

2015/2016

# LATVIA Human Development Report



## Mastery of Life and Information Literacy

*Latvia. Human Development Report 2015/2016. Mastery of Life and Information Literacy.*

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# Foreword

Dear Readers,

You have opened the Human Development Report prepared by the University of Latvia Advanced Social and Political Research Institute researchers. It contains valuable analysis of the skills that allow the population of Latvia to be masterful creators of their own lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – the time characterized by rapid development of technologies.

Technologies are a driving force, changing economy, labour market and our habits. Technology opens up new opportunities, yet its rapid development also creates challenges and the need to dedicate more and more attention to improvement of one's own knowledge and skills in order to be able to maintain the competitiveness and make the most of the latest opportunities.

It is important that the state should also set a good example in mastering of the new technologies by introducing modern and digital solutions both in its own work and in communication with the public. The digital age should grant every inhabitant and entrepreneur an opportunity to receive state and municipal services quickly, easily and securely. Less paper, more e-signatures and services in electronic environment will save the time and money of our citizens, businesses and state.

Data access and data use promotion, public involvement in governance and encouragement of technology-based innovation will be the development trends enabling Latvia to stand among the global leaders in the digital transformation and intelligent technologies. We already develop technologies that Europe will come to know only within the next decade. Latvia today is a language technology and artificial intelligence superpower. As a supporter of modern technologies and an active user thereof, I attribute great significance to these accomplishments. The economy breakthrough

required by Latvia will be achieved primarily by means of an advancement in thought and attitudes.

Information and technology era poses new requirements concerning all areas of life. Critical thinking, media use proficiency, political participation, reconciliation between work and family life, mobility, continuous professional development, planning and purposeful use of one's financial and other resources – all these facets require analytical approach, independent decisions and skills enabling a person to operate, communicate and build relationships equally well in the digital environment, as well as without technology intervention.

The Human Development Report has succeeded in selecting apt keywords – mastery of life and information literacy are essential competencies required to retain oneself when mastering new challenges, and to successfully move onward in step with the times. The study reveals our strengths, and, more importantly, shows the qualities to be perfected.

The greatest value of Latvia is its people. Approaching the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our country, all of us should recognize and meaningfully invest our resources into building modern, developed and prosperous Latvia together!



Raimonds Vējonis  
President of the Republic of Latvia

# Contents

<b>Foreword</b> . . . . .	<b>3</b>
<b>Basic facts about Latvia, 2015.</b> . . . . .	<b>8</b>
<b>Introduction</b> . . . . .	<b>9</b>
Definition of “mastery of life” and “information literacy” . . . . .	9
Information literacy as the 21 <sup>st</sup> century life skill . . . . .	10
Goal and main themes of Report . . . . .	13
<b>Chapter 1</b>	
<b>How proficiently do we take care of our health?</b>	
<b>How to become more skilful?</b> . . . . .	<b>16</b>
Concept of health literacy. . . . .	16
Health care financing and resource allocation policy . . . . .	17
Health policy in Latvia. . . . .	18
Public health and the main risk factors . . . . .	20
Population’s health information acquisition habits . . . . .	21
Plans of population regarding health improvement . . . . .	24
<b>Chapter 2</b>	
<b>Information literacy and mastery of life in the sphere of finance and shopping</b> . . . . .	<b>27</b>
Concept of financial literacy . . . . .	27
Financial literacy in Latvia. . . . .	28
Assessment of Latvian citizens’ financial literacy . . . . .	29
Information literacy regarding management of one’s own finances . . . . .	35
Savings and planning of finances . . . . .	38
<b>Chapter 3</b>	
<b>Family literacy – between public and private sphere.</b> . . . . .	<b>42</b>
Parental literacy and role of parental competency . . . . .	42
Literacy in building and maintenance of family relations . . . . .	45
Literacy in reconciling work and family life . . . . .	47
<b>Chapter 4</b>	
<b>Information literacy and mastery of life in politics and public administration.</b> . . . . .	<b>51</b>
Political literacy and its benefits . . . . .	51
Political literacy and institutions . . . . .	54
Awareness of political events . . . . .	54
Obtaining information on electoral choices and political decisions affecting one personally . . . . .	55
Experience in using national and local government services . . . . .	55
E-government. State and local government e-services . . . . .	56
Use of websites and e-services of institutions . . . . .	56
Political literacy outside institutions. . . . .	59

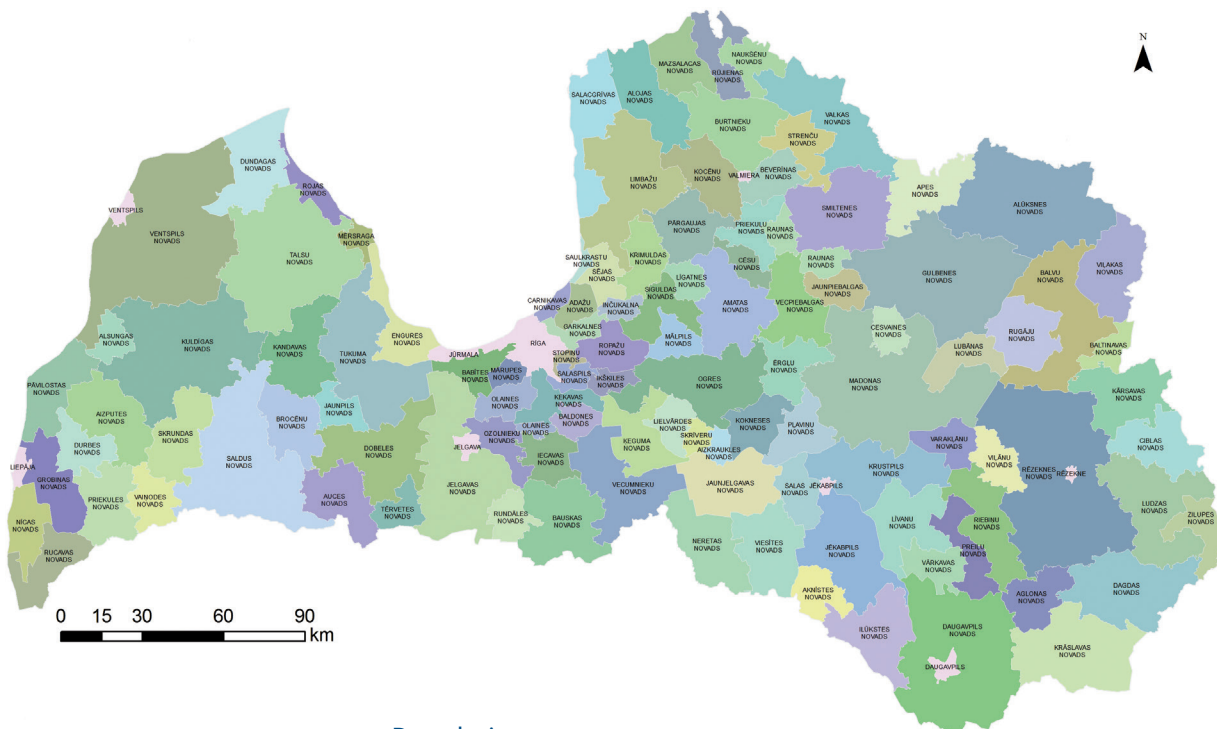
Social media use in political participation and self-organization . . . . .	59
Examples of online self-organisation . . . . .	60
Civil society context . . . . .	61
<b>Chapter 5</b>	
<b>Self-assessment of cultural literacy and inequality in the society . . . . .</b>	<b>63</b>
Cultural literacy and education (cultural capital hypothesis) . . . . .	65
Self-assessment of cultural literacy and mastery by population of Latvia in comparison with other spheres . . . . .	66
Self-assessment of cultural literacy and mastery according to various socio-demographic characteristics. . . . .	67
Gender differences in cultural literacy and mastery . . . . .	71
Summary, discussions and conclusion . . . . .	75
<b>Chapter 6</b>	
<b>Media literacy. A code for sustainable development of Latvia in the age of post-truth? . . . . .</b>	<b>78</b>
Media literacy environmental factors . . . . .	80
Policy of media literacy and education . . . . .	85
Media education . . . . .	86
Role of civil society and media industry . . . . .	88
Media literacy and life competencies . . . . .	89
Media use skills . . . . .	90
Critical understanding and interpretation skills . . . . .	92
Communication skills . . . . .	93
<b>Chapter 7</b>	
<b>Are the information literate and the well-informed also well-versed in the mastery of life? . . . . .</b>	<b>95</b>
Comparison of information literacy in various spheres of life . . . . .	95
Analysis of information literacy according to competency groups . . . . .	98
Information literacy, being informed and mastery of life . . . . .	107
Mastery of life and subjective well-being . . . . .	109
<b>Appendices . . . . .</b>	<b>113</b>
Survey regarding mastery of life and information literacy of the population: technical information . . . . .	113
Data tables . . . . .	117
The Human Development Index and statistical tables. . . . .	133
<b>Literature . . . . .</b>	<b>144</b>

## Boxes

Box 01	Basic principles in the field of information society . . . . .	10
Box 02	Reports on Human Development in Latvia: themes . . . . .	11
Box 03	Quality of life dimensions . . . . .	11
Box 04	21 <sup>st</sup> century skills . . . . .	12
Box 05	Digital intelligence . . . . .	14
Box 06	About the publication "Global Media and Information Literacy Assessment Framework: country readiness and competencies" . . . . .	15
Box 07	Definition of the concepts "competencies, skills, knowledge, literacy, mastery" . . . . .	15
Box 1.1	Responses to the question "When did you last have your blood pressure taken, measured cholesterol and sugar level in blood?" . . . . .	21
Box 2.1	Financial literacy and evaluation of its individual performance indicators of the population of Latvia . . . . .	30
Box 2.2	Financial literacy and evaluation of its individual performance indicators of the population of Latvia according to gender . . . . .	30
Box 2.3	Population of Latvia self-evaluation regarding components of family literacy . . . . .	31
Box 2.4	Respondents' knowledge of the possibility to recover expenses of their own or their family members' education from resident income tax . . . . .	32
Box 2.5	Respondents' knowledge of the possibility to recover expenses of medical services used by themselves or their family members from resident income tax . . . . .	33
Box 2.6	Responses to the question "If you / your household were suddenly deprived of its main source of income, how long would you be able to cover all your expenses from savings (without borrowing from relatives / friends, using unemployment benefits etc.)?" . . . . .	33
Box 2.7	Population of Latvia self-assessment regarding awareness of various issues, answers "very good" and "good" . . . . .	34
Box 2.8	Respondents' self-assessment of their awareness regarding financial management according to financial literacy groups . . . . .	34
Box 2.9	Ability of population of Latvia to find and use information relevant to management of their own finances . . . . .	35
Box 2.10	Responses to the question "Where most recently did you find the most useful information about management of your finances?" . . . . .	35
Box 2.11	Latvian population's assessment of its mastery of life (the ability to increase one's welfare) according to financial literacy groups . . . . .	36
Box 2.12a	Responses to the question "How do you build up savings (only one answer possible)?" . . . . .	37
Box 2.12b	Responses to the question "How do you build up savings (only one answer possible)?" . . . . .	37
Box 2.13a	Three main financial priorities . . . . .	39
Box 2.13b	Three main financial priorities . . . . .	39
Box 2.14	Responses to the question: "If you / your household suddenly were deprived of its main source of income, how long would you be able to cover all the expenses from savings (without borrowing from relatives / friends, unemployment benefits, etc.)?" . . . . .	40
Box 3.1	Self-assessment of skills related to childcare and upbringing . . . . .	43
Box 3.2	Self-assessment of skills related to establishment and maintenance of family . . . . .	47
Box 3.3	Factors imposing a burden on forming and maintaining family relationship . . . . .	48
Box 3.4	Childcare opportunities used within the last year . . . . .	49
Box 4.1	Explanation of political literacy . . . . .	52
Box 4.2	Do you understand, what is happening in politics? . . . . .	52
Box 4.3	Correlation between population's assessment of media literacy and political literacy . . . . .	53
Box 4.4	What is your overall assessment of your awareness about... . . . . .	54
Box 4.5	Test of basic knowledge. Which institution can revoke the decision of the Constitutional Court? . . . . .	55
Box 4.6	Assessment given by population regarding finding and using the information about services of state institutions . . . . .	55

Box 4.7	Institutions, where within the last 3 years people have sought information (in website or personally), April, 2014 . . . . .	58
Box 4.8	Have you used the following Internet sites? . . . . .	58
Box 4.9	<i>Manabalss.lv</i> – platform for alternative participation . . . . .	59
Box 5.1	Respondents who were not advised by anybody about the latest book read / cultural event attended, division by age group, % . . . . .	68
Box 5.2	Respondents who were advised the latest book read / cultural event attended by a relative: division by age group, % . . . . .	68
Box 5.3	Public non-participation in culture: non-attendance of cultural events and non-reading of books . . . . .	71
Box 5.4	Advisors of books and events: according to gender . . . . .	75
Box 5.5	Advisors of books and events: according to family relation . . . . .	76
Box 6.1	Components of media literacy . . . . .	79
Box 6.2	Structure of media literacy assessment criteria . . . . .	79
Box 6.3	Overall picture of books, periodicals, TV and radio broadcasting organizations (2000–2015) . . . . .	80
Box 6.4	Media use in Latvia . . . . .	81
Box 6.5	Media use on regular basis in 2015 . . . . .	83
Box 6.6	Excerpt from the model programme for class lessons . . . . .	86
Box 6.7	What is the extent of attention you devote to media literacy issues during lessons? . . . . .	87
Box 6.8	Media use skills of the population of Latvia . . . . .	90
Box 6.9	Media use language . . . . .	90
Box 6.10	Which assertions characterise your habits of mass media use most accurately? . . . . .	91
Box 6.11	Self-assessment of media evaluation skills by the population of Latvia . . . . .	91
Box 6.12	How often do you compare the information provided in various mass media? . . . . .	92
Box 6.13	Trust in media by residents of Latvia and EU . . . . .	92
Box 7.1	Population of Latvia self-assessment regarding various literacies according to gender . . . . .	96
Box 7.2	Intercorrelation matrix of seven variables of various literacies . . . . .	96
Box 7.3	Self-assessments of various literacies given by residents of Latvia according to age . . . . .	97
Box 7.4	Three MIL competency groups . . . . .	98
Box 7.5	Self-assessment of habits related to obtaining the information necessary in daily life . . . . .	99
Box 7.6	Obtaining information from personally known people – family, friends, colleagues . . . . .	100
Box 7.7	Searching for information with Internet search engines, I usually choose from the first three entries . . . . .	101
Box 7.8	I know how to select reliable sources of information . . . . .	101
Box 7.9	Where during the last search was obtained the most useful information about ... . . . . .	102
Box 7.10	Sources of information, where the most useful information has last been obtained regarding different spheres of life . . . . .	102
Box 7.11	I try to find the answers by comparing various information sources . . . . .	104
Box 7.12	I have difficulties to synthesize and store the found information . . . . .	104
Box 7.13	I know how to use the found information practically . . . . .	105
Box 7.14	Awareness level of residents in various spheres of life . . . . .	106
Box 7.15	Spheres of life which have clear action plans and to which attention is paid regularly, and where awareness is the lowest and implementation of plans – the least successful . . . . .	107
Box 7.16	Dynamic model of subjective well-being . . . . .	109
Box 7.17	Subjective well-being assessment of the residents of Latvia . . . . .	110
Box 7.18	Respondents with high and low subjective well-being: their answers to the question, whether they have a clear action plan for achieving specific goals . . . . .	111

# Basic facts about Latvia, 2015



<b>Population</b>		<b>Population distribution %</b>	
Population, millions	2.0 million	Rural	32
Annual population growth %	-0.3	Urban	68
Population density, person per km <sup>2</sup>	31		
<b>Gender distribution %</b>		<b>Age structure, % (beginning of year)</b>	
Males	46	0-14	15
Females	54	Working age (males 15-62, females 15-61.5)	62
<b>Ethnic structure, % (beginning of year)</b>		Above working age	23
Latvians	62	<b>Human Development Index rank - 46</b>	
Russians	26	Human Development Index	0.819
Belarussians	3	Adult literacy rate, %	99.9
Ukrainians	2	<b>Health</b>	
Poles	2	Average life expectancy, years	74.7
Lithuanians	1	Males	69.7
Others	4	Females	79.3
<b>Economy</b>		Infant mortality (per 1,000 births)	4.1
GDP, million euro	24377.7	Number of physicians (per 10,000 inhabitants)	34.7
GDP per capita, average prices in the year 2010, euro	10 805	<b>Government expenditures, % of GDP</b>	
GDP per capita, purchasing power	12 300	TOTAL	37.1
GDP growth, %	3	Of which	
Unemployment rate, %	8.7	Defence	1
<b>Employment by sector, %</b>		Education	6
Agriculture	8	Health	3.8
Industry	24	Social security	11.5
Services	68	<b>Territory, km<sup>2</sup> - 64,569</b>	
<b>Exchange rate of euro per USD 1 (end of year) 1.09</b>			



# Introduction

By the 1970s it was established that we live in an information society. It is a society, wherein the access to information has transformed all the spheres of life – economics, politics, education, social – and made a significant impact on them. Access to information has altered daily information practices. The very fact that information is available 24 hours a day has turned it into a resource that can be used by everybody. However, it increasingly requires us to distinguish among the sources of information, to decide, which information source to use, and which source can be trusted. A person's behaviour in seeking information solutions to specific life situations often develop instinctively and intuitively. The research shows (Bates, 2006) that the principle of least effort often prevails in information practices, as a person aims to achieve more or less acceptable results by spending minimum energy. An example, people choose inferior information sources because they are more familiar and accessible. They rely on the first information source found without double checking the information. Due to the efficiency and easy use of the Google search engine, they seek information only through Google, not knowing other databases provide reliable answers to specific questions. Additionally, people often use and share information disregarding copyright restrictions. However, the consequences of using poor quality information can be compared to the consumption of bad food products which can poison the body; whereas, poor quality information can “contaminate thinking”, thus, undermining decision-making, understanding of the situation, and acting.

Through formal education, knowledge and skills are acquired to find and use information essential for studies and research. Given the importance of obtaining the necessary information for every sphere of human life, attention to acquiring information skills is increasingly translated in terms of the development of society. Since 1990, United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been an active organization focussing its efforts on the support and development of “a media and information literate society by using comprehensive strategies embracing the target groups – information generators and consumers, educators, governments of states and decision makers” (UNESCO, n.d.b). UNESCO has developed several conceptual documents (*Media and Information Literacy: Policy and Strategy Guidelines* (Grizzle, 2013), *UNESCO Global media and information literacy assessment framework: country readiness and competencies* (UNESCO, 2013)), and organised significant conferences/forums, some of which have taken place in Latvia.

Another international organization that has actively promoted facilitation of information literacy throughout society is the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). The efforts of this organization are directed towards the implementation of information literacy in library work. As pointed out in the publication “Guidelines on Information Literacy for Lifelong Learning”, information literacy skills are essential for individuals to be successful in lifelong learning, work, and daily communication (Lau, 2006).

The development of information literacy is stressed in the development planning document “Information Society Development Guidelines 2014-2020” of the Latvian State. In the document, information literacy is presented as one of three basic principles constituting the information society (see Box 0.1).

As pointed out in the UNESCO document on the development of the knowledge society, “In order to succeed in this constantly changing environment, and to resolve problems effectively in every facet of life, individuals, communities and nations should obtain a critical set of competencies to be able to seek information, critically evaluate it and create new information and knowledge. Information literacy creates new opportunities to improve the quality of our lives” (UNESCO, n.d.a).

The central theme of the present Human Development Report (hereinafter, **the Report**) is mastery of life and information literacy as requirements in determining the quality of life. Information literacy is considered to affect the quality of life and is related to everyday processes: health, finances, family, work and education, the use of central and local government services, political involvement, culture and entertainment, and use of media. Hence, the present **Report** continues to pursue the issues crucial for sustainable human development (see Box 0.2).

## Definition of “mastery of life” and “information literacy”

### Mastery of life as a condition for the quality of life

The term “mastery of life” means the individual's care for his or her life, and the ability to organize life processes in a meaningful order. This term was introduced by the Finnish information scientist R. Savolainen (1995). Mastery of life can be either passive or active. It is active if a person solves vital

tasks or address challenges, such as overcoming a life crises or recovering from a sickness. It is active if a person purposefully plans his or her life, creating provisions rather than waiting for serious trouble. Mastery of life embraces a person's abilities, knowledge and skills to control and manage life and to cope with problems. In the group of mastery of life competencies, Savolainen has assigned significance to the **skills of acquisition, assessment, and use of information**. These skills, plus an individual's traits, problem solving attitude, values, material, social, cultural and cognitive capital, as well as specific life situations determine their mastery of life, aka *control* of life, or *management* of life. It can be said that mastery of life is composed of life skills, survival skills, or basic skills essential for a **quality human life**. Therefore, a person's mastery of life can be evaluated by taking into account the quality of their life. This includes

- satisfaction with life in general,
- living conditions,
- health and economic situations,
- education,
- personal productivity,
- relationship with other people, and
- subjective feeling of well-being or happiness (Gomes, Pinto, & dos Santos, 2010) (see Box 0.3).

## Information literacy as the 21<sup>st</sup> century life skill

### Life skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

Skills significantly influence every individual's opportunities in life. As indicated in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) study, "if a person has the necessary skills, they

can positively transform his or her life, whereas in the absence of such skills the person may feel isolated from the society, and as regards a country in general, the lack of the necessary skills may have a negative impact on its economic growth as well as undermine its position among other countries" (OECD, 2013). The analysis of social processes shows that indicators of information literacy coincide with economic development indicators (Farkas, 2011). For individuals, families, and societies alike, information is an instrument of empowerment to improve one's health, income, and relationship with the world. A literate community is a dynamic community, one that exchanges ideas and engages in debate. Illiteracy, is an obstacle to a better quality of life, and can aggravate exclusion and violence (UNESCO, 2016).

Economic, political and technological development of the society determines which skills are necessary for individuals to find solutions to personal and professional life situations. These might include entering the labour market, developing a social life, and accessing education and training opportunities. The development of information and communication technologies requires the individual to continuously learn new skills needed to use technologies or to handle changes brought about by them. An individual needs skills to address a problem *creatively*, and, seeing that the chosen strategy does not work, exchange it for another. The scholar Cris Dede (Dede, 2009), mentions other examples of why new skills are necessary in today's information society.

1. Increasing opportunity to work remotely; *there is a greater need for effective cooperation skills even with those people you are unlikely to meet physically.*
2. Growing volumes of available information; *the skills of filtering information, assessing the quality of information, and how data becomes essential.*

### Box 01

#### Basic principles in the field of information society (Information Society Development Guidelines 2014–2020, 2013)

##### Basic principles in the field of information society

- **access to information:** to create an opportunity and means to access and use information and ICT for each and every person; thus ensuring human rights, enhancing education, regional development, poverty reduction, gender equality, digital inclusion, overall availability, public transparency, effective use of resources and society involvement.
- **development of information literacy:** to create, support and enhance strategies, means and methodologies in order to develop abilities and skills to use information and ICT in all domains and for all social groups at all formal and informal educational levels offering opportunities provided by various information management models. Information literacy covers also abilities and skills, which relate to security and reliability in electronic environment. It is essential to strengthen research and technology innovation capabilities that are focused to knowledge building, as well as the national and regional information content creation.
- **legal and regulatory framework:** to develop the required legislation, which guarantees rights to information and enhances information and ICT availability and usage, concurrently strengthening information security and protection.

3. Developing new digital technologies; *requiring skills of mutual creation and division of knowledge.*

The OECD Survey of Adult Skills (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009) has stressed that in order to be able to invest in the training of skills it is important to

know which skills are needed and which are already available. Specific government policies are also required to ensure people have necessary skills for problem solving e.g., implementing logical tasks that may improve the quality of life.

## Box 02

### Reports on Human Development in Latvia: themes

**1995**

General Human Development Report Latvia; impact of the social changes on the population

**1996**

Poverty, Social Integration and Regional Gaps

**1997**

Living Standards, Education Reform and Participation

**1998**

State, Individuals and Private Sector; sustainable development, equal opportunities, quality of human relationship, partnership of individuals, state and private sector

**1999**

General Human Development Latvia; manifestations of globalization in Latvia, risks and opportunities generated thereby

**2000/2001**

Public Policy Process and Human Development Latvia

**2002/2003**

Human Security and Human Development; safety as the main condition for the development of society

**2004/2005**

Human Capability in the Regions

**2006/2007**

Human Capital; its relation to social capital, public institutions and networks

**2008/2009**

Accountability and Responsibility

**2010/2011**

National Identity, Mobility and Capability

**2012/2013**

Sustainable Nation

## Box 03

### Quality of life dimensions (European Union, 2015)



Several conceptual frameworks have been developed to group the **competencies needed by all in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**. For example, OECD groups the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the following **three clusters of competencies**.

1. Autonomous work (*drafting of life plans, protecting and assessing one's rights, interests and needs*).
2. Interacting with people from various groups (*creation of interpersonal relationship, cooperation, teamwork, conflict management and solution*).
3. Interactive use of various tools (*language, knowledge and information as well as various technologies*) (OECD, 2015).

Listed in the Global Assessment and Teaching of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills **four** are defined.

1. Thinking (*creativity and innovation; critical thinking, problem solving, decision-making, learning*).
2. Working (*communication, teamwork*).
3. Use of tools for working (*information literacy, ICT literacy*).
4. Living (*personal and social responsibility, including cultural competencies, local and global citizenship*) (Binkley et al., 2010) (see Box 0.4).

Information literacy is emphasised in almost all the models of competencies and skills. Over several years regarding adult *life skills* (OECD, 2013) in information-rich societies, a particular focus was directed at **information processing competencies**, on which information literacy depends: reading, numeracy, writing skills, and problem solving.

According to the researchers, these basic skills fulfil several functions supporting a better life.

1. Joining and integrating into the labour market, educational system, and participating in social and civic life.
2. Adapting to social and workplace situations.
3. Being politically influenced (OECD, 2013).

These skills are the basis of cognitive skills, such as analytical reasoning necessary for accessing and understanding knowledge. These skills provide the ability to read and appropriately react to text as in use of medications, or a message sent by a colleague, or to enrol your child in school. In the same way, math is indispensable from selling and buying goods, planning your day, planning your finances, to understanding the pension system. These problem-solving skills are increasingly dependent on the ability to manage and use information and technologies (OECD, 2013).

### Information literacy

There have been discussions about the term to define the skills of access and use of information required in modern society (e.g., *metaliteracy, transliteracy*) (Mackey & Jacobson, 2014). In this study "information literacy" is chosen as the basic term.

The term "information literacy" was first used in the USA in 1974 (Zurkowski, 1974). In short, **information literacy can be defined as the knowledge and skills to find, assess and use information in order to create new knowledge**

## Box 04

### 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (Binkley et al., 2010)

ATC215 defined ten 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into four broad categories. These have been grouped under the acronym KSAVE: knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and ethics.

#### WAYS OF THINKING

- Creativity and innovation
- Critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making
- Learning to learn/metacognition (knowledge about cognitive process)

#### TOOLS FOR WORKING

- Information literacy
- Information and communication technology (ICT) literacy

#### WAYS OF WORKING

- Communication
- Collaboration (teamwork)

#### WAYS OF LIVING IN THE WORLD

- Citizenship – local and global
- Life and career
- Personal and social responsibility – including cultural awareness and competence

For further details, please see: Binkley, M., Erstad, O., Hermina, J., Raizen, S., Ripley, M., Miller-Ricci, M. & Rumble, M. (2012), *Defining Twenty-First Century Skills*. In Griffin, P., Care, E., & McGaw, B. *Assessment and Teaching of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills*, Dordrecht, Springer.

(Catts & Lau, 2008). Information literacy characterises the level of a person's skill and efficiency in information practices.

R. Catts and J. Lau (2008) write that information-literate people are capable of the following practices of:

- recognising their information needs,
- locating and evaluating the quality of information,
- making effective and ethical use of information,
- storing and retrieving information, and
- applying information to create/communicate knowledge.

As a result of development in information and communication technology (ICT) information literacy is influenced by knowledge and skills in the use of these technologies. The ICTs have radically changed handling of information – access and selection, as well as creation and exchange of information. New terms are created for naming various new competencies, such as ICT literacy, Internet literacy, mobile literacy, digital literacy. These terms focus on mastery of ICT tools and skills. For the purpose of measurement, the term “digital intelligence” has been introduced. It includes digital safety, digital emotional intelligence, digital rights, etc. (Park, 2016) (see Box 0.5).

When assessing the various terms of literacy, Stordy has concluded there are 35 most frequently used literacies in different publications (Stordy, 2015). It has to be concluded that the term “information literacy” most accurately indicates the skills of obtaining information and its use. As the information environment changes, so does the definition of the term – it has become more explicit and consistent with the new opportunities to obtain information. For example, the new UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Assessment Framework defines media and information literacy as “a set of competencies that empowers citizens to access, retrieve, understand, evaluate and use, to create as well as share information and media content **in all formats, using various tools, in a critical, ethical and effective way, in order to participate and engage in personal, professional and societal activities**” (UNESCO, 2013, p. 29).

The analysis of the publications of library science and information science researchers shows that information literacy can be viewed from three different perspectives.

1. Information literacy as the acquisition of “information age” skills (Specific skills fixed in standards, models that must be mastered in order to manage information).
2. Information literacy as the cultivation of *habits of mind* (skill to use information in problem solving, critical thinking).
3. Information literacy as engagement in information-rich social practices (The skills that are

essential for living, work, education and other social contexts and are applicable to specific life situations) (Addison & Meyers, 2013).

In **the study** conducted for this Human Development Report, information literacy is largely contemplated as a social practice – an individuals' skill to obtain and use information in order to handle specific matters in life.

For the overall assessment of information literacy in **the Report study**, a media and information literacy matrix (MIL) is used comprising three competency groups.

1. **Access** to information sources (Awareness of one's information needs, choice of specific access tools and ways, search, obtaining of results).
2. **Evaluation** of the selected information sources (Credibility of information content and safety).
3. **Creation** of new knowledge/information on the basis of the obtained information (Sharing, exchange of information).

The MIL matrix was published in the UNESCO study issued in 2013 “Global Media and Information Literacy Assessment Framework: country readiness and competencies” (UNESCO, 2013) (see Box 0.6).

## Goal and main themes of Report

The **goal** of the Human Development Report “Life Mastery and Information Literacy” is to establish what skills pertaining to information are necessary to solve daily problems within the Latvian population. The goal wishes to evaluate if, and how, what skills affect the mastery of life in spheres such as health care and maintenance, finance management, use of state and local government services, organization of family life, political engagement and self-organization, recreational activities, professional work and education. Information literacy in each specific social practice is assigned a term: health literacy, financial literacy, family literacy, political literacy, cultural literacy. Media literacy is set apart as it is a skill essential to all spheres of life.

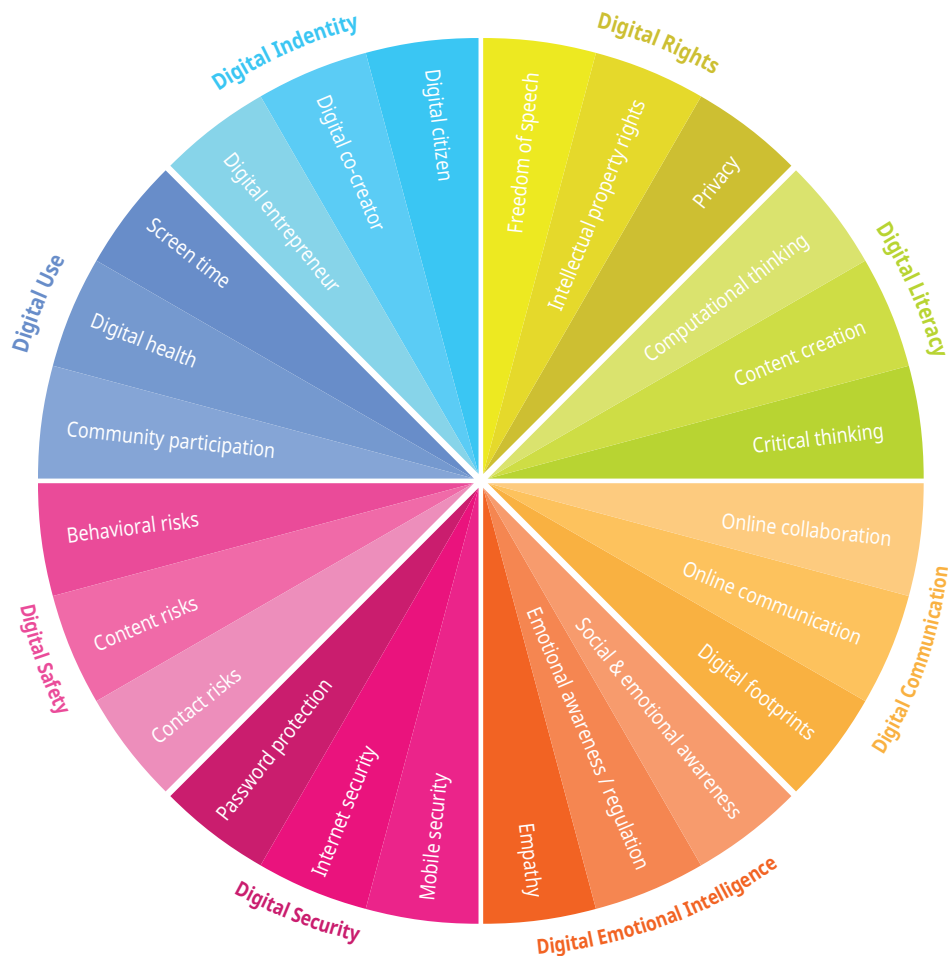
The examination of information literacy (the habits of obtaining and use of information) of the Latvian population, focused on self-assessment in terms of:

- knowledge and selection of information sources,
- evaluation of their quality,
- checking the credibility of the information sources, and
- understanding of information, and use of information sources.

In relation to this mastery of life sphere these attributes were examined through one's own knowledge and plans for life, in addition to other studies of the quality of Latvian life. Several approaches were used in the research and interpretation of results. Included were the analysis of the importance of these

## Box 05

## Digital intelligence (Park, 2016)



competencies at the individual and societal level based on the data of the public survey of the Latvian population *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* ("Survey regarding mastery of life and information literacy of the population" conducted March to May, 2016), and implemented by the University of Latvia Faculty of Social Sciences, 2016, (hereinafter **the study**) and the analysis of the individuals' self-assessment of their information literacy and mastery of life. For in-depth understanding of the situation, the data of other research works were used and the state policy and information environment in Latvia were assessed. Evaluation of every type of literacy was supplied with conclusions regarding the major achievements, greatest problems and most important tasks.

**The Report** is divided into seven chapters. Given that the quality of life first and foremost depends on a person's health, Chapter 1 of **the Report** is on health literacy of the Latvian population. Health

literacy is one of the information literacy types to which major attention is also given in other countries by drafting various training programmes and researching the subject. This section presents a survey of the benefits gained from health literacy by the individuals and the society in general. It contains the analysis of state policy manifested as the community's life mastery in this sphere. The health status of the Latvian population is evaluated, which indirectly characterises their mastery of life in this aspect, and the people's self-assessment regarding their health literacy and health mastery.

Chapter 2 of **the Report** focuses on another area essential for life mastery – financial literacy. This literacy skill has been emphasised over the past several years, as it is a close link between individual skills and the gains of the entire Latvian community. Skilful management of one's own finances and creation of savings is the condition by which a certain level of material prosperity is achieved. The analysis



of the Latvian people's self-assessment of their financial literacy brings out the major deficiencies in knowledge and skills, and their impact on financial management.

Chapter 3 is devoted to family literacy, a relatively new concept of information literacy. Family literacy includes skills on the access and use of information regarding parent-children relationships, adult partnerships, and issues of harmonizing career with family life. Several studies, statistical data and significant processes in the Latvian society prove that life mastery and awareness in this area leave much to be desired.

Chapter 4 contains an analysis of the Latvian people's political literacy. Information literacy in politics means the ability to find and select sources of information in order to assess the candidates in the pre-election period and to understand political events, as well as to participate in solutions of various public issues and to more successfully collaborate with state and municipal institutions.

Chapter 5 of **the Report** addresses the Latvian citizens' self-assessment regarding their cultural literacy, which is viewed as an entirety of information skills necessary to choose which culture product

to use and in which culture practices to engage when planning one's spare time. Compared with the other skills examined in **the study**, Latvian citizens have given the highest assessment to their cultural literacy.

Media literacy is a special type of competency analyzed in Chapter 6. Media literacy comprises the skills required to access and critically analyse various media and create new media. Media literacy has a significant impact on all the spheres of life, particularly on political literacy, where the skill to retrieve information from various media is seen as essential to understand a specific political event. Given that media literacy depends on the accessibility of media, that chapter also examines the media environment of Latvia.

**The Report** is concluded with the chapter devoted to the connection of the Latvian citizens' information literacy awareness and life mastery. The section is an overall assessment of information literacy examined in **the study**. In the concrete spheres of life it identifies the main deficiencies in information literacy and the relationship between information literacy, mastery of life and one of life's quality dimensions – subjective well-being.

## Box 06

### About the publication “Global Media and Information Literacy Assessment Framework: country readiness and competencies”

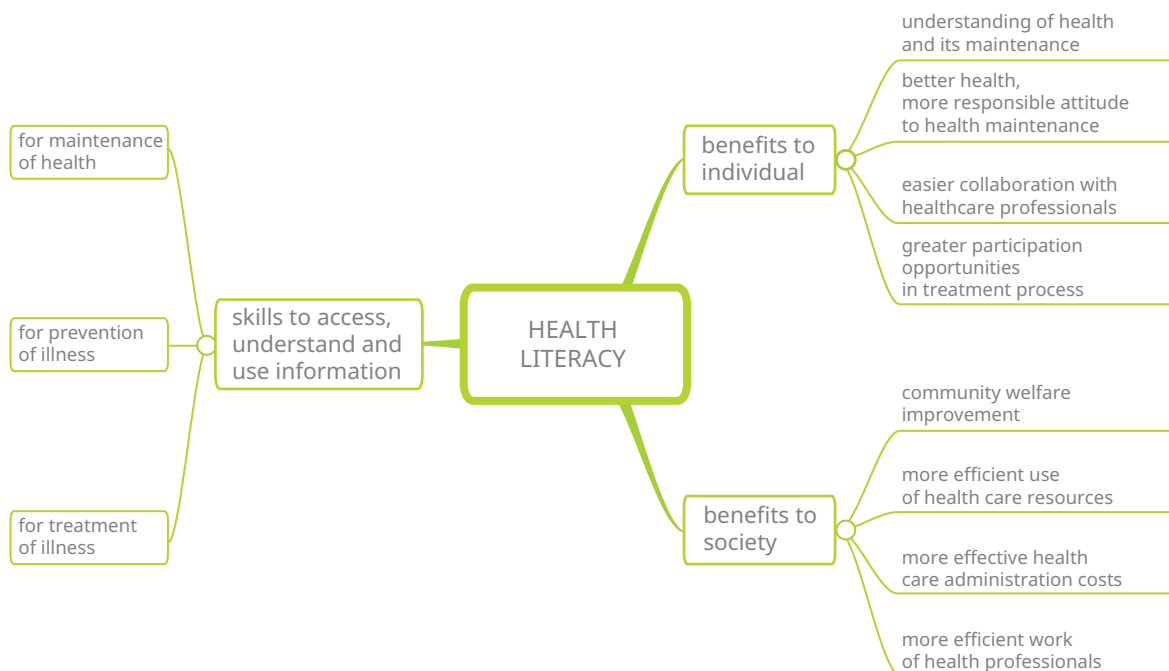
The publication „Global Media and Information Literacy Assessment Framework: country readiness and competencies” was created with the aim to develop the strategy and methodology for examining the citizens' media and information literacy (MIL), stressing that these competences are an essential precondition of the countries' sustainable development. The progress of MIL is based on rights laid down in Article 19 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights “to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” The framework does not offer a ready-made methodology and toolkit, it comprises the chief indicators that every state can adapt in order to create its own MIL research tool applicable on the state, institutional and individual level.

## Box 07

### Definition of the concepts “competencies, skills, knowledge, literacy, mastery”

Similarly to OECD studies on adult skills (OECD, 2013), in the Human Development Report the concepts “**competencies**” and “**skills**” are used as synonyms, although often in the concept of “**competencies**” the skills are viewed as one of the three components of competency. The other two are knowledge and attitude. Both skills and competencies are associated with an individual's ability to act appropriately in a given situation. Both involve the application of knowledge, the use of various tools, cognitive and practical strategies and routines, and both imply beliefs, dispositions and values (e.g. attitudes) (OECD, 2013). The topic of **the Report** being information literacy, the competencies and skills essentially pertain to the access to information, its assessment and use in the examined spheres of life. The word “**literacy**” in **the Report** is used as a general term defining the entirety of information skills and can be considered a synonym to the term “information literacy”.

The term “**mastery**” in the Latvian language is used to describe an excellent level of a skill enabling one to achieve the result adequate to the set goal (Meistarība, 2009). Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary gives another definition of mastery – “complete control of something” (Mastery, n. d.). In **the Report**, the term “mastery” mostly (except the Chapter 5 dedicated to the cultural literacy) is used to describe the control over a certain sphere of life.



## Chapter 1

# How proficiently do we take care of our health? How to become more skilful?

Health is one of the most important resources in our lives. Health care is a daily issue – whether expecting a child, facing serious health problems or a life-threatening condition. Health care is extensive and complex – the range of information and the spectrum of issues to deal with are broad. Among other issues, the following are examples of questions that might be asked.

- What is a healthy diet?
- What are the most important disease risk factors and symptoms?
- What are the publicly funded health care services?
- Where to receive the required service?
- Where to go for advice or assistance outside the family doctor's working hours?
- How to recover a part of the health costs?

Regarding the last question, 25% of respondents do not know if medical costs for themselves, or their family, are recoverable-in full or partially. Information and understanding of health related topics in order to make health related decisions, have become important competencies closely related to the person's state of health and successful recovery.

### Concept of health literacy

What is health literacy and what does this concept encompass? **Health literacy is the ability to access, understand and use health information** (Sykes, Wills, Rowland & Popples, 2013, p.12) **and to assess and appraise it to**



**make decisions about treatment, health care or disease prevention** (HLS-EU Consortium, 2012, p. 7). “Health literacy” implies a broad use of the term within the concept of mastery of life. Examples in the field of health include regular preventive medical examinations, adhering to a healthy lifestyle, being able to evaluate the significance of health problems and take appropriate action, plus do what is important to preserve health.

Health literacy is an essential precondition to ensure a person’s health. As concluded in the foreign studies, there is a relationship between a person’s health literacy and health condition. People with lower health literacy often have worse health indicators; an example is misunderstanding medical or pharmaceutical instructions. These studies also found that people with lower health literacy use emergency medical services and hospital services more (Rowlands, Protheroe, Price, Gann, & Raf, 2014, p. 9). This is explained by delayed visits to the doctor or failure to comply with doctor’s instructions. People with lower health literacy more often suffer from complications after being discharged from a health care institution (Wallace, Perkhounkova, Bohr, & Chung, 2016).

Thus, it can be concluded on the individual level, health literacy helps to ensure a person’s better health condition achieved through disease prevention and timely diagnosis, easier interaction with health care professionals, excluding risks of misunderstanding or failure to comprehend medical information. Higher health literacy helps an individual increase:

- trust in health care professionals,
- self-esteem due to understanding medical information, and
- opportunities for participation in one’s own treatment process.

If citizens are taking disease prevention steps, maintaining a higher standard of healthy living and assuming an active role in their own health care, the overall community benefits (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2013, pp. 22–23). Society’s higher health literacy level contributes to a more efficient use of health care resources by concentrating on primary health care and prevention, thus, reducing the costs from late and complex health-related complications and hospitalizations. This helps to improve the cost-effectiveness of health care administration, by contributing to faster, more efficient application for visits, and preparation of insurance and health expenditure documents. A person’s health literacy permits more in-depth communication with medical professionals, which in turn allows for time and attention to medical treatment.

Key challenges for the health care system include:

- ability of patients to understand and navigate extensive health information,
- capacity to evaluate its reliability, and
- comprehension of medical terms (Rowlands et al., 2014, p.5).

