As it was mentioned before, in the Education Law, a prohibition of differential treatment has been stipulated, thus guaranteeing the right to acquire education regardless of the material and social status, race, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, religious and political affiliation, state of health, occupation and place of residence.

According to the Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020 of the Republic of Latvia, the main goal of the education development policy is high-quality and inclusive education for personal development, human welfare, and reaching sustainable national growth. In the context of this Convention, the following sub-goal has been defined in accordance with analysis of the issues identified in the previous planning period and future challenges: "Education environment: to increase the quality of education environment by optimising the content and developing a suitable infrastructure". Environmental quality of education at all educational levels is determined by its content that promotes improvement and strengthening of individual knowledge, competencies, and skills, professional and competent teaching personnel that pass this educational content to educatees, modern educational environment and educational process that promote comprehension and acquisition of the content, as well as embodiment of inclusive education principle envisaging an equal opportunity irrespective of the needs and abilities, property status, social status, race, nationality, sex, religion and political beliefs, health conditions, place of residence, and occupation of educates in available, respectful, and supportive environment.

Latvia has implemented a range of initiatives to put these principles into practice and tackle disparities in education access and learning. All children have a legal entitlement to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) from 1.5 years of age. Municipalities provide free meals for children from poor families attending ECEC and if the municipality's financial capacity allows for it they provide free meals for all children. Compulsory basic education and upper secondary education is free and costs to households are low due to policies such as free school meals for Grades 1 to 4 and free transport for children in remote areas.

Latvia provides considerable support for ethnic minority languages, education and culture. The aim of Latvia's bilingual education policy is to give all basic education graduates a good knowledge of both Latvian and their own native language. The government has developed and financed its bilingual education model by providing publicly funded education in seven minority languages: Russian, Polish, Hebrew, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Estonian, and Lithuanian. At the basic education level bilingual schools are entitled to determine which subjects are taught in Latvian. The basic education standards provide five different models for combining subjects in Latvian and a minority language. At the upper secondary education level, however, 60% of all subjects are taught in Latvian in the minority language stream.

Regarding the gender equality, the Education Law prohibits differential treatment on the basis of gender. Statistics show that there is no significant difference between females and males in the proportion of enrolment to primary and secondary education. However, at the level of tertiary

education females outnumbered males by almost 80% in the year 2000. This ratio changed in favour of males, but females still outnumbered males by 50% in the year 2013. The teaching profession is far from balanced in terms of gender, as the majority of teachers, including school leaders, are female at all levels of education.

Based on the results of the PISA 2012 survey, 15-year-old girls performed better than boys in all three areas tested, including those in which boys tend to perform better than girls on average throughout the OECD countries. In reading, girls performed better than boys with a statistically significant difference of 55 points (OECD average: 38 points higher for girls). In mathematics, the main topic of PISA 2012, girls performed better than boys with a non-statistically significant difference of 4 points (OECD average: 11 points higher for boys). In science literacy, girls performed better than boys with a statistically significant difference of 15 points (OECD average: only 1 point higher for boys.
Please explain which are the obstacles or difficulties encountered in completing the ratification process and the means of overcoming them

I.2.1 In case your country is a State Party to the Convention

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As mentioned earlier, the Latvian government is committed to implementing the principle of "inclusive education" with special attention on inclusion of people from poor backgrounds, economically and socially marginalized and from other vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities.

Several poverty reduction policies are in place both on State and municipality level. From September 2014, State budget funds are allocated for catering of pupils at primary and lower secondary education institutions in the first three grades. For several groups of children meals at school are provided for free at other grades as well, like those from large families, low income families as well as for orphans. These measures depend on the respective municipality and its financial opportunities, hence, there are a couple of municipalities which offer free lunch for all pupils learning in certain grades.

Special needs children (those with learning disabilities, speech impediments, physical and emotional developmental disorders) can attend special education facilities, which provide need-appropriate medical treatment along with the academic program. Demand for assistant services continued to grow in 2015 – services helping students with disability to move around the educational institution, providing support in interaction and communication with other students, teachers and other persons, as well as self-care support.

Latvia pays special attention to promotion of integration of the Roma community into the Latvian society, by eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunities to the Roma community in education, employment and human rights. Although a special Programme entitled "Roma in Latvia 2007-2009" has not been renewed, Latvia continues activities in this field. The main activities are related to education of Roma children and ensuring equal opportunities of Roma in labor market. A special program for professional training of teacher assistant with Roma background was developed. The teacher assistants significantly promote education achievements by Roma children and motivate parents of Roma origin to ensure that their children acquire education. The Council of Europe has highlighted this Latvian initiative an example of good practice. One of the main priorities for Roma integration in Latvia is Roma children's education and prevention of segregation of Roma children. A special program "Teachers' Assistants of Roma Background" has been developed. The idea of the project was to prepare teaching assistants of Roma background and to facilitate their inclusion into school and pre-school educational institutions attended by

children of Roma background. Special social rehabilitation programs for representatives of Roma community have been launched in 2011 (Jurmala, Liepaja). The main goal of these programs is to reduce social exclusion and to promote their successful integration into society and into the labour market. Involvement of Roma community leaders in dialogue with the state and local governments is an important mechanism for promotion of Roma community inclusion. Children's and students education is one of the priorities of the Latvian Roma inclusion activities. In average, every year more than 1200 Roma children attend school. A special program "Teachers' Assistants of Roma Background" has been developed. The idea of the project was to prepare teaching assistants of Roma background and to facilitate their inclusion into school and pre-school educational institutions attended by children of Roma background. The schools in cooperation with Roma teacher's assistants promote the socialization process and the inclusion of Roma children, encourage and motivate them to engage in further education. An important part of the program is social work with parents, by explaining them the importance of education for children. The level of public awareness rises and the existing prejudices and stereotypes are diminishing.

One of the main priorities in the protection of children's rights is the conceptual formulation of a system of protection of children's rights. One of the main tasks of the children's rights movement is to activate a close working relationship between professionals and those families from whom children have been taken in order to help those families overcome social difficulties, and to promote the return of the children to their families. Several community organizations have been established since 1991 whose main purpose is to provide assistance to children. The three having made the most significant contributions in this field are "Save the Children", "The Latvian Children's Fund". These organizations run charity drives on a regular basis, which have resulted in funds that have been donated to orphanages, children from poor families and children who are invalids. These groups have been successful in securing effective assistance from local businesses and foreign sources as well. They are also actively involved in educational efforts and in the nutrition, care and development of children. Some community organizations take part in national children's rights efforts, actively suggesting activities and projects. The National Centre of the Protection of Children's Rights, for example, has signed an agreement with the community organization "Education for a Civil Society". The project involves attorneys, teachers, psychologists, educational experts and social workers from both government and community organizations. Major accomplishments in the protection of children's rights 1991 – 1999 The ratification of the Latvian Children's Rights Protection Law can be considered as the most significant step toward true protection of children's rights and compliance with the UN Convention on Children's Rights. The establishment of institutions, both on a national and regional level, for the protections of children's rights is significant. The establishment of community organizations and their active involvement in the issue has been most significant.

Is the Convention directly applicable in your country's domestic law following its ratification?
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Has it been incorporated into the national Constitution or domestic law so as to be directly applicable?
Latvia has a unified, ongoing system of education consisting of the following levels:
-Pre-school program;
-Basic program, includes the first stage (grade 1- 6) and the second stage (grade 7-9);
-General secondary program;
-Basic, secondary and upper level professional education;
-Higher education;
-Continuing education.

Pre-school education
Children may enter pre-school education institutions from the age of 1.5 years. 5-6 year old children have to participate in pre-school programmes provided by general education institutions or kindergartens as a part of the compulsory pre-primary education. The objective of the

pre-school education is to foster general development of children and their readiness to enter primary stage of the basic education.

Pre-school education programs are available at the following facilities: General pre – schools; Special pre – schools; Pre-school education consulting centres; Play groups and pre-school education groups at various other schools.

