

ANED country report on equality of educational and training opportunities for young disabled people

Country: Latvia

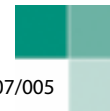
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The information contained in this report was compiled by the Academic Network of European Disability experts (ANED) in May 2010.

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 Equality of educational and training opportunities in European countries with reference to equality for young disabled people.

The purpose of the report ([Terms of Reference](#)) is to review national implementation on equality of educational and training opportunities for young people, and in particular the National Strategic Reports of member states from a disability equality perspective in education and training, and provide the Commission with useful evidence in supporting disability policy mainstreaming.



Section 1: Executive summary and conclusions

Latvia uses a so called mainstream approach, which means that disability questions are included in Laws and Policy planning documents. Even more so in the education field, where the terms disability and disabled children are not used: terms used are - children with special educational needs or children with special needs. This includes a large spectrum of children with different problems, not only with functional impairments of different severities (not all are always recognised as disabled children) but also children with learning difficulties.

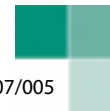
This impacts on the available statistical data, which differs according to the institution collecting data, e.g. data from the Ministry of Education and Science (henceforth – MEaS) versus data from the State Social Insurance Agency. There is lack of correct data about the number of people with disabilities in each kind of education (in pre-school, schools, vocational schools and higher education institutions).

The implementation of rights to inclusive education as well as to individual support in education is subject to different circumstances – political, financial or attitudinal beliefs from society, pedagogues and parents. The MEaS has always supported the idea that two trends in special education – special schools (groups, classes) and inclusion in mainstream schools – should exist in Latvia. NGOs are more supportive of the idea of inclusion – that disabled people must be educated in mainstream schools. In practice the education of disabled persons still remains segregated – in 62 special schools.¹

According to the Law on General Education², special education is a part of general education. Special education in Latvia refers only to children with functional or developmental disabilities. Special education is general education adapted for persons with special needs, health and developmental impairments. Special education provides additional support for pupils by adapting the curriculum and school environment, by using special technical devices and materials to ensure educational opportunities appropriate for pupils' health conditions, abilities and their level of development. The special and mainstream schools mainly follow the same curriculum. For example, in mainstream schools the same curriculum is used for students with or without special needs, though there are some exceptions to the physical activities for those with mobility impairments. However in special classes and special schools there are different curricula which are based on the same subjects (language, mathematics etc.)

¹ http://visc.gov.lv/saturs/specizgl/skolas/spec_skolas.pdf.

² <http://izm.izm.gov.lv/laws-regulations/2094.html> (see sections 49-58 on special education)



Children with special educational needs (learning disabilities, language disabilities or physical and mental disabilities) may attend either a separate pre-school educational institution (groups) or integrated groups in a regular pre-school institution. Integrated groups may be attended by children with mild mental and physical disabilities, if the help of all necessary specialists is provided and an appropriate programme of education can be implemented in the educational institution.

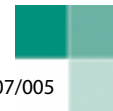
Parents have right to choose what kind of educational institution their child should attend – a special school, a special class in a mainstream school, a special group in a mainstream school or if he/she should be included in a mainstream class, but the child should have a statement from the State Pedagogical Medical Commission or municipal commission about an appropriate special education programme. Although parents have the right to choose the kind of education their child receives, in reality the school is the main decision-maker. There are cases where schools have not admitted disabled children on the basis that the school environment is not accessible and the school does not have the necessary staff. Quite often the commission statement could be different from what the parent wants, in which case the child will go to a mainstream school and very soon after the school administration will again ask the commission about the necessary education programme. There is often pressure on parents, who will then choose to either admit their child to a special school or keep their child at home, waiting for a teacher to come to a child.

Although legal documents provide support for education, there is a lack of available data, research studies, published information, and evidence about the number, outcomes, costs or benefits or comparison about these questions with non-disabled people.

The movement towards integration and inclusion of disabled people started in the middle of the 1990s. The main problems concerning integration of disabled children into ordinary education were stated in the 1998 Concept *Equal Opportunities for All*³, to be a system of special schools; lack of qualified specialists for work with disabled children; lack of flexibility of time for education; environmental inaccessibility of schools and lack of finances (Concept *Equal Opportunities for All*, p.6-8). The document includes an action plan till 2010, but annual reports of the implementation of the Concept indicate that the problems stated in 1998 remain and measures for reducing the problems must be included in new political documents, such as the Implementation Plan for UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities 2010.-2013.⁴

³ http://www.lm.gov.lv/upload/normativie_akti/koncepcija_viv.doc

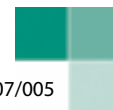
⁴ http://www.lm.gov.lv/upload/sociala_aizsardziba/vienlidzigas_iespejas/lmpl_300409.doc



In 2009, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted an Implementation Plan for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2010.-2013, which includes only one task in the education field - to facilitate integration of children with disabilities in pre-school, ordinary and vocational education institutions⁵, prescribing as a result the coordination of a support system for special education and nominating the MEaS and Ministry of Welfare as the responsible authorities.

In accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2010 Latvia has started to prepare a project of the Basic Statements for Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2013 -2019.

⁵ These institutions include both mainstream and special schools.



Section 2: Legal and policy context

The Constitutional Law *Satversme*⁶ determines the right to education for every resident of Latvia. Every citizen, non-citizen⁷ and permanent resident of the Republic of Latvia, as well as European Union citizens who have been issued a temporary residence permit, and their children, have an equal right to acquire education, regardless of their state of health or disability.

The Law on Protection on Child's Rights⁸ determines equal rights and the possibilities for all children to acquire education according to their personal abilities.

