

# **Questionnaire to Governments on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995)**

## **LATVIA**

**Period 2004 - 2008**

### **Part One: Overview of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment**

The first strategic document in the field of gender equality policy in Latvia was the *Concept Paper on Gender Equality Implementation (2001)*. The Concept Paper is used as a fundamental basis for the development of further plans of action and documents to implement the goals set in the Concept Paper. Since then gender mainstreaming has been the main method of facilitating the principle of gender equality in Latvia, and is constantly adjusted and improved due to economical, social and political changes and due to increasing awareness of how gender pervades all government policies. Two operational documents have been accepted by the government to implement activities and achieve aims defined in different directions. The aim of the *Programme for the Implementation of Gender Equality 2005-2006* is to promote an efficient, integrated and coordinated implementation of gender equality issues and develop sustainable institutional mechanism. Four main directions of action have been identified: education at all levels and awareness raising in the society about gender equality issues; reconciliation of work and family life; improvement of the administrative capacity to work with gender equality issues and improvement of the gender equality policy mechanism; prevention of violence. The *Programme for the Implementation of Gender Equality 2007-2010* is in line with the EU Roadmap for Gender Equality and the national situation. The objectives set out in the Programme are focused in six directions of action: 1) awarenessraising about gender equality in general public; 2) education about gender equality for specialists in central governmental institutions and other specialists; 3) improvement of monitoring of gender equality policy implementation; 4) bringing the issue of domestic violence into agenda; 5) studying of the health related lifestyle habits; 6) reconciliation of work and family life. Activities are carried out by public institutions, as well as nongovernmental organizations and the private sector. They are focused on the different target groups – employers, employees, women and man in different age group, family, and specialists working in the education.

If in the previous years emphasis was put on establishing a capable institutional mechanism, procedures and methods, then currently the emphasis has shifted on implementation of the principle of gender equality in the various sectoral policies through line ministries. Certainly, vertical gender equality policies are also carried out to address the gaps not reachable by gender mainstreaming. It can be said that Latvia currently has a dual strategy where both horizontal and vertical gender equality activities contribute to each other.

Furthermore, the Cabinet of Ministers accepted amendments to the Instruction for preparation of legal acts that require annotations of legal acts to contain an *ex-ante* impact assessment on gender equality situation.

As to “particular focus on financing for gender equality” or gender budgeting, in Latvia this is still in developmental stage. While Latvia increasingly finances activities related to gender equality through branch policies and attempts to introduce gender mainstreaming into sectoral policies there is yet little awareness among the institutions that they actually engage in gender budgeting. However, it is expected that gender budgeting will acquire greater prominence in Latvia due its status in gender equality policy documents of the European Union (EU) and interest among specialists at the Ministry of Welfare and other institutions.

In line with international and European legal documents, gender equality is guaranteed in the legislation of Latvia in all spheres of life. Most important of these legal norms is Article 91 of the Constitution stating that “All human beings in Latvia shall be equal before the law and the courts. Human rights shall be realized without discrimination of any kind.” The most important sectoral laws containing new norms promoting gender equality came into force in 2002, namely, Labor Law and Law on Labor Protection. These more clearly than before establish the standards of equal treatment for men and women. More specifically, norms of equal pay, equal access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions, parental leave, burden of proof in cases of discrimination based on sex, protection of pregnant workers, protection against harassment and sexual harassment, nondiscrimination based on gender are part of these documents. In line with general political and legislative processes in the European Union, an increasing number of national laws are amended to include clauses of equal treatment due to gender. Likewise laws to regulate provision of goods and services, insurance provided by private insurance companies are amended in order to prevent gender based discrimination. By the amendments of April 22, 2004 and September 21, 2006 to Labour Law, the Article 29 (prohibition of differential treatment) was updated and the definitions of direct and indirect discrimination had been added. Besides by the amendments of April 22, 2004 the article had been supplemented with legal norms which provided that harassment of a person within the meaning of this Law is the subjection of a person to such actions which are unwanted from the point of view of the person, which are associated with his or her belonging to a specific gender, including actions of a sexual nature if the purpose or result of such actions is the violation of the person’s dignity and the creation of an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, degrading or offensive environment.

During last five years policy approach as regards to work and family life reconciliation measures has developed rapidly in order to make it more worthwhile as well as reducing the gender imbalance in doing so, providing financial support during family-related leave and reducing discrimination. Parents of both sexes are eligible to all care-related leaves and benefits, except those specifically related to a certain sex, i.e., maternity and paternity leaves and benefits. In 2005 a new parental leave policy was introduced which entitles one of the parents to receive a benefit in amount of 70% of persons previous salary (but not more than 396 Latvian Lats) up to the child’s 1st birthday. Previously persons were eligible to receive the benefit only if they were not employed during the parental leave. Since 8 March, 2006 this norm has been changed allowing persons to work during the parental leave and receive 50% of the benefit, but not less, than 56 Lats. After lawsuit in constitutional court, further changes in national policy and benefit system were indispensable. Accordingly the ceiling was abolished and since 2008 employed persons are entitled to full amount of the benefit. This has led to a situation where child care leave is no more a prerequisite for the benefit. Thereby due to economical reasons families take the decision (i.e. men have higher salary and corresponding benefit) and mothers are the ones taking care of infants, but fathers receive full benefit (in amount of 70% of persons previous salary) while continuing work full time.

For previously unemployed persons (i.e. persons having no social insurance contributions) there is a flat rate benefit of 50 Lats.

A relatively recent important policy change to promote reconciliation of work and family life was the introduction of a paid paternity leave since 2004 (unpaid leave was available since 2002). The 10 day long leave must be taken within the first two months of a child's life. The benefit amounted to 80 % of the person's previous social insurance contributions since 2004, and 100% since 2008.

Recognizing the importance of the international experience to promote gender equality, Latvia has successfully used the co-operation with international organizations to develop different measures to promote gender equality in Latvia. After joining European Union in 2004 the cooperation patterns have changed. Development of different initiatives and implementation of projects in cooperation with Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM), PHARE, European Community, UNDP, and some other international partners that was common before 2004 common, is not anymore. Requirements for Latvia as to a member state of EU have increased as well, logically expecting equal political, administrative and, what is very important, financial input. Admittedly parallel to other social needs that need financial investments there have been always difficulties to have appropriate financial means for gender issues. Even if possibilities to implement joint projects are very limited, participation in cooperation programs to create a common political platform is continued. Since 2004 more emphasis on EU Structural funds and policy programs has been put. For example, equal opportunities (that include gender, disability and aging aspects) has been defined as one of horizontal priorities in the distribution of EU structural funds' resources.

## **Part Two: Progress in implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and the further initiatives and actions identified in the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly**

### **Women and poverty**

The analysis of the poverty risk for various social demographic groups shows that poverty in Latvia has a gender dimension – a trend of poverty feminization, however this tends to diminish over time.

Analysing statistical data disaggregated by gender, women in Latvia are more subjected to poverty than men, especially single women – 62 % (51 % men). Women show higher poverty rates than men as women usually have lower average income (wage, pension) which is explained by the fact that more women are employed in spheres with generally lower wages, but if they work in spheres with a high average wage, they usually do not occupy high and well paid positions.

