

The Development and State of the Art
of Adult Learning and Education
(ALE)

**NATIONAL REPORT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA**

BY

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Abbreviations Used

AEC – Adult Education Centre
ALE – Adult learning and education
ESF – European Social Fund
LAEA – Latvian Adult Education Association
LALRG – Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments
LLL – Lifelong Learning
MCFA - Ministry for Children and Family Affairs
MES – Ministry of Education and Science
MoC – Ministry of Culture
MoD – Ministry of Defense
MoE – Ministry of Economics
MoF – Ministry of Finance
MoH – Ministry of Health
MoI – Ministry of Interior
MoJ – Ministry of Justice
MoW – Ministry of Welfare
MRDLG – Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government
NALLT – National Agency of Latvian Language Training
NB – National budget
NLDVA – National Leonardo da Vinci Agency
RL – Republic of Latvia
SIF – Social Integration Fund
SEA – State Employment Agency
SSAMEGA – Secretariat of Special Assignments Minister for Electronic Government
Affairs
SSAMSI – Secretariat of the Special Assignments Minister for the Social Integration

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Introduction

Background

LATVIA – Republic of Latvia

Country Code: LV

Latvia is the central country of the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). On the world map Latvia is to be found in North-eastern Europe, on the east coast of the Baltic Sea.

The Republic of Latvia was founded in 1918, was occupied by Soviet Union (1940-1941, 1945-1991) and Nazi Germany (1941-1945). On August 21, 1991 Latvia declared the restoration of its *de facto* independence. Since 2004 Latvia is a member state of the European Union.

Population

Population in 2007: 2,270,700

Ethnic composition: 59.03% Latvian, 28.29% Russian, 3.74% Byelorussian, 2.53% Ukrainian, 2.4% Polish, 1.36% Lithuanian, 0.45% Jewish, 0.01% Livs, 2.19% other nationalities.

Latvians and Livs are the indigenous people of Latvia.

Official Language: Latvian.

Education:

The state guarantees free primary and secondary education. More than 90% of children attend state schools which provide free education. 9 years of primary education are obligatory. The most of the students attend state universities. Apart from state-financed educational institutions, there are also private schools and private universities in Latvia. Latvia also has state-financed ethnic minority schools or classes where courses are presented in Byelorussian, Estonian, Hebrew, Lithuanian, Polish, Roma, Russian and Ukrainian.

According to the Census of 2000 the data concerning the level of education for persons over 15 years of age are as follows: 13,9% have higher education, 20,2% - secondary specialized education, 31% - secondary education, 5,9% - basic education, 1,5% below basic education (less than 4 years), 0,6% have not received official education, but 0,25% are recorded as illiterate¹.

¹ From: M. Pranka, I. Trapenciere, A. Trupovniece. Sociālās atstumtības iespējamība un tās iemesli bezdarba riska apdraudētajām grupām (Possibility and causes of social exclusion for the groups of high unemployment risks: Ministry of Welfare, Riga, 2003, p. 14)

In Latvian adult education system, **the adult** is defined as a person who has reached the age of 15 years².

I. ALE Policy. Legislation and Financing

Adult learning and education (ALE) in Latvia is part and parcel of lifelong learning process. As such, it is part of the educational system that is covered by Education Law.

1.1. Legislative and policy framework of ALE in Latvia

Attention paid to ALE implies recognition of the exclusive role of education in the life of the individual and society: “Education is the most important pre-condition for the existence and development of society. It plays an important role in the development of both individuals and society and belongs to human rights as well as serves as important means for achieving such aims as equality, gender equality and the growth of economy and civic society.”³

Changes in modern society and economy promote new requirements for the education system in general and ALE in particular. It has to be of high quality, rational in its expenses and accessible to every inhabitant of Latvia. Government support to education and research may be of crucial importance for the future development of the country. Latvian long-term economic strategy envisages an increased emphasis on social policy and investments in education, adult education and learning included.

The Lifelong learning policy is based on the idea that support is needed for the promotion of individuals’ personal growth, as well as self-development in every stage, and sphere during the whole life, thus creating preconditions for the development of inhabitants’ initiative, adaptation abilities and achieving the goals of social integration, employment, and active civil participation.

The basic principles of ALE have been formulated in line with relevant European documents concerning the primary role of ALE for general progress and welfare:

- “**Memorandum on Lifelong Learning**” worked out by the European Council and signed in Brussels on 30 October, 2000;
- Communication of the Commission of European Communities “**Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality**” (adopted in Brussels, on 21 November, 2001)
- **Lisbon Strategy** that defines the directions of the economical development of the European Union until 2010, and sets forward, as one of the main targets, social

² See: Basic Guidelines of Lifelong Learning Policy for 2007–2013. Ministry of Education and Science LR, 2007, p. 5: “Adult – in these basic principles, a person at the age of 15, that after a break continues general or professional education (formal, informal)”.

³ Basic Guidelines of Lifelong Learning Policy for 2007–2013. Ministry of Education and Science LR, 2007, p.7

cohesion – employment and social integration, and development toward knowledge-based competitive society in Europe.

- Communication of the Commission of the European Communities “**Adult learning: It is never too late to learn**” (adopted in Brussels, on 23 October, 2006)

- Communication of the Commission of the European Communities “**Adult learning: It is always a good time to learn**” (adopted in Brussels, on 27 September, 2007)

The basic guidelines of Latvian lifelong learning are developed on the basis of strategic, political and other kinds of planning documents, such as:

- **Latvian long-term economical strategy** (approved in meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers on 17 July, 2001, protocol No. 34);

- **National development plan** for 2007-2013 (2006);

- “**The Growth Model of Latvia: People First**” - a long-term conceptual document (adopted in the meeting of *Saeima* (Parliament) on 26 October, 2006);

- “State cultural politics guidelines for 2006-2015. National state.” (Adopted by the Decree of RL Cabinet of Ministers No 264 of 18 April, 2006);

Latvian National Lisbon Programme for the years 2005–2008, basic guideline project “**Basic guidelines of educational development** for 2007–2013” (confirmed by the Decree of RL Cabinet of Ministers No 742 of 17 September, 2006)

Apart of the above-mentioned legal basis for ALE, the policy environment regarding ALE related issues is harmonized with such legislative documents as:

Education Law (1998);

General Education Law (1999);

Professional Education Law (1999);

Law of Higher Education Institutions (1995).

The education policy in Latvia is also stipulated by different regulation acts.