The Law on Education⁹ adopted in 1998 defines the main organizational principles and procedures of educational services and the Law on General Education¹⁰ adopted in 1999 defines the organizational principles and procedures of general education services. The aims and the goals of general education are described in the Standards of General Education,¹¹ which have been adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers. The main principles and procedures of assessment of students including those with special needs are also adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers. For children with special needs, they are set out in the Regulations Nr.490 (20.11.2001.)¹² Regulations on the admission of children with special needs into boarding schools, special schools and special groups in pre-schools, and deduction from special schools and special groups in pre-schools are also set out.

The Law on General Education defines the types of education implemented in Latvia. It states that special education is a part of general education. Chapter 8 of this law defines the implementation of educational programmes of special education. The provision of educational services for children with special needs and the procedures for identification of special needs are defined in the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers. The Law on Education identifies special education as general and professional education adapted for persons with special needs and health problems. The emphasis on special education is on making it possible for the child to develop and live usefully in society. The state should provide opportunities to acquire general education and vocational training for persons with special needs, taking into account their health conditions and their levels of physical and mental development. The goals of the curriculum of special compulsory basic education are the same as for mainstream compulsory basic education. The task of special education is:

⁶ <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=57980>

⁷ Soviet-era residents of Latvia recognised in legislation as legitimate residents but who do not have the same civil and political rights as citizens.

⁸ <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=49096>

⁹ <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=50759>

¹⁰ <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=20243>

¹¹ <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=181216>

¹² <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=55894&from=off>

- to provide possibilities to persons with special needs to acquire knowledge in general study subjects as well as living and working skills by focusing on the practical aspects of education,
- to perform control, treatment, corrective measures and rehabilitation of pupils at education institutions,
- to encourage the development of individual abilities, thus compensating for mental and physical development problems so that persons themselves may continue education and acquire professional working skills according to their abilities, and work and participate in social life.

As mentioned above, in 1998 the Cabinet of Ministers adopted the Concept *Equal Opportunities for All*¹³. The main goal of the Concept was to create equal possibilities for people with disabilities, promoting social rehabilitation, restoration of working capacities¹⁴, education and involvement in the labour market. The Concept dealt with problems in the fields of health, education, employment, accessible environments and social security and it included an action plan for 2010. The problems stated in the Concept have remained the same and as evidence of this, new policy documents have been developed: Main Policy Statement for Diminishing Disability and its Consequences 2005.-2015¹⁵ and the Action Plan for the Implementation of Main Policy Statement for Diminishing Disability and its Consequences 2005-2015¹⁶. (The difference being that these documents deal only with problems that are the responsibility of the Ministry of Welfare (employment, social security, disability expertise, social services).

The Main Policy Statement for Diminishing Disability and its Consequences 2005-2015 proposed the drafting of new legislation: a Law on Disability and a Law on the Employment of Disabled People. The Law on Disability was submitted to the Saeima in 2007 and at the time of writing is on the 3rd reading. Its intention is the establishment of a new disability expertise system. Up to now in Latvia, disability support has been allocated into three disability groups. The new system will retain the same three groups and provides for more support to people with a disability prognosis.

In 2009 the Cabinet of Ministers adopted the Implementation Plan for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities 2010 -2013¹⁷, which includes only one task in the education field, to facilitate the integration of children with disabilities in pre-school, ordinary and vocational education institutions, prescribing the provision of coordinated support for special education and nominating the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Welfare as responsible authorities. The Ministry of Welfare is responsible for the vocational training of disabled people – young people and adults.

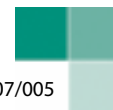
¹³ http://www.lm.gov.lv/upload/normativie_akti/koncepcija_viv.doc

¹⁴ Support in vocational training and possibilities to acquire a new profession; supported employment measures

¹⁵ <http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/596>

¹⁶ <http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/596>

¹⁷ <http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/596>

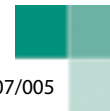


The MEaS (MoES) is a responsible ministry. The MEaS¹⁸:

- implements the state's unitary policy and strategy on education;
- develops drafts of regulatory enactments on education;
- establishes registers of educational establishments, educational programmes and pedagogues;
- manages the licensing of educational programmes;
- manages the accreditation of educational programmes and institutions;
- organizes further education for pedagogues;
- develops the state's standards in education;
- develops proposals and submits requests for the allocation of the state's budget to education, science, sport and youth activities;
- controls the legitimate use of funds from the state's budget in supervised institutions;
- co-ordinates the cooperation between state educational institutions, other countries and international organizations;
- develops directives for educational programmes according to educational standards (except for higher education);
- develops regulations for educational and educational support institutions;
- manages the state's order for developing and publishing textbooks;
- determines and co-ordinates training for teachers;
- organizes assessment of professional qualifications for pedagogues and school heads;
- determines when the state's examinations will take place and what the content will be;
- develops and implements actions for the improvement of the teaching process;
- approves the regulations of colleges and of state educational and educational support institutions;
- employs directors of institutions, who are supervised by the Ministry (except higher educational institutions);
- recommends the dismissal of school heads in schools belonging to municipalities.

Other Ministries, for example the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture, are competent to suggest the establishment, reorganization or closure of educational organizations. Ministries develop the content and standards for professional subjects and control the implementation of the standards in the supervised institutions. They also control the financial operations in the institutions they are responsible for supervising. However, the role of other ministries has decreased starting in 2004 with the transfer of vocational education institutions from the jurisdiction of the Ministries of Health or Agriculture to the jurisdiction of MEaS. The aim of this transfer is to ensure united management and to promote the quality as well as cost efficiency of vocational and compulsory education.