Accordingly as women receive, on the average, lower salaries than men, their average social contributions and in result pensions are also lower, which poses a threat for their poverty during the whole lifetime.

Also during childbearing and on parental leave or in cases when taking care of sick and elderly family members it often leads women to leave labour market. Decisive in these situations is a stereotype that caring for family members is a responsibility of women. When taking upon themselves the duty of childcare women are restricted in their economic possibilities. Single – parent families with underage children and a woman as the head of the family are exposed to a higher poverty risk.

By 8 pp the poverty risk has decreased among the unemployed reaching 57 % in 2007. Analysing the situation from the gender perspective, unemployed men are more subjected to the risk of poverty than unemployed women, respectively 66 % and 47 %.

Analysing households according to the demographic content, two main types of households are subjected to increasing social risk – households with three and more children and single parent households with 1 or more dependent children (very often these households are sustained by a woman). While the at-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers on average decreases for older people (65 years and older), women are significantly more likely than men to encounter poverty.

Household type	2005	2006	2007
1 person household (65+ years)	45	69	75
1 person household – men	42	49	51
1 person household – total	41	55	59
1 person household – women	40	58	62
2 adults, 3+ children	39	52	46
1 personas household (aged up to 64)	37	42	44
Singe-parent family (at least one child)	31	40	34
All households (no children)	20	25	26
2 adults (without children, both younger than 65)	19	22	20
All households (with children)	19	22	18
2 adults, 2 children	18	22	16
2 adults, 1 child	14	15	12
Other households with children	13	16	13
Other household without children	13	11	10
2 adults without children (one adult aged 65 or more)	11	16	22
<i>Source: Central Statistical Bureau</i>			

The average risk of poverty for all households is 21 %, hence risk levels above this could be considered as high. From the data presented above it emerges that age is a significant factor and also the number of persons in a household. This perspective reiterates the significance of gender in relation to poverty, however shows the increasing significance of other factors where gender used to dominate.

## **Education and Training of Women**

The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (adopted by the Constitutional Assembly of Latvia on February 15th, 1922.) paragraph 112th states that everyone has the right to education. The State shall ensure that everyone may acquire primary and secondary education without charge. Primary education shall be compulsory.

The Education Law in force (law has been adopted by the Saeima on October 29th, 1998.) states that every citizen of the Republic of Latvia and every person who has the right to a non-citizen passport issued by the Republic of Latvia, every person who has received a permanent residence permit, as well as citizens from European Union States who have been issued a temporary residence permit, and their children, have equal right to acquire education, regardless of gender (..).

Law on Scientific Activity (law was adopted by the Saeima on 14 April 2005.) paragraph 3 states that any person, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, language, age, political or religious conviction, social origin, or material, family or employment situation and other circumstances, has the right to perform scientific activity. Respectively, discrimination in education and training is forbidden.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia has no accurate statistics on issues concerning analphabeticism among women in Latvia. Taking note of compulsory primary education and statistical data the percentage is not high. There is only data available on early school leavers by gender in 2007 in Latvia: total number 16%, female 12.2% and male 26.7% (ages 18-24, source: Eurostat).

Latvian women make much more effort to achieve high level of education than men do. Female proportion of the total number of students is 64%, and this is stable pattern since 2004. However the female proportion of the total number of graduates or qualifications has been slightly growing, 69% in 2004, 72% in 2008.

In academic year 2000/2001 there were 49% women among those graduated from universities at doctoral level, in 2005/2006 women comprised 59% from the total number of all graduates at doctoral level.

The proportion of women also decreases when it comes to the employment positions at the highest level in the academic sphere. Assumption that as higher in the educational system the lower the female proportion is, can be verified when looking at the female proportion of the total number of academic staff – 56% (Source: *Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia*).

In 2007 44.5% of scientists working in the science sector were women, the proportion is even higher among young (up to 34 years) scientists – 47.8%, proportion of female scientists between age of 35-44 is 51%. In 2007 53.38% research workers (scientists, technical staff and attending staff) were women (source: *Central Statistical Bureau of Republic of Latvia*).

As regards to economically active inhabitants according to the data of Central Statistical Bureau, 24,2% (21,5% - 2002) of employed population had higher education in 2007, 61% of them were women (58% in 2002). In 2007 29,8% of all economically active females and 17.8 % of males had higher education. This number also has tendency to grow for women.

Vocational education and training establishments in Latvia are mainly small (250 – 400 students) and are not capable to offer sufficiently broad range of vocational training programs, nor provide their quality, thus creating large differences in the education and training offer from regional and employment viewpoint. Out of the total number of students in vocational education and training in the age group of 15-19, approximately 40% are girls/women.

The legislation of the Republic of Latvia and policy planning documents does not determine separately approach in order to foster girls and women education and training of lifelong learning. Basic Guidelines of Lifelong Learning Policy for 2007-2013 (approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2007) provides to ensure the availability of lifelong learning for inhabitants regardless of their age, sex, previous education, place of living, level of income, ethnical identity, social status, functional disorders.

The statistical data show, that women more often than men intend to study within the time perspective of one year: 25% female and 18% male (2007). Participation in lifelong learning (Latvia, 2006.): 9.3% female and 4.1% male (source: *Eurostat* (LPS)).

There is a trend that in the area of adult education women have mostly attended study programmes offering humanitarian education, as well as social sciences, but men – study programmes involving technical engineering, technology, security services etc. Sexual segregation in education areas leads to inflexible workforce.

### **Women and health**

In conducting analysis from the gender perspective, health is one of the examples, which distinctly characterises the different situation of women and men in a particular area, demonstrating negative tendencies in the health indicators of men. It seems that both genders have the same rights, resources and opportunities to take care of their health and to have a healthy lifestyle, however drastic differences are visible in viewing the indicators characterising health and lifestyle habits related to health in division according to genders.

The main priorities currently are prophylactic screenings, human resource development and improvement of access to health care. This includes both early diagnosis and promotion of healthy lifestyle. Measures are taken to address society in order to increase awareness about harmful lifestyle habits – sedentary life, unhealthy food, smoking, use of alcohol and drugs, and their impact on every persons health, as well as their burden on health care budget in general. Investments in the health care sector principally are directed towards previously mentioned areas - ensuring qualitative and effective access to health care services and emergency medical treatment for the population, including development of health care infrastructure, implementation of e-health and professional development of human resources. Additional investments are provided for implementation of preventive health care measures, by promoting in the society an understanding about healthy lifestyle thereby ensuring the improvement of the population's health situation as well as the decrease of demand for health care services and emergency medical treatment in the future.

General health indicators show that both women and men encounter certain health problems, which do not always correspond each other. The projected life expectancy has been raising continuously until 2004 and was for females – 77,2 years, males 67,1 – years. During last years projected life expectancy has decreased again, in 2007 females 76,5, males 65,8. From 2002 till 2004 the difference of the foreseeable lifespan between both genders had a tendency to reduce, however in 2005 it increased again, reaching 11.8 years, and stands in 2007 by 10,7 years.

