

Latvia

National report on the
implementation of the Beijing
Declaration and Platform of Action
(1995) and the results of the 23rd
Special Session of the General
Assembly (2000)

List of abbreviations

CSB – The Central Statistical Bureau

CDPC – Centre for Disease Prevention and Control

EIGE – European Institute for Gender Equality

EU – European Union

EWCS – European working conditions survey

LCE – Latvian Confederation of the Employers

LFTUF – Latvian Free Trade Union

MDGs – Millennium Development Goals

NCE – National Centre for Education

NGO – non-governmental organisation

NTCC – National Tripartite Cooperation Council

PISA – Programme for International Student Assessment

STCLA – The Sub-council of the Tripartite Cooperation in Labour Affairs

UN – United Nations

UNSC – United Nations Security Council

WB – The World Bank

WHO – World Health Organisation

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Section one: Overview analysis of achievements and challenges since 1995

a) Major achievements and challenges, main constitutional, legislative developments in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women

In Latvia, gender equality issues have been on the agenda since the mid-1990s, but still one can face a sceptical attitude to the equality of each gender.

Gender equality issues are implemented by an integrated approach in Latvia, that means the principles of gender equality must be taken into consideration while solving the issues and forming a policy in any field of politics and at all levels, especially when the influence is anticipated directly upon society. One has to remember that even if the legislation guarantees equal rights to everyone, not always do both genders have equal conditions, because quite often the available resources and possibilities of men and women differ. Analysing the situation in Latvia, the above mentioned situation can be confirmed - although the rights of men and women are equal in legislation, there is still a challenge to implement gender equality in practice.

The Ministry of Welfare is responsible for gender equality policy coordination.

The first strategic document for gender equality policy in Latvia was the Concept Paper on Gender Equality Implementation (2001). This 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 for facilitating the principle of gender equality in Latvia, and is constantly adjusted and improved due to economic, social and political changes.

The Concept Paper defined the main tasks for gender mainstreaming - the establishment of institutional mechanism; functions of stakeholders (ministries, CSB, etc.); training of specialists in different areas and public awareness in general about women's and men's equal opportunities and rights in real life.

The principle of gender equality in Latvia is determined by the Constitutional Law of the Republic of Latvia, article 91, stressing that "all people in Latvia are equal before the law and Court. Human rights are exercised without any discrimination ". At the same time, legislation in various policy fields establishes the prohibition of different treatment or discrimination by gender. Latvia has joined several international documents on human rights and gender equality.

The principle of equality is laid down in the different legislative acts:

- Educational Law (1998). Article 3.¹, which defines prohibition of a different attitude. It establishes the right to obtain education regardless of property, social status, race, nationality, ethnicity, gender, religious and political belief policy confidence, health status, employment, place of living;

- Sports Law (2002). Article 3 defines the equality principle to engage in sports;'

- Youth Law (2008) Article 2.¹ defines basic principles of youth policy, including the principle of equality to participate in social, political, cultural life and economics without discrimination;

- Law on Scientific activity (2001) Article 3 defines 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;

- Labour Law (2002). Besides the prohibition to discriminate in the labour market, the Law defines 10 days paternity leave for the father of a new-born, as well as parental leave for one of the parents;

- Law on Social Security (1995) defines that in ensuring social services, differential treatment based on a person's race, skin colour, gender, age, disability, state of health,

religious, political or other persuasion, national or social origin, property or marital status or other circumstances is prohibited. Differential treatment includes the direct or indirect discrimination of a person, infringement of a person or an implication to discriminate thereof. The Law describes the definition of direct discrimination, indirect discrimination and infringement of a person;

- Law on Judicial Power (1992). Article 4 defines that all persons are equal before the law and the court, and they have equal rights to the protection of the law as well as a court shall adjudge a trial irrespective of the origin, social and financial status, race or nationality, sex, education, language, attitude towards religion, type and nature of occupation, place of residence, or the political or other views of a person;

- Law on Physical Prohibition of Discrimination of Person of Economic Activities (2009) aims to prohibit different treatment of individuals who wish to take or carry out activities for a profit;

- The Sentence Execution Code of Latvia (1970). Article 4 defines that in executing any form of criminal punishment discrimination against a convicted person on the basis of race, nationality, language, gender, social and financial status, political beliefs, religious convictions or other criteria is not permitted;

- The other legislative acts like Administrative Procedure Law (2001); Consumer Rights Protection Law (1999); Insurance Companies and their Supervision Law (1998); Support for Unemployed Persons and Persons Seeking Employment Law (2002); State Civil Service Law (2000); State Administration Structure Law (2002); Military Service Law (2002); Custody Court Law (2006); Law on the Rights of Patients (2009); Electronic Media Law (2010).

Three operational documents have been accepted by the government to implement activities and achieve aims defined in different directions:

- Programme for the Implementation of Gender Equality 2005-2006;
- Programme for the Implementation of Gender Equality 2007-2010;
- Plan for the Implementation of Gender Equality 2012-2014.

The main directions in policy planning documents are:

- women's and men's economic independence and the promotion of equal opportunities in the labour market⁷
- reconciliation of work and family life;
- reduction of gender based violence;
- education at all levels and awareness raising in society about gender equality issues;
- capacity building for stakeholders.

There has been progress in some policies, especially when compared with the situation in 1995. Besides development in legislation, statistical information (analysis is available segregated by gender), establishment of institutional responsibility, there is a need to give an overview on policy development in particular policy fields, like violence against women, education, labour market, etc.

Reconciliation of work and family life

The female employment rate in Latvia has always been relatively high; reaching 65.5% in 2008, but due to the economic recession fell to 60.9% in 2009. While these indicators smoothed in 2010, reaching 59% (more details about employment under Section Two - F. Women and the economy).

Reconciliation of work and family life is an essential prerequisite for women to ensure their economic independence. Reconciliation of work and family responsibilities has long been a part of the equality policy in Latvia. A central goal has been adequate care leave and benefit as well as good quality day care for children.

Within the gender equality programme for 2005-2006, work and family life issues were addressed in connection with the development of alternative forms of childcare provisions. In

the gender equality programme for 2007-2010, the development of infrastructure for preschool institutions at the centres of the national and regional centres was included. With support from the European Regional Development Fund, 26 preschool institutions were built or reconstructed and 34 were renovated from 2007 to 2013.

In the programming period 2005-2006, 39 playground and development centres were funded. Thus, municipalities were supported with the appropriate infrastructure according to family needs, allowing parents with young children to comply with work and childcare responsibilities.

The availability of pre-school childcare services, in particular for children from the age of one, is an essential precondition for women returning to the labour market after parental leave.

Preschool education financing in Latvia has experienced several reforms. At present, the financing is divided between the state and local municipalities. Pre-school teachers can be specialists with specific qualifications; consequently, parents can rely on the quality of education provided.

Approximately 15% of children up to 3 years of age are in formal childcare education. In 2005, the proportion increased to 16%, which indicates the availability of child care services at an early age is still a challenge.

Since September 1st, 2013 the Latvian government started a pilot project to provide financial support for parents who need child care support for their children ages 1.5 - 4 years who do not benefit from public childcare (from 5 years of age on municipalities have a legal obligation to provide primary education to children). More details about the service can be found in Section Two.

Since 1996, the situation in Latvia has changed, and men spend more time in household work and with children.

As the EWCS data shows¹, men living in Latvia are leaders in time spent on household work in comparison with men from other EU countries.

Both in 2005 and 2010, Latvian women stand out with the longest paid working hours compared to the situation in other EU countries - 38.1 hours per week, but time devoted for work in the household is 10.2 hours more than men do – 28.4 hours. In 2010, Latvian men spent 40 hours per week in paid employment and 18.2 hours in unpaid care and responsibilities.

Informative educational measures, the improvement of childcare facilities and flexible working time arrangements were the main directions of activities in all policy planning documents.

Activities devoted towards a new-born baby's father has played a crucial role with the aim of attracting men to the new-born's baby care, thus strengthening family relations. Fathers are eligible to paternity leave and the data on paternity leave shows an increase since 2004, when it constituted 22%, but in the first half of 2013 42%.

Most activities took place within the European Social Fund and the Community initiative EQUAL projects (2004-2007). Awareness raising campaigns, seminars, discussions, informative materials about gender equality aspects in employment and employment relationships were the main focus within the activities which were carried out by the social partners' organizations.

In the context of work and family life reconciliation, there is a need for the development of alternative services for other dependent family members who can't care for themselves. From 2008 until 2013, the improvement of availability of the alternative care services in the regions was implemented. These services provide possibilities for persons with mental and physical disorders to spend time in day care centres, while their family members are able to

¹ European Working Conditions Observatory, European Working Conditions Surveys, 2012. <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/ewco/surveys/>, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/ewcs/2005/index.htm>, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/ewcs/2010/index.htm> (accessed July 16, 2014).

integrate into the labour market.

Starting from 2013, persons with visual impairments are able to get assisted service in the local government. This service is also available for children starting at the age of five. It is financed from the state budget. Assisted service provides personal contact for the person to get from the place of residence to the educational institution, working place, or day care centre. Consequently, the introduction of this service also provides support for parents of children with disabilities to get the children to educational institution. In total, 3069 persons received this service, including 458 children.

Reconciliation of work and family life is high on the political agenda, in particular, when decisions are taken regarding the increase of benefits or the development of new services for families with children. The crucial issues are the proportional planning of the amount of benefits and services to ensure that support is available and would be sufficient, without creating a desire to withdraw from the labour market.

Gender based violence

Since 2008, a planned policy towards reducing violence against women has been in place. In 2008, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the *Programme for reducing domestic violence 2008-2011* that were aimed to prevent criminal offenses connected to domestic violence and to reduce the negative consequences caused to a victim. During these four years, essential changes in the legal provisions concerning domestic violence were introduced. Also, different activities were organised in order to attract attention to the dissemination of domestic violence. After implementing the *Programme for reducing domestic violence*, the prevention of domestic violence was set as one of the directions of the State guidelines for the *Family Policy 2011-2017*.

Despite the escalation of the violence issue, working with the reduction of violence against women is still one of the biggest challenges for gender equality policy in Latvia.

According to the survey “Domestic Violence against Women”, made in 2010 in 27 EU countries by Eurobarometer, the highest level of tolerance of violence and trend to blame a person who had suffered from the violence is in Latvia. The other survey gives evidence that society has accepted a “non-reporting manner” which means that people do not report cases of violence. This is the main reason why the domestic violence issue is dealt with so slowly in Latvia.

Since 2011, essential amendments to the legislative act have been made to tighten liability and penalties for violent offences committed, if they have been used against a spouse or former spouse and living with an unregistered marriage partner. Since 2013, emotional, physical, sexual and economic violence against a spouse or his or her child, or a child of both spouses, is clearly mentioned in the Civil law as a reason to request a divorce without observing the mandatory reconciliation period for spouses.

In 2014, Latvia introduced new legal instruments to guarantee protection orders in cases of domestic violence. These amendments provide the right for the person suffering from violence or stalking to ask the court on his or her own initiative, or with the intermediation of the police, to take appropriate protection measures against the perpetrator within civil proceeding. Such measures, for instance, can be a prohibition for the perpetrator to approach or communicate with the victim, as well as an order for the perpetrator to be removed from the housing, and a prohibition to approach, return to, or stay in a housing unit which is the permanent residence of the perpetrator or victim. In order to ensure an effective implementation of the protection measures, criminal liability for a malicious unfulfilling of a protection measure ordered by the Court is envisaged.

In 2014, amendments to the Criminal Law came into force. The purpose of which are to bring the definition of rape and sexual violence in line with the definition of the Council of Europe Convention on violence against women and domestic violence prevention and

elimination (Convention of Istanbul). This means that sexual violence and rape should be punished also in cases when it is done without physical violence but against the will of a person,

In 2013, the Ministry of Justice prepared a report "On the international experience of the limitation in the field of prostitution and the proposals to reduce prostitution in Latvia". The report was prepared based on discussions in society on the necessity to apply criminal proceedings to those who buy services with a sexual character. Views on the prohibition of prostitution and the punishment of prostitution consumers differ among experts.

In 2014, the amendments to the Criminal Code entered into force providing criminal liability to the consumer for the conscious exploitation for the prostitution victim of trafficking in human beings or minors.

Education and public awareness rising

Gender equality in educational content is viewed in the context of human rights as equal rights and opportunities which are free from stigma and discrimination. For example, one of the aims laid down in the standards of primary education is to foster pupils' responsible attitude and awareness of the physical and mental safety, growth, development, relationship, sex, family planning, social norms and traditions, etc. Gender equality issues are included in the subject "social knowledge" standard.

Gender equality issues are also addressed in subjects such as geography, history, foreign language, Latvian literature, social studies.

In 2005-2007 several surveys were undertaken on different aspects of employment (tax policy, wage, undeclared employment etc.), causes of unemployment, risks of social exclusion, gender equality in the labour market and education. The surveys showed that there is a need to address issues related to education and the labour market, especially as concerns gender segregation in the labour market.

In 2005-2006 a teaching programme "Approach and working methods to ensure equal opportunities for boys and girls" was developed within a project financed by EU Structural Funds and it was highly recognized by pedagogues. Several teaching movies for three different age groups were developed.

One of the remaining challenges to implement gender equality in all spheres of our life is the stereotypes which prevail in society. Changes in attitude develop very slowly. In 2001, a survey showed that 84% of respondents believed that "women do regular housework", meanwhile 85% believed that "men should take the main responsibility to provide the wealth of the family" In 2006, the survey showed that 68% of respondents believed that the "responsibility of the household" should be taken by women, while 86% believed that "men should be the provider of the family". The 2013 survey confirms that the stereotypes concerning gender roles are still alive, and they are most striking in terms of the labour market dividing the profession as "female" or "male" profession rather than according to each person's individual abilities.

Women still spend nearly twice as much time doing housework like cleaning, cooking etc. Besides, mainly women are involved in child and other dependant's care.²

While the study on family values showed slightly different viewpoints from the abovementioned, 67% believe that there is no main person in the family and decisions have to be taken together (67%); 44% believe that only men should work and women should take care of the home. Meanwhile, women indicate that they would like to work less and devote more time to family, even if it would mean a loss of income.

Over the past 10 years, various studies found that society's values and beliefs about various issues are often not in accordance with their action and behaviour patterns. In

² European Institute for Gender Equality. Gender Equality Index: Country Profiles. <http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Gender-Equality-Index-Country-Profiles.pdf> (accessed on July 16, 2014).

particular, it was observed with respect to a family being based on marriage, because unregistered partnerships are widely accepted, as shown by the data that 45% of children born in unregistered partnerships³. Stereotypes of masculinity and femininity also have a negative impact on human health because men visit physicians less than women, including with preventive reasons.

Changing stereotypes is largely dependent on values and beliefs, and these are areas that cannot be changed by legislation.

In 2004-2007, extensive public awareness campaigns were carried out which were aimed at different groups in society, including men, to break stereotypes about "masculinity" or "masculine" behaviours, while promoting and encouraging men to get involved in caring for children and household duties.

In recent years, public awareness campaigns have not been implemented, which is one of the reasons why the public awareness on gender equality, particularly in the past two years has significantly deteriorated, and gender equality as one of the principles of human rights is being misunderstood.