¹⁸ <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=79100&from=off>



At the same time the vocational rehabilitation (education and training) of persons with disabilities remains the responsibility of the Ministry of Welfare. People with disabilities receive vocational rehabilitation services in the Social Integration Centre¹⁹ (an institution under supervision of the Ministry of Welfare). The main objective of this Centre is to provide and develop rehabilitation possibilities for people with disabilities, giving them opportunities to acquire a suitable qualification for occupation. The Centre provides various services for people with disabilities to facilitate their successful integration into the labour market according to their specific health condition, general skills and abilities.

Vocational education is regulated by the Vocational Education Law²⁰ which regulates the implementation of vocational initial education, vocational secondary education and first level higher vocational education and the award of corresponding vocational qualifications.

Higher education is regulated by the Law on Institutions of Higher Education,²¹ which applies to all existing institutions of higher education and colleges irrespective of the procedures for the founding and financing and the specialisation thereof. The law regulates the legal grounds for the activities of institutions of higher education and colleges, and determines and protects the autonomy of institutions of higher education.

As stated above, in Satversme and other national laws, disabled persons are recognised as having equal rights to education and lifelong learning, but in reality children as well as adult persons have many problems exercising these rights.

The main problems preventing integration of disabled children into secondary education were stated in 1998 in the Concept *Equal Opportunities for All*:

- system of special schools;
- lack of qualified specialists for work with disabled children;
- lack of flexibility of time for education;
- environmental inaccessibility of schools;
- lack of finances

(Concept *Equal Opportunities for All*, p. 6-8²²)

(See also the information in section 2 on the national plans superseding this measure.)

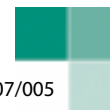
A national mid-term planning document, the National Development Plan 2007-2013, was adopted in 2006. It indicated the main directions for development and the main tasks of the state and society.

¹⁹ <http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/214>

²⁰ http://www.ttc.lv/export/sites/default/docs/LRTA/Likumi/Vocational_Education_Law.doc

²¹ http://www.ttc.lv/export/sites/default/docs/LRTA/Likumi/Vocational_Education_Law.doc

²² http://www.lm.gov.lv/upload/normativie_akti/koncepcija_viv.doc



Education and knowledge for economic growth and technological distinction was defined as the main strategic aim, which pointed to the following priorities: a well-educated and creative workforce, technological advancement and flexibility of enterprises, and research development. The Plan proposes that it is necessary to achieve an important turn in education, science and industry, in order to establish a stable intellectual and material basis for the gradual improvement of the quality of life in Latvia.²³

The 'Basic Standpoints in Lifelong Learning for 2007-2013' was approved in 2007. This policy planning document plays an important role in promoting the development of an equal and knowledge-based society, and its long-term aim is to ensure education through the entire life course in accordance with people's interests and skills, as well as meeting regional needs for socio-economic development.²⁴

Basic Standpoints in Education Development 2007-2013²⁵ were adopted in 2006. Taking into account the guidelines for the development of society and education defined in European and national policy papers, it defines the main course of action for seven years. Particular attention is paid to the quality of pre-primary and basic education, modernization of vocational education, raising competitiveness of higher education, improvement of teaching quality and implementation of lifelong learning.

However, none of the political documents in the field of education include any questions about disabled persons.

At the same time, one of the main national policy aims in special education remains the fostering of integration of children/pupils with special needs in mainstream education. In recent years, a discussion on the necessity of establishing a support system in special education has been initiated.

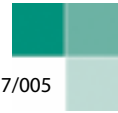
The support system was partially initiated by the National Centre for Special Education (NCSE) – see below - in accordance with the Concept Equal Opportunities for All. The centre was the main initiator, but other institutions, like special schools and ordinary schools and the MoES, were also involved. The support system is mainly based on the development of Special Education Development Centres. The government had accepted the Regulations²⁶ on the criteria and procedures for granting the Special Education Development Centre statuses in 2003. So far four centres have been established, for children with hearing problems, with vision problems, with speech problems and mental (intellectual) problems. Such a support system for organizing and ensuring advisory and methodological work, as well as providing practical assistance, became even more important because of the increasing number of pupils with special educational needs as a proportion of all pupils. This is evidenced in Table 1 (below).

²³ <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=139505&from=off>

²⁴ <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=153578&from=off>

²⁵ <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=144686>

²⁶ <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=74483&from=off>



In 2007 the National Centre for Special Education was established, with an aim of promoting education appropriate to the skills, health conditions and levels of development of learners as well as to coordinate the special education support system. It was also planned that regional special education centres would be established, to increase the number of schools where the services of special education teachers were available. Furthermore, special education research centres in three teacher training universities of Latvia (within a project under the activity of the Operational programme Human Resources and Development, included in the National Strategic Reference Framework of Latvia 2007-2013), were also to have been instigated. However unforeseen economic circumstances in Latvia have caused alterations in projects and initiatives. The Centre was reorganised in 2009 and plans remain as plans.

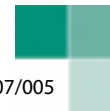
The basic principles of special education are stated in the above mentioned laws (the Education Law and the Law on General Education, etc.). As support to disabled children is organised in the form of special education programmes, carried out in special schools or mainstream schools, the adaptation of mainstream schools to special needs is determined by the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers (21 October, 2003 Regulations on the suitability of basic and secondary education institutions for special education purposes) and is ongoing. Other legal documents set out requirements for teachers' qualifications, educational content, premises, equipment, methodological support etc., as follows²⁷:

- Regulations on the Provision of General Basic Education and General Secondary Education Institutions in Conformity with Special Needs;
- Regulations on the Minimum and Maximum Number of Educatees in a general education class, preschool education institutions' group, special education institution and social and pedagogical correction classes in Educational Institutions Established by State and Local Government,
- Model Programmes for Special Basic Education,
- Model Regulations of Special Education Teacher's Work,
- Model Regulations of Teacher Assistant's Work Model;
- Regulations of Teacher-Speech Therapist's Work in General Education Institutions, etc.