An important assistant in the understanding information is the Internet. According to a 3-month span in 2015, *Eurostat* data shows 79% of the population aged 16–74 years have used the Internet. The EU increase is about 11 %, while in Latvia since 2010, it has risen by 13% (Eurostat, 2015). Websites offer a wide range of information – from professional medical literature to websites’ comment sections where people may share their experiences in a free form and discuss the best methods of treatment. Thus, the Internet simultaneously aids literacy levels but can become a source of misinformation to those who are unable to critically evaluate the quality of an information source. This may ultimately put them at an increased health risk. At the same time, the Internet also provides access to a variety of health services, such as doctor appointments, purchase of health insurance, and electronic tax declaration systems enabling partial recovery of health expenditures.

Improvement of public health literacy is an essential role of health care professionals. Major challenges are associated with:

- communicating understandable health-related information to patients,
- recognizing when patient has not understood what the doctor has said, and
- helping people improve their literacy level.

Promotion of health literacy by health care professionals’ is important because patients may be ashamed of the fact they do not understand the doctor, which, in turn, may deter them from asking further questions, resulting in worse health (Rowlands et al., 2014, p. 7).

There are three levels of health literacy. The first is *functional literacy*. It includes the person’s skills to read and understand medical information, and understand spoken guidance given by a health care expert. The second level, called *interactive literacy*, is skills and ability to discuss and engage with health care professionals about the disease and its treatment (Rowlands et al., 2014, p.13). The third level, called *critical literacy*, is based on the ability to find and understand health information, discuss it with a health care professional, process the information, recall it, and make the necessary decision (Sykes et al., 2013, p.6). This means that the person is able to critically evaluate information, to determine the risk factors, and take an appropriate action controlling one’s own or relatives’ health.

## Health care financing and resource allocation policy

Health literacy means an individual’s ability to address and prevent health problems, and to understand health solution models at the public level, namely, funding and services in the country.

Each country has its own health policy. It becomes the foundation of health promotion and health care

provision. Policy translated to action refers to decisions and plans undertaken to achieve health care goals within society. An explicit health policy defines a vision for the future, establishing targets and points of reference for the short and medium term (WHO, 2016). Health policy over a long period of time establishes the society's life mastery in health issues.

In this chapter, the authors focus on health care policy and government decisions concerning health care. Government decisions determine how health care is organized, who will pay, and how funding from citizens' taxes will reach medical personnel and necessary infrastructure for providing medical services, medication, equipment, etc. Ministry of Health develops the national health policy, as well as organizes, coordinates, and monitors its implementation. To secure implementation, the Ministry of Health develops regulations, policy planning documents, evaluates projects developed by other institutions, represents state interests in foreign and international institutions, informs society about health policies and the work of other health care institutions, and develops and defends national positions in the field of health care in the EU (Republic of Latvia Ministry of Health, 09.09.2015). Public acceptance of political decisions in health policy suggests passive support or, at least, acquiescence with the policy.

## Health policy in Latvia

On 26 April 2016, Prime Minister Māris Kučinskis' Government approved a health care plan (Par Valdības rīcības plānu .., 2016). The 2016 Government Declaration is feasible with 285 points. These are the main points.

1. Develop a mandatory health insurance model, determining the base sources of mandatory contributions to health care and the rate thereof.
2. Review the health service tariffs and conditions of payment, setting state-funded choices of services.
3. Evaluate the Latvian tax system, with the possibility of increased health funding in proportion of GDP.
4. Complete the introduction of the single electronic health information system, and ensure its comprehensive operation and development.

The medium and short-term objectives in health care have been settled and citizens can review the Action Plan and wait for implementation. The problem is the lack of a long-term vision and the probable lack of knowledge within the population as to the approaches in building and funding a health care model. The choice of one or another particular health care model can affect each Latvian resident's access to health care services. To successfully implement the reforms, the government must find mutual points of interest with a significant proportion of the country's representatives and society.

The health care reforms would bring Latvia nearer to the EU positions in health policy, as the EU supports equitable, comprehensive, and quality health care. To ensure the perspective on health policy as a contribution to the people, the EU adopted a long-term strategy for 2014–2020 through the so-called "Third Health Programme" (Regulation (EU) No. 282/2014 of 11 March 2014). The Third (2014–2020) Health Programme lists four overarching objectives.

1. Promote health, prevent diseases and foster supportive environments for healthy lifestyles taking into account the 'health in all policies' principle.
2. Protect EU citizens from serious cross-border health threats.
3. Contribute to innovative, efficient, and sustainable health systems.
4. Facilitate access to better and safer health care services for Union citizens (Regulation (EU) No 282/2014, 11 March 2014).

Although health care reforms are being implemented in many countries, most of these countries have operational models of financing and resource allocation that are quite stable and rich in tradition. The same cannot be said about Latvia.

The website developed via ESF-funded project "NGO expertise in development of health policy" indicates four main sources of health care funding. They are:

- 1) allocated state financial resources,
- 2) patient fees and co-payments,
- 3) voluntary insurance funds (payments subject to insurance are patient's co-payment and a payment for health care services that are not included in the state funded health care services), and
- 4) investments of health care institution owners into their property, implementing the mandatory requirements stipulated for medical institutions and their structural units by the Cabinet of Ministers (Finansēšanas kārtība, 2016).

The eligibility of this fourth source in this list is questionable. The primary private health care source of investment consists of state resources through fees for the services provided, or patient payments, rather than the personal resources of the health care institution's owner. One can understand the dissatisfaction expressed by owners of health care institutions with the costly requirements laid down by government with regard to ensuring physical accessibility for people with disabilities, while at the same time imposing a financial burden on the rest of society and raising the costs of health care services for others (Noteikumi par obligātajām prasībām .., 2009).

Mastery of life in the health sphere includes not only individual action, but also the ability to interact and influence policy implementation. The prolonged problems with the sector's financing point to society's representatives being unable to choose fair funding

sources readily comprehensible to all, and to agree on priorities and mechanisms for the use of funds.

For more than a decade, Latvians have worried about the affordability of health care, and political decisions have yet to lead to acceptable solutions. The “European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions” (EU-SILC), survey data for the period 2005 to 2014 shows 16.8–27.7% of the population were unable to receive necessary health care services due to a lack of financial resources. In 2014, 23.6% of Latvian population indicated that they were unable to receive health care services due to lack of funds. Disgracefully, Latvia among the EU, ranks first in financial unavailability of health services (Eurostat, 2016).

Since 1991 and the restoration of Latvia’s independence, funding models for health care have repeatedly changed with no explanation given. This results in confusing funding for any model and questions whether or not it is necessary or consistent with the situation in Latvia.

Until January 1, 1997, health care financing was from taxes and the gradually developing direct patient co-payments. From January 1, 1997 to January 1, 2004, compulsory health insurance was introduced, namely, 28.4% of the income tax was earmarked to a special health care budget. The funds were not sufficient and were supplemented by an additional state budget grant—a part of general taxation, and direct patient co-payment. Private health insurance began to develop, as well. From January 1, 2004, the Cabinet of Ministers waived special budgets and the health care industry once more was financed from:

- general tax revenues,
- private health insurance, and
- direct patient co-payments.

Latvia was late to implement health policy reforms, not only when compared with the EU but with neighbouring countries.

European health researchers, Elias Mosialos, Anna Dixon, Joseph Figueras focused on two health system finance sources and models: funds from general taxes, and social insurance system.

Both can be supplemented with private insurance and patient co-payments. Health care provision is not possible without a justified choice of health care financing and service distribution. Choosing a funding model must be assessed in regards to whether health care will be fair (higher investment contributed by the wealthier, who will pay for the poor), and whether it will be just. Studies of previous decades have shown that funding from general taxation often fails to provide progressiveness, unlike financing from direct taxes. Financing from direct taxes (social health insurance) is fairer because it provides both vertical progressiveness (the wealthier pay more) and horizontal equity (the healthy pay for the ill). By contrast, the patient co-payment, particularly a high co-payment (in Latvia amounting

to 40%), limits access to health care services, although a person participates in financing the system through the indirect taxes – income tax, and excise duty. This is the case in Latvia (Mosialos, Dixon, Figueras & Kutzin, 2002).

Social health insurance, which means funding from direct taxes, operates in several European countries – Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland. In several segments of the population, it also operates in the countries using additional indirect tax funding – Finland, Sweden and a number of post-communist countries – Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia and Poland, and now, in the last decade, Lithuania. World Health Organization researcher, Richard Saltman, mentions three main advantages of compulsory social insurance or social security.

1. Social security provides for individual recording of the payments made and services provided.
2. Social security is self-regulating, because it is guided by its participants (doctors, sickness funds).
3. Social security is a financially stable system and does not depend on the annual decisions of politicians, as they distribute the funds of a state budget (Saltman, 2004, pp. 3–20).

A partial social health care insurance existed in Latvia after the restoration of independence from January 1, 1997 to January 1, 2004. The compulsory health insurance principles were introduced earmarking 28.4% of the income tax. This social insurance system is suitable for Latvia due to high indexes of inequality and because the “sickness benefit social insurance” already is operating successfully.

Population/patient understanding and active participation in their health promotion can be expected only when there is a clear and transparent health service distribution and financing system that provides cost transparency and efficiency of benefits.

General secondary education programmes in Latvia do not include health education. Some topics, such as healthy diet, and impact of harmful habits, are taught through biology or social science lessons. Vocational education, in this sense, is a step ahead. Since 2016/2017, a study course “Social and human security” has been introduced in vocational schools according to the Ministry of Education regulatory framework. The subject content encompasses themes of health risk factors, preventive measures, and health as an individual’s choice. Related factors that may be included are lifestyle, physical and social living environments, addictions, and nutrition and health. Overall, there is a lack of topics dedicated to health services, disease risk factors and symptoms, or tests. The Centre for Disease Prevention and Control has responsibility for preparing educational as well as general population informative materials. However, information is supplied via information campaigns in a fragmented way. Education in public health

identifies the main health risk factors and approaches to solution. The survey of health situation allows to identify the main health risk factors and approaches to solution.

## Public health and the main risk factors

In the context of health literacy, attention is paid to the ability to care for one's own health preventively by:

- 1) following a healthy lifestyle with necessary check-ups, and
- 2) timely identification of disease risk factors and symptoms.

The most frequent cause of hospitalization and death in Latvia is diseases of the circulatory system. 60,000 adults were hospitalized in 2015 with circulatory diseases, of which 8.7% died. Mortality from circulatory system diseases mainly occurs in the age group above 60 years of age (90.9% of all deaths). Within the Latvian regions, the highest death rate was in Latgale (1057.2 per 100,000 population) and Vidzeme (914.4); the lowest was near the Latvian capital in Pierīga region (660.2 per 100,000 population) (Slimību profilakses un kontroles centrs, 2015). Lower incidence rates in Pierīga region are explained by better availability of services, a lower demographic load over working age, and a higher average revenue per household member thus, more people can afford to pay for health care services. In the Pierīga region, this figure was 424.44 EUR per month (Centrālā statistikas pārvalde, 2014).

Tumours are the second most frequent cause of hospitalization and death in Latvia (98.1% of cases, malignant tumours). 35,000 adults were hospitalized with this diagnosis in 2015, of which 7.4% died. Greater mortality from malignant tumours is in the age group above 60 years of age – 82.2% of all deaths. However, in contrast to circulatory diseases, malignant tumours also affect the group of middle aged significantly more, as 17.5% of deaths are recorded in the age group 15–59 years. In comparing regions, tumour and circulatory mortality rates per 1000 inhabitants are similar. The highest death rate from malignant tumours is in Latgale (338.1), Vidzeme (307.0), and Riga region (304.2), the lowest – in the vicinity of Riga (272.0) (Slimību profilakses un kontroles centrs, 2015). Similar to circulatory diseases, the better indicators in Pierīga region are explained both by a younger population and a higher household purchasing power.

The circulatory diseases and tumours show an alarming negative trend. In recent years, mortality expressed per 100,000 inhabitants has increased. Mortality due to circulatory diseases has increased by 6.0%, and by 3.9% for malignant tumours (Slimību profilakses un kontroles centrs, 2015).

The most important circulatory disease and tumour risk factors that can be influenced by an

individual are smoking, increased body weight and a sedentary lifestyle, diabetes (Liels cukura daudzums ... 2013) and, in case of circulatory diseases, high blood pressure, and elevated blood cholesterol levels (Riska faktori, b. g.). Thus, regular exercise and a healthy, balanced diet, as well as preventive health checks (measurements of blood pressure, cholesterol and sugar level in blood) can significantly reduce the incidence of these diseases (Riska faktori, b. g.). These health risks are characteristic not only to oncology and circulatory diseases, but also to many other serious diseases.

According to **the study** survey data, people have their blood pressure tested frequently – 71.8% within the last year. This more frequent blood pressure measurement is explained by being a non-invasive examination, therefore, simpler and less expensive. Blood pressure is usually measured during a visit to the family doctor, but can be checked in pharmacies and at home due to availability of equipment.

Cholesterol and blood sugar levels, according to the survey data, are measured less often – having been tested within the last year by 46.2% and 47.7% of Latvian population, respectively (see Box 1.1). These less frequent measurements can be explained by the fact they require blood tests, a more complicated and expensive measure. These measurements are more frequently carried out for persons in at-risk groups. Persons not at risk have this measurement taken once a year or less often, unless there are complaints or symptoms.

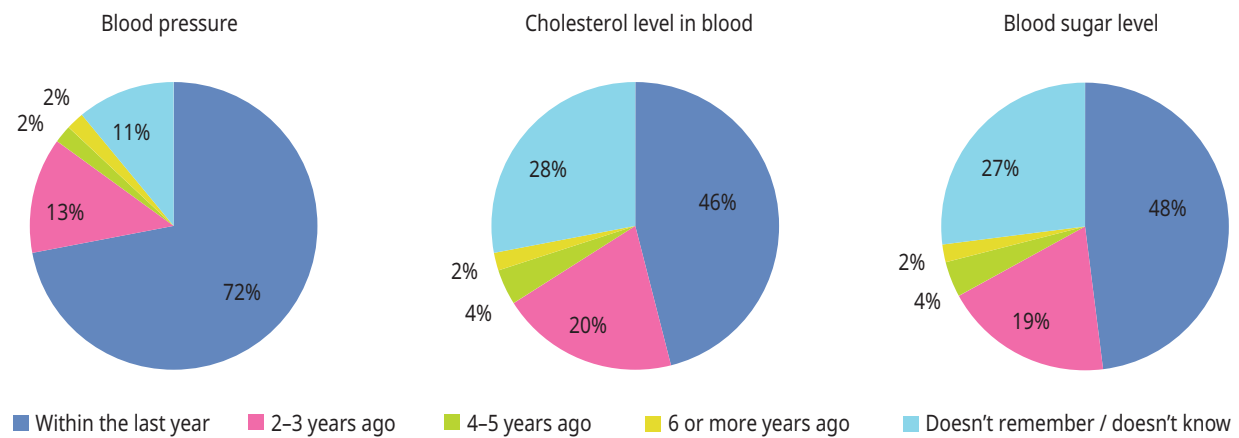
**The study** survey brought a conclusion: the more often a person measures one of the indicators, the more often that person measures the other parameters. Female respondents traditionally measure these health parameters more frequently than males.

As concluded in the statistical analysis, the largest circulatory disease and tumour risk groups consist of the people above 60 years of age, living in Latgale region, where higher mortality rates were recorded. **The study** survey found that older people above 60 more often measured blood pressure, cholesterol or blood sugar levels as they more often visit doctors and are hospitalized.

No significant differences were observed in Latvia's regions regarding blood pressure measurements, however, differences in measurements of sugar and cholesterol were revealed. Those living in Latgale and Zemgale regions over the last year measured cholesterol and blood sugar levels less frequently compared to other regions. However, even the inhabitants of Pierīga region, who, according to statistics, had the best health indicators, did not carry out these measurements more often during the last year. Thus, an important role in reducing mortality is not only by prophylactic examinations of the inhabitants themselves, but also by other factors: healthy lifestyle, solvency, and ability to navigate

**Box 1.1**

**Responses to the question “When did you last have your blood pressure taken, measured cholesterol and sugar level in blood?” (%) (n = 1018)**



Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZ, 2016).

the health system and understand health-related information.

In terms of physical activity, more than half the population admitted that they are not sufficiently physically active – 23.3% of those surveyed are not physically active at all, and 31.1% are insufficiently active. 45.6% of the population indicated that they have high physical activity at work, or regularly engage in high-intensity workouts.

The high proportion of persons indicating a lack of physical exercise offers an explanation as to why there is a high incidence of overweight and obesity in Latvian society. According to FINBALT survey<sup>1</sup> results in 2012, 49.1% of the population (52.1% men and 46.4% women) were overweight (*Slimību profilakses un kontroles centrs*, 2013). Therefore, it is necessary to promote society’s knowledge and understanding of the body mass index, a measure of weight to height.

Regarding smoking, FINBALT survey data concludes that smoking is a common habit detrimental to health. In 2012, 34.3% of the population (52.0% men and 17.6% women) smoked daily. Men 45 to 54 years, and women 35 to 44 years of age, represent the highest proportion of daily smokers. By comparison, in 2012, alcoholic beverages were consumed by 87.2% of men and 81.6% women. The largest proportion of alcoholic beverage consumers both among men and women belonged to the age groups 25 to 54 years (*Slimību profilakses un kontroles centrs*, 2013).

<sup>1</sup> The sample for the study of 2012 was selected according to the stratified multistage random sampling method. General set – 1 549 011 residents of Latvia aged 15 to 64 years (Republic of Latvia Central Statistical Bureau data for 2010), sample size – 3004 inhabitants (a sample representative of general population).

**Population’s health information acquisition habits**

A population’s health literacy is represented by acquisition habits, and the ability to use information channels.

**Health-related information acquisition channels**

In the context of health literacy, an essential role is played by selecting the sources of information, for example, to decide on the use of a particular medication. **The study** survey results showed that 18.5% of the respondents had begun in the last three months, to use a new analgesic or anti-inflammatory non-prescription medicine. Of these respondents, the largest share (41.6%) said that non-prescription medications were recommended to them by the family doctor, another 28.8% had received a recommendation from the pharmacy employee, and 13.4% had a medication recommended to them by a family member, a neighbour or a colleague. 7.7% had obtained the information from an advertisement in a magazine, on TV or on the Internet, 5.8% from other sources, while 2.9% did not indicate exactly where they had found the information about the non-prescription medication.

13% of the surveyed confirmed that they had used the assistance of psychics or healers to solve medical problems.

Evaluating the skills of finding reliable information, 74.1% of respondents agreed with the statement that they know where to find reliable information about health maintenance or improvement. 15.7% disagreed with this statement, but



8.3% indicated that they do not require this type of information. 1.9% of the respondents did not provide a substantive answer to this question. Overall, three quarters of the surveyed believe that they know how to find reliable information about health maintenance or improvement.

Most recently, respondents received the most useful information about health maintenance or improvement from the following sources:

- 27.0% in consultation with the state, local government, non-governmental organization or commercial specialists,
- 21.2% with acquaintances of family, friends, co-workers,
- 13.3% from social networking sites,
- 8.5 % from media,
- 1.3% from state or local government organization website,
- 1.1% from websites of non-governmental or commercial organisations,
- 16.2% found the useful information in other sources, and
- 11.4% had not sought such information.

Obviously, while the relative majority of respondents consulted specialists, many rely on less dependable information which is difficult to verify. People's lack of understanding about a scientifically based solution to health issues and opportunities to use it undermines the confidence in medical professionals because the used sources of information (websites, media) are not responsible for the quality of advice, but can give the impression that health can be improved without medical support.

## Comprehension and use of information

Several health literacy indicators assess comprehension, examination and use of information important for health maintenance. For example, respondents were asked questions about their comprehension and action after the doctor tells them to carry out an examination or makes a diagnosis. 19.4% of respondents frequently seek additional information from various sources regarding the examination or diagnosis, 27.2% sometimes; 23% rarely, but 30.3% said they never collect additional information. Women seek this information more often than men, respondents with at least unfinished higher education are more likely to do so than those with lower education, and Riga residents more often than those living in other cities, towns and rural areas.

At the same time, 37.1% of the respondents said that ultimately, they find the necessary information; 30.9% said sometimes; 15.4% said rarely; and 16.6% never locate this information. Women find information more often than men, respondents with at least unfinished higher education are more likely to find it than the respondents with a lower education, Latvian-speakers find this information more often

than the surveyed speakers of other languages (except Russian language speakers) and Riga residents are more likely to locate this information than those living in small towns.

According to their self-assessment, 47.5% of respondents often understood the information obtained from the doctor; 29.5% sometimes; 11.2% rarely; but 11.8% indicated that they never understood it. Women understood this information significantly more often than men; respondents without a completed secondary education were less likely to understand it than those who obtained a higher education degree in USSR. Latvian speakers understood the information given by doctors more often than Russian speakers.

Respondents were also asked how often they share their thoughts about the received diagnosis or compulsory medical examination. 20.8% spoke to others often; 33.1% sometimes; 24.6% rarely, but 21.4% never communicated about it. Women share their thoughts about the diagnosis or examination significantly more often than men, inhabitants of Riga and other cities, talked about these matters with others more often than those who live in small towns and rural areas.

In response to a question about the use of the obtained information in their daily life, 27.7% of respondents indicated that they used it frequently; 34.2% sometimes; 21.4% rarely, and 16.7% did not use it at all. Women used this information in their everyday life more often than men, respondents with at least secondary special education (or vocational education without secondary education) more often than respondents with a lower education, Latvian speakers slightly more often than Russian speakers, inhabitants of Riga and bigger cities, more often than those living in small towns.

The responses to the question about evaluation of the obtained information (whether it corresponds to the respondent's situation) were the following: 35.2% of respondents replied often; 30.8% sometimes; 19.7% rarely, while the remaining 14.2% said that they never evaluate the obtained information. Women evaluate the relevance of information to their situation more often than men, respondents with a completed higher education are more likely to appraise the information than the respondents with an incomplete higher education and a lower education, Latvian speakers a little more often than Russian speaking respondents, and those living in rural areas and Riga slightly more frequently than the residents of small towns.

Reliability of the information is evaluated frequently by 31.4% of the respondents and almost as many (31%) claim that they evaluate it sometimes. 19.4% do it rarely, and 18.2% never assess the reliability of information. Women appraise the reliability of the information more often than men, respondents with higher education do so more frequently than

those with secondary or lower education, residents of Riga a little more often than those living in cities, small towns and rural areas.

Replying to a similar question as to how often respondents examine whether obtained information is trustworthy, 26.3% of them replied that they did so often; 30.8% sometimes; 20.8% rarely, and 22% never. Women checked information more often than men, respondents with higher education more often than those without such education, residents of Riga more often than respondents residing in one of the other bigger cities of Latvia, small towns or in the countryside.

To arrive at decisions regarding one's own health, 31.2% of respondents often summarize the obtained information; 29.6% do it sometimes; 18.2% rarely, but 21% never summarize the acquired information. Women summarize the information more often than men, the respondents with higher education more frequently than the respondents without it, but the people living in small towns summarized the information significantly less frequently than the residents of Riga, big cities and rural areas.

Overall, it is evident that only a little more than half of respondents are trying to understand, examine and use the information that is relevant to their medical examination or diagnosis.

Analyzing the respondents' answers to questions about understanding, review and use of health-related information, it can be concluded that among all the questions there were positive, moderately strong or strong correlations. The strongest correlation was observed between appraising the reliability of the information and the assessment as to whether the information is well-founded ( $r = 0.8$ ); evaluation of the reliability of information and summarising the obtained information to make decisions about one's health ( $r = 0.73$ ); and between assessing whether the information is well-founded and summarising the obtained information ( $r = 0.72$ ). The weakest correlation is observed in the question of whether the respondents collected additional information about their medical examination or diagnosis, and whether this information was understood ( $r = 0.4$ ); and sharing one's reflections with others ( $r = 0.42$ ). It can be concluded that those respondents who assess the trustworthiness of the information more frequently check whether the information is well-founded and collect additional information.

The habit of obtaining further information had a weak, but positive and statistically significant correlation (0.23) with the respondent's level of education, which was measured according to the 10-point scale (from unfinished primary education to doctorate degree). Comparing the mean values for men and women with relation to the habit, it was determined that this habit was more common among women (2.95) than among men (2.48), and

that these differences are statistically significant ( $t = 9.25$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The average value of obtaining further information is slightly higher for Latvian speaking respondents over Russian speaking ones, (respectively, 2.78 and 2.67) and this difference is statistically significant ( $t = -2.07$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ). Comparing the average values of the habit with regard to urban and rural residents, there are small, but statistically significant differences between the inhabitants of Riga (2.87) and small towns<sup>2</sup> (2.57), as well as between those living in cities (2.75) and towns.

Correlation of the habit to obtain further information with income level is weak ( $r = 0.106$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), although positive and statistically significant. Comparing the mean values of obtaining further information about medical examination or diagnosis by income groups, one can observe statistically significant differences between respondents whose family's average monthly income after taxes and other deductions is up to 200 EUR, and the groups with average monthly income of 501–600 EUR and over 901 EUR. The data analysis revealed no statistically significant differences in the average values of obtaining additional health information for those with family monthly income between 201–500 EUR, or 601–900 EUR. The highest average value (3) is with family income over 1500 EUR, followed by a 901–1000 EUR (2.94) and 1201–1300 EUR (2.9). The lowest indicators are observed in family monthly income below 200 EUR (2.54), 301–400 EUR (2.69) and 401–500 EUR (2.7).

During the survey, respondents were asked as to how often, or not, instructions or information materials available in hospitals and pharmacies were understandable. The following questions asked.

- Is information printed in a font too small to be read?
- Are information symbols and words unfamiliar?
- Is content too complicated?
- Does it take a long time to read and understand the information?
- Is it necessary to ask someone's assistance to read this information?

Insufficient font size as a problem was mentioned by an explicit majority – a total of 55.7% of the respondents admitted that they encounter this issue of which 30.2% said frequently, and 25.7% sometimes. 16.5% indicated that this situation occurs rarely, while 27.5% replied that they had never encountered this problem. This question has a relatively high negative and statistically significant correlation ( $r = -0.41$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) with the respondent's year of birth. This suggests that the problem is more pronounced in the elderly and it becomes increasingly important as the person ages. Similarly, a total of 59.7% of the respondents mentioned the presence of unknown

<sup>2</sup> Any other city or town of Latvia apart from Riga and the other eight largest cities of Latvia.

words and symbols in medical information – of these 24.8% faced this problem often; 35.1% sometimes, but 21.2% replied that this issue arises rarely, or never 19.2%. It would be logical to assume that the answer to this question depends on the level of education, but the correlation turns out to be weak and statistically not significant ( $r = -0.034$ ,  $p = 0.28$ ). The opinions as to how often or rarely medical information content seemed too complicated were relatively evenly distributed: the answer often was chosen by 19.8%; 29.9% sometimes; 27.8% rarely, and 22.5% never. Like the previous question, the correlation with the level of education turned out to be weak and not statistically significant ( $r = -0.059$ ,  $p = 0.061$ ). The responses to the fourth question of this group, *how often does a situation arise when a long time is required to read and understand the information?* also are quite evenly distributed. Often this situation arises for 20.3% of respondents; sometimes 27.7%; rarely 25.2%; and 26.8% never have faced this situation. This question has a moderate, negative and statistically significant correlation ( $r = -0.27$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) with the respondent's year of birth, which shows that this problem occurs more often to older people and it becomes more acute with increasing age. In this question, a statistically significant correlation with the level of education has not been established ( $r = -0.06$ ,  $p = 0.057$ ). 51.2 % of respondents never needed to ask for help reading medical information; often such a need arises in 10.1% of respondents, sometimes 17.6%; rarely 21.1%. In older people, this need occurs more often ( $r = -0.29$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

The summarised obscurity ratio of medical materials has a moderate negative statistically significant correlation with the respondent's year of birth ( $r = -0.35$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while the mean value for men and women does not significantly differ statistically (resp., 2.35 and 2.40;  $t = 0.79$ ,  $p = 0.43$ ). It must be remembered that a higher value of this indicator means that the information comprehension problems occur more frequently, hence, the lower this ratio, the easier it is for the respondent to understand the information in medical materials.

The average value in medical materials' obscurity index for Latvian speaking respondents is the lowest (2.28), followed by Russian speakers (2.51) and speakers of other languages (3.18). All the differences are statistically significant at the level of at least 0.05.

Comparing the mean values of the index between income groups, it can be concluded that they are slightly higher in the group of 201 to 500 EUR than in groups 601 to 700 EUR, 901 to 1000 EUR group and the group with an income above 1200 EUR.

When comparing the mean values of this index from the aspect of localities, it can be concluded that incomprehensibility is being evaluated slightly higher in Riga (2.48) and by those living in rural areas (2.39), while those living in small towns are the least

likely to complain about it (2.19). The differences are statistically significant at the level of 0.05.

29.3% of respondents absolutely agreed with the statement *You have no difficulty to understand information about health maintenance or improvement*, the response somewhat agree was chosen by 50.3%, 10.7% rather disagreed, and only 1.9% did not agree at all. Another 1.2% said that they did not know the answer to this question, while 6.6% said that they did not need information like that. This statement has a weak consent, but a positive and statistically significant correlation with the level of education ( $r = 0.2$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The average value for women is slightly higher than that for men (resp., 3.21 and 3.1), and this difference, although small, is statistically significant ( $t = 2.4$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Similar differences are observed between Latvian and Russian speaking respondents ( $t = -2.45$ ,  $p = 0.015$ ), where the average value for the Latvian speakers is 3.21, but for the Russian speakers 3.1. Agreement to this statement tends to increase with the increase in the income level, although the correlation is weak ( $r = 0.14$ ,  $p = 0.0001$ ); groups with an income up to 300 EUR have visibly lower average consent rates than the groups whose income is 601 to 900 EUR and above 1201 EUR. Rural population's agreement level to this question is somewhat lower (3.02) than that of city inhabitants (3.29), Riga (3.23) and small town (3.20) population.

## Plans of population regarding health improvement

Mastery of life includes care for one's health preservation and improvement activities. This matter was examined in **the study** by asking respondents questions as to whether they had plans regarding implementation of health-related activities. Mastery of life is also reflected in ability to influence decisions at the macro level, not only to solve one's individual problems.

Results of the population survey showed that 18.9% or less than a fifth of respondents absolutely agreed with the statement "I have a clear action plan to maintain or improve my health" choosing the answer "definitely, yes". 56.8% partially agreed to this statement by answering "most probably, yes"; 12.9% indicated that they, most likely, did not have a plan of this kind, and 2.4% of the respondents replied that they definitely had no such plan. 8.9% mentioned that they had no need for such a plan, consequently, the proportion of respondents who did not have a clear health preservation or improvement plan, reached the total of 11.3%.

Existence of a health preservation or improvement plan positively and statistically significantly correlates with the level of education ( $r = 0.2$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ): the more advanced the education, the higher the probability that the respondent has such



a plan. Looking at the average response by gender, it can be concluded that women are more likely than men to indicate that they have such a plan (i.e., 2.96 and 2.70;  $t = 4.85$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Regarding the correlation with the year of birth/age, no statistically significant differences were found, the same is true of the correlation with the primary family language. The respondents with an income above 500 EUR note that they have a health preservation or improvement plan more often than the respondents with an income up to 200 EUR. Residents of Riga and other big cities are more likely to respond that they have a health preservation or improvement plan than the respondents who live in small towns and rural areas.

Overall, 81.9% of respondents pay attention to maintenance or improvement of their health (the answer "definitely, yes" was given by 27.3%, and "most likely, yes" – by 54.6% of respondents). 10.6% admitted that, most likely, they did not pay regular attention to health preservation or improvement, and another 1.3% chose the answer "definitely, not". The remaining 6.3% indicated that, in their view, it was not necessary. The last ones could be added to those who answered "definitely, not", so the total of these respondents reached 7.6%.

Regular attention to health preservation or enhancement, positively and statistically significantly, albeit weakly, correlates with education levels ( $r = 0.16$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Comparing the average values of this statement, women present higher than men (resp. 3.16 and 2.84), and this difference is statistically significant ( $t = 6.06$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Older respondents often indicate they regularly pay attention to maintaining or improving their health ( $r = -0.22$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Language is not statistically significant in differences regarding this question. Comparing the answer to the question by income groups, if the answer to the question is compared by income

groups, the most often positive response is given by respondents with incomes from 601 to 700 EUR (3.24) and those with incomes exceeding 1500 EUR (3.25). The lowest average values in relation to this question are those with an income of 1201–1300 EUR (2.83) and those whose income is below 200 EUR (2.94). The surveyed living in Riga (3.1) and bigger cities (3.06) indicate that they regularly pay attention to health maintenance or improvement slightly more often than people living in towns (2.93) and rural areas (2.95).

Mastery of life regarding the health sphere was also assessed through evaluating the attitude towards the statement: "So far, I have been most unsuccessful in maintaining or improving my health". As a stand-alone, isolated question it is not particularly useful, because it contains a negative self-appraisal and makes respondents reluctant to choose the answers supporting this statement, but within the rest of the survey it can serve as a control question to learn how the responses divide in comparison with other answers to questions about health literacy. Overall, 38% of respondents agreed with this statement (6.7% chose the answer definitely, yes and 31.3% more likely, yes). 50.6% disagreed with this statement, while the remaining 11.4% indicated that they had not any plans of this kind. No statistically significant differences were found, comparing men and women's answers. More often, Russian speakers, rather than Latvian speakers, agreed with this statement – that is, they assessed the implementation of their health preservation or improvement plan more critically ( $t = -3.55$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Comparing the groups by income, respondents with an income of 801 to 900 EUR and exceeding 1500 EUR are less likely to agree with this statement than the rest of the groups. The residents of Riga (2.5) evaluate their health preservation or improvement plan implementation more critically than those residing in towns (2.81) and rural areas (2.72).

## Greatest achievements. Most serious problems. Most important tasks.

### Greatest achievements

The Internet has become an important contemporary contributor to information literacy. Websites offer a wealth of information about healthy diet, serious disease risk factors, they inform about the queues for state-funded medical examinations, provide an access to various services, such as doctor appointments, health insurance purchase, entry into the electronic declaration system in order to recover a proportion of health expenditure from the paid taxes. According to the *Eurostat* data of 2015, 79% of the population aged 16–74 years have used the Internet within the last three months, and it is equivalent to the average rate of 28 EU countries. This indicator in Latvia has grown rapidly – since 2010, by 13 percentage points, while the EU average increase has been about 11 percentage points (*Eurostat*, 2015). Consequently, Latvia has a high potential for the efficient use of this resource to promote health literacy.

Health care reform issues in Prime Minister Māris Kučinskis' Government Action Plan indicate that the public desires change to improve health care service accessibility. Government's performance will be judged on the basis of the decisions regarding health care financing and ensuring service provision in this sphere. A part of the population is active and interested in how to obtain information about health care and they pay attention to government decisions regarding health policy reform.

A significant part of the population (one in three) recognized information literacy and mastery of life in the field of health as particularly unsuccessful, thus, it should be possible to improve these aspects both on the personal and public level.

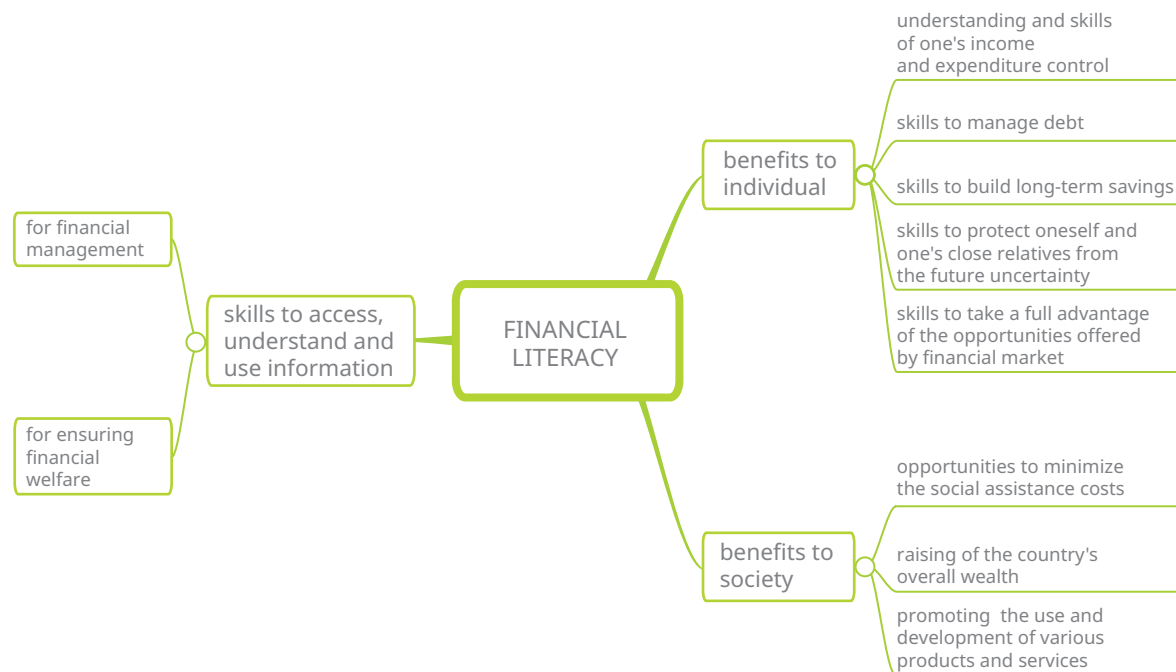
### Most serious problems

The mortality caused by circulatory diseases per 100,000 of the population in Latvia has increased in recent years. In 2010, the mortality rate was 767.7 cases per 100,000 of the population, but in 2015 there were 813.7 cases. The mortality from malignant tumours has also increased – in 2010 it comprised 284.8 cases per 100,000 of the population, while in 2015 – 295.9 cases (*Slimību profilakses un kontroles centrs*, 2015).

The education system in strengthening health literacy is underutilized. In general education institutions, little is said about a healthy lifestyle, common disease and disease prevention, risk factors and symptoms, health services and other important matters related to health care. On this point, vocational education is a step ahead, since starting from 2016/2017, vocational education institutions have introduced a study course "Social and human security", which is dedicated to health risk factors, preventive measures, healthy lifestyle, nutrition and other issues. The most important work in promoting public health literacy is carried out by the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, preparing a variety of informative materials and organizing outreach activities.

### Most important tasks

1. It is necessary to strengthen health literacy as indicated by the foreign studies, because a population's lower literacy level is associated with worse health indicators, more frequent misunderstanding or failure to comprehend medical information provided by the doctor, and increased hospitalization (*Rowlands et al.*, 2014, p.9). Health literacy should be strengthened by improving the obtainment of information.
  - Doctors and other medical professionals should provide patients with clear, understandable information.
  - People should be encouraged to look for additional, reliable information and research about required examinations or received diagnosis.
  - People should be encouraged to carefully evaluate information regarding health preservation and improvement.
  - Action must be taken to promote better clarity and access to medical information for all persons.
  - The socio-structural inequality (gender, age, place of residence, ethnic and linguistic affiliation, income level, education) with regard to access and use of quality medical information must be decreased.
2. It is necessary to reduce the sense of insecurity of being unable to receive quality health care services, if needed. According to *Eurostat* data, in 2014, 10.5% of the Latvian population 16 years or older who have not obtained the required medical services due to their cost. This is four times higher than the EU average of 2.4% (*Eurostat*, 2014).
3. By addressing health care reform issues at the public policy level, it is possible to promote individual activity and interest in health literacy. Easier access to health services and successful social experience will, undoubtedly, spread the conviction of every individual's opportunities in health literacy in the Latvian information sphere.



## Chapter 2 | Information literacy and mastery of life in the sphere of finance and shopping

The contemporary market economy has opened up new opportunities to earn and manage money. These opportunities have brought overwhelming choices because of the growing number of financial decisions to be made. There is an increase in both local and foreign financial products and services, often complex, and with associated risks. One must start taking care of security for old age well in advance because the increase in life expectancy means a longer retirement period. The primary responsibility for financial decisions lies with the individual, who needs to be educated to understand and navigate the broad offer of financial markets, otherwise, individual and family maybe at risk.

### Concept of financial literacy

The concept of “financial literacy” explores the attitude, behaviour, and experience of people toward finance. The research community is still debating the best definition of financial literacy and the methods to measure it. Indicators are:

- ability to save,
- successful investment of money,
- management of debts, and
- mathematical and key economic concept knowledge (Titko, Ciemleja, & Lāce, 2014, p. 6).

The available literature defines financial literacy alternately as:

- a particular type of knowledge,
- the ability or skill to use this knowledge,
- the perceived knowledge,
- sound financial behaviour, and
- experience in financial matters (Hung, Parker & Yoong, 2009, p. 5).

The intelligent control and management of one's financial resources benefit not only the individual or household, but also the country as a whole; for example, expenditures on social assistance are reduced. With improved solvency, overall welfare increases and contributes to the development and use of products and services.

The research by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) translates the term "financial literacy" as improving one's financial welfare through skill, motivation and confidence in order to make effective decisions (Hung et al., 2009, p. 5). Further, financially literate people are better able to control their income and expenses, manage debt, and to build long-term savings. Adopting effective financial decisions and taking advantage of the financial markets protects us and loved ones from future insecurity-economic shocks, prolonged illness or loss of income.

Thus, the concept of financial literacy, and its socio-economic value, has entered the spotlight of many public interest groups, government institutions, banks, businesses and other organizations. As consumers, we have two difficult tasks: (1) to make good decisions, and, (2) to comply with them. Decision-making is hindered by the accuracy and amount of information available to us, our ability to process and understand this information, as well as, the limited period within which to make a decision (Mullainathan & Thaler, 2005, p. 5). Due to these and other reasons, policy makers and stakeholders have begun to consider the population's practical knowledge about basic financial concepts and tools needed to make informed decisions.

## Financial literacy in Latvia

Latvian citizens' knowledge and operating skills within the financial sector are undeniably influenced by historical background. Unlike Western Europe, several generations in Latvia have experienced the transition from a planned economy to a market economy, with no prior theoretical or practical preparedness to make decisions in the new economy (Latvijas iedzīvotāju finanšu .., 2014, p. 5). Plus, multiple changes of currency and financial sector instability challenge Latvian citizens' confidence in financial institutions. According to the results of the survey, 52% of respondents have neutral and trustful attitudes toward the providers of financial services in the Latvian market. This proportion has increased

by 2% compared to the previous year (FKTK: Latvijas iedzīvotāju finanšu .., 2016). Along with the increase of trust grows the activity of using financial services. During 2015 the gross premiums written by insurance providers increased by 2.6% and amounted to 531 million EUR (FKTK: Latvijas iedzīvotāju finanšu .., 2016). People increasingly prefer to insure their risks, and it shows a better understanding of the nature of the service, awareness of potential risks and long-term planning. However, to assess the current financial literacy of the Latvian population and opportunities to improve it, one must look at the developments in this area, the research carried out so far, and the conclusions.

## Implemented activities

Latvian citizens' improvement of financial literacy began with the gathering of information and transfer of financial services to consumers. Since 2002, an Internet site [www.manpensija.lv](http://www.manpensija.lv) is providing information on all three levels of the Latvian pension system. In 2005, the Bank of Latvia created "Money World" for financial education and information that interactively provides information about monetary policies, and the circulation and history of money. In 2013, the website "*Naudas skola*" ("Money School") was opened. Since 2011, the Financial and Capital Market Commission established "*Klientu skola*" ("Customer School") a financial services website with information about deposits, loans, insurance, etc. It offers educational materials and tests, in addition to research on the population's financial literacy. Market participants of commercial banks, insurance companies, and associations in the finance sector have developed their own websites of educational information and budget planning tools, conduct research, organize guest lectures, and build training programs.

Public knowledge of financial literacy has only been discussed in recent years. But as a result, regional and national levels of long-term welfare have been strengthened, intergovernmental and NGO's like the World Bank and OECD have become increasingly viable.

Latvian 9<sup>th</sup> grade students (15–16 years of age) participated in the 2012 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Financial literacy module. Latvian students showed relatively high results, surpassing the OECD average. It was concluded that financial literacy continues to be integrated into the Latvian education system, using a multi-subject approach through home economics, mathematics and economics. Likewise, a family's socio-economic status (parental level of education, profession, material resources at home, etc.) impacted the results achieved by students (*Skolēnu kompetence finanšu jomā .., 07.09.2014*). The Guidelines for the Development of Education for 2014–2020, were, in part, intentionally developed to

support educational content and innovative teaching aids, including financial literacy competency (Par Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādņu ..., 22.05.2014). It was hoped knowledge would continue to improve.