Capacity building

The Equality Body responsible for the implementation of the principle of gender equality in practice is the Ombudsman of the Republic of Latvia. On 1 January 2007, the Law of the Ombudsman entered into force. Before the creation of the Ombudsman institution in Latvia, the National Human Rights office had operated. The Ombudsmen monitors compliance with norms in respect to gender equality and non – discrimination, provides consultations, recommendations on gender equality issues, reviews complaints on violations of gender equality, represents individuals in court, as well as promotes the awareness of human rights issues in society.

The aim of the Concept paper on gender equality (accepted by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2001) is to deal with gender equality issues in an effective, integrated and coordinated way, and to emphasis the role of institutional capacity building. During 2004-2008, educational measures were implemented for public administration professionals who work with a gender equality integrated approach. The educational measures were successful in previous years, as the Ministries started to include information concerning the gender perspective into the policy field analysis. Almost all overview documents prepared by other ministries provide information and data segregated by gender that is a good basis to perform an in-depth analysis on sectorial policies from a gender perspective, as well as to provide proposals in support of new policies

One of the requirements for the final beneficiaries in the projects of EU Structural Funds is the implementation of equal opportunity principles. The Ministry of Welfare is responsible for the coordination of an equal opportunities policy, which includes gender equality, disability, and ageing issues.

In the period 2007-2013, more than 50 seminars for EU Structural Fund project applicants, appraisers and developers, as well as for employees involved in the management of EU Structural Funds were organised. During the seminars, the information how to integrate age, disability, and gender equality issues into the project activities and project evaluation was provided. The seminars were attended by more than 2000 participants. Furthermore, the guidebook "How equal opportunities should be insured in projects of EU Structural funds" was prepared and disseminated in 2008. During the next programming period of EU structural funds (2014-2020) equal opportunities for men and women will be insured while implementing projects in sectorial policies (employment, education, environment, etc.).

³ Centrālās statistikas pārvaldes datu bāzes. <http://data.csb.gov.lv> (accessed July 16, 2014).

b) Setbacks/reversals in progress towards gender equality and empowerment of women

Although Latvia has established institutions for promoting gender equality and adopted legislation to promote gender equality in different policy fields, a challenge has been to fully implement the legislation. The main obstacles have been low awareness of gender equality issues, and a lack of interest among different stakeholders (e.g. employers, employees, legal professionals, civil servants).

In Latvia, women and men enjoy the same political rights, but women are still underrepresented, especially in Parliament and Municipality politics.

To effectively deal with gender equality issues there is a need for the political will and desire to include these issues in the political agenda.

After the 8th Parliamentary elections (2002-2006) the Parliamentarian Committee on human rights and Public Affairs established the sub-committee on gender equality with the aim of promoting gender equality in political discussions. After the 9th Parliamentary elections in 2007, a parliamentary women's group was created with the participation of almost all women who were elected to Parliament, with an aim to cooperate with Parliamentarian women in other countries.

Since the elections in 2010, there have not been any such initiatives organized. Still in June 2014, there was a parliamentary group "For female Parliamentarian cooperation" established in Parliament which brings together 9 women Parliamentarians (from 25 members). This is a positive step towards upcoming parliamentary elections.

The economic crises which started in 2008 had a negative impact to the development of a gender equality policy, resulting in a budget suspension of several activities which were supposed to promote public awareness on gender issues, to successfully continue the work undertaken in the field of education, to reduce gender segregation in the labour market, to introduce incentives for insuring female and male economic independence, as well as to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders. The economic crises also had a negative impact on several family benefits where the beneficiaries were mainly women and on the paternity benefit used by fathers.

c) National budget for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women

There is no annual budget line in the state budget for gender equality issues. The work with gender equality has also benefitted from external resources, e.g. different EU funds, the Nordic Council of Ministers and other donors. For the past 7 years, co-funding from the EU Structural Funds and the Norway Grants were too small. The programme for the Implementation of Gender Equality 2007-2010 was implemented during the economic crisis, which had a negative impact to all action lines in the programme.

The municipal or regional level has not developed plans or strategies for the promotion of gender equality, as well as municipalities have not allocated budgetary resources to gender equality issues.

The activities which are included in policy planning documents for promoting gender equality, mainly are implemented within appropriation, which is granted for a particular policy field (e.g. employment), as well as by attracting the resources from cross-border bilateral cooperation or international projects.

d) Mechanisms that are in place for a regular dialogue between the Government and civil society

Involvement of non-governmental organizations and social partners has played an

important role in policy-making and the implementation of a gender equality policy. Knowledge and expertise of non-governmental organizations is an important resource which is used not only for development of gender equality policy, but also for providing a range of services and support, especially for women in various crisis situations, as well as for promoting public understanding and awareness of equal opportunities in any area of life and opportunity to defend their rights. There are representatives from active NGOs working with women's rights and gender equality in all Advisory Councils and Working groups which are working under the Ministry of Welfare, the institution which is responsible for the coordination of a gender equality policy. There are quite few NGOs working with gender equality issues in Latvia when compared with other countries. According to survey data, there were 17 550 NGOs, from which only 3-4 are working with gender equality issues in 2013.

The NTCC coordinates and organizes the tripartite social dialogue among employer organizations, government bodies, and trade unions to bring their interests in social and economic issues in order to safeguard social stability in the country. The STCLA was created to ensure and facilitate a social dialogue - a participation and cooperation of the state, the employers' organizations and their unions and employees' trade unions - in the issues of labour protection, regulation of legal labour relationships, and ensures equal opportunities in legal labour relationships. STCLA is a part of the institutional system of the NTCC in which the government, LCE and LFTUF are represented. On August 26, 1993, the work of the Tripartite Labour Protection Council was initiated.

From 2008 till 2010, the Ministry of Welfare organised meetings with NGOs on a regular basis to have discussion on gender equality issues and new initiatives. In 2010, The Committee on Gender Equality Issues was established whose main task is to develop proposals for the implementation of gender equality policy as well as to monitor gender equality implementation in different policy fields.

According to the Rules of Cabinet of Ministers on public participation in the development of policy planning, everybody can take part in drafting policy planning documents by submitting proposals. Besides, all the documents which are developed for gender equality policies are available in the internet site of the Ministry of Welfare.

e) Main in-country, bilateral, sub-regional and/or regional cooperation

Latvia's membership in the EU has played an important role in gender equality policy at the national level. Latvia is also a Member State of the Council of Europe, which has an important international role in promoting democracy and human rights.

Latvia is a member of the Management Board of the EIGE 2008-2010 and 2013-2015, and takes part in the EIGE Expert Forum and in working groups on specific subjects.

As an EU member state, Latvia also participates in the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming and the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and has contributed to the development of indicators adopted at the EU-level for the follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Northern – Baltic States cooperation has an essential role in the development of a gender equality policy. Within the cooperation, a variety of networks and contacts have been created, as well as several projects have been implemented. Since 1998, the cooperation between the Northern Council of Ministers and Baltic States has been implemented through a particular programme. Currently, there is a cooperation program for the period 2011-2014 in force which lays down a number of priority themes: equality and labour market, training on gender equality, equality in public space and in media, gender-based violence reduction, etc.

f) **The extent to which MDGs in overall, and in particular the gender-related MDGs, facilitated or strengthened the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

MDGs are binding for Latvia and their achievement is an important indicator of social welfare and development. Latvia has reached particularly good indicators for women's representation in power and decision-making positions, as well as in access to education.

Latvia is actively involved in the defining of a new framework of the MDGs. Latvia emphasizes the necessity for a long standing goal for gender equality and the inclusion of gender equality in other policy goals like employment, health, education, and poverty reduction.

Section two: Progress in the implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action since 2009

A. WOMEN AND POVERTY

The poverty reduction targets in Latvia are set in the National Development Plan of Latvia for 2014-2020⁴ and in the National Reform Programme⁵. These policy documents define both priority target groups, and main support areas and types of activities (main policy directions) such as the reduction of income inequality, increasing the participation of groups at-risk-of-poverty and social exclusion in the labour market, eliminating discrimination threats and stereotypes.

Several mechanisms have been established by law which both – directly and indirectly - stipulate the reduction of income inequality. The most relevant that must be mentioned are tax policy, a minimum wage, social insurance system, state financial support to certain groups of the population (mainly benefits), social assistance, unemployment insurance etc. Since 2008, austerity measures and fiscal consolidation of the state budget during the economic crises also affected the financial support for different groups of the population. The amount of different benefits has been reduced, and accessibility and affordability of public services has also been negatively influenced. Since the economic and financial recovering of the state, several initiatives aimed at increasing the support for certain groups of the population have been approved and developed.

For 2013 and 2014, decisions within the state budget have been taken to implement different income support measures for families with children to reduce the high poverty rates for children as well as the decisions to improve the accessibility of services which are relevant for families with children and persons with functional disorders.

An assessment of existing poverty thresholds has been made to identify current weaknesses and propose changes in setting an adequate minimum income level against which to measure the required support for people at risk of poverty and social exclusion. In 2013, a comprehensive research assessing the social security system and long-term unemployment issues (WB 'Latvia: Who is Unemployed, Inactive or Needy. An Assessment of Post Crisis Policy Options) was completed. Regarding social assistance, the main conclusions of this research were that there is no evidence of widespread benefit dependency, the coverage of social assistance is low and there is a scope for the improvement of the adequacy of social assistance benefits. On 11.12.13 the Government discussed the Informative Report on Proposals on Improvements of the Social Security System (including social assistance) and agreed on a roadmap for further work. Regarding social assistance, the Informative Report mentions the need to improve coverage and adequacy of social assistance; however, these changes will not take place before 2016.

On 04.12.2013, the Government adopted the Guidelines for Development of Social Services with an aim of improving the social services including services targeted at the clients of social assistance. On 18.12.2013 the Government adopted the Guidelines for Social Work. Improved quality of social work is expected to improve the activation of the recipients of social assistance benefits.

During the period from 2009 – 2014, a minimum monthly wage for normal working time (8 hours per day and 40 hours per week) has increased from 228 EUR in 2009 to 320 EUR in 2014. As of January 1, 2014, the monthly non-taxable minimum of personal

⁴ Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre. National Development Plan of Latvia for 2014-2020, 2012. http://www.pkc.gov.lv/images/NAP2020%20dokumenti/NDP2020_English_Final.pdf (accessed on July 16, 2014).

⁵ Politikas plānošanas dokumentu datu bāze. Latvijas nacionālās reformu programmas „ES 2020” stratēģijas īstenošanai projekts. <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/view.do?id=3517> (accessed on July 16, 2014).

income tax has increased, and the rate of monthly personal income tax relief for dependents has increased.

In the framework of the Latvian social security system, families or separately residing persons with inadequate financial resources for covering their daily needs and having an income below the needy person's income level established at the national level are entitled to receive municipal social assistance. This opportunity was used by 12.3% or 249 000 Latvian citizens in 2013.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION

Due to the rapid economic downturn during the financial and economic crises from 2008 to 2010 in Latvia, the declining income of the population occurred. This was mainly due to job loss and wage reduction that directly influenced the average level of household income. The depth of the economic crisis and its adverse impact on living standards and the level of welfare of the population reflected in the poverty and material deprivation indicators. The highest at-poverty risks remain unchanged for families with three and more children and single-parent families and for single person households as well.

The poverty situation for men and women was greatly influenced by the economic crisis. Up to 2008, men were at a lower risk of poverty than women, but since 2009 and 2010 the opposite trend can be observed: men are at a higher risk of poverty than women. One of the explanations of this trend could be the predominance of men employed in the construction sector (in 2010, 13% of men and 1.5% of women were employed in construction sector), which suffered during the crisis the most, and as a result, more men than women lost their jobs. Women are traditionally more employed in the public sector, which was not hit so hard by the economic crisis. In 2010, the *at risk of poverty* rate for women was the lowest in the last six-year period. Starting from 2011, the scores began to gradually align and in 2012 women were more exposed to the risk of poverty than men by about 1.1 percentage points.

In 2013 the research of the WB "Scientific research: Latvia: "Who is Unemployed, Inactive or Needy? Assessing Post-Crisis Policy Options" (hereinafter referred to as WB study) was conducted. According to the WB study low income families with children, households with low work intensity, elderly people, particularly with addiction problems, chronic illnesses or disabilities are the main target groups which support measures should be improved or new initiatives should be developed. Alongside the traditional groups of the population that are associated with the risk of social exclusion, the WB study was identified specific groups that are not often associated with labour market issues, and are not supported within the employment policy. Among the 9 specific groups being subject to social exclusion risk in Latvia, women have a high education level, having children, especially under the age of 6. Generally, the majority (7 of 9 groups) of risk groups' individuals identified by the WB study have been employed for more than 10 years and have not been permanently unemployed or economically inactive, which reveals that the main reason of unemployment is not a lack of motivation or disability. Moreover, within 6 of the 9 specific risk groups identified by the WB study as a significant reason for high unemployment risks highlight a low or very low level of education, particularly for men aged 20 to 39.

The WB study confirmed that the recession had the most negative influence on the low income groups of the population, and they felt the slowest economic improvement.

The assessment of the poverty situation of women and men by age groups reveals significant gender differences after retirement age. This trend remains stable for 2009-2012. It is caused by gender differences in the working period and gender pay gap. Wage differences which are affected by the segregation of women and men in certain economic sectors, contribute to lower contribution wages throughout working lives and have a direct impact on the level of old age pensions. Starting in 2013, the amount of newly granted old age pensions for women is slightly higher than for men. Notwithstanding the fact that women on average

had a lower social insurance contribution wage, their average insurance period is higher than men's average insurance period. In addition, men constitute the majority of so-called 'envelope wages' receivers, where taxes are paid only from the minimum wage, while the rest of the salary may be issued without paying taxes. The gender pay gap also influenced the fact that employed women in Latvia are at higher risk of poverty than employed men.

The period of economic crisis has significantly increased the impact of social transfers⁶ on household income, which reduced the risk of poverty for population. In 2007 and 2008, social transfers slightly reduced risk of poverty by more than 10 percentage points, but in the period from 2009 to 2011, this effect has doubled and social transfers reduced the risk of poverty by more than 22 percentage points⁷. In 2011, if there had not been social transfers, 43, 9% of the Latvian population would have been be at risk of poverty. Due to social services provided directly in the crisis period within social security system, social transfers prevented the risk of poverty to one fifth of the population. Gender differences are also highlighted when assessing the role of social transfers. If women do not receive social transfers, they will have a higher risk of poverty than men.

During the period of economic crisis from 2010 to 2012, ceilings for several social insurance benefits were defined – the payment of unemployment and sickness benefits were limited as well as the amount of maternity and paternity benefits. After the temporary limitation of social insurance benefits payments in 2013, the maternity, paternity, and parents' benefit ceiling has been doubled. The financial support to parents taking care of children up to the age of 1 and who are not socially insured has doubled (from 71.14 to 142.28 EUR). The minimum amount of parent benefit for socially insured persons taking care of children up to the age of 1 is also 142.28 EUR. The mandatory social insurance contributions to pension, disability and unemployment fund for parents taking care of children up to the age of 1.5 and receiving childcare benefit or parents' benefit has doubled. Thus, the future pension capital increases during the period of child care up to the age of 1.5.

B. EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN

The obligation and principles to ensure equal treatment for men and women are laid down in the Education Law⁸. The law defines that every person has the right to education regardless of material and social status, race, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, religion and political beliefs, health condition, occupation and place of residence.

