

## Latvia – ANEd country profile

The information contained in this summary was compiled by the Academic Network of European Disability experts (ANED) in April 2009.

### Academic networks and resources

There are currently no established academic networks or resources for disability research in Latvia.

### Policy and enforcement bodies

The key national bodies with responsibility for disability law and policy implementation include:

The [Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia](#) is the leading institution of the state administration in the areas of labour, social security and gender equality. The mission of the Ministry of Welfare is to stabilize the condition of people in situations of social risk, to reduce the possibility of social risk.

[Ombudsman of the Republic of Latvia](#) is an official elected by the Parliament, whose main tasks are encouragement of the protection of human rights and promotion of a legal and expedient State authority, which observes the principle of good administration. The Ombudsman is independent in its actions and is governed only by law. No persons or State or municipal institutions have the right to influence the performance of the Ombudsman's functions and tasks.

[National Council for the Disabled Persons](#) is the co-ordinating body for policies in the field of integration of disabled people into society. The Council was established in 1994. Members of the National Council for Disabled People are ministers and members from national level disabled people's organisations.

### Organisations of disabled people

The national organisation representing disabled people at the European level (European Disability Forum) is:

The [Latvian Umbrella Body for Disability Organisations](#) (SUSTENTO) founded in 2002. It has 23 national member organisations representing about 20,000 people with disabilities.

Other significant national organisations of disabled people include:

Union of people with disabilities and their friends [APEIRONS](#)

Latvian Organisation of people with disabilities

[Latvian Deaf Society](#)

[Latvian Blind Society](#)

Latvian Association 'Rūpju bērns'

### National law and strategy

Latvia has signed the [United Nations Convention](#) but not the [Optional Protocol](#).



Important national laws, policies and strategies concerning disabled people include: [Law on medical and social protection of disabled persons](#) (1992) defines the status of disabled person and establishes the main rights of disabled people.

Conception '[Equal Opportunities for All](#)' (Cabinet of Ministers, 1998) was intended to create equal opportunities for people with disabilities, promote social rehabilitation, restore working capacities, achieve education and involvement in the labour market. The concept addressed problems in the fields of health, education, employment, accessible environment and social security and includes action plan till 2010.

Basic Policy Statement for [Reduction of Disability and its Consequences 2005-2015](#) (Cabinet of Ministers, 2005) proposed drafting of new legislation: Law on Disability and Law on Employment of Disabled People. Law on Disability was submitted to Saeima in 2007. The draft Law on Disability is directed to establishment of the new disability expertise system.

[Action plan for implementation of the Basic statement](#) of reducing disability and its consequences 2005-2015 (Cabinet of Ministers, 2006)

### **Facts and figures**

Data on population indicate that:

During recent years the number of people with disabilities remains in the region of 5% population. In 2008 4.8% (108.2 thousand) of the general population have a 'disability' (out of 2270.9 thousand people in Latvia), of which 50.5% male and 49.5% female. Of these 1.1% are under age 4; 12% aged 55-59. 2% (2.1 thousand) disabled people are children. (Ministry of Welfare Statistical bulletin 'People with Disabilities 2003-2007 [part 1](#) and [part 2](#)). There is no specific statistical data of number of disabled people by type of impairment.

The [State Medical Expertise Commission on Health and Working Capacities](#) maintains a database on disability matters, including data about status (employed, unemployed), age, gender, kind of disability, severity of disability and others).

The [State Social Insurance Agency](#) performs the public administration functions in the area of social insurance and social services, maintains a data base on pension and social benefit receivers, amount of pensions, etc.

Data on employment indicate that:

The [unemployment rate in Latvia](#) in December 2006 was 6.2%, and 5.4% in December 2007 (compared with 7.6% and 6.8% for EU27). In December 2008 it was 7%, in January 2009 8.3%, and in February 9.5%. We have no separate register for disabled people.



Statistical data about employed and unemployed disabled people is weak and unreliable.

According to data from State Medical Expertise Commission on Health and Working Capacities only 13-14% of disabled people are employed. According to data from State Employment Agency during recent years to 2007 the number of people with disabilities registered as unemployed increased from 3,165 in 2003 to 3,367 in 2007 (1,810 women and 1,557).

The State Employment Agency registers and records unemployed persons and persons seeking employment, helps unemployed persons and job seekers to become involved in the labour market. Their database contains only general data on people with disabilities registered as employed persons or job seekers.

Data on education indicate that:

According to [data from the Ministry of Education and Science](#) the number of pupils in special schools and classes in the year 2008/2009 is 3.7% (8,760 from a general population of 236,223). Although this number is decreasing every year (from 10,169 in 2001/2) it has increased in percentage terms (from 3% in 2001/2002 to 3.7% in 2008/2009).

Data on accessibility indicate that:

The MeAC e-accessibility survey [results for Latvia in 2007](#) showed that:

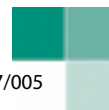
Only 1 out of 5 selected public websites passed the automatic evaluation (none passed both the automatic and manual evaluations). None of the sectoral/commercial websites passed even the automatic evaluation.

The main emergency number (112 or other) was not directly accessible by text telephone.

Neither of the two main mobile telephony operators provided eAccessibility-related information via their website. Neither of them offered models labelled as hearing aid compatible via their online sales.