Up to now, Latvian population behaviour shows a shortage of financial knowledge and skills. Examples include the rapid growth of indiscriminate borrowing before the crisis, use of simple and liquid financial services such as savings accounts, and deposits, and the annual increase in quick or short-term loans. In 2015, the non-bank credit service providers issued new loans of 468.01 million EUR, which was 20.8% or 80.63 million EUR more than in 2014. Loans renewed 3 or more times increased to 38% (PTAC data). The use of short-term loans may reflect:

- an inability by citizens to cover their consumption expenditure with existing resources,
- being unaware of high prices charged for services, and
- impulsive purchases and short-term planning.

Use of short-term loans may testify to a failure to evaluate one's capacity to return the debt, as well as ability to see the true cost of service extension.

In a public survey of 2015, 91% of respondents agreed that financial literacy should be regularly updated. Of these, 28% would be happy to acquire knowledge via the Internet, and 26% would participate in seminars or courses. Yet, 20% have not taken steps to improve their knowledge (FKTK pētījums ..., 12.03.2015). Thus, the population seems aware of the need for financial knowledge, but lacks initiative.

Financial ignorance is not solely the purview of the population. State and financial sectors should contribute to the literacy of people who participate in the financial market. As a result in 2014, the **"Strategy for Financial Literacy in Latvia 2014–2020" (the strategy)** was designed to achieve a gradual increase in the population's financial literacy level (Latvijas iedzīvotāju finanšu ..., 2014). The following tasks and activities were proposed.

1. Development of the national curriculum.
2. Development of educational websites.
3. Organization of research projects / seminars / practical training.
4. Elaboration of normative acts, etc.

The data published in 2016 suggest that the following strategic goals are being implemented.

1. A growing share of the population now compares several services prior to purchase.
2. Amounts in private pension funds and the number of life insurance users have increased.
3. Loan-to-deposit ratio is balancing out (FKTK: Latvijas iedzīvotāju finanšu ..., 21.06.2016).

Since 2014, the Financial and Capital Market Commission has carried out an annual survey of Latvia's financial literacy. The evaluated parameters include the use of specific services, frequency, motivation, saving, the ability to cover costs, etc. Latvian

citizens' financial literacy index rose by 0.6 points in 2015, reaching 21.2 points from 20.6 points in 2014 (Finanšu pratības indekss, 2015). Indices results improved in the areas of budget and planning, savings, awareness (being informed), e-security and financial services. Indices results were worse in the field of credit and solving financial exercises. Although the results can be explained in a variety of ways, in the sphere of credit, the highest index is shown by the pensioners, as they least use loans, the index provides an overview of the population's financial knowledge.

### Assessment of Latvian citizens' financial literacy

Of the literacies reviewed in the **survey**, *self-assessment of financial literacy* occupies a low 6<sup>th</sup> place for women and 5<sup>th</sup> place for men.

Looking at financial literacy and self-assessment of individual indices (see Box 2.1.), respondents highly evaluate their capacity to keep track of their income (average points 1.84) and spending (1.98), while the lowest evaluation (2.80) was given to the ability to use the benefits and tax incentives, and to defend their consumer rights (2.81).

Women give their financial literacy a higher assessment than men, with the exception of being able to evaluate terms of leases and non-bank loans. Significant differences were observed in the ability and use between genders on five of nine skills; those being:

- tracking income,
- covering monthly costs,
- using benefits and incentives,
- defending consumer rights, and
- tracking spending.

Everywhere women perform better.

Interestingly, those 51 years and over, rated their skills to use and evaluate the financial services lower than respondents of other age groups, but higher in their skills to keep track of income and expenses, and ability to cover monthly costs. Significant differences among age groups are observed regarding the skills of:

- tracking income and expenditures,
- covering monthly expenses,
- assessing financial risks posed by pawnshops and other types of pledges,
- understanding terms of finance lease, and
- understanding non-bank creditor loan conditions.

Overall, better results in financial literacy were shown by those aged 31 to 50 (average points 2.37).

Financial literacy assessment shows respondents' skills to control their finances and use financial services are mainly determined by the level of respondents' education – indicated by a direct linear relationship. Respondents with a higher education

## Box 2.1

**Financial literacy and evaluation of its individual performance indicators of the population of Latvia**  
(average points according to a scale, where 1 – very good, 2 – good, 3 – average, 4 – poor, 5 – very poor skills)

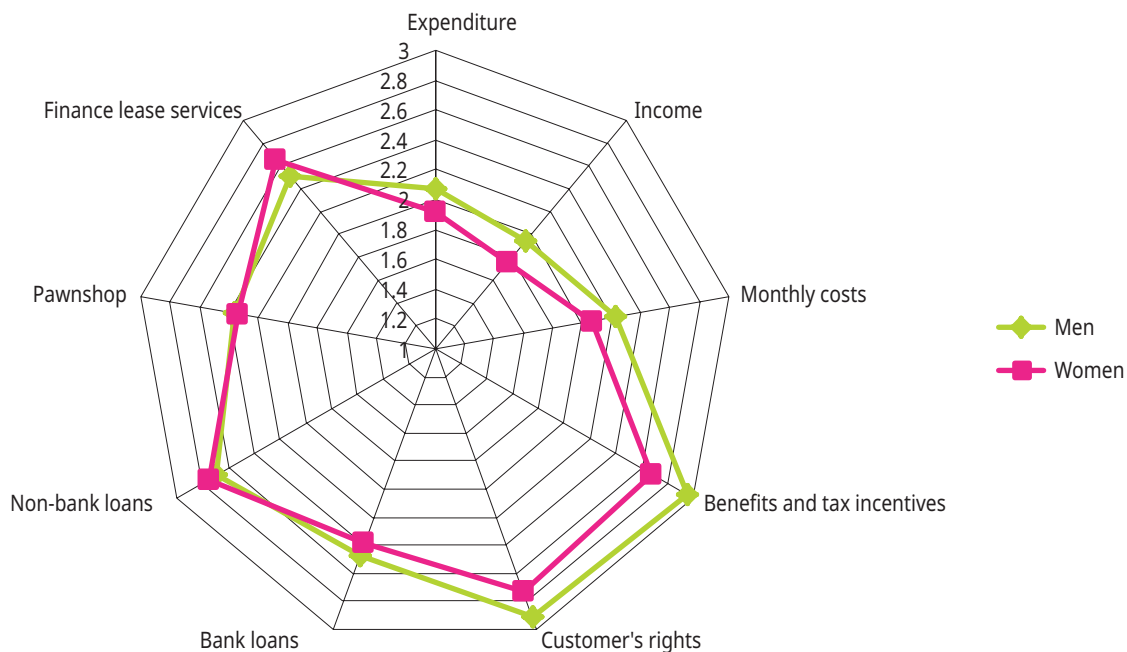
Evaluation of skills indicating financial literacy	All respondents		Male		Female	
	Average	Rank	Average	Rank	Average	Rank
Keeping track of one's income	1.84	1	1.95	1	1.75	1
Keeping track of one's expenditure	1.98	2	2.07	2	1.91	2
Covering one's monthly costs	2.15	3	2.23	3	2.08	3
Assessing the financial risks or possible losses incurred by the pawnshops and other types of pledges*	2.35	4	2.37	4	2.34	4
Assessing the bank loan (study or consumer credit, mortgage, etc.) conditions*	2.43	5	2.48	5	2.39	5
Assessing the goods/services finance lease conditions*	2.59	6	2.52	6	2.66	6
Assessing non-bank creditor ("quick loans", and similar) loan conditions*	2.72	7	2.69	7	2.75	9
Using the benefits, tax incentives	2.80	8	2.95	9	2.68	7
Defending one's rights as a consumer	2.81	9	2.91	8	2.73	8

Base: all respondents,  $n = 1018$

\*Index calculation takes into account only assessments by those respondents who used the respective services.

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

## Box 2.2

**Financial literacy and evaluation of its individual performance indicators of the population of Latvia according to gender**  
(average points, where 1 – very good and 5 – very poor)



## Box 2.3

## Population of Latvia self-evaluation regarding components of family literacy (percentage)

Separate components of family literacy	All respondents, n = 1018	fgrup1, n = 348	fgrup2, n = 358	fgrup3, n = 312
Ability to solve family budget issues (very good and good skills),	64	84	62	44
incl. very good skills	17	34	11	4
Capacity to make purchases or order services (very good and good skills),	78	90	82	59
incl. very good skills	24	39	21	11

Base: all respondents, n = 1018.

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

achieved the highest average result in financial literacy – 2.24; respondents with secondary education had average points of 2.40, while the respondents showed the worst results with education below the secondary – 2.76. Significant gaps in skills between educated groups are displayed in all indices, with the exception of services offered by pawnshops and non-bank creditors.

Significant differences between income groups have been observed regarding the capacity to cover monthly payments, to defend consumer rights and evaluate the non-bank creditor loan services. The respondents within the income group “800 EUR and more” give higher assessment to their capacity to cover monthly payments (average points 2.01) and to defend consumer rights (2.72), while the respondents from the income group “400 euro and less” rated their skills to evaluate the non-bank creditor loan conditions above the rest (2.70).

Depending on the nationality of the respondents, the most significant difference in evaluations of financial literacy was observed regarding the capacity to keep track of one’s spending and income, to cover monthly costs, and assess the terms of a finance lease. Latvian respondents rated their skills in overall financial literacy higher than other respondents – on the average with 2.36 points. Representatives of other nations lagged behind in all skills – average of 2.60 points, except the skill to keep track of monthly spending and to evaluate the non-bank creditor loan conditions, where they showed better results than the Russian respondents – average of 2.48 points.

All appraisals by respondents distributed by localities exhibited significant differences, except for the ability to keep track of their spending and income, or the ability to assess the banks’ credit conditions. Riga region residents highly rated their skills to

control their finances. The most notable difference in skills’ assessment is observed in the people from other large cities of Latvia, who rated their skills to evaluate the financial risks posed by pawnbrokers and other pledges with average points of 2.71, non-bank creditor loan conditions of 3.32 and lease financing conditions with 2.92.

Based on **the study** (see Box 7.2), the strongest correlation exists between financial literacy and family literacy (Pearson correlation coefficient 0.425). Respondents who highly assessed their financial management skills, showed better skills in dealing with family budget matters and making purchases or ordering services (see Box 2.3). Lack of funds was the primary reason that hinders family relationships and was in second place as indicated by 21% of the respondents. Media literacy (0.359) and education literacy (0.343) show the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> strongest correlation. In addition, the lower the level of financial literacy the more frequently respondents indicated these reasons (the first group of financial literacy – 16%, fgrup2 – 23%, and fgrup3 – 26%.)

Conditionally, it is possible to distinguish between three groups of financial literacy with about the same number of respondents. A high literacy group 1.00 to 2.00 points becomes the first financial literacy group (designation fgrup1, n = 348), a mediocre level of literacy 2.10 to 2.75 points becomes the second financial literacy group (designation fgrup2, n = 358) and, a low level of literacy 2.76 to 5.00 points is the third financial literacy group (designation fgrup3, n = 312).

### Financial literacy knowledge

However, the respondents who highly evaluate their financial skills in some cases exaggerate their

## Box 2.4

**Respondents' knowledge of the possibility to recover expenses of their own or their family members' education from resident income tax (percentage)**

Question	All respondents n = 1018	fgrup1, n = 348	fgrup2, n = 358	fgrup3, n = 312
<i>Filter question.</i> Can income tax payer partially or completely recover his or her own, or the family members' educational expenses from the state?				
Don't know	37.5	30.5	35.5	47.8
No	10.5	9.5	10.3	11.9
These expenses can be recovered, if the resident's annual income tax declaration is prepared.	52.0	60.1	54.2	40.4
<b>Percentage of respondents, grouped according to particular items, who correctly answered the question as to whether one can partially or completely recover one's own or one's family members' expenses from the state:</b>				
Expenditure of higher education, all levels of vocational education and acquisition of specialty in educational institutions accredited by the Republic of Latvia or the European Union member states (including the costs of studies in preparatory institutions/courses) ( <i>both in Latvia and EU countries</i> )	36.8	43.1	37.7	28.8
Expenditure of training at work, profession, occupation or craft to obtain and improve the necessary skills, as well as to expand the knowledge ( <i>acquiring or improvement of new professional skills, a profession</i> )	25.7	33.6	22.9	20.1
Expenditure of acquiring a higher level of professional training ( <i>an increase of already acquired professional level</i> )	23.5	29.9	22.9	17.0
Expenses covering transportation costs to get to the place of education and back, housing rent and the utilities used therein, as well as expenses of food during the studies	19.0	23.8	19.8	12.5

Base: all respondents, n = 1018.

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

ability to solve a variety of problems regarding tax breaks and the opportunity to recover resident income tax expenses of education or medical services (see Boxes 2.4 and 2.5).

For example, only 60.1% of the respondents from the high financial literacy group correctly answered that the personal income tax payer may partially or completely recover from the state the costs of their own or family members' costs of education. Only 23.8% are correctly informed that one cannot recover expenses covering transportation costs to school, housing rent and utilities, nor the expenditure for food during the studies.

A similar situation is also observed regarding the knowledge about recovery of expenditure for medical services. 74.4% of respondents from the high financial literacy group correctly answered that the personal income tax payer may partially or completely recover from the state the costs incurred by oneself or

family members for medical services, but only 23.8% are aware that they may partially or fully recover the costs of medical supplies, (medical products, medicines and vitamins), medical equipment and the purchase of goods, which are not covered from state-funded health care.

As might be expected, the respondents from the mediocre and low groups of financial literacy show poorer understanding of these matters. Only 12.5% of respondents from the low group are correctly informed that transportation costs, housing rent and utilities, and food expenses during educational studies cannot be recovered from the state, and only 16% are aware that costs of medical supplies, medical equipment and the purchase of goods, which are not covered from state-funded health care, can be partially or completely recovered from the state.

There are not many respondents, who, if they were to lose their main source of income, could cover



## Box 2.5

**Respondents' knowledge of the possibility to recover expenses of medical services used by themselves or their family members from resident income tax (percentage)**

Question	All respondents, n = 1018	fgrup1, n = 348	fgrup2, n = 358	fgrup3, n = 312
<i>Filter question.</i> Can income tax payers partially or completely recover the expenses of medical services used by themselves or their family members from the state?				
Don't know	25.9	21.3	21.2	36.5
No	5.3	4.3	4.5	7.4
These expenses can be recovered, if the resident's annual income tax declaration is prepared.	68.8	74.4	74.3	56.1
<b>Can your own or your family members' medical treatment costs be partially or completely recovered from the state? The expenses to be recovered:</b>				
the costs of those health services not covered by the state-funded health care	44.3	51.1	45.0	36.2
the paid patient contributions	44.6	51.1	45.5	36.2
costs of treatment in rehabilitation facilities	38.6	44.5	39.4	31.1
the cost of medical supplies (medical products, medicines and vitamins), medical equipment and the purchase of goods, which are not covered by the state-funded health care	19.6	23.8	18.7	16.0
dental services, including full compensation of expenses related to dental prostheses	50.4	59.5	51.7	38.8

Base: all respondents, n = 1018.

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

## Box 2.6

**Responses to the question "If you / your household were suddenly deprived of its main source of income, how long would you be able to cover all your expenses from savings (without borrowing from relatives / friends, using unemployment benefits etc.)?" (percentage)**

Period	All respondents, n = 1018	fgrup1, n = 348	fgrup2, n = 358	fgrup3, n = 312
Approximately a week	15	9	15	21
At least a week, but not a month	16	14	13	20
At least one month, but not three months	25	25	31	19
At least three months, but not six months	14	20	14	9
More than six months	8	12	8	4
Don't know	21	19	19	27

Base: all respondents, n = 1018.

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

## Box 2.7

## Population of Latvia self-assessment regarding awareness of various issues, answers “very good” and “good” (percentage)

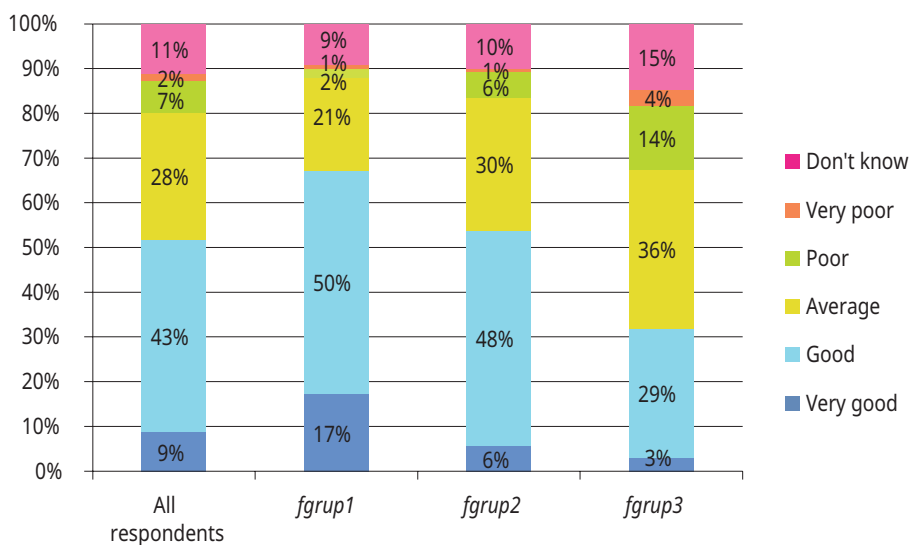
How do respondents rate their overall awareness of	All respondents, n = 1018	fgrup1, n = 348	fgrup2, n = 358	fgrup3, n = 312
purchase of goods or services	76	88	79	58
culture and entertainment opportunities	70	80	66	53
forming family relations	54	70	53	36
health maintenance and improvement	53	70	54	32
management of one's own finances	52	67	54	32
raising and educating children	48	64	48	31
opportunities to promote one's own or family's welfare	47	70	47	21
services provided by local government	42	58	42	24
services provided by state institutions (e.g., State Social Insurance Agency, Road Traffic Safety Directorate, State Revenue Service)	42	61	41	21
opportunities for professional career development	41	57	43	22
obtaining or improving education (information about education institutions, opportunities to obtain professional qualification, etc.)	40	55	42	22
political events in Latvia	32	48	30	18
political events in the world	30	43	27	17
events and processes in economy of Latvia	26	42	24	11

Base: all respondents, n = 1018.

Source: Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību (LU SZF, 2016).

## Box 2.8

## Respondents' self-assessment of their awareness regarding financial management according to financial literacy groups (percentage)



Base: all respondents, n = 1018.

Source: Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību (LU SZF, 2016).

## Box 2.9

**Ability of population of Latvia to find and use information relevant to management of their own finances (percentage)**

Particular skills	All respondents, <i>n</i> = 1018	<i>fgrup1</i> , <i>n</i> = 348
I know how <b>to use</b> the information I have found ("fully agree" and "rather agree"),	68	84
incl. "fully agree"	25	42
I have no difficulty <b>to understand</b> the information ("fully agree" and "rather agree"),	63	80
incl. "fully agree"	23	40
I know where <b>to find</b> information ("fully agree" and "rather agree"),	56	73
incl. "fully agree"	17	31
<b>Overall, I assess</b> my awareness (being informed) as ("very good" and "good"),	52	67
incl. "very good"	9	17

Base: all respondents, *n* = 1018.

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

## Box 2.10

**Responses to the question "Where most recently did you find the most useful information about management of your finances?" (percentage)**

Information sources	All respondents, <i>n</i> = 1018	<i>fgrup1</i> , <i>n</i> = 348	<i>fgrup2</i> , <i>n</i> = 358	<i>fgrup3</i> , <i>n</i> = 312
Acquaintances – family members, friends, colleagues (non-specialists)	15.4	11.5	18.4	18.3
State, local government institution, non-governmental organisation, commercial enterprise specialists (face to face or via telephone)	12.9	14.1	15.4	8.7
Mass media – radio, TV, press	6.8	6.9	7.0	7.4
Internet homepages of state, local government institutions	3.1	3.4	3.9	1.9
Internet homepages of non-governmental organisations, commercial enterprises	2.5	4.0	1.7	1.6
Internet social networks, news sites	9.9	15.2	7.8	6.4
Other	8.3	11.2	7.3	6.4
I have not sought such information	41.1	33.6	38.5	52.2

Base: all respondents, *n* = 1018.

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

all their expenses from savings for more than six months. To compare, 12 of every 100 persons in the high financial group could meet this criteria, while only 4 of every 100 persons in the low group would be able to do so. While the high is three times larger than the low group in financial literacy it is overall a very small number, and confirms the observation that we cannot yet speak about a serious middle class in Latvia (Menshikov, 2016).

**Information literacy regarding management of one's own finances**

Within the survey, 52% of the Latvian population responded they have a very good or good awareness (being informed) of **financial management** (see Box 2.7). The highest numbers were in regards to the purchase of goods or services (76%), culture and entertainment opportunities (70%), while lower

results were reflected in world political events (30%), and Latvian economy, events and processes (26%).

Viewing the respondents' self-assessment of financial management the high group is more than two times better when compared to the low literacy group: *fgrup1* – 67%, *fgrup2* – 54% and *fgrup3* – 32% (see Box 2.8).

A more detailed analysis of the Latvian population's perceived ability to work with financial management information shows the high financial literacy group rated their ability to find, understand and use information much higher (see Box 2.9) than the others. However, paradoxically, representatives of all three groups rated their ability to use the found information much higher than their capacity to understand it and find it. For example, within the high financial group, 84% knew how **to use** the information they found, but only 80% answered that they had no difficulty **understanding** this information, and only 73% indicated that they knew where **to find** it.

This paradox can partly be explained by the fact that 41% of respondents do not seek such financial information at all, including 33.6% of the first group (see Box 2.10). When seeking financial information the number of respondents who consulted specialists or used Internet social networks and news sites is quite small. In this regard, the high financial literacy group stood out – 15.2% of them used the Internet social networks and news sites while only 6.4% from the low group of financial literacy did so.

One of the most important characteristics to mastery of life is planning and implementing the intention to increase the welfare of oneself and one's family. Therefore, it is necessary to have good knowledge of financial management and sound financial management skills, in addition to being well informed. **The study** results show that quite many people have failed to implement a plan to improve their welfare (see Box 2.11). Only about 50% of the respondents indicated that they had managed to implement a plan to increase their or their family's welfare. Although 81% of the respondents wished to improve their welfare, only 58% had clear action plans in this area. The high financial literacy group showed slightly better results in the implementation of this goal – 32% had clear action plans.

Mastery of life and awareness of financial management are interlinked. Many citizens lack sufficient ability; they do not pay adequate attention to financial management information. Many respondents' perception of their literacy is exaggerated, affecting their quality of life and achieving the desired welfare level.

The respondents' answers to the question "The implementation of which plan most significantly impedes the execution of other plans?" show the most serious obstacle to increasing the quality of life is the failure to implement a welfare improvement plan – 47%. It turned out that it is characteristic of all three financial literacy groups: *fgrup1* – 45%, *fgrup2* – 47%, and *fgrup3* – 48%.

### Box 2.11

#### Latvian population's assessment of its mastery of life (the ability to increase one's welfare) according to financial literacy groups (percentage)

Mastery of life components with respect to welfare	All respondents, <i>n</i> = 1018	<i>fgrup1</i> , <i>n</i> = 348	<i>fgrup2</i> , <i>n</i> = 358	<i>fgrup3</i> , <i>n</i> = 312
I have a clear <b>action</b> plan for increasing my welfare ("definitely, yes" and "most likely, yes"),	58	86	78	63
incl. "definitely, yes"	15	32	14	13
<b>I have not had any clear action plans</b> for improvement of my welfare	9	7	5	15
<b>I regularly pay attention</b> to improving my welfare ("definitely, yes" and "most likely, yes"),	81	87	84	70
incl. "definitely, yes"	25	31	25	20
Until now, <b>I have been the least successful</b> in improving my welfare ("definitely, yes" and "most likely, yes"),	53	43	59	59
incl. "definitely, yes"	13	9	11	18

Base: all respondents, *n* = 1018.

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

## Box 2.12a

**Responses to the question "How do you build up savings (only one answer possible)?"**  
(percentage of those who responded)

Possible answers	All respondents, n = 1018	Financial literacy groups			Education level			Family income		
		fgrup1, n = 348	fgrup2, n = 358	fgrup3, n = 312	Below secondary n = 171	Secondary n = 525	Higher education n = 319	Up to 400 EUR, n = 215	401-800 EUR, n = 321	801 EUR and above, n = 303
I save regularly, putting away a particular sum of money for this purpose weekly / monthly	13.1	19.5	12.0	7.1	7.0	11.8	18.5	7.4	10.6	17.8
I save occasionally, putting away different sums of money at my own discretion	15.7	18.7	18.7	9.0	7.0	13.7	23.5	11.2	13.7	21.8
I spend one income (for example, salary) and save other income (for example, the revenue from renting out an apartment)	1.7	1.7	2.5	0.6	1.8	1.3	2.2	1.9	1.6	2.6
We save the income of one family member and spend the income of another family member	2.2	3.2	2.0	1.3	2.9	1.5	2.8	0.0	2.2	4.3
I save what is left over at the end of the month	19.0	22.1	19.6	14.7	12.3	20.6	19.7	12.6	20.9	22.8
I do not build up savings	47.7	34.5	43.9	67.0	68.4	50.3	32.6	66.0	50.2	30.0
Other (please, indicate)	0.7	0.3	1.4	0.3	0.6	0.8	0.6	0.9	0.9	0.7

## Box 2.12b

**Responses to the question "How do you build up savings (only one answer possible)?"**  
(percentage of those who responded)

Possible answers	All respondents, n = 1018	Gender		Age groups			Nationality		
		Male, n = 448	Female, n = 570	Up to 30 n = 263	31-50 n = 372	51 and more n = 383	Latvian, n = 636	Russian, n = 331	Other, n = 51
I save regularly, putting away a particular sum of money for this purpose weekly / monthly	13.1	11.6	14.2	11.0	13.7	13.8	13.8	11.5	13.7
I save occasionally, putting away different sums of money at my own discretion	15.7	15.2	16.1	17.5	16.7	13.6	18.6	10.9	11.8
I spend one income (for example, salary) and save other income (for example, the revenue from renting out an apartment)	1.7	1.3	1.9	0.8	2.2	1.8	1.6	1.8	2.0
We save the income of one family member and spend the income of another family member	2.2	2.7	1.8	1.9	1.6	2.9	1.7	2.7	3.9
I save what is left over at the end of the month	19.0	19.0	18.9	16.0	17.2	22.7	18.6	21.5	7.8
I do not build up savings	47.7	49.8	46.1	52.1	47.8	44.6	44.8	51.4	60.8
Other (please, indicate)	0.7	0.4	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.5	0.9	0.3	0.0

## Savings and planning of finances

Savings are very important from the perspective of a household's financial stability. When personal income exceeds spending and the country experiences rapid growth, it is possible to put money aside for a rainy day. On the other hand, economic recession, sudden shocks, such as job loss or health problems, may require spare funds to meet incurred and fixed costs. Lacking savings, holding debt, or reliance on public social assistance adversely affects not only the household welfare, but also the country's economic development. Saving, in terms of financial literacy translates to making savings, assessing the types of saving appropriate for one's situation, and the ability to plan for the long term (Titko, Ciemleja, & Lāce, 2014, p. 6).

Latvian household savings' level in the last 10 years has been subject to significant changes. From 2007–2011 there was a rapid increase in savings due to the decline in lending and transition from the growth phase to recession. People began to limit their expenditures, consequently, the savings' rate increased to 14.3% in 2009. As income continued to decline, saving sharply declined. By 2011, the savings rate turned to a negative -3.2% as more regular income was spent than received (Eurostat, n.d.). Income was made up either through debt or from the sale of financial or non-financial assets, or spending savings. From 2014 to 2015, the situation improved and household savings increased by 0.5 billion, reaching 8.6 billion EUR (FKTK: Latvijas iedzīvotāju finanšu..., 21.06.2016.).

With increased household income, savings and consumption increase. From 2005 to 2007 there was a net household salary growth (+31.5% in 2007), but savings decreased, testifying to the increase in consumption (Centrālā statistikas pārvalde (CSP), n.d). High inflation, escalation of lending, and over-optimistic revenue forecasts resulted in consumption growth but a decline in saving.

Latvia follows this model of income growth and saving declines. Households adopt impulsive decisions, thinking more about their current consumption rather than long-term financial plans. The ability to think long-term and be aware of potential risks is very important. The period during which a person is planning one's future depends on many factors (personality, liabilities, income, marital status, etc.). At the same time, it is important to realize that not all can build up savings. Residents with low income set short-term goals because they are forced to consider the current situation. What is desired is an equilibrium point – everyday need met with some surplus money left over.

According to **the study**, 51.6% of respondents save. The structure of savings and their share are, as follows:

- 36.8% of the respondents save what is left over at the end of the month,
- 30.5% save occasionally, putting away different sums of money at their own discretion,
- 25.3% save regularly, putting away a particular sum of money for that purpose weekly/monthly,
- 4.2% save the income of one family member and spend the income of another family member, and
- 3.2% spend all their income (for example, salary) and save other income (for example, the revenue from renting out an apartment).

Building up savings from the funds left over at the end of the month does not indicate "proactive" saving and is not conducive to establishing the habit of saving, because there is a risk to spend the accumulated money the next month or to spend all of the income, without creating savings. Putting away money in a separate account or in a safe place increases likelihood that it will not be spent.

Willingness to save on a *regular basis* indicates the existence of financial resources, and is influenced by education and financial literacy. The data shows of 13.1% of all respondents – 19.5% including respondents of the first group of financial literacy; with higher education – 18.5%; and with income level 801 EUR and above – 17.8% have a willingness to save on a regular basis. Savings is largely influenced by *education*.

Undeniably, saving depends on the *income level of the population*, and is also demonstrated by **the study** – only 33.1% of the respondents with average family income of less than 400 EUR build up savings. Savings increase according to income level: 49% of respondents earning 401 to 800 EUR save; while 61.3% save whose monthly income exceeds 801 EUR. Comparing the trends in saving according to the three groups of financial literacy, 65.2% of respondents from the highest financial literacy groups save (*fgrup2* – 54.7%; *fgrup3* – 32.7%). Thus, it can be concluded that people who are more knowledgeable about the financial sphere are more likely to build up cash savings.

Age is also related to savings, but not as significantly. By age group, the percentages that save are as follows:

- up to 30 years – 47.1%,
- 31–50 years – 51.4%, and
- 51 years and more – 54.9%.

Reviewing the different ethnic groups it was found Latvians at 54.3% had the highest propensity to save; 48.4% of Russians, and 39.2% of other ethnic groups save.

## Box 2.13a

## Three main financial priorities

Possible answers	All respondents, n = 1018	Financial literacy groups			Education level			Family income		
		fgrup1, n = 348	fgrup2, n = 358	fgrup3, n = 312	Below secondary, n = 171	Secondary, n = 525	Higher education n = 319	Up to 400 EUR, n = 215	401-800, n = 321	801 EUR and above, n = 303
To pay bills	84.4	87.6	84.9	80.1	66.7	87.0	89.7	89.3	88.5	86.8
To put away money for emergency situations (illness, accidents, etc.)	36.6	40.2	38.5	30.4	32.7	37.0	37.9	40.5	36.4	38.3
To live as well as possible on the existing means	45.0	48.6	43.6	42.6	38.0	45.9	47.3	47.9	48.6	43.6
To safeguard one's family in case of sickness / incapacity for work	21.6	24.1	22.6	17.6	12.3	23.4	23.5	15.8	21.2	28.7
To repay credit / debt	19.9	17.2	23.2	19.2	13.5	19.4	24.5	17.2	20.6	25.1
To save for old age	8.5	11.8	8.4	5.1	4.1	9.3	9.7	9.3	8.1	10.2
To pass the money / savings on to one's children / grandchildren	7.4	10.9	6.4	4.5	8.2	7.6	6.6	7.0	7.5	6.6
To purchase a property (apartment, house, land)	9.1	11.5	10.6	4.8	4.1	6.5	16.3	3.7	6.5	15.3
Other (please, indicate)	3.8	2.9	4.2	4.5	4.1	3.6	4.1	3.3	3.7	4.0
I do not have any priorities	7.4	4.9	6.7	10.9	17.5	7.0	2.2	5.1	6.9	5.3
I don't know	1.9	2.0	1.1	2.6	7.0	0.8	0.9	1.9	0.0	0.7

## Box 2.13b

## Three main financial priorities

Possible answers	All respondents, n = 1018	Gender		Age group			Nationality		
		Male, n = 448	Female, n = 570	Up to 30, n = 263	31-50, n = 372	51 and above, n = 383	Latvian, n = 636	Russian, n = 331	Other, n = 51
To pay bills	84.4	80.4	87.5	70.7	86.3	91.9	85.1	83.1	84.3
To put away money for emergency situations (illness, accidents, etc.)	36.6	33.9	38.8	30.0	28.8	48.8	37.4	36.0	31.4
To live as well as possible on the existing means	45.0	41.7	47.5	44.9	47.6	42.6	43.4	48.6	41.2
To safeguard one's family in case of sickness / incapacity for work	21.6	19.9	23.0	16.3	23.9	23.0	20.8	22.7	25.5
To repay credit / debt	19.9	22.3	18.1	22.1	27.7	11.0	21.4	19.3	5.9
To save for old age	8.5	7.8	9.1	3.4	7.0	13.6	8.8	8.5	5.9
To pass the money / savings on to one's children / grandchildren	7.4	5.6	8.8	3.4	7.3	10.2	7.9	5.7	11.8
To purchase a property (apartment, house, land)	9.1	10.9	7.7	16.7	11.0	2.1	9.9	8.2	5.9
Other (please, indicate)	3.8	3.3	4.2	5.7	3.6	2.9	4.9	2.4	0.0
I do not have any priorities	7.4	10.0	5.3	12.2	7.0	4.4	7.2	7.6	7.8
I don't know	1.9	2.7	1.2	4.2	1.9	0.3	1.6	1.5	7.8



## Box 2.14

**Responses to the question: “If you / your household suddenly were deprived of its main source of income, how long would you be able to cover all the expenses from savings (without borrowing from relatives / friends, unemployment benefits, etc.)?” (percentage)**

Possible answers	All respondents, n = 1018	Financial literacy groups			Education level			Family income		
		<i>fgrup1</i> , n = 348	<i>fgrup2</i> , n = 358	<i>fgrup3</i> , n = 312	Below secondary, n = 171	Secondary, n = 525	Higher education, n = 319	Up to 400 EUR, n = 215	401-800 EUR, n = 321	801 EUR and above, n = 303
Approximately a week	15	9	15	21	25	15	9	27	16	6
At least a week but not a month	16	14	13	20	14	17	14	20	20	11
At least one month but not three months	25	25	31	19	15	27	29	24	28	29
At least three months but not six months	14	20	14	9	11	14	17	7	15	21
More than six months	8	12	8	4	4	9	8	5	5	17
I don't know	21	19	19	27	31	19	21	18	16	16

### Financial priorities of the population

The study data reveal three financial priorities account for 70% of choices from all options offered to respondents. They are: (1) to pay the bills – 84.4%; (2) to live as well as possible on the existing means – 45%; and (3) to put money aside for emergencies – 36.6%. Other significant choices selected were safeguarding one’s family in case of sickness/incapacity to work – 21.6%, and credit/debt repayment – 19.9%.

Thus, the first five priorities form 88% of the total possible options offered in the survey, while the remaining four options make up only 12%. The priorities, which may be attributable to different types of savings, make up 74% and include:

- 36.6% who save for emergency situations (illness, accidents, etc.),
- 21.6% who save to safeguard one’s family in case of sickness or incapacity to work,
- 8.5% saving for old age, and
- 7.4% who save for children or grandchildren.

Data from the survey concludes the population is aware of the need for financial security and the risks inherent when lacking financial security. However, the short-term priorities – paying bills and living as well as possible on the existing resources – remain the most urgent.

As noted above, early preparation for retirement and the desire to be independent of the national

old-age pension testify to long-term planning. The priority “to save for old age” chosen by 8.5% of the respondents, was most often chosen by the people age 51 and over – 13.6%. This result is logical, as thoughts turn to retirement security. For example, the capital accumulated in the 3rd level pension savings can be accessed from the age of 55 (all at once, in installments, or one can continue to build savings). Knowledge that the accumulated money is accessible at any time and is not frozen promotes the use of this service and overall saving. 11.8% of the population with the highest financial literacy indicated that they saved for old age. This continues previously noted trends, as savings are also built by the groups with a monthly income of 801 EUR or more – 10.2%, and those with higher education – 8.7%.

7.4% of respondents who do not have financial priorities also have below secondary education – 17.5%; and are less than 30 years of age – 12.2%.

The study data show that respondents could not cover all their expenses only from savings if they were to lose their main source of income. Only 8% of the respondents answered that they could cover their expenses for more than six months only from savings. Even among the highest income group only 17% would be able to do so, and only 12% of the high financial literacy group. Thus, it must be concluded that while people have savings, these savings are small or insufficiently liquid to be used if required.



## Greatest achievements. Most serious problems. Most important tasks.

### Greatest achievements

“Strategy for Financial Literacy in Latvia 2014–2020” (Latvijas iedzīvotāju finanšu .., 2014) is a considerable achievement in the field of financial literacy. It has been developed in partnership between public authorities and professional associations of financial service providers. It lists numerous tasks and activities, such as improvement to the national curriculum, development of educational websites, organisation of research projects/seminars/practical training, enhancement of normative acts, etc. The data published in 2016 suggest that all the strategic targets are being implemented: the number of people who compare several services prior to their purchase is increasing, more and more people use private pension funds and endowment life insurance policies, and loan-to-deposit ratio is becoming more balanced.

A variety of significant activities have been realised: the centre for financial education and information “Money World” has been established in 2005, and it interactively provides information about monetary policies, circulation and history of money, and subsequently, in 2013, the website “*Naudas skola*” (“Money School”) opened. Since 2011, the Financial and Capital Market Commission established the financial services website, “*Klientu skola*” (“Customer School”) – informing about deposits, loans, insurance, etc. It offers educational materials and tests, as well as research on the population’s financial literacy. Market participants (commercial banks, insurance companies, economic associations) have developed their own websites, publishing educational information and budget planning tools, and conducting research, organizing guest lectures and building training programs.

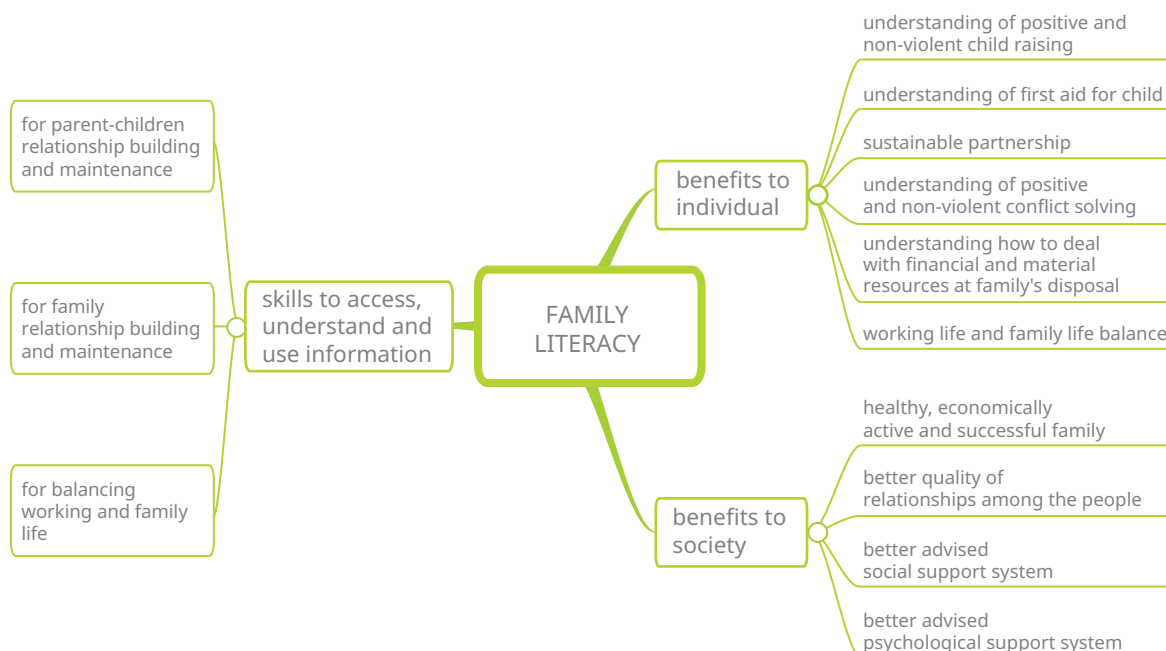
### Most serious problems

The transition to a market economy has increased the number of financial decisions to be taken. However, many people in Latvia lack theoretical and practical preparedness in the field of financial literacy. The results obtained in **the study** survey of the Latvian population brought, at best, average results (the mean value characterising the population’s self-assessment in the field of financial literacy was only 2.41 points in 5-point scale). Although more than half the population builds savings, they are small or are not sufficiently liquid to be used in case of necessity. Quite a lot of the respondents – 41.1% do not seek information on issues impacting their ability to control their finances and use of financial services. Mastery of life, as well as being informed, is closely linked to financial management, but a part of the population has neither knowledge nor skill to turn its attention to information about financial management. Assessing the quality of life indicators, it is evident that many of the respondents have an overrated perception of their own literacy in this area.

### Most important tasks

Latvian citizens’ financial literacy assessment shows that their capacity to control their finances and to use financial services is primarily determined by the level of education. Therefore, the most important task deriving from “Strategy for Financial Literacy in Latvia 2014–2020” is improvement and implementation of education, first of all, in educational institutions – preschool to university – then with the assistance of general education institutions, websites, etc. In view of the socially vulnerable proportion of the population in Latvia, it is important to provide them with appropriate educational information about financial matters. The exchange of information among national authorities, the financial sector, businesses and citizens should be on-going and carried out in language understandable to the layperson.

Finally, a very important role in increasing financial literacy is played by family. Previous studies have shown involvement of young people in family budgeting significantly improved their understanding of income and expenditure distribution, the role of money in the economy and the quality of life.



## Chapter 3 | Family literacy – between public and private sphere

Traditionally, family literacy, or literacy enabling a person to resolve family and domestic issues, is not mentioned. Leaving aside a more extensive family literacy review, for example, reading acquisition in the family, the current **Report** includes three family literacy themes.

1. Parental.
2. Partnership.
3. Reconciliation of work and family life.

### Parental literacy and role of parental competency

The State Family Policy Guidelines 2011–2017 (Ģimenes valsts politikas pamatnostādnes 2011–2017. gadam, 2011) notes that a share of parents, especially young ones, lack knowledge of child raising and development, and the need to provide children with a safe and healthy environment. Neither this document nor the Education Development Guidelines 2014–2020, contain parental competency prerequisites (Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādnes, Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija, 2013). However, more young parents are recognizing a need to improve parental literacy, and are acquiring new knowledge to complement their own experience and expertise. Through their “need to know,” non-formal education is increasing via courses, television, radio and Internet social networks.

Studies (e.g. Skreitule-Pikše, 2010) have found if a mother has extensive child development knowledge, her perception of parental effectiveness has a positive impact. Whereas, if her knowledge is poor, she may overestimate her effectiveness, and the interaction with the child may not be positive. When parents are well informed about child development, they are able to evaluate

their child-parent interaction more accurately and choose more appropriate methods. Due to extensive availability of information on childcare and upbringing, fathers are better prepared for the entry of a child into the family (Jansone-Ratinika, 2013). **The study** survey data show subjective assessment of parental literacy is very high. Of the respondents who have underage children, 58.5% assess their skills to care for the children as good, and 33.4% as very good. Just as highly appraised is the skill of raising children (see Box 3.1).

**The study** survey data shows parents rate their skills in building cooperation with the child and influencing the child's interaction with other family members as good and very good. High assessment was given to their ability to cooperate with other family members in educating and caring for children. **The study** concluded that parents assessed as good their existing skills for childcare within the environment of family and close relatives. But the skills required for the provision of childcare outside the family were evaluated as weaker. Average or poor assessment was more frequently assigned to the ability to cooperate with the child's caregivers in educational institutions, or to influence the child's cooperation with educators, teachers and peers.