Adult learning in Latvia has long and stable traditions. However, it attained a nation wide momentum in the mid-1990s when different separate educational societies, groups and undertakings across the country were consolidated in an attempt to create a monitoring system in the Latvian Adult Education Association – LAEA (1993 – *Latvijas Pieaugušo izglītības apvienība*) enabling to concentrate both the intellectual, human and financial resources available for adult education. The concept of Lifelong Education was formulated in 2000, giving a strong impetus to ALE. The concept of adult learning and education was included in the general concept of education, as one of the stages of a lifelong process. Thus adult learning is part of an all-age-groups-inclusive approach that covers all the stages in human life from early childhood to late years of adulthood.

The shift in approach was fundamental and affected all the levels of educational system in Latvia adding to them a new, life-long perspective.

The adult education development policy has been designed according to the education development guidelines set by the European and Latvian policy planning documents such as the Lisbon Strategy, Bologna Process, European Commission Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, UNESCO programme “Education for All”,

European Commission work programme “Education and Training 2010”, European initiative “i2010 – European Information Society for Growth and Employment”, EU Basic Strategy regarding gender equality, long-term conceptual document “The growth model of Latvia: People First”, “Long-term Economic Development Strategy”, “Joint Economic Strategy”, Development Guidelines of Sustainable Development of Latvia”, Guidelines for Policy Planning”, Latvian National Action Plan for Employment”, “Guidelines of Sport Policy for years 2004–2009” and “Regional Development Guidelines”.

1.1.2. Priority goals for ALE:

- availability;
- quality;
- cooperation and shared responsibility.

Each of these goals contributes to better access to education for all, irrespective of previous educational level, economical, geographical, social, ethnic, age, gender or other factors.

Each of these goals aims to attain inclusive learning environment. Each of them promotes the awareness that ALE is a continuous and ongoing process. From the point of view of content in ALE, irrespective of the field of particular specialization, six general “Life competences” are important for success: (i) learning, (ii) methodological, (iii) social, (iv) civic, (v) economic, (vi) IT.

1.1.3. ALE system monitoring

According to the established educational system in Latvia, the supervising authority for ALE is Ministry of Education and Science (MES). The system of ALE, nonetheless extends over to other sectors, as envisaged by the Education Law (Article 17), stating that “regional local governments shall organise adult education”. In fact ALE functions at a much broader scale; it covers vocational, in-service training for the business or sector needs. Large state owned companies have Learning centres (e.g., The National Bank, Latvian Mobile Telephone, Lattelecom, the Latvian Railway, the Latvian Postal service, big market centres, etc.). The specific needs and requirements of individuals are taken care of by a network of private and non-governmental educational institutions and undertakings that are run on private funding, and some of them are profit oriented.

Within the framework of professional in-service training provisions, other ministries participate in ALE: Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defence, Secretariat of Special Assignments Minister for Electronic Government Affairs, Secretariat of Special Assignments Minister for Society Integration, Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government.

According to the provisions included in the draft amendments to the Education Law, ALE is seen as a constituent part of overall educational system in Latvia. The adoption of the amendments to the Education law is expected in 2008.

As stated above, the ALE system is decentralized in Latvia and is under the supervision of MES. The advantage of decentralization is that ALE tends to be as close to the learner as possible in order to meet his/her needs and desires in the most accessible way. On the other hand, the local affiliation of ALE activities requires additional accreditation procedures for ALE programmes to be introduced in each region separately⁴.

However, for the purpose of quality requirements, the question of centralized supervisory authority is essential. Therefore the LAEA functions as a coordinating body in the system of ALE.

1.1.4. National plans coordination

The Ministry of Education and Science is the national authority that is responsible for the strategy of ALE, its quality monitoring and coordination of plans in Latvia. Accordingly, it supervises the activities that are carried out in regions under the auspices of regional and local municipalities. In order to consolidate the ALE system with the existing system of education in Latvia, MES initiated amendments to Education Law envisaging ALE as a constituent part of life-long education system in Latvia. As mentioned above, the amendments are to be adopted in 2008. Most recent document in the ALE related action is “Basic Guidelines of Lifelong Learning Policy for 2007–2013” by Ministry of Education and Science LR, 2007.

1.1.5. Challenges

Sharing the general challenges that the Commission of European Communities pointed out in 2006, namely, competitiveness, demographic change and social inclusion, the ALE in Latvia recognizes as its main challenge the task to provide a wide range of options for all adults to raise the level of their competences and to acquire new competences.

Among the main challenges in the present day situation of ALE the main are: introduction of ICT, educational facilities accessibility to all, diversity of offer, surveys of demand. Each of these challenges have been taken into account in the policy making process. Their implementation needs a wide scope of resources and joint actions in many fields. For example, ICT and accessibility of education for all can be met with the help of computerisation of the country, the network of computerized libraries, etc.⁵

⁴ The fragmentation of lifelong learning in Latvia is pointed out as a disadvantage by several researchers. See: M.Pranka, I.Trapenciere, A. Trupovniece. Sociālās atstumtības iespējamība un tās iemesli bezdarba riska apdraudētajām grupām. (Possibility and causes of social exclusion for the groups of high unemployment risks: Ministry of Welfare, Riga, 2003, p.13)

⁵ See: Latvian long-term economical strategy (approved in meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers on 17 July, 2001, protocol Nr.: 34); National development plan for 2007-2013 (2006); “State cultural politics guidelines for 2006-2015. National state.” (confirmed by the Decree of RL Cabinet of Ministers No 264 of 18 April, 2006).

In its Basic Guidelines, MES also expresses awareness of and concern for the challenges of the harmonization and development of the ALE system in Latvia⁶.

An overall challenge for the adult education system is an introduction of a performance assessment system for multiple purposes and different audiences; having the financial resources required for assessment development, implementation, and maintenance.

1.1.6. Other policies that have an impact on ALE

Adult education and learning is closely related to issues of public welfare, employability, mobility and social integration. ALE issues are included, for instance, in the surveys and development projects of Ministry of Welfare, and Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government.

Thus, the ALE policy is related to the policy for integration of society (civic education for naturalisation), the policy of welfare and economical growth of society.

The State language law has its implications for ALE – it requires knowledge of the official language for civil servants and a number of other professions. To meet this requirement a broad and successful project under the auspices of the UNDP was launched in 1996. Since then a National Agency of Latvian Language Training (NALLT) has functioned across the country providing Latvian as a second language courses for adults and methodology training for Latvian language and bilingual content teachers. In the previous decade it has educated approximately 60,000 persons in 120 hours courses of Latvian as a 2nd language. Besides this, the NALLT has given in-service training in language teaching methods and bilingual education to more than 5,000 teachers since 1997.