Pre-school education is regulated by the Education Law (1998), the Law of General Education (1999) and other related legislation and resolutions. Funding for pre-school education at public schools comes from national and local budgets according to procedures defined by the Ministry Cabinet. Parents usually pay only for meals and expenses resulting from special programs such as foreign language instruction in kindergarten.

Children from poor or large families may receive assistance with these fees if the local government is in a position to offer such assistance.

Pre-school education is available in Latvian, Russian and other minority languages such as Polish and Lithuanian, for example. Groups that are instructed in a language other than Latvian, have lessons in Latvian as well. To facilitate the learning of Latvian as a second language, the "Latvian language program at the pre – schools level" was developed.

There was a significant rise in the number of pre-schools in the period from 1990 to 2016. The birthrate has declined by a factor of two since 1990, therefore the number of children presently attending pre – schools or expected to attend in the next few years has decreased as well. Birth statistics are directly related to the social and economic conditions in the country. In 2015/2016 school year there are 647 pre- schools in Latvia, Latvian is the language of instruction at 458 pre-school education facilities, 75 facilities teach in Russian and 111 facilities teach in both Latvian and Russian, one pre – school teach in Poland, one – in Poland and Russian, one – in English.

Along with the pre-school program, children at minority schools are also taught about their respective culture, traditions, history and language. Funding for minority pre-school education facilities is based on the same principles as Latvian language pre-school education facilities.

There is also another type of preschool education, that is, preschool special education which is tailored for children with special needs. In 2015/2016 academic year 40 pre-school institutions implemented special preschool education programs, Special preschool education programs are implemented also by the general education institutions. Special needs children (those with learning disabilities, speech impediments, physical and emotional developmental disorders) can attend special education facilities, which provide need-appropriate medical treatment along with the academic program. Unlike regular pre-schools, which are budgeted by local governments and parents incur meal expenses, special education pre-school facilities are nationally run and funded. A significant accomplishment in pre-school education was the formulation and ratification of the "Pre-school education program", which stresses the development of the child. Using the Education Law (1998) as their basis, two programs have been established in the hopes of achieving greater academic equity among children starting grade 1; the two are "Preparing five- and six-year-olds for basic school" and "Methodological recommendations in preparing five- and six-year olds for basic education". Recommendations have been worked out for parents who choose to work with their children at home. Individual kindergarten programs have been awarded the status of pre-school education consulting centres, and they consult with parents regarding effective preparation of children for school. Methodological recommendations still need to be worked out for parents and teachers outlining the various methods that can be used in preparing five- and six-year-olds for school.

Basic education

9-year single structure basic education (including primary and lower secondary levels – ISCED 1 and 2) is compulsory for all children from the age of 7. The curriculum is determined by the national basic education standard (framework curriculum). The Ministry of Education and Science supervises and determines the content of the final national examinations. Pupils who have received evaluation in all subjects of the compulsory education curriculum, national tests and examinations, receive a Certificate of Basic education (apliecība par pamatizglītību) and a statement of records (sekmju izraksts) that qualify them and serve as a screening criterion for admission to further education and training in upper secondary level educational programmes. In case a pupil has not received evaluation in any of the subjects or centralised national tests and examinations, he/she receives a school report (liecība) giving the right to continue education and training in vocational basic education programmes.

In August 2014, the Cabinet of Ministers accepted the Regulations on the Framework Curriculum for Basic Education, which is a step towards the implementation of competence-based curriculum in general education.

Special needs education

Young people with special educational needs due to mental or physical disabilities, are entitled to an education that accounts for their health condition level of development. Education for special-needs students is provided in special schools (which are often specialized on youth with certain types of disabilities), in special classes in a mainstream school, or in mainstream classes – by the separate study programme for the student with special-needs or fully integrated student with the special needs in to mainstream education process. The structure of special needs education is generally similar to that of the mainstream education, including general education subjects as well as general skills with strong emphasis on the applicability of the acquired knowledge and skills in order to facilitate social inclusion. However, for some categories of students (e.g. those assigned into the category of students with developmental issues/ disabilities) the curriculum is significantly reduced. Special needs schools produce lower outcomes than mainstream secondary schools, in all general education subjects. Thus, in 2014 the average test score in Mathematics in the 12th form in special needs schools has been 39.5 points, as compared to the average score of 48.8 in general schools.
The Ministry of Education and Science has planned measures include structural reforms of the special-needs education, working with schools and teachers to improve individualisation of pedagogical approach to students, which should enable to educate more students with special needs in mainstream classrooms.

Vocation-oriented education

Vocation-oriented education in arts, music and sport is provided in specialised schools. Based on the Education Law, vocation-orientated education is acquired in parallel/in addition to studies in a basic school or a general secondary school. Such education programmes exist in an art, music or sports. Students graduating from such programmes obtain a certificate of vocation-oriented education, which offers an opportunity to continue professional education in the selected area.
Please indicate whether the provisions of the Convention can be invoked before and given effect to by courts, tribunals and administrative authorities
Yes

The constitution of the Republic of Latvia states that all persons are entitled to education. Any person may acquire primary and secondary education without charge. Pursuant to the Education Law, a prohibition of differential treatment has been stipulated, thus guaranteeing Latvian and foreign citizens and stateless persons in Latvia the right to acquire education regardless of the material and social status, race, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, religious and political affiliation, state of health, occupation and place of residence.

Basic education (from 1 to 9 grade) is compulsory from the age of 7 through 18. Legislation enshrines the right to education and provides for freedom of choice for parents in choosing

education institutions.
The aforementioned provisions of the Education Law are binding at all levels of education and in all types of education in accordance with Paragraphs 5 and 6 of the Education Law. Specific norms regarding the education system are defined in the General Education Law, the Vocational Education Law and the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.
filecount - [{"title":"Primary Education","comment":"","size":"17.747","name":"ANNEX1.docx","filename":"fu_s49tqhpbs3qf3n2","ext":"docx"}]
I. 2. 2 In case your country is not a State Party to the Convention

1

N/A

Have legislative measures been taken pursuant to the Recommendation?
Yes
Please explain briefly the ways in which public policies and programmes correspond to its provisions.

Students have to stay in school until they complete lower secondary or turn 18, but those who fail to complete lower secondary education can move to evening and vocational education schools. Students with special needs who do not attend mainstream schools are catered for in 61 special education schools.
Minimum age for the end of compulsory education, for marriage and for entry into employment are coherent and aligned:
-DBasic education (from 1 to 9 grade) is compulsory from the age of 7 through 18.
-DA marriage in Latvia is allowed only between persons that have reached the age of 18 years and be legally capable. In an exceptional case, a person who has reached the age of 16 years may get married by a parental or guardians' consent if the other person with whom the marriage is concluded is a major.
-DAccording to the Labor Law of the Republic of Latvia, it is prohibited to employ children in permanent work. Within the meaning of this Law, a child shall mean a person who is under 15 years of age and who until reaching the age of 18 continues to acquire a basic education. In exceptional cases children from the age of 13, if one of the parents (guardian) has given written consent, may be employed outside of school hours doing light work not harmful to the safety, health, morals and development of the child. Such employment shall not interfere with the education of the child. Work in which children may be employed from the age of 13 shall be determined by the Cabinet. In exceptional cases if one of the parents (guardian) has given written consent and a permit from the State Labour Inspectorate has been received, a child as a performer may be employed in cultural, artistic, sporting and advertising activities if such employment is not harmful to the safety, health, morals and development of the child. Such employment shall not interfere with the education of the child. The procedures for issuing permits for the employment of children as performers in cultural, artistic, sporting and advertising activities, as well as the restrictions to be included in such permits with respect to working conditions and employment conditions, shall be determined by the Cabinet. It is prohibited to employ adolescents in jobs in special conditions which are associated with increased risk to their safety, health, morals and development.
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I. 2.3 For either the provisions of the Convention or the Recommendation, please list the principal national laws and regulations adopted in order to implement them.

Secondary (Upper Secondary) Education

There are two types of secondary education programmes: general secondary and vocational secondary education programmes. When admitting students to upper secondary level education, schools are free to hold entrance examinations according to the basic education standard, except in those subjects for which students have already received a Certificate of the basic education.

