



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

Country: Latvia
Author(s): Daina Calite

Background:

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

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

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

The first version of the report was published in 2008. This is the second version of the report updated with information available up to November 2009.



Summary of changes since 2008

Housing, homelessness and disabled people:

There is no specific data about homeless persons with disabilities. In the country report disabled persons are mentioned as one of the risk groups. Disability is mainstreamed and that affects collection of specific data. There are no institutions who know the real situation – no quantitative evidence or research is available. On the local level, municipalities collect only data about persons using the services of night shelters.

New strategies and actions for the inclusion of disabled people:

During 2008-9 there have not been any important developments in national laws, policy or national strategy for social inclusion or social protection that affect disabled people. The new Law on Disability is still in the Saeima.

Latvia was one of the last states to ratify the UN Convention. It should be mentioned that the Government took this decision only after pressure from NGOs. During last year a specially organized working group of civil servants from state institutions (ministries) and representatives from different NGOs working with and for disabled people have prepared recommendations for UN Convention implementation. But due to the economic situation in Latvia these may remain only recommendations.

Change in incomes, benefits and pensions:

During 2008-9 no important changes in the level of available support to disabled people have been made. The available state benefits remain the same, also the amount, except that social security benefit for persons disabled from childhood and additional payment to family benefit for disabled children was increased from LVL 50 to LVL 75 (from 1 st January, 2009). The income level may change according to individual situations: for example, when disabled persons become unemployed. In this situation disabled persons still have rights to receive unemployment benefit. During summer 2009 the Government took a decision to reduce state pensions by 10%, but the Saeima did not reduce disability pensions.

In the current situation, where many unemployed persons have lost their right to receive unemployment benefit, the income situation for disabled persons is better. According to statistical data from State Social Insurance Agency the average amount of disability pension was increased from LVL 84.02 in 2007 to LVL 104,63 in 2008. (presentation of National Council for Disabled People)

http://www.lm.gov.lv/upload/cilvekiem_ar_invaliditati/lm_prezentacija-invalidu-padome_18022009.ppt

However it must be mentioned that Ministry of Welfare and Government working on the state budget 2010 is discussing the reduction of state social benefits.

Due to the economic situation no new research took place in 2008-9.

Change in long-term care and support:

The economic situation in Latvia and shortage of financial resources is influencing available services. In 2006 the state budget for social and vocational rehabilitation services was 2530.7 thousand lats (LVL); in 2007 - 3369,8 thousand LVL and during 2008 the available state budget remained approximately the same – 3547,1 thousand LVL. However during 2009 the budget was reduced to 3084,3 thousand LVL which is affecting the quality of services and number of service recipients (presentation of National Council for Disabled People http://www.lm.gov.lv/upload/cilvekiem_ar_invaliditati/lm_prezentacija-invalidu-padome_18022009.ppt).



During 2008-2009 Government and the Ministry of Welfare mainly focused on reducing finances (state budget).

Reductions led to the reorganization of several state institutions, including those working with disabled people, for example - the state agency Technical Aids Centre (provider of technical aids to disabled persons) was reorganized and incorporated with the National Rehabilitation Centre "Vaivari" (medical rehabilitation institution).

Due to the economic situation no new research was carried out in 2008-9.

The economic crisis:

Up to this moment it is very difficult to evaluate effect of the economic crises on the situation of disabled people. On one hand, disabled people have the same pensions and benefits and their income situations are better than that of many unemployed persons. Incomes may differ from person to person and family to family, mainly due to previous employment and duration of unemployment.

On the other hand, shortage of financial resources is affecting additional municipal benefits and social services.



PART ONE: SOCIAL INCLUSION PLANS (GENERAL)

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

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

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

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

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

Information about people with disabilities is included in Latvian National Action Plan for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion (2004-2006)¹, Disabled people are described as being a social group at risk of social exclusion, subject to several risk factors depending on types of disabilities, having difficulties in obtaining good quality education, having a low employment level and experiencing insufficient social services Chapter 3² gives a description of Conception "Equal opportunities for all" which uses an integrated approach and states an intention to implement an overall set of measures to eliminate barriers for the independent living of disabled people and their full participation in social life. An Action plan for 2010 is also presented. The chapter includes information about the draft "Law on Social Protection of Disabled Persons" which must define the main principles for the prevention of disability, widely used criteria in international practice for the determination of disability, and institutions responsible for assessment of persons' situations and decision-making. It also includes information about the plans of Government to continue or broaden existing social services; for example, in vocational training, house adaptations and technical aids.