The equality principle is laid down also in the Sports Law, which states that everyone has the right to engage in sports; the Youth Law seeks to ensure opportunities for young people to participate actively in social, political, cultural and economic life without any discrimination; as well as in the Law on Scientific Activity, which confirms that everyone has the right to carry out scientific activity regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, language, age, political and religious belief, social origin, property, family or professional status and other circumstances.

A policy planning document in education is Guidelines for the Development of Education for the period 2014-2020. It defines education policy framework, objectives and lines of action for seven years. The Guidelines cover all types and levels of education.

The Latvian educational system provides varied educational programmes. A part of the young people face different obstacles during their educational process like social, economic, violence between students, etc., which results in early school leave. The share of the

⁶ Social transfers are all benefits and pensions paid by state and municipality, alimony for children, scholarships, social insurance benefits and compensations, including those paid by other countries.

⁷ Centrālās statistikas pārvaldes statistisko datu krājums „Ienākumi un dzīves apstākļi Latvijā 2012.gadā”. Rīga, 2013.

⁸ Grozījumi Izglītības likumā. LV 24.03.2010., No.47 (4239); <https://www.vestnesis.lv/?menu=doc&id=206963> (accessed on July 16, 2014).

population in the age group 18-24 who have not obtained secondary education and do not continue their studies was 15.5% in 2008, 11.6% in 2011 and 10.2% in 2012. The share of men in the age group 18-24 who have not finished school is twice as high as that of women - 17.2% men and 9.4% women in 2009, 15.8% and 7.5% in 2011, 14.5% and 6.2% in 2012.

Women in Latvia are more educated than men. The difference is particularly for higher education. Among graduates, the share of female students was higher - 71% in 2009 and 69% in 2013.

By field of study, female students are underrepresented in technical fields, and it resonates with the current situation in the labour market, which is experiencing labour market segregation by gender.

The tertiary education system is characterised by both horizontal segregation by study fields, and vertical segregation among academic staff – the higher the academic position, the smaller the proportion of women in this post. For example, in relation to the segregation between different study fields, in 2013 92% of graduates in the field of education, and 92% in health and social care were women, while 74% of the engineering, manufacturing, and construction graduates were male.⁹

The share of women in the study field of Education and Humanities tends to rise, but the proportion of women has remained almost unchanged in such study fields as environmental science, mathematics and information technology.

To reduce educational segregation, the Gender Equality Committee established a Working Group which, in 2013 developed recommendations "On the integration of gender equality aspects into process and content of all educational levels until 2020."

In 2014, the Committee established a Working Group which has been working on recommendations to balance the number of women and men in various business areas, in particular to promote the involvement of women in companies which produce higher profit.

Gender equality aspects are included in the pedagogue's professional development program content by linking them with ethical and other issues.

In 2010, NCE implemented the European Social Fund project "Lifelong learning of pedagogues". During the courses, the pedagogues could learn about issues like health education, gender equality, etc. The courses were attended by 4000 pedagogues.

From 2010 till 2011 NCE implemented a pilot during which the pedagogues were asked to use methodological material "The integrated training programmes for six-year-old children during their work with children. NCE visited the educational institutions (kindergartens) which participated in a pilot project and were using the methodological material. NCE noticed a presence of gender stereotypes about the kindergarten environment, such as a puppet corner for girls, car storage for boys, teacher attitudes to children, for example, boys/girls roles."

In 2012, the Ministry of Welfare, with the financial support from the Northern Council of Ministers, implemented the pilot project "Translation and publishing of the Danish children's books "Den Dag da Rikke var Rasmus" and "Den Dag Da Frederik var Frida" and the methodology brochure "Børnehaver med Plads til PippiPrinser og PiratPrinsesser" and the education for the personnel and parents of preschools regarding the promotion of equal opportunities for boys and girls. The objective of the book is to encourage discussions among children – about what girls do and what boys do; whether it is OK for girls to play football; whether boys who would like to try out the "family game" with a pram and pampering a baby should be ashamed of it, etc.

The methodological material and books serve as the source of inspiration for teachers and others working with preschool children where they can learn how to refuse obsolete concepts about the abilities of boys and girls, their skills, "decent" gender compliant behaviour and to let them be as they are without restricting their possibilities just because they are either boys or girls. At the same time, the methodology material and the book can serve

⁹ Latvijas Republikas Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija. 2013.gada pārskats. <http://izm.izm.gov.lv/registri-statistika/statistika-augstaka/2013.html> (accessed on July 16, 2014).

the teachers' self-reflection. Don't we unconsciously treat boys and girls differently? The final goal of the project is to merge the traditional strict borders of the social roles of genders to open up a wider perspective for children for learning about themselves and the world by opening their true talents and encouraging more comprehensive development. 280 pre-school pedagogues participated in the project and were introduced with the subject of equality for women and men. The book caused a sharp public debate both in Parliament and in the public space, indicating that the book and the teaching material is in conflict with the traditional values accepted by society, as well as gender equality as a threat to the public.

In 2010, the Ministry of Education and Science in collaboration with the University of Pedagogy, Psychology and the Arts Faculty and NCE developed methodological recommendations "Content development for teaching literature according to National educational standards", which also contains recommendations on the development of teaching literature in terms of gender equality. The recommendations show that "the content of the training material should pay attention to the texts and exercises that help build awareness about human rights, personal rights and freedoms encourage students to express their views, experiences and discuss". An important role is for illustrations of women and men, their performance in illustration (marital status, housework, decision taking, and the business environment).

To promote awareness about gender equality, since 2013 gender equality issues are included in the subjects world history, history of Latvia, social sciences, politics and law.

C. WOMEN AND HEALTH

The goal of a public health policy in Latvia is to prolong the healthy life years of the Latvian population and to prevent premature deaths, while maintaining, improving and restoring health. This policy goal has been defined in the Public Health Strategy (2001) developed by the Ministry of Health in 2001, as well in the following policy planning document- guidelines *Public Health Strategy for 2011-2017*¹⁰. According to the guidelines, by 2017, the following are to be achieved:

- increase the healthy life years of individuals by two years (from 52.6 healthy life years for men in 2009 to 54.7 years in 2017, and from 55.8 healthy life years for women in 2009 to 57.8 years in 2017);
- decrease the potential years of life lost by 20% (from 85338 potential years of life lost among men in 2009 to 68270 in 2017, and from 35793 potential years of life lost among women in 2009 to 28634 in 2017).

In 2012 the Cabinet of Ministers approved the Plan for Improvement of Mother's and Child's Health for 2012–2014¹¹, a short-term policy planning document elaborated to consider Public Health Strategy for 2011-2017 aim "*to improve mother's and child's health and to reduce the infant mortality rate*". One of the most significant problems in the area of sexual and reproductive health is infertility, that's why within the framework of the Plan for Improvement of Mother's and Child's Health for 2012–2014, an infertility treatment programme has been in place since 2012. Postponing a pregnancy, increased body weight and obesity, sexually transmitted diseases could be among the factors stimulating infertility. According to statistics in Latvia, 1100 in-vitro fertilisation procedures have been carried out yearly and provided as medical services at a charge. Since 2012 state financed support for infertility treatment for women up to the age of 37 has been provided. In 2012, 50 treatment procedures were financed, but in 2013 - 275 treatment procedures were financed.

To improve the situation in the area of mental health, the plan for 2013-2014 for the

¹⁰ Politikas plānošanas dokumentu datu bāze. Sabiedrības veselības pamatnostādnes 2011.-2017.gadam. <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/view.do?id=3768> (accessed on July 16, 2014).

¹¹ Politikas plānošanas dokumentu datu bāze. Sabiedrības veselības pamatnostādnes 2012.-2014.gadam. <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/view.do?id=4010> (accessed on July 16, 2014).

implementation of the guidelines *Improving Mental Health in Population for the years 2009-2014* has been developed. One of the policy targets defined within this plan is to ensure awareness raising and the education of society on mental health issues.

According to regulation, the state financed health care services to all Latvian residents are provided by the principle of equality, without providing a breakdown by gender (except for the specific gender differences related to the services).

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION

In their analytical report on Latvian population health, the CDPC of Latvia has mentioned a sufficient number of health care personnel among the indicators characterising the availability of health care services and the total capacity of the health care sector. Both the number of doctors and nurses in the last 12 years has not changed significantly; however, according to the WHO guidelines, this number is insufficient.

The average life expectancy of new-borns was used as the public health indicator. Compared to the year 2000, life expectancy for men has risen to 69 years in 2012, but for women - up to 79 years. While the gender differences within this indicator remains unchanged, women live for almost 10 years longer than men on average.

An analysis of the main causes of death reveals that the most prevalent cause of death in Latvia is non-infectious diseases – cardiac and circulatory diseases. Cardiac and circulatory diseases are causing approximately 55% to 56% of the total number of deaths in Latvia. In 2010, the total mortality rate from circulatory diseases among women was 795 per 100,000 of the population and among men - 707 per 100,000 of the population. In 2012 these indicators had increased for both genders – 855 among women and 732 among men per 100,000 of the population. High blood pressure, obesity, high cholesterol and smoking are main causes of these diseases. Epidemiological studies on risk factors of cardiovascular diseases show that at least 65% of men and 62% of women in Latvia have elevated blood cholesterol levels, and this indicator has a growing tendency.

The proportion of excessive body weight and obesity in a population is relatively high – 2012 46, 4% of women were overweight (2010 - 45, 4% respectively). The prevalence of excessive body weight is 35, 7% for men (in 2010 - 31, 8%) and 27, 8% for women (in 2010 - 27, 5%). The prevalence of obesity is higher for women – 18.6% (in 2010 – 17, 9%) than for men – 16, 4% (in 2010 - 13.0%). The lifestyle of Latvian men is typically less healthy, involving the use of dependency inducing substances (smoking, alcohol), and risky behaviour – men more often become the victims of traffic accidents and accidents at work.

Malignancies occupied second place in the reasons for causes of death. The most widespread cause of death in malignant tumours among men is malignant lung tumour, but the other widespread cancers are - colorectal, stomach, and prostate cancers. The most common cause of death in malignant tumours in the female group is breast and colorectal malignant tumours, followed by stomach and lung cancers.

Men are almost four times more likely to die from the third most common cause of mortality in Latvia – external causes of death. External causes of death included suicide, road accidents, drowning, murder, fatal accidents at the workplace, etc. The gender differences of this indicator are associated with men's and women's differing lifestyles (stereotypes about what is 'masculinity'. The dynamics of external causes of mortality observed a downward trend: during the period from 2000 to 2011, the figure dropped to about half. The fastest (about 68%) decrease is in transport accident mortality per 100,000 populations: from 29, 5% in 2000 to 9, 7% in 2011. Similar to the dynamics of violence causing mortality which also has a decreasing tendency (decrease by 47% since 2000).

According to the objective of the Public Health Strategy for 2011-2017 concerning the reduction of morbidity and mortality from non-infectious diseases, a public cancer screening programme has been implemented since 2009. The screening programme includes a centrally

organized cervical cancer preventive screening for women from 25-70 years (every three years, receiving an invitation letter) and preventive breast cancer screening for women 50-69 years (once every two years, receiving an invitation letter). The preventive programme also includes bowel cancer preventive testing, for men and women aged 50 to 74 years, what is not organised in a centralised way.

In 2012, the Ministry of Health and the National Health Service launched a social campaign *Check your health, the state will pay!* which aims to increase citizens' awareness of the importance of preventive examinations, and to invite them to take them.

Condoms, intrauterine devices and hormonal contraception are the most popular known methods of contraception in Latvia. According to research data carried out in 2011¹², 22.7% of women have indicated as not being able to afford contraceptives either frequently or sometimes. In general, there is a correlation between the respondent's income and the availability of means for contraception in an older age group of respondents, but no correlation in the younger age groups of respondents. Thus, one can suggest that the availability to contraceptives is determined not only by the respondent's financial resources, but also the acquisition priority in a spending structure. The research data reveals that unsafe methods and means of contraception have been chosen, or they have been used incorrectly. Less than a half of sexually active respondents always use contraceptives in illicit sexual encounters. Condoms are the most frequently used means of contraception among the Latvian population (41% of female and 51% of male).

Coitus interrupts as a contraceptive is used by about a fifth of the respondents, and it is the second most popular method of contraception in Latvia. Hormonal contraception use is 13% of women and 17% of the surveyed male partners. Overall, 33% of sexually active women surveyed and 25% of men used unsafe methods of contraception. 48% of women and 57% of men believe that hormonal contraception is harmful to their health. 26.8% of women and 19.9% of men consider the usage of emergency contraceptive as abortion-like activities. Since research carried out in 2003, the percentage of respondents who did not spend money for contraceptives has grown – 46% of men and 57% of women. Protection against unwanted pregnancy could not be afforded by 14% of men and 23% of women. The CDPC in 2013 implemented educational measures for sexual and reproductive health issues for 1st and 2nd study year students of professional education institutions. Educational measures included the interactive, educational lessons for 1st and 2nd study year students of professional education institutions, including topics about sexuality as a natural and essential part of identity, about responsible and safe sexual relations (incl., the available contraceptive methods in Latvia and potential risks during sexual relations to become infected with sexually transmitted infections). In 2013, 39 lessons were carried out in all Latvian regions and 679 students of the target group participated.

One of the most important indicators, characterising behaviour habits, is the number of abortions. During the last few years the number of abortions has decreased in Latvia. In 2009 the number of abortions per 1,000 women of reproductive age (15-49 years) was 16.8, while in 2010 it was 14.6, in 2011 it was 14.4, and in 2012 it was 15.3, which remains one of the highest rates in the EU.

In 2012-2013, the University of Latvia carried out a study which surveyed more than 700 women in medical institutions in Latvia who have had a legal abortion. The results of the study showed that the majority - 80% of women who have had an abortion - had a stable partnership, and an average age of women of 29. Only 10% of women had an income of less than 200 lats a month (~ 284 EUR). The study results are breaking stereotypes that underage girls, single mothers and women with relatively low incomes and low education level choose abortions. As the study found, women's knowledge about contraception is mediocre, and not

¹² Biedrība „Papardes zieds”. Latvijas iedzīvotāju reproduktīvā veselība. Pārskats par situāciju 2003.-2011. 2012. http://www.papardeszieds.lv/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=311:latvijas-iedzivotju-reproduktivs-veselibas-ptjums&catid=23:petijumi&Itemid=21 (accessed on July 16, 2014).

dependent on a woman's age, education level attained, pregnancy, and childbirth per above. In addition, even after the abortion and consultation with a gynaecologist, a considerable part of women indicated that they have not yet decided what contraceptive method will be used in the future.

In 2012, a mother's average age at the time at which her first child was born was 26.6 in Latvia. During the last few years the trend has been for this age to increase (in 2009 it was 26). The number of babies born to underage mothers (15-17 years) continued decreasing in 2012, constituting 1.4% of new-borns (in 2009 it was 1.7%, and in 2008 it was 2.1%)¹³.

In 2009, maternal mortality reached the indicator of 46.1 per 100,000 live births. The cause of death in eight out of ten deceased women was linked directly with pregnancy. In 2010 this indicator dropped by almost half (26.1 per 100,000 live births), and in four out of five mothers who died the cause of death was directly linked with pregnancy. In 2011 this indicator had dwindled to 5.4 per 100,000 live births, but in 2012 maternal mortality increased to 20.5 women per 100,000 live births and in 4 of 4 cases the cause of death was linked directly to pregnancy.