Upper Secondary General Education

The compulsory curriculum of 3-year upper secondary general education (from grade 10 to 12) is determined by the national education standards in the following profiles: (1) general comprehensive, (2) humanities/social sciences, (3) mathematics / natural science / technical, (4) vocational/ professional (arts, music, business, sports). All educational programmes must contain 8 compulsory and 3-6 selected subjects according to the selected profile. Schools can choose to offer some optional subjects that take no more than 10-15% of the total classroom time or to major in any of the compulsory subjects. General secondary education programmes, irrespective of the profile, may be combined with a national minority educational programme by inclusion of the minority's national language and subjects related to national identity and its integration into the Latvian society.

Graduates have to take 4 centralised national examinations, the content and procedure of which are determined by the Ministry of Education and Science and approved by the Cabinet of Ministers. A Certificate of the Secondary Education (atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību) is awarded to all students, who have received a positive assessment in all subjects according to the chosen profile and the national examinations. The certificate includes examination scores, providing the right to compete for admission in any higher education programme. If the student has not received an evaluation in one or more subjects or national examination, he/she receives a school report (liecība).

Vocational Education and Training

In the Latvian education legislation and system, term "vocational education" is applied, rather than "vocational education and training" because most of vocational education is implemented through school-based education programmes that include periods of practical learning which can be school- or work-based.

There are five levels of vocational qualifications specified in the education system of Latvia (qualification levels):

1) the first qualification level – theoretical and practical training, which provides an opportunity to perform simple tasks in a specific sphere of practical operation;

2) the second qualification level - theoretical and practical training, which provides an opportunity to perform independently qualified artisan work;

3) the third qualification level – higher theoretical preparedness and professional skill, which provides an opportunity to perform specific artisan duties, which also include planning and organising of the work to be implemented;

4) the fourth qualification level – theoretical and practical training, which provides an opportunity to perform complicated artisan work, as well as to organise and manage the work of other specialists; and

5) the fifth qualification level – higher qualification of a specific sector, which provides an opportunity to plan and also perform scientific research work in the relevant sector.

Different vocational education programmes are developed and offered in accordance to the structure of the Latvian economy. The national standards of vocational education and the occupational qualification standards determine the curriculum/content of vocational education programmes. Most vocational education schools in Latvia provide 4 and 3 year vocational education programmes. 3 year vocational basic education programmes are provided in vocational schools for students without a certificate of basic education (after completion of at least 7 grades of basic education, but not before the calendar year when they become 15 years old). Besides acquiring Level 1 or 2 of vocational qualification students also have the opportunity to complete lower secondary education. There are 174 vocational basic education (profesionālā pamatizglītība) programmes licenced in Latvia.

4-year vocational secondary education programmes are offered by vocational secondary schools (names in Latvian: profesionālā vidusskola) to those students who have successfully completed compulsory basic education. Vocational secondary education programmes lead to a diploma of vocational secondary education (diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību) and professional qualification of level 3: increased theoretical knowledge and professional skills (for example, technicians, car mechanics, modellers, and hospitality service specialists – ISCED 3). In addition, vocational secondary education students take state centralised examinations in Latvian, Math, foreign language and one in optional study subject. Students receive a certificate of general secondary education (vispārējās vidējās izglītības sertifikāts) which gives the right to enter higher education.

2-3 year vocational education programmes are offered to students who have completed the basic education and provide the opportunity to acquire Level 2 of vocational qualification. Education can be continued in 2-year programmes leading to qualification Level 3 or 1-2 year programmes leading to a Certificate of the secondary education (atestāts par vidējo izglītību). Vocational education programmes (2-3 year education programs) are offered in the same thematic areas as 4 year programmes. Students obtain a certificate of general secondary education, a statement of records and a general secondary education certificate in the manner prescribed by the laws and regulations regulating the field of education.

Post-secondary non-tertiary vocational education

Some programmes in Latvia fall into the category between the secondary and higher levels of education (ISCED 4). The continuing vocational education programmes (1-3 years long) and continuing professional development programmes (at least 160 hours long) fall into this category. After general secondary education a person can take a professional development programme (no less than 160 training hours, which can be a part of qualification). According to the Professional Education Law, professional development is a special kind of professional education which provides an opportunity for persons, irrespective of their age and previous education or professional qualification, to acquire systematic professional knowledge and skills corresponding to the requirements of the labour market. The student obtains a Certificate.

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Yes

II. 1.1 Is discrimination in education based notably on grounds specified in the Convention/Recommendation fully outlawed in your country?

II. 1.2. Please explain which measures are adopted to:

No

The constitution of the Republic of Latvia states that all persons are entitled to education. Any person may acquire primary and secondary education without charge.

According to the forecasts of the Ministry of Economy, in the coming years, people having no professional qualification will be the most likely group at risk of unemployment. In order to promote employment of the youth and their faster integration into the labour market, Latvia seeks to attract more students to vocational education. In response to labour market demands, the share of the number of students in vocational education and secondary education is planned to be changed in favour of vocational education from 33/67 (in 2010) to 50/50 (in 2020). In order to make vocational education more attractive as well as to improve the quality of vocational education, major structural reforms are taking place at the moment. Vocational education programmes with a modular approach will be developed to ensure the acquisition of vocational and lifelong learning competencies. The National Centre for Education is preparing occupational standards and basic vocational qualification requirements in cooperation with employers and sectorial experts.

Eliminate discrimination within the meaning of the Convention/Recommendation?

[{"title":"General Education System","comment":"","size":"115.717","name":"ANNEX_General.docx","filename":"fu_qeqxuphkaqcihyg","ext":"docx"}]

With respect to ensuring equal opportunity in education in the Republic of Latvia, the legislature and the government have passed all the requisite legislation that prescribes identical and equally applicable national requirements and rules for compliance with and the implementation of the Convention. As stated before, general requirements regarding the prohibition of differential treatment in education have been laid down in Section 3.1 of the Education Law. The Education Law is binding in the implementation of education at all its levels and in all types of education, as well as in the application of the norms of the General Education Law, the Vocational Education Law and the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Higher Education

Each higher education institution has its own admissions board and criteria. From year 2004 the entrance examinations are replaced by the results of the national centralised secondary education examinations.

The system of higher education in Latvia is binary since the Law on Institutions of Higher Education sets a difference between academic and professional higher education, but the difference is not strictly institutionalised. Universities and other institutions of higher education mostly run both academic and professional programmes. There are three groups of programmes: academic programmes leading to academic degrees, professional programmes based upon a standard of the first academic degree thus making graduates eligible for further academic studies and the applied professional programmes oriented towards higher professional qualifications but not providing background for direct admission to further academic studies.

Academic higher education programmes are geared towards fundamental and/or applied science; they usually comprise a research paper or thesis at the end of each stage and lead to a Bachelor's degree (Bakalaurs) and Master's degree (Maģistrs). The duration of Bachelor's degree programmes may be 3 or 4 years depending on the study field and educational programme. The 3-4-year Bachelor's degree is considered as a complete academic qualification. Master's degree is awarded after the second stage of academic education and requires at least 5 years of university studies altogether.

The Law on Higher Education Institutions and the Law on Vocational Education stipulate a two-level professional higher education – the first level of professional higher education or college education (2-3 years) leading to professional qualification Level 4 (diploms par pirmā līmeņa profesionālo augstāko izglītību), and second level of professional higher education leading to qualification level 5 (2-3 years). Having completed a programme of professional higher education, students are awarded a professional qualification or a professional Bachelor's degree that can be followed by a further 1-2 years of professional Master's degree studies. The Master's degree (Magistrs) of higher professional education is awarded after the total duration of studies of at least five years.

There are so-called "short" second level professional higher education study programmes (1-2 years), where qualification is obtained on the basis of a previously acquired first level professional higher education or academic Bachelor's degree. In total the duration of professional qualification Level 5 study programmes is not less than 4 years after secondary education and not less than 2 years after college education.