In 2003, the Regulations on the Provision of General Basic Education and General Secondary Education Institutions in Conformity with Special Needs²⁸ were adopted, stating the necessary provisions of general education institutions concerning the integration of pupils with special needs in mainstream schools. The pupil might be integrated either in a general education class or in a special class only for pupils with special needs within a mainstream school.

²⁷ www.likumi.lv

²⁸ <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=80421&from=off>



All provisions were divided into institutional facilities (i.e. additional rehabilitation measures, provision of teachers' assistants, additional pedagogical staff and educational programmes) and utilities of premises (accessible environment etc.). The main measures include reduced class sizes (no more than 20 pupils in the case of a general education class, or 4-20 pupils in the case of a special education class, depending on the disorders and individual diagnosis). Measures also consist of all necessary adaptations (pencils, aerophones²⁹, ramps, elevators etc.) for the respective kind of disorder; additional lessons with specialists for rehabilitation and correction: therapy lessons, psychological and medical examination and analysis, adapted schedules (shorter lessons and an individual learning approach) etc.

Since the 2003 regulations, pupils have had a legal right to an assistant who helps teachers working with learners with physical and/or mental development disabilities, vision or hearing impairment. During lessons, the assistant works individually with at most three pupils. He/she also helps pupils to prepare for lessons, to walk, as well as helping with the integration in a class and school in general. A special school speech therapist may work with children with speech problems during their entire school career.

There are also some specific measures in the educational assessment of pupils with special needs studying in mainstream schools and also for those on leave for a longer time due to illness. The latter are excused from learning a subject according to the formal regulations concerning bed-ridden pupils. Likewise, they are released from passing state tests in these subjects.

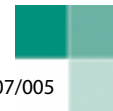
Responsibility is divided between the MEaS (responsible for educational programmes) and local municipalities (responsible for environmental accessibility of pre-schools and schools).

The constitutional law Satverme provides equal rights to all people. Although higher education is regulated by other laws, disabled people's rights to receive necessary support apply also after compulsory schooling age.

To some extent specialised education programmes require education and training providers to support individualised learning for disabled children based on their health conditions and learning possibilities. However, programmes mainly are carried out in special schools and special classes, which mean that individualisation is mainly based on the type of disability – deaf learners with sign limitations, pupils with learning impairments etc.

The constitutional law Satverme provides equal rights to all people. Although higher education is regulated by other laws, disabled people's rights to receive necessary support apply also after compulsory schooling age.

²⁹ This instrument makes sounds louder.



No new proposals or strategies have been developed to support disabled children and young people, except for one general task: the Implementation Plan for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2010-2013.³⁰ However the precise steps to be taken have not been clarified.

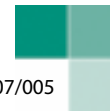
The idea of inclusive education and training has been in existence for more than 10 years; it was included in the 1998 Concept developed by the Ministry of Welfare. NGOs of and for disabled persons (see list of NGOs in the Latvia ANED country profile) are the main groups who are campaigning and lobbying for policy changes using channels such as the National Council for Disabled Persons³¹, organising training courses for pedagogues and politicians, and developing methodological materials (such as the NGO *Apeirons*³² of disabled persons and their allies, which has developed exercise books during the project work).

Under pressure from NGOs, Latvia was the last of the EU member states to ratify the UN Convention. Up to the year 2010, the UN Convention has had some impact in the discussion of reforms to education and training policies in areas where NGOs are more active and progressive. However, the political and economic situation has restricted the implementation of planned activities and projects, as well as the realisation of political planning documents.

³⁰ <http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/596>

³¹ <http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/559>

³² <http://www.apeirons.lv/index.php?p=2>



Section 3: Evidence of outcomes and progress towards inclusion

The MEaS states that³³:

“The movement towards integration and inclusion of students with special needs started in the middle of the 1990s. The Law on Education stated that every child has the right to obtain his/her education in the school of his/her parents’ choice.

The MEaS has always supported the idea that both trends in special education – special schools (groups, classes) and inclusion in mainstream schools – should exist in Latvia.”

NGOs more clearly support the idea of inclusion – that disabled people must be educated in mainstream schools.

Overall, there is a lack of statistical data and research about children with disabilities in educational institutions. The MEaS collects information about the number of children with special education needs (from ages 7 s to 18) (Table 1), but no data is available about disabled people in pre-schools, in higher education, in vocational training, in adult and continuing training compared to the number of young non-disabled students/trainees. No data is available about educational outcomes and qualifications for young disabled people compared with those for non-disabled people. There is also no data on how many young disabled people, from which groups of people, are participating in different types of learning or how many young disabled people are ‘Not in Education, Employment or Training’, compared to the number of non-disabled young people. However, there is some information available about children with special needs, which includes disability amongst other characteristics. The number of students with special needs in a mainstream environment is available.³⁴

Table 1: Number of all pupils in Latvia and those with special needs

School year	2009/2010	2008/2009	2007/2008	2006/2007	2005/2006
Total Number of school children in Latvia	226,034	236,223	250,941	266,111	283,947
Number of children with special education needs in special schools and classes (in mainstream schools)	8,906	8,760	9,063	9,376	6,991

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 2010³⁵

³³ <http://www.european-agency.org/country-information/latvia/national-overview/development-of-inclusion>

³⁴ Here are some tables with the numbers of mainstreamed students with special needs 2009-10. <http://translate.google.com/translate?sourceid=navclient&hl=en&u=http%3a%2f%2fizm%2eizm%2e.gov%2elv%2fregistri%2dstatistika%2fstatistika%2dvispareja%2f4948%2ehtml>

³⁵ <http://izm.izm.gov.lv/registri-statistika/statistika-vispareja/4948.html>

Data about children with special educational needs in special schools and classes cannot be directly compared with the statistical data from the State Social Insurance Agency³⁶ about the number of disabled children (from birth to 18 years old) (Table 2), because not all children with special educational needs are disabled children.