Death rate of infants reached the lowest numbers in last ten years 7,6 fatal incidents for 1000 alive births, but has increased in 2007 again – 8,8 incidents for 1000 alive births. As a positive tendency should be mentioned that more infants than in previous years receive breastfeed for a

longer period. From women that have started the pregnancy screening 2,4% are teenagers, this has remained persistent over last five years.

Men do practice more unhealthy habits but and take also less care of their health than women, including their reproductive health. Data provided in the last report on the reproductive health of residents (conducted in 2003) testify that women visit a doctor more frequently than men. According to the results of the poll of residents performed in 2003, in all 84% of the women surveyed during the research and 68% of men (from 15 to 49 years of age) have visited outpatient institutions within the time period of the previous 12 months.<sup>1</sup>

Smoking, alcoholism, suicides, life expectancy are indicators where men are in a much worse situation than women. There are on average four times more men within the number of patients registered with the diagnosis alcohol-induced psychosis, alcoholism, addiction to narcotic and psychoactive substances.<sup>2</sup> 63% of women go to preventive gynaecological examinations once a year or more frequently, however 62% of men have never visited a venereologist or an andrologist.<sup>3</sup> Particularly striking tendencies are observed also among young people, 29% of boys begin to use strong alcohol at 14-17 years of age (accordingly 7% of girls).

Death indicators from external causes of death (transport accidents, drowning, poisoning with harmful substances, alcohol, suicides) are particularly alarming. In 2005 the number of men who died from external causes of death was 2429, the number of women – 785. In the same year the number of men who died from external causes of death and committed suicide was 445, the number of women – 199.<sup>4 5</sup>

Among HIV infected persons the female proportion lies below 25%, except age group 15-19 and 20-24 where female form over 35% at the beginning of 2009. Total number of persons with reported cases of sexually transmitted diseases has significantly decreased, the female percentage has remained at 40%.

An important political decision was the establishment of the Ministry of Health in 2003. since then a more targeted work has been done. More detailed policy documents were passed to and accepted by the government.

To improve the situation the Cabinet of Ministers in July 2003 has approved a National Strategy on Mother's and Child Health Care. The strategy addresses mainly problems related to reproductive health, perinatal care, and health care of infants, small children and teenagers. Mainly activities addressed health problems of women ( such as womb cancer, breast cancer, breastfeeding) and youth reproductive health as well as health of infants and child. Activities are carried out by public institutions, medical schools, medical research centers and nongovernmental organizations. They are focused on the different target groups – doctors, students, researchers, women, youth and society as whole.

Other documents in health sector are Concept paper on Healthy food (2003-2013), National Health Strategy and implementation plan for 2004-2010, Programme to restrict the dissemination of HIV/AIDS (2003-2007).

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<sup>1</sup> Reproductive Health of Residents. Report on Situation in Latvia (1997-2003). UN Population Fund, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Men and Women in Latvia. Central Statistics Bureau of the Republic of Latvia, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Reproductive Health of Residents. Report on Situation in Latvia (1997-2003). Riga, UN Population Fund, Latvia's Association for Family Planning and Sexual Health "Papardes zieds", 2003

<sup>4</sup> Data of the Health Statistics and Medical Technologies State Agency of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Latvia.

<sup>5</sup> Data from the database of the Central Statistics Bureau.

Being aware of gender gaps in health sector survey of lifestyle habits related to health was set as one of the main directions of action within the Programme for gender equality implementation. It includes measures to survey and raise the awareness of residents regarding lifestyle habits, which are specifically characteristic to each gender, and the impact thereof on health and the quality of life.

Among persons with disabilities there are approximately 50% females and 50% males. For persons with disabilities of working age to regain and develop professional knowledge and skills as well as to master a new profession there are state financed vocational rehabilitation services provided. In 2004, with the establishment of a *Social integration state agency* a unified package of rehabilitation services was developed and perfected, supplementing the existing vocational rehabilitation services. The new agency gives the possibility to disabled people to requalify or acquire a new profession, combining vocational education with individual social rehabilitation and elements of medical rehabilitation (physiotherapy ergotherapy, aquatic therapy, physiotherapy, etc.) according to their functional disorders, abilities, wishes and level of development, as well as taking into account the type of disability and its manifestations.

### **Violence against women**

There has been a significant change regarding violence related problems on political agenda during last years. The Ministry of Children, Family and Integration affairs has been appointed as responsible governmental body about violence issues and in cooperation with line ministries and other involved institutions drafted a medium – term planning document “Program to combat domestic violence 2008 – 2011” (accepted by the Government in 2008). The Program is the first policy planning document to combat domestic violence, which gave clear recommendations concerning the measures to combat domestic violence more effectively than before.

The Program sets out three directions of action – Identification of domestic violence, prevention of domestic violence, cooperation of institutions in order to provide assistance and rehabilitation. Under the Program domestic violence, violence of partnership, int.al. violence against women will be reduced. As part of the programme activities to rehabilitate victims of domestic violence are implemented, activities to resocialize perpetrators are still under consideration.

Moreover, in order to provide complex help in crisis situations as well as in cases when it is necessary to receive support for finding solution for the family problem (also in cases when woman and minors are victims of violence), during 2004 – 2008 with the Ministry’s of Children, Family and Integration affairs support 26 family support and crisis centres which provide complex help for families with children in different situations (for example, support groups, psychologist consultations, mediation, children emotional upbringing program etc.) were created.

According to existing legislation, state is entitled through various means to provide services of social rehabilitation to child-victims of illegal acts – all forms of violence, exploitation etc. Social rehabilitation of children who have suffered from violence (up to age 18) is legally established since 2000. State-financed services to children victims of violence are provided at the place of residence (10 consultations by psychologist, psychotherapist or social worker) or at institution (up to 60 days). Services are equally guaranteed both for boys and girls. In 2007, 1774 children were provided social rehabilitation out of which 863 were boys and 911 were girls.

Importantly, while the legislation at this point does not establish an obligation to aid adult-victims of violence, these persons also receive assistance to some degree. In 2005, 38 persons



accompanying a child to rehabilitation institutions received support. In 2006 the number of persons was 93, in 2007 - 110 persons. Hence, there is a tendency to increasingly assist also adult-victims of violence. While there are no data on the sex of these adult-victims, the most often encountered scenario is that women (mainly mothers) accompany their child (children) to the rehabilitation institution. To address this problem several political documents have been passed by the Cabinet of Ministers that provide the necessity to ensure adequate social rehabilitation services also for adult-victims of violence as well as perpetrators. Necessary amendments in respective laws have been prepared by the Ministry of Welfare to provide state funded social rehabilitation services for those two groups. Services are planned to be in place in 2010.

The NGOs have remained as the main vehicle of assistance and rehabilitation for victims of violence, however increasing state funding is budgeted. These activities have been initiated to some extent by the Council of Europe Campaign to Eliminate Violence Against Women.