Chapter 5, gives information about the implementation of subsidised employment measures for disabled persons in 2003, within the framework of the national central budget programme "Improvement of employability of unemployed" administered by the State Employment Agency.

Action plans and National reports do not include specific actions for people with disabilities, measurement instruments or indicators for evaluation of achievements that take into account the specific needs concerning kinds of disabilities, age, or ethnicity.

¹ Chapter 1. Major Trends and Challenges, Section 1.10. The situation of Social Exclusion Risk Groups, Sub-section 1.10.2. Disabled people

² Chapter 3.Policy Measures, Section 3.14.Special State Support Measures for groups at Risk of Social Exclusion, Sub-section 3.14.2.Disabled People

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

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

After the Conception "Equal opportunities for all" was accepted by the Cabinet of Ministers in 1998, each of the ministries involved was meant to report annually about their implemented activities. In reality, each year those activities have not differed from the yearly planned activities which were closely connected to the financial possibilities of the state budget.

The main goal of the Conception "Equal opportunities for all" was to create equal opportunities for people with disabilities, promoting their social rehabilitation, restore their working capacities, acquiring an education and involvement in labour market. The concept dealt with problems in the fields of health, education, employment, accessible environments and social security. The problems noted in the concept have remained the same and new policy documents provide evidence of this: Main Policy Statement for Diminishing Disability and its Consequences 2005.-2015 and Action Plan for Implementation of Main Policy Statement for Diminishing Disability and its Consequences 2005-2015. A difference is that the new documents deal only with problems in the field of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Welfare (employment, social security, disability expertise, social services).

The Conception "Equal opportunities for all" was one of the first policy documents dealing with disability issues.. The policy documents: Main Policy Statement for Diminishing Disability and its Consequences 2005.-2015 and Action Plan for Implementation of Main Policy Statement for Diminishing Disability and its Consequences 2005.-2015 are a logical continuation. The Conception and new policy documents repeat the same policies while again limiting responsibility.

The Main Policy Statement for Diminishing Disability and its Consequences 2005.-2015 proposed drafting of new legislation: the Law on Disability and Law on Employment of Disabled People. The draft Law on Disability addresses the establishment of a new disability expertise system.

The draft Law on Disability was submitted to the Saeima in 2007. The Law was not accepted by the Saeima at this time and discussions are still ongoing. Eventually there may be many changes to the text of Law, but the main changes foreseen are that disability expertise will in future be carried out by the State Agency. Instead of three disability groups, in the future there will only be two groups for the level of disability. The Law would allocate many important tasks to the Government (for example, proscribing disability criteria), to the dissatisfaction of NGOs for and of disabled people.

During 2008-9 there have not been any important developments in national laws, policy or national strategy for social inclusion or social protection that affect disabled people. The new Law on Disability is still in the Saeima.

Latvia was one of the last states to ratify the UN Convention. It should be mentioned that the Government took this decision only after pressure from NGOs. During last year a specially organised working group of civil servants from state institutions (ministries) and representatives from different NGOs working with and for disabled people have prepared recommendations for UN Convention implementation. But due to the economic situation in Latvia these may remain only recommendations.

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

According to the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers, each legislative act or policy planning document must be evaluated by NGOs.

Disabled people organisations are involved in drafting of new policy documents and legislative acts by participating in working groups on drafting documents and submitting comments on prepared documents using web pages of the ministries or Cabinet of Ministers.

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

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

The most recent research in connection with disabled people and employment was carried out between 2005 and 2007 (see ANED country Report on employment). All studies aimed to evaluate the opportunities open to people with disabilities in labour market, possibilities of integration into society and labour market, to state the main problems and to provide recommendations. Nevertheless some of the research deals with the problems of poverty and social exclusion. See, for example, *Risk Possibilities and Reasons for Unemployment and Social Exclusion of People with Disabilities* (2006). The studies are mainly based on interviews with the target group (in the study *Reasons of low employment level of people with disabilities and solutions for the problems* it was ~1000 people with disabilities, *Integration of People with Disabilities – Wheelchair users into Labour Market: ~ 30 wheelchair users*).