1.2. Financing of ALE

1.2.1 Sources of finances:

1. National budget
2. Municipalities budgets
3. European action programmes
4. International assistance
5. Private funding
6. Individual cost-sharing.

The underlying principle in financing ALE is sharing. Except for several high priority programmes that have been free of charge because of the social and/or political urgency

⁶ See: Basic Guidelines of Lifelong Learning Policy for 2007–2013. MES LR, 2007, p.15: “Currently in Latvia there are no tools that ensure recognition of the acquired knowledge and skills apart from the formal education.

Moreover, there has not been established a lifelong learning administration structure in national and local level, there is poor cooperation between ministries, non-governmental organisations and social partners, as well as shortage of lifelong learning normative base and funding mechanisms.”

of the issue (e.g., the implementation of the language law at the language courses by NALLT are all free of charge), the cost of the project is seldom financed by one source alone. Usually there are two or more donors (state and Europe, state and company, state and individual) that participate on negotiated terms.

Table A. Adult education funding (percentage by source)

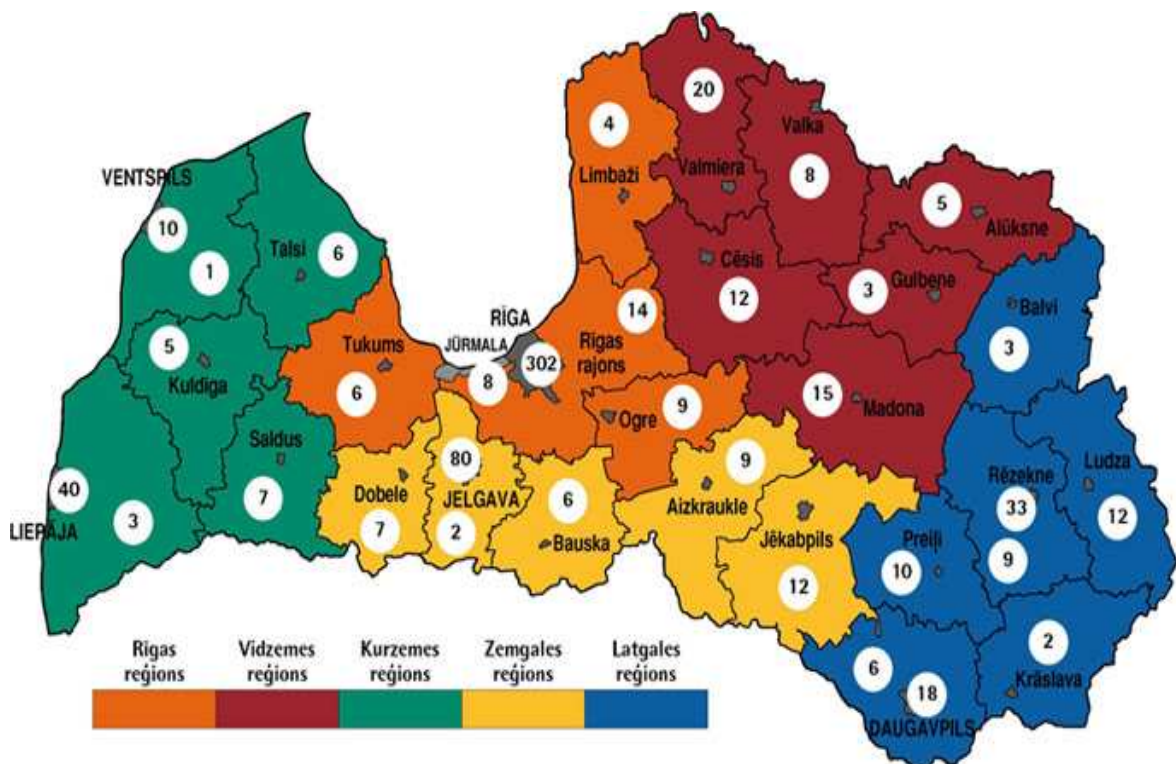
| | 1998 | 2006 |
|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|
| National budget | 43,2 | 30 |
| Learner's contribution | 17,5 | 15 |
| Company's contribution | 35,2 | 32 |
| Local governments contribution | 1,9 | 5 |
| Other sources (incl.foreign funding) | 2,2 | 18 |
| Total | 100,0 | 100,0 |

1.2.2. Foreign bilateral/multilateral donor investment

The assistance of foreign bilateral/multilateral donors to ALE has been significant since the mid 1990s and ever increasing. The main source of foreign investment in ALE support and development programmes comes from EU through European Structural Funds.

European Social Fund (ESF) is one of the EU structural funds that invest in the human resources development. With the support of ESF, the employment situation is improved in the country, as well as individuals increase the level of education, learn new skills and professional competences, thus considerably enlarging the perspectives of their career building and competitiveness in the labour market.

Latvia receives funding from ESF since May 2004. It is included in the consolidated programme document of the Development plan in Latvia under Priority 3 "Development of human resources and promotion of employability" (Position 2 and 3).



Amount of adopted projects in the regions of Latvia

Results

- During 2004–2006 the total funding allocated to education amounted to LVL 48.38 mln, that consists of ESF and State budget financing.
- Beneficiaries among others are 4470 students who have been provided with studies in new study programmes;
- Almost 27.5 thousand students and learners have participated in career education and consultation events;
- 120 persons have graduated doctorate or post-doctorate study programmes;
- More than 3600 pedagogues and 150 civil servants and life-long learning regional coordinators have received in-service training with upgrading of their professional capacity;
- 487 learners have been involved in pedagogical correction classes.



Participation in the European Union Education Programmes:

There are no formal obstacles in the legislation of the Republic of Latvia for the mobility of people receiving education and for the recognition of the education obtained abroad. On the state level, a coordinated support system for the education mobility exists within the EU education programmes *Grundtwig*, *Socrates*, *Leonardo da Vinci* and *Youth*.

The mobility promotion instrument in the area of higher education in the EU is the *Erasmus* subprogramme of the EU education programme *Socrates*. The development of the mobility opportunities of *Erasmus* can be characterized by several result indicators achieved in the period from 2004 to 2006, which also show that the total number of students involved in the mobility in academic year 2003/2004 was 308, however in 2005/2006 accounted for 681 students. In addition, the flow of exchange students of Latvia and other member states of the programme has increased: in academic year 2005/2006 it accounted for 681 students from Latvia and 248 students from abroad.