Table 2: Number of disabled children

Year (data on January)	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Number of disabled children	7,354	7,505	7,503	8,032	8,532	9,665

Source: State Social Insurance Agency³⁷

Major investments are still being made in segregated learning institutions rather than inclusive ones. Due to the declining birth rate during the last decade the number of students in schools has declined (see Table 1). This has led to a situation where every school needs all children of the local community to attend it, to prevent the closure of some classes, or even the whole school.

Given this situation, more and more mainstream schools and pre-school institutions are adapting and developing new curricula to offer education to children and young persons with different kinds of special needs. To ensure that schools and pre-school institutions have teachers who understand how to work with children with disabilities, universities and colleges offer in-service training for teachers to acquire special teaching qualifications. Because of this development, the number of students in special schools and boarding schools is changing. Although the number of students in special schools was decreasing, in recent years the number of students in special schools and classes has increased (Table 1). At the same time the overall number of disabled children has decreased (Table 2).

Table 3 below provides data on the number of young people attending segregated and integrated schooling in 2007/8.

³⁶ <http://www.vsaa.lv>

³⁷ <http://www.vsaa.lv/vsaa/reportspopup/?sely=2005%7C2006%7C2007%7C2008%7C2009%7C2010%7C&actionrep=process&lang=lv&rld=2&sels=104&sely=2005&sely=2006&sely=2007&sely=2008&sely=2009&sely=2010>

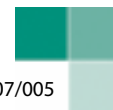


Table 3: School Attendance of Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN), 2007/8

	Primary School	Secondary School	Total	Academic Year of reference	Notes
Number of compulsory school aged pupils (<i>including SEN</i>)	117,084	80,965	198,049	2007/2008	Does not include students over compulsory school leaving age
Number of SEN compulsory school aged pupils (<i>in all education settings</i>)	5,244	3,291	8,535	2007/2008	Does not include students over compulsory school leaving age
Pupils with SEN in segregated special schools	3,948	2,909	6,857	2007/2008	
Pupils with SEN in segregated special classes in mainstream schools	818	208	1,026	2007/2008	
Pupils with SEN in fully inclusive settings	478	174	652	2007/2008	Only pupils with SEN in inclusive settings where a special education programme is licensed. There are many more children with SEN in inclusive settings who receive support measures, but they are not reflected in the MEaS official data.

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 2008/9³⁸

³⁸ www.izm.gov.lv

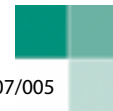


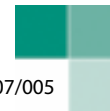
Table 4: SEN Pupils in Inclusive Education

Study Year	Acquiring General Education Programmes	Acquiring Special Education Programmes	Acquiring Social Correction Programmes
2008/2009	769	821	68
2009/2010	113	462	64

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 2008/9³⁹

However, it should be noted that the process of inclusion is not straightforward. Not all mainstream schools can provide the best support and learning environments that children need. The attitude of society in general and of parents, children, and school staff does not always permit integration or inclusion of students with disabilities on the terms that fit their needs.

³⁹ www.izm.gov.lv



Section 4: Types of support for young disabled people in education and training (summary points)

The following information is based on Latvian country reports available from the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education⁴⁰ and Information on Education Systems and Policies in Europe - National summary sheets on education systems in Europe and ongoing reforms.⁴¹

The following excerpt is from The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education website.⁴²

Teachers are trained at the higher education level. To become a teacher a person should enter university or college and complete a full course of professional studies (4 -5 years). Teacher training comprises several components: general education studies, studies related to specific subjects and professional studies. The qualification of special teacher can be acquired in several ways:

- by completing a 4 or 4.5 year professional study programme concerning a specific disability;
- via a 2,5 year study programme (80-93 credits) for teachers who already have a teacher qualification;
- through masters study programmes;
- through in-service training courses for teachers with qualifications in some other subjects (72 study hours).

Disability issues are included in the general curriculum of university training for school teachers (2 credits).

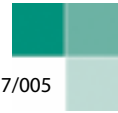
According to the requirements of legislation, all students with disabilities except those with mental disabilities follow the general education curriculum, which is based on the adopted standards of general primary education. That means that they have to take state tests and examinations and to be assessed as students with no disabilities. The process of testing and assessment can be adapted to the needs and abilities of a 'regular' student. Students with mental disabilities do not take state tests and their academic success is measured according to the dynamics of their development and their abilities.

The efficiency of every school and pre-school institution, as well as the quality of the education process is evaluated by a special state commission at least once every 6 years. The internal and external evaluation is done based on criteria developed to evaluate different aspects of the education process in the institution.