Key findings:

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

The study does not provide any specific figures on these financial or poverty risks for women and there is no comparison with the overall population.

The level of income in families where people with disabilities are working, is higher than in families where disabled people are not working. All interviewed people were divided into 5 groups according to income level for one person in the family: I - (3,5-54,0 LVL), II - (55,0-74,5 LVL), III - (75,0-99,0 LVL); IV - (100,0-127,0 LVL) and V - (130,0-425,0 LVL). 79% of families, where people with disabilities are working, belong to last three groups. (*Reasons of low employment level of people with disabilities and solutions for the problems, 2007*)

2. Similar to people without disabilities, young people with disabilities have fewer problems with integration into the labour market, but more problems face people with disabilities in pre-pension age. It is impossible for people with intellectual disabilities to find work when disability is evident or the cause of disability is mentioned in documents necessary for work.
3. People with disabilities with higher levels of education have more possibilities for finding a job. However not all universities are interested in providing higher education for people with disabilities because of a lack of adequate infrastructure and educational methods.
4. Ordinary schools offer the best possibilities for integration into society, but at the same time there is not general agreement about the necessity of integrated education. The main objections mentioned relate to lack of financial resources and concern that level of education will be lowered, if children with disabilities attend the same classes. There are cases, when children with disabilities have been rejected from ordinary schools because of a lack of accessible environment.



5. There is lack of information in society about people with disabilities, their problems and possibilities and a lack of success stories in the mass media.
6. Society is sceptical about integration of people with disabilities in society, because of difference.
7. Latvia has necessary legislation, political and planning documents, but has practical problems in implementing them (*Reasons of low employment level of people with disabilities and solutions for the problems, Riga, 2007*) At the same time legislation, policy and practice is not directed towards education and employment of people with mental disabilities. All people with disabilities are recognised as a single group and their specific needs are not taken into account (*Possibilities of People with Mental problems in the Labour Market, Riga, 2006*)
8. NGOs have a large role in the field of employment, but at the same time cooperation between NGOs is weak.
9. Technical equipment for adjusted work places is not of good quality and does not support integration in society.
10. There is a lack of educated social workers and occupational therapists (for adjusting work places).
11. There are instances of discrimination in work places – refusal to employ disabled people, lower salaries and dismissal from work because of disability.
12. Lack of a common database and statistics about people with disabilities.

Most of this research was done in the employment field and mostly makes statements about inequalities between different groups regarding possibilities to be employed, to get education (including vocational education and higher education) and access to resources.

Due to the economic situation in Latvia, no new research was funded in 2008-9.

New research is needed in the fields of education, social security, accessible environments and discrimination. Specific research is needed on equality and social inclusion of disabled people from childhood and people with different kinds of disabilities, disabled women, older people and ethnic minorities.



PART TWO: INCOMES, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

2.1 Research publications (key points)

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

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

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

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

Situation on 1 January 2007:

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

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

The Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers state that State Social Security Benefit is LVL 45 per month, but for people with disabilities from childhood: LVL 50. From 1 January, 2009 social security benefit for persons disabled from childhood and additional payment to family benefit for disabled children was increased from LVL 50 to LVL 75.

Disability pension is calculated using 'ordinary' State Social Security Benefit (LVL 45), but if the disability pension is calculated for a person who is disabled from childhood, then the level of State Social Security Benefit used was LVL 50, from 1 January, 2009 – LVL 75. The average disability pension in October, 2009 was LVL 126.09 (€179) per month.

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

State Social Security Benefit for people with disabilities: LVL 50 (€72) per month. From 1 January, 2009: LVL 75 (€107) per month.

Supplement to the family state benefit for disabled child under 18 years of age: LVL 50 (€72) per month. From 1 January, 2009: LVL 75 (€107) per month.

Disabled child raising allowance: LVL 50 (€72) per month. From 1 January, 2008: LVL 150 (€214) per month.

Disability pension – those eligible are all persons below state pensionable age who are recognised as disabled persons and who have paid social insurance contributions or on whose behalf contributions have been calculated, including employees and self employed persons.