Postgraduate education

Master's degree or the equivalent is required for admission to doctoral studies. Doctoral studies last 3-4 full years. They include advanced studies of the subject in a relevant study programme (or an equivalent amount of independent research while working at a university, research institution, etc.) and scientific research towards doctoral thesis. Publications in internationally quoted scientific journals are required before public defence of the doctoral thesis as an integral part of a study programme. The Council of Science appoints the Promotion

Council and sets the procedures for awarding Doctor's degrees (PhD).
Prevent discrimination within the meaning of the Convention/Recommendation?
In 2015, in Latvia there were 17 public higher educational institutions and 17 public colleges in which total amount of students are 63 626, or 76 % from all students studying in Latvia (total number of students in Latvia 84 282).

Public higher educational institutions are represented in all regions of Latvia, but – with different representation intensity. The largest number of higher educational institutions (public, as well as private) and students are located in Riga, whereas the least number of higher educational institutions and students per number of population is in Vidzeme region (where Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences is situated).

The dynamics of total number of students in the higher educational institutions of Latvia during the last years is negative, the number of students in comparison with year 2005/2006 has decreased by more than 35 %. During the last years the rate of decrease has slowed down; in 2015/2016 the rate of the decrease of students was only 1,9% in comparison with year 2014/2015.
D
In Latvia total higher education financing for state funded study places is approximately 85 million euro – being financed by the Ministry of Education and Science and by the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Agriculture (and in specific cases – by the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Defence).

In 2015/2016, 34 873 students or 41 % studies were financed from public funds and has remained comparatively low during the last years, despite the serious decrease of higher education funding (approximately – by 50%) in 2008.
D
Public institutions in Latvia have a higher level of autonomy than institutions in many EU countries. Tertiary education institutions are able to determine their internal structure, develop and adopt their own internal codes of conduct and procedures, and establish academic programmes. They also determine the levels of pay for academic staff above governmentally-established minima and set the levels of tuition fees. Checks and balances to counter this high degree of autonomy are weak, however. For example, government funding is currently not linked to performance nor are tertiary education institutions required to publicly account for their balance sheets.

There are 25 private higher education institutions (14 private higher educational establishments, 9 colleges) in Latvia, i.e. 42% of the total number of higher education institutions of Latvia, i.e. 59. There are also two private foreign higher educational establishment branches situated in the Republic of Latvia.

[{"title":"Higher
Education","comment":"","size":"97.185","name":"ANNEX2.docx","filename":"fu_8v7fpwwc7pdw5ei","ext"
:"docx"}]
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1
II.2.1 Please explain what are the concrete actions taken by your Government to guarantee equal access to all level of education in your country?
Adult education includes all types of formal, non-formal and informal education including further and interest-related education, professional upgrading and professional development training. It is provided to satisfy needs of adults in lifelong education process to support personal development and competitiveness in the labour market regardless of a person's age and previous education.
The State financially supports and local governments may financially support adult education by financing non-formal adult educational programmes, as well as by supporting employers in the further learning of employees. Adults wishing to complete formal primary and secondary education after a certain period of time are given an opportunity and access to second chance education in

the form of evening (shift) classes as well as distance or extramural education programmes.
The development of the Adult Education policy in Latvia has been put on the agenda for the Ministry of Education and Science. Ministry of Education and Science together with the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Economy works on the implementation of Adult Education Governance Model which is planned to be implemented as of 2016, in order to achieve the targets as set by the European Union Adult Education (EU AE) strategy for 2020. Thus, it is necessary to support the adult learner involvement in AE by the development of quality criteria for adult education increasing the attraction to adult education which is currently at the rate of 6,4%. AE being fragmented in Latvia, another issue is the development of principles and structures for AE governance, the model of which is being developed during the second stage of the Erasmus + project of the National Coordinators. The Erasmus + project National coordinators for the Implementation of the European Agenda in Adult Education aims at the development of quality assurance mechanism in adult learning in Latvia, specifically for adult education providers in non-formal education. The setting up of local networks within the framework of the project will help to enhance awareness of the role of adult education as well outreach for less targeted low-skilled adults in remote rural areas. The adult educators' competencies are to be established as part of quality assurance scheme. The project team will further develop the support model for adults in adult education, thus, establishing the features of quality criteria for AE, as well as promoting cooperation and coordination of activities
The Plan on Implementation of Adult Education Governance Model for 2016 –2020 has been developed by the Ministry of Education and Science (adopted on May 5, 2016). The objective of the Plan is to extend the opportunities of adult education by ensuring the availability of adult education and increasing the participation in adult education up to 15% of adults (25-64 years) until 2020, so every adult could develop his/her necessary basic skills and professional competence and adults with low education level increased their ability to compete in labour market. The Plan provides implementation of several actions: provision of adult education for employed persons to improve their professional competence and qualification; strengthening the capacity of VET institutions in adult education; promotion of international cooperation of adult educators and improvement of their professional competencies.
As stated in the Convention, education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality, therefore it is crucial to provide values, knowledge and skills for personal and professional development. To fulfil the individual educational needs and desires of people regardless of age and previously acquired education, state-provided interest-related education is a type of non-formal education. Interest-related education is the term used to describe hobby-based education. Interest-related education in Latvia is implemented and funded according to programme principle.

In Latvia, the literacy rate among the population has been close to 100% ever since the country regained its independence in 1989. Nevertheless, a slight increase can be observed since 2000. The proportion of female to male literates is well-balanced, with women having a bit more literates among them as compared to males of the same age group. In terms of educational attainment, females have a higher level of education on average, with more than 30% having acquired higher education, as compared to less than 20% of males, in the year 2013.
filecount - [{"title":"Literacy Rates","comment":"","size":"14.055","name":"ANNEX3.docx","filename":"fu_6yw9w6zz54xeirh","ext":"docx"}]
II. 2.2 Please indicate how strategies and programmes are being implemented with a view to ensuring, in your country, equality of educational opportunities (in terms of access, participation and completion).
1

Education policy documents have been gathered in the paragraph 1 Section 2.3 of this report.

The effective monitoring and evaluation of schools is essential to the continuous improvement of

schools' performance. Schools need feedback on their performance to help them identify how to improve their practices, and to allow them to be held accountable for their performance. In Latvia the State Education Quality Service (SEQS) is responsible for both the legal accreditation and external evaluation of schools (every six years) and their programmes (every two or six years).

The accreditation decision is based on conclusions and recommendations of the experts` commission typically composed of three representatives of the sector (i.e. national government, municipalities and other schools). The experts` commission considers multiple sources of evidence such as the school's self-evaluation report, classroom observations, documentation, and surveys against 19 quality criteria that are grouped in the following 7 key areas:

1.DCurriculum
2.DTeaching and learning
2.1.The quality of teaching;
2.2.The quality of learning;
2.3.Evaluation and assessment as part of the study process.
3. Attainment (the level is not graded; instead it is described):
3.1.Students' performance in daily work;
3.2.Students' performance in tests and exams.
4.DSupport for pupils:
4.1.Psychological support, socio-pedagogical support, ensuring the safety and security of learners (security and workplace safety);
4.2.Support for developing personality and character;
4.3.Support for career education;
4.4.Support for differentiated individualized learning;
4.5.Support for learners with special needs (the level is not graded; instead it is described);
4.6.Cooperation with the learner's family.
5.DEthos:
5.1.Psychological and social environment/atmosphere;
5.2.Physical environment.
6.DResources:
6.1.Equipment and material resources;
6.2.Human resources.
7.DManagement, leadership and quality assurance:
7.1.DSelf-assessment of the institution's work and development planning;
7.2.DThe work of the administration, and personnel management;
7.3.DCooperation with other institutions.

Internal and external assessments are performed during the accreditation process. The internal assessment is performed by the education establishment, which is preparing its self-assessment report. The self-assessment report is a mandatory precondition for the accreditation of institutions and programmes. It is the basis for initiating the accreditation procedure in an institution. Accreditation of education establishments and programmes is further based upon the report provided by an external expert commission and its recommendations to the accreditation commission on granting or denying accreditation.

