

Executive summary about Latvia.

- Public debate on the problems of people with special needs began only after regaining independence, which is since 1990.
- The definitions, which are used for disability, still are not clear in Latvia.
- Term of disability in Latvian sounds as invalids and many people are not satisfied with meaning of this word in other languages. Although this definition is used in Latvia legislation at the moment and it is impossible to change it immediately.
- In order to implement the social integration of the disabled the National Concept “Equal Opportunities for All” has been adopted for the period from 1998 to 2010.
- It is important to look at NGOs impact on all aspects of society and not just focus on their role as service deliverers.
- In governmental level since 1997 there is National Council of Disabled Affairs. The aim of the council is the implementation of the National Concept “Equal Opportunities for All”.
- Unfortunately Council is organised by Cabinet of Ministries and its work is strongly managed by it. Ministries have rights to decided which organisation have or have not opportunity to participate in the work of council. Also level of ministries represented in council is very low – in general they are officers who are not able to make any decisions.
- The current situation, with the majority of funding coming to NGOs from external sources, on a time limited and project focused basis, does not allow for any internal stability and will prevent any sustainable progress in terms of organisational development.
- Currently 64 special educational institutions offer education to pupils in cases of 11 different kinds of development disorders and diseases in Latvia. In special educational institutions 70% of children have several disorders. Only

few mainstream schools have accessibility. Disability NGOs are working very hard on idea of inclusive education.

- In Latvia people with disabilities have much less chance to be employed than their counterparts, who are not disabled.
- One of the major issues for people with disabilities is physical accessibility. Lack of access is a real barrier to the social integration of physically disabled people and is made worse by the total lack of public awareness of the problems they face.
- Though computer technologies theoretically give lot of opportunities, in everyday life blind person still is too dependant on others assistance.
- Present policy concerning residential institutions, is to give them over from state responsibility to competence of local authorities.
- It is important to develop network of day care centres to give opportunity for parents to work and also group homes to reduce number of large residential institutions.
- Developing social services is one of the key political challenges admitted as essential to reduce poverty and social. This means providing an opportunity for people with disabilities to receive social services according to their needs and as close to their place of residence as possible.
- Pensions of people with disabilities, not speaking about social security benefits, are below statistically reckoned minimal subsistence standards.