Since 2004 several projects aimed to prevent and combat with violence against women have been carried out. At the moment the project „Legal aid for women suffering from family violence”(Jan.2006-Dec.2008) with financial support from National Charity Campaign of Norway is implemented by Resource Centre for Women "Marta". Goal of the project is to provide professional legal aid for free for women suffering from domestic violence; to change public opinion about domestic violence issues. Target groups are women suffering from partner's violence; professionals involved in domestic violence cases and society as whole.

With support from NCM several projects have been implemented. The latest project “Strengthening the multi-sectoral cooperation to prevent violence” (Aug. 2005. – March 2006) has been initiated and realized by the Ministry of Welfare . The aim of the project was to increase knowledge and awareness among specialists about root causes of violence, especially domestic violence; to promote a respectful and non-stereotypical attitude towards victims of violence; to initiate discussions about the problems surrounding the issue of domestic violence; to contribute to the development of multi-sectoral cooperation in preventing violence. In the frame of the project eight regional seminars for 250 specialists from different spheres were organized.

As successful example of policy development could be considered Programme for Prevention of **Human Trafficking** 2004-2008. During implementation of Programme for Prevention of Human Trafficking 2004-2008 situation with prevention and combating of human trafficking improved – society became more informed on the problem, a new system for the provision of social rehabilitation services was put in place in order to increase the opportunities to receive such services. Several amendments to the Latvian Criminal Law have been made, thus providing legal instruments to fight trafficking. In the framework of this Programme it is envisaged to introduce the necessary amendments in Latvian legislation so that it would correspond to international law. Human trafficking is now considered as a serious violation of human rights and sentence for this crime is deprivation of liberty for up to fifteen years. Besides in the Latvian Criminal Law an offence is provided not only for human trafficking, but even for a person who commits sending a person with his or her consent to a foreign state for sexual exploitation. In order to fight human trafficking efficiently, a special division was established in the State Police. As a result of its focused operation, the number of cases of human trafficking has been reduced considerably. Latvia has also signed the key international documents in this regard, most recently, the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

The Ministry of Welfare is responsible for implementation of activities included in the section “Support services for victims of human beings trafficking (rehabilitation)” of the anti-trafficking programme aimed at ensuring inclusion of victims of human trafficking into society by providing coordinated interinstitutional social support services. To achieve this, on June 17, 2004

amendments and regulations were passed to the Cabinet of Ministers to provide state financed social rehabilitation for victims of human trafficking. Thus the social rehabilitation for victims of trafficking in human beings is provided since January 2006. The number of victims who have received rehabilitation, indicates about certain difficulties in state institutions and NGOs cooperation as regards to identification and assistance to victims of trafficking.

In cooperation with nongovernmental organizations Ministry of Interior with the relevant state institutions has worked out the project for the next Programme for Combating Human Trafficking 2009-2013. The Programme should be accepted by the Cabinet of Ministers at the beginning of 2009.

In the past years of educational, informative and research activities on issues of human trafficking prevention were continued. With support from state institutions several public organisations in Latvia have implemented projects to inform society about the problems and risks of human trafficking, and the opportunities of assistance for victims of human trafficking.

An interactive portal was created in 2006: [www.cilvektirdznieciba.lv](http://www.cilvektirdznieciba.lv) ([www.trafficking.lv](http://www.trafficking.lv)), which is available in Latvian, English and Russian. The portal provides general information about the problem of human trafficking, a summary of Latvian and international legislation, news, information about implemented projects and campaigns, as well as other useful information.

The NGOs are the most active actors so far in prevention of trafficking and dealing with its consequences. Resource Centre for Women "Marta" project "*Prevention and Rehabilitation Efforts to Combat Human Being Trafficking*" (Oct.2004 – Aug. 2005) main goal was to educate society on the problem of human trafficking and to foster the participation of social and government institutions in decreasing the risks of human trafficking and resulting problems. By increasing public understanding and developing socio-psychological rehabilitation and reintegration programs, the project aimed to decrease the isolation of victims of human trafficking as well as discriminating attitudes towards those persons. Target group of the project were potential victims and victims of human trafficking; NGOs and social workers, specialists, and local politicians.

With financial support from Embassy of USA in Latvia the project "*The Protection and Rehabilitation of Victims of Human Trafficking*" (Oct. 2004 - Oct. 2005) has been implemented. Main goal was to protect victims of human trafficking; to carry out the socio-psychological rehabilitation of victims and their reintegration into society; to prevent the social isolation of victims; to educate potential victim groups regarding legitimate and safe employment opportunities abroad.

During 2004 - 2008 Ministry of Welfare was involved in Nordic Baltic Network for support of women victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. In this framework pilot Project *Support, protection, safe return, and rehabilitation of women victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation* was carried out.

With the assistance of the Social Integration fund the project „*Be careful – trafficking in human beings in Latvia!*” (Sept. 2005 –Sept. 2006) was carried out. General aim of the project was to develop and strengthen institutional and operational capacity of nongovernmental organizations and partner organizations, stimulating integration and implementation of EU standards and legislative norms and development of civil society to solve social problems; to enhance the dialogue between the government, local and regional municipalities and society on the topic of combating trafficking in human beings.

During the reporting period, Ministry has also been involved together with a variety of partners from NGO sector and other state institutions and research institutes in Project „Cooperation Against Trafficking in South-East Baltic” that was funded by Daphne program and in Project „Opening Labor Market for Women” that was funded within framework of EQUAL initiative with an aim to develop an open market for women by reducing gender segregation in the labor market (also to integrate victims of trafficking in human beings into the legal labor market), facilitating reconciliation of family and working life, developing efficient supporting capacity and reducing national tension.

### **Women and armed conflicts**

Latvia is not directly involved in any armed conflict or wars and there are no special conditions or problems that concern women as victims of armed conflicts.

Since 2007 Latvia has a fully professional military service to be entered free of formal unequal treatment due to gender. According to the data provided by the Ministry of Defence in 2007 there were 17% women of the national army. The percentage of women at command positions is 11%. Latvian women and men can volunteer to take part in peacekeeping operations, in international missions there were 0,36% women at the beginning of 2008.

As regards to the diplomatic service there are both equal rights to join the diplomatic service, no restrictions to make a diplomatic career depending on gender and equal possibilities to receive further education - courses, studies and scholarships. As of January 2009, there were total 474 women and 230 men in diplomatic service, i.e. 67% women. The difference comes opposite when we look at gender equality among ambassadors, where 32 are men and just 8 are women. Significant gender equality can be observed among positions of persons in charge of diplomatic missions, where the proportion is 1:1. In general, the tendency shows that the percentage of men-diplomats is decreasing: for example, in 2000, there were 38, 9 % men and 61, 1% women in the diplomatic service, but, in 2009, there are 33% men and 67% women.

### **Women and economics**

Both women and men are free to seek their economic independence – to obtain education, job, run their own business, participate in decision making process. However there are figures that give evidence that women and men probably do not have the same opportunities to benefit from equally guaranteed rights.