The Accreditation Experts' Commission submits the evaluation report and proposals (recommendations) for the improvement of the school to the SEQS. Based on the proposals of the commission, the SEQS decides whether to accredit the education institution for a six-year period or to refuse accreditation. It also decides whether to accredit its education programme for six or for two years, or to refuse accreditation. Experts' commissions may refuse to accredit education programmes for the six-year period if some aspects are not rated to be of high quality. Decision on refusal may be taken if any of the following criteria is evaluated as "insufficient": (1) curriculum; (2) the quality of teaching; (3) equipment and material resources; (4) human resources, or if more than one third of 19 criteria are evaluated as "insufficient".

During the process of accreditation the discrimination is evaluated under the criterion 5.1. "Psychological and social environment/atmosphere" in such questions as:
- Whether students and staff feel equal, regardless of gender, ethnic, religious affiliation, social status or other circumstances,
- Whether the education institution respects the principle of equal treatment, regardless of gender, ethnic, religious affiliation or other circumstances,
- Whether the staff and students in their actions respect and promote the comprehension of general human and democratic values, and contribute to their observance in education institution.

During the process of accreditation the accreditation experts meet representatives of students, their parents, teachers and other stakeholders and discuss questions of wellbeing (including equal rights and possibilities etc.) in the education institutions.

Education quality control system, governed by SEQS, improves the principles of equal rights in both private and state education institutions. All education institutions should be registered and their educational programmes should be licensed and accredited at national level. Non-formal education may be implemented by other legal or natural persons after receiving licence from local authorities. Mandatory accreditation system allows state institutions to control implementation of such principles as integration of persons with special needs, equal possibilities, regardless of nationality, tolerance for different religious affiliation, involvement of every person younger than 18 years of age in educational activities, elimination of violence etc. Accreditation is carried out by commissions of top level specialists and practitioners in education. SEQS also made investigations on a claim about breach of legal regulation or mistreating of good governance principles in education institutions. According to SEQS, there has not been any case of discrimination in education institutions for at least the last 5 years. Situations of differentiated treatment in education institutions have been few. Fewer situations were caused by individual incompetence of school officials, like rejection of a person with special needs to attend the selected school, due to of insufficient funding of school. In every case the reaction of state was quick and successful in order to prevent any consequences (in this situation the local community made the necessary investments and the person was able to start studies in the selected school). SEQS has the right to control every education institution in the state, including preschool and tertiary education, post graduate and vocational education. SEQS also controls institutions of special education (for persons with special needs) and education institutions in detention facilities. There are equal rules and control processes applied to all education institutions, except additional requirements for appropriate infrastructure and staff in special education institutions. Violation is still an issue among students, but there have not been observed cases of gender related or ethnically based abuse. SEQS has made a permanent monitoring targeted on measures applied at education institutions in order to prevent risks of violence or discrimination. Regulation on violence and abusive behaviour in education institutions has been established at state level and monitored by SEQS. The present version of the regulation was adopted in 2009.

Research projects (Baltic Institute of Social Research 2014, „Aptauju Centrs" Ltd. and „Excolo Latvia" Ltd. 2015,) enlightens problem in students` attitude towards violence among students. Students consider people at the same age less harmful than adults (average rate 40:60). Statistics show an opposite situation. Violence from adults in education institutions is under strong multilevel control, and violent persons must immediately stop working with children. Student`s violence is still hard to control and principles of non-discrimination sometimes create situations in which violent person is almost considered to be the victim. Now this problem is one of the major matters of discussion between the Ombudsman, SEQS and the Ministry of Education and Science.

Furthermore, one of the most significant matters of explanation for SEQS at the moment is strengthening of comprehension about importance of cooperation between school community and parents in granting equal possibilities for every child with special needs.
In Latvia there is a difference between children in capital, Riga, and those who live in remote

rural areas. Although the state financial support for education is equal everywhere, urban area gives more comfort (less time spent on commuting) and wider range of leisure activities. At present, local communities work hard to compensate the difference.
It is almost impossible to eliminate the difference in life quality between the city and rural areas and it is one of the causes for pre-graduate leaving of education.

The availability of teaching and learning materials, as well as the pupil/ teacher ratio has been considered as the key measure for assessing the quality education. According to existing legislation of the Republic of Latvia, the state provides teaching manuals for all schools and learning materials for all students. Regarding the pupil/teacher ratio, in comparison with the UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/14, In Central and Eastern European countries the average Pupil-teacher ratio in primary education is 17, in secondary education- 12. In Latvia (2012), the Pupil-teacher ratio in primary education was 11.01, in secondary education- 7.90.

Latvia is one of five OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey countries where the average number of students in a school is below 300. The average class size in Latvia is 18 students, similar to class sizes in Estonia and Finland and lower than the TALIS average of 24.
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II. 2.3 Please describe the actions planned and taken in your country to ensure inclusion of all learners in learning process.

0
-
According to the Education Law, state educational institutions are financed from the State budget in accordance with the annual State Budget Law. Local government educational institutions are financed from local government budgets, however, their teaching staff salaries are also paid from the State budget. The State also participates in the financing of teachers' salaries of private schools, if accredited basic education and general secondary educational programmes are implemented in these schools. Local governments may participate in the financing of teachers' salaries in private schools. Special needs education, including special educational institutions, special educational classes and groups in general educational institutions, as well as boarding schools, are financed from the State budget.
The Ministry of Education and Science ensures the administration of state general budgetary allocations for education. The institutions responsible for decision-making concerning the conditions of service for teachers are: the MoES, municipalities and education institutions. The Education Law, the Labour Protection Law and the Labour Law as well as a number of regulations issued by the Cabinet of Ministers determine conditions of service for teachers.

According to the Education Law, the State funds teacher salaries and subsidises some other costs (e.g. teaching aids, school lunches in primary school) while local government has duties regarding the financing of the maintenance expenditure of its educational institutions. Most schools in Latvia are founded and maintained by local governments. Special schools (schools for students with special education needs – SEN) are funded by central government according to a separate formula. The coefficient of expenses per student depends on whether a SEN student is staying at a boarding school or living at home and attending a day school.
The main forthcoming changes in the area of school system financing concern the new system of teachers' remuneration which is currently being established and which has not yet been approved by the Cabinet.

In Latvia, 89% of teachers are female, which is the highest proportion among all OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) countries. The average age of teachers in Latvia is 47

years; the average age across TALIS countries is four years less. In Latvia, 5% of teachers are younger than 30 and 11% are older than 59 (the TALIS averages are 12% and 6% respectively).

Only 1 in 10 teachers in Latvia works in a school that does not have to compete with other schools for students (TALIS average is 23%), and 79% of teachers work in schools that compete with at least two other schools (the TALIS average is 63%).

In Latvia, 86% of teachers agree that their school provides staff with opportunities to actively participate in school decisions, 92% report that such opportunities are provided to parents and 88% agree that opportunities are provided to students.
The percentage of school leaders in Latvia who report a shared responsibility for the following tasks: appointing or hiring teachers: 53% (TALIS average, 39%); dismissing or suspending teachers from employment: 46% (TALIS average, 29%); establishing teachers' starting salaries, including setting pay scales: 53% (TALIS average, 14%); determining teachers' salary increases: 50% (TALIS average, 18%); deciding on budget allocations within the school: 75% (TALIS average, 47%).

The great majority of teachers' lesson time is spent teaching. On average in TALIS countries and in Latvia, teachers report spending around 80% of their lesson time on actual teaching and learning.

Compared with the average, teachers in Latvia report spending a smaller proportion of their time keeping order in the classroom (9% vs. 13%).
Teachers in Latvia report spending similar numbers of hours performing a variety of work-related tasks, compared with the TALIS average. For example, they report spending 19 hours teaching per week and 6 hours on average for planning their lessons.

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II.3.1 Universal primary education

The Ministry of Education and Science has initiated several activities regarding the improvement of teaching profession: development of the project of teaching professions new standard; discussions on improvement of the process of evaluation of teachers' performance; reviewing the regulation on necessary education and professional qualification for teachers.