The CDPC regularly conducts surveys on the habits of the Latvian population (age group 15-64) influencing their health. The objectives of the surveys are to obtain information on the population's health-related behavioural manifestations, discover public health problems, show their geographical and socio-demographic spread, as well as to get a more accurate picture of the health promotion and education tasks in the future.

According to the results of a survey in 2012 27.0% of men and 18.5% of women (in 2010 - 32.2% of men and 24.6% of women) in Latvia rate the condition of their health as 'good', 30.9% of men and 31.0% of women (in 2010 - 26.8% and 27.7% respectively) – as 'rather good', but 9.6% of men and 11.8% of women (in 2010 - 7.6% and 7.9% respectively) – as 'poor' and 'rather poor'. As a major health problem, women have mentioned various pains and insomnia.

In 2012, 49.6% of women spent their leisure time reading or watching television, 31.1% of women included fresh vegetables 6-7 days a week in their nourishment, but 27.4% of women have eaten cakes and biscuits three or more days a week. 14.1% of men and 8.6% of women used 6 or more doses of alcohol at least once a week. In 2012, 17.6% of women and 52% of men smoked daily.

The Eurostat survey data on the self-reported unmet need for a medical examination or treatment in 2011 reveals that 20.4% of Latvian males and 23.3% of Latvian females have no access to healthcare when this becomes necessary. The three main obstacles limiting accessibility to health care services and treatment are – too expensive health care services, too long waiting lists, too long distance. 13.7% of males and 17.9% of females in Latvia have given indication to these problems.

D. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The constituent elements and punishment of criminal offenses set in the Criminal Law are not discrete or graded depending on the sex of a victim. Such criminal offenses as female genital mutilation and forced sterilization are qualified as one of the forms of criminal offenses against morals, and sexual inviolability, i.e. rape, forcible sexual assault, sexual connection with a person under 16 years of age.

A planned policy towards reducing violence against women has been in place since 2008. In 2008, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the Programme for Reducing Domestic Violence 2008-2011 that was aimed to prevent criminal offenses connected to domestic violence and to reduce the negative consequences caused to a victim. During these past four years, essential changes in the legal provisions concerning domestic violence have been

¹³ Source: Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. 2013.

introduced, also different activities were organised in order to attract attention to the dissemination of domestic violence. After implementing the aforementioned programme, the prevention of domestic violence was set as one of the directions of the State guidelines for the Family Policy 2011-2017 initiative.

In May, 2009 the Parliament approved amendments to the Law on Social Services and Social Assistance stating legal provisions for state funded social rehabilitation services for both adult victims of violence and persons who have committed an act of violence. Because of limited financial resources the establishment of both services have been delayed many times since then. In order to transpose the Directive 2011/220/TI an ad-hoc group under the Ministry of Welfare is currently drafting regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers on the proceedings by which the services are provided. The draft of these regulations is currently revised by other ministries and social partners; and the social rehabilitation services shall be available as of January 1, 2015.

Several important amendments to the Criminal Law were made in 2011. In order to broaden a list of aggravating circumstances in case of criminal offenses against the health of a person, the use of violence or a threat of violence while committing a criminal offense was defined as one of aggravating circumstances. The presence of this circumstance is also investigated in the case of the rape of a spouse.

Until 2011, in the case of intentional slight injuries, a victim could initiate a criminal proceeding, except if an offence was qualified as a case of domestic violence. In some cases a criminal proceeding wasn't initiated only because the perpetrator and the victim hadn't registered their partnership as a marriage or didn't share a household. By excluding the private prosecution institute, a situation where victims who are discriminated by the chosen model of partnership are no longer possible and legal protection of victims has become more effective.

Since 2013, emotional, physical, sexual, and economic violence against a spouse or his or her child, or a child of both spouses, are clearly mentioned in the Civil Law as a reason to request a divorce without observing a mandatory reconciliation period for spouses. Before the amendments, the language of the law was quite vague in this respect and there was a great deal of room for interpretations.

Recognising that not all of the criminal offenses against morals, and sexual inviolability are committed by using violence, in 2014 the Criminal Law was supplemented, stating the commitment of a criminal offense against morals, and sexual inviolability against a person to whom the perpetrator is related in the first or second degree of kinship, spouse or former spouse, or a person with whom the perpetrator has been in a domestic partnership, as an aggravating circumstance. Also, as of January 2011 the Code of Administrative Violations of the Republic of Latvia envisages a possible administrative penalty in the case of causing insignificant injuries, defined as those injuries which have led to short-term, insignificant consequences without causing health disorders or a general loss of workability.

In 2014, Latvia introduced new legal instruments to guarantee protection orders in cases of domestic violence. These amendments provide the right of a person suffering from violence or stalking to ask a court on his or her own initiative, or with the intermediation of the police, to take appropriate protection measures against the perpetrator within civil proceeding. Such measures, for instance, can be a prohibition for the perpetrator to approach or communicate with the victim, as well as an order for the perpetrator to be removed from the housing, and a prohibition to approach, return to, or stay in a housing unit which is the permanent residence of the perpetrator or victim. Such protection measures shall be imposed by the Court. In order to ensure an effective implementation of the protection measures, criminal liability for a malicious unfulfilling of a protection measure ordered by the Court is envisaged.

Currently, any preventive measures imposing certain prohibitions on a suspect or on an accused person can be taken only under criminal proceedings. In addition to the protection

measures mentioned before, an ad-hoc group under the Ministry of Justice is currently drafting a law on coercive preventive measures. The aim of this law is to change the focus from the consequences of violence to the prevention of causes of violence and to develop adequate responses to the situations of potential violence.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION

In 2010, a report of the research conducted by the Eurobarometer *Domestic Violence against Women*¹⁴ was published; results of the research shows that only 66% of the citizens of Latvia see violence against women as unacceptable and support its criminal liability, and 29% see domestic violence as unacceptable, but not always requiring punishment. Thus, Latvia was placed as the most tolerant country towards domestic violence against women among the 27 European countries. Additionally, national studies show a high level of the so-called “reporting culture”, meaning that most of the cases of violence are not reported.

There are no national research studies on the prevalence of violence against women, thus the survey conducted by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights in 2014¹⁵ is considered as the most significant review of the situation in Latvia. The survey is the first of its kind on violence against women covering all 28 member states of the EU. It is based on interviews with 42 000 women, who were asked about their experiences of physical, sexual and psychological violence, including incidents of intimate partner violence or domestic violence. It was concluded that there is no significant correlation between the length of the relationship between a victim and a perpetrator and the presence of violent behaviour. Persons with little formal education or employed in a low-skilled job, as well as persons using alcohol are more likely to become a perpetrator. In fact, those who regularly use alcohol are more violent. Frequently, an act of violence may persist also after divorcing a partner. According to the survey:

- 32%, or 269 248 women aged from 15 to 75 years of age, have suffered from physical and / or sexual violence leading to about 115 women per day;
- about 60%, or 504 839 women in Latvia, have suffered from psychological violence in forms of insult, control, threat, and economic violence by a partner or former partner;
- about 14%, or 117 796 women in Latvia, have suffered from stalking in forms of unwelcomed phone calls, property damage, and tracking, mostly as long-term behaviour and performed mostly by former partners;
- about 47% of women in Latvia have suffered from sexual harassment in forms of physical (unwanted touching or kissing), verbal (insulting comments or jokes) or non-verbal harassment (insulting e-mails, SMSs or comments in social networks);
- about 70% of women in Latvia have never reported cases of violence – only one tenth of all cases are reported to the police. The reason for that is a lack of faith in a positive result, shame, and fear.

Since 2008, administrative data on cases of domestic violence are collected from medical institutions, state and municipal police, courts, and crisis centres. As most of the cases are not reported and there are some imperfections in the system of data collection, administrative data considerably differs from the conclusions of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights survey.

According to the Informative report on cases of the prevalence and dynamics of domestic violence in 2012, the number of men who have looked for medical treatment because of experiencing violence is much higher than the number of women in the same situation. The report shows that only 5% of men in 2012 (4% in 2008 and 2009 and 5% in

¹⁴ Special Eurobarometer 344. Domestic Violence against Women. Report. http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_344_en.pdf (accessed on July 16, 2014).

¹⁵ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. Violence against Women: an EU-wide Survey. Main results report. <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/vaw-survey-main-results> (accessed on July 16, 2014).

2010 and 2011) have suffered from domestic violence by a spouse, partner, parents or other relatives, whereas women suffer from domestic violence by a spouse, partner, parents or other relatives about nine times more (33% in 2008, 32% in 2009, 42% in 2010, 44% in 2011 and 46% in 2012). This data confirms that men are most likely subjected to violence committed by same sex perpetrators, while the women are most likely subjected to violence committed by opposite sex perpetrators. The report also shows that in the case of domestic violence, the perpetrator is mainly a spouse or partner when the victim is a woman; or other relatives rather than spouse or partner if the victim is a man.

NGOs are the most important actors in providing support to women who have suffered from violence. The state provides social rehabilitation services only for minors less than 18 years of age who have suffered from unlawful acts – criminal offense, exploitation, sexual harassment, violence or any other unlawful, cruel or derogatory act. According to the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No.1613, of December 22, 2009, a family member or a person who takes care of a child (hereinafter – attendant) can accompany a minor in the social rehabilitation institution, if a psychologist or a social worker advises so. During 2010-2012 almost all of the attendants were women – during the three years only one man stayed in the social rehabilitation institution as an attendant of a minor. Most of the attendants are mothers, also siblings, or other relatives or legal representatives of a minor; statistics show that about 35% of them have suffered from violence committed by the same person that has been violent towards a minor. Although there are no legal provisions that prescribe the social service provider a duty to provide psychosocial support to the attendant, it is done in practice.

In 2009 and 2010 support groups for women who have suffered from domestic violence were organised: 56 women attended support groups in Riga, Cesis, Rezekne and Talsi in 2009; 113 women attended support groups in Talsi, Kuldiga, Valmiera, Cesis, Lielvarde, Dobele, Madona, Balvi, Rezekne, Daugavpils, Liepaja, and Saldus. Also, 15 support group leaders in 2009 were trained. Additionally, a pilot project for developing a model for providing support to persons who have committed violence against a spouse or a partner was initiated in 2011. As a result, several support groups across the country were established and specialists in different regions were trained. The pilot project will continue until the state funded social rehabilitation services will be introduced on January 1, 2015.

During the first three months of 2014, 100 people have already used their rights to ask the courts to take appropriate protection measures against the perpetrator within a civil proceeding; in 24 cases the decision on separation was made by the police and in 76 cases by the court. In most cases, the court orders prescribe an order for the perpetrator to be removed from the housing, and a prohibition to approach, return to, or stay in a housing which is a permanent residence of the perpetrator or victim. Also, five cases of criminal liability for a malicious unfulfilling of a protection measure ordered by the Court were initiated. The number of orders and activity of victims is evidence that there is a need for such protection measures. In order to implement the legislation on protection measures, significant attention towards training police officers, social workers and health carers and other relevant specialists must be paid.

Trafficking in human beings

As of January 24, 2008 Latvia has been a signatory to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. In order to implement the Convention, Latvia has developed an effective system for combatting trafficking in human beings which consists of:

- a clear system for the identification of victims;
- State funded social rehabilitation services and support during the criminal proceedings;
- a planned policy set in regular policy planning documents that are approved by the

government (Programme for the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings 2009-2013, Guidelines for the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings 2014-2020);

- informative campaigns about trafficking in human beings, including risks of shame marriages, organised in cooperation with NGOs;
- active police work with the most vulnerable groups;
- trained border guards for an effective identification of victims of trafficking in human beings, etc.

The legal definition of trafficking in human beings and punishment for committing an act of trafficking in human beings is included in the Criminal Law, Art. 154¹ and 154². In compliance with the Criminal Law, Art.7 an act of the trafficking in human beings is classified as a felony with detention from three years to a life sentence depending on the age of the victim, the type of felon (individual or an organised group), consequences caused to the victim and methods used while committing the act of trafficking in human beings. Being aware of the increasing phenomena of shame marriages, in 2012 the Criminal Law was supplemented with a new article defining malicious securing which provides legal rights for residing in the Republic of Latvia or any other member state of the EU, or European economic area country, or in Switzerland criminal offense.

Since 2006, State funded social rehabilitation services for victims of trafficking in human beings¹⁶ are provided to all victims that have been identified, irrespective of age, sex, race, and nationality of a victim or any other factors, including the type of exploitation. During the last few years several amendments to the legislative regulations have been made in order to transpose requirements of the Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings and protecting the victims. In particular, the content of the State funded social rehabilitation services has been expanded to provide assistance and support to the victims before, during and after the criminal proceedings.

Since 2013, victims are entitled not only to a course of social rehabilitation of up to 180 days, but also to a professional psychosocial support (individual consultations by social workers and psychologists; individual consultations on legal matters) and other services such as translation, preparation of legal documents, and legal representation in court if a victim participates in a criminal case either as a victim or a witness. For those victims who do not participate in the criminal proceedings, five individual consultations by a social service provider are available after a course concerning social rehabilitation has been completed. The social service provider also organizes the return and accompaniment of a victim (or a potential victim – a person who could potentially be recognized as a victim) and children accompanied by a victim, if necessary. Additionally, family members of victims who are minors are entitled to five consultations by a social service provider, if necessary. All the services mentioned above are financed by the state and all except support during the criminal proceedings are provided to all victims irrespective of the fact whether the criminal proceedings have already been initiated, and whether a victim has agreed to participate in those as a witness or a victim.

In January 2014, the Guidelines for the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings 2014-2020 were adopted. The guidelines are aimed to prevent trafficking, to protect and assist victims of trafficking and to promote a cross-sectional cooperation between both governmental and non-governmental sectors. Acknowledging that there are some social groups that are still unfamiliar with the phenomena of trafficking in human beings and the risks of becoming a victim, these guidelines are an essential instrument as it envisages several campaigns and research studies in order to clearly identify the most vulnerable groups, including not only victims but also potential victims, as well as essential environmental or any

¹⁶ Law on Social Services and Social Assistance; Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No.889 of October 31, 2006. „Regulations Regarding the Procedures, by Which Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings Receive Social Rehabilitation Services, and the Criteria for the Recognition of a Person as a Victim of Trafficking in Human Beings” and Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No.291 „Requirements for Social Service Providers”

other risk factors that might lead to becoming a victim.

In 2013 the state funded social rehabilitation services received 33 victims; by June 12, 2014 already 27 victims have received state funded social rehabilitation services, 12 of which started a course in 2013. The majority of victims are women (24 in total); the average age of victims is 27. These victims are mainly victims of shame marriages (66, 7%), as well as victims of forced labour (29, 6%) and sexual exploitation (3, 7%)¹⁷. Countries of destination are mainly European countries (United Kingdom, Ireland, Greece, Cyprus, Portugal, Spain, Latvia, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium), and rarely countries in other continents (Brazil, Columbia, Russia, USA). During the last years the number of victims of forced labour has increased, also new forms of trafficking have developed (removal of organs, drug smuggling, forced begging, and forced housekeeping). Also, the tendency that a pimp is an acquaintance, friend or even a family member of the victim is increasing.