Economical activity level of women has been raising during last years - the economic activity of women in 2005 in the age group 15-74 was 56.8 %, in 2007 – 60,4%. Over the period since 1995 the gender pay gap has decreased - female wages being 78.5% of the male wages in 1995 and 84.4. % in 2005. In 2007 the gender pay gap is 17%. One of the main reasons for the economic inequality of men and women is still the horizontal segregation of the labor market into “male / female professions”. Women are mainly employed in such low paid sectors as education, health and social work, while men dominate in following professions – industry, transport, storage and telecommunication.

<b>Rate of employed persons and monthly average gross wages and salary by sex and kind of activity, 2007</b>					
Kind of activity	Rate of employed persons (annual average)		Monthly average gross wages and salary, LVL		Female wages in % from males wages
	Females, %	Males, %	Females	Males	
Industry	40	<b>60</b>	359	<b>458</b>	78
Transport, storage and telecommunication	31	<b>69</b>	452	<b>507</b>	89
Financial intermediation	74	<b>26</b>	873	<b>1557</b>	56
Education	<b>82</b>	18	<b>415</b>	504	82
Health and social work	<b>85</b>	16	<b>446</b>	527	85

*Source: Central Statistical Office*

As data shows women still receive, on average lower salaries than men, their average social contributions and in result pensions are also lower, which poses a threat for their poverty during the whole lifetime.

<b>Employed population aged 15 –74 years in the main job by sex and by occupation, 2007</b>		
	<b>Women, %</b>	<b>Men, %</b>
Legislators, senior officials and managers	41	59
Professionals	66	34
Technicians and associate professionals	65	35
Clerks	77	23
Service workers, shops and market sale workers	76	24
Skilled agriculture and fishery workers	45	55
Craft and related trade workers	18	82
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	14	86
Elementary occupations	47	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>51</b>

*Source: Central Statistical Office*

Another important factor for female engagement into paid work is child care possibilities. These questions have been discussed in detail and several measures have been taken. During 2004 – 2008 the Ministry of Children, Family and Integration affairs has supported the creation of alternative to preschool institutions in local municipalities – 46 children’s play and development centres to provide preschool aged children supervision when their parents do not have opportunity to baby-sit. In these centres it is possible to leave a child for several hours a day in a secure and child development facilitating environment under a supervision of qualified specialists. In 2007 Ministry ran a pilot project for nurse service creation in Liepaja city, during which 60 nurses were trained, a web-site was created, and nurse service provision for families was started.

To promote reconciliation of work and family life the Ministry of Children, Family and Integration affairs during the time period of November 2005 to December 2006 was implementing an international EU funded project „Men equal, men different” in partnership with Latvian NGOs, and with partners from Denmark, France, Bulgaria. Project partners have jointly defined three main objectives:

- 1) To indicate main factors impeding active fatherhood and promote male involvement in family life and child care;
- 2) To develop recommendations and good practice advices for employers – how to reconcile successfully the work and family life;

- 3) To promote the change of gender stereotypes in society and to educate about the possibilities of men involvement in the family life.

A research was carried out to clarify most important circumstances, which prevent men from engaging in the family life, and it was concluded that the existing stereotype (a man as a breadwinner) is an impediment for men to be involved in the family life. The research also emphasizes the need for a more active employers participation in work and family life reconciliation.

In addition, an action plan has been approved for solving problems concerning development of pre-school education institutions network aimed at development of pre-school education institutions network, meeting the interests of the state residents. The action plan envisages promotion of pre-school education institutions network, amendments to normative acts made regarding the hygiene standards of pre-school education institutions and tax incentives for residents, as well as a research is performed on development forecasts of pre-school education institutions and alternative services of taking care of children within the country. To enable both parents to work full time and promote the reintegration of women after the childcare leave, activities co-financed by EU Structural Funds were implemented in order to create new and renovate existent preschool establishments.

In 2007 there was a study completed *The specific problems in the labour market of Latvia and its regions*<sup>6</sup>, which is the first discrimination monitoring in Latvia and its regions, that evaluates the openness of the Latvian labour market – regarding equal treatment and examining the existing social inequality against the different social groups and its varied expressions in regions. According to research, inequality, related to gender is not commonly observed in the Latvian labour market. Only 2,1% females have felt unequal attitude to themselves based on gender and 4,9% females have witnessed unequal attitude to others based on gender. Research also displayed, that the labour market segregation among the employers is supported and maintained. Division into “male” and “female” jobs is considered as a norm. Also the fact that so-called “female” jobs are paid less if men do not want to work there, but women agree to work for lower salary is considered as a norm. Some employers, however, considered that in the labour market there is no gender discrimination, at least concerning equal pay for the same work. There were given examples that women receive higher salaries than men in their enterprises. However, discrimination can be explained not only by insufficiencies in labour legislation but also by poor awareness of the employers about their rights (less than 40% of the employees admit having heard about the equal attitude requirement to employees during different stages of labour legal relationships). Also there are problems with employees passiveness in executing their rights, 68,4% of the employees have admitted that even if their labour rights were limited, they would not apply to any organization for help to solve these problems. The passiveness of the employees in defending their rights might indicate to serious problems in the labour market, lack of monitoring institutions, insufficient capacity and availability. However, passive activity of professional organizations and trade unions might be even more significant, which is proved by the low participation percentage (less than 10%) in such organizations, as well as the rare use of collective agreements as a tool to ensure the rights (less than 20%).

Child-care system in Latvia provides for work and family life’s harmonization, which means that duties of child care are not only women’s obligation. Fathers as well as mothers can take a part in child-care, going on child-care leave and receiving Pearent’s benefit, but mothers after child’s birth can return to work, if they want it. This system ensures opportunity for both of parents to

have a child-care leave and receive child-care benefit since 2002. The amount of child-care benefit for persons who are raising children under 1 year of age was LVL 30 per month and to persons who are raising children between 1 to 2 years of age, the amount was LVL 22 per month. Since 2005 this system has experienced major changes in order to develop a more family friendly system, that would benefit also the demographic situation. The amount of child-care benefit for employed persons was increased, so that the benefit replaces the persons previous income from paid work and thus makes it possible for persons to be on child-care leave without losing their previous quality of life. There is a double-level (flat-rate and earnings-related) child care benefit provided to take care of those parents or care-giver (guardian) who are not employed or are not full-time employed and who are raising children under 2 years of age. Since 2008 there are two kinds of child-care benefits in Latvia: earnings related Parent's benefit for employed (socially insured) persons (both mother, and father) and flat-rated Childcare benefit for unemployed (socially uninsured) persons (both mother, and father) and persons are raising children between 1 to 2 years of age. The amount of parent's benefit is 70% of the average gross wages upon which contributions have been paid during 12 months, but not less than LVL 63 (€ 89,64) per month. These 12-month period applies from three months before the month of the child's birth. The amount of childcare benefit for not employed persons and who are raising children under 1 year of age is LVL 50 (€ 71,14) per month, for persons who are raising children between 1 to 2 years of age LVL 30 (€ 42,69) per month.