Within the *Leonardo da Vinci* programme 527 mobility projects have been approved in Latvia as well as 25 pilot projects and language projects. In the projects of 2005 and 2006 more than 1400 persons received education that suggests the growth of the EU education programme popularity among the inhabitants of Latvia.

In 2006 a larger discussion was started on the promotion of the international appeal of the institutions of higher education of Latvia, including the facilitation of activities within the EU co-operation programme with the third countries *Erasmus Mundus*. When designing a new draft of the Law on Higher Education, the specialists of the branch have stressed the need to improve the offer of the study programmes of the higher educational institutions of Latvia for the students from other regions of the world. Therefore the new draft law envisages an increased offer of study programmes to be delivered in foreign languages thus facilitating the internationalization of the study environment and allowing for the designing of bilateral exchange programmes with certain member states. In 2006, funding was allocated to popularize the options of higher education in Latvia among the higher educational institutions of the EU member states, as well as in Thailand and India within the European Commission *Asia-Link* programme.

The Ministry of Education and Science and institutions subordinated to it have concluded cooperation agreements with more than 30 international organisations, including 10 professional associations. The Agreement on Cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Science and the Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Workers can be mentioned as the most important cooperation contract.

The Ministry of Education and Science involves also non-governmental organisations in the work groups in the course of development of regulatory acts. Non-governmental organisations are notified on the necessity of adoption of regulatory acts if it is stipulated by the Directives of the European Union. The Ministry of Education and Science cooperates also with 88 sports federations certified in Latvia and managing and coordinating the relevant type of sports or area of activities in Latvia.

The policy planning documents under the competence of the Ministry of Education and Science are developed in cooperation with non-governmental organisations. For instance, “The strategic guidelines for the development of education for years 2007 – 2013” were developed in cooperation with representatives from the Adult and Vocational Education Association, Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Workers, Latvian Employers’ Confederation, Latvian Association of Municipalities, Latvian Rectors’ Council, Council of Higher Education, Latvian Teachers’ Council, Latvian Union of Parents “*VISP*”, Consultations Council “Education for Everybody” and Latvian Association of Traditional Culture.

Draft policy documents and draft regulatory acts in the area of general education are always coordinated with the Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Workers, Latvian Association of Education Managers, Latvian Association of Municipalities, Latvian Union of Parents “*VISP*” and regional education boards. Representatives of the Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Workers often participate in Management Meetings of the Ministry of Education and Science. Working groups for the development of the draft national policy documents on the vocational education has been formed in cooperation with non-governmental organisations. Conclusions provided by non-governmental organisations in the area of higher education are reflected in the Minutes on coordination of draft regulatory acts developed by the Ministry of Education and Science. In the area of higher education the Ministry of Education and Science cooperates with the Latvian Rectors’ Council, Latvian Association of Colleges, Latvian Students’ Association and other non-governmental organisations.

The contribution by non-governmental organisations was especially important in the coordination of the strategic guidelines for the policy of Lifelong Learning for years 2007 - 2013.

The flagman of NGOs in the ALE movement is the above-mentioned Latvian Adult Education Association (LAEA) founded in 1993.

1.2.5. Benchmarks in financing Lifelong learning

In the period 2007-2013 the following appropriations are planned for lifelong learning policy implementation in compliance with the National Strategic Framework;

Table B

| Source of financing | Sum total | In % from the total |
|--|---|---------------------|
| From state and local government budget | LVL 13,05 million (=EUR 18,57 million) | 17.60 |
| From European Social Fund | EUR 86,97 million | 82.40 |
| Total plan | EUR 105,54 million | 100.0 |

The planned funding for LLL in breakdown by directions and in percentage 2007-2013

Table C

| Direction | State and local budget LVL/EUR million | ESF EUR million | Total EUR million | % |
|--|---|--------------------|----------------------|-------|
| Availability of learning facilities | 7.25/ 10.32 | 48.31 | 58.63 | 55.6 |
| Quality education for sustainable competence building | 4.35/ 6.19 | 29.00 | 35.19 | 33.3 |
| Coordinated administration | 1.45/ 2.06 | 9.66 | 11.72 | 11.1 |
| Total | 13.05/ 18.57 | 86.97 | 105.54 | 100.0 |

Other measures:

In the area of higher education several significant amendments were made in the regulations No. 220 of 29 May, 2001 "Order for the awarding, repayment and discharging of the study and student loan from the funds of the credit institution with the guarantee presented on behalf of the state". Under the above-mentioned amendments the size of the student loan was increased up to 120 LVL per month. Before the amendments the amount of the student loan did not exceed 60 LVL per month from the first to the third year and starting from the fourth year for those studying in the bachelor and master programmes - 80 LVL per month, doctoral students – 100 LVL per month. Similarly the amount of funds was increased from 4% of the total amount allocated for crediting that can be used for the studies abroad. According to the results of the tender of 26 January, 2006 the right was acquired to issue and serve study and student loans by the joint-stock company *Parex Banka*. According to the state guarantee defined in the state budget of 2006 and tendered, 15.120 mln LVL could be used for study loans and 9.720 mln LVL for student loans. In 2006 the joint-stock company "*Parex Banka*" signed 3517 study loan contracts with students for the total amount of 7.771 mln LVL and 2121 student loan contracts for the total amount of 6.461 mln LVL. This measure might concern the creation of financial mechanisms for increasing the investment of household/families/private persons.

In the area of vocational education and training there is a lack of funds (about 8 mln LVL) to meet the regulation requirements for vocational education. The institutions of vocational education can raise additional funds from their business activities, provision of services within the implemented programmes, organization of study process for fee and attracting funds of companies, private persons or other sponsors. Increase of investments for the vocational education is integrated in the general investment programme of Latvia. In average, every year investment projects are approved for 2 – 3 institutions of vocational education. The aims of the vocational education policy also include the development of co-operation among institutions of vocational education, employers, professional organizations, companies and social partners on the regional level for the development of education contents, provision of the places for study practice and advancement of the vocational education pedagogues' competence.

In the area of general and professional education for the disabled persons a certain development is connected with the increasing provision of facilities for the integration of the disabled persons in the existing educational. There are a bigger number of schools that are technically suitable for the learners with movement disorders. Seven general education schools, two institutions of higher education and three vocational; education institutions have been fully adjusted to the needs of persons with movement disorders and 16 education institutions have partly been adjusted.

Within international co-operation projects the co-operation with the pedagogical higher education institutions has improved thus enhancing the preparedness of pedagogues for the work with the persons with special needs. As a result of the facilitation of the co-operation of the institutions of special education with those of vocational education the work in trade rooms for the pupils of special schools with mental disorders has improved. Six special education schools have been awarded the status of the special education development centre that promotes the integration of the pupils with special needs in the institutions of general education.