⁴⁰ <http://www.european-agency.org/country-information/>

⁴¹ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/eurybase_en.php

⁴² <http://www.european-agency.org/country-information/latvia/national-overview/identification-of-special-educational-needs>



During the first year of schooling, students follow the mainstream curriculum. If they show considerable difficulties in accessing this curriculum and their academic achievements that do not correspond to the requirements of national basic education standards the support team of the school can suggest support measures and the development of an Individual Educational Plan. If the mentioned measures do not work and the child's achievements have not improved, it can be suggested that the child repeats the year or attends the pedagogical medical commission. Before attending the commission, the child should be assessed by a psychologist, a speech therapist, and a teacher and if necessary should have a general health check-up. The commission prepares recommendations regarding what kind of curriculum the child should follow, but it is up to the parents to make the final decision about their child's education

The MEaS in 2003 adopted the Model Regulations of Teacher Assistant's Work, in 2004 the Model Regulations of Teacher–Speech Therapist's work in General Education Institutions and the Model Regulations of Special Education Teacher's work. These model regulations define the main tasks, rights and obligations of teachers and assistants working with children with special needs.

Special education programme models contain the aims and tasks of special education, curriculum implementation plans, principles of pupil evaluation etc. A regulatory enactment on necessary equipment and facilities was also adopted. The Cabinet regulations envisage 10% additional payment for appropriately qualified teachers who work with special needs students integrated into mainstream schools.

Teachers who do not work with special needs children do not receive the additional payment.⁴³ It is interesting that the same regulations state that teachers in special schools will receive a 20% additional payment compared to teachers not teaching special school children.

The competence of the State Pedagogical Medical Commission and municipal commissions is defined in regulations⁴⁴ issued by the Cabinet of Ministers. The commissions include specialist professionals – special teachers, psychologists, doctors and social workers. They diagnose children's need for special education provision, define special conditions necessary for teaching and learning as well as provide information on schools implementing appropriate education programmes.

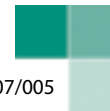
⁴³ http://izm.izm.gov.lv/upload_file/Normativie_akti/MK-not-836.pdf

⁴⁴ <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=200238&from=off>

Various aspects of child's performance are assessed and they may identify the following special educational needs:⁴⁵

- Learning disabilities (difficulties). Children with **learning** disabilities attend special or general education institutions. Relevant treatment cures the inadequacy of children's intellectual capacities to their age and if it helps, children may continue learning in ordinary schools.
- Hearing impairments. Children with **hearing** impairments attend special boarding schools or general education institutions. The task of special educators is to make children learn the content of a given subject and to overcome deviations that appear in the thinking process of such pupils.
- Visual impairments. Children with **vision** impairments attend special boarding schools, development centres for children with poor eyesight or blind children, or general education institutions. Special educators, who develop school tasks and methods preserving eyesight and compensating for eyesight problems, perform educational, psychological and medical control of such children.
- Physical disabilities. Children with **physical** disabilities, such as cerebral palsy, or distinct scoliosis, attend sanatorium boarding schools, special schools, rehabilitation centres or general education institutions. In addition to movement problems, cerebral palsy includes deviations in mental and speech development. The task of educators is to correct such deviations.
- Language impairments. Children with **language** impairments attend speech therapy schools or general education institutions. Children with serious speech problems attend speech therapy schools. The task of a speech therapist is to prepare children for studies in general education institutions.
- Intellectual disabilities (disabilities of mental development). Children with **intellectual** disabilities, such as mental retardation, oliphofrenia as well as those with reading or counting problems, attend special or general education institutions. When educating such children, educators take into account three levels of mental retardation: minor, medium or severe, or several severe developmental impairments.
The education of persons with special needs due to mental retardation takes place on three levels - level A and B for children with special needs due to minor mental development disabilities; level C for children with special needs due to medium or severe mental development disabilities, or several serious development problems. In 2007, 10 subject model programmes in basic education for pupils with mild mental development disabilities were completed: Latvian, Literature, Mathematics, Life Skills, Geography, Latvian and World History, Crafts and Technologies, Natural Sciences.
- Mental health disorders. Children with **mental health disorders** attend sanatoria at boarding schools or general education institutions and learning is based on the curriculum for general education institutions. These children are treated individually to avoid mental overwork and are provided with the necessary conditions for recovery, a regime of work and rest.

⁴⁵ <http://www.european-agency.org/country-information/latvia/national-overview/identification-of-special-educational-needs>



Medical and psychological assistance is provided if required for severe and multiple disabilities; (Note that the category severe and multiple disabilities is only used as an aspect in assessment of educational needs, but they will be in classes with people with other kinds of disabilities.) chronic illnesses. Children with **chronic health disorders** attend sanatorium boarding schools or general education institutions. Children who have tuberculosis, asthma, other respiratory diseases, or digestion problems may attend sanatorium boarding schools and receive the necessary medical assistance.⁴⁶

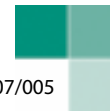
Parents may choose what kind of educational institution their child should attend (see also the discussion above) – a special school, a special class in a mainstream school, a special group in a mainstream school or inclusion in a mainstream class. The main difference between attending a special class or group in a mainstream school is that a class consists of a set number of children, probably a specific educational programme (for example - children with hearing problems), but the group can consist of pupils of different ages and different kinds of disabilities.

Students who have obtained a statement from the commission about appropriate special education programme can attend a mainstream school if the school has licensed the special education programme and is appropriately accommodated. Some more information is available about these schools from time to time in the mass media. The Vaivari Elementary school was one publicised, but at the end of last year there were controversial issues and discussions in the Jurmala municipality on the further existence of the school took place. No information is formally collected about these schools in the Ministry or on the sites. A pupil will be admitted to an ordinary, general class, or to a separate class for certain categories of pupils recognized as having special educational needs. They correspond to eight target groups (see above, excluding the 'severe and multiple disabilities' category).