Neither of the two main landline telephony operators provided eAccessibility-related information. Neither offered models labelled as hearing aid compatible via their online sales.

Of the two main public TV channels, in 2006, both provided some national language programs with subtitling. One provided programs with signing. Neither provided programs with audio description. Information about the TV access services provided was made available on the public broadcaster's website and via teletext.



Of the two main commercial TV channels, in 2006, both provided national language programs with subtitling. Neither provided programs with signing or programs with audio description.

Of the two main retail banks operating in the country, neither had installed talking ATMs. No plans to deploy talking ATMs were identified.

Data on poverty and incomes indicate that:

People with disabilities are recognised as a risk group subjected to poverty and social exclusion, but activities are planned using a mainstream approach. Disabled persons are mainly not treated as a separate group, there are no specific income policies for disabled and non-disabled people, with the exception that minimum level for disability pension is stated by the Law.

During the past year the inflation rate is growing, pensions remain on the previous level. The State social security benefit level for disabled persons from childhood is LVL 50 (€72) per month and these persons are living under the relative line of poverty. In the economic crises situation the Cabinet of Ministers plans to stop indexation of pensions.

Data on attitudes indicate that:

We do not currently have data on attitudes towards disability in Latvia (and Latvia was not included in the EU15 Eurobarometer 54.2 on the attitudes of Europeans).

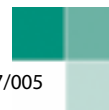
The [2007 Special Eurobarometer on Discrimination in Europe](#) showed that 62% of people knew someone who was disabled (compared to 55% EU average) and 82% acknowledged that being disabled tended to be disadvantage in society (EU average 79%).

Disability discrimination was viewed as widespread by 51% (EU average 53%); 30% thought that disability discrimination was more widespread than five years ago. 61% thought that not enough was being done to combat discrimination in general (EU average 51%).

72% thought that more disabled people should be in the workplace (EU average 74%) and 83% thought specific measures on equal opportunities were needed in this field.

Data on public spending indicate that:

In 2006, disability benefits accounted for 7.3% of all benefits expenditure (both cash and in kind benefits) compared to an EU27 average of 7.5% (European System of integrated Social Protection Statistics)



## Social protection

Key features of the national system include (including adapted items from the [MISSOC](#) database December 2008):

### Disability benefits

Disability pension: Minimum pensions are based on the State Social Security Benefit of LVL 45 (€64) per month: Category I: 1.6 x State Social Security Benefit, Category II: 1.4 x State Social Security Benefit. The disability pension for category III is fixed at the amount of the State Social Security Benefit. In 2007 state disability pensions recipients were 77.1% (83.5 thousand) of all disability pension recipients. Disability pension receivers are 51.5% female and 48.5% male, according to severity of disability from total number from disability pension receivers category I – 6.7%, category II – 57.9% and category III – 35.4%. The average age of pension receiver is 57 (male – 55 years, female -58 years). The average amount of disability pension in 2007 was LVL 93.51 (for category I – LVL 118.96, category II – LVL 104.54, category III – LVL 69.09).

The number of recipients of State Social Security Benefit increased from 10,803 (end of 2006) to 11,152 in 2007 (or 13.7% of the total number of disabled people). The amount of the State Social Security Benefit for disabled people is LVL 50 (€72) per month.

The number of recipients of Supplement to the family state benefit for disabled child under 18 years of age decreased from 10,592 (2006) to 7,684 in 2007.

The number of [recipients of Disabled child raising allowance](#) was 1,606 in 2008, the amount of the benefit was LVL 150.

### Rehabilitation and re-training

Vocational rehabilitation and re-training are provided free of charge by the [Social Integration State Agency](#).

According to state Employment Agency data, the number of workers with disabilities in subsidised employment was 619 in 2003, 415 in 2004, and 296 in 9 month of 2005. A subsidised employment scheme was financed from the European Social Fund (2004-2006 planning period).

### Preferential employment and quotas

There is no preferential employment quota scheme in Latvia.

### Long-term support and care

Care in institutions is a traditionally established form of care in Latvia. Only during last 10-12 years have day care services been developed for persons with intellectual disability. With financial support from European Structural Funds, within the framework of several projects administered by the Ministry of Welfare, new forms of



services were developed during last few years – half-way homes for disabled people living in the specialized social care centres, and specialized workshops.

Care homes for elderly and physically disabled people are provided by local municipalities, a few by private or non-governmental organisations. Care homes for intellectually disabled people are provided by the state.

For care services disabled persons or their suppliers are paying full costs (or part of the costs may be covered by the local municipality). Care services in state specialized care institutions are free of charge.

Local municipalities can provide other types of services (homecare) according to the needs of disabled people and financial possibilities.

### **Additional information**

Useful sources of more detailed information about the situation of disabled people, and the policies and support available, include:

[Webpage of the Ministry of Welfare](#)

[Webpage of the Ministry of Education and Science](#)

[Ombudsman of the Republic of Latvia](#)

[State Medical Expertise Commission on Health and Working Capacities](#)

[State Social Insurance Agency](#)

[State Employment Agency](#)

[Social Integration State Agency](#)

[Statistical data](#) (including *Statistical bulletins on People with Disabilities*)

[Links to legislative acts](#)