As the first case of trafficking within Latvia was discovered in only 2013, Latvia is considered mainly as a country of origin of victims subjected to trafficking. Social exclusion and marginalisation, and limited financial or other resources, are the main reasons why people migrate to other countries hoping to find a better life in more developed countries, consequently becoming one of the main at risk individuals for trafficking. Most of the victims are young women that are used by pimps or other recruiters who recruit, transport, sell, and use women for shame marriages, forced labour or sexual exploitation. Women then end up in a state of severe violence with a serious breach of human rights, serving as an object or an item that brings an enormous profit to the traffickers. Young women, single mothers, unemployed, persons from large and low income families, persons raised in long-term social care and social rehabilitation institutions, persons with low education and persons with liabilities are considered the most vulnerable groups.

E. WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT

The Military Service Law stipulates a unified course of military service which is performed by soldiers, both men and women. Women are entitled to perform a military service and to be awarded with a military rank on general provisions. There is no unit, speciality or a position in the Latvian National Armed Forces where women's rights to perform a military duty would be limited.

International humanitarian law regulates not only the limits of the effects of armed conflicts, and restrictions and regulations to the means and methods of warfare available to combatants but also protects soldiers and other specialists who are a part of the armed forces. Latvia has signed the four Geneva conventions – The Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field, The Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea, The Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War and The Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Also, two of three additional amendment protocols to the Geneva Convention are binding to Latvia – Protocol I relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts and Protocol II relating to the protection of victims of non-international armed conflicts. As these, and several other international treatments that are binding to Latvia, aim to ensure human rights and include the prohibition of discrimination on the ground of sex, a theme on international humanitarian law with aspects of gender equality integrated is included in the training before soldiers of the national armed forces participate in the international operations.

¹⁷ Data about victims who have received State funded social rehabilitation services in 2014. Source: organisation „Shelter „Safe House””, 2014.

DESCRIPTION OF SITUATION

The number of women soldiers in the Latvian National Armed Forces is mainly constant. Because of a reduction of personnel, the number of women participating in the national armed forces dropped from 1200 in 2009 to 1044 in 2013, which is about 21% of the total staff. However, the number of women who take a position in international organisations and international operation remains unchanged – 21, or approximately 10% of the staff.

Latvia supports the UNSC resolution S/RES/1325 on women and peace and security which reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction, and stresses the importance of the equal participation of women and incorporates gender perspectives in all UN peace and security efforts. The resolution also calls on all parties in the conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse in situations of armed conflict. In 2009, Latvia in cooperation with Estonia, Greece and Lithuania organised a symposium in order to gather views and ideas on ways to ensure a gender perspective in the implementation of European Security and Defence Policy in its missions and operations. Latvia sees the implementation of this resolution as an essential element of sustainable development.

In September 2013, Latvia endorsed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict; Latvia has also consistently provided support to others UNSC resolutions on this issue. The Declaration ensures that all peace, security and conflict mediation processes explicitly recognise the need to prevent, respond to, and reduce crimes of sexual violence in conflict and stresses the need to exclude such crimes for amnesty provisions; tends to strengthen and support the efforts of regional organisations to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict in their peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding initiatives; etc. Several Latvian NGOs are active in this field in order to ensure equal treatment of men and women and to promote observance of women's rights.

F. WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

The principle of equality in an employment relationship is laid down in the Labour Law which stipulates that everyone has an equal right to work, as well as to fair, safe and healthy working conditions and fair work remuneration. The Labour Law also prohibits different treatment on the grounds of the employee's sex while establishing an employment relationship, during an employment relationship, particularly in cases of the promotion of an employee, the determination of working conditions, remuneration or professional training or qualification, as well as in cases when an employee or an employer gives a notice of termination. Both men and women are entitled to paid childcare leave in case of a birth or an adoption of a child for a maximum period of 1, 5 years; also men are entitled to parental leave for a maximum period of ten days.

Several provisions concerning the breach of the prohibition of different treatment on grounds of gender of an employee are laid down in the Labour Law. If an employer breaches the prohibition of a different treatment on the grounds of an employee's gender:

- in establishing an employment relationship – an employee is entitled to file an application to the court within three months from the day when a refusal to establish an employment relationship has been received;
- by giving a notice of termination during the probation period – an employee is entitled to file an application to the court within one month from the day when a notice of termination has been given;
- in determining remuneration – an employee is entitled to file an application to the court within three months from the day when an employee has found out, or should have

found out, about the breach;

- in determining working conditions, professional training or qualification – an employee is entitled to file an application to the court within three months from the day when an employee has found out, or should have found out, about the breach.

An employee is also entitled to file an application to the court in order to declare a notice of termination invalid within one month from the day when an employee has received a notice; also, in other cases an employee is entitled to ask the court for reinstatement within one month from the day of dismissal. Additionally, in the case of a breach of prohibition of different treatment or causing adverse consequences on the grounds of gender an employee is entitled to compensation for physical or moral damages; the amount of compensation for moral damages may be determined by the court.

The principle of equality and equal treatment is also laid down in the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination towards Physical Entities Who Are Engaged in Economic Activity (entered into force on January 2013), Law on Social Security (entered into force on October 1995; principle of prohibition of different treatment defined and clearly explained included since January 2006) and Law on Support for Unemployed and Persons Seeking Employment (entered into force on July 2002; principle of prohibition of different treatment defined since April 2010).

DESCRIPTION OF SITUATION

Employment

The economic crisis in Latvia has left more visible consequences to female employment than to male employment. The level of employment of men has dropped from 72, 0% in 2008 to 61.3% in 2009, whereas the level of employment of women has dropped from 65.5% in 2008 to 60.9% in 2009. In 2010 these indicators equalised to approximately 59% (59, 2% to men and 59, 4% to women). Resulting from the end of the recession in 2010, the level of employment among men increased more rapidly by reaching 66,8% in 2013 while the level of employment among women in 2013 increased to only 63, 4%.

Though indicators of the level of employment of women in Latvia are only slightly shorter than the level of employment of men, there are still areas where noticeable dominance of one gender exists. The most preponderance of male employees exists in construction, as well as transport, storage, information and communication services, and agriculture, forestry, fishery, industrial and energy sectors while significantly more women than men are employed in education, and trade, accommodation and food services, as well as health and social care.

According to the Eurostat data on differences in employment indicators between men and women with at least one child up to 6 years old and men and women without children, a positive correlation is shown for men with children.¹⁸ Comparing to 2007, the overall employment rate in Latvia for parents with at least one child has improved; however, women with children still tend to be unemployed. The level of employment of those women from 20 to 49 years of age who have at least one child is about 9, 6% lower than the same group of women without any children; the employment rate of men who have at least one child is about 12,6% higher than that of men of the same age without children. Thus, although the employment of women with children has significantly improved, the decision to become a parent still tends to have a more negative influence to female rather than male employment. The proportion of both women and men in part-time employment in 2012 was low in all age groups; the highest part-time employment rate can be observed amongst youngsters – almost every fifth women in Latvia from 15 to 24 years of age work in a part-time job.

¹⁸ A Europe 2020 initiative: Progress on equality between women and men in 2012. http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/130530_annual_report_en.pdf (accessed on July 16, 2014).

A positive phenomenon is that the rate of employment tends to become higher as the level of higher education increases for both female and male employees. For instance, the level of employed men with tertiary education in 2012 was 91.7% while the level of employed women of the same group was 88.6%. A positive correlation between a higher education level and employment exists mostly amongst women. In 2012, there were 43% women with higher education amongst all employed women from 15 to 74 years of age, whereas only 25% of employed men had gained a higher education; 5% of employed women and 13% of employed men have finished secondary or lower education. Comparing to 2000 the level of education of both women and men has increased, yet more changes can be observed amongst employed women with higher education – the number of employed women with higher education has increased from 24.7% in 2000 to 43.4% in 2012. Likewise, the proportion of employed people with a secondary or lower education level among employees of both genders has decreased.

91% of all employed women from 15 to 74 years of age are employees (compared with 86.2% of employed men), 2.6% are employers or merchant owners (compared with 5.3% of employed men), and about 0.7% are unpaid workers who are, e.g. helping family members in their businesses or farms, etc. (compared with more than 1% of employed men). Indicators concerning women who are employed as unpaid workers have significantly dropped from 4.2% in 2000.

Like in other Member States of the EU, the rate of both employed women and men before the crisis was relatively similar. The economic downturn significantly affected the construction sector, and as more men are employed in this sector, the proportion of men amongst unemployed directly increased. The number of unemployed men increased from 8.4% in 2008 to 22.7% in 2010, while the number of unemployed women increased from 7.1% to 16.3% in 2010. After the crisis, the level of both unemployed women and men has decreased; however, changes in data about unemployed men are more substantial.

The State Employment Agency provides a variety of programmes for unemployed and job seekers in order to promote an active participation in the labour market. Women tend to participate in these programmes more actively than men – from 2009 to 2013 in the programme “Professional training, vocational retraining and improvement of qualification” the proportion of women in the total number of participants exceeds 50% (it must be noted that there are more officially registered unemployed women than officially registered unemployed men).

Payment differences

The gender pay gap in 2005-2012 stays constant between 15 and 19%. There are only three areas where the pay gap is lower – administrative and service sector (1.8%), professional, scientific and technical sectors (0, 7%), and state administration (0.2%); in these sectors women receive higher wages. In all the other sectors, women receive lower wages than men, the most essential difference can be observed in the finance sector where women receive only 63.1% of the wage that is received by men. The situation has become worse, and the gender pay gap in 2013 is higher than it was in 2008.

According to the European Commission Survey on gender pension gap, women in Latvia receive a 9% smaller pension than men. Though the rate is lower than the average rate in the EU (39%)¹⁹, not always the difference between average wages of men and women can be related to equal value of work that has been done. This difference is also influenced by the fact that men are mainly concentrated in rather better paid sectors and are more likely in higher positions than women. Besides, women often work less working hours and more likely

¹⁹ European Commission. The Gender Gap in Pensions in the European Union. http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/130530_pensions_en.pdf (accessed on July 16, 2014).

interrupt their professional career in order to take care of their families, including their children, parents, or other relatives.²⁰

In order to raise public awareness about the negative influence of the gender pay gap to women's economic independence, the EU organises a set of informative campaigns. The Ministry of Welfare also regularly informs society about topicalities via press releases, the web page²¹, as well as by participating in discussions with employers and representatives of trade unions about the best ways to ensure equal wages for both women and men. Also, mass media reflects on employment opportunities for women and men and gender pay gap and challenges in its reduction.

Reconciliation of work and family life

The number of available places in childcare facilities is relatively sufficient for children from three to seven years of age; however, it is more than insufficient for children up to three years of age²², especially in the biggest towns of Latvia, including Riga. The waiting list for the available places in childcare facilities (day-care centres) decreases as new private institutions are built, some institutions organise new groups or reorganise the existing groups; in separate counties an au pair service has been introduced. On January 1, 2014 Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No.1462 on proceedings by which state support for children from 1, 5 years of age is provided if a child receive childcare services in private institutions or if the childcare services are provided by a private service provider (e.g., au pair) because of a lack of available places in municipal childcare facilities. The amount of this support is up to 142 EUR a month with the condition that the total amount of state and municipality support doesn't exceed 228 EUR a month for children living in Riga planning region, or 185 EUR a month for children living in other planning regions. According to the Child Supervision Services Provider Register on May 2014, there were 726 registered private childcare service providers (85% of those are private entities) and 106 legal entities that employ childcare service providers.

The activity of childcare service providers is regulated by several legal acts, most of them entered into force in 2013. Childcare service can be provided by either a state or municipal institution, or a legal or physical entity that has been registered as a service provider. Therefore, qualifications and requirements for hygiene and supervision refer to all childcare service providers regardless of the legal status of the service provider. By establishing a united system, it becomes possible to organise comprehensive and appropriate financial support to all families with children.

One way to reconcile work and family life is to work for flexible working hours, e.g. part-time job, aggregated working hours, flexible timetable (possibility to choose the beginning and/or end of working day), telecommuting or remote work. Gender Equality Index for the EU is a measurement tool, and it is formed by eight gender indicators that are combined into a single measure. One of main domains is time, and it is analysed and measured by studying participation in care for other relatives. According to the statistics on the situation in Latvia in 2010, from all of the employed residents who spend at least one hour a day for care or education of their children or grandchildren 48.7% are women and 37.3% are

²⁰ Labklājības ministrija. Plāns dzimumu līdztiesības īstenošanai 2012.-2014.gadam. <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/LoadAtt/file62154.doc> (accessed on July 16, 2014).

²¹ Labklājības ministrija. Dzimumu līdztiesība. <http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/146> (accessed on July 16, 2014); Gender equality. Available on: <http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/726> (accessed on July 16, 2014); Гендерное равноправие. Available on: <http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/831> (accessed on July 16, 2014).

²² European Commission. Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Barcelona objectives: The development of childcare facilities for young children in Europe with a view to sustainable and inclusive growth. 2013. http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/130531_barcelona_en.pdf (accessed on July 16, 2014).

men. Whereas, from all of the employed residents who spend at least one hour for cooking or chores, 82.6% are women and only 43.7% are men.

The survey conducted by the Eurobarometer on working conditions²³ show that only 68% of employed residents in Latvia are satisfied with opportunities to reconcile work and family life, while the average rate in the EU is about 74%. About 82% of the employed residents are satisfied with the number of their working hours, which is slightly higher than the average rate in the EU (80%). Only 2% of the employed residents in Latvia are working flexible hours.

A socially insured person who takes care of a child till one year of age is granted a parents' benefit if this person is employed on the day the benefit is granted (is deemed to be an employee or a self-employed person in accordance to the Law on State Social Insurance). The amount of the benefit is 70% of the person's social insurance contribution. The benefit is not granted if a person has received a maternity benefit or a childcare allowance for the same child and for the same period.

As of October 1, 2014 new regulations on parents' benefit will enter into force. The new regulation will be more favourable to employed parents, including those who take care of a child from one to 1, 5 years of age while working standard hours or working in a part-time job. Employed parents will be entitled to choose either to receive a parents' benefit until the child reaches one or 1, 5 years of age (the amount of the benefit will be 30% of the parents' benefit in both cases); also parents will have an opportunity to be additionally granted a childcare allowance (171 EUR), as well as to work and receive a salary. The amount of the parents' benefit for unemployed parents who take care of a child up to one year of age as of October 1, 2014 will be 60% of the person's social insurance contribution.

The childcare allowance is granted for taking care of a child up to two years of age, and the receiver of the allowance can be either a father or mother and the fact of employment is irrespective. The amount of the allowance is 171 EUR for taking care of a child up to two years of age, and 42,69 EUR for taking care of a child up to 1,5 years of age.

The father of a child is entitled to a paternity leave of ten days which is granted not later than two months after the birth of a child. Additionally, those fathers who apply for a paternity leave receive a paternity benefit which is 80% of the father's average social insurance contribution.

Women as entrepreneurs

In 2014, the Latvian information technology company "Lursoft" conducted research on female activity in entrepreneurship²⁴. The results of the research shows that in February 2014, 69 526 enterprises were owned by women, also 85 606 shared a holding in an enterprise. Therefore, about one third of all enterprises registered in Latvia are owned by women; most of the areas of these enterprises are bookkeeping, accounting, auditing and tax consultations.