Integrated schools provide individual education programmes for children with special needs and organize education in compliance with the requirements of the respective special education programme and the regulations of the institution. The content of such education must be practical, and vocational skills must be developed to allow pupils to compete in labour market after the completion of school. Schools must carry out comprehensive work aimed at checking the progress and rehabilitation of pupils and collect data on children's development and health conditions. Integrated schools must adapt school facilities to suit the needs of children having serious physical disability and prepare educators, medical staff, children's parents and other pupils for the integration of children with special needs in school life. Schools must cooperate not only with educators, tutors and children's parents in order to develop individual education programmes and create favourable environments, but also with special education development centres⁴⁷. Latvia has 5 special education development centres.

⁴⁶ <http://www.european-agency.org/country-information/latvia>, <http://www.european-agency.org/country-information/latvia>

⁴⁷ <http://izm.izm.gov.lv/registri-statistika.html>



Those pupils who for various reasons may not be integrated into mainstream schools, attend special schools (school for hearing-impaired and deaf; school for weak eyed and sightless, etc.) or special classes. Pupils with severe mental or development disabilities attend rehabilitation centres to be prepared for life in society and to take care of themselves. Children who cannot attend school because of illness for more than a month receive home education.

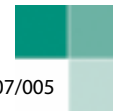
Schools follow the sample curriculum plan issued by the MEaS, developed in cooperation with specialists and practitioners in various fields. Each category of special education has model plans of curricula. Curricula include the same compulsory subjects (including computer training) as in mainstream schools and specific rehabilitation and correction lessons for each category of special needs education. Taking into account the interests of parents and children, as well as the capacity of the school, schools may offer optional subjects that are not included in curricula.

The following information is reproduced from the Eurybase website⁴⁸

Pedagogues of special schools should use methods creating positive emotions and positive environment, and motivate children for learning. Children's ages, condition of physical and mental health, ability to make contacts, interests and behaviour are taken into account when choosing methods. Special attention is paid to implementation of principles of "developing teaching" to achieve comprehensive development of children, acquisition of knowledge by emphasizing their practical application possibilities as well as development of different skills. The teacher and pupil cooperation elements are included and may be implemented in every teaching method: organization and implementation, stimulation and motivation, control and processing of learning activities. Pedagogues use verbal, visual and practical methods in the work with children with special needs. There is a list of recommended books issued by the MEaS each year where materials for special education are also included. The MEaS also publishes teaching materials in Brail as well as in large font size etc. These materials are distributed free of charge. However, there is a lack of special teaching materials for pupils with heavy mental retardation and several other diagnoses.

After finishing education programmes, pupils receive a certificate on basic education or a certificate on secondary education and an achievement sheet. Students with special educational needs who follow special education programmes and acquire the National Standard of Basic Education are assessed as for pupils who follow general education programmes. Pupils following special education programmes are entitled to receive accommodations for exams. Pupils with certain diseases and mental development disabilities may not have to take national examinations in order to obtain a general basic education certificate. The list of diseases is centrally determined.

⁴⁸ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/eurybase_en.php



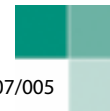
A grade nine student in a special general education institution, following a special education programme for pupils with mental development disabilities, may be exempted from taking state examinations by the school head on the recommendation of the School's Pedagogical Council.

Some projects have been developed that have aimed to assist specific groups to enter the labour market. De Jong and Vanabs (2009)⁴⁹ report that in 2008, 1,136 people participated in these vocational projects and just 282 in the first half of 2009 (although 1,525 places were planned for 2009 as a whole). However, this number included a range of disadvantaged people and figures for disabled participants are not provided.

Information about vocational rehabilitation services, including vocational training, is provided by the state agency Social Integration Centre.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ <http://www.eu-employment-observatory.net/en/documents/EEO-Thematic-Reports.aspx>

⁵⁰ <http://www.siva.gov.lv/titullapa.html>



Section 4a: Financial support

Financial support for learning

There are no specific grants, allowances or bursaries available to disabled students and trainees for the purposes of their education and training. Disabled people or parents of disabled children receive a disability pension or state social benefits and social services (described in previous ANED reports, i.e. Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion).

Funding for disability pensions and/or social benefits and social services comes from social security (disability pensions) or the state budget. Data about the number of disability pensions and benefit recipients are available on the webpage of the State Social Insurance Agency.⁵¹

A disability pension is also available to a disabled student in cases where the person is studying in another country, but other benefits are not because social assistance benefits are not exportable. The availability of disability pensions and social benefits has been described in a previous ANED report: basically a person must meet the requirements stated by social security laws.⁵²

The arrangements for financing of educational services are stated in the Law on Education⁵³ (Chapter 7) and this depends on the ownership of these institutions. There are three types of educational institutions. State owned institutions are funded from the state budget according to the Law of State Budget for a definite year. Municipal educational institutions are funded from two main sources – the local budget (maintenance) and the state budget (teacher salaries and social taxes). Private educational institutions are funded by their founders. The state and municipalities share the costs (for teachers' salaries and social taxes) of private institutions if the curriculum they provide is licensed by the MEaS. All costs of special schools, classes and groups are covered by earmarked subsidies from the state budget according to regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers.⁵⁴ It is planned that at the beginning of the school year 2009/2010, a new financing system in education will begin – funding will follow a pupil using a so called “back pack” principle of financing.

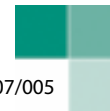
Vocational schools, secondary vocational schools, and post secondary non-tertiary vocational schools are financed through the responsible ministries (mainly the MEaS).