The State Special Education Centre was established comprising the State Pedagogical and Medical Commission. Special education support centres operate in regions and provisions have been made for high quality work of the state and municipal pedagogical and medical commissions. Different levels of special education programmes have been designed as well as their methodological support. If needed, in every school the services of the special pedagogue are available. Special education institutions offer vocational education programmes as well as strengthen the acquisition of housekeeping, besides there are classrooms and school premises that have been renovated as well as improved technical basis for the studies. In every district at least one education institution has been adapted to the inhabitants with movement disorders.

II. Quality of Adult Learning and Education provision. Participation and Achievement

2.1. Provision of ALE and Institutional Frameworks

Within the framework of the educational system in Latvia, ALE extends over basic and secondary (the so-called evening schools), higher, professional, vocational, interest and special education. It provides formal and non-formal, full time and part-time, centralized and regionally/locally centred educational and learning options. By location, it is usually linked to the existing infrastructure of educational establishments. However, as indicated earlier, large companies and corporate businesses have specially built or accommodated modern educational centres for their employees.

Universities and higher educational institutions offer in-service and continued qualification courses and programmes in their premises, besides the distance learning facilities offered for part-time students (University of Latvia, Riga Technical University, University of Agriculture a.o.)

The premises of schools are often used for ALE by agreement of school administration and local authorities. They are used especially in cases when the learners of ALE are teachers and parents of the students).

Large state-owned companies have learning centres with specially equipped classrooms that provide for good learning environment (Jelgava Adult Learning Centre, a.o.). These centres have regular educational programmes for the employees of the company. Cooperation with other institutions is also practiced - both technical and conceptual. Cross-cultural and educational programmes are exchanged and popularized. At regular meetings and annual conferences of LAEA experience is exchanged and good practice popularized.

2.1.1 Institutions responsible for ALE

The authority responsible for ALE in Latvia is **MES**, but the coordinating institution is LAEA. Under the supervision of MES it coordinates and manages the system of informal and non-formal adult education, encourages the regional units of adult education and enhances modern methods, techniques and strategies in adult education.

Quality management is performed by MES. Two procedures are envisaged for the quality management of adult in-service training and further education of adult learners: accreditation and certification. Courses that offer 160 hours of learning are certified at the MES and are accepted all over the country. Regional municipal educational programmes may be shorter; they also are accredited by the local authority. They need a formal adoption by each municipality where the educational programme is to be implemented. This procedure is considered necessary in order to ensure adequate learning conditions in each concrete place.

The system of certification in adult education is in the process of development. The criteria, maintenance of standards and identification of levels are a few of the complex tasks involved in this, taking into consideration the dispersed forms of non-formal education and learning of adults.

There are two authorities that have established a stable testing system. These are the Board of Attestation (within MES) which is responsible for the testing of the level of the linguistic competence in the Latvian (official) language, and the Board of Naturalization (within MoI). Their functions are limited to assessing results rather than to learning or teaching. However, their mandate is important for keeping up the quality requirements and assessment benchmarks for the rest of ALE system.

2.1.3. Linkage between formal and non-formal approaches.

Linkage between formal and non-formal ALE exists at the thematic level. Topical issues receive due treatment both in the formal and non-formal education. As a rule, non-formal education is a practical “observe and do as I do” type of learning with close personal exchange of experience and consultation. Non-formal learning often is dispersed from the point of view of its time scope. Being based on close personal contacts, it contains much of hands-on practice and only occasional standardized theoretical information. The latter is condensed to the very basic principles.

Non-formal learning is a productive type of learning and is encouraged by all institutions at all levels of education, the highest included. Together with the shift in pedagogical paradigms of education and ever increasing acceptance of interactive methods as the most productive way to sustainable knowledge, there is a boom of diverse forms of non-formal education for adults. This seems to be popular both with teachers and learners.

There is a lot of evidence about the increasing popularity of non-formal forms of education in the projects of ESF programmes that use innovative forms of professional education, such as individual or group consultations, joint projects of schools, discussion clubs, summer camps of school teams etc. (e.g. The National Agency of Latvian Language Training).

The positive aspect about the non-formal approach to learning is its emphasis on learning by doing rather than by listening about the problem and memorizing. This approach entails a higher degree of personal involvement of the learner, thus its effectiveness is increased.

As part of ALE, non-formal education deserves much more recognition than it has previously received. As experience shows, non-formal education needs planning, administrative support and monitoring, and financing.

Linkage with formal education becomes evident in a longer time perspective. Non-formal learning experience, contacts and practice give incentives for continued education in official educational programmes.

(Here is a case that may serve as an example of career growth in NALLT teacher training: a young teacher living and working at a regional centre of Eastern Latvia, BA in Latvian language and literature, participated in a teacher training course as a learner in

1997. Her future seemed vague and, as she confesses now, she never imagined that the course of training teacher trainers would be of much significance for her. In 1998, she continued to attend the teacher trainer course and became a teacher trainer, From that time on her academic growth is impressive: in 2000 – MA degree in pedagogy, in 2007 – PhD in pedagogy.)

2.1.4. ALE and certification

All the graduates of accredited courses receive a certificate. It testifies the theme and the fact of attendance. Formal testing may precede the acquisition of the document. However, the degree of formality of testing differs. The legally accepted and officially recognized certificates are issued by institutions and authorities that have special accreditation. The procedure of accreditation of educational institutions and organisations is in the competence of MES that has introduced regulations on the procedures and prerequisites of programme accreditation.

| Programme (name and brief description) | a) Provider (please choose the appropriate one from below): | | | b) Area of learning (please choose the appropriate one/s from below): | | | c) Target group/s | d) Programme cost LVL mln | e) Funding source |
|--|---|----------|---------|---|------------------|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------|-------------------|
| | Public/ State | CSO/ NGO | Private | General competencies | Technical skills | Knowledge generation, innovation | | | |
| Integrative educational programmes for youth with special needs | x | x | | x | x | | Invalids and handicapped people | 1.38 | ESF, NB |
| Development and implementation of corrective education | x | | | x | x | | Prisoners | 2.20 | ESF, NB |
| Support for professional orientation of education | x | x | | | x | | School drop-outs, job seekers | 2,14 | ESF, NB |
| Support of educational practice for secondary and higher level students | X | | | | X | X | professionals who need upgrading of skills and competences | 2.70 | ESF, NB |
| Continued professional education for teachers, incl. Latvian language acquisition programme for minority schools | x | | | x | x | x | Teachers, learners, educationalists | 4.70 | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|-------|---------|
| Lifelong education and in-service training | x | x | x | x | X | X | employees of various sectors | 2.10 | ESF, NB |
| Support to priority areas in higher education | X | X | X | | X | X | Undergraduates, postgraduates, researchers, teachers | 20.40 | ESF, NB |
| Quality improvement in secondary education level of science, math and technology | X | | | X | X | | Teachers, learners of secondary schools | 6.23 | ESF, NB |

(Source: State Education Development Agency, website <http://viaa.gov.lv/en>)

2.2. Participation in ALE

2.2.1.

