

## **Youth policy recent developments in Latvia**

### **Development of the legal framework for youth policy**

During last two years one of the most crucial results is the development of legal framework for youth policy that meets European Union and the Council of Europe recommendations.

#### **Youth Law**

The Youth Law was adopted in Parliament on 8th of May 2008 in third reading. Youth Law aims to improve young people - persons aged 13 to 25 years – life's quality by promoting their initiatives, participation in decision-making and public life, as well as supporting youth work. Youth Law defines the participating parties and their competence in youth policy, youth participation in youth policy formulation and implementation, as well as guiding principles for the funding for youth initiatives, participation in decision-making and public life, as well as youth work. Youth Law defines young person, as well as the criteria for youth organization. Youth Law emphasize that the state and municipality has to encourage the non-formal education, volunteer work, physical activity and participation in culture as main tools for useful utilisation of leisure time. At the same time, the Youth Law to prescribe that the youth workers working for municipality must be trained according to the order set down by the Cabinet.

#### **Bylaws by Cabinet of Ministers to implement Youth Law**

- 1) Regulation of Youth Advisory Council (Adopted on 02.12.2008, bylaw nr. 985) – regulates work of Youth Advisory Council;
- 2) Regulation of Youth affairs specialist training (adopted on 16.12.2008, bylaw nr. 1047) – regulates youth affairs specialist training system – necessary skills, competences and knowledge to work as youth affairs specialist according to professions standard.
- 3) Regulation of procedures for granting of financing from the State budget, which is provided for promotion of young people initiatives and participation in decision-making and social life, as well as for youth work (adopted on 16.12.2008, bylaw nr. 1018) – regulates process of open call competitions for financial support from the State budget for:
  - a) youth organizations for projects, the objective of which is the promotion of youth initiatives and participation in decision-making and social life, as well as projects for youth work;
  - b) local government and an association or a foundation, a project of which is oriented towards youth work;
  - c) youth organizations for operational support of their activity.

#### **Youth specialist professional standard**

Youth specialist professional standard on 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2009 was included in "Occupational classification" by the amendments to the Cabinet of regulations Nr.125 "Regulations on the occupation classification, professions key purpose and relevant qualification requirements, and for use and updating the procedures for occupation classification."

Professional Standard defines youth specialist's basic functions and necessary professional competence, skills and knowledge to perform. Several municipalities have already established entity, which serves as a youth specialist's and fulfil those duties and functions. These persons work with young people, cooperating with the all involved persons, draws up proposals to develop the youth policy system, implements and coordinates the information and educational activities, projects and programs in youth field, and promotes youth civic education, encourage young people's voluntary work and participation in decision-making and public life, advise young people

on youth policy regarding project and program design and implementation, as well as promoting young people's personal development.

### **Plan for Council of Europe recommendation implementation**

Ministry of Children, Family and Integration Affairs (MCFIA) as youth policy coordinating institution soon after Council of Europe (CoE) international review on youth policy in Latvia started to work on implementation of recommendations. On 4<sup>th</sup> of February 2009 1<sup>st</sup> progress report on implementation of recommendations was submitted to CoE international review team. This report is a result of a long discussion and action process carried out by Youth Policy Coordination Council (YPCC) and Youth Organizations Consultative Council (YOCC). To draft it - Plan for CoE recommendation implementation all involved and relevant institutions were coordinated in common action – to evaluate recommendations and feedback about possibilities to implement them. All recent legal framework development and policy planning development is in line with CoE recommendations.