Funding from the state budget is allocated for the continuous professional development of teachers to improve their professional competence and receive additional qualification thus ensuring valuable load for teaching profession. Continuing professional development is compulsory in Latvia for teachers (including school heads and their deputies) at all education levels. According to Cabinet regulation on Requirements for Necessary Education and Professional Qualifications of Pedagogues, and Procedures of Pedagogues' Professional Development, each pedagogue should take part in professional qualification improvement programme which is at least 36 hours every three years. The programme is organized by the educational institutions which have the rights to realize professional qualification improvement programmes for teachers. They are financed by the state, local government or private finances. The aims of professional development are to ensure the necessary teacher qualification, to conform to the needs of society and to promote the growth of teachers as creative personalities. Curriculum includes development of specific subjects and subject teaching, cooperation with pupils and parents, and creative processes in education work. In general, teachers themselves are responsible for acquiring the mandatory professional development.

According to the Cabinet Regulation No.363, A or 36-hour programs can be developed and implemented by education institutions, professional non-governmental organizations of teachers in coordination

with the local government, in whose territory the programme will be implemented, as well as the institutions subordinate to the Ministry of Education and Science, which do not need to coordinate the implementation of programs. Teachers are responsible for the improvement of their professional qualification. The mastering of the programs is mainly funded by teachers themselves, local government support is also possible, the state covers courses of programme B of professional improvement for teachers. The scope of programme A is no less than 36 hours within 3 years. After the mastering of programme A, its implementer issues a certificate of improvement of teacher's professional qualification valid for 3 years. The information regarding the mastering of programme A is entered into the State Education Information System, where the teachers are warned about the expiry of their certificate and invited to master a 36h program.

Teachers, who have not less than one year's service in pedagogy and participate in implementing of general educational programmes, including of general education programmes at pre-school educational level, of vocational educational programmes at basic or secondary educational level, of professional orientation programmes and of interest education programmes, have the right to receive the teacher quality assessment at least every five years. Based on the teacher quality assessment teacher is awarded with one of the five teacher assessment levels, which are provided by:
1) Teacher quality assessment level 1, 2 and 3: by the educational institution, in coordination with the municipality where the educational institution is located;
2) Teacher quality assessment level 4: by the municipality, within whose administrative territory the educational institution is located, in coordination with the MoES;
3) Teacher quality assessment level 5: by the Ministry of Education and Science.
After receiving the certificate the teacher may also have a private practice. In 2013 there were issued 184 certificates for launching a teacher's private practice for implementing interest and non-formal education programmes. In comparison with previous years interest in launching a teacher's private practice has not changed substantially.

The most needed professional development areas indicated by Latvian teachers are new technologies in the workplace (24%), ICT skills for teaching (19%), student behaviour and classroom management (15%), approaches to individualised learning (14%) and teaching students with special needs (12%).

Teachers in Latvia report that the biggest barriers to their professional development are the following: professional development is too expensive/unaffordable (30%), professional development conflicts with their work schedule (29%), there is no relevant professional development offered (23%), and there are no incentives for participating in such activities (22%) and a lack of time because of family responsibilities (22%).

All teachers to be qualified to work in a school must undergo study programmes leading not only to higher pedagogical education but also to a teacher qualification in the respective level of education. Besides, most programmes prepare teachers of certain subjects (subject specialists). Thus, completion of a certain kind of programme entitles to teach the respective subject at the respective level of education. There are exemptions – early childhood teachers and primary school teachers (classes 1-6) receive a teacher qualification in the respective level of education, and are entitled to teach most subjects ie. are general study subject teachers.

No
Please provide information on the progress made with respect to ensuring universal access to primary education

Please provide details on the availability of compulsory and free of charge primary education in your country:

Human rights education, religious and moral education is an integral part of the right to education and is increasingly gaining recognition as a human right in itself. Knowledge of rights and freedoms is considered a fundamental tool to guarantee respect for the rights of all. According to UNESCO, education should encompass values such as peace, non-discrimination, equality, justice, non-violence, tolerance and respect for human dignity. Quality education based on a human rights approach means that rights are implemented throughout the whole education system and in all learning environments.

Since 1990ies, human rights issues have been integrated into a number of general subjects such as Social Science, Latvian and World history, Ethics, Geography, Politics and Law, Health education standards and syllabi sample content. The basic requirements for the subject of social sciences define that upon graduating from 9th grade, a student, for example, is tolerant of differences; knows and have used in practice civil participation in the school, local and national events; understands that people have different religious, political and other beliefs; demonstrates tolerance towards minority opinions; knows the concept of the rule of law, can name basic human rights and is aware of their integrity; collaborates with others, participating in local projects of public interest; knows the importance of the Constitution in a democratic society and can explain on what values it is based.

This year Latvia embarks on a major curriculum reform project, aimed at developing a competency based approach across and throughout all subject areas. Critical thinking and problem solving skills, digital and media literacy, collaboration and self-reflection are some key transversal competences to be embedded in all subjects. Moreover, these competencies include certain positive attitudes which are based on core values.

To promote the scope and visibility of human rights education not just in educational institutions, but also as a crucial element of lifelong learning and social development, international conferences have been organized with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia and other institutions. As an example, last year an international conference on human rights education in the Baltic States took place in Riga and it was organized by the non-governmental organization Baltic Human Rights Society. It brought together representatives from the state, non-governmental and academic sectors with the aim to raise awareness about the importance of human rights education in the protection of human rights and to promote the cooperation between those different stakeholders in the Baltic region. Several tools, such as Human Rights E-Guide, has been introduced. The Human Rights Guide is an online information and education resource and a self-help tool for everyone (available here: http://www.cilvektiesibugids.lv/en/themes). The project has received the Patronage of the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO. It has been planned to develop guidelines for educators to use the Human Rights Guide in teaching and learning processes.

[{"title":"Pedagogical staff","comment":"","size":"17.289","name":"ANNEX5.docx","filename":"fu_p8nu26b84tzupdb","ext":"docx"}]

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Is primary education available free of charge to all?

In 1991, immediately after Latvia regained its independence, all schools in Latvia were considered national. Along with the Education Law ratified that year, most schools were delegated to the authority and financial responsibility of regional governments. This opened the door for the establishment of private schools as well. A certain number of speciality schools remained the responsibility of the national government; these included sports and music schools, special education facilities and other schools that provided mandatory basic education along with the speciality to children from all across the country. School funding is shared between the national government and municipalities. Central funds are transferred to municipalities and private schools

through a grant to pay for the salaries of teachers and other education staff. The national government also provides free school meals to all students in Grades 1 to 4 in all schools including special education schools and private schools.

A very small proportion of students (1%) attend one of the 48 private schools, mostly located in the capital city, which can set tuition fees and can receive public funding to cover the costs of teaching staff (OECD, 2014a; MoES, 2015).

Schools are relatively independent in developing and implementing education programmes, hiring staff, and school management. Schools define their own goals, the organisation of the education process, internal regulations, and programmes to be implemented within the framework of the General Education Law. Within the National Standards for Basic Education, teachers have discretion in developing or selecting the subjects of study or course programmes in agreement with the school principal. Schools should also establish a school board that includes staff, parents, students and representatives from the municipality or the school founder in the case of a private school. The board is consulted over the drafting of the school development plan, organises school social activities, manages donations and decides on the use of these funds.

As previously described, the State Education Quality Service (SEQS) was founded in 2009 to, among other responsibilities, register and inspect educational institutions (including private educational institutions) and licence both general and vocational educational programmes through a uniform accreditation procedure of general educational and vocational educational institutions and programmes.
please list the laws and policies that ensure this universal free availability of primary education.

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Parents have the right to enrol their children in a public or private school of their choice as long as places are available. Schools cannot apply selective admission criteria, although those who live near the school are prioritised when demand exceeds the places available. Gymnasia providing lower secondary education (Grades 7 to 9) are allowed to use entrance tests, however. Schools are relatively independent in developing and implementing education programmes, hiring staff, and school management. Schools define their own goals, the organisation of the education process, internal regulations, and programmes to be implemented within the framework of the General Education Law.