Moreover, in 2004 in order to ensure equal opportunities for all parents, who for some reason have to take care of a child alone (mainly women), Administration of the Maintenance Guarantee Fund was created. The Fund is aimed to implement children rights for social guaranty, securing minimal maintenance guarantee amount for children, who are cared by one of the parents, because the second parent does not fulfil the judgement of court. Statistics shows that maintenance guarantee was received by 10 472 parents in 2007, of which 96,4% were women. In 2008 the number of maintenance guarantee recipients has increased – 11 562 parents, 96,6% of which were women. Minimal maintenance guarantee amount for children under 7 years in 2008 was 40 LVL/month, for children aged 7 to 18 years – 48 LVL/month.

To reduce causes of professional segregation, and to close the gender pay gap a project “Reducing Causes of Professional Segregation” has been implemented with funding from EU Structural funds. There are male dominated professions and professions where mostly women are concentrated – this represents professional segregation. In Latvia, there are the following consequences of professional segregation, women dominate low-paid professions, technical sectors lack qualified specialists, a lack of gender balance at workplaces, the potential of women as entrepreneurs is not fully used.

The following goals have been set within the project in order to reduce division between male and female professions, and to ensure equal opportunities for men and women in the market: to reduce stereotypes on gender roles in the market, to promote career choices of young people in favor of technical sectors, to promote women entrepreneurship in technical sectors, to promote gender balanced development of local governments, to gain trans-national experience, develop innovative approaches and recommendations for reducing professional segregation. To reach the common goal of the project, 20 partners - representatives from non-governmental organizations, state institutions, municipalities, employee unions – established co-operation.

The project “Opening Market for Women” facilitated access to market and re-entering there by those who find it difficult to go or reintegrate into the labor market that should be open to everybody. It also aims to reconcile family and working life by developing more flexible and efficient forms of work organization and support services, to reduce differences in the area of

gender equality and eradicate the existing barriers into men's and women's professions, and to integrate victims of trafficking in human beings into the legal labor market. The goal of the project is to develop an open market for women by reducing gender segregation in the labor market, facilitating reconciliation of family and working life, developing efficient supporting capacity and reducing national tension. Implementer of the project is Resource Centre for Women "Marta". Project partners are several representatives from non-governmental organizations, state institutions and international organizations.

The project "Silent hands" implemented by the Latvian Union of Deaf People. There are approximately 1000 women with hearing disabilities living in Latvia. These women communicate with the help of sign language and consider this language as their native one. According to an estimate made by Latvian Union of Deaf People 80% of these women have a primary or even lower level of education, 70% are unemployed without real opportunities to find a job. Low self-esteem and lack of skills, society's stereotypes regarding deaf people, and the attitude of governments who do not consider these issues to be priorities defines their low social status in the risk zone of social exclusion. The project activities include intervention in all spheres and systems connected to the employment of deaf persons, development of preconditions for social reintegration of recurrently discriminated women with hearing disabilities, incorporation of their problems in the national gender equality development policy, development of preventive defense mechanisms in employment and social security spheres balancing their private life with employment opportunities using untraditional, innovative approaches, creation of a best practice model which can be used by other groups of disabled people for solving women's unemployment problems. Target audience of project: families where all members (including children) are deaf; deaf women with minors; single mothers with hearing disabilities; deaf women at pre-pension age.

### **Women in power and decision-making**

There are no formal obstacles for equality in political representation. The right of both men and women to vote and be elected was recognized in Latvia already in 1918 with the establishment of the Latvian state. However politics is one of the areas where the *de facto* gender equality remains to be achieved. Since the restoration of independence among deputies of the Saeima (Parliament) women compose approximately 8% - 20%.<sup>7</sup> Likewise at the Cabinet of Ministers there is a constant gender disproportion, there are usually 2-4 women ministers out of 17 ministers' posts. Usually women have the responsibility over social sectors - education, culture, social issues, health. Although there have been some exceptions when women were leading IT, justice and defence sectors. This shows structural obstacles for women to enter politics. Research shows that main obstacles for this are intra-party and intra-political elite, political culture, stereotypes about what constitutes a politician held by the general public and family obligations for women.<sup>8</sup> The low participation of women in politics is related to the political culture and long traditions in Latvia, where politicians is perceived as men's field of action.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> Saeima – 16% of women, 6<sup>th</sup> Saeima – 8%, 7<sup>th</sup> Saeima- 17%, 8<sup>th</sup> Saeima – 21%, 9<sup>th</sup> Saeima – 19%, [www.saeima.lv](http://www.saeima.lv). See also table "The Cabinet of Ministers (1999-2006)", [www.mk.gov.lv](http://www.mk.gov.lv).

<sup>8</sup> Public Policy Institute. *Men and women in governance*. Riga: Ministry of Welfare, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

In Civil Service where there are more women (71%) than men (29%), senior decision – making positions are most frequently held by men while women are more often delegated the role of deputies, substitutes, executors of decisions.

<b>Women and men in the State administration<sup>10</sup></b>		
<i>Position</i>	<i>women%</i>	<i>Men %</i>
State Secretary, Director of State chancellery, director of Secretariat of the Special Assignments	56%	44%
Under State secretary, Deputy director of State chancellery, Deputy director of Secretariat of the Special Assignments	41%	59%
Director of department	71%	29%
Deputy director of department	68%	32%
Specialists	72%	28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>29%</b>

The fact that at some times there have been and are some women in very high and responsible positions (president, speaker of parliament, leader of treasury, leader of the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau, leader of the main daily newspaper and bank, etc) has been a very positive example but at the same time the fact impedes fruitful discussions about women in politics and power positions. Their example makes it harder to discuss the barriers that still do exist for most women.

The activity of women in last elections on local level in March 2005 was high (45.3 % of candidates). Among the elected there were 42.3% women and 57.7% men in the Local Government elections on March 2005. At the same time women form only 18% of the elected members in the City councils. Looked upon from a vertical power perspective – only 23 % of the mayors are female. Before elections 15% of the mayors were female.

Significant gender disproportion can be observed also in other positions and levels where decisions are made (e.g., public agencies, executive positions of large enterprises) where the representation of women is low. The share of women employers among total number of employed women was only 1,5% in 2002 (men – 4,8%), and has raised up to 1,95 in 2007 (men – 4,43), but is still far too low. A positive tendency can be observed, in 2002 there were three times more men employers than women employers, whereby since 2005 number of female employers has increased - men are only two times more than women.

### **Women and human rights**

Although the anti-discrimination provisions had been elaborated into the national legislation, their real provision is not sufficient. The problems of equal opportunities or anti-discrimination are actualized in Latvia mostly through the aligning of legislation to the international agreements and by integrating into the EU – elaborating the provisions of Employment and Race directives into the national legislation. At the same time, the anti-discrimination policy is fragmentary; there is no single, all-inclusive law, which would provide the basis for the wider approach to the problem and its solutions. Although among the draft laws, which had to be passed by the Parliament of Latvia urgently before Latvia accessed to the EU in 2004, there was also Law on

<sup>10</sup> Administration of Civil Service, <http://www.vcp.gov.lv/>.