High self-evaluation regarding parental literacy may be questioned based on facts found in other studies. Putniņa and Linde have identified various

forms of violence used in Latvia in connection with raising children (Putniņa & Linde, 2011). The study also pointed out that education specialists and other professionals have a relatively low ability to recognize violence towards children. Consequently, parents may also have more difficulty recognizing forms of violence in child raising. This may reflect the differences between self-assessment and actual child-rearing practices.

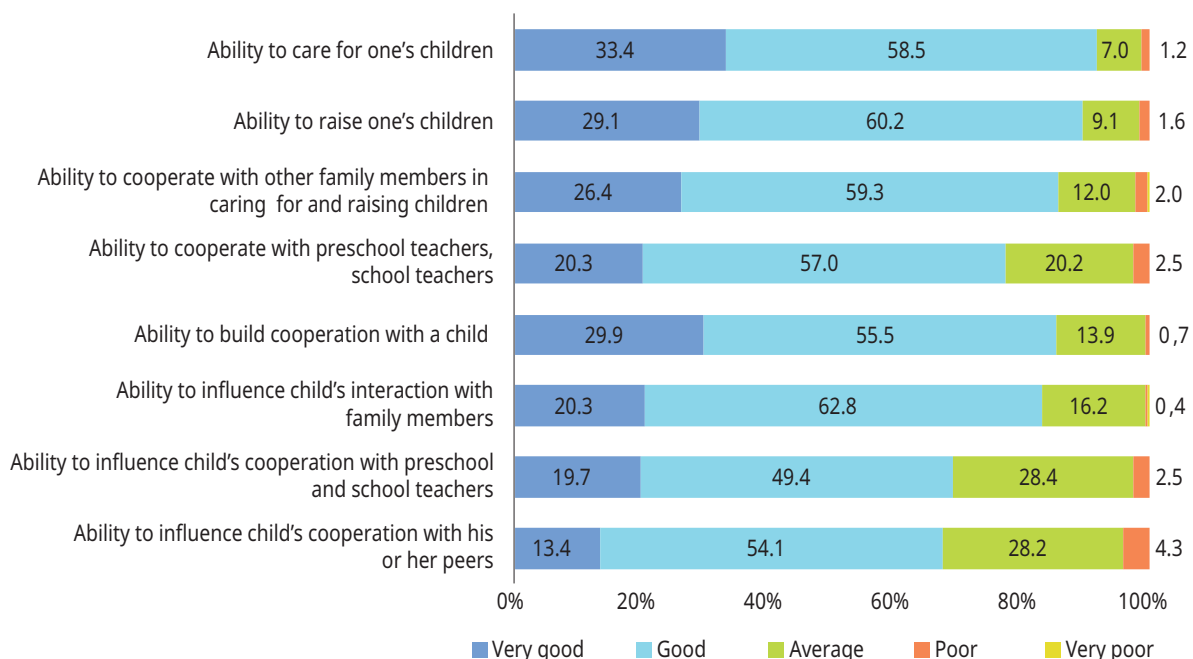
Parental competence is increased by experience. There is a positive association between received social support and the parents' ability to cope with concerns of child upbringing. Specialized study groups that provide support and encouragement for appropriate parent-child interaction may contribute to more positive perceptions of the parental-child rearing role.

Organized parental training, also called *parents' schools*, is in many cities. Local government and non-governmental agencies often carry out non-formal education of prospective parents and new families. In several cases, social services within local governments provide classes for future parents on children's emotional upbringing, childcare and child rearing.

However, not every Latvian municipality offers these activities. Study programmes are primarily available to those able to pay. So, while the state provides for childbirth, there is a cost imposed by

**Box 3.1**

**Self-assessment of skills related to childcare and upbringing**



Base: all respondents, n = 1018.

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

maternity institutions that require school for parents (Putniņa & Linde, 2011). This situation is aggravated by a number of factors.

1. Government policy has been oriented toward individuals, not families.
2. Services available to families are fragmented or not accessible to all.
3. Financial provisions for preventive measures are low or unfunded.
4. Division of responsibilities between state or local governments and the non-governmental sector is not well defined.

Institutional work is more focused on children in crisis, disadvantaged, or poor families, rather than on healthy families.

The most widely available courses – offered by healthcare and social care centres – are **for future parents** and are concentrated in Riga and other big cities of Latvia. Outside the larger cities, classes are not always available close to home.

In contrast, there are much broader educational opportunities available to **parents of infants** – courses and individual consultations are organised for them. In popular language, “baby schools” are the most common form of parental education in Latvia. It is for children who do not yet attend kindergarten, and where parents, grandparents or nannies may meet peers to learn, do, and acquire skills and knowledge together.

Alternative mother and child support movements have become increasingly widespread in Latvia. *Dūlas* are non-medical female supporters of women during pregnancy, at birth and during post-partum period, providing information, education, and physical and emotional support. Another group, Emotional First Aid Mum Movement (EFA moms) consist of women who have received specific training in providing emotional support to parents from the birth of their child until age three. EFA moms conduct home visits giving support, information, and encouragement to parents in the first days and weeks after the baby's birth, helping parents learn their new role as mom or dad. An EFA mother advises on helping the baby adapt to the world thus relieving stress for both child and parents. EFA moms may counsel about breastfeeding, excessive crying, restlessness and poor sleep, and discussing with parents baby's daily care. Currently, home visits and remote consultations are provided at a cost, which largely influences accessibility to this assistance.

Informal parent education in Latvia involves many agencies, leading to fragmented and often contradictory information. A relatively new trend in information collection and exchange is the social networking site Facebook, which is established by parents. Initially parents formed these groups according to place of residence, a group of Jelgava city moms, mothers of Mārupe, etc. But in recent

years it has become increasingly popular to create thematic groups on certain childcare or health issues. Examples include the group *Living with allergies, Atopic dermatitis, Baby led weaning* and others. Parents also become enrolled in Facebook groups dedicated to education, health or leisure opportunities that can be attended with a baby, such as *Classes for mothers in Sigulda, Events and activities for children in Jelgava*, etc. Although parents' level of competence has grown, there are problematic aspects about competence and the pathways towards acquisition of this knowledge. The virtual environment gives ample opportunities for parents to exchange experiences and reduce the sense of social isolation. However, there is a risk that parents obtain information from unverified channels. The challenge is to check the reliability of the available information. Parents need critical thinking skills. The issue is the excessive trust of young parents in the discussion forums, where parents attempt to resolve serious issues on the Internet, asking for advice from other mothers rather than consulting a doctor.

The involvement of fathers in raising children, as **the study** concludes, is on the increase (Sedlenieks, 2016). Apart from providing financial security, fathers are increasingly involved in other matters related to children and family. Nevertheless, childcare and child nurturing are still considered a woman's area of competency and responsibility. This is demonstrated by the information space dedicated to mothers, while publications, support groups and discussion forums for fathers are an exception.

It is necessary to improve parental competencies, taking into account different categories of parents and their financial capacity. Those involved in providing parental education are concerned about parents' paying capacity and adequate fundraising to secure quality in parental education services. Paediatricians and family doctors play a large role in promoting parental literacy; consequently, it is important to strengthen their involvement and support.

In terms of parental competency, finding answers to questions is crucial: parents need to understand appropriate child development, discipline, age-related skills expectations, raising a child emotionally, intelligently. Greater attention should be paid to child safety issues – just like first aid training in courses for drivers, a state-funded course in first aid to a child should be required. Information and guidance on child injury via the Internet is not sufficient. There must be a serious national program, as child injury data in Latvia has not decrease in past years.

Parental education in many parts of the world is seen as an important precondition for the family to be healthy, economically active, and successful. Parents wish to acquire knowledge and answers to their questions, and benefit from an opportunity to learn of, and from other parents' experiences.

## Literacy in building and maintenance of family relations

Demographics of European countries show a consistent drop in the popularity of marriage along with an increase in divorce rates. *Eurostat* explains the concept of family has become variable, without a single definition (Marriage and divorce statistics, 2015). This is true for Latvia. Within the most popular electronic media published in Latvia (*apollo.lv*, *delfi.lv*), marriage and partnership are the two most often discussed topics on family forums.

The data obtained during the study related to unregistered marriages (“Pētījuma par laulību neregistrēšanas problemātiku”), reveal there is a compelling change of family models, and unregistered civil partnerships have become a popular and recognized family form in Latvia. The study confirms cohabitation, without registering the relationship, serves a similar function as the marriage-based family, i.e. provision of emotional and material support, covering health and education costs (Putniņa, Dupate, Mileiko, & Brants, 2015). The public attitude towards marriage and unregistered cohabitation is accepting of both models existing in parallel and not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are seen as different stages of the same relationship. State institutions protect couples that live in a marriage, yet people who live in a partnership are protected only partially, as it is not recognised as legitimate. This study identified evidence of unequal treatment towards different family forms as early as 1992. In Article 214 of the Civil Law: *“In the narrow sense of its definition, a family consists of the spouses and their children while they are still part of a common household.”* (Civil Law, adopted on 28.01.1937, in force since 01.09.1992). In this case, cohabitation does not fit the definition of family, although it entails the same functions. When using the term “family literacy”, this **Report** includes both family models based on their functional similarities, rather than the official approach of the state.

Cohabitation is a fairly common phenomenon in Latvia, but the current legislation fails to offer cohabitating partners comprehensive protection of their rights. For the time being, legislation settles the legal status of cohabiting partners only in certain provisions, not equating this partnership to marriage. Moreover, there is a tendency to provide a framework for cohabitation-related regulations in public law rather than in civil law, thus establishing the right of a cohabitation partner status in cases when it imposes restrictions. An exception applies to criminal proceedings and administrative procedure rules, which guarantee protection of cohabitants’ rights (Beinaroviča, 2014). Social assistance in Latvia is provided on the basis of the relationship among persons living in the household. In turn, a number of

other laws and regulations focus on the relationship status. The arguments against legally altering this situation, where members of family are not protected, are based on (a) the need to strengthen the institution of marriage, which is recognized as a value in the Constitution, and (b) cohabitation, without registering the relationship, is a choice that can be resolved by entering into marriage. The study (Putniņa & Linde, 2015) concluded that professionals associated the reluctance to marry with a couples’ ignorance or lack of knowledge about the difficulties that can arise in various crisis situations. Thus, cohabitation as viewed by the state, is one that lacks family literacy but can be remedied by information about the risks involved. The study makes the point that couples themselves need to know the risks of cohabitation vs. marriage. Fortunately, it does recognize the need to find a tasteful way to provide this information. Not surprisingly, people who choose to live together mention other reasons for deciding not to marry. A survey implemented in 2014 by the Council of Sworn Notaries of Latvia and Marketing and Public Opinion Research Centre SKDS, documented an opinion that marriage does not change the relationship (LZNP, SKDS, 2014). This was the most common reason not to marry chosen by 41% of the surveyed living in a non-marital relationship. Another 32% of this population felt the planning and financial investment in the marriage ceremony was too onerous. Others had not encountered a legal situation that made marriage necessary. Twice as many men as women believed that cohabitation, rather than marriage, did not affect the relationship. On the other hand, the interviewed women living in a non-marital partnership admitted that they would gladly marry, but the existing gender roles do not permit them to propose marriage. 26% of the respondents indicated they lived in a non-marital relationship for only a time and had plans to marry in the near future. 20% of the population have faced a situation where, at the end of the partnership, the partner has been banished from the common household or left without a joint ownership share, which has been registered in the name of another.

Until now, the state has considered cohabitation as a social problem, needing solution. One suggestion is to facilitate the marriage registration process, allowing it to take place before a notary. Pre-matrimony training to register a marriage has also been introduced, but has been extensively criticized in public discussions. The current state family policy is to support a monogamous marriage life. The study concluded that the development of a relationship is based on mutual love, which is emotional and, consequently, irrational (Putniņa et al., 2015). Rational evaluation of a relationship may lead to doubts as to its veracity. It is essential that the desire to marry

in this study is described as an emotional decision, which means that the state has no way to influence it.

Another aspect that can be attributed to family literacy is the resilience of the relationship. Divorce rates increased during the 2008 financial crisis and have now slightly decreased, with the number of remarriages increasing. At the national level these numbers are viewed as a social problem needing to be reduced. It is difficult to identify coupled relationship resilience and sustainability that have not married because there is no official way to obtain the data. Also, the large proportion of single parents attests to the lack of resilience and sustainability of relationships in Latvia. Study participants describe changing conditions, variable relationship dynamics, and different periods of living together as influencing the relationship status.

The study (Putniņa et al., 2015) shows that all families, regardless of status, face issues and challenges not addressed by state supported policies. For example, status disparities or children from previous relationships are only a part of the reality faced by families. New situations demand solutions requiring new skills and abilities. An offered state solution of training the public on the risks of cohabitation vs. marriage raises the question of state interference in private life. It is not the role of the state to mould families into their desired form of relationship.

The study confirms that the stability and security in relationships is not determined by relationship status, but the quality of these relationships, mutual interaction and love. The study indicates the security of a relationship is based on joint experiences and the ability to rely on each other, therefore introducing a child into the relationship may be a test to resilience and sustainability (Putniņa et al., 2015). The study reports that in most cases the conception and birth of a child is a cause for divorce, especially when the traditional division of work and chores dominates (man earns money, woman manages the household tasks). Distribution of chores, while not problematic to the woman before the child is born, arises when the woman returns to employment, and, in addition, is now expected to maintain the same distribution of household chores. The study substantiates frustration where division of tasks appears unequal to one of the partners – most often women. Unequal division of responsibilities is also mentioned as one of the causes for relationship dissolution. Equality in the relationship and shared housework, based on the traditional roles instead of need, affects family stability. Therefore, it is an essential family literacy competency, especially when the family has young children. Even if the family dissolves, those where more equal relationships have prevailed, are better able to deal with childcare issues. In the families where relationships are more traditional,

childcare after the divorce is delegated to the mother, estranging the child from the father.

**The study** survey data show the **subjective** assessment ensuring a fair sharing of the duties in the family is good – almost 50% of the respondents indicate their capacity to fairly share the responsibilities in the family is good, while 13% said “very good”. The respondents also rated their ability to cooperate with their partner as good – the response “very good” was chosen by 15% of the respondents, and “good” by 44% (see Box 3.2).

The second aspect affecting family literacy, specifically partnerships, has to do with conflict resolution. **The study** survey data show that only 7.4% of respondents rate their ability to deal with the psychological conflicts in the family as very good. It is important to note that this particular skill linked to family literacy received the most assessments marking this skill as “poor” 5.4%. Among the indicators, violence is certainly an indicator of poor conflict resolution skills. The study on the reproductive health of the population (Iedzīvotāju reprodūktīvā veselība ..., 2011) indicates that the Injury Registry data show the most frequent abusers are spouses and partners. In Latvia the records of violence are incomplete, and in many cases, people do not report violence. The reproductive health study found that 49.7% knew where to look for help, but did not want to it. Importantly, changes have been made in defining the concept of *violence in the family*, viewing it as the violence against people within a shared household. On May 18, 2016, Latvia signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. This document included amendments pertaining to police work in preventing violence against women and domestic violence in general. Unfortunately:

- society has a high tolerance for violence against women and domestic violence,
- stereotypes and norms remain that promote gender inequality and violence, and the
- majority of abused women do not report violence, and do not seek help (It is generally observed that police and other services rarely receive reports on violence against women).

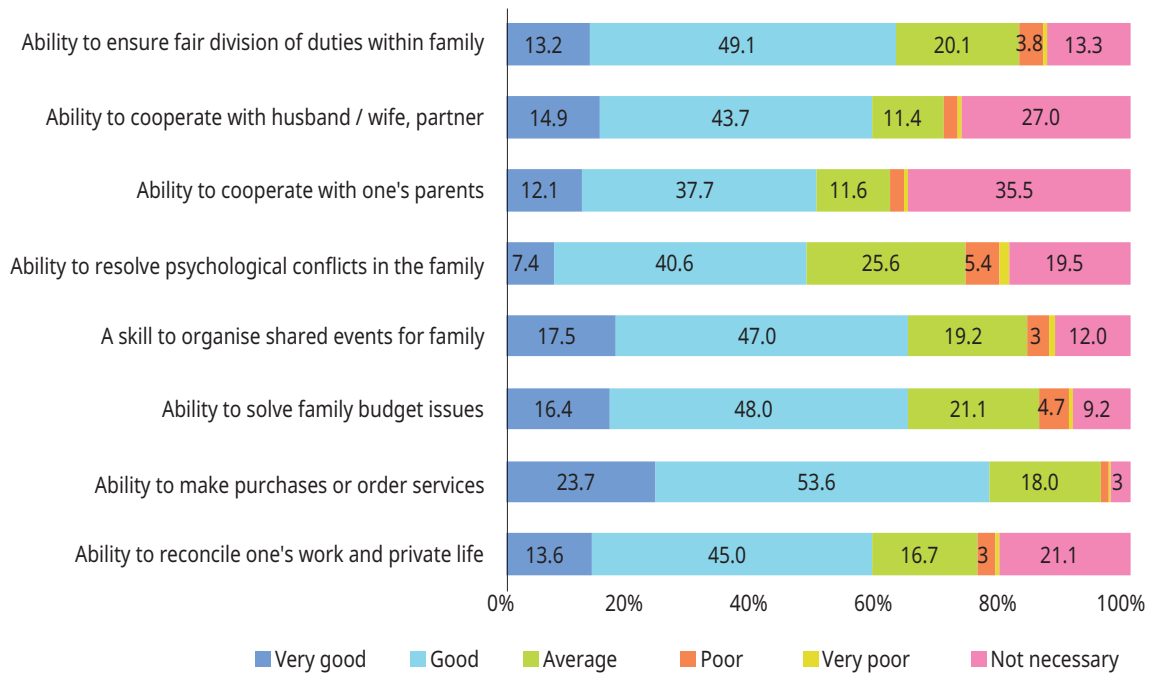
In Latvia there have been no activities implemented to inform the public about violence against women, its prevention, combating this phenomenon, or motivation to report violations.

A support resource for prevention of family violence is provided by the association “Skalbes”, and non-governmental organization “Marta,” which provides free counselling for women and “Centrs Dardedze”, which specializes in prevention of violence against children. Currently, there is a lack of non-governmental organizations specializing in, or providing support to men who suffer from domestic violence.



Box 3.2

Self-assessment of skills related to establishment and maintenance of family



Base: all respondents, n = 1018.

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

Divorce is mentioned as the apex of the crisis, which may lead to emotional and health problems for all the parties involved. Anyone, regardless of gender, involved in a divorce may be subject to emotional violence. Unable to resolve their relationship, divorce often involves children, which can lead to their long-term health problems. As yet, the state has not provided support services or divorce mediation to assist preserving the couple's relationship. The study *"Biedrības "Mediācija un ADR" mediācijas statistika"* (Kāpiņa, 05.12.2014) indicates that in 2014 the statistics provided by the members of association "Mediācija un ADR" includes 425 cases when people have used mediation, including five cases of cross-border family mediation. Only in 150 cases have mediation services been provided in family matters, including 129 cases instigated following an initiative of Orphan's court or another institution, while 68 cases were initiated by the marriage partners themselves. Looking at the association's "Mediācijas padome" website, three more associations provide mediation services but aggregate information is not available.

The study (Kāpiņa, 05.12.2014) indicates that 27 of the 37 members of the association provide mediation in Riga or the surrounding region (Pierīga). This reflects the limited availability of mediation services in other regions of Latvia. Mediation services are

free of charge only when children are involved. This creates inequality with regard to couples that do not or cannot have children, and yet mediation services are required, in cases of partnership dissolution. Mediation increases consensus solutions. A wider availability of services would promote stability, allowing families in crisis situation to solve problems.

An important role in building and maintaining the family is the skill to manage the financial and material resources of the family. **The study** data suggest that the subjective data in the ability to make purchases and order services is evaluated highly. Yet the overall ability to deal with family budget issues is rated very good by only 16.4% of the respondents. Therefore, it becomes necessary to assess income-generating opportunities more broadly and to discuss the Latvian population's ability to reconcile working life with family life.

**Literacy in reconciling work and family life**

Another aspect related to family literacy is balance of work and family life. Work and family life reconciliation is related to events or situations that are important in human life, family formation, the birth of children, including, but not limited to the support of family and relatives (Hein, 2005). If

reconciliation of work and family life fails, a work-life conflict is formed. Sometimes the conflict is based on time division or time expectations; time is taken from one role to fulfil another. Other times, behaviour required to fulfil one role is incompatible with behaviour expected in the 2<sup>nd</sup> role. The potential for conflict increases when an individual is not able to adapt his or her behaviour to the expectations related to the performance of different roles. If one finds a balance between the changing requirements and environmental and personal resources, it is associated with the ability to balance work and family demands and responsibilities. A successful balance of work and family life is impacted by family type and support of family members. This, in turn, is related to the division of chores and duties within the family, the employer's attitude and offered solutions, and state and local government facilities to support children's education and childcare.

The reason most frequently cited in **the study** survey as imposing a burden upon family relations and maintenance is being busy at work or studies – this was indicated by 22% of the respondents (see Box 3.3). The second reason is a lack of resources, experienced by 21.7% of the respondents, and it is also related to the ability to reconcile work and family life.

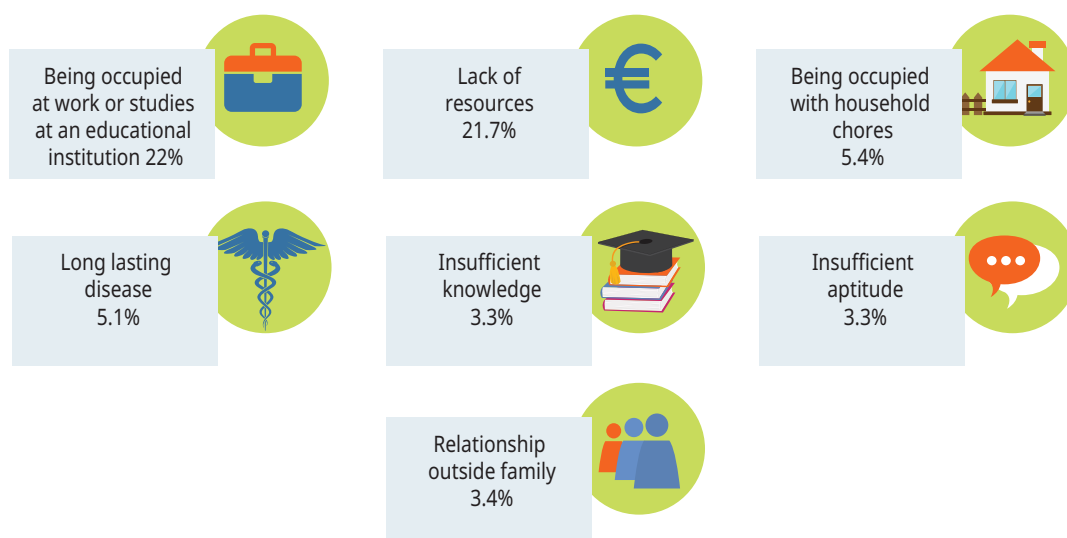
According to the family experience of respondents, **the study** included other factors that cause difficulties in family relations-work abroad, alcohol abuse, caring for a sick person, etc.

Lack of balance between family and working life does not only affect particular individuals. It can lead to frustration and problems fulfilling one's responsibilities at work and in the family. The employed, experiencing work-life imbalance, may opt for a smaller number of children, planning to have children at a later stage of life, or even abandoning the thought children altogether. The study "Tautas ataudzi ietekmējošo faktoru izpēte" ("Research on factors that influence population growth") (Eglīte, Putniņa, Brants, Mileiko, & Laizāne, 2013), indicated a positive correlation between women's employment and a nation's birth rate. It is essential that women become economically independent given the high risk of dissolved relationships coupled with the fact that women are more often tasked with raising children in a single-parent family. Economic independence of women increases the chance to have the second and third child, if the experience with the first child (including availability of childcare services as a very important influencing factor) has been positive.

A person's ability to reconcile work and family life is dependent on family organization. One of the essential aspects is number of children, their age and childcare. The more children a family has, the more difficult is the organization of daily life, which is linked to providing for each child's needs. Opportunities to combine work with family are also affected by the number of adults in the household and their readiness to participate in childcare. The studies indicate that it is difficult for parents of many children

### Box 3.3

#### Factors imposing a burden on forming and maintaining family relationship



Base: all respondents,  $n = 1018$ .

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

to ensure meeting each child’s needs, and the same is true in cases where one adult is both breadwinner and child-carer. The study “Tautas ataudzi ietekmējošo faktoru izpēte” (Eglīte et al., 2013) identified the greatest supports for single parents – financial and care giving – were given by relatives – mothers, fathers or future partners. For single parents, their employer’s support is particularly important. Reconciling work and family life is also determined by the division of responsibilities in the family in both everyday situations and in crisis, such as when a child falls ill. Often the ability to reconcile work and family life is associated with a person’s ability to build family relationships as a support mechanism.

Equilibrium of work and family life depend on the willingness of employers to offer support to employees. It is essential to note that support differs between small enterprises, less formal but with the ability to discuss and agree on solutions, and large companies, which may have formal policies. No less significant in achieving a better balance of family life and work is the provision of childcare. Childcare opportunities differ for those parents who work and those who stay home. In 2013, State Chancellery employed a company “Projektu un kvalitātes vadība” to conduct a study on population growth. As shown by the data of this study (see Box 3.4), working parents more often used external services e.g. kindergartens, babysitters, grandparents with whom they do not live, good friends, and close

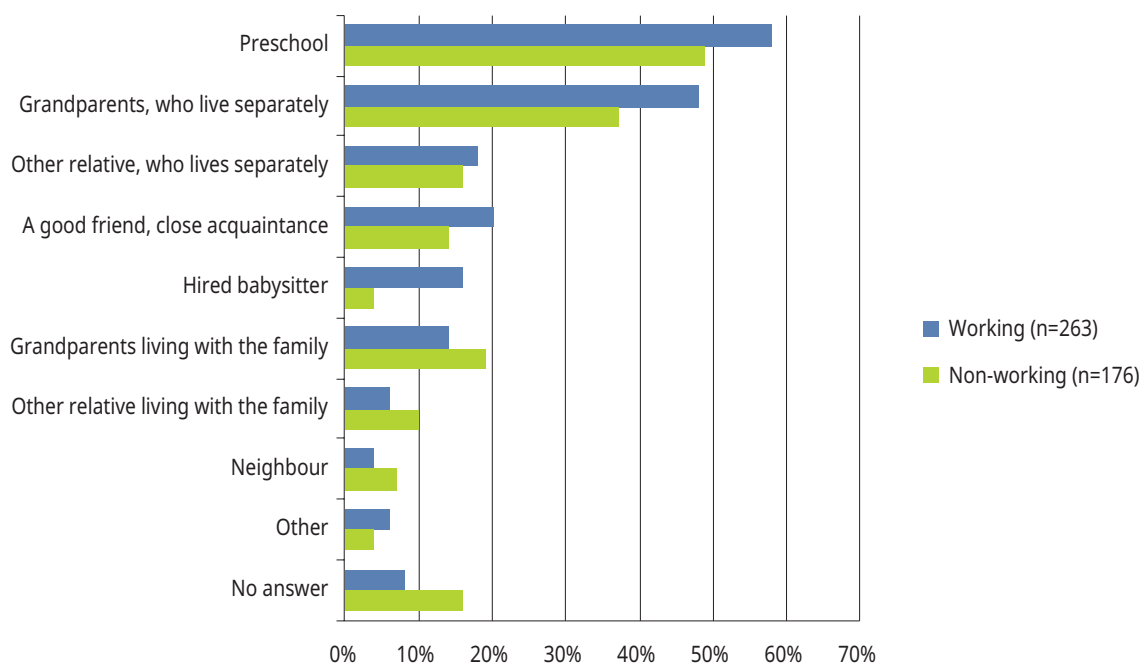
acquaintances, while non-working parents relied upon internal assistance, e.g. grandparents and other relatives with whom they live, or geographically close neighbours. As working parents rarely live in extended families, they more often need services to look after children and these services most frequently are provided by preschools or kindergartens. Use of babysitters is significantly less frequent, due to the higher costs.

However, kindergarten services are only available during the normal working hours, or a little earlier/ later (in different municipalities and preschools the situation slightly differs, however, normal working hours are approximately from 7.00 to 19.00). In some cases, but rarely, preschools are available at night, but not provided on weekends and holidays.

Statistics show that about 30% of all employees work non-standard hours requiring different hours of childcare. Babysitting services for people with standard working hours are generally provided by municipal preschools and alternative solutions are sought only in situations of crisis. People with non-standard working hours may partially solve babysitting situations, but are forced to look for additional individual solutions. The need for differently organized babysitting services is associated not only with different working hours, but also with the family structure and working hours of other family members. In families of two working people, where one parent is working non-standard hours, but the other one has standard employment,

**Box 3.4**

**Childcare opportunities used within the last year (Eglīte et al., 2013)**



Base: parents with children up to 6 years of age.

most often the care for the child is undertaken by the parent working standard hours, or by grandparents, older children, neighbours and friends. It is more difficult to organize supervision of children in families where both parents work non-standard hours. Then work schedules are coordinated, but the parents seldom see each other, and in the long run it can incur risks to family stability. In this case, people with non-standard working hours indicate fatigue, because they do not have time to sleep after work, which, in turn, can lead to health problems. Also in this case relatives are involved in the care of children – grandparents, older children, neighbours and friends. The people who raise their children alone face the most difficult childcare challenge, and since they are the sole wage earners for their family, have the greatest fear of losing their jobs. They are also

the group most exposed to poverty risk. In several cases, these parents admit that children have been left unattended because childcare was unavailable.

**The study** survey data shows that Latvians, despite the challenges, rate their skills in reconciling work and family life as good (45.0%). Family literacy is related to people's ability to build relationships – not only those of parents and children and with each other, but also in the wider family, where the quality of relationships is valued and also an essential part of mutual support. The general conclusion is that self-assessment of various family literacy aspects is higher than the reality shown by the indicators, such as divorce, child injuries, domestic violence, etc. The data obtained in qualitative research also show that awareness of family literacy is weak and often based on assumptions and habits.

## Greatest achievements. Most serious problems. Most important tasks.

### Greatest achievements

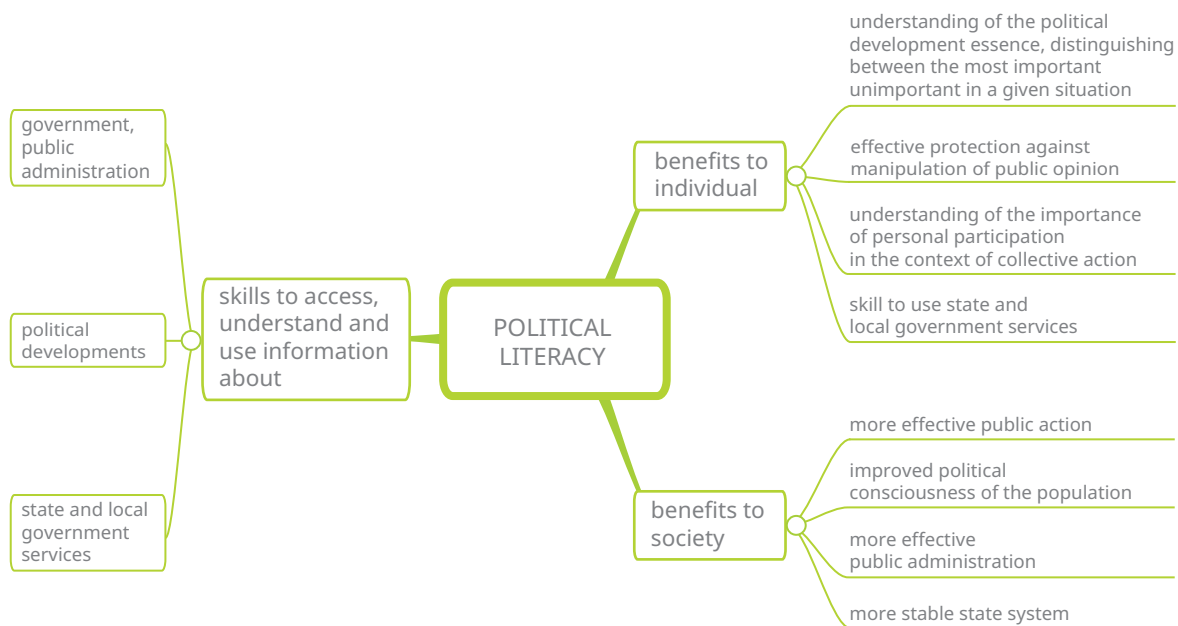
- Awareness that family literacy is an important area of life, where one needs to acquire knowledge and develop skills to better understand family relationships and solve practical issues.
- Parents are informed about early development of a child, preparing them for future challenges. This training is supported both by new parents and the rest of the society.
- Parental Internet portals and opportunities for learning contribute to mastering family literacy and rapid exchange of information.
- Mediation services are available for family conflict resolution.

### Most serious problems

- Views on child rearing and family relationships have changed. The traditionally accepted ways and the new vision are in conflict and often fail to provide specific or immediate solutions. Support promoting family literacy is currently recognized in respect to strengthening the competency of new parents. Seeking similar support in later stages of a child's age are more an attribute of crisis or family dysfunction.
- Parental Internet portals and the opportunities provided by them also lead to fragmented and erratic, often contradictory information. There is an over-confidence in the information given in the discussion forums.
- Public retains a high tolerance for violence against women and domestic violence.

### Most important tasks

- Develop effective approaches to reach target audiences in order to promote family literacy.
- Develop training programmes to ensure continued parental literacy of the older child- early school years, teenage period and adolescence.
- Public awareness of the risks and signs of domestic violence must be improved as well as becoming informed of institutions providing support.
- An attitude of zero tolerance against different types of domestic violence must be developed.



## Chapter 4 Information literacy and mastery of life in politics and public administration

Information literacy in politics increases political awareness and effectiveness of citizen action. Awareness allows a person, through observation of events, to recognise the political substance of different issues and events. Political literacy, in turn, helps a person to navigate various political issues, such as finding and use information from various sources, formulating a reasoned opinion, and use diverse state and municipal services both in person and online.

### Political literacy and its benefits

Political literacy improves knowledge of the political and administrative structures – the Constitution, legislative and executive powers, the courts, government institutions, and the political process as a whole. Political literacy also includes political participation skills which help citizens to be involved with local government, e. g., in the form of public consultations, participatory forums, ministry working groups, and/or involvement in political and civic campaign activities.

Heightened discussions about political literacy usually take place just before and after passing politically sensitive decisions or when criticizing the level of public awareness about issues to be decided. Prime examples are the 2012 referendum on whether Russian language should become the second official language in Latvia, or the vote on withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (*Brexit*). Often political literacy is mentioned as an antidote to the public's low interest in and knowledge of politics, in addition to the weak

**Box 4.1****Explanation of political literacy****Political literacy – a capacity to reveal the true conflicts of power**

In the late 1990s, British scientist, representative of the House of Lords and co-discoverer of DNA Sir Bernard Crick developed an advisory report on political literacy and citizenship education, looking at three areas of education – social and moral responsibility, participation in community activities and political literacy (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998). Crick's Report contributed to inclusion of citizenship education in UK educational standard. It should be emphasised that in Crick's Report the political literacy is not associated solely with the knowledge of the public administration machinery. The task of political literacy is much deeper – it should enable a person by himself/herself “to discover the true conflicts of power” (Crick & Porter, 1978). Therefore, in the higher levels of political literacy we should seek answers to fundamental political questions – who benefits, how much he or she receives and according to what principles. By asking these questions, we should not hesitate to challenge the existing political and economic system. In this way we draw attention to the growing income inequality in the world, try to uncover the real interests of the various parties involved, focus the attention toward constructing the meanings of popular political concepts, and carry out other activities that place social, economic and political processes under the magnifying glass.

**Box 4.2****Do you understand, what is happening in politics?****Do you understand, what is happening in politics?**

A prevailing opinion is that politics is not understandable to a person burdened by everyday concerns. To a certain extent, it is also confirmed by the public perception in Latvia. The response to the question “How often does the political situation in Latvia seem so complicated that you really do not understand what is going on?” was given by most people – 53.6% of respondents answered “often” or “almost always”. Of these, the affirmative answer more often was given by younger population, while 33.7% did not think that the political situation in Latvia is too complex. Among the main reasons for the difficulties to better understand these developments, people in Latvia mentioned the fact that they simply were not interested in politics (46.3%); or claimed a lack of knowledge (21.9%). Another 20.9% admitted that it was not difficult for them to gain a better understanding of the political process.

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

collective consciousness of statehood. As the public interest declines, there is a risk that the population can become manipulated more easily.

Political literacy brings several substantial benefits.

**Political literacy helps improve understanding of political developments, by helping to distinguish the most important information from the unimportant information.**

Political understanding should save us from the fate of captives imprisoned in Plato's cave who could not discern the shadows from the actual bodies casting them. In the era of unprecedented access to information, we more than ever need filters that help us sift information with a wholesome content from that of little value. We live in an age in which political information is presented in a format that allows it to be easily digested at the expense of depth of content. Information presented by mass media is often characterized by excessive personalization of politics (e. g., celebrity politics) or trivialization (orientation towards scandals, populist rhetoric, etc.). Such depiction of politics contributes to the perception that the political process is not determined by well thought out judgments but rather emotions, drama,

manipulations, and self-interest (Valtenbergs, 2011). It contributes to evasive and negative attitude of the public towards political processes and related public developments. In such conditions, part of society chooses to ignore political information or believes politics is not for them. This trend is particularly strong among young people (Russell, 2004).

**Political literacy can provide effective protection against manipulation of the public opinion.**

Today, countries increasingly use techniques to influence the information environment in resolving mutual conflicts. Consequently, reduced public interest and inferior knowledge about politics increases the likelihood that political participation could be fuelled by anti-democratic forces of populism or radical nationalism, which also consolidates their influence within the information environment. A common information strategy is to increase the feeling of powerlessness and fear, while constructing the illusion of an alternative source of security – a leader, superpower, or idea that soon would solve all the problems.

Latvian population supports the values of democracy and pluralism. This is reflected in the support for a variety of media publications that hold



diverse political views and the readiness to comply with the law, even if it seems unfair. Yet in recent years, the Latvian population increasingly supports authoritarian values, and the support for a “strong hand” leader (Nikišins, Rozenvalds, & Zepa, 2014, pp. 246–247). Therefore, the question of political literacy largely is also a matter of the stability of state.

**Political literacy raises awareness of the importance of personal participation in the collective action.** One of the challenges faced by modern democracy is the decrease in public interest in participation, especially participation in elections and political parties (Blais & Rubenson, 2013). The survey conducted in the project of National research programme, *Innovation and sustainable development: Latvia's post-crisis experience in a global context (SUSTINNO – Sabiedrības vērtīborientācijas un sabiedrības atjaunošanās / The value-orientations and renewal of society)* showed that among the public, political alienation is more evident than social alienation. The extent of political alienation was established on the basis of responses given by the participants to such assertions as “politicians are interested in people like me”, “things in Latvia are developing in the right direction”, as well as trust in government, Saeima and political parties (SUSTINNO aptauja, 2015). Political alienation is higher in households of non-ethnic Latvians and those perceiving themselves to be poor. Older people feel more politically alienated whereas younger people feel more socially and culturally alienated (SUSTINNO aptauja, 2015).

In 2014, 48% of the Latvian population believed that elections were the most effective way to influence decisions of politicians. Nevertheless, citizen participation in elections declined about 10% compared with 2002. According to the results of the **study**

for the current Human Development Report, 58.3% of the population believe their participation in parliamentary or local government elections will not affect the outcome. This opinion is more prevalent in the regional areas of Latvia outside the capital Riga and its surroundings (Pierīga). It shows that regional disparities are negatively associated with the political attitudes of the population. People with higher levels of income and education as well as those who speak Latvian at home tend to believe more in the efficacy of their participation (political efficacy). Age and gender do not have significant influence upon the perception of the impact of electoral participation.

**Political literacy is linked to media literacy.** A statistically significant correlation exists between (1) people's assessment of their own ability to judge the quality of media content and the work of journalists, and (2) the ability to find reliable information on the political decision-making process and evaluate candidates and parties before the election. For example, persons who believe they are able to assess the reliability of facts in published media are also more confident of their ability to find reliable information about how certain political decisions will influence the development of Latvia ( $r_s = 0.39$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ). A moderate correlation exists among other variables that measure the work of the media or the political process evaluation (see Box 4.3).

However, the respondents' self-assessment of media literacy must be interpreted critically. Confidence in one's ability to assess the media and political information weakly correlates with the assertion that during the online search one usually selects one of the first three results. This means people who estimate their ability to find and critically evaluate information as good more often admit they rely on

### Box 4.3

#### Correlation between population's assessment of media literacy and political literacy

	Ability to assess the quality of media	Ability to assess particular journalists	Ability to assess the credibility of facts published by media	I usually select one from the first three sources offered by online search engine
I can assess party candidates before election	0.36**	0.35**	0.35**	0.11**
I can find reliable information about the impact of particular political decisions on development of Latvia	0.41**	0.38**	0.39**	0.16**
I can find reliable information about preparation and passing of political decisions	0.42**	0.34**	0.39**	0.12**
I am able to assess party programmes before election	0.38**	0.33**	0.33**	0.09**
Looking for information by using online search engines, I usually choose one of the first three sources offered	0.21**	0.20**	0.19**	1.00

Note. \*\*Correlation is significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level (2-tailed).

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

the most easily available information provided by an online search. A skilful choice of search queries in most cases, indeed, can provide the needed results on the first page, but there is no reason to trust that online sources shown on the first page are more reliable than those on subsequent pages.

**Political literacy promotes alternative forms of political participation.** Research on political participation often reveals the passivity among different societal groups, especially the young. However, the measurement of these processes sometimes ignores the fact that people are increasingly using alternative forms of political participation, such as signing petitions, expressing opinions online or boycotting various goods (Harris, Wyn, & Younes, 2013). In essence, these forms of participation are much more individualized, specialized, thematic and less associated with the traditional forms of participation. Young people may attach to these forms a meaning that is completely different from what political researchers see in them.

The international study *MyPlace*, which involved 1,200 young people from Latvia, showed that political activity and passivity of youth has a multi-dimensional character. A young person who can be formally described as politically passive can actively think and evaluate and have an attitude of a citizen that is concerned about societal problems and development. In addition, young people from prosperous families and with a good education are more prone to political activity (Mierīņa, 2015). Political literacy can also improve the knowledge and skills of those people who perceive themselves as outside the institutionalized forms of participation.

## Political literacy and institutions

Basic knowledge of public administration work remains an important part of political literacy. Institutions affect people's lives, even if the people themselves do not attach importance to the institutional work.

Addressing political literacy in the context of institutions, it is imperative to assess people's:

- awareness of political events,
- self-assessment to obtain the information required to make electoral choice,
- ability to find information about the impact of political decisions on themselves and their family, and
- experiences in using various government and municipal services, with a particular focus on the increasing offer of e-services and population's ability to use these e-services.

The decline of traditional political institutions encourages looking for political literacy outside institutions. Evaluating political literacy outside the institutional context, use of the following aspects can be considered:

- individualized participation platforms, such as sites dedicated to collection of signatures (petition services), for example, *Manabals.lv*,
- social media in political participation and self-organization, and
- online mobilization events that illustrate organization in small groups with an aim address current challenges in people's neighbourhood area or sphere of interest.

Overall, political literacy represents one of the elements constituting mastery of life. Mastery of life refers to an individual's ability to organize life processes in a meaningful order (Savolainen, 1995). Participation and use of e-services and social media to formulate, implement, and represent ideas, both on the institutional level and beyond, are expressions of this mastery.