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

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

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

Disabled person's care benefit is provided to persons with severe physical and functional impairment where the need of care is recognised by the State Medical Expertise Commission on Health and Working Capacities. Introduced from January 1, 2008, the amount of benefit is LVL 100 (€142) per month.

State social benefit for transport compensation to the disabled persons with mobility problems is available for people with disabilities where the severity of mobility restrictions is recognised by the State Medical Expertise Commission on Health and Working Capacities. The amount of the benefit for 6 month period is LVL 56.00 (€80).

According to the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers, the Supplement to the family state benefit for disabled child under 18 years of age is paid to parent who has child with disability and where the disability is recognised by the State Medical Expertise Commission on Health and Working Capacities. The Supplement to the family state benefit for disabled child under 18 years of age in 2008 is LVL 50. From 1 January, 2009: LVL 75 (€107) per month.

If the disabled child has severe physical and functional disturbance and this is recognised by the Commission, the parent has the right to receive an additional allowance. In 2008 Disabled child raising allowance is LVL 150.

Number of recipients - Data (October of 2009):

Disability pension – 67,326

State social security benefit – 15,267

Supplement to the family state benefit for disabled child under 18 years of age – 7,455

Disabled child raising allowance – 1,726

Disabled person care benefit – 7,951

State social benefit for transport compensation to the disabled persons with mobility problems – 13,575.

During 2008-9 no important changes in the level of available support to disabled people have been made. The available state benefits remain the same, also the amount, except that social security benefit for persons disabled from childhood and additional payment to family benefit for disabled children was increased from LVL 50 to LVL 75 (from 1 January, 2009). The income level may change according to individual situations: for example, when disabled persons become unemployed. In this situation disabled persons still have rights to receive unemployment benefit. During summer 2009 the Government took a decision to reduce state pensions for 10%, but the Saeima didn't reduce disability pensions.

In this situation, where many unemployed persons have lost their right to receive unemployment benefit, the income situation for disabled persons is better. According to statistical data from State Social Insurance Agency the average amount of disability pension was increased from LVL 84.02 in 2007 to LVL 104.63 in 2008. (presentation of National Council for Disabled People) http://www.lm.gov.lv/upload/cilvekiem_ar_invaliditati/lm_prezentacija-invalidu-padome_18022009.ppt) The average disability pension in October, 2009 was LVL 126.09 (€179) per month.

However it must be mentioned that Ministry of Welfare and Government working on the state budget 2010 is discussing the reduction of state social benefits.



More information can be found at:

<http://www.vsaa.gov.lv>,

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

<http://www.vsaa.lv/vsaa/reportspopup/?selt=75|76|&lang=lv&rld=5&actionrep=process&sel=75&el=76&sely=2009&selmonth=9>

2.3 Policy and practice (summary)

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

During 2008-2009 inflation rate was growing, pensions remain on the previous level. At the same time Disabled child raising allowance was enlarged from the 1 January, 2008 to LVL 150 (€214) per month. The State social security benefit level for disabled persons from childhood was enlarged from the 1 January, 2009 to LVL 75 (€107) per month. From January 2009 new benefit was introduced for disabled persons with care need. All decisions were taken during so called 'rich years'.

The economical situation rapidly changes during 2009. But no important changes in the level of available support to disabled people have been made. The available state benefits remain the same, also the amount. Disability pensions were not minimized (in comparison with old age pensions).

There have been no important changes or modernisations of policies in Latvia. The latest changes were in relation to limiting social security expenses.

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

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

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

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

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

There is absolutely no sustainable income for those disabled persons who receive a state social security benefit and are dependent on relatives. Those who receive the minimum level of the disability pension are in the same situation, as disability pension level is based on the state social security benefit.

The number of disabled persons is not increasing very quickly. State policy mainly is targeted on supporting potential disabled people with medical rehabilitation and vocational rehabilitation services. These aim to return people to ordinary lives and minimise the number of people with disabilities.



There is no evidence that financial system could not cope with the problems of disabled people. It is political willingness to offset a reasonable income level for persons disabled from childhood who have no opportunities to work.



PART THREE: CARE AND SUPPORT

3.1 Recent research publications (key points)

There are no specific reports, research or publications, except those in the in mass media after a tragedy in a specialised social care centre, where lot of people with mental disabilities lost their lives after fire.