Discrimination Prevention that would potentially form the basis for the uniform anti-discrimination policy, it was not passed. At present the anti-discrimination provisions are mostly elaborated into the Labour Law. Some other are discussed in the parliament.

For institutions involved in the solution of these issues, discrimination problems are not the priority and the limited resources are allocated for the solution of more urgent problems. Experts indicate that, although there is a discussion on the particular situations to be considered as discrimination, there are not much applications, complaints submitted by the victims and therefore these problems are not much considered. The representatives of regional institutions admit that they cannot identify the discrimination situations and, if there would be complaints on the discrimination, they would not be competent enough to deal with such cases.

Many people, especially **women**, are unaware of their juridical and political **rights** in the field of gender equality. That is due to the lack of information in the society about these issues and possibilities to protect their rights. Additionally the societies' distrust in the court system and fear of possible sanctions are factors that influence the situation why there are so few complaints. In spite of the very low number of court cases and grievances in The Latvian National Human Rights Office (LNHRO) progress regarding equal treatment and women rights protection can be observed. So we can notice, that the dissemination of information is a very important precondition for the achievement of a more gender aware society.

LNHRO provided free consultations on legal matters within the framework of the project EQUAL "Opening labor market for women!" during 2006-2007. Consultations were received by calling a free line or by visiting the office personally. The lawyers of the LNHRO gave consultations about the rights of women in the field of employment; upon starting the employment relationships; about women rights in the work environment; about their rights when losing the job; about social guarantees in the field of employment; in other problem situations, that concern the rights of women on the job market. In case of well-grounded complaints LNHRO will research the case within the framework of its competence. If the solution will not be achieved by a settlement, LNHRO lawyers were providing assistance in submitting documents to the court and representing the person at the court if necessary.

Since January 2007, on the basis of the LNHRO an Ombudsmans office was created. The activities of the Ombudsman are regulated by the Ombudsman Law. The Ombudsmans main tasks are encouragement of the protection of human rights and promotion of a legal and expedient State authority, which observes the principle of good administration.

Applications, complaints submitted on discrimination to State Labour Inspectorate		
Year	Number of submissions	
2004	0	On work interview questions and advertisements
2005	1	On work interview questions and advertisements
2006	0	
2007	8	On work interview questions and advertisements
2008	38 (3-approved)	On unequal treatment

Labour law of June 20, 2001 had already predicted that everyone has an equal right to work, to fair, safe and healthy working conditions, as well as to fair work remuneration. The rights provided shall be ensured without any direct or indirect discrimination – irrespective of a person's gender. As well as the Law defined the prohibition of differential treatment. Regarding discrimination in labour relations a person can turn to the State Labour Inspectorate. Applications and complaints submitted to the State Labour Inspectorate were mostly relating to discriminative

advertisements in the process of search for employment (on gender, age basis), as well as regarding discrimination on fair work remuneration.

### **Women and media**

The coverage of gender equality related issues in the media is strongly connected to the activities implemented at that time. Thus during the period when several governmental bodies and NGOs were carrying out projects about gender equality related issues appeared in media more frequently. Still there is lack of understanding and awareness about the role of mass media in replicating stereotypes and reporting about gender issues. Recognizing the importance of mass media in the formation of public opinion one of the projects was aimed at mass media professionals.

The project “Mass media in (re)distribution of power” (Jan. 2004 – March 2005) in the framework of the European Community Programme for Gender Equality 2001 -2005 had its focus on gender stereotypes in media. By challenging and changing existing stereotypes, the project was aimed to reach a situation when both genders are motivated and enjoy equal opportunities to participate in decision-making on issues important for the whole society. One of the main objectives of the project was to raise awareness of media practitioners, policy makers and general society about existing gender stereotypes that prevent full and equal representation and participation of both genders, especially, women in the decision-making process on issues important for the whole society. Activities for different target groups – journalists, communication specialists, politicians, policy makers were carried out.

From 2005 to 2007 in the framework of National Programme “Capacity strengthening of the institutions responsible for policy development and implementation in the fields of employment and gender equality” a project was implemented further awareness raising activities for journalists.

### **Girl child**

In Latvia sexual education is compulsory subject at schools, officially it is started from 11 years of age. 14% girls and 22% boys have had sexual relations at age 15 years, 84 % of girls and 86,9 % of boys were using contraception.

Abortion is legal in Latvia, including based on social and economical reasons. 15-19 years old girls give birth to 22,1 children for 1000 inhabitants. 15-19 years old girls have had 16,6 legal abortions for 1000 inhabitants. The total number of abortions for girls under age of 20 has been decreasing over last four years.

In education girls show better success than boys do. Girls more often than boys after elementary school do continue their education in the secondary school and then in high school. Among school drop outs and early school leavers there are 60% boys.

Several preventive measures in order to combat violence against girls have been carried out in Latvia. For example, in 2008 The State police in cooperation with The State Inspectorate For Protection Of Children's Rights in schools organized campaign „*I am with you, not against you*” about relationships between children and inter-individual conflicts.

## **Part Three: Institutional development**

Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia is the designated responsible governmental institution for the development of gender equality policy in Latvia since 1999. Since February 2003 gender equality issues were the responsibility of the Department of European and Legal Affairs, where Gender Equality Unit in July 2003 was formed. Since July 2007 the Gender Equality Unit is part of the Department for Social Policy Inclusion. The other two department's units are dealing with social inclusion policy and rights of persons with disabilities. Ministry's responsibilities in the field of gender equality contain the coordination of the implementation of the gender equality policy, monitoring and assessment of gender equality promotion programmes and projects, monitoring of the overall situation and the assessment of the political impact from the gender equality aspect, ensuring the co-ordination of various normative acts.

**Line ministries**, as well as the **Secretariats of Ministers for Special Assignments** are responsible for the coordination of the incorporation of gender equality principles into the already existing and future policies, normative acts and programmes, preparation of proposals for the gender equality implementation, and information of the society about activities undertaken in the area of gender equality in accordance with their competence. Since 2004 all line ministries have nominated a **person responsible for gender equality** issues at the highest level (usually at understate secretary level). These persons are used now as contact points in order to mainstream gender into their particular field.

**National Human Rights Office** (NHRO) monitors the compliance with norms in respect of gender equality and non – discrimination, provides consultations, recommendations on gender equality issues, reviews complaints on violations of gender equality, represents the individuals in court. In 2004 there Department of Discrimination prevention was created. The department deals with discrimination on the ground of sex as well as other forms of discrimination. Since 2007 office was reorganized into Ombudsmans Office.

The **Ombudsman** of the Republic of Latvia is an official elected by the Parliament, whose main tasks are encouragement of the protection of human rights and promotion of a legal and expedient State authority, which observes the principle of good administration.

**State Labor Inspectorate** (SLI) is a state administrative and supervisory institution that works under supervision of the Ministry of Welfare. The main task of SLI is to take measures to ensure effective implementation of State policy in the field of labor legal relations, labor protection and the technical supervision of dangerous equipment. SLI had approx. 100 inspectors throughout the country.