In 2012, the Ministry of Economics supported the research work *Women in Entrepreneurship 2012* which showed that 45% of women entrepreneurs value the business environment as neutral, meaning they don't see specific hedges in starting a business. 94% of respondents or 188 women couldn't identify any legal obstacles for a woman to become an entrepreneur. In order to encourage new entrepreneurs, a list of support programmes is available, and even if they are not specifically oriented to women most of the participants are women; the research showed that 57% of respondents or 114 women have used support programmes for new entrepreneurs. The Investment and Development Agency of Latvia

²³ European Commission, Flash Eurobarometer 398. Working Conditions. http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_398_sum_en.pdf (accessed on July 16, 2014).

²⁴ Lursoft. No visām sievietēm, kas patlaban ieņem amatus uzņēmumos, 33,52% ir vecumā no 50-70 gadiem. 2014. <https://www.lursoft.lv/press/2014/03/10/No-visam-sievietem-amatpersonam-33.52proc-ir-vecuma-no-50-70-gadiem> (accessed on July 16, 2014).

administers a state support programme *Motivation Programme for Innovative Entrepreneurship* which is financed by the EU. Since 2009, 15 projects have been implemented with participation in 240 mentors (76, 7% women, 23, 3% men) and 284 mentees (70, 8% women, 29, 2% men) in the frame of this programme.

The NCE participates in the project “Innovative strategies for equal employment”²⁵ which is financed by the INTERREG IVC (*Innovation and Environment Regions of Europe Sharing Solutions*). The aim of the project is to encourage and support women to participate in entrepreneurship and leadership in the Baltic Sea Region countries. The project started on 2011, and it will finish in December 2014.

The State Employment Agency, in April 2009, introduced a new support programme “Support for starting self-employment and entrepreneurship” which envisages a financial support up to 2846 EUR for starting a business from drafting a business plan to implementing it. In 2013, 173 unemployed residents drafted their business plans, 79.8% of which were women and 20.2% were men. A financial support for implementing a business idea was granted to 79.2% women and 20.8% men from the total number of beneficiaries. The participation of women tends to grow higher every year – in 2010 64% of participants were women, in 2011 the proportion of women participants was already 72% and in 2012 – 78%.

In December 2013, the Society Integration Foundation in cooperation with the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Economy started a project “Gender equality in economic decision making: tool to promote economic competitiveness and equality value”²⁶ which is financed by the PROGRESS programme 2007-2013. The aim of the project is to promote balanced representation of women and men in economic decision-making in Latvia. An in-depth research on gender equality aspects in the biggest Latvian entrepreneurs will be conducted by launching a survey and organising experience exchanges for students of business management and professors. It is foreseen that this project will raise knowledge on the gender dimension in business management and increase interest and understanding of gender equality issues.

G. WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

Taking into account that the female employment rate is relatively high, as well as a the proportion of women among graduates is higher than that of men, women's representation in the power positions and decision-making shows that women are in a less advantageous position as compared to men in this area. The situation is characterized by both vertical segregation (the higher the post, the proportion of women has a tendency to fall) and a pronounced dominance of one gender (male) proportion in economic decision making. Women are underrepresented in the higher levels of decision-making, both in the boards of companies listed on stock exchanges and in the management of the central bank in Latvia.

After the last parliamentary elections in autumn of 2010, the gender division of the 100 members of the Saeima was the following - 25 women and 75 men (25% and 75% respectively), which is a higher rate than in the previous parliamentary term, respectively - 21% and 79%²⁷. In local elections in 2013, 40.56% of candidates were female and 59.44% of candidates were male. The proportion of women among elected members was 31.33%.

²⁵ INTERREG IVC. Labour Plus. <http://www.interreg4c.eu/projects/project-details/?project=169-innovative-strategies-for-equal-employment&> (accessed on July 16, 2014).

²⁶ The Society Integration Foundation. About the project: Gender Equality – Tool And Value. http://www.sif.lv/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9175%3APar-projektu-Dzimumu-lidztiesiba-instruments-un-vertiba&catid=2%3Afonds&lang=en&Itemid=244 (accessed on July 16, 2014).

²⁷ Latvijas Republikas 11.Saeima. Statistika pēc dzimuma. http://titania.saeima.lv/Personal/Deputati/Saeima11_DepWeb_Public.nsf/fStatistics?readform&type=4&lang=L_V&count=1000 (accessed on July 16, 2014).

Comparatively, the proportion of women elected was 35.5%²⁸ in the 2009 municipal elections.

In May 2014, there were 5 female members of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia, compared to 9 male members (36% and 64% respectively). In the last 6 years, the number of female members in the Cabinet of Ministers has changed, but has never been lower than 30%. There is vertical gender segregation in the proportion of women in the highest positions of state officials in Latvia – the higher the post, the smaller the proportion of women. The proportion of women is highest in the group of lower positions (specialists and heads of units, and deputy heads), which gradually decreases, while the lowest proportion of women is in the group of highest posts, at the State Secretary level.

At all levels of courts in Latvia, the proportion of women is higher than men. There is a tendency since 2005 at all level of courts, both in numerical and percentage terms that the number of women has increased compared with the number of men.

With regard to the proportion of women in the economy-related posts since the founding of the Bank of Latvia in 1992, the Bank Presidents have been men-only. The proportion of women in the Council of the Bank of Latvia, and in the Board has increased from 14% in 2009 to 21% in 2014²⁹. In the biggest companies listed on stock exchanges in October 2013³⁰ in Latvia, 28.6% of non-executive and executive board members were women, which is the third highest in the EU. A positive trend can be observed in recent years - the representation of women in the non-executive and executive board of companies only increased: in 2004, the proportion of women in boards of companies was 10%, in 2007 – 17%, in 2010 – 23%. Considering that the specific measures to balance the proportion of women and men in decision-making positions has so far not been implemented, Latvia's relatively good indicators have been influenced by cultural and historical factors.

H. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Since 2009 gender equality policy in Latvia has been implemented within the framework of two policy planning documents accepted in the Government – Programme on gender equality implementation 2007-2010 and Gender Equality Action Plan 2012-2014. Directions of activities set in the policy documents are as follows: promotion of economic independence and equal opportunities of men and women in the labour market, equal participation and representation in decision-making processes, work and family reconciliation, promotion of a healthy life style of women and men, elimination of gender-based violence, awareness raising of society on gender equality. Informative reports about the implementation of measures are prepared and submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia.

Since 2005, all ministries have nominated a high level official whose responsibility is to ensure gender mainstreaming in the policy area they are responsible for. Another aim of this network is to make closer cooperation with national authorities in the policy making process.

Instead of the Gender Equality Council from 2008 until 2010, the Ministry of Welfare organised regular meetings with NGOs to discuss topicalities in the area. By order of the Minister of Welfare Gender Equality Committee was established in 2010. The committee's responsibility is the promotion of the implementation, monitoring, and improvement of

²⁸ Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. Women and men in Latvia. 2013. http://www.csb.gov.lv/sites/default/files/nr_14_sievietes_un_viriesi_latvija_13_00_lv_en.pdf (accessed on July 16, 2014).

²⁹ Latvijas Banka. Latvijas Bankas struktūra. <http://www.bank.lv/par-latvijas-banku/latvijas-bankas-struktura> (accessed on July 16, 2014).

³⁰ European Commission. Gender balance on corporate boards. http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/140303_factsheet_wob_en.pdf (accessed on July 16, 2014).

gender equality policy. The committee's tasks are to provide proposals and information on gender equality in the implementation of gender mainstreaming in different areas, propose the possible directions and priorities for the development of gender equality policy and programme, as well as to monitor and evaluate gender equality policy.

The Equality Body responsible for the implementation of the principle of gender equality in practice is the Ombudsman of the Republic of Latvia. On 1 January 2007, the Law of the Ombudsman entered into force. Before the creation of the Ombudsman institution in Latvia, the National Human Rights office was operating. The Ombudsmen monitors compliance with norms in respect to gender equality and non – discrimination, provides consultations, recommendations on gender equality issues, reviews complaints on violations of gender equality, represents the individuals in court, as well as promotes the awareness of human rights issues in society. Since the establishment of the Ombudsman office in 2007, when 3 full-time employees worked with all questions of the prohibition of discrimination, the situation has worsened. In 2012 - the staff was reduced to 2 full-time employees. Complaints received by the Ombudsman related to discrimination based on gender mainly concerns the scope of employment - equal pay for work of equal value, job advertisements, prohibition of discrimination in relation to pregnant women and women who return from maternity leave, as well as access to goods and services.

Complaints received in the Ombudsman office related to discrimination based on gender constitutes 10-20% from all received during the period from 2007 to 2011. During the period from 2008 to 2014, 10 cases out of 61 were prosecuted and they were related with discrimination based on gender in the private sector. Not in all cases where the person has indicated an infringement of their rights during the phone conversation, have they been willing to turn to the written application of the Ombudsman or the courts.

State Labour Inspectorate enforces the application and supervision of labour and health legislation, and safety at work as well as equal treatment prescribed in the Labour Law. As an example, active supervision of job advertisements, where no gender distribution regarding the required specialists in different professions and positions is allowed can be mentioned. The State Labour Inspectorate receives complaints about breaches of the equal treatment principle. In 2009, there were 38 and in 2010 there were 31 complaints in which, *inter alia*, an employee was complaining about gender discrimination in the work place. Between 2009 and 2014 (June 30) the State Labour Inspectorate received 191 complaints about different breaches of the employment relationship regulation. In 41 complaints, the violation of the equal treatment principle and discrimination based on gender (four towards women and 36 towards men) was confirmed. In all cases, the administrative penalty was imposed.

The location of the responsible unit for the gender equality issues in the Ministry has been changed. From 2004 to 2007, there was a separate division for gender equality in the Ministry, but since 2012 gender equality issues are integrated in the Department of Social Policy Planning and Development. The main 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 aspect of gender equality, ensuring the co-ordination of normative acts, as well as being responsible for the development of the national position of Latvia with regard to gender equality issues in different institutions of the EU, Council of Europe and other international organizations.

The CSB compiles statistical data which is used in policy making on a regular basis. In general, more than 75% of all data available on persons are summarized in a breakdown by gender.

Every two years, the CSB publishes a special edition of *Women and Men in Latvia*. This collection of data aims at providing statistical information on the status of women and men in society: number of females and males, their breakdown by age and ethnicity, marriages, divorces, fertility, mortality, morbidity, employment, unemployment, earnings, income, at

risk poverty rate, social protection, education, tourism, use of information technology, crime, representation in legislative and executive institutions.

I. HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN

In 1995, the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia was supplemented with Chapter VIII on fundamental human rights.³¹ The Constitution includes both civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights, and such rights as the right to a favourable environment. Article 91 of the Constitution states that all people in Latvia are equal before the law and the courts. Human rights are exercised without any discrimination. The prohibition of discrimination enshrined in article 91³² prevents the possibility to limit personal freedoms based on such criterion as race, ethnicity, or gender.

In turn, article 89 of the Constitution certifies that the State recognizes and protects human rights in accordance with the Constitution, laws, and binding international agreements. In addition to the previously adopted legislation that enshrined the principles of human rights and gender equality, a number of regulations concerning gender equality have been adopted during the period since 2009. On 25 March 2010, the amendments to the Labour law article 29 came into force. This states that less favourable treatment during pregnancy or maternity leave, or leave for the child's father, is considered as a direct discrimination based on sex.

The Electronic Media law, which concludes that audio and audio-visual commercial communications must not incite hatred and invite someone to discriminate against a person or group on grounds of sex or sexual orientation, was adopted in 2010.

The law on the prohibition of discrimination of natural persons engaged in economic activity states that the prohibition of the differing treatment of self-employed persons based on sex and sexual orientation in connection with his/her business activities and access by offering and selling goods or services is prohibited.

The law on extra-judicial recovery of debts stipulates that the contact with the debtor is prohibited from using an aggressive contact form, including making threats and taking action which infringes upon sex and security, as well as sexual orientation.

SITUATION DESCRIPTION

Women's rights and gender equality is one of the priorities of Latvia in international organisations. During discussions on the development of a global framework beyond 2015, Latvia firmly supports the call for a stand-alone gender equality goal together with the full integration of gender equality in all other goals.

One of the achievements which ought to be mentioned is the election of Latvia to the UN WOMEN Executive Board (for the time period 2013-2015). In 2013, Latvia had its Presidency of the board. Latvia provided financial support to the agency through voluntary contributions to its budget in the amount of \$10,000 in 2013.

Latvia joined the Equal Futures Partnership initiative in April, 2013. By joining the Equal Futures Partnership, Latvia has undertaken to further eliminate barriers to effective economic and civic participation by women and to further reduce labour market segregation, improve women's health care, and build the capacity of law enforcement to address trafficking in human beings.

Women's rights and gender equality will be one of the priorities in the field of human rights during the EU Presidency of Latvia in 2015.

Latvia has put forward its candidacy for the 2014 UN Human Rights Council elections

³¹ Grozījumi Latvijas Republikas Satversmē. LV 10.05.2002. No.70 (2645). <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=62020> (accessed on July 16, 2014).

³² The Decision of the Constitutional Court of Latvia in case No.2008-37-03 of December 29, 2008. Conclusion No.6. http://www.satv.tiesa.gov.lv/upload/spriedums_2008-37-03.htm (accessed on July 16, 2014).

and, in the case of election, committed to promote the protection of women's rights and gender equality at the international level.

Latvia is actively involved in international projects aimed at the promotion of women's rights. The NGO Resource Centre for women *Marta* provides support for the implementation of different activities in Uzbekistan: shaping the system for the promotion of women's rights and integrity, strengthening families, implementing activities aimed to raise awareness about the risks of trafficking, and providing assistance to local women in the implementation of activities, particularly in rural areas.

The organisation regularly participates in the women's Committee of Uzbekistan and other leading organizations' meetings of national and local institutions, discussing women's living and working conditions and provides recommendations for further improvements.

Marta has implemented several projects in Moldova and cooperates with women's organizations in Iraq working on the creation of a network to combat violence against women.

The membership of the UN Women Executive Board and participation in the Equal Futures Partnership initiative, as well as other initiatives previously mentioned, gives an opportunity for Latvia to promote women's rights at the international level, and at the same time promotes to review and improve the national policy in this area.

J. WOMEN AND THE MEDIA

The responsible institution for the electronic means of communication is the National Electronic Mass Media Council. Article 4 in the law on the press and other media states that it is not permitted to interfere in media activities. In July 2010, the electronic mass media law was accepted in Parliament. Article 35, paragraph 7 states that audio and audio-visual commercial communications may not incite hatred or invite discrimination against a person or group of persons on the grounds of sex, race or ethnic origin, nationality, religious affiliation or faith, disability, age or other circumstances.

In turn, article 24 of the Act, paragraph 1 declares that electronic media are free and independent in the production and distribution of programmes and broadcasts as well as in the editorial activity thereof, insofar as it is not restricted by the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, this law and other laws, state technical standards, and international agreements binding on Latvia. Therefore, according to the legislation the National Electronic Mass Media Council cannot influence the decision-making in the organisations of mass media. At the same time, according to the article 24, part 2 it is possible to indirectly regulate media as it states, the electronic mass media, respecting the variety of opinions, shall maintain the idea of the independent, democratic, and judicial State of Latvia, observe human rights and operate in the interests of the society of Latvia. The provision mentioned in the law could be interpreted as media responsibility to adhere to generally accepted human rights standards, including gender equality.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION

According to the Report on the implementation of the Beijing platform for action in the area of *Women and the Media* (2013) produced by the EIGE the proportion of women in decision-making positions in the major media organizations in Latvia is slightly more than men (60% and 40%).