⁵¹ www.vsa.gov.lv

⁵² This is discussed mainly in the ANED Latvia Report on Social Inclusion, Part 2 (p. 8). There is also a summary on the benefits available to download. <http://www.disability-europe.net/en/countries/Latvia>

⁵³ <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=50759>

⁵⁴ <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=164152&from=off>



The following information on funding is from the Eurybase website:⁵⁵

State higher education establishments are funded from the basic state budget and income from other sources. Higher education establishments shall use this income according to the regulations on non-profit organizations. Higher education establishments founded by the state receive the following funding:

- from the state education budget - basic financing for the optimum number of lists of study programmes and the number of students covering resources to pay for public utilities, taxes, infrastructure maintenance, purchase of equipment and inventory, research and artistic creativity as well as salaries for the staff;
- from tuition fees, paid by the state or received as repayable or free loans which either have to be paid back or need not to be paid back according to the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers on financing studies;
- from financing intended for use on specific goals.

Practical assistance with learning

Practically, individual practical assistance to young students with disabilities is not available. According to laws, students have rights to practical assistance (sign language interpretation, technical aids, etc.), but exercising these rights is restricted by several circumstances, including finances available to educational institutions, the attitudes of society, pedagogical staff, etc. There is no information available about the number of disabled students in higher educational institutions and forms of practical assistance which they receive or should receive. Although the Disability Law has been passed, it will only be enforced from January 1st, 2011.⁵⁶ Thus the availability of personal assistants is currently under discussion. For the most part practical assistance is recognised as a kind of social service to disabled people, financed by the state budget.

The availability of social services is regulated by the Law on Social Assistance and Social Services⁵⁷ and several regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers. The basis for receiving social services is a disability certificate. Specialists or municipal social workers together with the disabled person decide on the necessary support, which is limited due to financial possibilities. Quite often disabled students need to use support from relatives, friends, and NGO volunteers and their own private financing.

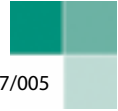
Disabled students do not have any personal budgets for practical assistance. Their financial income is mainly from a state social security benefit or a disability pension.

There is lack of information or published evidence about the equity or effectiveness of practical assistance with learning.

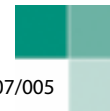
⁵⁵ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/eurybase_en.php

⁵⁶ <http://www.lm.gov.lv/news/id/1853>

⁵⁷ <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=68488>



As personal assistance is defined as a social service (a social benefit in kind), it may be received in Latvia, but not when disabled people are in another country. This type of social service to students with disabilities from other countries is available when the person meets the requirements stated by social security laws.



Section 4b: Personal assistance, equipment and adaptations

Equipment and accessibility for learning

Necessary equipment or environmental adaptations must be provided by local municipalities in those schools that carry out special education programmes, but lack of finance influences the possibilities of municipalities. Individual technical aids could be received through an ordinary assessment prescribed by the Cabinet of Ministers⁵⁸. Technical aids could be received free of charge (as a social service financed from the state budget). The Cabinet of Ministers adopts so called 'positive' list – a list of technical aids that are financed from the state budget.

The Technical Aids Centre is a structural unit of the National Rehabilitation Centre *Vaivari*, which provides technical aids to all disabled people, including students and trainees. Disabled people can receive individual technical aids, which are included in the 'positive' list, based on their needs. Needs assessment is done by a general practitioner or medical specialist – occupational therapist. Those technical aids that are not included in the 'positive' list could be purchased by persons with their own finances. There are no financial budgets for equipment.

Specialists and disabled persons or parents of disabled children usually make decisions about the necessary individual equipment or adaptations. Needs assessment is carried out by a general practitioner or medical specialist – occupational therapist, or another person. The state budgets, as well as municipal budgets have limited resources and this influences environmental adaptations of schools and availability of individual technical aids.

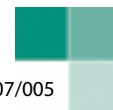
There is no correct data available on the number of disabled people, or students, or children receiving individual technical aids. The same applies to the number of adapted schools.

There is no published evidence about the equity or effectiveness of equipment or adaptations provided for the purposes of education and training.

Individually used technical aids are available to a disabled student when he/she is studying in another country.

As technical aids are recognised as a type of social service, disabled students from other countries who are studying in Latvia, where they need them, must meet requirements stated by laws in social security.

⁵⁸ <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=202674&from=off>



Section 5: Evidence of good practice

There has been a strong need for the development of a nation-wide support system for persons with special needs. The National Centre for Special Education was established in 2007⁵⁹. Its main objectives were to:

- suggest amendments in legislation concerning education of persons with special needs,
- improve the assessment of children with special needs,
- co-ordinate the development of the support system for children with special needs,
- provide methodological guidance for special education;
- consult all stakeholders about the issues of special education,
- gather evidence of good practice and to disseminate it, to develop co-operation between different national and international agencies .

The National Centre for Special Education has initiated many activities that have influenced the development of a nationwide support system for inclusive education, including the cooperation of Development Centres and integrated schools. Together with general education institutions, educators and medical staff of Development Centres check and diagnose children, determine children's educational and development problems and identify possible special assistance. They also apply and develop new methodical and teaching aids, plan classes and events, develop individual curricula, consolidate information about children's development and health conditions and organize seminars and courses for general education institution educators and children's parents.

Due to the economic situation, the National Centre for Special Education was reorganised in 2009 and now is included as a part of the State Education Content Centre,⁶⁰ dealing also with special education questions.⁶¹

⁵⁹ <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=153850&from=off>

⁶⁰ <http://visc.gov.lv/>

⁶¹ <http://visc.gov.lv/saturs/specizgl/info.shtml>

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4. Constitutional Law *Satversme*; <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=57980>
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