For example, there are several alternative pre-school education programs available in Latvia, each of which functions according to its own principles and tenets. They are the Waldorf Program, the Steinert Program and the Montessori School. The first alternative programs appeared shortly after 1991.
does your government intend to ensure free primary education?

how?
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Is primary education compulsory in your country?
In the academic year 2015/2016, 811 general education schools are implementing general education programmes. In Latvia there are two kinds of educational programs: for schools which have education programs in the state language - Latvian ¬ - and those which have programs for education of ethnic minorities which are held in the minority language, in Latvian and both. Latvia finances obligatory primary and secondary education in seven national minority languages, even where only a small number of children are seeking instruction in a certain language. These minorities are Russians, Belarusians, Poles, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Estonians and Jews. Education in national minority languages is a precondition for maintaining the cultural identity

of national minorities in Latvia.

The Ministry of Education and Science has drawn up five model bilingual education curricula for primary schools that differ from each other in terms of the proportion of classes to be taught in the minority language and Latvian or bilingual. National minority schools can opt for one of these curricula or prepare their own. Minority secondary schools have been given 40% of the total number of subjects in the national minority language and free choice is given to the minority schools in determining the subjects which should be taught in the official state language.

The Government of Latvia has constantly been exerting efforts to promote the dialogue with representatives of national minorities. The Ministry of Education and Science has established the Consultative Council on issues of national minority education. This institution helps to maintain a dialogue between the Ministry of Education and Science, students and teachers of national minority schools, parents' organizations and NGO's.

In order to unite Latvian society and ensure the successful acquisition of the official language in the educational system, the Latvian Language Agency (LLA), which is a body subordinated to the Ministry of Education and Science, provides systemic and sustainable support for minority education by funding both from the central government budget and the European Social Fund and European Fund for Integration of Third Country Nationals. Teachers, pupils and parents of all ethnic minority schools have received this assistance, as have teachers and pupils at schools with Latvian as the language of instruction that have a linguistically varied environment (in all schools of Latvia there are pupils with various mother tongues).
In response to significant public interest and the language policy implemented in Latvia which requires that persons employed in certain professions must have certain level of the state language proficiency, the LLA has been providing language courses tailored to the needs of specific professional groups since 1997. These courses are provided free of charge and have been taken by more than 66 000 persons.

Although since 1999 the state regulations require teachers' state language proficiency at the highest level, the LLA organizes Latvian language and methodology combined courses for professional needs for teachers of ethnic minority schools and preschool educational institutions. Since 2004, the LLA has trained 7830 teachers.

Since 2004, the LLA devoted special attention to a new target audience – parents of children attending national minority schools. Latvian language as second language courses are in high demand among this social group; they not only help to learn the language, but also provide the parents with a wider understanding of the educational reforms being carried out in the country and bring them closer to the school and their children who already have comparatively good language skills.
The LLA has developed further education programs for teachers at ethnic minority schools and teachers working in a varied linguistic environment. Varied and innovative forms of further education have been used in the professional development of educators: such as creative camps for teachers, pedagogy master classes, professional development courses of various scope and subject matter for teachers, both in full-time and distance learning format. The LLA projects and events have promoted cooperation among educators at Latvian ethnic minority schools and schools with Latvian as the language of instruction, as well as strengthened school autonomy by involving the school administration, teachers, pupils and their parents in project activities.
The LLA has developed methodologies for the acquisition of the Latvian language as second and foreign language, produced and published textbooks and methodological literature for Latvian language acquisition and bilingual studies. In order to support bilingual education, Latvian ethnic minority schools have been provided with thematic plans for secondary education in ten academic subjects (physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, geography, economics, politics and law, history and Latvian language and literature); with manuals on the Latvian experience in bilingual education and current issues in the field; with methodological editions for the

development of writing ability in bilingual studies, as well as for content and language integrated learning in history, geography, biology, physics, chemistry and mathematics.

In order to ensure the acquisition of knowledge and skills in an electronic environment, nine study films have been produced for the acquisition of the Latvian language, literature and culture, as well as an interactive learning resource From Modernism to Post-Modernism; seven methodological films on best practices in bilingual education; interactive board material for grades 7, 8 and 9 have been released, as well as a DVD feature on best teaching practices in work with interactive board materials; more than 500 teachers have been trained in working with interactive board material; a digital dictionary for pupils e-PUPA has been developed, and Latvian schools have been provided with an interactive map system JSBaltija2 the schools edition, for the purpose of contemporary acquisition of the geography of Latvia and the Baltic region.

Since 2012, specific attention has been given to pre-school education: the LLA developed programs for Latvian language acquisition and bilingual education and have introduced new interactive teaching and learning materials (such as interactive ABC, language games, animation films etc.). The LLA organized the Language school for minority children in a popular public place – a shopping center – and received great public attention and participation. In addition, 28 TV programs "Ar smaidu" ("Learn joyfully") were made, where families learned the Latvian language in different interesting places, such botanic garden, fitness center, shops etc. These materials are available online: www.valoda.lv, www.sazinastilts.lv.
please provide details on its implementation and indicate the current period of compulsory education
The standards are common for majority and minority schools. Many aspects of education for diversity are integrated into variety of all school subjects: for example, human rights education; intercultural / multicultural education, inter – religious education, anti – racism education, tolerance education, civic education, education combating anti – Semitism, teaching on ethnic/cultural minorities, gender equality. Instruments of diversity education in Latvia are the following: recognition of the positive value of diversity, intercultural approach at school, diversity in textbooks, ensuring equal access to education for various groups, inclusive environment at school, training teachers to address equality issues in diverse society.

The quality of education is constantly monitored by the Ministry of Education and Science, the State Education Quality Service. Statistical data clearly shows that the examination results in minority schools do not differ substantially from the results observed in previous years. Examination results in some subjects are even better than before.
Indicate whether your country has adopted and reviewed legislation so that minimum ages for the end of compulsory education, for marriage and for entry into employment are coherent and aligned.
[{"title":"Ethnicities
","comment":"","size":"35.405","name":"ANNEX6.docx","filename":"fu_h3q8yiwg466fpme","ext":"docx"}]

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Latvia needs to strengthen the quality of teaching in rural schools and continue its efforts to integrate students with special needs in regular schools. Furthermore, at the tertiary level the funding model currently under development should be more equitable, moving away from the purely merit-based selection system to ensure promising disadvantaged students have access to free study places.

II.3.2 Secondary education

Though Latvia has made good progress in expanding access and improving learning outcomes, the data suggest there still are considerable disparities in learning opportunities. Despite a range of policies, from compulsory participation in early childhood education and care for 5-6 year-olds to ensuring free basic and upper secondary education, there are marked differences in student

performance between rural and urban schools, while students with special education needs and/or from at-risk groups do not benefit equally from quality learning opportunities. Reducing inequities will require greater and more targeted efforts to support students in rural areas and/or at risk of social exclusion.

The child poverty is an important issue for Latvia. Despite good progress in recent years, a sizable proportion of Latvia's youth (children under the age of 18) were still at risk of poverty and social exclusion: 35.3% in 2014, down from 44.1% in 2011. The Latvian government is committed to reducing socio-economic and regional disparities and breaking the cycle of disadvantage. With the support of EU and other funding it is continuing to implement a range of activities to develop the support system and proper education infrastructure necessary to provide these at-risk youth and youth with special education needs with a quality education (MoES, 2014).

The evidence also suggests much more needs to be done to better support the learning of students with special education needs and integrate them into regular classes where possible. The data showed that in 2013/14 fewer than 4 out of 10 students (35%) with special education needs were integrated in regular schools (MoES, 2015).

Females tend to outperform males in Latvia on a number of education-related indicators. In PISA 2012, girls performed better than boys in all three of the subjects, particularly in reading and science (OECD, 2014c). There is also a substantial gender gap and regional gap in the number of dropouts from secondary education. Dropout rates remain high for young boys, and early school-leaving rates1 are about twice as high in rural areas as in urban areas (OECD, 2015c). Tertiary attainment is also generally higher for women, and the difference is larger than the OECD average. The tertiary attainment rate for 25-64 year-olds was 36% for women and 21% for men in 2012. Among younger adults, the difference was even more marked: tertiary attainment rates for 25-34 year-olds were 51% for women and 26% for men (the OECD averages were 44% and 34% respectively) (OECD, 2014b). Striving for gender equality with a focus on boys and young men may help widen Latvia's talent pool and achieve its inclusive education ambitions and other education objectives.