## Awareness of political events

Most Latvians assess their awareness of political events in Latvia as average. Such opinion is held by 40.8% of the surveyed, but 32.1% of the population evaluate their awareness as good or very good. Another 24.6% think of their knowledge of politics as

### Box 4.4

#### What is your overall assessment of your awareness about...

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor	No answer
political events in Latvia	4.2%	27.9%	40.8%	17.7%	6.9%	2.6%
political events in the world	4.2%	25.2%	41.9%	18.1%	7.8%	2.8%
services of your local government	7.5%	34.5%	38.6%	14.0%	2.2%	3.2%
services of state institutions	7.2%	34.7%	36.7%	13.8%	4.1%	3.5%

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

**Box 4.5****Test of basic knowledge. Which institution can revoke the decision of the Constitutional Court?****Test of basic knowledge. Which institution can revoke the decision of the Constitutional Court?**

In order to assess the population's political knowledge, they were asked, which institution could revoke the Constitutional Court's decision, and the proposed answers in multiple choice were the Cabinet of Ministers; the President of the state; none of the institutions in Latvia (the correct answer). The question was correctly answered only by 27.2%, but most respondents either did not know the answer (45.2%), or answered incorrectly (27.6%). The higher the education level, the more correct answers were provided. The higher the education level of the people, the greater their interest in politics and assessment that they gave about the efficacy of their participation.

Data: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

**Box 4.6****Assessment given by population regarding finding and using the information about services of state institutions**

	I know where to find reliable information about services of state institutions	I have no difficulty to find this type of information	I know how to use this type of information
Entirely agree	19.6%	22.7%	25.2%
Rather agree	48.2%	45.4%	50.5%
Rather disagree	18.3%	17.9%	11.8%
Entirely disagree	2.2%	3.0%	1.3%
Don't know / no answer	2.4%	1.5%	1.4%
Lack the necessary information	9.3%	9.5 %	9.8%

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

poor or very poor. Results regarding their awareness of the political events in the world are similar (see Box 4.4).

**Obtaining information on electoral choices and political decisions affecting one personally**

When asked about their ability to obtain information that helps them to make a decision in elections and the ability to locate personally relevant information on policy decisions, the respondents most frequently assessed their skills as average.

For example, 66.6% of the respondents used this answer to indicate the level of their ability to evaluate party candidates before elections; 57.3% – to describe their ability to find trustworthy information about how separate political decisions will influence the development of Latvia; and 64.5% – evaluate their proficiency to locate trustworthy information about how decisions made by a municipal council will influence him or her or their family.

At the same time, 26.2% of the respondents said that their ability to evaluate the decisions of the municipal or local government is good or very good. The second most optimistic assessment regards the respondents' ability to evaluate candidates before election – 24.6% said that their proficiency in doing so is good or very good. Yet only 15.8% of the respondents think of their abilities to find reliable information about preparation and adoption of political decisions as good or very good.

**Experience in using national and local government services**

Residents of Latvia evaluate their awareness of local and national government services as good or average. Nearly 42% responded they had good or very good knowledge of services provided by the state and their local municipal government. It is noteworthy that 67.8% of the respondents completely agree or rather agree that they know how to find information about services provided by national government

institutions, but even more respondents (75.7%) say that they either believe or rather believe that they are able to use the information they find. It should be stressed that the individuals themselves may hold a higher opinion of their own information literacy than shown by their actual performance (Keverē, 2016).

## E-government. State and local government e-services

The availability and use of e-government and e-services form an essential part of information literacy and, in the wider context, mastery of life. To highlight this, the term “e-government literacy” (Eroġlu 2015) is also used. Whether or not an individual has these skills to work with information, including the use of information and communication technologies, has a significant impact on how quickly and successfully he/she can cope with routine and complex life situations. This also directly applies to the individual’s interaction with state institutions. On the one hand, e-government provides great opportunities to enhance cooperation between the individual and the state, which is traditionally regarded as a weaker service provider than the private sector, but, on the other hand, the success of these processes depends both on the quality of e-government services, as well as the individuals’ skills and readiness to use them.

In Latvia, there are examples and efforts that illustrate the skilful use of new technologies to facilitate life. Latvia stands out with a well-developed infrastructure, particularly web accessibility and speed, in addition to the use of these technologies to reflect the work of state institutions – for example, the webcasting of parliamentary and Cabinet of Ministers meetings. Still, there is no shortage of challenges and problems hindering the full use of opportunities available today. Development and introduction of e-government in Latvia advance with variable degrees of success. The range of offered and used services is increasing, but it is not always accompanied by growing service quality. Various expensive e-solutions have proved unsuccessful. The most characteristic example includes the development and implementation of the project *Skolas.lv*, an e-health platform (Kinca & Bērtule, 2015). There is reason to believe problems associated with implementation of e-government or individual e-services are rooted in departmental differences. As these problems are solved, the development of e-services and their quality will improve, which is the main prerequisite for the use of these services by the population.

In Latvia, the full spectrum of e-services offered by state institutions and local governments is available through the Internet portal *Latvija.lv*. The portal offers more than 400 different e-services and is increasing. From its inception through February 2017, 721,000 unique users have visited it

(VRAA, 03.03.2017). The question of whether this is a large number is debatable, but, as recognized by the creators of the portal, a major problem is many users do not return to the portal and do not use it repeatedly (LETA, 2015). Future studies are needed to clarify, whether such a trend is linked to the functionality and convenience of the portal, or the services offered by *Latvija.lv* are not relevant to the users.

The United Nations’ E-Government Development Index, places Latvia among the countries with a high level index (United Nations, 2014, p. 17). The index has three dimensions.

1. Availability of online services.
2. Telecommunications infrastructure.
3. Human capital (United Nations, 2014).

However, the European Commission’s Digital Economy and Society Index is specifically used to measure the human capital dimension, which is important from the information literacy perspective. In determining the value of e-government information to its citizens, Latvia ranks among the EU countries with the weakest results. These results underline the fact that e-services’ development is not sufficient, and attention must be paid to the skills required to use these services.

This human dimension index consists of two parts. The first explores basic skills and their use, and is measured by whether people have access skills to use the Internet and other digital technologies. In this part, Latvia scores better than other EU countries. However, the second part measuring higher skills and development, (the number of information and communication technologies’ specialists, the number of graduates from science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education programs), shows poor results (European Commission, 2016a). Consequently, the readiness to use e-services by any non-specialist is not the weakest point. The problem lies with the lack of specialists, which may have an impact on the quality development of state e-services.

## Use of websites and e-services of institutions

The Human Development Report of 2012/2013 concluded that despite of good Internet access, extensive availability of e-services, and public awareness of e-services, many of them are not being widely used in Latvia. The most popular e-services were those aimed at solving practical issues, such as payment of utility bills (used by 64% of respondents back then). Most of the available other services were used much less frequently. For example, electronic applications to state or local government institutions were regularly submitted only by 10% of the population; income statements to the State Revenue Service (SRS) by 17%; residence was electronically declared by 10% (Holma, Krūmiņa, & Pakalna, 2013).

Overall, e-services are not used as extensively as it would be possible.

According to **the study** conducted for the current Human Development Report, during the last six months e-services had been used by 48.1% of the respondents. This points to a lower use of e-services than was found in the study conducted by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development in 2015. According to the results of that study, e-services were used by 69% of the population (*Sabiedriskās domas izvērtējums par e-pakalpojumu pielietojumu*, 2015). Differences in survey results could be due to different methodologies of formulations of the question. The survey commissioned by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development contained a question "Have you used any electronic services within the last 6 months?" This question is broader than the question posed within **the study** survey, which excludes bank and other private sector e-services that are used by a relatively large share of the population. During the preparation of **the study**, the survey question was worded as follows: "Have you used state or local government e-services during the last six months (e.g. the services available in portal *Latvija.lv* or Road Traffic Safety Directorate (*CSDD*) services; SRS electronic declaration system, sent any other electronically signed documents, requested certificates or references, declared the place of residence electronically)?"

To evaluate whether the utilization rate of e-services is directly related to whether these are state or municipal e-services, or the general willingness to use electronic communication opportunities, it is worthwhile to look at how many residents of Latvia use private e-services. Results from the Digital Economy and Society Index indicate that the use of e-services provided by private enterprises in Latvia varies in different areas. Almost 40% of the population purchase goods and services online – this rate has doubled since 2010. The number of people who have used the Internet for online banking services has reached 80%, which is one of the highest levels in the EU (European Commission, 2016b). Such numbers indicate a relatively high level of readiness and skills for solving everyday matters online. Evidently, by improving the quality and credibility of state and municipal e-services, it is possible to achieve more extensive use of services provided by public institutions.

A more widespread use of e-government might improve accessibility of government services, including faster transfer of information and feedback. However, when developing e-services and e-government, diverse knowledge and skills of the needs of the public must be taken into account. Of those people who have never used e-services, 33.9% admit that they have insufficient knowledge or lack the skills needed to use e-services. Another 8.9%

of the respondents answered that they did not use e-services due to the lack of confidence, 13.3% said that e-services were not convenient, while 13.8% did not have access to the Internet. The fact that e-services are not used by these people, means that policy makers must address the quality issues of e-services as well as problems with availability of these services and skills needed to use them.

It is noteworthy that 41% of the people who have not used e-services, point out that they have not encountered any particular obstacles. This echoes the conclusion of the Human Development Report 2012/2013, indicating that non-users do not see the need for such services (Holma et al., 2013). According to the results from a survey conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, 47% still prefer to receive services in person. Among the main reasons provided was willingness to avoid misunderstandings and mistakes, which points to users' lack of confidence in e-services (*Sabiedriskās domas izvērtējums par e-pakalpojumu pielietojumu*, 2015). These results can be interpreted in different ways. Non-users of e-services may not be ready for changes in how they do things, or these results might indicate general cautiousness towards e-services and the ability of the government to provide adequate usability, quality and security of these services.

When analyzing the non-use of e-services, relevance of particular services in a resident's life should be taken into account. Few people have a need to register a company or send an application to a government authority. Obviously, these e-services will be used less than those required by the majority of the population, such as payment of bills or real estate taxes, and purchase of tickets.

The most popular providers of information are banks and municipal councils (SKDS, 2014). Among institutions that people consult for information either by visiting their websites or visiting in person, the most popular are banks (36,2%). As for the government institutions, the most popular were municipal councils (29,2%), SRS (26,4%), and libraries (18,5%). Other institutions are being consulted much more seldom (see Box 4.7).

Among the specialized online sites operated by the national government, the most popular were the site that contains Latvian laws and other legal documents *Likumi.lv* (16,2%); the site that integrates state and municipal online services, *Latvija.lv* (12,8%); databases of businesses, such as *Lursoft* or *Small and medium businesses in Latvia, (mvu.lv)*, Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (*csb.gov.lv*) (6,5%).

Although few respondents said that they use the specialized sites, but among the most popular of these is the State officials' declaration database, operated by SRS (6%) (see Box 4.8).

Younger, more educated and wealthier people use e-services more frequently. E-services were

## Box 4.7

**Institutions, where within the last 3 years people have sought information (in website or personally), April, 2014**

	Institution	%
1.	Banks	36.2
2.	Respondent's local government	29.2
3.	State Revenue Service (SRS)	26.4
4.	Library	18.5
5.	Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (OCMA)	10.4
6.	Police	9.9
7.	Rural Support Service (RSS)	6.7
8.	Ministries	5.1
9.	Central Election Commission of Latvia	3.4
10.	Parliament of the Republic of Latvia ( <i>Saeima</i> )	2.8
11.	Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia / State Chancellery	2.5
12.	None	41.9

Source: SKDS, 2014. *Demokrātijas audits, aprīlis (Latvijas iedzīvotāju aptauja)*.

## Box 4.8

**Have you used the following Internet sites?**

	Site	%
1.	<i>Likumi.lv</i>	16.2
2.	United portal of state and local government services <i>Latvija.lv</i>	12.8
3.	Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia ( <i>csb.gov.lv</i> )	6.5
4.	State officials' declaration database	6.0
5.	Various sites about EU, for example, the official EU Internet site in Latvia	5.1
6.	Direct public administration institutions' database	2.0
7.	Policy planning, research and publication databases	1.1
8.	Political parties' finance database	0.7
9.	None of the above	69.9

Source: SKDS, 2014. *Demokrātijas audits, aprīlis (Latvijas iedzīvotāju aptauja)*.

most often used by people aged 25 to 34 (67.2%) and 18 to 24 years (57%). In the age group 55 to 64 e-services were used by 38.7% of the respondents, and among people aged 65 to 74 the usage rate was 14.4%. E-services are used by 60% of the people with an employment, and less often by those who do not work anymore – 28.2%.

A strong relationship exists between the use of e-services and education level. The higher the education level, the greater the likelihood that a person uses at least one e-service. Of those who

have used e-services, 81% had a bachelor's degree or equivalent, 42.7% had secondary education, and 46.6% had secondary vocational or vocational education.

E-services are also more popular among people with higher income. For example, among people with an average monthly income from 200 to 500 EUR after taxes, e-services were used by 20 – 40% of the surveyed. At the same time, among those people whose monthly income was between 1200 and 1500 EUR, 76.2% use e-services, and among people



## Box 4.9

**Manabalss.lv – platform for alternative participation**

The online petition site *Manabalss.lv* offers an alternative to institutionalized forms of participation in Latvia. Here, an initiative can be proposed and signed by any citizen of Latvia who has reached 16 years of age. Every initiative signed by at least 10 thousand citizens is referred to the Parliament. At the end of 2015, 31 initiatives had been published online, and altogether there were 113 opened initiatives. In 2015, four initiatives were submitted to the Parliament, and two were submitted to local governments. So far, eight of the 14 initiatives submitted to the Parliament have evolved into normative acts. The Parliament rejected the initiative for the protection of fur animals, the VAT rate reduction for heating and decriminalization of marijuana. The most important successes attributable to the site *Manabalss.lv* include the full state financing of the hepatitis C treatment, and population campaign *Mans prezidents* (My President), during which more than 15 thousand people expressed their views on who should become the President of Latvia.

*Manabalss.lv* is an increasingly recognised platform of direct participation, but its use is not extensive and the overall impact on the politics is not large. According to the results of the survey carried out during the project *Inovācija un ilgtspējīga attīstība: Latvijas pēckrīzes procesi globālā kontekstā* (Innovation and sustainable development: Latvia's post-crisis experience in a global context, *SUSTINNO*) (a survey was implemented for the purposes of the project *Sabiedrības vērtīborientācijas un sabiedrības atjaunošanās* (Value orientations and reproduction of society), the initiatives in portal *Manabalss.lv* in 2014 had been signed only by 4.7% of the population, although the site's statistics showed that the number of the platform users was growing rapidly (*SUSTINNO aptauja*, 2015). Signing an online petition is more popular among people who are 34 years old or younger. *Manabalss.lv* initiatives more frequently are signed by the people with higher education, rather than those that have primary, secondary, or secondary vocational education. Similarly, people with a higher level of income have signed petitions it more often than the people with low, moderately low, moderate or moderately high income. Women are more active than men in signing the initiatives, but 70.8% of people who propose an initiative are men.

Sources: *SUSTINNO aptauja*, 2015; from *Manabalss.lv* on year 2015. Available at <https://manabalss.lv/page/progress>

whose income exceeds 1500 EUR, e-services are used by 75%.

**Political literacy outside institutions**

Civil society requires its citizens to be able to organize and mobilize on issues and ideas outside the framework provided by the state. Today, online platforms connect people with diverse geography but similar interests or concerns.

This section explores the opportunities for participation in online media. However, to be able to unleash the potential offered by online media, people need skills associated with political literacy.

**Social media use in political participation and self-organization**

Social media and networking sites allow users to follow the news from mass media, politicians, or government institutions, etc., as well as to connect with others to compose and distribute their own messages.

According to the data obtained by the survey carried out in the autumn of 2015 within the project *The value-orientations and renewal of society* (*SUSTINNO aptauja*, 2015), the most popular social media platforms in Latvia are Facebook (used by 56.9%), Draugiem.lv (55.4%), and YouTube (60.9%). Twitter is used by 16.6%, Odnoklassniki – 19.3%, Instagram – 14.1%, and V Kontakte – 8.5%.

The employment of social networking sites for self-organisation and building informal groups are

frequently discussed in public. Yet, such use is not necessarily related to political activity.

Social media are said to have played a key role in the Arab Spring and other recent political and social movements. However, the mere fact that political activists in a movement extensively use social media does not allow ascribing any particular political effects to these media in isolation from a wider informational environment that is being shaped by politics and mass media.

When explaining events during which social media have been used, we should also take into account the preparations carried out by the respective users in their face-to-face relationships, their intentions and general communication skills and practices (Wolfsfeld, Segev, & Sheaffer, 2013; program; Aday, Farrell, Lynch, Sides, & Freelon, 2012; Dewey, Kaden, Marks, Shun, & Zhu, 2012). The initiative to use a communication platform for particular purposes, such as to distribute or obtain content, comes from the users themselves, who employ the most effective and most comfortable means at their disposal – rather than the mere availability of a communication platform. That being said, social media can indeed be used to achieve various political goals, as well as to avoid politics altogether. However, the focus of the inquiry should be on the social aspects of media use, including communication skills and media literacy.

It should be noted that the most common activities on social networking sites include:

- communicating with friends/acquaintances and following their posts,
- playing games,

- browsing photo galleries and videos, and
- acquisition and dissemination of practical or entertaining information.

According to a 2013 TNS survey, only 19% of Latvian social networking users said they wrote comments and participated in online discussions (Hokonena, 2014). This was the least popular of the listed activities. Measured in this way, it may include not only political discussions but also a variety of other thematic areas. Furthermore, a 2016 SKDS survey showed that during the past year only 5% of social networking site users in Latvia had signed a petition, and only 7% had shared some type of legal advice, contacts or other useful information (Rožukalne & Skulte, 2016). Much more popular were activities that involve solving practical everyday issues and searching for providers and customers of various services.

Nevertheless, Latvians use social networking sites for self-organization, but not on a large scale. On popular social networking sites like Draugiem.lv and Facebook, “group” feature is widely used, and users who join various thematic groups, exchange information on respective topics and locate other people interested in those same issues. A brief overview of groups relevant to the topic of this Report is provided below.

### Examples of online self-organisation

On sites Draugiem.lv and Facebook, groups function similarly to online forums, in which additional features such as surveys, event announcements, ability to identify users by their profiles, etc. are available. Such groups attract people who are interested in a particular topic, and participants can post entries and respond to them with comments.

One area of self-organization particularly evident is related to emigration from Latvia. Social networking sites are widely used by Latvians living abroad. Many place-based groups have been established that unite Latvians residing in different countries, regions, and cities. At least 60 country, city, or region-based groups with at least a thousand members exist on Draugiem.lv (Buholcs, 2014). The most popular groups are dedicated to countries with the largest Latvian population, which include Great Britain, Ireland, Denmark, Norway, and Germany (Hazans, 2013). The largest group on Draugiem.lv are *Anglija • England* (33,000 participants); *Latvieši Anglijā un Īrijā* (*Latvians in England and Ireland*, 11,400); and *Latvieši Norvēģijā* (*Latvians in Norway*, 10,700). Similar self-organisation also takes place on Facebook. Among the most popular groups there are *Latvians Worldwide – Latvieši pasaulē\** *The Embassy of Latvians on Facebook*, 10,000+ participants; *Latvieši UK* (*Latvians in the UK*, 8,700 participants), and

*Latvieši Anglijā forums* (*Latvians in England Forum*, 7,200+ participants).

Many of these groups function as hubs for exchange of practical information and assistance, and participation in them is a way Latvians find their compatriots living nearby. Solidarity among emigrants, their interest in contacts with other Latvians, and extensive use of online social networking sites enable access to crucial support during the early stages of emigration. Later participation in such groups is useful for networking and maintenance of contacts. However, apart from the conversations dedicated to group-related and practical topics, socio-political discussions related to Latvia or the host country seldom take place in such groups. Participants typically do not recognize them to be appropriate for such activities. At the same time, participation in these groups is among the elements that unite Latvians living nearby and help them to maintain contact with Latvia and acknowledge their national identity (Buholcs & Tabuns, 2015).

In Latvia proper, social networking site groups that bring together users based on cities they live in perform a similar function. While the capital Riga has the largest number of such groups, they exist in smaller communities of Latvia, too. Participants in such groups exchange information about current events in their neighbourhood, lost and found items, or post recommendations. Facebook group *Hospitāļu ielas un Brasas apkaimes kaimiņi* (*Neighbours of the neighbourhood of Hospitāļu iela and Brasa* has 740+ participants); 5,200+ users follow the group *Vecmilgravis*; Плявниеки (Pljavniki exceeds 4,600). Outside of Riga, the Draugiem.lv group *Valmiera* has 5,700 participants, *Veeju pilseeta* has 2,900, and *Jelgavniekiem* – 2,200.

Another way of self-organisation is to form a group based on a particular socio-political topic. For example, *Feministu forums* (*Feminist forum*, +700 participants) is dedicated to feminism and gender-related issues. *Latvijas Mediju atklātais forum* (*The open forum of media in Latvia*, 450+ participants) is devoted to discussion of journalism and media. The group *Latvijas humanitāro un sociālo zinātņu aizstāvībai* (*In defense of Latvian humanities and social sciences*) has more than 100 members and was established by academics and researchers to advocate for change in the Latvian science policy.

One of the most popular socio-political groups on Facebook is *Gribu palīdzēt bēgļiem* (*I want to help refugees*, 2800+ members) who support and are willing to assist asylum seekers and refugees. Members exchange stories about particular refugees and asylum seekers, disseminate requests for help and offers of assistance, and discuss the general situation in this regard.

On Draugiem.lv, some of the most popular groups dedicated to topics attributable to socio-political issues are *Armija* (Army, 2600+ participants); *Konspiroloģija* (Conspirology, 1000+ members); and *Politologi* (Politologists, 1200+ participants). Various groups on Draugiem.lv deal with religious, culture and art-related, or sports themes. However, these groups often have a small number of members and low level of interaction.

Other examples of political self-organization concern situational or event-centred initiatives. In 2016, Saeima (the Parliament of Latvia) considered restricting female egg donation, and Facebook was one of the communication channels used to disseminate information about the planned picket against the proposed amendments to the Sexual and Reproductive Health Law. On Facebook, 3,650 users were invited to the event; 499 responded that they are “interested”, and 277 said that they would go – while only slightly more than 100 participants actually showed up in the June 16, 2016 picket. The number of people who promised to attend was not high in itself; furthermore, such data from Facebook are poor indicator as to how many people actually turn up at an event. Nonetheless, the people who showed interest had received the information about the event from Facebook, and, therefore, the site had served its communicative function.

Generally, the use of social networking sites related to practical issues is more popular. The Facebook group *Atbrīvojies no lietām Rīgā* (Get rid of things in Rīga) has 36,000+ participants who seek or offer things free of charge; and the group dedicated to real estate *Nekustamie īpašumi Latvijā* (Real estate in Latvia) has almost 48,500 participants. Apart from the groups dedicated to Latvian migrants abroad (discussed above), the largest gatherings on Draugiem.lv are *Māmiņu tusiņš* (Mommy hangout, 23,500 participants), *Anekdotas* (Anecdotes, 69,400), and *Audi fanu klubs* (Audi fan club, 10 600).

## Civil society context

The use of social networking sites can be better understood if the state of civil society in Latvia is taken into consideration.

Less than 30% of Latvians participate in public organizations, church parishes, trade unions,

amateur art collectives, political parties, professional and other organizations, and this figure tends to decrease over time (Ījabs, 2014). Nevertheless, Ivars Ījabs (2014) brings to attention the fact that a great difference exist between involvement in institutionalized forms of participation and those in which solidarity and other types of support are being expressed individually. An example of individual participation in Latvia is support for charity projects, such as raising money for people's medical expenses. However, the fact that this seems to be the most popular type of civic participation further emphasises how little the Latvians take part in movements associated with political self-organization and participation, let alone establish such movements themselves. The way Latvians use of social networking sites, which were described above, illustrate these same trends.

Any form of political or social activism requires investment of effort and resources in organization of activities, content creation and distribution, and reaching out to people. In the context of online communication, the mere possibility of participation does not alter the fact that content consumers greatly outnumber content creators, and the number of activists is smaller than of bystanders and watchers. The mere use of online media cannot reverse these proportions, despite the ability of media channels to shape the dynamics of communication or facilitate exchange of information and outreach to others. Thus, only 19% of Latvia's residents see social networking sites as an opportunity to influence state and local governments' political activity (Rožukalne & Skulte, 2016).

During surges of civic activity, social networking sites indeed are among the primary means used by people. These sites already fulfil an important function in communication and collaboration of among people who take part in various social and interest groups. However, the most important prerequisite for these civic processes to strengthen is not the mere availability of a particular type of communication infrastructure (such as the Internet and social media), but people's capacity and proficiency to become involved and to self-organize. If the level of civic activity in the society is low, the availability of advanced means of communication cannot compensate for the lack of related capacities and skills.

## Greatest achievements. Most serious problems. Most important tasks.

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### Greatest achievements

A diverse range of online tools and services useful in both political participation and solving of diverse everyday issues are available to the residents of Latvia. Although the number of people who use different kinds of e-services varies greatly, the use of the most convenient services is growing. This suggests a readiness to increase the use of online-based tools, if such tools are of adequate quality and meet users' needs.

### Most serious problems

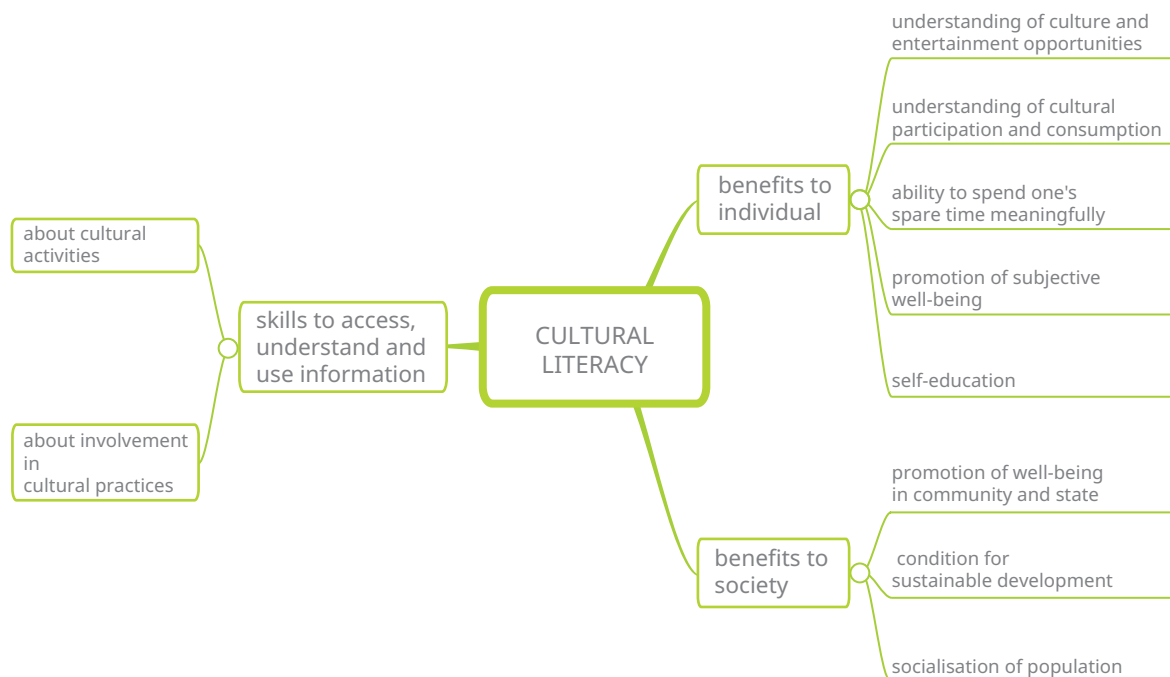
The availability of online communication infrastructure and services itself does not mean that people will use them, and this availability will not necessarily bring about socially or politically desirable outcomes. E-services and online participation may facilitate engagement, but availability is not the only or even the main element that explains the level of civic activity. An important factor is users' knowledge and skills, as well as their own objectives and perceived benefits of use. With regard to the use of online information and services, a gap exists between people with higher or lower income and education level. Thus, political and informational literacy is closely related to social and economic inequality in society. The understanding of and interest in political processes can be rated as average in Latvia. Civic activity is most visible in individuals' acts of solidarity with those in need, but self-organization around political issues with an aim to promote change is rare.

### Most important tasks

This chapter has identified two main tasks. First, it is necessary to continue to develop e-services and improve their quality and usability. Many e-services developed and financed by governmental institutions have become unduly expensive and not user-friendly. Too many first-time users do not return to these services, which indicates shortcomings in the developers' understanding of how such projects should be carried out and what needs end users have. Solutions that are planned and implemented without taking into account users' perspective, will fail to fully achieve their objectives.

Second, it is essential to continue strengthening of civil society by promoting societal activity, citizen participation in non-governmental organizations, and reducing alienation between the population and public administration. Participants in a more active civil society would be more efficient in fulfilling their own interests using e-services, online social interaction, and political participation platforms.

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## Chapter 5 Self-assessment of cultural literacy and inequality in the society

This chapter presents the analysis of the cultural literacy and cultural participation of the adult Latvian population, drawing predominantly from the survey of **the study**. The goal was to find out:

- how people evaluate their cultural activities,
- how skilful they feel in the implementation of their cultural practices,
- who are the people they listen to when choosing this or that cultural activity, and
- what is the participation (or non-participation) of various social groups in specified cultural activities?

The survey data provide the opportunity to acquire some understanding of the logic behind various cultural practices, including the acquisition and assessment of information. Major attention in the analysis is focussed on these topics regarding:

- sources of cultural information, and
- gender distinctions.

Throughout the chapter, two assumptions about the cultural practices are maintained.

1. They are social not only in terms of their content, but also in their form.
2. The strongest determinant of cultural participation is education, which is true with regard to the difference in female and male approaches to consumption of culture.

Individuals have a lot of time to spare, and in the West free time keeps increasing (Robinson, 2001; Coulangeon, 2015). From the viewpoint of social engineering and successful state governance, it is important that the use of spare time is as meaningful as possible. That is, people in their free time continue to improve their education, physical and social status. Members of society seemingly agree cultural activities such as reading books and attending theatre performances should be part of their daily lives, or at least holiday and weekend activities. Hence, cultural participation and consumption is a legitimate and topical area of social research.

Today's research and social politics are unanimous in the opinion that active cultural participation, such as amateur choir singing or athletic activities, and more so passive consumption of culture, such as attending concerts, can promote well-being, subjective well-being and cohesion of individuals, community and even the entire nation (Dunphy, 2009; Silvanto et al., 2008; Davidson & Faulkner, 2010; Jeannotte, 2005; Kiwan et al., 2007). Research of cultural practices and attitudes has become one of the basic elements of development policy. Particularly in Western society, culture is becoming an indispensable fourth pillar of the sustainable development vision along with: economy, ecology, and social equality (Daugavietis, 2015).

Chapter Five begins with the definition of the theoretical approach and the examination of the results and problems of former research. Subsequently, the survey data analyses of the study reveal how respondents evaluate their cultural literacy in comparison with their literacy in other areas (see the section "Self-assessment of cultural literacy and mastery by the population of Latvia in comparison with other spheres"). The next section "Self-assessment of cultural literacy and mastery according to various socio-demographic characteristics" is devoted to the analysis of self-assessment of cultural literacy, cultural mastery and cultural participation. It provides comparisons by the respondents in various socio-demographic groups (e.g., age, education, material wealth) and attempts to determine the differences in cultural and entertainment practices. The last section "Cultural literacy and mastery differences in the context of gender" focuses on gender differences in cultural practices and attitudes. Practically every cultural survey finds significant differences in female and male cultural participation, yet few studies provide satisfactory explanations. Finally, the main conclusions and results are summarised and critically synthesised.

## Theory

The study is dedicated to information seeking, focusing on people's ability to find information and

use it in a range of everyday situations and various spheres. Within the basics of information seeking between culture and entertainment areas, the main concepts are cultural literacy and cultural mastery. These terms, introduced by the Finnish scholar Reijo Savolainen, studies the daily information-seeking practices of individuals, which he interprets as "a natural constituent part of daily life" (Savolainen, 1995, p. 261). Savolainen refers to the theoretical concepts of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu for example, the concept *habitus*. According to Bourdieu, *habitus* is "a mechanism" that has evolved in the course of socialization and produces correct (i.e. "logical" and "reasonable") practices, which often seem to be instinctive reactions to specific life situations (Savolainen, 1995).

Savolainen distinguishes between two dimensions of literacy: orientation and practice. Therefore, **cultural literacy** in this chapter is defined not only as an individual's ability to find and use the information on culture (e.g., events, facts, works of art), but also as orientation that compels the individual, possibly even subconsciously, to do so. On the other hand, **cultural mastery** designates the highest degree of cultural literacy, when the individual has taken this literacy to the next level, changing from an ordinary information user into a skilful information manager.

"Cultural capital" is another concept developed by Pierre Bourdieu, and used in this chapter. Acquired by an individual in the form of knowledge, its chief indicator is the level of education. Actually, it is the sum of knowledge about the structure and functions of the physical and social world, as well as of standards, values, and accepted models of behaviour. Bourdieu uses the broadest interpretation of culture that implies not only practices like singing, writing or reading, but also nearly everything created in the specific community, culture or civilization. Therefore, the use of the concept "cultural capital" refers to the process of education and learning in general, rather than to the activities of select cultural or artistic circles.

On the assumption that cultural literacy is part of an individual's daily practices, it follows that some successful process of cultural socialization has developed during the formative years. Thus, the individual has decided that consumption of certain kinds of culture is acceptable (necessary), and accumulated a certain amount of cultural capital.

## Operationalization, or how to measure culture (cultural literacy)

The concepts of culture, cultural participation, consumption of culture, cultural literacy are difficult to operationalize and measure, because they should be measured both "directly" (e.g., by counting attendance of events), and "indirectly" (by asking



people about their practices and attitudes), and each of these concepts poses methodological and practical difficulties. When operationalizing cultural literacy or transforming it into measurable “constituent parts”, it is useful to divide it into the two previously mentioned dimensions: the orientation and the practice. In the orientation dimension, we should attempt to identify individuals’ attitudes, which can be apparent both in practice, i.e., what they choose to do (and not to do), and in their verbally expressed and sometimes merely hypothetical attitudes and assessments. When empirically defining the practical dimension we should identify the consumption level of cultural products, as well as the forms and intensity of participation in specific cultural practices. This division into attitudes and practices is classical in sociological research of cultural practices.

It is easier to measure individual practices if they can be assessed independently by observing and registering. “Physically” registered statistics of participation would be counting all the spectators entering the theatre. It is more complicated and methodologically less accurate to ask information from an individual, (so-called self-assessment). Nevertheless, self-assessment is a widespread practice even in official national statistics – for example, the *Eurostat* survey “European Union statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC)”, 2015, module “Participation in social and cultural life”; and the culture modules of “Adult education survey (AES)”, 2007 and 2011.

A separate problem in cultural research is the high social prestige of cultural consumption and participation. This is evidenced by individuals’ answers seemly to exaggerate their participation. Even more, this factor of social prestige affects the respondents’ answers to their attitude to various cultural phenomena, their hypothetical actions and value orientations in general.

### Cultural literacy and education (cultural capital hypothesis)

Simply expressed, the hypothesis set forth is: the bigger an individual’s total capitals (Menshikov, 2009), the greater that individual’s cultural literacy and mastery of culture.

Based on concepts of cultural capital, it should be presumed that cultural literacy is directly affected by the amount of cultural capital: the bigger the capital, the more literate the individual. Savolainen and other information researchers use the term “literacy” to refer to education, but this is more than just the skill to read a written text. Other factors may influence skills and mastery including an individual’s physical and mental health, economic welfare, and local traditions – all represented by other types of capital – economic, symbolic, social, health. Yet current attention

is focussed on the influence exerted upon cultural literacy by all capitals (health, economic, social) but primarily cultural capital. Therefore, the task of the research is to estimate relationships between cultural capitals on cultural literacy.

This hypothesis – the bigger an individual’s total capitals, the greater that individual’s cultural literacy and mastery of culture, is not original, and is confirmed by practically every empirical study (Nagel et al., 2010). Present data too, may prove that more educated people are more culturally active, and that the forms and content of their consumption of culture are “highbrow” or more socially acceptable. There are, however, some spheres, where the traditionally identified differences cannot be unequivocally explained by the capital approach. An example is the differences in cultural practices among ethnic groups or genders in society.

### Methodology

The questionnaire of **the study** was compiled of questions about information: seeking, using, and assessing it. Quite traditionally, respondents’ answers to the questions about their information literacy indirectly give evidence of their (1) cultural **participation**, such as reading books, learning and attending of cultural events, as well as to their (2) cultural **competency** and information skills, such as information seeking, assessment, comprehension, and general self-assessment in terms of planning of cultural and entertainment practices. Such secondary data are available from other surveys, enabling a comparison of the situations observed at other times and in other places. People’s answers indirectly show their cultural orientation and values. Rephrasing Bourdieu’s esthetic distaste thesis as a strong indicator of a person’s taste, the data can be used as significant evidence of cultural non-participation (e.g., refraining from non-reading books, non-attendance of cultural events).

In this survey, clarity is brought forth by specific questions to find out which people **influence** us when we choose this or that form of culture or entertainment. These questions of who recommended the last book you read or the latest cultural or entertainment event you attended, enable us to come a bit closer to understanding and interpreting the logic behind certain cultural practices. First, they reveal the traditional dimension of cultural participation (reading/non-reading of books, attendance/non-attendance of cultural events); second, the data analysis delineates people close to the individual or to whom they listen. They could be called the nodes of social networks as they have larger symbolic capital and greater prestige in cultural matters, i.e. who are listened to (two categories can be distinguished here – kinship and gender). Data analysis also might point to in which

forms of culture individuals wish to be more autonomous and/or feel competent to make an independent choice. It also reveals those types of cultural consumption and participation that are “more social”, i.e., in which our fellow beings have a greater influence.

### Self-assessment of cultural literacy and mastery by population of Latvia in comparison with other spheres

Comparing respondents' answers to the same questions regarding these eight defined spheres of:

- health preservation or improvement,
- personal finance management,
- culture and entertainment opportunities,
- services of public administration institutions,
- building of family relationship,
- upbringing and education of children,
- professional career opportunities, and
- receiving/raising one's education level, culture is the one in which they feel most competent and literate.

Judging from the answers of those surveyed, they should be experts in culture. Thus, 80% of the respondents claim that they *know where to find reliable information on culture and entertainment opportunities*, which is the highest result. In close, but second place at 74% is competency in preservation or improvement of health; and in third place 68% report their competency about the services of public institutions (see Table B1, p. 129) “To what extent do you agree or disagree to the statement that you know where to find reliable information regarding the following matters?”. Similarly, more respondents assess their ability to understand and use information about culture and entertainment as “good” and “very good” in comparison to other areas.

The term “expert” usually refers to people with specific education and considerable professional experience in a particular field. According to this interpretation, the absolute majority of the population cannot be experts in cultural and entertainment matters, yet their confidence about their knowledge in this area seems to indicate that they are generally very satisfied with their cultural choices, habits, and tastes. This indicates that people have acquired a rather stable notion about their cultural and entertainment requirements (*I know very well what music and novels I like!*), which is relatively enduring and hard to change. This is exactly how these answers should be interpreted: as the individual's self-assessment and subjective attitudes, captured by a certain pressure of social prestige. Culture is, indeed, one of the spheres, in which public opinion influences and consequently, elevates one's answers. People wish to be readers, cleverer, better educated and cultured persons, both in their own and other's eyes.

When analyzing the answers to the questions set to establish people's **mastery** in various spheres, it can be concluded that respondents pay attention more frequently to improvement of their welfare, preservation or improvement of their health, and creation or strengthening of their family. Only 4–6% do not pay attention to welfare and health matters, but more than 25% of respondents to family, and more than a 33% to further education and career (see Table C3, p. 131). The majority of the respondents have a clear action plan in two areas: health and culture (see Table C1, p. 131). On the other hand, the answers to questions regarding fulfilment of one's own plans show the following correlations: the plans assessed as more successful are either the ones easier to implement, those not important for 25–33% of the population, or those that the majority of people ordinarily implement such as, education, new experience and social contacts, founding family, and expanding one's cultural competence. Hence, plans that are important for approximately 90% are assigned the greatest importance, but are implemented less frequently. These include plans to increase welfare, build professional career or maintain/improve one's health (see Table C2, p. 131).

Expanding cultural competence is by no means a self-evident plan or an inevitable task. In these matters people are not so confident and convincing in assessing their cultural literacy. Probably, most people have no such plan or goal. In today's public discourse, the humanism imperative of “continuous education and spiritual growth” is not so strong. This is partially reflected by the survey data of the **study**: cultural competence for 20% and acquisition of education for about 40% of the population is hardly important. At the same time, and probably just for this reason, the ideal of “a man of culture” (educated and capable of understanding and enjoying great art) is still alive in the political rhetoric. Viewing culture as a more extensive phenomenon, including its educational aspect, is still one of the most important components of EU social policy, including life-long learning (see “EU policy in adult learning”).

The initiative “Culture School Bag” by the Republic of Latvia Ministry of Culture is also consistent with the “man of culture” approach and belief: *The goal of this initiative is to create a system that from 2018 will offer children and youngsters the opportunity to experience various events in professional art and culture within the framework of state-guaranteed education process* (“Kultūras skolas soma – dāvana bērniem un jauniešiem Latvijas valsts simtgadē”, Latvijas Republikas KM, 15.10.2015).

Comparing the self-assessment of mastery in various spheres, the tenets of economic determinism can be noticed. People wish to be more literate, yet they often fail in their mastery when implementing two plans required for improvement of health and welfare: ‘basic’ need for physical survival and

well-being. Summarising the respondents' answers concerning cultural and entertainment literacy and mastery, three major conclusions can be ascertained.

1. The individuals' high self-assessment in information and entertainment literacy indicates they are definitely individualistic and subjective: the individuals rate their taste highly and are more satisfied with their culture consumption practices than with other spheres.
2. It may show it is easier to satisfy cultural needs.
3. A relatively lower assessment for some regarding their own cultural mastery may indicate it is not an urgent and acute priority.

## Self-assessment of cultural literacy and mastery according to various socio-demographic characteristics

### Age

If it is presumed that younger people possess less cultural capital than older people, then it should be expected that older people are more culturally active. Flemish researchers comparing the cultural participation data over several decades in the USA, the Netherlands, Denmark and Belgium observed this trend (Roose & Daenekindt, 2015). However, the survey data of **the study** show that with the onset of old age, self-assessment of nearly all cultural and entertainment skills significantly and steadily decline. This leads to the conclusion that:

- knowledge and skills accumulated and held by older people in comparison with young people, are not the strongest factors in cultural activities, including information seeking, and
- cultural capital significance is greater in spheres of culture consumption and participation when more complicated and more active mental and physical involvement of an individual is required.

In the matters of **cultural literacy**, on the average, 80% of respondents have given themselves a very high assessment on having respective knowledge, understanding and skills to assess information in the sphere of culture and entertainment. Within this figure, on average 80% of 18 to 24 year olds evaluate their information literacy as good or very good, while only 50% of the respondents in the age group 65–74 think so. The biggest differences observed in the assessment of these two skills as follows.

1. "Choose and buy a music recording" in the group of the youngest respondents, 80% think themselves very good or good at this, while in the oldest group this opinion is held by 27%.
2. "Find dependable information about cultural events" (85% and 45%, respectively). Most probably, these are the indications of the significance and intensity of this kind of cultural participation in the respective age groups.

It is confirmed by the answer option "I don't attend cultural events", chosen by 10% in the youngest group and increasing to 40% in the oldest. Smaller and statistically less significant differences between age groups are observed in the skills "choose a film to see" (88% to 69%) and "choose a book to buy". These skills, assessed as *good or very good* by 50% of respondents, are similar in both the younger and the older age groups. The most optimistic responses came from the 45–54 year-olds (65%). This shows that these cultural and entertainment activities are equally practiced by all age groups, which is further confirmed by little significant difference in book reading – 33% of respondents across all age groups were non-readers.

With advancing age, the number of people choosing the answers "cannot assess" and "no information needed" grows from a few per cent in the youngest group to 20% in the oldest. When these culturally indifferent respondents were excluded, the responses to the majority of questions showed no significant differences among age groups.