Analysing the ratio of men and women at different levels of decision-making positions, a tendency is seen - the higher the level of decision-making, the lower representation of women in it. The proportion of women at the highest decision-making level (Member of the Board, President, Director) constitutes 25%, while men - 75% of decision-makers. In the level of chief senior operational managerial positions (chair and members of senior operational board) the proportion of women and men is equal - 50%. In the third level - senior operational

management (heads of unit/directorate/specific area of responsibility) the proportion of women constitutes 60%, but of men - 40%. In the fourth and the fifth level – operational positions (heads of section) the proportion of women constitutes 67% and men – 33%.

The proportion of women and men in the public and private media organisations' boards is 50%. This is higher than the EU average (25% and 75%).

The situation shows that the representation of women in decision-making bodies in the media does not guarantee compliance with gender equality in media content. Stereotypical and sexualized reflections of the female image are still observed in media and the public space as a whole.

At the same time, there are limited options for the state to influence the performance of the private media, particularly concerning the decision-making processes within the organisation. Therefore, significant work should be done by educating media professionals and journalists promoting a greater understanding of gender equality issues and its importance in different areas of life.

Activities aimed at eliminating gender stereotypes and gender issues in the media have not been implemented with any regularity.

The project *Mass Media role in (re)distribution of power* was implemented within the framework of the programme (2004-2006) on gender equality. Two surveys were conducted, *The role of Media in redistribution of power* and *Gender Equality and political governance* and awareness raising activities on gender equality issues for journalists and specialists working in advertising.

During the economic crisis, measures focused on the issue of gender equality in the media were not implemented. In November, 2013, The Ministry of Welfare, in close cooperation with the Centre of Public Policy PROVIDUS, organised a discussion about the image of women in the public space, analysing stereotypes about men's and women's social roles, capabilities and interests that prevail in Latvian society, and which the media is maintaining to a large extent. It was combined with the premiere of the documentary *Miss Representation* produced in the USA in 2011. Similarly, the University of Latvia, Faculty of Social Sciences, Communication Studies Department organised the Conference "Media Gender and transformation. Gender identity formation". The focus of the Conference was on the role of gender identity in media organizations, the impact of the media in the process of the formation of gender identities in different time periods, as well as the promotion of gender equality.

K. WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION

How climate change affects men and women and what is the impact of the everyday living habits of women and men to environment – these are areas where research at the national level has not yet been carried out.

The promotion of a healthy and environmentally friendly lifestyle of women and men was included as one of the action directions in the Gender Equality Action Plan 2012-2014. One of the measures intends to promote climate, environmental protection, and gender equality experts' knowledge on the integration of gender aspects in climate and environmental policy. Within the project *Gender and climate change* supported by the Nordic-Baltic Mobility Programme for Public Administration, civil servants from two ministries dealing with gender equality and climate issues visited Denmark and Sweden. The main aim of the project was to establish contacts among different Nordic and Latvian civil servants, experts, scholars dealing with the issues of climate change, and gender equality, as well as to identify the necessary steps in order to mainstream gender in the climate change policies in Latvia by gathering experience from Nordic colleagues.

A better understanding of Sweden's and Denmark's experience in the field allows Latvia to define the target groups of the society more easily and accurately from gender and other perspectives to be able to target educational information campaigns for promoting an environmentally friendly lifestyle and adaptation to the consequences of climate change. The information provided is relevant for the elaboration of the Latvian national adaptation strategy under the EEA programme that is due to start in the near future in the Ministry of Environmental Protection.

Denmark, which held the Presidency of the Council of the EU during the first half of 2012, decided, in cooperation with EIGE and support from the European Commission, to review the area entitled *Women and the Environment* focusing on gender equality and climate change and to propose indicators in this area. Based on the theory and on the available data, the report discusses two important dimensions of the objective K.1: women's participation in climate change decision-making at the national, EU and international levels, and the proportion of female tertiary graduates among graduates in scientific and technical fields related to climate change. Women's participation in climate change decision-making is an important prerequisite for more gender-responsive and efficient climate change policies that best serve the needs of society. According to the report, the proportion of women in decision-making positions in the ministries responsible for these areas (Ministry of Economics, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development) constituted 34.6% in 2011. In 2014, the proportion of women has increased to 50%.

The indicator looks at the three levels of decision-making. In the case of Latvia, Ministers are the highest decision-making level, the State Secretaries – the second highest, while the Heads of Department responsible for an area are at the third level.

The survey showed that there are no women at the first and the second levels of decision-making positions in the ministries. But at the third level, the proportion of women constitutes 71%.

In 2011 the highest proportion of women in decision-making positions in Latvia was in the environmental sector – 41.7%, which has increased to 78% in 2014. The proportion of women in transport sector was 37.5% in 2011, but it has decreased to 17%, in 2014. The proportion of women working in the energy sector increased from 16% in 2011 to 40% in 2014.

L. THE GIRL-CHILD

The Children Rights Protection Law stipulates that the rights and freedoms of a child are performed without any discrimination on the grounds of the child's and his/her parents' or guardians' race, nationality, gender, language, political belonging, political or religious views, national, ethnic or social background, domicile, material or health conditions, birth or any other factors. A specific role in the system of children rights protection is given to the State Inspectorate for Protection of Children's Rights³³ which is responsible for the supervision and control of compliance with legislation in the children rights protection area. By organizing inspections in private and state institutions, camps, etc. the Inspectorate evaluates whether general principles on children's rights protection and the prohibition of discrimination has been considered.

On August 21, 2013 the Cabinet of Ministers approved the Guidelines for children crime prevention and protection of children against criminal offenses 2013-2019³⁴ which foresees specific activities for the reduction of children crimes, as well as to promote the level of children's safety and to safeguard children from health and life threats. These guidelines

³³ State Inspectorate for Children's Rights. Regulatory enactment. http://www.bti.gov.lv/eng/vbta_inspekcija/links/ (accessed on July 15, 2014).

³⁴ Bērnu noziedzības un bērnu aizsardzības pret noziedzīgiem nodarījumiem pamatnostādnes 2013-2019. <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/view.do?id=4469> (accessed on July 15, 2014).

are a follow-up for the Guidelines for children crime prevention and protection of children against criminal offenses 2009-2011³⁵. The Guidelines foresees such activities as implementing an information system for the support of minors, disseminating informative materials to youngsters as part of prevention, and preventive activities on safety issues, etc.

Also, several activities are included in other policy planning documents, e.g. the guidelines “Latvia fit for children” and the State family policy guidelines 2011-2017. Since 2004, the responsible ministry annually submits a report to the Saeima on the situation of children in Latvia.

On June 12, 2014 the Saeima passed a law by which the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (aka Lanzarote Convention) was adopted. The Convention envisages a list of responsibilities in order to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, to protect the rights of child victims of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, and to promote national and international cooperation against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children.

In 2013 and 2014, significant amendments to the Children Rights Protection Law were made by which, *inter alia*, the definition of emotional violence towards child was included; according to the definition violence towards a close relative in front of a child is also considered as emotional violence towards a child. The amendments also improved provisions for the liability of employees of childcare facilities and children event organizers by stipulating that the head of the institution or the organizer of an event shall require information from the criminal register about employee’s records at least once a year. Also, the range of specialists (e.g. police officers, judges, social workers, and teachers, etc.) who need to acquire specific knowledge about children’s rights protection area and specific themes of the trainings are now laid down in the Children Rights Protection Law. Teachers are also required to acquire knowledge about the identification of child victims of violence, risks of domestic violence and trafficking in human beings, skills in interaction with minors, etc.

DESCRIPTION OF SITUATION

Health and welfare

In 2013, 17.1% of the Latvian population was children under the age of 17 years³⁶. 48.7% of the Latvian children/young people aged up to 17 years old are women, while 51.3% male. The ratio has remained almost unchanged since 2005 when the proportion of girls in the total number of children/young people (age group 0-17) was 48.9%, while 51.1% were boys. Compared to 2005, in 2013 the total number of children in the country has decreased by 22%, but in the age group 12-17 years their number decreased by 47%.

According to data from a survey on health behavior in school-aged children³⁷ in the school year 2009/2010, 21.0% of students have evaluated their health as ‘excellent’, 60.1% - as ‘good’, 17.6% and 1.3% respectively – as ‘fair’ or ‘bad’. Compared to boys, girls have evaluated their health worse. 23.6% of girls evaluated their health as ‘fair’ and ‘poor’, whereas only 13.7% of boys gave such a health self-assessment rate. Older children were more likely to report fair or poor health, particularly this trend is observed among girls in the age group of 15 years. Girls in all age groups were significantly more likely to report fair or

³⁵ Bērnu noziedzības un bērnu aizsardzības pret noziedzīgiem nodarījumiem pamatnostādnes 2009-2011. <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/view.do?id=3144> (accessed on July 15, 2014).

³⁶ Latvijas Republikas Centrālā statistikas pārvalde. Bērni Latvijā. 2013. http://www.csb.gov.lv/sites/default/files/publikacijas/nr_13_berni_latvija_2013_13_00_lv_en.pdf (accessed on July 16, 2014).

³⁷ Slimību profilakses un kontroles centrs. Skolas vecuma bērnu veselību ietekmējošo paradumu pētījums Latvijā. Social determinants of health and well-being among young people international report from the 2009/2010 survey. http://www.spkc.gov.lv/file_download/929/Social-determinants-of-health-and-well-being-among-young-people.pdf (accessed on July 16, 2014).

poor health than boys.

The proportion of girls and boys within youth in Latvia, who have tried smoking, is almost equal³⁸. According to survey data (2011) the proportion of youth aged 15-16 years who tried smoking is the highest (80%) among 37 countries participating in this survey (average 58%). If in 1995, only 63% of 15-16 year old girls and 84% of boys had tried smoking, and then in 2011 the number of girls has rapidly increased and leveled with the boys who have tried smoking, respectively - 79% of boys and 78% of girls.

In 2012, the number of primarily registered children (to whom the diagnosis is determined for the first time in their life) with diseases related to acute intoxication of narcotic, psychotropic and toxic substances and due to a harmful overuse of drugs has dramatically increased compared to 2011 (169 and 90 children respectively). In 2012 122 boys or 68.1 per 100,000 boys and 47 girls or 27.6 per 100,000 girls were primarily registered as patients with the aforementioned diagnosis. Generally, till 2010 there was a slight decrease in the number of such cases, but since 2011 the number of primarily registered patients (children) has increased.

According survey data in the school year 2009/2010 on children psycho-emotional welfare³⁹ among children of 11, 13 and 15 years of age the psycho-emotional welfare score for girls is lower than for boys. 44.8% of boys and 54.7% of girls have experienced irritation or a bad mood at least once per week. Girls more frequently than boys complain about nervousness and dejection. Data on patients suffering with depression confirms that young women suffer from depression more often than young men. In 2012, among young people aged 15-24 years of age, 89 patients registered as patients with the diagnosis 'depression' were men (71,2 per 100 000 inhabitants in the respective age group) and 140 patients were women (118,5 per 100 000 inhabitants in the respective age group)⁴⁰. As in all age groups a number of suicides among young people for young men is 5 times higher than for young women. Among men the mortality rate for attempted suicides was 36.2 per 100,000 inhabitants in the respective age group, but among women – 4.9 per 100 000 inhabitants in the respective age group. The number of committed suicides has increased compared to 2009 for both genders and for women it has almost doubled.

The results of The Adverse Childhood Experiences study⁴¹ reveals that girls and boys suffer equally often from domestic violence. In childhood, 64.6% of boys and 67.2% of girls received physical violence. Beating as a physical punishment in childhood was received by 63.2% of boys and 60.8% of girls. Whereas 21.2% of women and 12.6% of men have been physically punished by slapping their face, but 17.8% of men and 19.5% of women were shoved. Only 32.9% of men and 35.4% of women indicate that they have not received physical punishment in childhood.

In 2013, the state financed social rehabilitation for children suffering from unlawful actions was provided to 2126 children, in 1055 cases social rehabilitation was provided in the institution, but in 1071 cases – in the place of residence of service recipients. The state budget

³⁸ The Ministry of Health, The Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, ESPAD, Survey on use of alcohol and other drugs among students, 2011. <http://www.spkc.gov.lv/aktualitates/211/petijums-atkaribu-izraisoso-vielu-paradumi-un-tendences-skolenu-vidu-atspogulo-informaciju-par-latvijas-jauniesu-atkaribas-vielu-lietosanas-paradumiem> (accessed on July 16, 2014).

³⁹ Iveta Pudule, Biruta Velika, Daiga Grīnberga, Inese Gobiņa, Anita Villeruša. Health behaviour in school-aged children. Results and tendencies of survey of school year 2009./2010. Riga, The Centre for Disease Prevention and Control: 2012., p.40

⁴⁰ For calculations the register data of the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control on patients with mental and behavioural disorders (this registry data provide psychiatrists) was used. Data includes the number of patients's records with diagnosis F32 (depressive episode) and F33 (recurrent units of depressive disorder) at the end of 2012.

⁴¹ In 2011 the specialists of the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control with support of the WHO conducted *The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study*. The study was conducted in 5 Latvian cities, including adult respondents who were students of professional education institutions and secondary schools.

spent for the provision of the social rehabilitation in 2013 - 1 424 074 EUR. In the period from 2010 to 2012 social rehabilitation was more often provided to children from 7 till 11 years of age, but children up to age 2 received it most rarely. The service has been provided more often for girls from the age 12 till 17 years and for boys from the age 7 till 11 years. The service recipients more often have suffered from emotional violence (722 children), the majority of them were 7 till 11 years of age. Both girls and boys have received social rehabilitation most often at the age range from 7 till 11 years of age because of having experienced emotional violence. The rarest social rehabilitation is provided for children from the age 3 till 6 years because of sexual violence. It must be mentioned that the most frequently unlawful actions have been done by the children's parents, while the rarest occurrence is children who have suffered from unlawful actions under imprisonment (1 case in 2011). During 2010-2012 no student of social correction educational institution has suffered from unlawful actions. In the majority of cases, criminal proceedings were initiated.

The State Inspectorate for Protection of Children's Rights provides a children hotline (free of charge) giving an opportunity to get psychological help and consultation, including consultation in cases of violence against children. The number of calls for service has a tendency to decrease in the period from 2009 till 2012. An analysis of the demographic data reveals the increasing tendency of male callers – the proportion of boys calling children hotlines services has increased from 32.7% in 2009 till 43.4% in 2012. Whereas, the proportion of female callers for children hotlines services has decreased from 67.3% in 2009 till 56.6% in 2012⁴². Compared to 2011, in 2012 the number of callers who have eating disorders has increased (by 22 calls). Most of the callers are girls and these disorders tend to be associated with complaints about their body's physical appearance (128). Frequent complaints about their body's physical appearance and related eating disorders are results of emotional violence that create the feeling that the body is "bad", so it somehow needs to change, for example, not eating or eating too much.

In 2013, 4.08% of crime victims or 481 were children - about half of them were up to the age of 14⁴³. Compared to 2011, the number of crime victims, including the number of children, has declined. However, the proportion of children among crime victims each year is changing. Among children who are crime victims 62% are boys, and 38% are girls.