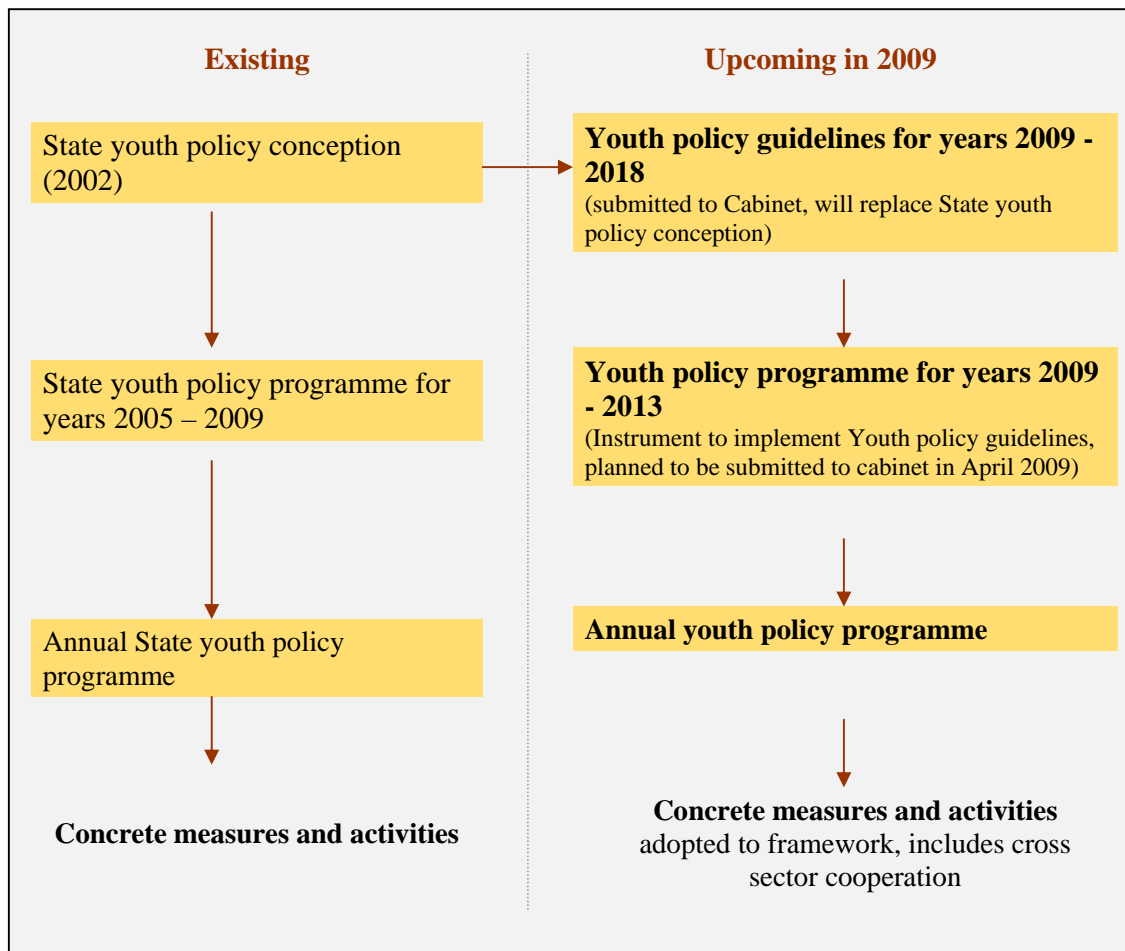
#### **Time framework for CoE recommendation implementation and planned further actions:**

| Nr. | Action  | Date                   |
|-----|---|------------------------|
| 1.  | CoE national hearing in Riga. Representatives of youth organizations, local and national level discuss implementation of recommendations and prepare proposals for implementation.                                | 18th January 2008      |
| 2.  | YOCC discuss CoE recommendations and possibilities to include their implementation in Youth policy guidelines.  | 14th of April 2008     |
| 3.  | YPCC discuss implementation of CoE recommendations and delegates MCFIA to coordinate with all relevant institutions to draft Plan for CoE recommendation implementation   | 30th of April 2008     |
| 4.  | YOCC is informed about process and progress of drafting Plan for CoE recommendation implementation, National Youth Council of Latvia presents youth organisation opinion about implementation CoE recommendations | 29th of July 2008      |
| 5.  | YPCC adopts Plan for CoE recommendation implementation  | 24th of September 2008 |
| 6.  | YOCC makes statement on Plan for CoE recommendation implementation  | December 2008          |
| 7.  | MCFIA submits Plan for CoE recommendation implementation (1st progress report) to CoE   | 4th of February 2009   |
| 8.  | YOCC updates discussions on Plan for CoE recommendation implementation  | 27th of February 2009  |
| 9.  | MCFIA presents Latvian progress in CDEJ meeting   | March 2009             |
| 10. | CoE international review team feedback on Plan for CoE recommendation implementation  | May/April 2009         |
| 11. | Youth Consultative Council discuss updated Plan for CoE recommendation implementation and CoE feedback  | May/June 2009          |
| 12. | MCFIA update Plan for CoE recommendation implementation   | Summer 2009            |
| 13. | Youth Consultative Council evaluates progress and implementation of Plan for CoE recommendation implementation  | October 2009           |
| 14. | MCFIA submits 2nd progress report to CoE  | First quarter of 2010  |
| 15. | CoE evaluates implementation of CoE recommendations   | Year 2010/2011         |

## Development of youth policy coordination and planning system

Within last two years youth policy coordination and planning system has been sufficiently developed. One of main key milestone for further development – Youth policy guidelines for years 2009 – 2018 has been drafted and submitted to Cabinet. Youth policy guidelines for years 2009 - 2018 is a long-term policy planning document for next 10 years, aimed at achieving a coherent youth policy implementation and coordination, and identifying priority action lines and policies, creating a vision of development in relation to the life quality of young people and youth policy. The guidelines identified the key challenges for youth, as well main action directions, main challenges and the policy and operational results of the next 10 years in youth policy field.