Mentioned by every fourth respondent **three information sources** predominate in the answers to the question "Last time I got the most useful information about the cultural and entertainment opportunities from...":

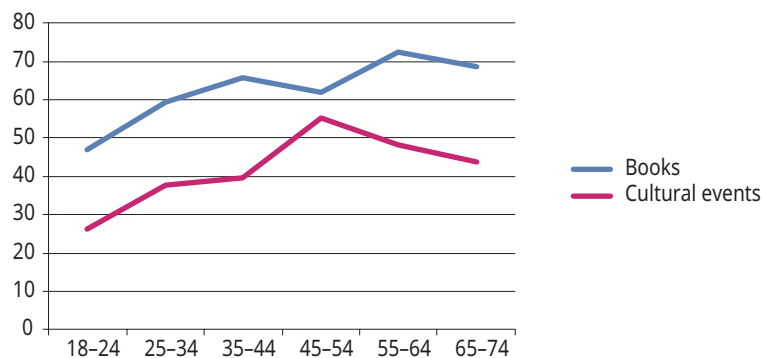
- people I know: family, friends, and colleagues,
- mass media, and
- Internet social networks.

16% chose the answer "I don't look for such information." The previously observed trend is repeated here – 7% of the youngest respondents choose this answer least often, senior groups choose this answer twice as often, and the oldest respondents – 3 times more frequently. There is a significant difference in the importance of the two sources – mass media and Internet social networks – in finding cultural opportunities. The importance of using Internet social networks **diminish** with the age of respondents, whereas the prominence of the traditional mass media rises. The other information resources (specialists of state, local government, non-governmental organizations or commercial organizations; websites of state, local government, non-governmental organizations or commercial organizations) were mentioned no more than in 3% of cases. This leads to the conclusion that the respondents' main information channels in culture and entertainment matters are other people of acquaintance and mass media, whereas the more particular information channels are of no particular consequence.

In the matters of **cultural mastery** "I have a clear plan of expanding my cultural competency and I regularly pay attention to expanding my cultural competency" a similar trend is observed. As the age of people increases, the ratio of those who maintain that they have a plan and they try to follow it decreases – from 75% of respondents having a plan in

## Box 5.1

## Respondents, who were not advised by anybody about the latest book read / cultural event attended, division by age group, %

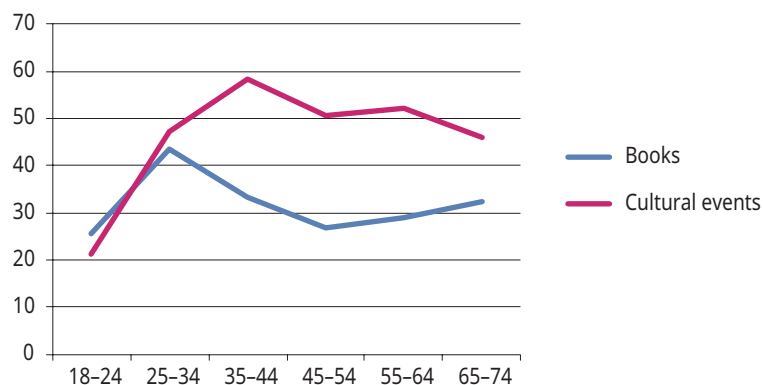


Basis: the ratio was calculated taking into account only the respondents who had received someone's advice.

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZ, 2016).

## Box 5.2

## Respondents who were advised the latest book read / cultural event attended by a relative: division by age group, %



Basis: the ratio was calculated only taking into account the respondents whom somebody had advised.

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZ, 2016).

the youngest group to 50% in the oldest group. Those for whom this sphere is important are equally skilful, irrespective of their age.

Responding to the question – *Who advised you to go to the latest of the cultural events attended by you?* – of those who attend such events “Nobody advised me” was chosen least frequently by young people 18–24 (26%), and most frequently by respondents aged 45–54 (55%). After this age, the choice of this answer again decreases to 44% in the oldest respondent group (see Box 5.1). This clearly shows culture and entertainment events play a greater socialization role in youth and in the second half of one’s life. As to the choice of books, the surveyed are more independent in their decisions.

When analysing the respondents’ answers to the question – who advised them to read the latest book/attend the cultural event – the smallest number of individuals who mentioned a **relative** (such as mother, father, wife, husband), belonged to the youngest age group (20%), while in the other age groups the distribution was quite equal (see Box 5.2). This shows, which people have influence in which age groups. For young people, the family definitely has less authority in the matters of culture and entertainment than for other age groups.

This finding regarding young people is repeated in the answer to the question, who suggested the latest book you have read? About 80% of young people responded it was not a relative. Yet, as opposed to

the suggestions about cultural events, the answers of older respondents did not differ greatly from the young people's responses (see Box 5.2). This can partly be explained by the fact that reading books is more intimate and less public than attending events. Reading is generally not done in a group or with a partner, thus does not require agreeing on choice or accepting other people's invitation.

## Education

Respondents were divided into three groups according to level of education: primary or lower education, secondary education and higher education. The thesis of cultural capital is best confirmed in the sphere of education capital. In all other types of cultural literacy and cultural mastery other than choice of film, there are differences between the less and more educated respondents and these differences are statistically significant. In the cases of cultural non-participation, an inverse correlation is observed. Cultural events are not attended by 43% of population with basic or lower education. Yet 17% with a secondary education and 11% with a higher education also do not attend cultural events. Non-readers of books (51% with a basic education; 33% with a secondary education; 14% with a higher education) are the same group who do not attend cultural events. People who are better educated are also more independent in their choice of cultural activities. By a larger percentage they answered nobody advised me to go to the latest cultural event I attended and nobody suggested that I read the latest book I have read.

In the choice of specific cultural products, the more educated respondents choose media and experts as their advisers rather than their family members and friends. Those with larger cultural capital, probably combined with other capitals, rely more on mass media, expert opinions or advertisements than on family or acquaintances.

Probably the extent of cultural capital (attested only by the level of education in this survey) so strongly correlates with the intensity of cultural participation also because the prestige of culture is higher in the respective population groups. It is relevant here to return to the second dimension of literacy defined by Savolainen – *values*. At various levels of education, the values taught can be different and the attitude to "cultural non-participation" is one of them.

## Ethnicity

Comparing the answers of Latvian and Russian-speaking respondents (the people of other ethnicities are insufficiently represented in this sample for statistical analysis), Latvians evaluate their cultural literacy and mastery slightly higher and less

frequently choose the answer "I cannot assess this", yet these differences are not significant.

There is a similar trend, when the language spoken in their families – Latvian or Russian, divides the respondents. The **exceptions** are observed in the choice of films, music, and books and with these choices the Russian community of Latvia is slightly more confident than the Latvians. Russian language books, films and music are available in greater variety than those in Latvian, and the overall majority of these Russian cultural products, consumed by the Russian speaking community in Latvia, has been produced in the Russian Federation. Language and availability may determine the comparative difference. It reminds us once more that the consumption of culture and art is local rather than universal (Tabuns, 2006), and is clearly linked to language.

## Size of household

As the number of household members increase from two, three, four or more, the self-assessment of the respondents' cultural literacy rises and the percentage of passive individuals decreases. Although these differences are for the most part statistically insignificant, the trend itself is stable. As usual, the exception is films and books. It may seem surprising that the people with bigger families evaluate their level of information and cultural activity as higher than those who live alone or with a partner – the former ones seemingly should have less spare time. This shows that the consumption of culture is not only personal but also collective and family-oriented, and definitely a social activity. An individual living in a household is drawn into a network of culture consumption arranged by other members, and the bigger the household, the richer the field of information, with greater opportunities to increase cultural literacy and practices. The second general conclusion well illustrated by this case is culture consumption is not relative to the available spare time. Lack of time is not an argument for non-participation in cultural activities, but only an excuse: *[...] those who do not wish to attend cultural activities more often, usually as an explanation, tend to mention lack of time or being too busy* (Klāsons, Tjarve, Laķe, Spuriņš, & Asare, 2014, p. 38).

## Place of residence

Inhabitants of cities, more often than those in rural areas, are convinced their cultural literacy and mastery is good or very good. Most probably this conviction arises due both to the urban inhabitants' cultural capital – they are better educated (Iedzīvotāji ar augstāku izglītības .., 26.02.2015), and have access to more choice. In terms of regional division, the inhabitants of Vidzeme are essentially more literate. This confirms the data obtained in other research and



is explained by the relative proximity to Riga, and a better socio-economic situation, plus inhabitants of Vidzeme are ethnically more homogenous and have old and strong civil cultural traditions (Tisenkopfs et al., 2002, Daugavietis, 2015). Following Vidzeme, Riga shows the highest *self-assessment* in cultural literacy, whereas in the assessment of *mastery* the situation is reverse.

In fact, the respondents fall into two groups, those on “the other side” are Latgale, Zemgale, and Kurzeme as opposed to the residents living in the regions closer to those of Vidzeme and Riga. The inhabitants of Latgale maintain that they are interested in cultural events, attend cultural and entertainment activities and read books more than average in Latvia, yet their self-assessment of literacy and mastery is considerably lower than in other regions. This may reflect greater pessimism combined with the depressive economic status of the region, thus impacting the self-assessment of cultural literacy and mastery.

## Employment

Respondents, who are currently employed, give higher self-assessment results in practically all the cultural literacy and mastery areas in comparison to unemployed respondents. They are more active consumers of culture, and these differences are statistically significant in most cases. The choice of books and films is an exception again, showing almost no differences.

## Material status

Income per family member status was grouped as follows:

- poor – below ~ 150 EUR,
- low-income ~ 200–250 EUR,
- well-off ~ 250–350 EUR, and
- affluent ~ 450 and more EUR.

The analysis of the respondents’ answers showed a rising trend in cultural literacy and cultural mastery with improving material status. The exception was in the ability to choose a film; people of low income or those who are culturally passive consider themselves more competent, (yet not in all cases were the differences statistically significant.) This is an indirect confirmation that education level is closely connected with employment and income level. Monetarily more comfortable people are better educated (Aleksejeva, 2012; Krasnopjorovs et al., 2016).

There are significant differences in the skill of decision making as to which cultural event to attend, which book or music to buy. The choice of the response “I cannot answer” differs across the groups. The answers of the two wealthier groups are similar, whereas the respondents of each “low-income” group

choose this answer twice as often. Of the low-income group, 33% say that they do not attend cultural and entertainment events at all, whereas in the well-off group only 13% give this answer.

Actually, the only exception – and the trend is nearly reversed – is the self-assessment of the skill to choose which film to watch. Although the differences are not statistically significant, the low-income respondents consider themselves most competent (82%). This shows that watching films is an equally popular pastime for all groups of society. A mere 1–3% of respondents across all groups selected “I cannot choose.” However, differences could arise as to choice of titles or genres of film.

## Joy of living

“The Purpose in Life” Test was developed in 1963 by American psychiatrists James C. Crumbaugh and Leonard T. Maholick, and was designed to measure a new type of neurosis arising from Austrian psychiatrist and neurologist Viktor Frankl’s concepts of meaning and purpose in life (Adler, 1997). The neurosis arises out of lack of purpose and responsible decision-making meaning in life and the feeling of emptiness, resulting in existential frustration (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964, p. 200). The test scale consists of 20 questions, and in the present survey, the scale of 10 questions was used (see Box C5, p. 132 – the questionnaire). Depending on the respondents’ answers, they were divided into three groups: optimistic, balanced and hopeless.

The answers to the psychological test questions of **the study** show as table and statistically significant trend: with the decline in the joy of living the cultural activity of people subsides (cultural passivity and non-participation increase), and the self-assessment of literacy and mastery goes down. For example, 7% of the optimistic, 16% of the balanced and 34% of the hopeless do not attend cultural events (see Box 5.3). Books are not read by 20%, 29% and 43%, respectively. The “Hopeless” group stands as about 20% choose the answer “I don’t need information”. Of course, based on the data of this survey only, the dynamics or trends in time and causal relationship cannot be discussed, yet this statistical picture is quite clear and convincing – optimistic individuals are more confident about their cultural literacy and more actively participate in cultural practices.

The summary of the differences and trends in cultural participation across various socio-demographic groups is vividly illustrated by the non-participation ratios in Box 5.3. The greatest differences are caused by education, gender, age, employment and material status, plus physical and mental health and stability. The correlation is simple: the smaller the respective capital, the more passive the individual’s cultural participation. Discussion of



economic capital, also human capital, social capital and even health and language capital is more familiar. The concept of capital or value associated with gender is less customary in our society to be male or to represent the dominating gender is more advantageous, because the economic and social value is higher. This topic is discussed in the context of cultural literacy in the next section.

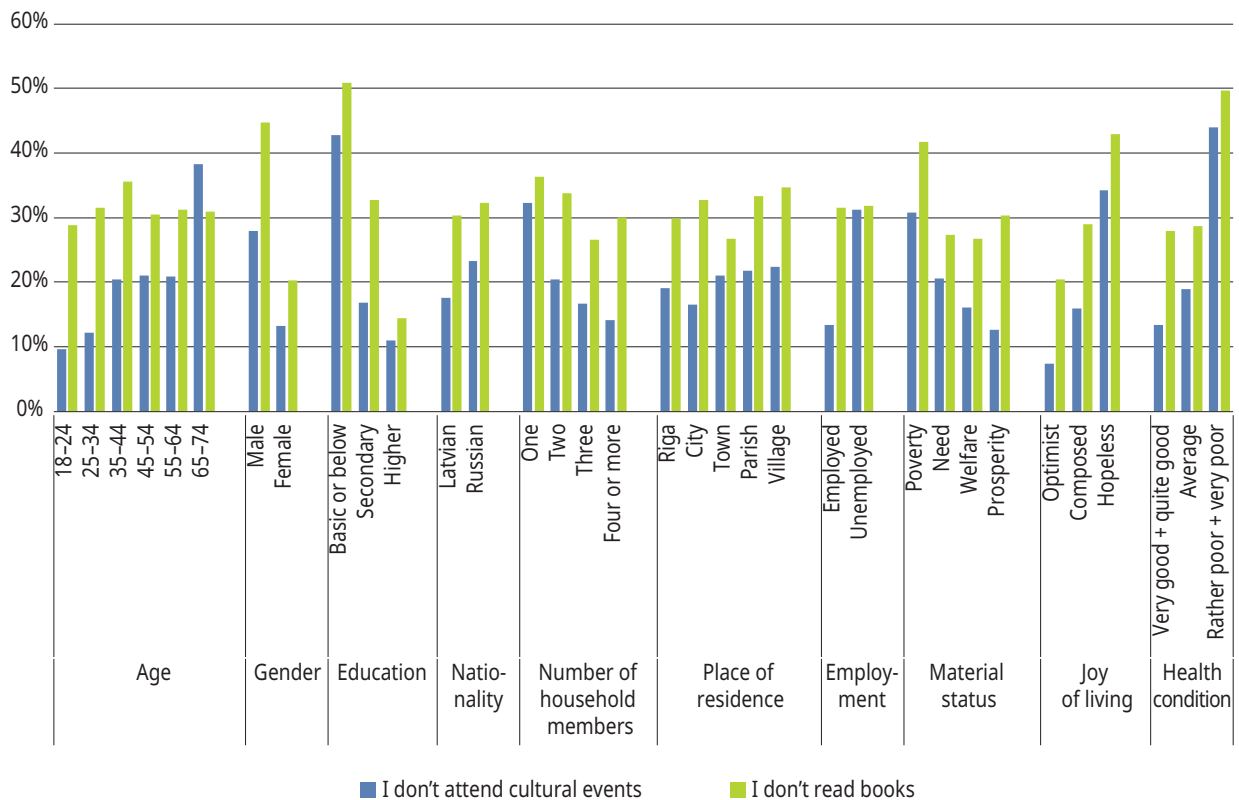
### Gender differences in cultural literacy and mastery

Gender equality has always been an essential theme of human development publications. In 1999, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), issued a special publication titled, "Gender and Human Development in Latvia" (Neimanis, 1999). Traditionally, gender equality has been discussed in spheres of economy, health care, education and politics, but less frequently in culture. This study performs an in-depth analysis of differences in female and male cultural literacy and mastery. Significant

gender differences in cultural participation in Latvia is even more pronounced than in other EU member states and has not been thoroughly researched and clarified. Most probably, these differences are caused by a radical separation of genders in cultural socialization, participation and consumption, which, in turn, is a consequence of the separation and confrontation of genders in a broader social context. The example of unequal participation of genders in cultural activities is amateur dancing, a seemingly traditional activity of couples, yet there are always more women than men. An amateur genre of the so-called European dance has gained increasing popularity in Latvia seemingly without prejudice, as it ignores the West's traditional idea of a man and a woman dancing together. And generally only women participate in the current and popular line dancing. A further observation in everyday life is the unequal distribution of roles and duties in a family and upbringing of children (Sedlenieks & Rolle, 2016). The society is reproducing concepts and, consequently, human behaviour models automatically assigning certain spheres and roles to one or the other gender.

#### Box 5.3

#### Public non-participation in culture: non-attendance of cultural events and non-reading of books



Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZ, 2016).

In Latvia, culture and the arts is largely “a women’s thing,” resulting in a continuation of gender segregated cultural participation and consumption.

In this section, differences in female and male cultural behaviour are reviewed. This includes analyzing cultural literacy, mastery of culture, cultural participation and cultural consumption. Based on Bourdieu’s concepts of cultural capital and *habitus* (defining *habitus* as a result of continuous socialization with an individual remaining in one social position (Бурдьё, 1993), the author of this text suggests the concept of the class or strata *habitus*. In the Marxist interpretation, which is among the influences affecting Bourdieu, there are basically two types of class: the subordinating and the subordinated. Looking at other divisions of the society that do not directly stem from the relations of production, for example, division of all people into two large social groups – men and women – can also be analysed by applying the concept of the group’s *habitus*. In the gender perspective, man classically is a subordinator subjecting women – the subordinated – to the social order preferred by him (West & Zimmerman, 1987). This allows for the assumption that the women’s *habitus* makes them more submissive and conformist, while the men’s *habitus* “produces” non-conformist practices in them. Although in the Western world, including Latvia, the traditional patriarchal society keeps changing in the direction of gender equality, undermining the power of this *habitus* (the subordinator and the subordinated), it still exists and the sphere of culture is among those where these differences are still present.

Returning to the concept of cultural capital, and bearing in mind that various social groups and stratas have different cultural capitals, it can be assumed that one of the reasons for gender differences is diverse understanding of education. For example, exactly what should be learned and acquired (which knowledge is more important, which is less significant). Cultural capital is measured not only by level of education, but also by types of acquired knowledge. When explaining gender segregation of cultural practices the following sub-hypothesis is suggested: various social groups have different subjective assessment of the same type of knowledge; in this case, men and women have different attitudes to cultural. These gender differences in cultural orientation and practices are explained by the fact that girls, due to early socialization, by the *habitus* are “made” to be more diligent in acquiring their cultural capital (particularly, the knowledge of culture and arts) and thus, achieve better internalisation of culture and arts than boys.

Cultural consumption is one of those spheres, in which the subjective value of goods or services grows by use. A child’s spare time activities in childhood and youth may affect his or her spare time practices in the future (Yoesting & Burkhead, 1973). In other words,

all that a child does, acquires, or experiences, may affect cultural preferences as a grown-up. A similar idea is expressed in the so-called approach of cultural addiction (Ginsburgh, 2001).

The assumption that girls are more diligent in acquiring knowledge than boys is based on the thought that our rather patriarchal society still holds the stereotypic and traditional view of gender roles: the subordinated and the subordinator, wherein the former must be conformist and the latter – non-conformist. *Why can it be decisive in the cultural and artistic socialization?* Because exactly at this stage (preschool and primary school) the basic component of the cultural capital (“arts and culture”) is introduced to a child, and at this age children are more susceptible to the notions and traditions existing in society, including the one of culture and arts being “the women’s thing”. A considerable number of boys are not interested in the humanities and arts at school because they have already learned that this is mostly “the girls’ thing”, yet, contrary to the majority of girls, who probably prefer the jumping across elastic bands (common pastime in the schools) or tree climbing to reading of books, the boys are more resistant to the social pressure (e.g., they more successfully avoid singing in the school choir, even though it is a compulsory activity), because the males are forgiven, even expected to be rebellious and non-compliant. Therefore, analysing the gender differences of socialization, it can be concluded children learn the basics about culture and arts, including the attitude of the society that girls are more successful and their cultural capital is bigger. Combined with other stimulating factors (such as habits and traditions), this makes women more active consumers of arts for their entire life.

## Gender and education

Through the school years, children acquire and accumulate knowledge about the surrounding world and its processes, skills and abilities. During this time they create their cultural capital. The data obtained under the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted by the OECD show that in Latvia, girls are more successful in literature and science, whereas, in mathematics, the gender differences are statistically insignificant. Although in the past boys’ achievements in mathematics were better than those of girls, this difference has diminished and in some places, including Latvia, girls have shown better results than boys. Since 2009, girls’ achievements in science have been higher than boys’, and this difference is statistically significant. In science, girls’ average achievement was 11 points higher compared with the boys’ result. At the same time, in OECD countries, the achievements in science gender-wise, generally are more balanced, with

boys slightly overtaking girls. However, the most striking difference in average achievements is seen in PISA reading results: in 2015 in Latvia, the girls' achievement in reading was 42 points higher than the boys' (OECD PISA, 2016; Geske, Grīnfelds, Kangro, & Kiseļova, 2013). In the centralised state tests in the year 2015 across all subjects, except chemistry, girls showed better results than boys. The biggest differences in the boys' and girls' results were observed in the French and Latvian languages (Valsts pārbaudes darbi ..., 2016).

Although the results in mathematics do not differ by gender, the child's own opinion of his or her abilities plays an important role. By comparison to boys, girls tend to underestimate their skills and competencies in mathematics (Simpkins, Davis-Kean, & Eccles, 2006). Such underestimation may prompt girls to choose a subject for academic studies that does not require knowledge of the exact sciences, at least not the top level of knowledge, which leads to a gender disproportion in disciplines such as arts, humanities, mathematics, natural sciences, computer and information sciences.

The difference in boys' and girls' educational achievements has no obvious explanation. The process of education in Latvia does not separate boys and girls, and both genders are guaranteed equal opportunities of education. However, it should be kept in mind that the theoretical framework of education states there is no difference in providing education to boys and girls, yet in the process of learning a child/young person is being taught gender differences and roles (Situation analysis in the educational system ..., 2005; European Parliament, 2012). This includes the transfer of stereotypes and values from a teacher and the content of a curriculum to a child (Pičukāne, Ķīkule & Zemīte, 2001). Therefore, in 2005, the Republic of Latvia Ministry of Welfare concerned about gender equality principles, published textbook Guidelines to focus attention on gender stereotypes reflected in textbooks and study materials *Vadlīnijas mācību grāmatu veidotājiem: dzimumu līdztiesības principu integrēšana mācību grāmatās* (Bogdzeviča, Celmiņa, Grigule, Ķīkule & Rāta, 2005). Of course, the transfer of stereotypes and values may occur both at school and outside it, and cultural capital is also created in a family and under the influence of mass media, and through traditional societal views about gender roles (European Parliament, 2012).

Even at the initial stage of socialization, children, too, divide their peers into groups, the division of boys and girls being among those groups. Besides, children themselves may exercise so-called peer pressure on other children regarding behaviour and interests appropriate for girls and boys resulting in homogenous gender groups of children.

Parents, more frequently expecting from girls some demonstration of joy, while boys are taught

not to show and discuss their emotions too openly, form behaviour that corresponds with the child's gender role in the process of socialization. Girls learn to show compassion or empathy to others, therefore, in situations when empathy is a logical reaction, girls interact more naturally than boys who are taught to suppress and hide their feelings. Conversely, boys' aggression and anger are perceived with greater tolerance than similar feelings demonstrated by girls (Garnerb & Estep, 2001). Accordingly, girls learn submission, empathy and diligence, speaking of their own and other people's emotions already in childhood, while boys, more often learn to react aggressively. This may partly explain why boys' achievements at school are below those of girls. The success at school is enhanced by qualities like diligence and submission to the teachers' demands which result in better marks to girls, while the boys' aggression urges them to resist parents, teachers and school rules. The educational achievements of girls are influenced by the potential popularity among their peers. For girls, as opposed to boys, good marks are among the popularity criteria apart from physical attraction and the parents' material status. Hence, those boys who demonstrate strength, physical achievement and resistance to authority, leaving academic achievements in the background, can gain popularity at school (Adler, Kless, & Adler, 1992). The state basic education standard-standards of the primary education subjects, and sample primary education curricula, state that by the 9<sup>th</sup> year of school a child must have acquired "Understanding of man's and society's development progress and regularities" (Noteikumi par valsts pamatizglītības ..., 12.08.2014). These rules document understanding gender roles and the value of gender equality. Nevertheless, education provided to boys and girls at primary school level (school years 5-9) still differs. Girls at school are taught cooking, sewing, knitting and similar household skills, while boys learn woodwork, metalwork and technical drawing (see textbook "Mājturība un tehnoloģijas. 5. klase. Tekstila tehnoloģijas", Kazaka & Moroza, 2009). Over time, the required learning of traditionally gender-associated skills have disappeared. Yet these classes continue to be divided by gender and only with one's own initiative can a student join the opposite gender group to learn an "opposite gender" skill. Consequently, formal education reinforces gender bias in subsequent generations. These biases may include whose duty it is to cook meals, or the perception that boys are to be breadwinners for their future families. These practices may affect a young person's and their parents' priorities, in that their interest from, say, literature, is diverted to a different priority more suitable for "earning money". In the article "*Gender differences in mathematics: the role of culture*", the authors conclude that the culture of the

society influences the difference in boys' and girls' results in mathematics. In societies where gender equality is considered a value and the role of women is just as valuable as men's role, the girls' results in math improves (Nollenberger, Rodrigues-Planas & Sevilla, 2014). This indicates the socialization process and acquisition of gender roles is an important role belonging not only to parents, but also to the culture impacting the socialization process at school. Culture affects parents' opinions about gender roles. Both mothers and fathers have various stereotypical beliefs – either conscious or unconscious – that get expressed in their communication with children. Fathers, in particular, expect their sons to show a better understanding of science and mathematics, whereas for their daughters, parents anticipate difficulty or a lack of interest in the exact sciences (Tenenbaum & Leaper, 2003).

To a great extent, women themselves take part in reproducing gender stereotypes. *“Latvia is characterised by a high percentage of women involved in educating children and youngsters. In the school year 2015/2016, 88.3% of teachers in comprehensive education establishments were women. Similarly, in vocational education 72.3 % are women teachers and 55.4% in higher education are women. The smallest number of men have chosen to work in preschool education, where the percentage of women was 99.6%. In addition to this dichotomy of numbers by gender, more seriously there is a shortage of young teachers. Only 7.3% of teachers are under 30 years old”* (Centrālā statistikas pārvalde (CSP), 2016b, p. 17).

Girls' higher achievements in education at primary and secondary school levels are reflected in the percentage of female students in higher education. In Latvia, for the school year 2015/2016, 59.1% of students were women (Centrālā statistikas pārvalde (CSP), 2016a). However, there are noticeable gender differences in numbers by education subject. Despite the facts that girls' have higher achievements in natural sciences than boys' and there is no difference between boys' and girls' results in mathematics, in the academic year 2015/2016, natural sciences, mathematics and information technologies were studied by 2,138 women (32%) and 4,540 men (68%). Simultaneously, arts and humanities were studied by 5,109 women (74.1%) and by 1,857 men (25.9%) (Centrālā statistikas pārvalde (CSP), 2016a).

When choosing subjects at a higher education institution, despite equal or even higher achievements at the secondary level, women more frequently choose the humanities or arts, and less often exact sciences. This seems to be influenced by society's attitude to specific spheres fundamentally viewed as feminine or masculine, as well as the girls' larger than boys' early accumulation of culture and arts capital. The result is a considerable difference in cultural capital, not only in quantity, but also in interest. Women's

cultural capital constitutes a larger share of humanitarian and artistic knowledge.

## Gender and consumption of culture

The indicators of cultural literacy and mastery of culture are influenced by the respondent's gender. The analyses of data show that women evaluate their skills in most types of cultural literacy and cultural mastery considerably higher than men. The gender differences decrease in the data on the choice of film, besides, in this case, it is not women's evaluation of their ability to choose a film for viewing that decreases, but it is men's self-assessment that rises. One more indicator, which is similar for both genders, is the ability to choose music for purchase. In this case, women's self-assessment falls rather than men's rising. The differences in cultural literacy decisions on films and music have proven insignificant in prior analysis (see the chapter “Self-assessment of cultural literacy and mastery according to various socio-demographic characteristics”).

Men more often than women indicate they have no need to expand their cultural competency, despite the lower self-assessment in cultural literacy and mastery. It seems they are generally satisfied with their cultural consumption and habits despite the predominance of “light genres”.

The survey data of **the study** show that men are considerably more passive in cultural events than women. Only in the consumption of films and music are there no differences between the genders. In answering questions about films and music, most respondents spoke of their own taste and preference for the most popular works of pop culture. Men's pursuit of popular, mass-oriented and “light” culture is confirmed by other studies. Eurobarometer Survey 2013 on cultural consumption (European Commission, 2013) confirmed men more often used the Internet for entertainment activities (downloading/watching films or listening to music or radio online), whereas women purchased books or tickets to cultural events, or searched information on cultural activities. Presumably, men's unwillingness to improve their cultural literacy is due to their inclination to seek “lighter” and more entertaining culture. Therefore, as compared to women, men lack motivation or the experience of daily practice for more serious or more highly valued types of cultural consumption.

Cultural capital and mastery by women is firmly indicated by the data (see Box. 5.4):

- 46% said no one advised them,
- 10% said their husband offered advice,
- 8% received recommendations from men other than husbands, and
- 12% received recommendations from other women.

Cultural capital and mastery by men is indicated as follows:

- 36% said no one advised them on cultural events,
- 33% said their wives told them to go to a cultural event,
- 1% received that advise from other men, and
- 36% received that advise from women.

Women to a greater extent than men are motivators and inducers for others to attend cultural activities.

In the choice of books, approximately 60% of women and men feel independent of other people's recommendations. But when advised, essential differences are seen in the persons from whom advice is listened. Women, more often than men, base their choice of book on the advice received outside their family, whereas men more often than women choose women as advisors (see Box 5.5).

Men are more passive in attendance of cultural events and reading of books than women, since 28% of men have answered that they do not attend cultural events, while 45% have declared that they do not read books at all; among women 13% do not attend cultural events and 20% do not read books at all (see Box 5.3).

It has been mentioned before, that with the declining joy of living, cultural activity decreases. Men feel the lack of optimism and succumb to hopelessness more often than women, who are more optimistic. Women are more interested in spending their leisure time in an active and cultural way, thus continuing to develop their cultural literacy and augmenting their cultural capital.

## Summary, discussions and conclusion

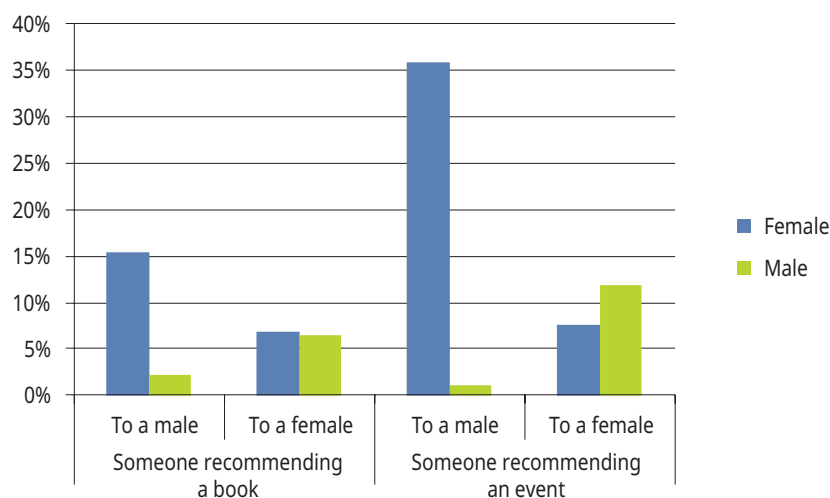
The analysis of the cultural literacy and cultural participation by the people's self-assessment confirmed the previously known conclusions of the quantitative sociological research: those who possess a larger capital, are more active in cultural participation (e.g., reading of books, attendance of cultural events), and more culturally literate. Traditionally, cultural capital has the greatest impact while health and economic capitals are important, too.

Not all the differences in cultural literacy can be explained solely by the capital approach. For example, the different habits of cultural practices between men and women. Another subject causing socio-political concern is the passivity of senior citizens. The relatively low cultural participation of the senior population testifies to practices and inherited stereotypes, such as "old people should stay at home and watch television". This is becoming a larger concern especially with the aging of our society and the subsequent focussing of social policy on the needs of the retired individuals and their reintegration in society.

The only exception showing no difference among social groups is the consumption of films and music. It is confirmation of the so-called theory of "cultural omnivorousness" – the middle and upper classes have turned from "univores" of "high" art and culture into "omnivores", with a inclusion in cultural diet of folk, popular and mass culture (Peterson & Kern, 1996). It is this part of culture that can unite people, even those from different ethnic communities.

### Box 5.4

#### Advisors of books and events: according to gender

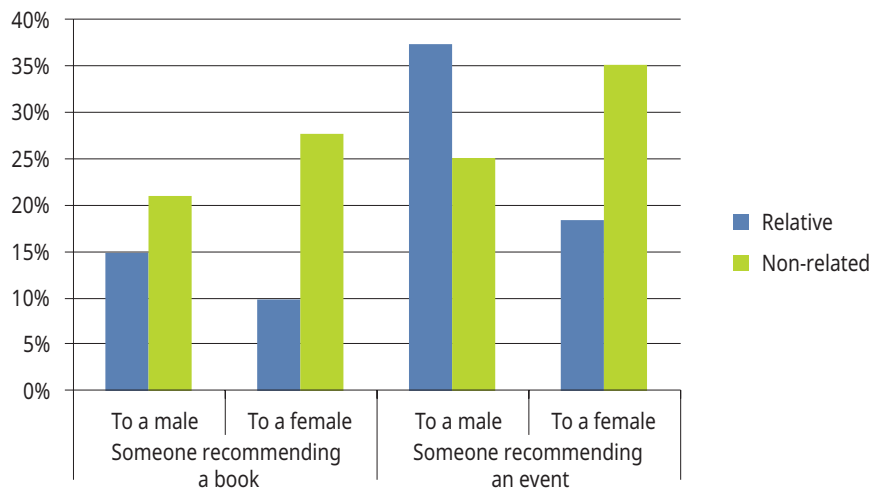


Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZ, 2016).

Those who do not read books or attend cultural events are excluded from the calculation. For approximately ¼ of advisors the gender could not be identified.

## Box 5.5

## Advisors of books and events: according to family relation



Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZ, 2016).

The unusually high self-assessment of respondents regarding their cultural literacy and mastery, in comparison with literacy in other spheres, e.g. health, deserves a special analysis. This may indicate the following trends.

1. Culture and entertainment are integral to daily life.
2. Regular cultural participation has generated routines of information acquisition and assessment.
3. It is easier to pursue entertainment than health or material well-being.

Cultural satisfaction may be achieved because less individual effort has to be made. While the majority population can be culturally satisfied via mass culture, it requires greater individual commitment to access and use information from the sphere of health, material well-being, etc.

For in-depth analysis of cultural practices, the indicators that are not traditional were important as they gave the details of understanding the logic behind cultural consumption. For example, knowing respondents' answers to who has influenced their choice of latest book or attendance of latest cultural or entertainment event, it was possible to conclude that first, informal channels of information are of a great importance in the sphere of culture, and second, one of the most essential functions of culture is the socializing function. Cultural participation has a distinct social nature that prevails its aesthetic nature. Therefore, cultural non-participation should

be seen as a current social problem. In some socio-demographic groups, 50% of respondents do not read any books, and more than 33% do not attend cultural and entertainment events (see Box 5.3). Their aesthetic or spiritual needs are not the only issue. Fundamentally, it is their self-isolation and exclusion from the society, community, and social life, and it is often caused by the stereotypes predominant in the society rather than a mere lack of spare time.

In this chapter, female and male differences in cultural literacy and cultural participation have been explained from the viewpoint of cultural capital, maintaining that women are more cultured, because they are better educated, particularly in humanities and arts. In other words, women have accumulated a greater cultural and artistic capital. This has happened because women due to the gender role assigned to them (presuming a more conformist behaviour model than that associated with men) in the school years have accumulated a larger cultural capital. More often than men, women have chosen to study humanities and arts at a higher education level. This difference compared to men's education or cultural capital facilitates the more active participation in culture by women, which is more than the consumption of culture. This gender socialization from the early stages of formal education promotes a greater engagement of women in the professional spheres of culture. The ratio of women in the cultural industry in Latvia is even higher than on the average in the EU (Eurostat, 2016).



## Greatest achievements. Most serious problems. Most important tasks.

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### Greatest achievements

The population of Latvia is generally very satisfied with their own cultural literacy and cultural mastery – including their awareness of cultural and entertainment opportunities, and their own cultural participation and consumption (choices, habits, taste). Their self-assessment in these matters is higher than the respective self-evaluation in other spheres (health, finance, public administration, family, career, education). People have formed a rather stable concept of their own cultural and entertainment requirements and a clear plan and routine of their satisfaction.

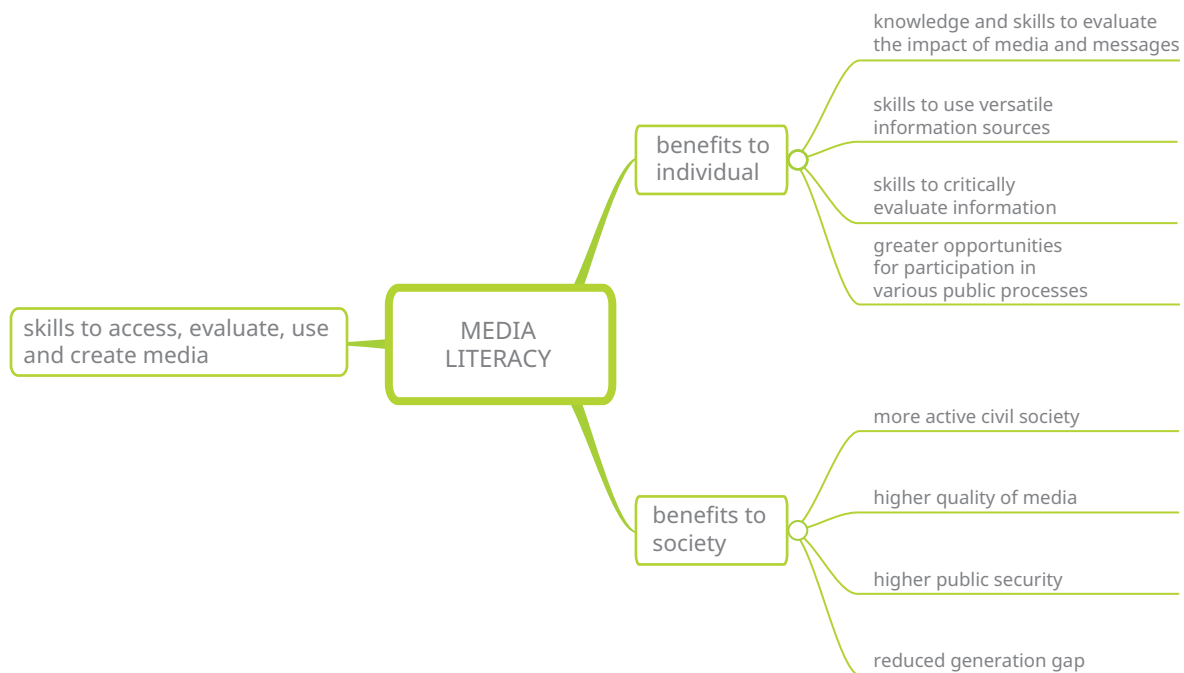
### Most serious problems

A comparatively large part of Latvia's population is passive and does not become involved in culture. For example, in some socio-demographic groups, 50% of individuals do not read books and more than 33% do not attend cultural and entertainment events. A great number of adults see no need for further education or enriching their knowledge in culture. The number of individuals excluded from cultural life is bigger in those population groups that have less educational and health capitals. Two specific groups, retired people and men are considerably less active in cultural participation and consumption than others.

### Most important tasks

In today's sustainable development policy, culture increasingly becomes one of its four pillars along with economy, social integration and ecology. Successful cultural policy is measured by people's involvement in various cultural processes, starting from passive consumption of culture and arts to proactive participation in culture. Given the aging of our society, de-socialization of a large part of senior citizens is unacceptable (cultural non-participation being a vivid example). On the other hand, the extensive male non-participation in culture is a symptom of the society being split by gender. Gender integration as an integral part of the gender equality issue is an urgent goal of development.

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## Chapter 6

# Media literacy. A code for sustainable development of Latvia in the age of post-truth?

Media literacy traditionally is defined as an individual's ability to access printed and electronic media, to analyze, evaluate and create media (Aufderheide, 1992). Plus, there are many other interpretations that supplement this definition based on particular situations. In the last decade, media literacy has become a global, urgent, and socially demanded research theme. A vast and rapidly growing amount of literature has been dedicated to media, education, science, sociology, culture and other fields as a result of the impact of media literacy on the lives, knowledge, prosperity, health, and security of society and individuals. Additionally, the mass media field has seen rapid, important transformations. Associated with the digitalization of information, and convergence of its transmission channels, it has changed how we access information. Today, the amount of information offered by the media has become massive, and content, while versatile, has diminished in quality and reliability (Potter, 2010, p. 673; Hobbs, 2011, pp. 419–420, Koltay, 2011, p. 211). The growing importance of media literacy is also attributed to the modern-era widespread phenomenon of the so-called post-truth world. In this post-truth world-view public opinion is not as limited to objective facts as much as attractive or pleasing emotions and personal beliefs. The most outstanding examples of 2016 are voter behaviour in the "Brexit" referendum and vote for Donald Trump in the US presidential election (Peters, 2017, p. 1). Furthermore, an increasingly pronounced generational gap can be observed in media use habits and media literacy, marking the rise in demand of media education. The increased importance assigned to the role of media literacy is due to its

paramount importance in the existence and quality of democracy, promotion of public participation and civic activities. The recreation and popular culture messages offered by media are a crucial socialization agent for young people and children. The application of information, its use and creation in an Internet environment, is an integral, and large part of the daily life of society (Koltay, 2011, p. 212). The fundamental purpose of media literacy is the individual's critical

autonomy in relationship with all media (Aufderheide, 1992).

Media use is a normal practice in the lives of people. For a great part of the public, media availability, use, and presence belong to everyday routines and rituals. Within media, people often find considerable information necessary to everyday life, plus have a respite from reality. Skilful media literacy creates human mastery of life, creating preconditions

### Box 6.1

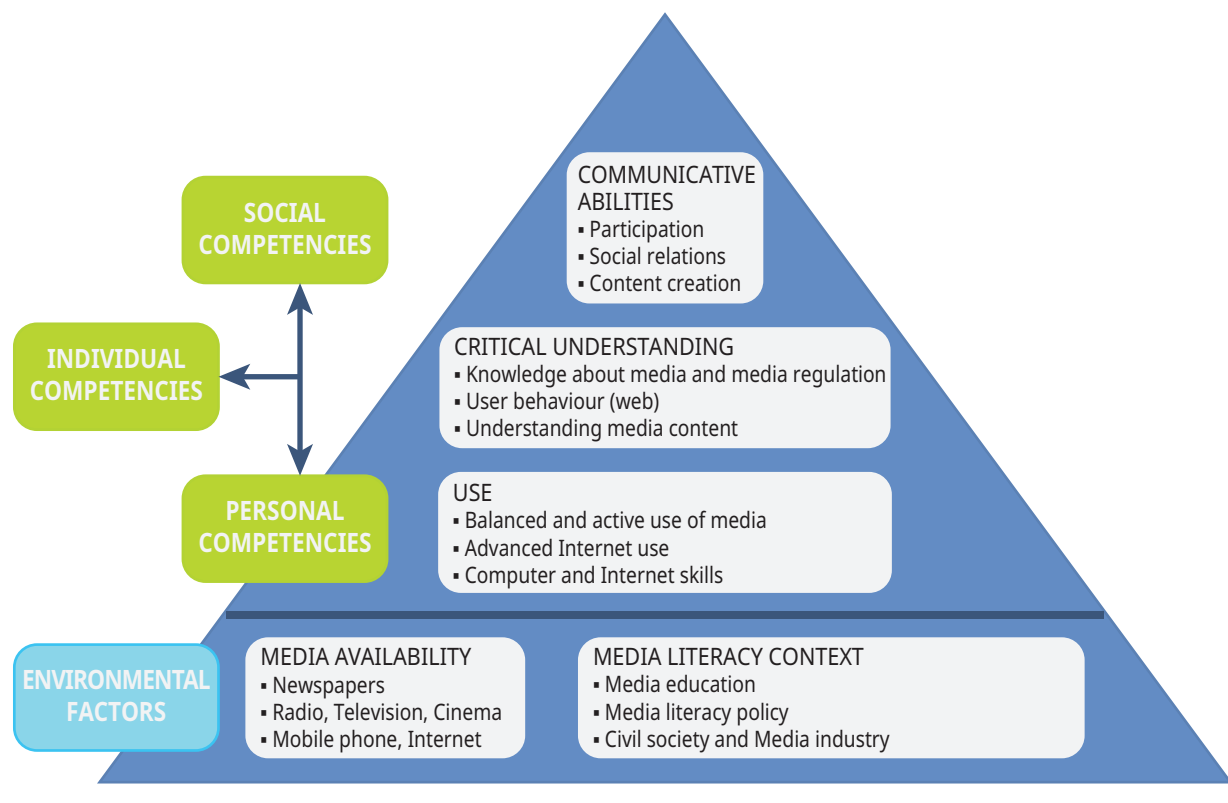
#### Components of media literacy:

- 1) skills of critical thinking, enabling to form an independent assessment of media content, which also determines the choice of media sources and interpretation of the obtained information;
- 2) comprehension of mass communication process, including the knowledge of media work, goals, functions and audience, as well as comparison of different media;
- 3) awareness of media impact upon individuals and society;
- 4) strategies of media message analysis and discussion;
- 5) media content as the reflection of contemporary society's culture (values, attitudes, behaviours, problems, ways of thinking);
- 6) capacity to comprehend, evaluate and enjoy the entertainment cultivated in media;
- 7) effective and responsible media message creation skills' development;
- 8) comprehension of media practitioners' ethical and moral duties.