In 2013, there was one case of kidnapping a minor (the victim was a 14-year old boy) and two cases of trafficking in human beings (victims were 14-year old girls). In 2013 three minors (age 11 – 17) were involved or used in the production of pornographic or erotic materials.

Education

According to the results of a PISA survey in 2009 and 2012⁴⁴, there is a comparatively low share of pupils with high achievements in reading literacy, mathematics and the natural sciences in Latvia.

There is a tendency for the achievements of girls in reading literacy, mathematics and natural science to be higher than for boys, especially in natural science and reading literacy.

The share of the population in the age group 18-24 who have not obtained secondary education and do not continue their studies was 15.5% in 2008, 11.6% in 2011 and 10.2% in 2012. The share of men in the age group 18-24 who have not finished school is twice as high as that of women - 17.2% men and 9.4% women in 2009, 15.8% and 7.5% in 2011, 14.5%

⁴² Valsts bērnu tiesību aizsardzības inspekcija. Pārskati un atskaites. http://www.bti.gov.lv/lat/zinas_par_iestadi/parskati_un_atskaites/?page=0 (accessed on July 16, 2014).

⁴³ Source: The Information Centre of the Ministry of Interior, 2014.

⁴⁴ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. PISA 2012 results: What Students Know and Can Do: Student Performance in Mathematics, Reading and Science (Volume I). <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results-volume-i.htm> (accessed on July 16, 2014).

and 6.2% in 2012.

Health education is included in the subject "social studies". Within the framework of the subject 1st to 9th class students have opportunities to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes on physical and mental safety, healthy lifestyle, stress and its management, addiction and co-addiction, growth, development, relationships.

“Health education” is an optional subject within general secondary education, which includes sexual and reproductive health issues. According to the data of the Ministry of Education and Science 5577 or 14.7% pupil studied the subject during the school year 2011/2012. In night school, 1990 pupils studied it. If comparing with the 2008/2009 school year, the proportion of young people who have mastered the subject has dropped.

Section three: Data and Statistics

Since Latvia is a Member State of the EU, its statistics are integrated into the European statistical system. The CSB regularly gathers statistical data which is broken down by gender. Information is available on employment, earnings, education, health, ICT and etc. The respondent's gender is required in all random surveys.

A completely new law on statistics, where the European statistics code of practice is used, is currently in the process of being drafted. Its principles and rules are incorporated into the code, as well as more obligations for institutions of collection, publication and dissemination of the statistical data are defined. Taking into account that the situation differs in all areas set in the Beijing Platform of Action in each EU Member State, since 1999 the EU Council of Ministers have decided on the quantitative and qualitative indicators for the evaluation of the progress achieved. The areas are as follows: Women in decision making processes (1999), Work and family life reconciliation (2000), Equal pay (2001), Domestic violence against woman (2002), Women and men in economic decision making processes (2003), Sexual harassment in the working place (2004), Women and health (2006), National machineries for the promotion of gender equality (2006), Women and education (2007), Women and poverty (2007), The girl child (2008), Women in armed conflicts (2008), Women and the environment (2012), Combating Violence Against Women and the provision of Support Services for Victims of Domestic Violence (2012), Women and media (2013), Institutional mechanisms for advancement of gender equality (2013), Women and the economy (2014).

For updating the statistics in each of the indicators, on the initiative of the Ministry of Welfare, two evaluation reports on the situation have been developed (in 2010 and 2013).

Minimum set of gender indicators, by domain

No	Indicators		Source of data	Comments	2009		2010		2011		2012		2013	
					Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
I Economic structures, participation in productive activities and access to resources														
2.	Average number of hours spent on paid and unpaid work combined (total work burden), by sex		CSB	From 1996	39.7	38.1	39.1	37.7	39.4	37.7	39.2	37.5	39.1	37.6
3.	Labour force participation rates for 15-24 and 15+, by sex	15-24	CSB	From 1996	46.4%	35.9%	42.2%	37.2%	41.1%	33.7%	44.0%	36.1%	42.6%	36.0%
		15-74			70.6%	61.6%	68.7%	61.1%	69.1%	60.4%	70.6%	62.2%	70.4%	62.2%
4.	Proportion of employed who are own-account workers, by sex		CSB	From 1996	7.0%	5.5%	7.0%	5.3%	7.6%	5.6%	7.5%	5.7%	7.2%	5.8%
5.	Proportion of employed who are working as contributing family workers, by sex		CSB	From 1996	1.7%	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	0.7%	1.1%	0.6%
6.	Proportion of employed who are employer, by sex		CSB	From 1996	5.8%	1.9%	5.4%	2.6%	5.0%	2.4%	5.3%	2.6%	5.5%	2.9%
8.	Percentage distribution of employed population by sector, each sex	Percentage distribution of employed population in agricultural sector, by sex, NACE Rev.2 section A	CSB	From 1996 <i>Persons aged 15-74 years, LFS data</i> <i>Data are calculated from not rounded figures, it is possible that the sum of indicators does not coincide with the total 100%</i>	11.5%	6.2%	11.8%	5.7%	12.7%	5.4%	12.0%	4.9%	11.3%	4.9%
		Percentage distribution of employed population in industrial sector, by sex, NACE Rev.2 section B-F, NACE Rev.2 section G-U			34.2%	15.3%	33.6%	13.6%	32.4%	14.0%	33.3%	14.1%	34.5%	13.6%
		Percentage distribution of employed population in service sector, by sex			54.2%	78.5%	54.6%	80.6%	54.9%	80.6%	54.7%	81.0%	54.1%	81.4%
10.	Youth unemployment by sex		CSB	From 1996 <i>Youth unemployment rate for persons aged 15-24 years</i>	36.4%	29.2%	37.3%	34.8%	31.3%	30.6%	27.8%	29.5%	21.8%	24.9%
13.	Gender gap in wages		CSB	From 1998	3.155	2.685	2.936	2.481	2.949	2.550	3.027	2.607		
14.	Proportion of employed working part-time, by sex		CSB	From 1996 <i>Persons who are part-time employed (employees) or usually work less than 40 hours per</i>	7.3%	10.1%	8.0%	11.4%	7.3%	10.9%	7.1%	11.6%	6.1%	10.0%

				<i>week. Persons aged 15-74 years, LFS data</i>											
15.	Employment rate of persons aged 25-49 with a child under age 3 living in a household and with no children living in the household	With children under age 3	CSB	From 1996	78.0%	53.7%	79.1%	56.3%	82.0%	60.6%	85.7%	61.8%	87.4%	61.4%	
		With no children			68.7%	77.0%	67.3%	77.2%	70.8%	77.2%	73.3%	78.2%	74.7%	79.0%	
16.	Proportion of children under age 3 in formal care		CSB	1999/2000 academic year	17.5	18.0	21.0	21.6	21.5	21.4	23.7	23.6			
17.	Proportion of individuals using the Internet, by sex		CSB	Data from 2005 for persons aged 16-74 years	69,4	67,7	72,4	70,0	74,5	72,4	76,7	75,0	78,1	77,8	
18.	Proportion of individuals using mobile/cellular telephones, by sex		CSB	Data available only about 2012 for persons aged 16-74 years							86,7	85,5			
II. Education															
21.	Adjusted net enrolment ratio in primary education by sex		CSB	From 1999/2000 academic year	97.9	98.0	97.9	98.1	97.1	97.4	96.4	97.1			
22.	Gross enrolment ratio in secondary education, by sex		CSB	From 1999/2000 academic year	114.3	115.4	120.3	117.9	124.1	121.7	122.8	120.4			
23.	Gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education, by sex		CSB	From 1999/2000 academic year	50.4	88.4	54.1	81.3	55.3	77.4	55.2	83.8			
24.	Gender parity index in enrolment at primary, secondary and tertiary levels	Primary, w/m 1-2 level	CSB		92.3		92.3		92.7		93.2				
		Secondary, s/v 3-4 level			97.4		94.6		93.6		92.1				
		Tertiary, w/m 5-6 level			168.4		156.9		147.6		143.9				
25.	Share of female science, engineering, manufacturing and construction graduates at tertiary level		CSB	From 1999/2000	31.8		31.2		29.0		30.1				
26.	Proportion of females among tertiary education teachers or professors		CSB	„ academic staff”,	55.9		57.3		56.5		56.3				
27.	Net intake in first grade of primary education, by sex		CSB	From 1999/2000	8454	8300	8699	8192	8248	7822	8632	8414			
29.	Graduation from lower secondary education, by sex		CSB	From 1999/2000	13458	12707	12326	11140	11199	10078	9825	8874			
30.	Transition rate to secondary education, by sex		CSB	From 1999/2000 Not available by sex											
31.	Education attainment of population aged 25 and over, by sex	Population with lower secondary education attainment by sex, <i>ISCED 0-2</i>	CSB	From 1996 <i>Persons aged 25-74 years, LFS data</i> <i>Data are calculated from not rounded figures, it is possible that the sum of indicators does not coincide with the total 100%</i>	17.4%	12.5%	17.4%	12.5%	18.0%	12.9%	16.5%	11.7%	15.6%	10.9%	
		Population with upper secondary education attainment by sex, <i>ISCED 3-4</i>			62.5%	58.0%	62.5%	58.0%	62.0%	56.6%	62.7%	55.7%	61.5%	54.4%	
		Population with tertiary education attainment by			20.1%	29.4%	20.1%	29.4%	20.0%	30.5%	20.8%	32.6%	22.9%	34.6%	

		sex, ISCED 5-6											
III. Health and related services													
33.	Under-five mortality rate, by sex	CSB	From 1965	9.1	8.3	6.2	6.2	7.5	6.3	7.2	6.3		
34.	Maternal mortality ratio	CDPC	Data sources – Register of Causes of Death and Medical Birth register	46.1		26.1		5.4		20.5		24.7	
35.	Antenatal care coverage	CDPC	Data source –Medical Birth register (information about delivered women who have registered and received antenatal care, % from all deliveries).	97.3%		97.3%		98.2%		98.4%		98.9%	
36.	Proportion of births attended by skilled health professional	CDPC	Data source –Medical Birth register (information about women who had birth in hospitals or planned home deliveries, % from all deliveries).	99.5%		99.4%		99.6%		99.6%		99.6%	
37.	Smoking prevalence among persons aged 15 and over, by sex	CSB, CDPC	Persons aged 15-64 years			47,4	20,7			52,0	17,6		
38.	Proportion of adults who are obese, by sex	CSB, CDPC	Persons aged 15-64 years			12,6	17,9			16,5	19,3		
39.	Women's share of population aged 15-49 living with HIV/AIDS	CDPC		30.9%		31.5%		31.9%		32.3%		32.8%	
40.	Access to anti-retroviral drug, by sex	CDPC	Not available.										
41.	Life expectancy at age 60, by sex	CSB	From 1969	13.10	17.98	13.05	18.00	13.31	18.46	13.51	18.36		
42.	Adult mortality by cause and age groups	CSB, CDPC	Per 100 000 live births by sex	1830,3	1566,2	1874,3	1605,6	1809,0	1545,9	1824,0	1622,8	1801,3	1638,1
IV. Public life and decision-making													
43.	Women's share of government ministerial positions	CSB	From 1997	13	3	10	3	11	3	10	4	9	4
44.	Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament	CSB	From 1997	9.Saeima 19% sieviešu no kopskaita		10.Saeima 19% sieviešu no kopskaita		11.Saeima 21% sieviešu no kopskaita					
45.	Women's share of managerial positions	CSB	2001., 2003., 2005., 2007., 2010. Data are available about women leaders of farms			53.2	46.8						
46.	Percentage of female police officers	CSB	From 2000	29%		28%		31%		32%			

47.	Percentage of female judges	CSB	From 1997	74%	75%	75%	76%				
V. Human rights of women and girl children											
48.	Proportion of women aged 15-49 subjected to physical or sexual violence in the last 12 months by an intimate partner	CDPC	Data from the Report „The reproductive health. Review of the situation in Latvia” (2003-2011). There is no information about the perpetrator’s relationship to victim.					1) physical violence – 30%			
49.	Proportion of women aged 15-49 subjected to physical or sexual violence in the last 12 months by persons other than an intimate partner	CDPC	Skat. Nr.48					2) sexual violence – 10%			
51.	Percentage of women aged 20-24 years old who were married or in a union before age 18	CSB	From 2013								
52.	Adolescent fertility rate	CSB	From 1971	16.2	13.6	14.6	15.3				

Section four: Emerging priorities

Core priorities in the field of gender equality for the upcoming period are (1) the economic independence of women, (2) the reduction of violence against women, (3) gender mainstreaming.

a) **Promotion of economic independence of women and men and reduction of gender segregation in the labour market**

In the following years, state and municipal institutions and other actors will continue the work to ensure children participation in pre-school education by reaching 95% of children who are involved in pre-school education by 2020. The National Development Plan of Latvia 2014-2020⁴⁵ envisages a complex support system that eases the reconciliation of work and family life, and additionally reduces the risk of poverty. Support measures include municipality based qualitative, adequate and accessible services for families with children (e.g. accessible pre-school education), and informative activities in favour of flexible working hours as well as about employment rights and occupational safety, as well as activities to encourage older people to work for longer.

According to the National Development Plan of Latvia 2014-2020 and the Education development guidelines 2014-2020 a variety of measures are planned with the aim to:

- establish an innovative content of curriculums and approaches;
- build creativity and entrepreneurial skills in the secondary and high school education,;
- ensure a digital study environment;
- introduce contemporary foreign language studies;
- update curriculums and teaching methods and materials, especially in environmental and social sciences, hence attracting the attention of scholars (specifically girls) to these sciences,;
- incorporate gender equality issues in curriculums and teaching materials.

Special attention will be drawn to value education and health education issues that are suitable to students' age specifics. Diminishing the number of school dropouts, especially boys, is considered one of the main challenges. It is also planned to reduce the impact of negative gender stereotypes connected with specific professions and to raise the motivation of young people to study professions which demand labour; all of these activities will be organised in close cooperation with employees.

b) **Elimination of violence against women and domestic violence**

It is highly essential to ensure rehabilitation and other support measures for both victims and violent persons. As of January 2015, state funded social rehabilitation services shall be provided to both groups. It is also necessary to continue to develop legislative acts as a precondition for signing the European Council Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence. Signing the Convention requires a revision of criteria for violent criminal offenses in order to also set the punishment for such specific crimes as female genital mutilation, strangling, systematic beating, stalking, and violence which has led to a psychic trauma. Also, efforts to collect comparable data on cases of

⁴⁵ The National Development Plan of Latvia 2020. http://www.pkc.gov.lv/images/NAP2020%20dokumenti/NDP2020_English_Final.pdf (accessed on July 16, 2014).

domestic violence will be continued.

c) Promoting understanding of equal opportunities for women and men and provision of equal treatment and rights *de facto*

Several activities are planned in order to diminish gender-based differences in life expectancy, for instance, changing negative stereotypes and views about roles of women and men, meaning behaviour, health and lifestyle with a perception of the role of men in the focus of attention. Efforts to develop a balanced proportion of women and men working in health care will be made; also specific measures to improve the health condition of both genders, by targeting women and men specifically. The EU Structural Funds will be used for organising comprehensive informative and awareness raising campaigns about the prevention of discrimination and ensuring equal rights and opportunities irrespective of one's gender, age, health condition, race or ethnicity, or any other grounds.