Data concerning participation rate in ALE have been investigated and processed by LAEA.

In a research Survey on the access to and opportunities of lifelong education 2007, the following trends were discovered:

15 % of adult respondents indicate that they have plans to continue education in next 3 years.

22 % intend to do it within coming 12 months,

51% of adult respondents have stated that they do not have plans to obtain education or acquire new skills

12 % have not thought about this option or do not have information.

Age factor in educational plans

Among young adults of the age group 15-24 years 45 % of respondents plan to study within next 12 months;

25 -35 years old –24% plan to continue education;

35 – 55 years old –15 %;

Over 55 years old – 7%.

Consequently, the curve of educational intentions declines with the increase of age.

Among employed and unemployed respondents there is almost no difference as to the educational intentions. 21 % of the employed respondents and 19 % of the unemployed ones have plans of further education. That is, every fifth person plans to learn in the coming year.

A characteristic trend has been noted in this survey: the level of education influences the plans for further education. The higher is the level of education, the higher is intention to continue it.

Thus, among the employed respondents with higher education 24 % intend to have some or other form of continued education. Only 10 % of the respondents with basic professional education have plans to learn in the nearest 12 months.

Gender factor

Female more often than male respondents intend to study within the time perspective of 1 year: 25 % female and 18 % respondents.

- The principle of gender equality has been taken into account in the designed policy planning document in the area of education development “Guidelines for Education Development in the period of 2007–2013” approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on 26 September, 2006 as well as in the development of

other drafts of legal acts in the competence of the Ministry of Education and Science.

- In 2006 the Ministry of Education and Science participated in the implementation of the project “Baltic States Network “Women in Science and High Technologies” (BASNET) of the 6th Framework programme of the European Community programme (project No. 017170; 2006 – 2007). The representatives from the Ministries of Education and Science of all three Baltic States as well as researchers from the universities of the Baltic States participate in the project. Within the project it is planned to carry out sociological research about women in different areas of science as well as the reasons for the potential discrimination and inequality and as a result develop the strategy for preventing the inequality;

Ethnic factor

The survey shows that 25 % of adult Latvians intend to learn within next 12 months.

Representatives of other nationalities (‘aliens’) – only 17 % have such plans. A closer look proved that the plans for further education of the adults of non-titular ethnic groups are considerably related with their command of the Latvian language. 70 % of people with poor knowledge of Latvian were not planning to study. Among those who have a good command or slight difficulties with language use, only 49 % do not intend to study. These differences are explained by the influence of formerly acquired level of education. Higher level of education, whatever the field, motivates for further continuation.

In the area of the national minority education the methodology for the acquisition of the official language has been designed and introduced in all educational establishments that implement national minority education programmes. Provisions have been made for educating the parents of the learners in national minority education schools in order to increase their skills of Latvian. The range of textbooks and study materials for language learners of all levels is expanded and work is going on to raise the standard requirements and practical applicability of the textbooks for minority learners.

In co-operation with schools, municipalities and non-government institutions, a support system for increasing the level of education of Roma children and involvement of the adult representatives of the Roma community in the education process was created. Provisions have been made for the implementation of the requirements of the EU Council Directive 2004/114/EK on the conditions regarding the admittance of the citizens of the third countries for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, practise or internship without receiving remuneration or volunteer work. As a result, the number of cross-culture awareness seminars has increased as well as the number of pedagogues who have upgraded their cross-cultural competence. There has been a growth in the number of the parents of national minority school pupils who have improved their knowledge of the official language. And this is an on-going process.

The number of the Roma children in the schools of general education and the education level of the adult members of the community has increased as well. Integration

of Roma people in the local communities is quite successful, however, problems still exist, especially in the social integration and adult Roma participation in ALE.

Household income as a factor

The survey shows that the income level affects the educational intentions of adults.

In low level income per persona households the average percentage of those who intend to study is 19 % (80 LVL per person). In reasonably high level income household (300 LVL and above per person) it is 29%.

Sectoral factor.

The sectors that are more educationally motivating and attractive for LLL are as follows:

Commercial and business skills

Education

Real estate and administration

Social care.

32 – 35 % of people who are employed in these areas have educational plans.

The lowest level was in the sectors of construction and industry – only 12 – 14 % of employees in these sectors intended to continue education or acquire a new skill.

Level of skills as a factor

Level of skills or qualifications also is as ALE active factor. Unskilled manual workers display low interest for education, only 12%.

All level managers and high tech specialists are twice as active: 26 – 31%

State/private owned companies

The state sector is a friendlier environment for educational plans of adults. In this sector 27% of employees have plans to study. In the private sector the share of the employees who have plans to proceed with education is about 18%.

2.2.2. Non-participation and groups that are difficult to reach.

With the financial support of ESF⁷ and the Government of Latvia (via MES), the Latvian Adult Education Association (LAEA) has carried out a research of the situation in lifelong learning availability in Latvia which to a large extent includes and consists of adult learning and education⁸.

⁷ National programme project „Development of Lifelong Learning Strategy”
No. 2005/VPD1/ESF/PIAA/05/NO/3.2.4.1./0001/0006/0185

⁸ Mūžizglītības pieejamība un iespējas izglīties Latvijā: Latvijas Pieaugušo izglītības apvienība, Rīga, 2007. (Accessibility of lifelong Learning and Educational Possibilities in Latvia: Research, LAEA, Riga, 2007)

The research was based on a survey and analysis of respondent answers that were reviewed in 2007.

The data of this research refer to groups that are difficult to reach and/or are not engaged in the system of ALE.

The following factors are indicated as the main causes of unwillingness to participate in educational and training activities:

1. low level of formal education (basic education is not completed),
2. lack of positive learning experience,
3. lack of supportive micro-environment for education and positive career development,
4. lack of information about possibilities, transport and communication difficulties,
5. low income,
6. lack of sufficient Latvian language skills
7. Other factors —family problems, other interests, other plans.

