

# YOUTH AFFAIRS

## OVERVIEW

According to the Youth Law young people in Latvia are persons from 13 to 25 years of age which constituted 18.66% of the total population in Latvia or 421 990 young people (Data by the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia) in 2009.

The youth policy is the purposeful set of activities in all the fields of state policy to promote the wholesome and versatile development of young people, their inclusion in the society and improvement of life quality. As a result of implementing the youth policy the persons involved (state and municipality institutions, youth organisations, etc.) promote the initiatives of young people, participation in the decision making processes and social life, support youth work and providing children easier transition to adult status envisaging corresponding activities for personal development of young people. The bases of the youth policy is youth work – planned practical set of activities developed for young people (events, projects, programmes) in order to improve the life quality of young people.

The implementation of youth policy is influenced by several aspects, because the life of young people is connected with the majority of fields of the state policy, therefore this is the inter-sectoral policy which has to implement particular tasks of youth policy: support youth initiatives, non-formal education, opportunities for useful free-time activities, access to information.

In order to ensure the youth and youth workers, as well as the policy makers on the state and municipality level with the information connected with youth affairs, the Ministry of Education and Science administers the Youth Policy and Youth Opportunities Portal [www.jaunatneslietas.lv](http://www.jaunatneslietas.lv).

According to their functions, the municipalities carry out youth work taking into consideration the basic principles of youth policy and the state policy planning documents in the field of youth. Municipal youth affairs specialists work with youth and collaborate with persons involved in the implementation of youth policy, come up with suggestions for the development of youth policy, implement and coordinate informative and educational events, projects and programmes in the field of youth policy and other activities that promote the improvement of life quality of young people.

## YOUTH IN FIGURES

Proportion of young people who assess their life quality as good	39.8%
The number of municipal youth affairs coordinators (youth affairs specialists) in 2010	49
The number of Youth Centres (youth initiative centres) in municipalities in 2010	79
Proportion of young people who consider that youth has huge possibility to influence the issues connected with youth problems in the country	43.9%
Proportion of young people who consider that they have huge or all possibilities to spend their free time as they wish	65.3%

## DEVELOPMENT

The essential document that defines the youth policy in Latvia is the Youth Law which came into force from January 1, 2009. The aim of this Law is to improve the life quality of young people – persons between the ages of 13 and 25 inclusively - by promoting their initiatives, participation in decision-making and social life, as well as by supporting youth work. The Youth Policy State Programme for years 2009-2013 was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in August, 2009 and it was developed to implement the aims and objectives set in the Guidelines of Youth Policy for years 2009-2018. The activities included in the Programme envisage the promotion of youth involvement in the decision taking processes, to promote youth social economical development, competitiveness and inclusion in society as well as to improve international collaboration in the field of youth policy.

In order to promote the implementation of youth work in municipalities for a long-term period according to the Guidelines of Youth Policy and based on the examples of best practices, the General criteria to assess the youth work in municipalities were developed in 2009. 105 General criteria grouped in 10 thematic sections have got a permissive status and municipalities can use them to assess the current situation in the youth work. Beginning with 2009 30 municipalities have started to fill in the criteria with the aim to develop the Youth Policy Strategy in the municipalities. Municipalities are responsible to develop the policy planning documents in the youth field determined by the amendments of the Youth Law initiated by the Ministry of Education and Science, which were adopted at the first reading by the Saeima on April 29, 2010.

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In 2010 and 2011 the Ministry of Education and Science plans to organize similar activities as in 2009 – the annual monitoring about self-assessment of life quality of young people, the level of awareness among young people, as well as youth participation in different social activities, youth organisations and voluntary work in order to obtain data about the youth policy implementation results.

With the support of the Ministry of Education and Science in 2009 training was provided for 46 municipal youth affairs specialists, as well as support was given to youth initiatives in the framework of open project competitions and exchange of experience was provided for persons involved in the youth work.

In the European Union the year 2011 will be the European Year of Volunteering in order to prove that volunteer work is one of the basic dimensions of active citizenship and democracy and contributes to the welfare of inhabitants and development of harmonic society in Europe. The Ministry of Education and Science will be the coordinating institution for the European Year of Volunteering activities in Latvia.

## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The implementation of international collaboration in the field of youth policy is based on several tasks, inter alia, to promote and support the use of examples of international good practices for improving the youth policy, to support the representation of Latvia in international institutions and networks in the field of youth, as well as to develop bilateral and multilateral cooperation among the countries, inter alia, the cooperation among youth organisations in the youth policy as Latvia is especially interested to extend and support these activities. The key tasks carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science are the following:

- In Latvia the State Agency “Agency of International Programs for Youth” of the Ministry of Education and Science implements non-formal education programme “Youth in Action”. In the framework of this programme the youth from age of 13 to 30 (and youth workers without any age restrictions) has the opportunity to gain knowledge, skills and experience by writing and implementing projects and raising funding from the programme “Youth in Action” assets. It promotes mobility within and beyond the borders of the European Union and collaboration in the field of youth on the European level.
- Non-formal collaboration with responsible institutions working with youth in Estonia, Lithuania, Germany and Finland is being developed, by means of coordinating views about the current issues in the field of youth on the agenda of the European Union and European Council, as well as exchanging experience in the implementation process of separate aspects connected with youth policy.
- In the framework of the Cooperation Protocol in the Field of Youth Policy with the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth for 2009 and 2010 it is possible to ensure the exchange of experience among youth affairs specialists by organising exchange visits about the aspects of implementation of the youth work, as well as German language seminars in the field of youth.
- In the framework of the Cooperation Programme in the Field of Youth for 2009–2011 of the quadruple cooperation agreement (with the governments of Flanders (Belgium), Estonia and Lithuania) training seminars are organized about the quality improvement of the youth work and about the development of inter- sectoral youth policy on the local level.
- In the framework of Swiss-Latvian Cooperation Programme it is planned to establish 10 multifunctional youth initiative centres, as well as to support the training, mobility and exchange of experience for youth and youth workers.
- The implementation of the Youth Exchange Programme under the Agreement between Latvia and Canada ensures the mobility and exchange of young people (between the ages of 18 and 35 inclusively), as well as cooperation and partnership between Latvia and Canada to offer opportunities for young people to learn, work or gain practical experience and improve the knowledge about language, culture and society of the other country. In 2009 there were 386 students from Latvia who used this opportunity to participate in the Exchange Programme (in 2008 there were only 22 students).

## CONTACTS AND INFORMATION SOURCES

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