(Silverblatt, Smith, Miller, Smith, & Brown, 2014, pp. 4-6; Baran, 2014, pp. 23-24)

### Box 6.2

#### Structure of media literacy assessment criteria (Celot, 2015, p. 14)



for the quality of life and ability to solve problems (Savolainen, 1995, pp. 288–291).

In researching media literacy, it should be noted that its structure, when viewed as a social phenomenon, is multi-layered. It consists of the following two key dimensions:

- media literacy environmental factors, and
- the individual's media use skills and their interaction with human life competencies (see Box 6.2) (Celot, 2015, p. 13).

In this chapter, both of these media literacy dimensions of the Latvian population are discussed.

### Media literacy environmental factors

Media literacy environmental factors that either promote or hinder the development of individual media competencies include:

- media availability,
- media literacy policy,
- media education, and
- civil society and media industry roles (Celot, 2015, p. 13).

### Media availability and use in Latvia

Just like other countries within recent years, the overall picture of media in Latvia is undergoing significant changes. For a part of society this includes

rejection of a number of traditional media use practices and forming new habits of use. This result is determined by new communication and information technologies in everyday life; the transformation of media content and type, and disintegrating borders between messages generated by media professionals and users. The changes in the overall picture of media are further promoted by the Latvian populations' economic and social processes – standard of living, economic crisis, migration, and aging. The economically prosperous period leading up to the financial crisis of 2008 was the so-called “fat years” of media and their users' well-being and consumerism. During this period, there was an attempt to please all consumer preferences resulting in quantitative growth and diversification (also partial trivialization) of media variety, consumption and time fragmentation (Brikše & Zelče, 2008, p. 110). During the economic crisis, the advertising market shrank by 46%, several media were closed, the labour market of professional journalists shrank, and audience decreased. Habits also changed. Part of the audience rejected the media because funds were required to switch to free formats (Rožukalne & Skulte, 2016, pp. 175–177). Looking at the overall picture of media use in Latvia, one must take into account that the media consumer potential is very limited because of the country's small population and audience division between Latvian and Russian languages. Given these circumstances,

### Box 6.3

#### Overall picture of books, periodicals, TV and radio broadcasting organizations (2000–2015)

Year	Books, brochures		Magazines		Newspapers		TV broadcasting organizations		Radio broadcasting organizations	
	Total No. of titles	% In comparison to 2000	Total No. of titles	In comparison to 2000	Total No. of titles	In comparison to 2000	Total	In comparison to 2000	Total	In comparison to 2000
2000	2546	100.0	325	100.0	227	100.0	24	100.0	27	100.0
2005	2371	93.1	366	112.6	261	115.0	22	91.7	28	103.7
2007	2767	108.7	412	126.8	259	114.1	23	95.8	34	125.9
2008	2855	112.1	431	132.6	262	115.4	22	91.7	35	129.6
2009	2244	88.1	370	113.8	244	107.5	25	104.2	43	159.3
2010	2035	79.9	368	113.2	197	86.8	19	79.2	42	155.6
2011	2128	83.6	339	104.3	208	91.6	17	70.8	37	137.0
2012	2083	81.8	329	101.2	251	110.6	18	75.0	37	137.0
2013	2223	87.3	308	94.8	242	106.6	18	75.0	36	133.3
2014	2177	85.5	318	97.8	254	111.9	.*	-	-	-
2015	2187	85.9	322	99.1	252	111.0	-	-	-	-

Source: CSP data

\* CSP has ceased to register these quantitative data, because, as media converge, TV and radio organisations are not always distinguishable

## Box 6.4

## Media use in Latvia

Type of media	2005	2008	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Printed press (in autumn)</b>								
Reading of press (regular or occasional reading of any periodical, %)	98.2	95	94	90	87	87	85	87
Daily newspapers, %	48	39	26	19	15	14	12	11
Regional newspapers, %	48.5	47	42	36	36	34	34	33
Weekly periodicals, %	52	43	66	59	57	51	53	49
Biweekly magazines, %	-	17	19	17	18	18	17	17
Monthly magazines, %	44	38	43	41	39	42	43	43
Quarterly magazines, %	9	11	9	12	15	13	15	15
<b>Television (per year)</b>								
The time spent by the TV by one TV viewer, hours	4:46	4:58	5:10	5:10	5:00	5:09	5:10	4:48
<b>Radio (in autumn)</b>								
Average listening time a day, hours	4:49	4:26	4:39	4:29	4:12	4:16	4:16	4:29
Have listened at least once a week, %	85	75	81	78	79	79	79	81
Have listened at least once a day, %	66	48	61	59	59	60	59	62
<b>Internet</b>								
Used throughout a year, %	48.9	66.4	71.1	75.8	77.9	79.4	81.8	82.6
Use regularly, %	36.3	57.0	62.5	70.3	71.2	71.8	7.9	77.0
<b>Mobile appliances</b>								
Use smartphone, %					27	38	47	55
Use tablet, %					9	17	19	22

Sources: CSP and TNS Latvia data

the media are trying to reach the maximum number of people contributing to uniformity of media formats and content, becoming increasingly stereotypical (Brikše, 2002, p. 92).

During the last decade, the role of the printed press in Latvia has transformed significantly. The statistical data indicates that while total magazine and newspaper titles have not markedly changed, but indeed have grown, total annual circulation has decreased more than two and a half times (see Box 6.3). Before the economic crisis in 2007, Latvia issued 211 million newspaper copies. By 2012, circulation had dropped to 100 million, and further decreased to 80 million copies by 2015. The total circulation of magazines and other periodicals in 2007 accounted for 53.5 million copies. Continuing the same trend as newspapers, 39.8 million periodicals and magazines were in circulation in 2010, and in 2015 only 29.3 million. The total number of books printed in 2007 amounted to 5.3 million copies, in 2010 – 3.3 million, and in 2015 – 3.1 million (CSP and TNS Latvia data).

This declining trend also characterizes the overall picture of reading habits (see Box 6.4). In 2010, 94% of the Latvian population read the press on a regular basis or occasionally glanced over its content, but by 2016 the number was down to 89% (TNS Latvia). In 2015, according to Eurobarometer data, the population of Latvia, compared to the average in Europe, read the printed media as follows:

- 22% daily, 31% average in Europe,
- 43% a few times a week 32% average in Europe, and
- 14% did not use printed media at all 18% average in Europe (EC, 2015, pp. 13–14).

In 2016, 57% of the residents of Latvia admitted they have read at least one book in the last year; the average was 68% in Europe. 41% of the Latvian respondents admitted that they did not read books at all (Klāsons, 2016, p. 34).

The audience has expressly lost interest in newspapers. Within recent years, the use of regional newspapers has decreased. For a long time – nearly 50 years – there was a stable circle of readers and

these regional newspapers served as an important symbol of local cultural identity. The position of local newspapers has been weakened by the administrative territorial reform of Latvia that thwarted the system of regional newspapers in existence for decades. Many of those who used to read the printed version of the newspapers have become users of their electronic format. The impact of migration and extensive distribution of free magazines issued by local governments are also significant. Magazine readership is relatively stable over the last decade with the leading type of publication now taken by consumer magazines – weekly and monthly periodicals aimed at a broad audience. These publications offer topical issues of interest to readers, providing lifestyle and consumption recommendations and offering solutions to problem situations. Consistently the most read periodicals include magazines “Ieva” (circulation 61,590), and “Privāta Dzīve” (“Private Life” 47,211). In 2016, the most popular Latvian periodicals included “Kas Jauns” (“What’s New” circulation 56,000), “Ievas Stāsti” (“Ieva’s Stories” 49,046), “Ievas Virtuve” (“Ieva’s Kitchen” 53,800), “Ilustrētā Pasaules Vēsture” (“Illustrated History of the World” 21,800), “Ievas Veselība” (“Ieva’s Health” 37,235), “Ievas Māja” (“Ieva’s Home” 34,719), and “Ievas Dārzs” (“Ieva’s Garden” 42,025). According to the data of *TNS Latvia*, the leaders of press published in Russian language are МК-Латвия (“MC-Latvia”), Телевизор / МК-Латвия (“Television” / “MC Latvia”) and Латвийская ТВ-программа (TV Programme of Latvia). The audiences of the intellectual and cultural periodicals are comparatively smaller. According to the data of Latvian Press Publishers Association, the magazine and circulation of “IR” (an analytical weekly journal, was 17,000), “Rīgas Laiks” (“Time of Riga”, primarily dedicated to philosophy and creative thought, 7,000), and “Teātra Vēstnesis” (“Theatre Herald” 1,000). The periodicals are mostly purchased in supermarkets, newsstands and other sales points, just like other consumer goods. A wide range of comparatively obsolete magazines (including those issued in Russia) can be bought in outlet type stores or stalls. In 2016, there were 416,353 press subscriptions in Latvia, in 2017 the number of subscriptions had dropped to 398,722 which, compared to the results of 2012, was 10%+ lower. Subscribing to printed or published media in advance is often the choice of the rural population where the availability of newspapers and magazines is more limited. In 2016, 67%, and 2017 76% of all subscriptions were purchased by residents living in Latvia’s regions outside Riga. Whereas, in Riga in 2017, this proportion was only 16%! (*Latvijas Pasts*, 2016; 2017). The Latvian population primarily reads printed periodicals as recreational material. Seen as an entertaining means of education, these publications touch on daily life concerning relationship building, cooking, health, home furnishing and garden design, and pets. They provide recipes for

solutions to problems by specialists, including celebrities and esoteric teachers. A marked generational gap can be observed in the use of printed media. The number of young people identifying themselves with the published media readership is rather small. They mostly read celebrity magazines containing information used for socialization, as well as to maintain conversation and pastime. Young people glance through newspapers if available while at work, but do not purchase newspapers for themselves (Rožukalne, 2010, pp. 106–111).

In comparison with the printed press, the position of television is much stronger and remains a very influential medium in Latvia. Watching TV is mentioned as a cherished pastime by 67% of residents (Klāsons, 2016, p. 13). In 2015, according to *Eurobarometer* data, the citizens of Latvia, compared to the average in Europe, watched television as follows:

- 77% daily, European average 82%,
- 12% several times a week, European average 13%,
- 6% a few times a month, European average 3%,
- 4% do not watch TV, European average 2%, and
- 1% do not have TV available, European average 0% (EC, 2015, p. 5).

Percentages of most viewed channels for 2015 and 2016 are as follows:

- TV3 viewing time 11.7% in 2015, slightly up in 2016 to 12.1%,
- LTV 1 – 9.7% and 10.2%,
- PBC – 8.7% and 9.8%,
- LNT – 8.1% and 7.9%,
- NTV Mir Baltic – 7.6% and 8.1%, and
- RTR Planeta – 6.7% and 3.7%.

The shares of other channels’ viewing time are relatively negligible (*TNS Latvia*, 2016, 2017). There are also short-term seasonal changes in the list of channels most watched by the audience of Latvia. For example, in July of 2016, Russian-language broadcasters PBK – 10.2%, and NTV Mir Baltic – 9.8% held the largest audience share. The following channels TV3 held 9.1%, LTV 1 was at 8.7%, and LNT – 7.9%. Most viewers watched:

- concerts such as Raimonds Pauls, Laima Vailule, concert “Dziesmu sirdij rodi Ventspilī” (“Find a Song for Your Heart in Ventspils”), festive concert of Dailes Theatre,
- entertainment shows such as “Es mīlu Tevi, Latvija” (“I Love You, Latvia”), “Kāpēc man dziedāt svešu dziesmu?” (“Why Should I Sing a Foreign Song?”), anniversary concert of Latvian film director and artist Jānis Streičs),
- major sports competitions,
- local TV series such as TV3’s “Ugunsgrēks” (“Fire”), and “Viņas melo labāk” (“They Lie Better”), and LTV 1’s “Saplēstā krūze” (“Broken Pitcher”),
- weather forecasts, and
- informative broadcasts.



In 2015–2016 the most viewed programmes consisted of traditional and media-type broadcasts that are repeated year after year and create the effect of “being at the important event” – the Eurovision Song Contest, fireworks marking national celebrations, New Year’s Eve fireworks, the New Year’s speech by the President of Latvia, and the most important games in the World Hockey Championship (*TNS Latvia*, 2016, 2017).

Due to their great popularity among viewers, the influence of Russian television channels has become a serious security threat to Latvia. Preconditions for the large audience of the Russian TV channels are based on the good Russian language skills of Latvia’s residents and their interest in Russian popular culture and celebrity life. Thus, the media environment of Latvia, for many years, has been used to distribute biased information created or initiated by Russia about Latvia, the European Union, the United States, Ukraine and other parts of the world. Russian language TV has used its popularity for the purpose of:

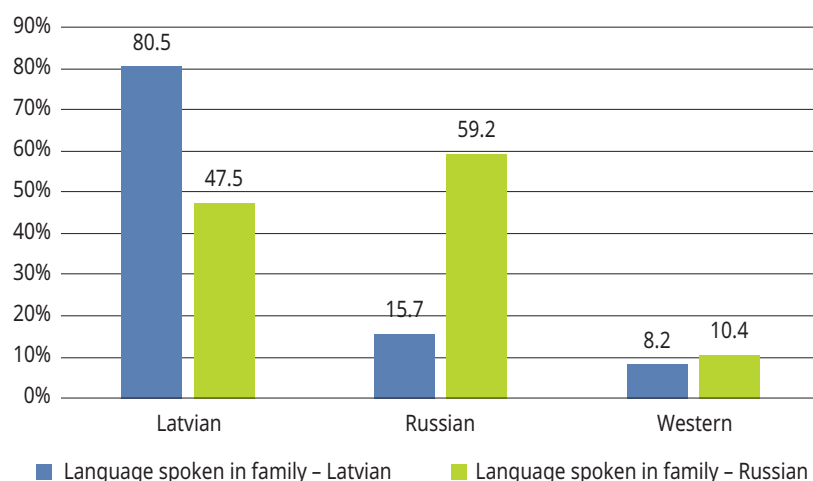
- promoting an ethnic split of the Latvian society,
- building a perception of Latvia as a failed state,
- cultivating doubts about the sovereignty of state,
- creating an impression that the course of Russia’s politics is correct and Russia is a country of excellence, and
- legitimizing aggression in Ukraine and the use of military force (Ločmele, 2015, pp. 8–9; Rožukalne, 2014, pp. 81–82; Bērziņa, 2016, pp. 14–19).

The data of 2015 survey show that 32.8% of the Latvian population watch Russian TV channels daily or almost every day, but 26.1% do not watch these

channels at all. More than 90% of the Russian nationality audience in Latvia watch these channels, and 62.5% peruse them daily or almost every day. Russian TV channels are also quite popular among ethnic Latvians, approximately 66% of the respondents watch them, furthermore, 20.6% do so every day or almost daily (SUSTINNO, 2015). The favourite programmes of Russian channels retransmitted in Latvia in 2015 included TV series “Ulicy razbityh fonarej 15” (“Streets of Broken Lights”, season 15), “Morskie d’javoly. Smerch 2” (“Sea Devils. Hurricane 2”), “Snajper: Oruzhie vozmezdija” (“Sniper: Revenge Weapon”), and “Snajper: Poslednij vystrel” (“Sniper: The Final Shot”), New Year’s TV show “Novogodnij parad zvezd” (“New Year’s Star Parade”) broadcast of International Contest of Young Pop Singers “New Wave 2015” from Sochi, as well as the New Year’s Greeting by the President of Russian Federation Vladimir Putin (*TNS Latvia*, 2016). Russian television channels expand their audience also by offering their most popular programmes with subtitles in the Latvian language. Russia’s television production (mainly TV series and entertainment shows) can also be watched on the Latvian public television *LTV7* and commercial television channels. In Latvia’s border area, surveys show that the residents of this zone cannot always access Latvian television channels, consequently, the residents of Latvia near the eastern border often live in Russian and Belarusian information space (Skudra et al., 2014, p. 198). The cable TV channel packages available to viewers of Latvia also provide Western television channels including *BBC News*, *CNN*, *ARTE*, but their audiences are small. The residents of Latvia increasingly watch their favourite broadcasts outside the airtime set by the TV channels, and with the use of interactive television

## Box 6.5

### Media use on regular basis in 2015 (%) (Bērziņa, 2016, p. 15)



Data of CSP and *TNS Latvia*

features watch at a time of their convenience. For example, in May of 2016, 6.4% of the total TV watching time was devoted to this purpose (TNS Latvia, 2016). It is possible to watch the programmes on the Internet, where the archives of the most popular TV channels' broadcasts are available. For example, LTV 1 and LTV7 programmes can be found on the website *replay.lv* and those of TV3 and LNT – on *skaties.lv*, programmes of multiple channels are offered by *TVPlay.lv*. In 2015 according to *Eurobarometer* data, the population of Latvia, compared to the average in Europe, watched online television as follows:

- 12% daily, average 8% in Europe,
- 15% several times a week, average 13% in Europe,
- 17% a few times a month, average 14% in Europe,
- 50% did not watch television online, average 57% in Europe, and
- 6% had no access to service, average 18% in Europe (EC, 2015, pp. 7–8).

The situation of radio, like TV, is also stable. According to *Eurobarometer* data, those listening to radio were as follows:

- 55% daily, average 50% in Europe,
- 20% several times a week, average 26% in Europe,
- 11% a few times a month, average 10% in Europe,
- 12% did not listen to radio, average 13% in Europe, and
- 2% did not have radio available, average 1% in Europe (EC, 2015, pp. 10–11).

Three radio stations are listened to the most. "Latvijas Radio 2", which broadcasts music in Latvian language and to whom people dedicate approximately 20% of their total radio listening time. Second place in listening time is "Radio Skonto" with 10–12.0% share, and the third most popular radio station is "Latvijas Radio 1" with approximately 10% in listening time (TNS Latvia).

Media use statistics show that the number of Internet users is gradually growing. In 2015, 63% of the population in Latvia used Internet daily, or almost daily, a slight increase over the average in Europe – 59% (EC, 2015, pp. 16–17). In 2016, the proportion of **regular users** exceeded 80%, with the total number of users approaching 83% (see Box 6.4). Latvia's most visited Internet site by the population is Google. According to the average one-day audience figures, Google is visited daily by 56.6% of Latvian's 15 to 74 years old. Second place, with 39.6% of the audience, and in both Latvian and Russian languages, is the domestic portal *Inbox*. Third place – 36.4% is held by the video sharing website *Youtube*. These leaders are followed by:

- *Facebook.com* – 36.2%,
- *Delfi* – 33.3% (in Latvian and Russian),
- *Draugiem.lv* – 24% (a social network portal), and

- *TVNET* – 22.7% (in Latvian and Russian) (TNS Latvia, 2016).

In January of 2017, according to *GEMIUS Latvia* data, the five most visited websites were:

1. *Delfi.lv*,
2. *Inbox.lv*,
3. *tvnet.lv/apollo.lv*,
4. *draugiem.lv*, and
5. *kasjauns.lv*.

In 2015, the online social networks were regularly used by 44% of the residents in Latvia (the average in Europe – 35%), but 33% did not use these networks at all (the average in Europe – 36%) (EK, 2015, pp. 19–20). In 2016, 71% of all Internet users were involved in social networks (CSB, 2016, p. 4).

Internet use reveals a pronounced generational gap. In 2016, 99% in the age group 16 to 24 used the Internet, while in the age group 55 to 74 only 49% were Internet users (CSP, 2016, p. 3). The most recent sales data of telecommunications company Baltcom shows that Internet sales continue to grow and exceed the sales figures of television. In addition, 70% of new customers under the age of 30 purchase only the Internet connection, viewing the content of TV channels via the Internet (Borovikovs, 2016).

The high level of piracy is also a part of the overall Latvian media use picture. In the summer of 2016 according to the statistics provided by network data analysis company *Muso*, Latvia is the leader in global piracy judging by the number of Internet users and the intensity of illegal use. 46.33% of Internet users steal copyrighted World Wide Web content (Delfi Bizness, 2016). It was also found that at least 100 thousand households in Latvia, or 20% of all those who have TV sets watch illegal content delivered to them by pirate operators. Thus, illegal television content is routinely watched by 12.5% of the population in Latvia. The State Police admits limited capacity to fight Internet and television piracy (Cielava, 2016). Additionally, the residents of Latvia have a tolerant attitude against piracy. The survey data show that nearly half of the population justify audio and video recording and computer software piracy (LETA, 2015). This behaviour is rooted in the habits of Latvian media users and likely will decrease only as the attitude towards media products changes and honesty increases. Experts point out, however, that one of the reasons for this attitude is the lack of opportunities to legally obtain films or music. The hopes that piracy will weaken are associated with the recent entry of video streaming service Netflix and music streaming service Spotify in the Latvian market. They offer a wide range of music, movies and TV series at a relatively cheap price (Krieviņš, 2016). The attitude toward copyright and piracy is also one of the indicators that characterize the level of media literacy.

The media literacy situation of Latvia, just like that of many other countries, is ironically dichotomous – there is an abundance and diversity of available mass

media, but on the other hand – there are serious problems in skilled, knowledgeable and reasonable use (Celot, 2015, p. 13).

## Policy of media literacy and education

Media literacy and education policy has become an agenda item of many eminent institutions. The European Commission focused in this direction as early as 2006. The work of multi-national experts resulted in the document adopted by the European Commission in 2007 on media literacy and its importance in the digital environment (EC, 2007). It emphasises that media literacy has become an important factor of European and national media and communication policy, because, although the use of the media is changing, they enable European citizens to better understand the world, to participate in the democratic processes, and enrich cultural life. Mobility, communication created by users themselves, a surge of Internet and digital product availability, has radically changed the media economy. It has generated a need for much better knowledge of media work, its opportunities and challenges, as well as digital media consumption in this new digital world.

Media literacy is generally defined as the ability of a user to:

- access various types of media,
- understand modern mass media for example, interactive television and participation in virtual communities, exploiting the potential of media for entertainment, access to culture, intercultural dialogue, learning and daily life applications,
- understand and have a critical approach to media as regards both quality and accuracy of the provided information, for example, content of advertisements, and to use search engines intelligently,
- using media creatively, as the evolution of media technologies and the increasing presence of the Internet as a distribution channel allow media users themselves to generate their content – create and disseminate images, messages and other content,
- understand the principles governing the economy of media and the difference between pluralism and media ownership, including the content influenced by this ownership, and
- be aware of copyright issues. (EK, 2007).

Media literacy problems are also discussed in other European Union institutions. In 2008, the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) addressed the problems of media literacy in the digital environment, with particular attention to media education of people representing various age groups (European Parliament, 2008). One of the most important documents was created in 2009 – the European Commission's recommendations

to promote media literacy in the digital environment and to strengthen the audiovisual and content industry competitiveness and an inclusive knowledge society (EC, 2009). Since 2011, under the auspices of the European Commission the Media literacy expert group was formed to fulfil the task of analyzing media education, media availability, literacy levels and to initiate research dedicated to these issues in all European countries. Their charge also included exploring the synergies existing among different EU policy directions, programs and literacy initiatives. This group pays special attention to literacy in the digital environment and media literacy teacher training. 2016 saw the start of the preparations for the European Parliament campaign, "Media literacy for all" (EC, 2016). The current interest of EU institutions in media literacy is determined by the:

- importance in the existence of a healthy democracy,
- exigency in the changing and increasingly sophisticated overall picture of media, and
- significance in promotion of basic human rights and the fight against the recent increase in radicalization of certain society groups.

Media literacy includes all technical, cognitive, civil and creative skills that enable people to use, evaluate critically and interact with media. All these skills enable citizens to participate in the economic, social and cultural life of the society, as well as be actively involved in the democratic processes (Viola, 2016).

For several decades, media literacy issues have been on the agenda of the UN's influential international organization UNESCO. In 1982, the Grünwald Declaration recognized the need to form a political and educational system for critical understanding of "communication phenomenon". The actual explosion of information and communication technologies, and globalization led to redefining the tasks to promote media literacy. In Paris during the 2007 meeting of media and education professionals, scientists, politicians and representatives of NGOs from all the regions of the world, a new strategy was developed that brought together media and information spheres as a combined set of competencies – knowledge, skills, and attitude. These media and information spheres were seen as being required by a contemporary person on a daily basis and in the labour market. UNESCO recommendations were developed for media education and work; media and education policy guidelines; media and information research methodology; plus a large number of specific measures and actions that have made a significant contribution to quality development of this field. This international organization has set itself the mission to create a media and information educated public through a comprehensive strategy that includes all the target groups: information creators and consumers, educators, governments, and decision-makers. UNESCO defines media and

## Box 6.6

## Excerpt from the model programme for class lessons

## METHODS AND TECHNIQUES FOR USE IN CLASS LESSONS

Title	Brief characterization	Process plan
Work with mass media	<p>Teacher offers students a piece of mass media published information to fulfil the task. Mass media shape the outlook of a student even more than the education system. It is important that students learn to understand the media language, the reflection of reality offered by mass media, to comprehend the causes of the reflected events, to recognize the goals of the offered information.</p> <p>Students learn to express their opinion about the information on TV, radio, in the newspapers, magazines, etc. It is important to also incorporate watching of the films in order to learn to assess them.</p>	<p><u>Preparation.</u> The teacher has meticulously planned the tasks before the respective activities. The students are prepared, for example, regarding the topics in film, the questions to be discussed after viewing of the film are introduced, attention is drawn to the points to which particular attention should be paid while viewing the film.</p> <p><u>Analysis.</u> Students implement critical watching/listening or watching in accordance with the given task. Obtain information – analyse, form questions or answer questions.</p> <p><u>Conversation.</u> The tasks completed by the students are discussed, their conclusions about the perceived and understood.</p>

Source: Valsts izglītības satura centrs, 2016.

information literacy as a mandatory prerequisite for implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – Article 19, among other articles, determining the people’s right to freedom of opinion and expression. Since 2015, UNESCO presents the Global Media and Information Literacy Award to organizations or individuals for outstanding international achievements in the field of media and information literacy (EC, 2016).

UNESCO in Latvia has implemented development of important literacy related activities. In May 2015, international experts discussed it when the National Library of Latvia hosted the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day event. A year later in June 2016, the Second European Media and Information Literacy Forum was held in Riga, organized by UNESCO in cooperation with other institutions. It particularly emphasised that media and information literacy is a code of life, which is the basis for sustainable development. During this international forum, several acute media literacy problems were defined with a particular emphasis placed on the need to promote pupils’ critical thinking. The recommendations adopted during the Riga forum highlighted the utmost importance of media and information literacy in today’s world. Politicians, opinion leaders, educators, media professionals, information and communication technology experts, and others were invited to do everything in their power to establish good practices in media and information access and use. This was seen as important to contributing to an individuals’ and entire society’s quality of life, promoting a society that supports democracy and a peaceful lifestyle, turning against cyber-attacks and hate speech, and endorsing digital privacy and digital security (UNESCO, 2016).

In 2015, the University of Latvia Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Communication Studies established the UNESCO Chair on Media and Information Literacy. Its mission is to conduct research, develop policy guidelines in digital literacy and media literacy in both spheres for different target groups. These groups include policy makers, educators, families, and the private sector. Additionally they are to develop study programs and practical materials for children and young people to promote their competencies in digital media, information and communication technology use.

Media literacy issues have become a part of politics in Latvia. They are included in “Mass Media Policy Guidelines of Latvia 2016–2020” developed by the Republic of Latvia Ministry of Culture, Media Policy Division. The implementation plan of these guidelines provides for media literacy research, teacher training, development of educational programmes, and the use of mass media in mastering media literacy and many other tasks. Planned for 2020, the media literacy level in the adult audience will increase by 7%, and in the audience of children and youth by approximately 15% (KM, 2016, p. 11).

### Media education

Media literacy is rooted in qualitative media education, which belongs to the new pedagogical areas in Latvia. The beginning of the first targeted scientific research of media education at the University of Latvia dates back to the academic year 2004/2005 (Pļaviņa, 2011, p. 1). These studies concluded that the most appropriate media education method in Latvia should be the implementation of

## Box 6.7

**What is the extent of attention you devote to media literacy issues during lessons?****Teacher Mārtiņš Geida, teaches social sciences in Ogre State Gymnasium, grades 7–9:**

“Once a week or once every two weeks I ask students to analyze a topic, which has gained currency in mass media. The overarching topic is given, for example, the price of life. Critically assessing the information available in the media, a student must create an individual presentation to be conveyed to the class. In addition, the presentation should be given within three minutes. At the beginning of presentation, the student must explain the main concepts used. A mandatory condition for these presentations is that they must contain the narrator’s own opinion on the specific topic, other opinions (those of experts available in mass media and similar views), and facts, to enable student to critically evaluate the information in comparison to these facts. The presentation must contain these three conditions. Students mostly look for the factual evidence base on the Internet, therefore, they should be able to assess what are these facts, what are their origins and the quality of their source. A mandatory requirement is that students must provide the list of media / sources at the end of the presentation, otherwise the task is not considered to be completed, and I explain that omitting references is plagiarism, which in universities is punished by expelling of the guilty student. They also receive a class evaluation and feedback. When several students tell about the same subject, a conversation is formed and a common denominator is reached as to what are good and bad sources. Next time, they are better able to assess, from which sources information can be taken. If this is done systematically, I no longer have to explain what are good and bad sources. Students learn to distinguish, which sources provide as accurate information as possible and as promptly as possible.

I have a good example of Wikipedia use, which I often show students. Here is a quote from that source: “Contraception encompasses a variety of methods that can stop pregnancy.” I show this quote in presentation and ask, “Is everything correct there?” The students read, read, read, read. Then I ask, “Does the sentence content reveal, whether the pregnancy has not occurred yet or has it already occurred?” And, in fact, it turns out that this is the definition of abortion. I show this example to demonstrate how critically the information should be evaluated.”

Source: Interview with Mārtiņš Geida, August 26, 2016, Ogre.

“an integrated approach within general education, and a combination of autonomous and integrated approaches at the level of higher education, with a particular emphasis on higher education institutions that prepare prospective teachers” (Rubene, Krūmiņa, & Vanaga, 2008, p. 178).

The demand for special media education in schools is dictated by changes in lifestyle and media use habits. Traditionally, children learned the use of mass media at home, family members sharing the same media. The purchase of media and control of their children’s relationship with media depended on the parents. The modern technologies offering personalized media use have drastically changed this situation. In addition, now children are often more familiar with computers than their parents, and from the earliest years of life computers, tablets and smartphones become the favourite toys. Children and young people have been raised in a world saturated with communication technologies, and are therefore referred to as “digital natives”. The media available through modern technologies have a much greater role in their lives than in those of the older generations, who are called “digital immigrants” (Clark, 2009; Westlund & Bjur, 2014; Taipele, 2016; Rubene, 2016).

Latvian Safer Internet Centre in collaboration with other organizations since 2007 informs and educates children, young people, teachers and parents about Internet content security. Additionally, they organize events, for example, the Safer Internet Day, which is also celebrated worldwide. In 2016, on Safer Internet

Day, 5,000 children were involved in activities of films, games, discussions, and workshops in schools and libraries. Latvian Safer Internet Centre has released educational materials dedicated to media literacy. In 2015, the Centre issued the textbook “Vaifija skola” (“Wi-fi’s School”) for 5–7 years old about the Internet.

During August 2016, they released a book “Pasaule tīmeklī” (“World on the web”) for teaching media literacy to 5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> class students. To improve the media literacy of basic school students, and in collaboration with the Environmental Protection and Regional Development Ministry, Latvian Safer Internet Centre offers schools a free interdisciplinary learning tool “Pasaule tīmeklī” (“World on the web”). It helps in improving critical thinking, learning, reading and writing, discussion and argumentation skills, as well as cooperation. The learning tool can be used in teaching a variety of subjects and class lessons, thus contributing to the entire learning process and implementation of the competency-based learning approach. This training material is freely available at [www.drossinternets.lv](http://www.drossinternets.lv), and each school receives 5–10 copies of the book as a gift. In 2017, Latvian Safer Internet Centre carried out social experiments “False casting advertisement” and “How much can be learned about a child on the Internet”. These experiments were aimed at encouraging responsible attitudes of parents toward their own and their children’s relationship with the Internet. The Centre also has prepared tips for parents, advising what to do if their child is involved in the game “Blue Whale” (or “Death Game”). This dreadful game, spreads via



the Internet encouraging children to self-inflict bodily harm and damage and then share it on the Internet in photos and videos.

Other organizations are also concerned with Internet safety for children and young people. In 2016, "Centrs Dardedze" launched an information campaign "Es tikai pārsūtīju" ("I just forwarded") against distribution of young people's nude photos via mobile devices. The purpose of the campaign is to remind teenagers about their responsibilities and the risks arising from sexting (sending intimate pictures to friends and acquaintances), which is considered a violent behaviour in the virtual environment. The survey implemented by "Centrs Dardedze" found that almost one in every two respondents has transferred or shown to others, another peer's nude photo, and that this subject has rarely been discussed with parents (Avena, 2016).

A significant institution in promoting media literacy is the Republic of Latvia National Centre for Education (NCE). In May of 2016, the Ombudsman's Office held a discussion dedicated to the promotion of critical thinking. NCE Director, Guntars Catlaks, explained: "In 2016, we are in a fundamentally different situation, because we live in the world of social media where everyone can be a medium oneself. At NCE we are considering approaches to strengthen critical thinking, although it is partially included in the curriculum content standards. Henceforth, it should become one of the transversal competencies that students must learn both in mathematics and in science, as well as in sports lessons, and so on" (Brinkmane, 2016). The website of NCE offers examples for developing class lessons encompassing media literacy for students from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> class. National Film Centre of Latvia (NFCL) in 2015 prepared methodological materials to promote integration of cinema materials and films created in Latvia into the study process of general education schools. These materials contain teacher lesson plans, worksheets to be used with lessons, as well as extensive film descriptions, whose fragments NFCL recommends for use in the learning process. Teachers can use 21 films in teaching their subjects by entering the site [www.filmas.lv](http://www.filmas.lv) and obtaining an access password.

In Latvia the idea of introducing media literacy as its own subject in the school curriculum has been proposed. Currently preference is given to teaching media literacy competencies' across subjects. In 2017, several media of Latvia began to include in their content specific programmes promoting media literacy education. Channel TV3 programme "Nekā personīga" ("Nothing Personal") in January and February offered the project "Melu teorija" ("Theory of Lies"), which was the denunciation of falsified news distributed in media (such as the Malaysian aircraft shot down in Ukraine, taking children from Russian families living in Europe, fascism revival in Latvia, the establishment of Latgale Republic and the desire of this region to separate from

Latvia, the good life of Latvian people in the Soviet Union). TV3 also included information on the technology used in creating these false messages. Latvijas Radio 1 programme included the broadcast "Tīri fakti" ("Pure Facts") every week offering expert talks on security and reliability of information disseminated by the mass media. Latvijas Radio 1 also has info-clips teaching how to distinguish untrue and entertaining news from true information. Exposing falsified news and promoting media literacy are high on the agenda of the non-profit "Re:Baltica" organization that produces investigative journalism. The Ministry of Culture in collaboration with British Council has launched a media literacy education programme addressed to journalists, teachers, librarians, local government employees and students. Materials educating society about media literacy matters are also published in the public media Internet portal [ism.lv](http://ism.lv) and in the press. Such regular educational programmes and publications play a vital role in raising an audience's media literacy level.

## Role of civil society and media industry

Media literacy level is also significantly influenced by other factors – the political and social climate, civic participation, attitude towards freedom of expression, culture of journalism and media industry. Studies have shown that Latvian society is not active in solving long-term problems of society as a whole. It is attested by the fact that a significant part of the population is alienated from the state and democratic institutions, distances itself from the political elite, and has low confidence in state institutions. The recently experienced economic crisis contributed to individualization, reliance on oneself rather than collective action. The greater part of the population considers itself unable to influence the political decision-making process, to eradicate abuse of power by state and is not prepared to engage in the improvement of the political environment. Residents of Latvia are able to quickly mobilize for advocacy of joint interests and providing assistance, mainly based on emotional factors, but are unable to organize themselves for the long term civic activities directed at the political environment and improving the quality of life. This situation sets the preconditions for passivity in the use of mass media. This precedent remains evident by top-down and one-way media information habits, on top of the minimal requirements directed at the media industry (Lāce & Rungule, 2016; Kruks, 2016; Rožukalne & Skulte, 2016).

Freedom of expression, media, and diversity of opinion exist quite successfully in Latvia. In the 2015 World Press Freedom Index of 180 countries, Latvia was ranked 28<sup>th</sup>, moving up four places in comparison to the previous year, but down two places compared to 2010. In this index, Latvia ranked highest in



2008, taking the seventh place (RSF, 2016). However, several serious problems are present in the media environment of Latvia. It has long been influenced by the lack of a considered national media policy, including media's non-compliance of legal regulation in respect to the "real world" media environment. Media quality is negatively impacted by the vague boundaries between public relations and journalism. Concerns include:

- use of local governments' administrative resources to influence the media,
- activity of politicians in journalism and journalists in politics, and
- insufficient capacity of media monitoring.

Media studies attest to critical problems in the quality of content, namely, the small proportion of investigative journalism, inability of the media to qualitatively discuss the current events of national, local and international issues, and the increasingly tabloid nature of printed newspapers and Internet portals (Skudra et al., 2014; Ločmele, 2015).

There is no complete and reliable information publicly available about the media owners or the ownership structure. This complicates assessment of specific media goals, editorial policy and reliability. The problem is especially pronounced in the sphere of the printed press (Skudra et al., 2014; Rožukalne, 2013). At the same time, there is lack of knowledge, passive attitude, and indifference regarding the work of Latvia's media industry – including the media owners and their interests. This indifference was noticed when SIA "Mediju nams", which publishes the newspaper "Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze" ("The Independent Morning Paper") and owns other media, acquired a new owner – Nauris Kāpostiņš in the spring of 2016. Kāpostiņš is a businessman who was previously unknown in the circles of media professionals, is relative of Aivars Lembergs (Lembergs is a Latvian politician and oligarch, who has been mayor of Ventspils since 1988 and has faced long running investigation since 2008).

This event became a media sensation for a few days without instigating a wider discussion regarding politically influenced media activities or the need to disclose the real owners of media and journalism, which combines politically influenced information with professional information (IR, 2016).

The journalists of Latvia, characterized by a weak culture of self-regulation and lacking strong professional organizations, lack authority, deal with unworkable codes of ethics, and have widely differing professional values. Some journalists accept the role of propagandists and exercise through their work the media owners' interests (Skudra et al., 2014, pp. 202–203). Quality improvement in the media environment is associated with the creation of a media ombudsman.

In 2015, the Republic of Latvia Ministry of Culture created a Media Policy Division, whose tasks

include developing mass media policy guidelines, implementing a legal audit of the mass media, and offering specific policy initiatives for improvement of Latvia's media industry and the information space. Much attention is paid to strengthening the quality of public media – LTV, Latvijas Radio and portal lsm.lv. Efforts are in consolidating their position in the media market and enhancing their role in the public good. The policy action directions planned in "Mass Media Policy Guidelines of Latvia 2016–2020", approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on November 8, 2016, are oriented toward mass media. The Guidelines are:

- diversity,
- quality and responsible environment,
- professional environment (achieved through education of mass media professionals),
- literacy of the audience, and
- secure environment (KM, 2016).

Implementation measures also include two State Culture Capital target programmes.

1. "Support to media for creation of socially significant content and strengthening national cultural space in Latvian language" (funding – 490,000 EUR).
2. "Support to media for creation of socially significant content and strengthening national cultural space in Latvian language in Latgale planning region" (funding – 171,500 EUR).

The first programme's main objective is "to support media in creation of socially significant content and strengthening national cultural space in Latvian language by supporting creation of non-commercial, publicly significant journalism in media, with an aim in promoting values enshrined in the Constitution, the national consciousness, the Latvian cultural space, in critical thinking, advance media accountability and quality, as well as the social cohesion on the basis of Latvian language on the way to the centenary (centennial of Latvian independence 1918–2018) of Latvia".

The main objectives of the second programme are "to strengthen the Latvian and Latgalian cultural space and national consciousness on the way to the centenary of Latvia, by supporting creation of publicly significant journalism in media in the Latgale planning region" (VKKF, 2017).

## Media literacy and life competencies

Individual media literacy competencies encompass:

- technical skills required for media use,
- critical understanding competency (comprehension and interpretation of media), and
- communicative competencies (individual's capacity to establish various relationships and commitments, solve issues and achieve the goals through media).

## Box 6.8

## Media use skills of the population of Latvia (2016, %)

Skills	Very good and good	Average	Poor and very poor	This question does not concern me (I do not read, do not watch, do not use)
To choose a newspaper relevant to my interests	69.2	7.6	2.1	21.2
To choose a magazine relevant to my interests	74.3	8.3	1.8	15.6
To choose a radio station relevant to my interests	80.7	8.3	1.2	9.7
To choose a TV channel relevant to my interests	89.7	4.9	0.7	4.7
To choose a news portal relevant to my interests	73.0	10.2	3.4	13.5

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

## Box 6.9

## Media use language (2016, %)

Media use	Nationality of respondent			Total
	Latvian	Russian	Other	
Only in native language	25.5	41.1	27.5	30.6
I use media in my native language more often, but comparatively seldom – in foreign languages	48.0	40.2	43.1	45.2
I use media equally often in my native and foreign languages	24.1	17.5	19.6	21.7
I use media in foreign languages more often, but in my native language – comparatively seldom	2.2	0.9	2.0	1.8
Only in foreign languages	0.3	0.3	7.8	0.7

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

These media literacy skills are in an interactive relationship with other private, individual and social competencies of human life-activity (Celot, 2015, p. 13).

### Media use skills

The technical skills necessary for media use, such as reading, keyboarding competency, and computer science are acquired in family and school settings. At a technical level no problems of reading literacy required for utilisation of printed media exist in the society of Latvia, however, NCE focuses on questions about children's and young people's ability to comprehend what they have read. There are also concerns regarding the situation that possibly many children do not attend school. For example in the school year of 2015/2016, 15,912 children were not registered in any educational institution (IKVD, 2016, p. 10).

A precondition of contemporary media literacy is also computer literacy, literacy in information and communication technologies, and digital competency. The

majority of Latvians use computers and smartphones (see Box 6.4), which provide media access. Latvian schools dedicate much attention to computer science teaching. As of 2015, a number of schools participating in a pilot project approved a structured 5-level computer science learning programme. It aims to establish the competency-based learning of computer skills. It is planned that during the school year 2018/2019 all the basic schools shall begin to implement this computer science programme (Valsts izglītības satura centrs, 2015). On the other hand, the adult lifelong learning programmes offer "how-to" skills in acquiring the latest information and using communication technologies. Computer skills on a regular basis are also included in the State Employment Agency's training programmes for the unemployed and job seekers; and a number of local governments and NGOs offer special computer learning courses for the older generation. Evolving information and communication technology and emerging new technologies dictate that all age generations need to learn, and refresh their respective technical competencies.