The interrelatedness of Points 1, 5 and 6 has already been highlighted above, leading to the indicator that 70 % of unemployed, low income, low educational background minority adults who do not know the Latvian language do not see education as an option for their nearest future.

2.2.3. What existing surveys/studies have been undertaken on learner motivation?

The above mentioned research has dealt also with motivation issues.

The main factors that motivate the adult learners are as follows:

1. The level of already acquired education;
2. Employment and the position at work;
3. Professional requirements and a possibility of advancement at work;
4. The age group. Younger adults are more education oriented.
5. The system of communication and availability of transport facilities or proximity to the place of work or living;
6. Emotional, psychological, social support from the nearest environment⁹.

2.3. Improvement of adult education opportunities

The economic development necessitates a growing demand for qualified labour force across all sectors. This increases the need to draw up modular programmes for education at all levels both for full-time studies and part-time studies, including distance education. This is envisaged during the following four years:

- provision of a coordinated support by the employers and the State to the development of adult education programmes, especially in the context of balanced territorial development;

⁹ Ibid., p. 84.

- promotion of the participation of higher and vocational education establishments in the development of further education by offering further education programmes, professional enhancement programmes and getting involved in the training of the unemployed;
- creation of a system of credits and its introduction in those programmes providing for their compatibility with the academic credit transfer system;
- drawing up the guidelines for evaluating the performance of evening schools;
- making proposals for a more extensive involvement of the employers in the financing of further education. (“Concepts of Education Development” – MES Draft Document)

Improvement of access to vocational education

Influenced by the social and economic factors, the students mainly choose those schools of vocational training that are situated near their homes but do not always provide them with an education that would suit their abilities. A great proportion of those educated at the schools of vocational training come from indigent and socially disadvantaged families. Access to vocational education is restricted by the number of places financed from the government budget and inadequate facilities of the educational establishments. A significant impediment for those who start to attend schools of vocational training is their poor level of general knowledge, which hinders the acquisition of professional qualification. Therefore, the pedagogical and methodological approach to the vocational education of young adults is an issue to be addressed in the nearest 2 years.

The following tasks are to be dealt with in the coming 4 years:

- to increase the role of social partners in order to promote their participation in determining government procurement for vocational education corresponding to the territorial demand;
- to introduce more widely professional education programmes with pedagogical correction for the students whose level of previous knowledge is poor;
- to promote the implementation of profession-oriented education programmes;
- carrying out of occupational and career guidance measures at educational establishments of all types.

Improvement for specific target groups:

Socially vulnerable groups that need special protection and attention;

- Ethnic minorities, in particular Roma;
- Unemployed;
- Disabled and handicapped, people with health impairments;
- Elderly and below poverty rate;
- People in custody;
- Others (immigrants, asylum seekers etc.)

Promoted integration of learners with special needs in general, vocational, higher and interest-related education programmes

The education system provides for opportunities of education also to persons with special needs, including people with movement disorders. Two educational establishments have been adapted for learners with movement disorders. In Latvia mainstreaming of learners with special needs in ordinary educational establishments has not been a wide-spread practice, but it is to be gradually developed.

The plan for the following four years is as follows:

- to train educators of general education, vocational education, professional guidance and interest-related education and the students of the pedagogical higher educational establishments for work with all the age groups of persons who have special needs;
- to begin the transformation of special education establishments into integrative education establishments;
- to continue the technical adaptation of educational establishments, including those of interest-related education, to serve the needs of learners with movement disorders;
- to facilitate access to higher education programmes, including distance education programmes, for learners with movement disorders.

2.4. Adult educators/facilitators' status and training

The educators of adult learners need specialized training which, in its turn, is part of the general ALE.

The following institutions have regular further education programmes for adult education facilitators and educators:

- The Centre for Curriculum Development and Examinations
- National Agency of Latvian Language Acquisition
- Latvian Adult Education Association.

Retraining and upgrading of the teachers of adult learners is provided on a regular basis. The average amount of persons who receive in-service training in this sphere of pedagogy is approximately 200 per year. The system how the status of adult educator is obtained varies depending on the field where the educator is going to work. The most demanding system, for example, was the system developed by NALLT in 1997. In it the would-be teacher trainers or multipliers had a year's course for educators (186 hours), the certificate of the adult educator could be obtained after a certain period of practice (usually one year) served as a teacher trainer, with the presentation of the results of the practice at a final colloquium.

A refresher course for multipliers is shorter (usually about 16 hours) and involves a required presentation of practical analysis of a relevant topic of adult education in written. These papers are officially presented at an open discussion. The best papers are published in the series of methodological aids for teachers. Since 1997 within NALLT 114 multipliers have received special training and retraining of educators of ALE

LAEA has worked out and offers a 160 hours course for educators of adults (*KomPas*). The annual enrollment to this course is 20 educators. Half of the time is independent individual work. This course provides for a wide range of diverse forms of

adult-education, non-formal included. On completion the graduates receive a certificate of the educator of adults.

Teaching adults is a part-time job for approximately 70% of the adult educators of the above mentioned 3 institutions. The remuneration of adult educators is competitive in comparison with the average level of teacher salary at school. The public opinion about adult educators is positive, since they are perceived as better informed and better educated than the average teacher. To become an educator of adults signifies that the person has taken a significant step forward in his/her own career, has achieved a higher qualification level and new future perspectives are open to him/her. This is due to good practice and good results of ALE in general.

III. Research, Innovation and Good Practice

3.1. Research studies in the field of adult learning

In recent years several relevant research projects have been carried out:

- LAEA initiated study “Mūžizglītības pieejamība un iespējas izglītoties Latvijā”, Riga, 2007 (**“Accessibility of Lifelong Learning and Educational Opportunities in Latvia”**)
- **Towards Lifelong Learning: Policy of Lifelong Learning in Latvia**. LAEA, 2007
- Pārskats par ES ietekmi uz nodarbinātību un sociālo drošību Latvijā: Ministry of Welfare, 2003. (**Survey of the EU impact on employment and social security in Latvia**)
- Sociālās atstumtības iespējamība un tās iemesli bezdarba riska apdraudētajās grupās, Ministry of Welfare, 2003 (**Possibility of social exclusion and its causes in groups of high-risk unemployment**).
- **Basic Guidelines of Lifelong Learning Policy during 2007–2013**: MES, 2007
- **The Influence of the Staff Professional Development Course in a Higher Education: Institution as a Learning Organization** by prof. Dainuvīte Blūma, University of Latvia. Published in: Humanities and Social Sciences (2007) 3 (52), Education Management, pp.87-105
- **The paradigm shift in higher education in Latvia in the context of the Bologna process**, by prof. Dainuvīte Blūma, University of Latvia, 2007

Since 2003, the above mentioned papers are used as sources of reference for policy development in adult education, social inclusion, social integration and social security related sectors.