After this tragedy the Ministry of Welfare organised a special group including NGOs representing disabled persons and this group has drafted recommendations.

Key recommendations include the development of alternative services (day care, short-term care, home care, assistants) near to the homes of disabled persons, instead of the development of traditional long-term care in institutions.

Latvia needs research on the possibilities for building partnerships between public and private institutions for the development of personalised social services for disabled persons Research about the financial aspects of social care services, barriers to the development of alternative social services and public attitudes to disabled people who need of high levels of support is also needed.

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

Care in institutions is traditional in Latvia. Only during the last 10-12 years have day care services in centres been developed for persons with intellectual disability. Using financial support from European Structural Funds, the Ministry of Welfare has developed new forms of services such as half-way homes for disabled people living in specialised social care centres and specialised workshops.

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

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

Legislation on housing is planned as at present practical help does not exist. Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers provides financial support for adaptations of housing, but disabled persons face problems in receiving credits (loans) from banks because of their low income levels. Riga municipality provides a municipal social benefit for flat or house adaptations (again except people with intellectual disability). Some NGOs have established group homes and flats in Riga for people with intellectual disabilities. In general help with housing is unsatisfactorily.

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

There are two main forms of support for mobility: adaptation of a car and social benefit for compensation of transportation expenses. In addition, some municipalities (for example, Riga) allocate additional benefits.

The current system of care and support limits the choices a disabled person and their families or relatives can make, about where to live.



Main issues have to do with; paid social care services, a lack of personalised services, lack of specialists, careers and the low level of service quality. And as the care services in the institutions are also paid services, many disabled people can not receive needed care services.

With regard to whether or not disabled people can choose to manage their own finance for care and support, this depends on the place where and with whom disabled persons live. In the social care institutions disabled persons receive only 15% of their disability pension or social benefits and they can spend this as they wish. The other part of the pension is used to cover service costs.

Those disabled persons who live with their families or relatives are free to use finances for care and support, except intellectually or mentally disabled people. In those cases family members mainly use the finances.

The quality and support of assistance depends on the financial resources of the individual or their family to a large extent. Service costs are expensive and the levels of social benefits or pensions are low. Income levels in families with disabled persons are lower.

The economic situation in Latvia and shortage of financial resources is influencing available services. In 2006 the state budget for social and vocational rehabilitation services was 2530.7 thousand lats (LVL); in 2007 - 3369,8 thousand LVL and during 2008 the available state budget remained approximately the same – 3547,1 thousand LVL. However during 2009 the budget was reduced to 3084,3 thousand LVL which is affecting the quality of services and number of service recipients (presentation of National Council for Disabled People³).

During 2008-2009 Government and the Ministry of Welfare mainly focused on reducing spending (state budget). Reductions led to the reorganization of several state institutions, including those working with disabled people. For example, the state agency Technical Aids Centre (provider of technical aids to disabled persons) was reorganized and incorporated with the National Rehabilitation Centre “Vaivari” (a medical rehabilitation institution).

³ http://www.lm.gov.lv/upload/cilvekiem_ar_invaliditati/lm_prezentacija-invalidu-padome_18022009.ppt



PART FOUR: SUMMARY INFORMATION

4.1 Conclusions and recommendations (summary)

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

Key objectives in the field of social inclusion were set out in the National Report on Strategy for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006-2008. Proposals included improvements in access to education and labour market services for children and young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, improvement of access to resources and services for families, especially large and single-parent families, and for retired persons under risk of poverty, especially those living alone. The Report did not envisage any improvements for people with disabilities during the period.

At the end of 2009 it is very difficult to evaluate the effect of the economic crisis on the situation of disabled people. On one hand, disabled people have the same pensions and benefits and their income situations are better than that of many unemployed persons. Income may differ from person to person and family to family, mainly due to previous employment and duration of unemployment.

On the other hand, shortage of financial resources is affecting the provision of additional municipal benefits and social services.