### Youth policy planing and implementation system:



With drafting Youth policy guidelines cross-sector approach has been visibly increased. As objective of guidelines is to achieve harmonized coordination and implementation of youth policy on state and local level, identifying priority action lines and policy results, creating vision after 10 years connected to youth life quality and realization of youth policy three main dimensions of youth policy were defined were state interferences are necessary according to CoE recommendations:

- a) dimension of youth policy coordination;
- b) dimension of youth participation and useful utilization of leisure time;
- c) dimension of youth social and economical growth and support to youth competitiveness and inclusion in society.

Guidelines include different youth policy horizontal directions, which are other field competences, as example:

- active youth participation in decision making process and youth organizations and nonformal groups;
- youth voluntary work;
- youth participation in physical activities and culture life;
- children and youth camps;
- youth health;
- educational aspects and youth mobility;
- youth employment;
- legal aspects of youth behaviour and violence against young people;
- youth social protection.

## Development of youth work quality

### Developments of Youth centres

At the moment in Latvia 39 youth centres established since 2004 with state support operates. Additionally with methodological and informative support to youth work municipalities has established 42 centres operating according to MCFIA drafted standards.



### Network of municipal youth affairs coordinators

Municipal youth affair coordinators work with the youth, with youth initiative groups and with youth organizations in different directions: employing leisure time, voluntary work, non-formal education, ensuring of youth participation in the local municipal administration. The youth affairs coordinator of the district, region, town or rural municipality plans and coordinates the work in the local territory, to give the youth support and assistance.



At the moment network of 68 youth affairs coordinators is established. Each of youth affairs coordinator works according to youth affairs specialist standard.

### Overall indicators for evaluation of local youth work

In Latvia tendency to carry out youth work, which is specifically adopted to local situation and needs of local youth according to subsidiarity principle, is raising, therefore MCFIA has drafted Overall indicators for evaluation of local youth work with an aim to facilitate youth policy implementation, which is harmonized with state youth policy and based on good practise from other municipalities, European Union and CoE. Those indicators are permissive and local municipalities can use them to:

- evaluate local youth work situation;
- identify fields where some development can be made;
- ensure implementation of targeted youth policy.

These indicators include 105 indexes in 10 different fields. First pilot report on 3 municipalities will be drafted in 2009.

## Development of youth information system

### Portal Jaunatneslietas.lv



There was a need to establish a unified information system to provide young people with quality, timely, comprehensive, holistic, and their interests and needs relevant information to support young people's initiatives and to provide them with the necessary tools to problem-solving.

On 29th of November 2007 youth information portal jaunatneslietas.lv was opened. When developing it use of existing facilities - local information centres, educational institutions and library resources - was used and new ways and places where young people

have a possibility to find information about educational opportunities, health issues, the integration of the labour market-related issues, on opportunities to spend leisure time, opportunities for participation of civil society, on voluntary work for sports activities, social and other topical issues for young people was introduced.

The portal contains every day updated information on current events in youth policy, youth policy matters, different projects, youth organization and youth affairs coordinator data base, possibilities to say opinions and recommendations to involved in youth policy implementation, as well there is ensured possibility to feedback between portal users and MCFIA. In one year portal was visited by 331 473 persons. In January 2009 portal at an average had around 1000 visitors per day.

Portal [www.jaunatneslietas.lv](http://www.jaunatneslietas.lv) serves youngsters as guide where on one spot wide range information is available regarding youth policy, besides there are gathered information and links

for young people to access necessary and interested information such as employment, education, participation, culture, sport, etc. Additionally there is created youth organization data base with communication possibilities and different innovations for ensuring easy usage; now there is registered 71 youth organization.

One of the main innovations and achievements in the information field is the within the portal [www.jaunatneslietas.lv](http://www.jaunatneslietas.lv) created local youth policy interactive map, where anybody can find youth initiative centres, local youth affair coordinators, child and youth centres and leisure time centres in Latvia. Especially successful is the convenient operational menu mechanism with which one can find in the map the closest leisure time utilisation possibilities as well as youth affairs coordinators and directly communicate with them.