Irrespective of what topical problem may be the focus of investigation, the issue of adult learning as a lifelong process is offered as a clue to the solution of diverse problems: unemployment, exclusion, integration, career building, equality, growth of the standard of life, psychological comfort, positive environment at work, increased tolerance, increased cross-cultural competence and high civic activity. Among the conclusions the most evident is the acknowledgment of the direct link between education and welfare. An essential feature of research is the recognition of separate endangered groups of population that need special attention and funding. These are – unemployed, elderly, disabled or handicapped persons with low skills or

no skills at all. Women and minority representatives are special groups. Women, as a rule, are relatively better educated than men, but there is evidence that the public opinion is under a strong influence of stereotype about typical female professions which also happen to be low paid.

The minority issue is frequently associated with the linguistic problem (i.e. insufficient command of the official language), which is addressed with the help of general school education and through the system of adult education within NALLT, as well as thanks to the support of the Social Integration Fund (SIF) which during the last five years has annually supported educational projects for adult learners, language courses included. Nevertheless, it is clear that not only the knowledge of the official language is essential for the representative of minority groups. In fact, all the same needs, rules, risks and opportunities are valid to them but as the 2007 research of Lifelong education by LAEA shows, the degree of minority group's vulnerability and the risk of social exclusion and self-isolation are higher if a low educational level is accompanied by lack of knowledge of the Latvian language.

The efforts to popularize the philosophy of lifelong learning and ALE in particular, have brought about results: the Operational Plan of the Declaration of the current Government contains items that directly indicate the necessity to address the issues of human resources via intensification of adult education:

- a) by introduction of professional training for women who return to work after the maternity leave and need retraining and/or re-qualification in order to be able to face the requirements of labour market and maintain competitiveness (item 2.14.1.);
- b) developing a normative regulation for further qualification, retraining and further education of employees of private firms and self-employed persons (item 2.17.1).

3.2. Innovations and examples of good practice

In ALE access to education for all needs a flexible approach to the problem.

In practice, besides such popular forms of work as groups that learn and increase their general education, professional competence or skills training in groups under the guidance of a qualified teacher, new forms have come into being:

- a) Group self development activities by joint participation in elaboration of educational projects. This type of learning is highly effective and motivates the participants to find creative solutions to their practical professional challenges. This type of non-formal learning gives a high degree of self confidence and cooperative skills.
- b) Individual consulting and mentoring. It is used for individuals of higher educational level or particular professional interests.
- c) ICT technology which, if and when introduced in the whole country, will help to reach the farthest and most isolated potential learner. The possibilities that ICT offers enable the tutor to become a mentor and adviser. Significant steps have been taken in this direction. However, much is still to be done.
- d) LAEA, in line with the tasks envisaged in the Development plan of Latvia, and in cooperation with colleagues in Europe, has created and introduced a

quality measurement system for ALE in Latvia. Its implementation across the country will be a significant contribution to higher quality of ALE in all the sectors.

- e) NALLT, in order to enhance the knowledge of the Latvian language, provides numerous options of individually-tailored further education for teachers, learners, adults of various groups (the vulnerable groups -- disabled, unemployed and elderly minority individuals – included). In 2006-2008 within an ESF funded programme for minority teachers and learners in the secondary level of education a new method of “learn by teaching” projects of cooperation between schools has been developed and gone through approbation.
- f) Cooperation among various adult education organizations is practiced and promoted by annual conferences (e.g. NALLT conference “Language for operation and cooperation” to be held in the end of April every year).

IV. Adult Literacy

As stated earlier, the population of Latvia is almost 100 % literate. However, 0.25 % of the population older than 15 years are recorded as illiterate at the last Census in 2000. In absolute figures it makes for 5000 individuals that are as a rule difficult to reach. Besides, education programmes are being developed for asylum seekers and refugees, as well as EU citizens within the framework of mobility labour force. The literacy issue is dealt with in linkage with the acquisition of basic Latvian language skills. This is almost equivalent to acquiring new literacy, although the person may have a very high level of general literacy. A step by step method is used and study aids are developed, including ICT technologies.

This area of ALE has a broad perspective with many further specializations ahead. The experience accumulated with Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) in the school system of Latvia will be of immense help. It has to be reassessed and adapted to adult training needs. Meeting new challenges will open new possibilities for development, both for the individual, and for the country.

V. Conclusions

In the conclusion, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia is fully aware of the progress the system of ALE has made in Latvia since the 1990s and recognizes the contribution of Latvian Adult Education Association in tackling the tasks of this extensive sector in the educational system of Latvia. The achievement in adult education has three dimensions: ALE has covered the whole country geographically; it extends over all the sectors of economical and social activities, it embraces all population groups, the endangered and neglected ones included. In view of the changes in the economical, social and geographical dimensions, ALE in Latvia has made a significant progress to achieve accessibility of education for all and ensure diverse educational possibilities for all the levels of previous education. In the process of development, the regional aspect has been emphasized in ALE. Thus at the present, the chance of training or updating one's professional skills, or continuing one's academic or professional education, as well as information about these possibilities has come closer to the potential adult learners.

5.1. Results, expected from CONFINTEA VI

- Enhancing the exchange of experience within the network of ALE organizations globally.
- Establishing the prevailing trends and assessing them within the framework of life-long learning strategies.
- Identifying problems, seeking their solutions by joint effort.
- Reconsidering relevant unified indicators for comparability and assessment of the progress in ALE among various countries, taking into consideration the diversity of challenges, differences of the background and the capacities of nations.

5.2. Future perspectives:

Recognizing the progress made in adult education and learning, MES and LAEA are also fully aware of the challenges that need to be dealt with for further strengthening of the system of ALE. The following issues may be listed for the future:

- We consider that the quality assessment system, which has been developed within LAEA, will need additional support for wider introduction in all the establishments of adult education and learning;
- The legal basis of ALE in Latvia needs finalization and implementation.
- For a successful development of ALE across the country, and especially, in order to reach the most neglected representatives of society, it will be necessary to make considerable investments in the development of available facilities and IT networks for educational purposes.
- Last, not least, the updating of methodology of adult education in the lifelong learning perspective needs to be maintained as a continuously on-going process and should duly be reflected in national and international agendas.

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