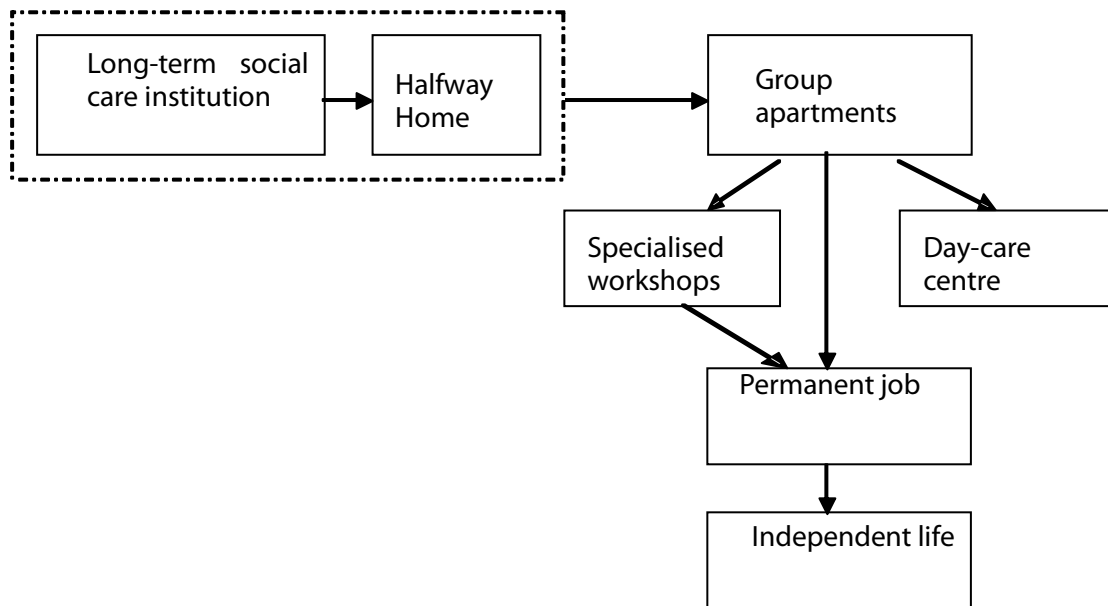
There is a need for targeted research in the disability field. Disabled persons should no longer be treated as a common group. Different needs of people with different kinds of disabilities different groups' - young/old, women/men, low/high skilled, people with multiple disability, etc. must be recognised and taken into account in drafting legislation and policies. As a priority, young intellectually disabled persons and persons disabled from childhood, disabled women, pre-pension age disabled persons and people with multiple disabilities must be recognised.

4.2 One example of best practice (brief details)

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

The programme contained one joint cooperation project between local government and state social care and social rehabilitation institutions from each of the regions involved (5 projects in total). Each of the projects envisaged provision of additional services for the clients of particular long-term social care institutions. Additional services included halfway homes, day-care centres, social rehabilitation, skill (including vocational skills) development, specialised workshops, short-term care, group apartments, etc. This was to provide the clients staying in these institutions who did not need of long-term social care with a chance to return for permanent residence to their local government area and to join the labour market if possible.

The scheme envisaged the following process:



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

Thus, the social service network was to be optimised in the respective area, accessibility and conformity of the service to quality requirements ensured, resources made cost effective, and persons with mental disorders and their family members engaged in the labour market. The total costs of the programme amounted to LVL 5.099.822 (EUR 7.256.392), with LVL 3.791.817 (EUR 5.395.269) of the sum co-financed by ERDF⁴.

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

4.3 References

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

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

Main Policy Statement for Dimishing Disability and its Consequences 2005.-2015.
 Available in Latvian <http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/596>

Action Plan for Implementation of Main Policy Statement for Diminishing Disability and its Consequences 2005.-2015
 Available in Latvian <http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/596>

Information on Implementation of the National Report on Strategy for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006-2008. in 2006.; <http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/549>

Risk Possibilities and Reasons for Unemployment and Social Exclusion of People with Disabilities, Riga, 2006

⁴ <http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/549>



Available in Latvian:

http://sf.lm.gov.lv/CMS/modules/EReditor/jscripts/tiny_mce/plugins/filemanager/files/esf/invalidu_nodarbinatiba.pdf

MISSOC, http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/missoc/2007/tables_part_4_en.pdf

Statistical bulletin, Disabled people 2003-2007, Ministry of Welfare, Riga, 2008

Available in Latvian: <http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/151>