At the tertiary level there are concerns that the merit-based selection process for free study places limits the chances of students from disadvantaged backgrounds continuing their studies. Government-funded monthly stipends are also awarded to the highest-achieving students in the programme. It is feared that such a purely merit-based funding system exacerbates inequities (World Bank, 2014).

Latvia works towards the implementation of inclusive education. High quality public education for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic conditions, functional status and place of residence, is the instrument for contributing to the equality and social inclusion. In 2014, the Saeima adopted the Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020 which stipulate measures for improving the content of preschool, primary and general education, raising professional competence of teachers, as well as ensuring inclusive education. The aforesaid Guidelines also envisage increasing the number of support personnel, including access to psychologists in preschool and primary educational institutions, in order to prevent violence among children. With the aim to address the issues of peer violence in schools, the Guidelines foresee preparation of various methodological materials and implementation of educational activities. It is also planned to provide training for teachers and special support to new teachers. For example, since September 2012, persons with disabilities are entitled to receive a support service – service of an assistant at the educational institution (institutions of a primary education, vocational education, general secondary education and secondary vocational education) to support person's mobility and self-care. The assistance services include such activities as moving within educational institution; self-care (for example, personal hygiene, meals); communication with teacher; taking notes during lectures; school supplies and arrangement of work place; interaction

with peers and others (for example, during breaks and extended school day groups, extra-curriculum activities, etc.); participation in events organised by an education institution. In 2012, this assistance was provided to 200 students, in 2013 – to 214, and in 2014 – to 263 students. As of January 2013, a new service for persons with disabilities was launched, notably, a municipality-based service of an assistant for performing outside home activities, targeted at children with disabilities of 5-18 years of age. Persons with disabilities use this service to do shopping, spend free time; attend cultural events; arrive at work, educational institution, or day centre; receive medical treatment services (including, visit to a general practitioner (GP)); engage in public activities, etc.

Measures applied by the State to support preschool education have been effective. In 2015, after the completion of the State support programme for the reduction of the municipal kindergartens' waiting list, the improvement of the childcare system will continue. It is envisaged to introduce a diversified childcare policy thereby facilitating the development of alternative forms of childcare and applying the "money follows the child" principle. As of 2013, in order to ensure the availability of preschool education, the State provides financial support programme for children who have not been ensured with the municipal preschool education, and therefore receive services provided by the private preschool educational institution, or a private childcare provider. In 2014, the State support across Latvia was granted to approximately 9,112 children, and the State-provided support for the reduction the waiting list in the kindergartens constitutes an amount of EUR 8,771,903.13. In 2014, there were 4,000 children on the waiting list in total

In 2013, a Registry for the providers of childcare services was established and is currently maintained by the State Education Quality Service. According to the Registry's data, in 2014, 1,229 legal entities (legal or natural persons) have been registered as private childcare providers, which is by 79.98% more than in 2013.

For the period 2014-20 the government intends to provide grants and other support to schools to support students in primary education who are identified as at risk of social exclusion. In the previous EU funding period (2007-13) the infrastructure of 36 general education schools and 61 special education schools was customised for children with special needs, including 13 special education schools in 2013 (MoES, 2015).

The Government draws the Committee's attention that the Ministry of Education and Science implements education for minor children of asylum seekers. A minor child of an asylum seeker, as well as a minor who is an asylum-seeker himself/herself is granted access to educational system. Namely, he/she has the right to primary and secondary education, as well as right to continue education after reaching 18 years of age. Pursuant to the Education Law, a minor who is a third-country national or a stateless person and who does not have legal grounds to stay in the territory of Latvia is entitled to pursue primary education during the period laid down for voluntary departure, during the period for which the expulsion has been suspended, as well during his/her apprehension period.
The Cabinet of Ministers Regulation on the Procedure of ensuring education to minor asylum-seeker was adopted in 2010. In accordance with the aforesaid Regulation the Ministry of Education and Science defines educational institutions which are entitled to provide education to minor asylum-seeker. In 2014/2015 academic year, there are 5 educational institutions throughout Latvia that ensure education for minor asylum-seekers.

On 15 April 2014, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted Regulation No. 195 on the Procedure on the assessment of whether a permission to work as a teacher for a person sentenced for having committed a criminal violation or minor criminal offence harm the interests of a student. The decision on granting or refusing to issue a permit, as well as the cancellation of such permit is ensured by the State Education Quality Service.

The State has launched a free meals' programme for students from 1st- 4th grade (EUR 1.14 per

student per day), as well as granted annual support for the purchase of educational materials for all students at primary, secondary and vocational schools (in 2013– EUR 9, in 2014– EUR 10).

In order to better rate the quality of all the available programs, educational program licensing has been initiated during the 1999/2000 academic year. The information accumulated during the licensing process will be compiled in the Educational Program Register. This information will be available to the public, thus enabling parents and their children to be better informed about educational choices available to them.

The principles of the Convention have been integrated into The Guidelines for Education Development Strategy 2014-2020. Latvia works towards the implementation of inclusive education. High quality public education for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic conditions, functional status and place of residence, is the instrument for contributing to the equality and social inclusion.

Measures have been taken to strengthen the role and capacity of the Ombudsman to address issues such as non-discrimination. Considering the recommendations provided by the Latvian Ombudsman in 2011 regarding the children's rights, a number of significant improvements were introduced. As the principles of the Convention have been integrated into The Guidelines for Education Development Strategy 2014-2020, they have been actively communicated to representatives of governmental and nongovernmental institutions, including portents' organizations, academics, teachers and others.

The Convention and Recommendations have been translated into Latvian Language and are available on Likumi.lv which is a legislation website ensuring free access to systematized (consolidated) legislation of the Republic of Latvia. English and Latvian versions of the document are also available on the webpage of the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO: www.unesco.lv
Please provide information on the general availability and accessibility to all of secondary education, including technical and vocational secondary education and training in your country.

[Yes]

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The promotion of the principles of inclusive society and inclusive education and lifelong learning has been a long-term priority of the Education programme of the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO. Through the UNESCO ASPnet that gathers 32 educational institutions in all regions of Latvia and by involving municipalities, teacher union, government institutions, NGOs, different aspects of promotion of culture of peace, human rights education and combating violence practices have been discussed through series of seminars, meetings, conferences.

Latvian National Commission for UNESCO coordinates the work of the council "Education for All". It was established to promote the implementation of the 6 Education for All goals accepted by 164 countries in World Education Forum in Dakar, 2000. Now the Council works towards achieving the Education 2030 – UN Sustainable Development Goals. The head of the council is the Minister of the Education and Science of the Latvia. The council gathers representatives of the Saeima (Parliament of the Republic of Latvia), Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia, National Centre for Education, State Service of Education Quality, Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees, Parents' Forum of Latvia, Latvian Association of Local and Regional Government, Latvian National Commission for UNESCO and different NGOs. The council meets 2 to 3 times per year to discuss current issues in relation to the accessibility and quality of the education and lifelong learning opportunities, topicalities in relation to the curricula and innovative methods and improvements of learning spaces. For example, last council meeting on April 2016 discussed on the policies and measures taken to combat violence in formal education and presented some very

successful projects and approaches.

Each year (at the end of April/ beginning of May) during the Global Action Week Education for All several activities- discussion forums, seminars, education campaigns has been organized by the Latvian National commission for UNESCO on the topics of inclusive education and lifelong learning, ensuring equal access and opportunities for all, combating violence and promoting the culture of peace. In addition, in past years during this week educational institutions in Latvia demonstrated their positive experience in addressing different and varied needs of pupils, the methods and
tools teachers use in their work as well as how they work with children
with different disabilities.

Is it available free of charge?
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