**Women's Interparliamentary Cooperation Group** was set up in the beginning of 2003. There are all women parliamentarians involved in this group. The main aim of the group is highlight gender equality issues and to pay specific attention to the women's socio-economic situation and role in society as a whole. Women parliamentarians of different political parties are members of this group.

The **Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia** collects statistical data out of which a significant proportion is also disaggregated by sex. The bureau also performs specific research (e.g. Workforce Survey, Statistical bulletin on Household Budget, statistical data collection on Time Use of the Population of Latvia, etc.) that include data and analyses from a gender perspective.

The **Maintenance Guarantee Fund** was created in 2004. It is an institution to provide minimum financial child support in the case where one of the parents is neglecting this duty. The fund is state-financed, however when possible initiates a procedure to recover the expenses from the particular parent. The recovery of child support disbursed from the Maintenance Guarantee Fund is not subject to the statute of limitations; that is, the child support payments and the relevant interest may be deducted from any income of the debtor at any period of his/her life (for example, from a scholarship, allowance or pension). The fund is another state measure to ensure the welfare of children and lone parents.

The **gender mainstreaming** approach is used as the main method to implement gender equality into branch policies and included as a horizontal objective in the strategic documents of Latvia regarding the use of European Union structural funds. Knowledge about gender equality issues, equal treatment of men and women, gender mainstreaming methods are of very high importance in the policy making process. Main actors in this process who need to have the mentioned knowledge are civil servants and politicians. Training course for civil servants „Rights and possibilities of women and men: what has to be considered in the development of the branch policies” has been included in the course programme of the Latvian School of Public Administration for 2005, as well as for 2006 and 2007. The interest from line ministries and subordinate institutions fluctuates from year to year.

From 2006 to 2007 several three-day training seminars for civil servants from state administration institutions were organized within the project “*Strengthening of capacity of institutions involved in the development and implementation of employment and gender equality policies*”. The seminars aimed to make an understanding on basic issues related to labor market and gender equality in Latvia and the EU context; inform about fields of activity and actual issues of institutions involved within development and implementation of employment and gender equality policies. More than 700 civil servants took part in the training.

Gender equality was a horizontal priority in the EU structural funds programming period from 2004-2006 and has retained its place in the period of 2007-2013. The Ministry of Welfare is the responsible institution for implementation of this horizontal priority into all structural funds activities.

The Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (CSB) compiles on regular basis **statistical data** that can be used to get detailed information on the situation of women in Latvia. For example, in all surveys of persons and households statistical data are summarized in the breakdown by gender. Detailed information is available on employment, wages, earnings, educational level, state of health, use of information technologies, participation in tourism activities, time use. For data users information is available on women’s activities in the field of research as well as information on the employment of women, who have acquired a doctor’s degree. The largest surveys that summarize data in the breakdown by gender are the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions statistics (EU-SILC), the Household Budget Survey (HBS), the survey on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT), the European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), the Adult Education Survey (AES), etc.

The Statistical Bureau of the European Communities (Eurostat) has worked out a list of 16 core variables including the sex of a respondent, that beginning with 2010 are going to be included also in all new surveys of households.

In the Beijing action platform a separate chapter was devoted to poverty related questions - here the EU-SILC data that are based on Laeken indicators are used. Data includes the poverty risk

indicator in the breakdown by gender. These data are available starting with 2004 (the 2005 survey data).

Though a lot of information is compiled in the breakdown by gender it should be noted that information on women in business is insufficient.

The CSB has also an access to data in the breakdown by gender from administrative data sources – information on social security, morbidity, violation, representation in legislative and executive bodies, etc. Still, it should be noted that in Latvia is not available detailed information on women that are victims of offence and insufficient is information on women's participation in cultural activities (museum, theatre admissions, etc.). Besides, more precise and detailed information on women's employment and education would be available if in Latvia are built up registers of working population, pupils/students/teaching staffs.

In order to improve the available information on victims of violence, in 2009 the CSB has launched the project “Translating and Testing Victimization Survey Module”, within a frame of which the questionnaire prepared by Eurostat is translated and evaluated. A separate chapter in the questionnaire is devoted to sexual violence. The Victimization survey is going to be launched in all EU countries in 2013. These survey data also will be compiled in the breakdown by gender.

In order to acquaint data users with information available in the breakdown by gender, the CSB prepares a regular publication “Women and Men in Latvia”, in which the current data on men and women in Latvia are summarized. The latest publication was issued in 2008. Data in the breakdown by gender are available also in other CSB publications including databases in the CSB homepage. On a regular basis are updated statistical data in the breakdown by gender that are available in databases in the UN homepage.

Several measures have been carried out in recent years for improvement of **social dialogue** both, on the national and regional level. Institutions involved in the employment partnership, among them the Employers' Confederation of Latvia and the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, were strengthened in the context of the National Programme “Support to capacity-building for implementation of labour market and gender equality policy in responsible institutions, distribution of information and raising awareness” co-financed by the EU Structural funds. In the context of the Programme, also capacities of Latvian local governments and Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments were built in order to ensure development of employment partnership and social dialogue on the local government level.

The close cooperation with **social partners** (trade unions and employers organizations) and **non-governmental** organizations has lead to different initiatives and projects (most important of them mentioned above). A network of cooperation is in place allowing to find the necessary partners on a national scale when needed. The most important actors of the network are Ministry of Welfare, Latvian Gender Equality Coalition, Public Policy Institute and Center for Gender Studies of the University of Latvia, Resource Centre for Women “Marta”, Crisis Centre “Skalbes”, “Rural Women's coalition”.

In the Ministry of Welfare a project “Capacity strengthening of the institutions responsible for policy development and implementation in the fields of employment and gender equality” has been implemented (Jan.2005- Dec. 2006). In the frames of the project several activities targeted to gender equality within the education system and labor market during 2005 have been executed – gender mainstreaming guidelines in school books; methodical materials and training

about gender equality for teachers; three educational documental films with methodical material (how to speak about the film in the classroom for teachers) for school children were produced and disseminated to the all schools of Latvia (approximately 1100 schools); public awareness raising campaign have been started (social advertisements and outdoors were produced, regional seminars for women, seminars for school children); methodical materials and training about employment policy and gender equality issues have been developed.

#### **Part Four: Remaining challenges and actions to address them (3 pages)**

Women still face several problems after child care leave with an integration into the labour market. High share of unemployed women after child care leave exists within the number of registered unemployed persons, in 2004 – 10,9%; 2005 – 11,3%; 2006 – 11,6%; 2007 - 7%; 2008 - 7 %. Women often leave their job or are not able to start it, due to inflexible work organisation or lack of child care institutions.

Overall, Latvia should focus on pursuing active labour market policies, as well as improving access to childcare. However, with the changing economic circumstances (and limited financial resources) the emphasis, firstly, will be put on the most effective measures like training and retraining activities.

Within an integrated *flexicurity* approach, the challenge remains to intensify efforts to increase labour productivity in Latvia by improving activation and regional mobility, and, enhancing the responsiveness of education and training systems to labour market needs, by putting in place a lifelong learning system.