

# SPORTS

## OVERVIEW

By sports we understand all kinds of individual or organised activities for person's physical and mental health and fitness, as well as achievements in sports competitions. The goal of the Latvian national sports policy is the formation of healthy, physically and mentally highly developed personalities. Since 2002 the general legal basis of sports organisation and development in Latvia is determined by the Sports Law. The Ministry of Education and Science is the state administration institution responsible for the area of sports.

Sports education is implemented in 61 professionally oriented sports education institutions (sports schools). In sports schools during the academic year 2009/2010 there are 26 268 children and youth practicing 35 different kinds of sports, the most popular being basketball, track-and-field athletics, volleyball, football, swimming and gymnastics.

Murjāņi Sports Gymnasium is a general education and sports education institution founded and financed by the state which trains and prepares candidates for the Latvian national team starts in the Olympic Games, the world and European championships, as well as candidates on the reserved list for Latvian national teams in seven kinds of Olympic sports. The Latvian Academy of Sports Education is a state founded and accredited higher sports education institution implementing bachelor, master's and doctoral study programmes. It coordinates and carries out research work in sports and educates specialists in sports science.

In order to increase the public interest in sports and improve the quality of organising competitions, the non-formal sports education is supported in Latvia by involving volunteers in organisation processes of sports events.

For about 100 non-governmental sports organisations - recognised sports federations – the state has granted the rights to manage and coordinate the development of corresponding kind of sport, represent Latvia in corresponding international sports federation as well as set the tasks in total for 23 sectors of sports. The Sports Law determines the delegation procedure. The Latvian National Sports Council has been developed to promote collaboration with non-governmental sports organisations.

## SPORTS EDUCATION IN FIGURES

Academic year	Number of training groups	Number of students
2005/2006	2412	31 722
2006/2007	2403	31 891
2007/2008	2564	32 161
2008/2009	2539	31 327
2009/2010	2071	26 268

Source: Ministry of Education and Science

## DEVELOPMENT

The main sports policy documents are the Sports Policy Guidelines and the National Sports Development Programme for the years 2006-2012 which envisages five directions in the implementation of sports policy: 1) children and youth sports; 2) elite sport; 3) sports for all; 4) sport for disabled persons; 5) sports facilities.

Unified state sports competition system is established in Latvia. Once in a four year period the Latvian Olympic Committee has been organizing the Latvian Winter and Summer Olympiads receiving state financing for organisational expenditures. During the II Latvian Olympiad in summer sports in 2008 which took place in Ventspils competitions were held in 22 kinds of sports and 26 disciplines with 485 athletes participating in the games. During the II Latvian Olympiad in winter sports in 2010 which took place in Sigulda competitions were held in 10 kinds of Olympic sports with 686 athletes participating.

Unified state sports competition system is established also for young athletes by organizing the Latvian Youth Olympiad in summer sports held once in a two year period and the Latvian Youth Olympiad in winter sports held every year. Participants of these Olympiads are students of general secondary education institutions. During the Latvian Youth Olympiad in summer sports in 2009 competitions were held in 22 kinds of sports and there were 1797 participants but during the Latvian Youth Olympiad in winter sports in 2010 competitions were held in 6 kinds of sports and 1073 participants took part in the games.

The state ensures the preparation for and participation of athletes and Latvian national teams in the European championships, world championships, the Olympic Games and other official international competitions by providing financial support for the preparatory programme for the Olympic Games, preparatory programmes for the Latvian Olympic team and the implementation of the development of the Latvian Olympic team.

# SPORTS

In order to ensure the development and efficient operation of institutional system of the state administration, as well as an efficient implementation of sports policy, during the institutional reform phase the number of sports institutions was decreased from 14 to 2. As a result of this reform sports federations have received significant state financial support to pay salaries for sports teachers thus ensuring the continuation in implementing the sports programmes which were offered by reorganized sports institutions before and improving the quality and efficiency of children and youth sports training process. Several tasks which were carried out by the state institutions are now delegated to non-governmental sports organisations. As a result of Administrative-Territorial Reform the network of sports schools in the country was revised and optimised, as well as a new system of criteria for state budget subsidy allocation was developed.

Administrative principles of the state budget allocations are improved ensuring transparency of state budget planning and providing opportunities for sports organisations to apply for the state financing for sports, as well as to take part in the decision-making process. The role of non-governmental sports institutions (sports federations and sports organisations representing sports federations) has increased to administer the state budget allocation for sports.

In the framework of the Olympic year 2010 the funding for athletes was maintained at the previous level to allow athletes to prepare well for the Olympic Games. Such approach provided the following progressive results in Vancouver 2010 XXI Winter Olympic Games:

- Martins Dukurs – silver medal (skeleton),
- brothers Andris un Juris Sici – silver medals (Men's luge, Doubles),
- Tomass Dukurs – fourth place (skeleton),
- The Latvian men's national ice hockey team three times in a row has gained permission to participate in the Olympic Games.

## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

For non-governmental sports organisations – recognised federations of corresponding kind of sport – the state has granted the rights to represent Latvia in the corresponding international sports organisation.

The Ministry of Education and Science ensures the representation of Latvia in international organisations and work groups (in the Council of the European Union and meetings of their workgroups, meetings organised by the Presidency of the Council of the European Union and European Commission as well as by the Council of Europe).

After adopting the Treaty of Lisbon Latvia is involved in the development of international unified sports policy in the European Union. At the moment there is an active involvement in the development of Sports programme for the European Union and Latvia has stated the need to find solutions to attract the resources of EU Structural Funds in the field of sports. Purposeful investments for the development of healthy and active lifestyle are long term investments, as this is a significant support to improve health and promote the quality of workforce.

The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for the fulfilment of the obligations Latvia has undertaken by joining the following international conventions in the field of sports: International Convention against Doping in Sport adopted by UNESCO, Anti-doping Convention of the Council of Europe and the European Convention on Spectators' Behaviour at Sports Events and, in particular, at football competitions.

Cooperation in the area of sports with several countries takes place in the framework of bilateral intergovernmental and interministerial agreements that ensures the exchange of specialists, participation of athletes in competitions as well as supports cooperation among different sports federations. In 2009 the government of the Republic of Latvia signed the agreement with the government of Azerbaijan Republic on cooperation in the field of youth and sports and in May 2010 an agreement has been signed between the government of the Republic of Latvia and the government of the Federative Republic of Brazil on cooperation in the field of sports.

Bilateral agreements provide an opportunity to promote cooperation in sports among the countries thus providing new cooperation opportunities. One of the key cooperation forms in sports is an active cooperation among the non-governmental state organisations of the countries – both sports federations and sports clubs. In its turn, the cooperation among state institutions should be developed in the field of interest: cooperation projects in sports, sports management, network of sports information, youth sports, sport for all, elite sports, senior sports, sports medicine, fight against the violence in sports, healthy and active lifestyle.

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