**The study** survey confirms the residents of Latvia highly assess their skills in choosing media (see Box 6.8). There are variations among age groups in skill self-assessment of choosing newspapers, magazines, radio and TV. For example, 83.2% those aged 18–24 believe that they have good or very good skills in choosing a news portal relevant to their interests. These skills are similarly rated by 51.6% of the respondents in the age group 65–74. Then again, 57% of those 18–24 assessed their skill to choose newspapers as good or very good, and 78.2% of those 65–74 said their skills were good or very good. The self-assessment skill differences by age are smaller when selecting magazines, radio and television channels.

The range of media literacy skills includes the knowledge of the official national language and foreign languages, enabling a person to use the media not only in his or her native language, but also in other languages. According to statistics, 95% of the adult population of Latvia aged 25 to 64 years know at least one foreign language, which is substantially more than the European average of 65.7%. In Latvia 46% of the adults know two foreign languages, and 13% have mastered three or more foreign languages. Russian is the most often spoken foreign language by the residents of Latvia (57%), followed by English (49%) and German (18%) (CSP, 2013). Latvian Language Agency data show that the Latvian language has been acquired approximately by 90% of non-Latvian

residents (LETA, 2016). Regardless of the good foreign language skills' indicators, 30.6% of the population in Latvia use the media only in their mother tongue. This situation offers a good opportunity for exploitation by the Russian state media propaganda. In total, more than 80% of Latvia's Russian population favour media in Russian, and almost 58% neither use the media in Latvian – the official national language – nor in other foreign languages (see Box 6.9).

The society demonstrates quite fixed media use habits (see Box 6.10). 50.1% of the population actually do not alter the mass media range that they peruse, and 42.5% do so rarely.

The media use skills possessed by the residents of Latvia can be assessed as relatively good. However, some in society are entrenched in their media use habits including the comfort of accessing information in their native language. Thus, the individual and social competencies are mainly reproduced rather than developed. It also has a negative impact on their mastery of life.

### Critical understanding and interpretation skills

The competency providing for critical understanding and interpretation of media is complicated to operationalize and difficult to measure, however,

#### Box 6.10

##### Which assertions characterise your habits of mass media use most accurately? (2016, %)

Media use habits	%
I most often use (read, listen to, watch) only my favourite mass media	50.1
I basically use my favourite sources, but now and then look into the offer of other mass media	42.5
I do not regularly use any particular media, as I prefer to explore new ones	7.4

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

#### Box 6.11

##### Self-assessment of media evaluation skills by the population of Latvia (2016, %)

Skills	Very good and good	Average	Poor and very poor	This question does not concern me (I do not read, do not watch, do not use)
To evaluate the quality of the medium	51.5	33.2	9.3	6.2
To evaluate particular journalists	37.7	31.1	18.5	12.6
To assess the credibility of the facts published by mass media	48.1	36.5	14.9	9.4

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

the attitudes and self-assessment proclaimed by people permit evaluation.

More than 50% of the residents of Latvia believe their ability to assess the quality of media that they use is good or very good. A relatively large part of the population is confident of their ability to assess the work of specific journalists and reliability of the facts published by the media (see Box 6.11). This self-assessment probably is determined by conservative media use habits, as well as the population's passive life position, which leads to choosing the media whose content corresponds to the specific individuals' worldview and values. Studies have shown that the attitude toward the media is largely determined by ethnic affiliation and the language used in the family; that is, Latvians trust the Latvian language media, non-Latvians trust the Russian media. 36% of the surveyed population of Latvia acknowledge that they use only the media expressing the political views that correspond to their own beliefs (Rožukalne & Skulte, 2016, pp. 187–188).

Studies show that the residents of Latvia perceive media content rather disparagingly. Almost 60% of

respondents believe that mass media reflect the government's opinion but not the views of the population, and fail to explain the causes of events, do not constitute an understanding of current processes, and that journalism has acquired a yellow tint. Only 46% of respondents indicate that the information provided by the media on domestic policies is clear to them, and 32% give a "clear" assessment to media information about the economy. 69% admit that there are no impartial media, therefore the media user must self-assess the quality of information. 46% of the respondents believe journalists uncritically reflect the opinion of the political and economic elite, 64% are of the opinion that mass media owners manipulate the journalists (Rožukalne & Skulte, 2016, pp. 187–188). Only about 30% said that they recognised their own daily experience in media messages and that media helped to plan their economic course of action. Most of the self-employed, unemployed, workers, housewives, students, non-citizens, the inhabitants of Latgale region, people with basic education and lower income believe that the media do not talk about them (Kruks, 2016, p. 160).

### Box 6.12

#### How often do you compare the information provided in various mass media? (2016, %)

Frequency of comparing	%
Always	8.7
Almost always	11.0
Often	22.0
Rarely	36.4
Practically never	21.8

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

### Box 6.13

#### Trust in media by residents of Latvia and EU (2015, %)

Type of medium	Rather trust		Rather distrust	
	In Latvia	Average in EU	In Latvia	Average in EU
Radio	57	55	29	36
Television	58	48	34	47
Printed press	37	43	46	50
Internet	35	35	38	45
Online social media	23	20	43	55
Overall trust	63	59	37	41

Source: EK, 2015, pp. 23–31.

In the survey of 2014, 54% of respondents indicated that they tried to keep up with the content of several media. Mostly they were public sector employees, managers, specialists and civil servants. On the other hand, 18–24 year-old inhabitants of Latvia, people with basic education, residents of Riga and pensioners rather trusted one medium (Rožukalne & Skulte, 2016, p. 188). The results of **the study** survey conducted in 2016 reveal that 58.2% of the respondents rarely or never compare the information provided in various media, while those who always compare the information from different sources constitute a mere 8.7% of respondents. The frequency in comparing news sources is reflected by the level of one's completed education.

Media use habits also confirm how a particular event is interpreted. The survey conducted in 2015 attests that the media of Russia are trusted by 21.2% of the population whose household language is Latvian, versus trust by 65.3% of the respondents who speak Russian at home.

A striking example is the differences in opinions about the events in Ukraine, about which the majority of the population in Latvia receives information from the media. Describing the events in southeast Ukraine, 65% of the Latvian-speaking respondents considered the conflict as a war of Russia with Ukraine, 53% assessed it as a war between the Ukrainian government and the separatists, while 45% believed there was a civil war.

In its turn, the majority, 66% of the Russian language speakers considered the conflict in Ukraine a civil war, 49% believed this was a conflict between the government of Ukraine and its citizens, but 48% admitted that Russia fought the West on the territory of Ukraine. 72% of Latvian speakers and 36.7% of Russian speakers were convinced that the crisis in Ukraine was caused by the intervention of Russia. By contrast, the intervention of the West was considered a cause of the events in Ukraine by 34% of Latvian speakers and 63.9% of Russian speakers (Bērziņa, 2016, pp. 16–18).

The data typifying the self-assessment skills of the media quality and content trustworthiness obtained from Latvian residents can be correlated to the level of trust in media. In 2015, according to the *Eurobarometer* data of the Latvian residents:

- 19% reported high trust in media,
- 44% indicated that overall they trusted media, and
- 37% did not trust mass media or the trust was low (EK, 2015).

These figures are quite close to the average European level of trust in media (see Box 6.13).

The level of trust in media expressed by the Latvian residents is relatively much higher than their trust in other major institutions. In the autumn of 2015, residents reported their trust as follows:

- 8% in political parties,

- 21% in the Parliament,
- 41% in regional and local authorities,
- 37% in the United Nations, and
- 37% trusted in the EU (EK, 2015, p. 5).

The relatively high confidence in media and an uncritical approach to their content in the contemporary era of post-truth have a potential of threat, because the new social media and search sites create favourable conditions for spreading deceitful and biased information. Fake news are disseminated in the virtual world via Facebook, Google and Twitter, creating a special “bubble world”, where algorithmically selected news sources, for example, create a uniform picture of the world and exacerbate existing prejudices. Therefore, increasingly the question is asked, *does the new social media undermine people's ability to recognize the truth?* (Peters, 2017, p. 2).

The skills of critical understanding and interpretation of media possessed by the residents of Latvia are greatly impacted by the media environment and usage factors. The media enjoy a high level of trust, although in the attitudes toward content, alienation from the state and democratic institutions is felt by a large part of the population. Their disassociation from the political elite and the influence of pronounced individualization is observed.

## Communication skills

Communication skills include people's involvement in shaping the media content in order to influence political and social processes and voice an opinion. The practical benefits of using media promote mastery of life and should become part of an individual's skills set.

Nevertheless, surveys indicate that the media do not belong to the most important sources of information in the lives of people. Only 13% of the respondents use the information published in the media to solve their problems, 16% search for this information online using keywords, and 3% of the respondents ask for advice on social media. A far more reliable source of information is considered personal experience and observations – 54%, and conversations with friends and acquaintances – 53% (Kruks, 2016, p. 157). A study survey conducted in 2016 attests that 58.3% of the respondents believe that reliable information can be obtained through family members, friends and acquaintances.

Internet use studies show that utilization of Internet is, but for a few, passive. Utilization percentages break-out as follows:

- 37% of the respondents read the news on the Internet daily,
- 19% watch television and listen to the radio,
- 15% read the websites of Latvian and foreign newspapers and magazines,
- 12% peruse the comments on messages,

- 10% play online games,
- 9% watch movies,
- 5% only create content – write blogs, tweets, publish photos and videos, and
- 4% write comments regarding messages (Rožukalne & Skulte, 2016, pp. 175–177).

According to other data, the residents of Latvia mostly use Internet for:

- e-mail – 86% of all Internet users,
- reading news sites, newspapers and magazines online – 84%,
- Internet banking – 76%,
- searching for information on goods and services – 75%, and
- participating in social networks (CSP, 2016, p. 4).

The use of social networks offers a wide range of communication and life-activity opportunities, such as participation in the labour market, the conduct

of business, acquisition of education, relationship building, and shopping. Social media are used for solutions of practical problems – the users answer each other's questions, give advice, engage in donation campaigns. However, online participation opportunities are not used extensively. In 2014, only 19% of the respondents admitted that use of social media creates an opportunity to influence state and local government policies (Rožukalne & Skulte, 2016, pp. 182–184). A platform for public initiatives ManaBalss.lv ("MyVoice.lv") opened in 2011, allows every Latvian citizen of 16 years of age to instigate and/or sign initiatives to build a better Latvia. The work of ManaBalss.lv gradually raises civic participation in politics and in the solution of social issues.

Public participation level is linked to other types of literacy required for the mastery of life, for example, political literacy.

## Greatest achievements. Most serious problems. Most important tasks.

### Greatest achievements

The people of Latvia have access to a diverse range of media, and the opportunities for using these media are vast. According to the residents' self-assessment, mass media skills are considered good. Media policy-making and implementation has been launched in Latvia, focusing on the development of media quality, accountability and the media work environment, as well as building media education. It also means raising the level of media literacy.

### Most serious problems

Media use practiced by the residents of Latvia is mostly one-way in its nature, dominated by the passive habit of information acquisition. Mass media users very seldom become involved in content creation, nor do they use media for civic activities or participatory processes. In part of the society, conservative media use habits prevail, including an indiscriminate approach to the daily use of media, and limiting oneself to the information provided by one medium and its language. Thus, these habits become prerequisites for the use of media as propaganda and manipulation of people's beliefs and values. This may pose a threat to security. The media literacy level of the population of Latvia cannot be deemed satisfactory. In the era of post-truth, media literacy is an important condition that hinders the spread of fake news and reduces threat to public security and stability.

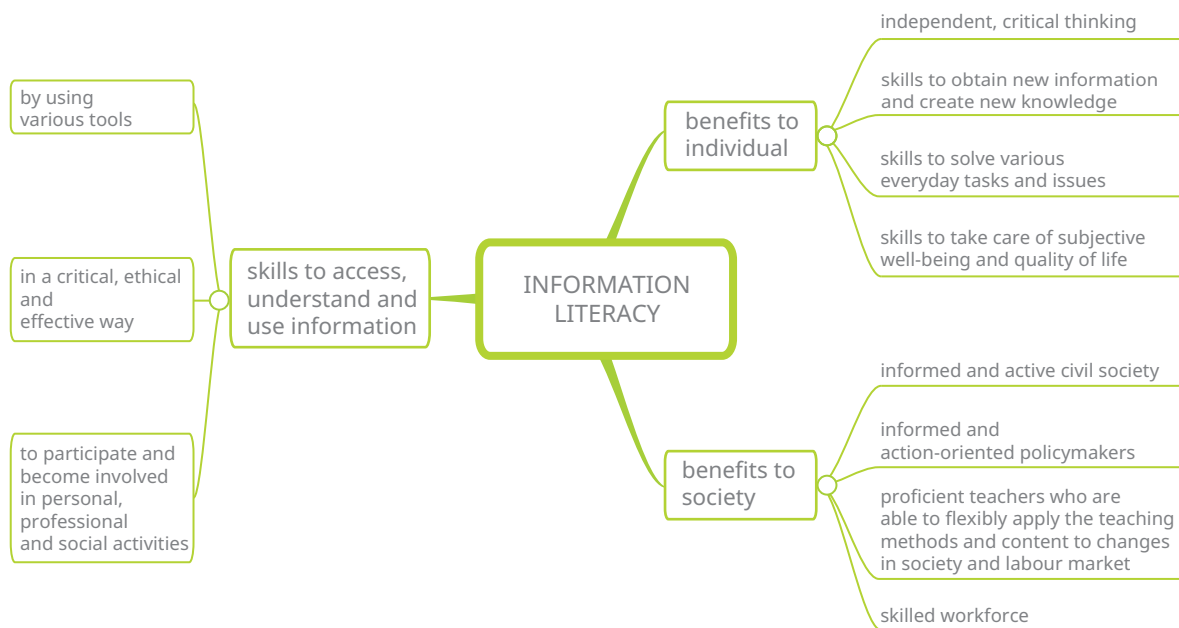
Problems have also expanded into the business of media and its operations: for example, legal regulation of media work, quality of journalism, and social security practice concerning the salaries of media workers.

### Most important tasks

The priorities are two-fold: the introduction of media education in schools along with the development of programmes, methodological tools and textbooks that are required, and the preparation of qualified specialists. Those who own or work in mass media should promote media literacy skills, critical thinking, and encourage an active life. Building knowledge about the world of post-truth, policy and media functioning, as well as distribution mechanisms of false information, deception, rumours and lies are required. As the civil society becomes more active it will also promote the growth of media quality and media literacy.

A crucial task is the consistent implementation of "**Mass Media Policy Guidelines of Latvia 2016–2020**" (KM, 2016) developed by the Republic of Latvia Ministry of Culture. The vital role of putting these tasks into practice is additionally accentuated by the increasing influence of post-truth on politics and public security.





## Chapter 7 | Are the information literate and the well-informed also well-versed in the mastery of life?

### Comparison of information literacy in various spheres of life

Compiling and comparing the data obtained in the study of information literacy in the different spheres of life, people self-assessed their skills from highest to lowest as follows:

- education and professional career,
- cultural literacy,
- family literacy,
- media literacy,
- health literacy,
- financial literacy, and
- political literacy, the lowest self-appraisal.

**The study** data also shows that self-evaluated skills for men and women are quite different (see Box 7.1). For example, women assessed their health literacy higher than men. In men's self-assessment, media literacy takes 2<sup>nd</sup> place, but women assessed their media literacy lower, placing it 5<sup>th</sup>. There were no significant differences between the genders with regard to self-assessment of financial literacy and political literacy – both genders evaluated these lowest.

Women rated all their literacy skills more highly than men excepting political literacy. Men self-evaluated financial literacy in 5<sup>th</sup> place but women placed it in the 6<sup>th</sup> place.

## Box 7.1

**Population of Latvia self-assessment regarding various literacies according to gender** (average points, where skills are self-assessed as 1 – very good, 2 – good, 3 – average, 4 – poor, 5 – very poor)

Literacy	All respondents		Male		Female	
	Average	Range	Average	Range	Average	Range
Educational literacy	2.09	1	2.14	1	2.06	4
Cultural literacy	2.11	2-3	2.23	3-4	2.01	2-3
Family literacy	2.11	2-3	2.23	3-4	2.01	2-3
Media literacy	2.12	4	2.18	2	2.07	5
Health literacy	2.18	5	2.55	6	1.89	1
Financial literacy	2.41	6	2.49	5	2.35	6
Political literacy	3.32	7	3.32	7	3.33	7

Base: all respondents,  $n = 1018$ .

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

## Box 7.2

**Intercorrelation matrix of seven variables of various literacies**

		Correlations						
		Financial literacy	Cultural literacy	Media literacy	Family literacy	Health literacy	Political literacy	Education literacy
Financial literacy	Pearson's correlation		0.336**	0.359**	0.425**	0.110**	0.282**	0.343**
	Sig. (2-tailed) <sup>1</sup>		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Cultural literacy	Pearson's correlation	0.336**		0.446**	0.385**	0.008	0.154**	0.493**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.801	0.000	0.000
Media literacy	Pearson's correlation	0.359**	0.446**		0.340**	0.013	0.331**	0.362**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.687	0.000	0.000
Family literacy	Pearson's correlation	0.425**	0.385**	0.340**		0.148**	0.235**	0.353**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000
Health literacy	Pearson's correlation	0.110**	0.008	0.013	0.148**		0.227**	0.095
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.801	0.687	0.000		0.000	0.083
Political literacy	Pearson's correlation	0.282**	0.154**	0.331**	0.235**	0.227**		0.203**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000
Education literacy	Pearson's correlation	0.343**	0.493**	0.362**	0.353**	0.095	0.203**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.083	0.000	

<sup>1</sup> Statistical significance of bilateral hypothesis.

Base: all respondents,  $n = 1018$ .

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

Viewed in the context of age groups, there were significant differences only in two self-assessments – health literacy and cultural literacy. The younger age group (up to 30) gave their highest self-appraisal score to cultural literacy. The group “51 and older” gave health literacy the higher self-appraisal score (see Box 7.3.).

Within the three basic levels of education (below secondary, secondary education, and higher education) there are significant differences in all literacy categories. As could have been forecasted, the highest level of competency was shown by the respondents with higher education (2.13), followed by the secondary education group representatives (2.40) and the poorest results were shown by the respondents with education level below secondary (2.65).

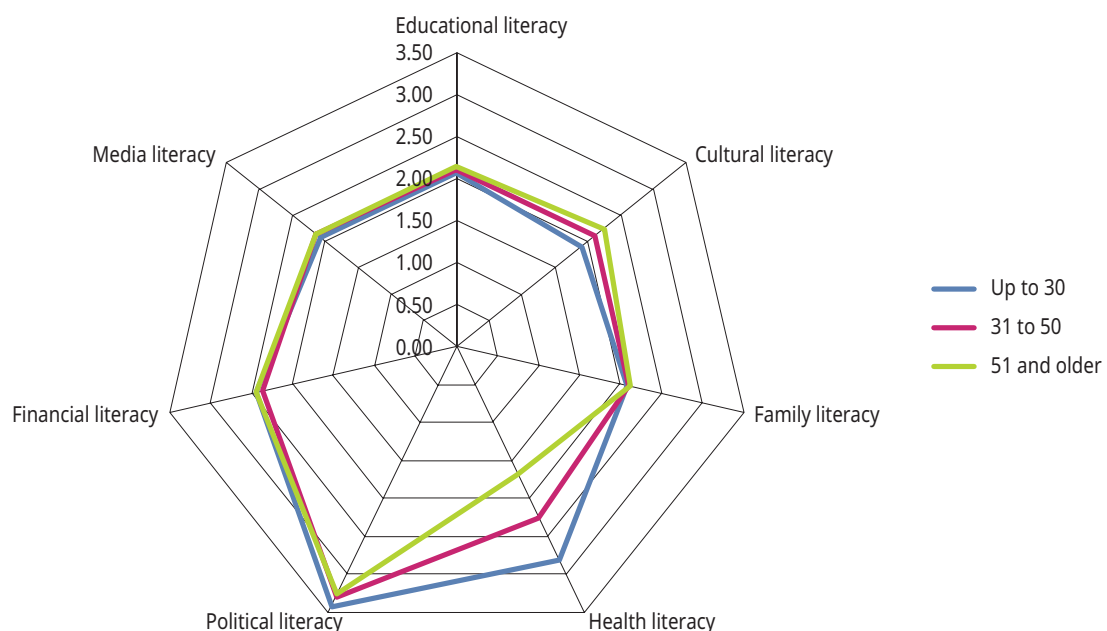
There is a notable difference in self-assessments between the three groups of media literacy and political literacy according to level of income (up to 400 EUR, 400–800 EUR and above 800 EUR representing the family’s average monthly income after taxes and other deductions). There is no significant difference among the groups in the matters of financial literacy, although the increase in average financial literacy points is observed with income growth (up to 400 EUR – average points 2.49, from 400 to 800 EUR – 2.42; 800 EUR and more – 2.35). However, these numbers do not show a statistically significant difference ( $r = 0.00$ ).

There are significant differences among different nationalities in their self-assessments of financial literacy, political literacy and cultural literacy. Latvian respondents gave a higher rating to their financial literacy (average points 2.36) and cultural literacy (2.06) than Russian respondents (political literacy average points 3.20). The representatives of other nations indicated lower assessments in all three areas.

All indicators, except health literacy and cultural literacy, show significant differences in self-assessments depending on the respondents’ place of residence. Overall, the residents of Riga region gave a higher rating to their media literacy 1.99, and average points for family literacy were 2.00, and financial literacy 2.30. Only in educational literacy was it observed to not follow the place of residence phenomenon. Since all the spheres of life are interlinked, information skills also are similarly interconnected. Information skills of one sphere inform information skills in other spheres of life (see Box 7.2). According to the assessment given by the residents, the closest connection exists between cultural literacy and educational literacy – Pearson’s correlation coefficient is 0.493, as well as cultural literacy and media literacy – Pearson’s correlation coefficient is 0.446. For this reason the skills to find information about cultural events are linked to media skills required to learn about concerts, exhibitions and other events, as well as the skills to find information on self-education

**Box 7.3**

**Self-assessments of various literacies given by residents of Latvia according to age** (average points, where skills are self-assessed as 1 – very good, 2 – good, 3 – average, 4 – poor, 5 – very poor)

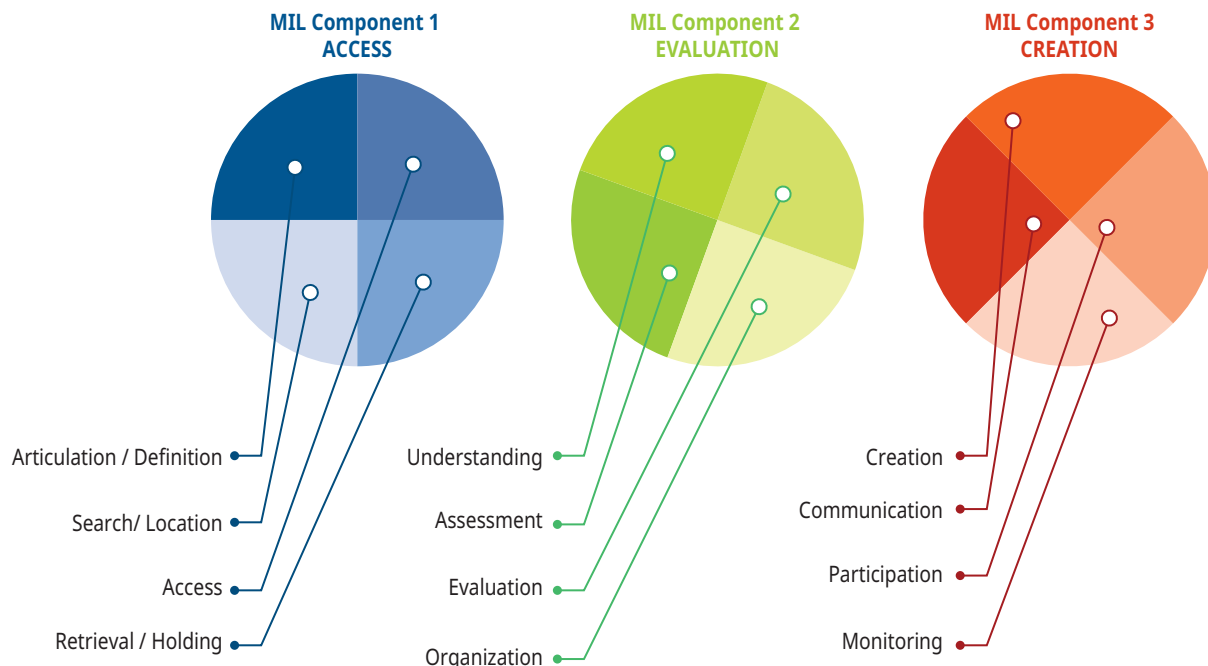


Base: all respondents,  $n = 1018$ .

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

## Box 7.4

## Three MIL competency groups (UNESCO, 2013)



opportunities. Financial literacy and family literacy also have a significant mutual impact (Pearson's correlation coefficient is 0.425), showing that the skills to manage information relevant to the family budget are also important in the context of family relations. Political literacy, in its turn, has a close connection with media literacy (Pearson's correlation coefficient is 0.331), which means in attaining an understanding of political events it is important to choose the appropriate media to compare same event coverage.

### Analysis of information literacy according to competency groups

The MIL (Media and Information Literacy) competency matrix has been used for analysis of everyday information literacy assessment. The three main components of MIL are *Access*, *Evaluation*, and *Creation*.

#### Access

The road to finding useful information begins with clear wording of the question, *an understanding of what information is needed* and from where it is best sought. **The study** data show 95% of the population completely agree or agree that they know what information they require. 44% of the respondents who completely agree with this statement have the attributes of high subjective well-being, and 30.5%, the characteristics of low subjective well-being.

Recognizing the need for information, it is important to be able to *effectively find information*. For the most part, residents positively assessed their skills to search for and find information. The highest rating, 81% was given to skills of finding reliable information on cultural and entertainment opportunities. Two additional information spheres receiving high assessment are health preservation and improvement, 74% and public administration services, 69%. Of the respondents, 56% know where to find information related to financial issues. Self-assessments in seeking a range of information about politics are relatively average. For example, the ability to find information on the preparation and passing of political decisions was assessed as very good or good by only 15.8%. 66.6% of the respondents rated as average their ability to find before-the-election information on party candidates. 64.5% rated as average their ability to find information about whether they or their family members will be affected by local government's decisions. Significant difficulties are encountered when attempting to find information about family and raising children, 47%, professional career development opportunities, 48%, and education opportunities, 55%.

The skills of *using Internet search tools* were given a higher self-assessment by the respondents with a higher subjective well-being: 31.9% of high well-being and 23.9% low well-being representatives noted the answer "agree"; 40.1%, and 26.1% of these groups disagreed with the statement. 34.4% of all the people

## Box 7.5

**Self-assessment of habits related to obtaining the information necessary in daily life**  
(fully agree or agree to assertion, %)

	All respondents n = 1018	Female n = 570	Male n = 448	Age groups					
				18-24 n = 149	25-4 n = 201	35-44 n = 177	45-54 n = 189	55-64 n = 170	65-74 n = 132
Most often, I understand what information I require	95	95	95	95	97	94	97	95	92
Most often, I obtain the necessary information with assistance of personally known people – family members, friends, colleagues	58	60	56	58	60	60	61	52	56
I trust only specialists	47	52	42	43	48	47	47	52	46
When searching for information by using Internet search engines, I usually choose one of the first three sources offered	36	36	37	45	45	43	33	30	16
I know how to choose reliable sources of information	72	73	70	79	77	69	72	71	64
I try to critically assess the information I have found	74	75	72	66	70	73	78	79	74
There is so much information that it is hard to choose the most appropriate	59	62	56	54	54	60	61	60	68
Synthesizing and holding/storing the found information is difficult to me	25	26	24	21	19	20	25	29	40
Most often, I look for information only in my native language	62	63	61	53	51	63	67	71	73
I know how to use the obtained information practically	79	81	77	85	83	79	81	75	72
Finding information is hindered by my insufficient knowledge of foreign languages	43	43	43	28	26	45	54	55	53
I try to find the answers, using various sources of information	79	81	77	86	84	82	81	77	61
I willingly share the found information and help others	80	84	74	83	83	79	78	81	73

Base: all respondents, n = 1018.

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

with low well-being characteristics chose the option “Hard to say”, which shows that their Internet search tool skills are not as convincing as those with higher well-being characteristics, 10.7%.

Analyzing 6,243 cases of information searches, the most commonly mentioned are:

- Internet social networks and news sites, 24%,
- asking known family members, friends, and co-workers, 20%,
- consulting with specialists in person or by telephone, 15%,
- media, 13%,
- state and local government websites, 11%, and
- websites of non-governmental organizations or commercial agencies, 8%.

Internet social networks and news portals are among the most readily available and most

commonly used sources of information today. To solve *daily issues* individuals turn to people they know – friends, family members, and colleagues. This approach to obtaining information is often the most convenient and fastest, does not require special effort, however, the acquired information cannot always be trusted. Information from personally known people is often obtained by women, 60% of the time, and slightly less frequently by men, 56%. Comparing by age groups, a slightly larger proportion of respondents obtaining information in this way is the age groups from 35 to 44 years, 60% of respondents and from 45 to 54 years, 61% of respondents (see Box 7.6).

A much safer approach to getting information is by referral to the relevant specialists. Almost half of the respondents, 47% affirmed that they trust only

professionals. Assessing the answers provided by the respondents of high and low subjective well-being, significant differences can be observed. 57.8% of high subjective well-being respondents fully trust or trust specialists, while only 35.4% of the respondents of low subjective well-being do so. People with low well-being may be more inclined to distrust others and also may turn to low quality specialists, thus setting up cyclical mistrust. This can be explained both by a more frequent general distrust characteristic of people with low well-being, and the fact that these people are probably more likely to turn to low-quality specialists, and it contributes to cyclical mistrust.

The information literacy competency group "Access" also encompasses two questions about the language in which the information is being sought and used. Most respondents, 62% seek information only in their native language. Of this 62% a greater proportion are older people with lower level of education and low well-being.

The population majority has recognized that insufficient foreign language skills hinder finding information.

Information literacy competency group "Access" also encompasses the *use of e-services* that facilitates access and faster exchange of information particularly with state and local government institutions. The fact that only 48.1% utilized the e-services of local and state governments may be explained by either a lack of need or the poor quality of service.

"Access" competencies also include the media used for obtaining *orienting information*. **The study** data show that the residents of Latvia give a high self-assessment to their media selection skills. There are differences in self-evaluation among the age groups only regarding the choice between two media: news portals are given a higher assessment

by the 18–24 year-old respondents, while the skills of choosing newspapers were rated higher by the 65–74 year-old respondents. 30.6% of the residents of Latvia use media only in their native language, which limits the opportunities to well-understand the various political events. **The study** also shows media use habits are ingrained and relatively undeviating, leading to the conclusion that respondents inhabit a relatively narrow and small world of information.

## Evaluation

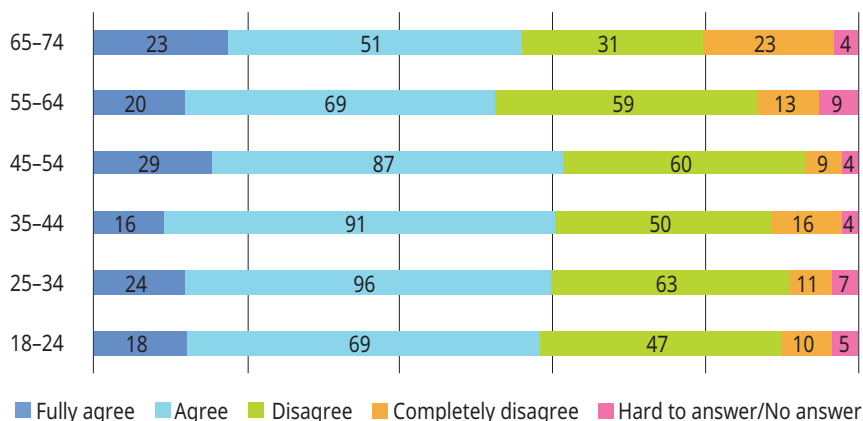
Another very important information literacy competency is evaluation of the found information. This includes comparison of sources or additional searches, checking reliability, and considering safe sources of information.

To establish how much time and attention is devoted to the evaluation of information that has been selected, the study questionnaire tested the assertion "when looking for information with the Internet search engines, I normally choose from the first three entries offered" (see Box 7.7). Relying on the fact that the search engine "knows" the best sources of information, across the age spectrum relatively few, 36% absolutely agreed or agreed. So we can positively assess the fact that the majority of respondents review a number of information resources to choose the most appropriate. While the younger respondents 18–44 years, more often agreed with the statement about relying of the first three listings, these statistics would indicate that 53–55% searched beyond that:

- 45 % of 18–24 years,
- 45 % of 25–34 years,
- 43% of 35–44 years,

### Box 7.6

#### Obtaining information from personally known people – family, friends, colleagues (non-specialists)



Base: all respondents,  $n = 1018$ .

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).



- 33% of 45–54 years,
- 30% of 55–64 years, and
- 15% of 65–74 years.

Consequently, younger people searching for information on the Internet are hastier and usually choose to view only the first selected sources of information, which are not always the most reliable and the safest.

An important information skill is the *selection of information sources*, as the content can affect the course of action that, in turn, has ramifications. The selected information sources also characterise the person's information horizon and information "paths" (typical sources of information the person knows, selects and uses, which also influence awareness of an issue and the behaviour/action in a given field).

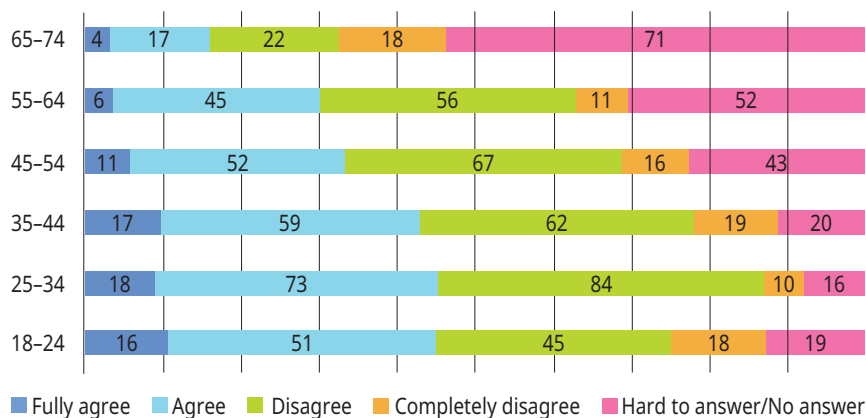
Residents highly evaluate their skills to choose *reliable sources of information*, 72% view their skills positively. There is a slight difference among the age groups – the younger respondents rate their skills higher (18–24 year, 79%; 25–34 years, 77%; 35–44 years, 69%; 45–54 years, 72%; 55–64 years, 70%; 65–74 years, 64%.)

Differences can also be observed by completed level of education. Those most confident of their skills are people with higher education – doctoral, master's or bachelor's degree.

Marked differences are also observed by the respondents' sense of well-being. For example, 23.5% of the high well-being group chose fully agree to being able to select reliable information sources, while this response was chosen only by 7.0% people with low

### Box 7.7

#### Searching for information with Internet search engines, I usually choose from the first three entries

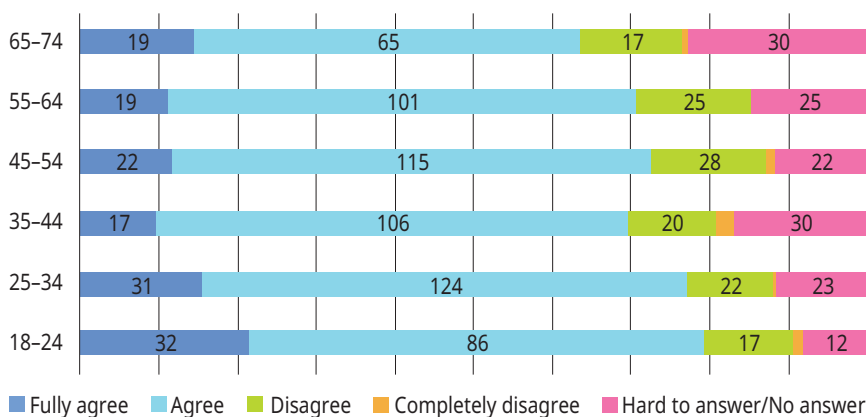


Base: all respondents,  $n = 1018$ .

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

### Box 7.8

#### I know how to select reliable sources of information



Base: all respondents,  $n = 1018$ .

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

## Box 7.9

## Where during the last search was obtained the most useful information about ... (%)

	From personally known people - family, friends, colleagues (who are not specialists)	Consulting state, local government, non-governmental or commercial organisation specialists (in person or via telephone)	In mass media - radio, TV, press	State, local government organisations' webpage	Non-governmental or commercial organisations' webpage	Internet social networks, news portals	Other
health maintenance or improvement, <i>n</i> = 901	24	29	10	1	1	16	19
management of one's own finances, <i>n</i> = 600	26	22	12	5	4	17	14
culture and entertainment opportunities, <i>n</i> = 862	28	3	27	3	2	33	4
services of public administration institutions, <i>n</i> = 828	11	22	12	32	3	18	3
services of one's own local government, <i>n</i> = 801	12	21	12	33	2	16	3
building family relationships, <i>n</i> = 457	35	3	13	2	3	31	11
raising and education of children, <i>n</i> = 441	33	5	14	5	3	30	10
opportunities of building professional career, <i>n</i> = 510	15	13	11	7	6	34	13
opportunities for obtaining or supplementing education, <i>n</i> = 558	11	14	10	9	56	40	10

Base: the respondents who have obtained useful information in the particular spheres of life (the number of respondents (*n*) is indicated in the table).

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

## Box 7.10

## Sources of information, where the most useful information has last been obtained regarding different spheres of life

Spheres of life	Information sources
Health preservation or improvement	1. specialists (29%) 2. personally known people (24%) 3. other sources of information (19%)
Culture and entertainment	1. Internet social networks and news portals (33%) 2. personally known people (28%) 3. mass media (27%)
Services of public administration institutions and one's own local government	1. webpage of the respective institution (33%) 2. specialists (21%) 3. Internet social networks and news portals (16%)
Finance	1. personally known people (26%) 2. specialists (22%) 3. Internet social networks and news portals (17%)
Family relationships	1. personally known people (35%) 2. Internet social networks and news portals (31 %) 3. specialists (3 %)
Child-raising questions	1. personally known people (33%) 2. Internet social networks and news portals (30 %) 3. specialists (5 %)
Education	1. Internet social networks and news portals (40%) 2. specialists (14%) 3. mass media (10%)
Professional career	1. Internet social networks and news portals (34%) 2. personally known people (15%) 3. specialists (13%)

well-being. The answers “Disagree”, “Completely disagree” and “Hard to say” were chosen only by 14.6% of the high well-being group and by 40.1% of those with low well-being. The different skills in obtaining information of a good quality might not be the result of low subjective well-being, but also its cause. Regarding this question, a circular loop can be observed – people with low skills of information searching also exhibit characteristics of low subjective well-being, and it can be concluded that, as a result of these low skills, people are unable to increase their subjective well-being.

To establish which *sources of information* people in different spheres consider useful, **the study** included questions about where respondents last obtained useful information on a variety of everyday life issues. The survey data show that in a variety of spheres the usefulness of information sources is different (see Boxes 7.9 and 7.10).

Lately, 89% of the population have looked for information **about health** ( $n = 901$ ). They have obtained the most useful information in consultation with specialists, 29%, but in 24% of the cases it has been derived from personally close people – family, friends, and colleagues. In 19% of the cases, the respondents have specified other useful sources. Minor differences can be observed when comparing the results by age groups. Specialist consultations are the most reliable source of information used 34% by people aged 55 to 64 years and 29% by those 45 to 54 years. Useful information about health issues from personally known people was obtained most often by those aged 25 to 34 years, 22%. Comparison by gender reveals that women have used specialist advice more often, while men have sought advice from family members, friends, and colleagues.

A more detailed analysis of individual situations in the health sphere indicates the main source of information in the use of non-prescription medicines has been a family doctor, 41.6% or pharmacist, 28.8%. On the other hand, 13% of the respondents admitted to solving medical problems with help of psychics or healers. Assessing the situation as a whole, the majority of respondents consult specialists, but quite a few also use less reliable sources of information: Internet social networks and news portals, websites, and media.

85% of the residents have sought information **on culture and entertainment opportunities** ( $n = 862$ ). Useful information was most often obtained from:

- social networking sites and news portals – 33%,
- people close to the respondent – 28%, and
- media – 27%.

The use of Internet social networks, media, and news portals to obtain information is significantly less frequent among the older population.

81% of the people have sought information on **public administration services** ( $n = 828$ ). Most useful information was obtained from:

- respective institution’s website, 33%,

- consultation with specialists, 21%, and
- Internet social networks, news portals, 16%.

79% of the population sought information regarding the services provided by **local government** ( $n = 801$ ). Most frequently the information was obtained from:

- local government’s website, 33%,
- consultation with specialists, 21%, and
- Internet social networks, news portals, 16%.

50% of the population are interested in **professional career building opportunities** ( $n = 510$ ). Most information was sought from:

- social networking sites, news portals, 34%,
- personal acquaintances, 15%, and
- specialists, 13%.

55% of the population have searched for information **on learning opportunities** ( $n = 558$ ). Most useful information came from:

- social networking sites, news portals, 40%,
- consulted specialists, 14%,
- information in the media, 10%, and
- state or local government’s website, 9%.

Although the population has not assessed its financial literacy too highly (average points – 2.41, ranking this literacy in the penultimate place), the information on **the management of finances** has recently been sought only by 51% of the respondents ( $n = 600$ ). In this sphere, the safest source of information is considered specialist consultations or information acquisition on state or local government organizations’ website, 22%. But more often information is gotten from:

- family, friends, and colleagues, 26%, and
- Internet social networks, and news portals, 17%.

Regarding **building family relations**, information has been sought by 45% of the population ( $n = 457$ ). Most useful information was obtained from:

- personal acquaintances, 35%,
- Internet social networks, news portals, 31%, and
- specialists, 3%.

Information regarding **raising and the education of children** has been sought by 43% of the population ( $n = 441$ ). Information has been obtained from:

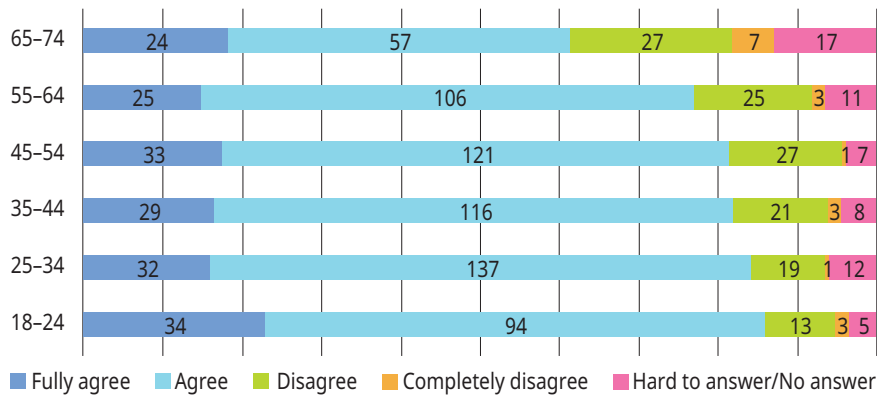
- personally known people, 33%,
- social networking sites, 30%, and
- specialists, 5%.

Based on **the study** data, it can be concluded that the use of these dominant sources facilitate the exchange of experience among parents, and simultaneously creates a risk that the information is obtained from unverified sources, and it may not be critically assessed.

For solution of daily life issues, the society considers the following sources of information the most useful: **personally known people, specialists, Internet social networks and news portals**. Although Internet social networks and news portals were indicated as the first among the sources, **the study** shows that information found there is not always sufficiently useful and reliable.

## Box 7.11

## I try to find the answers by comparing various information sources

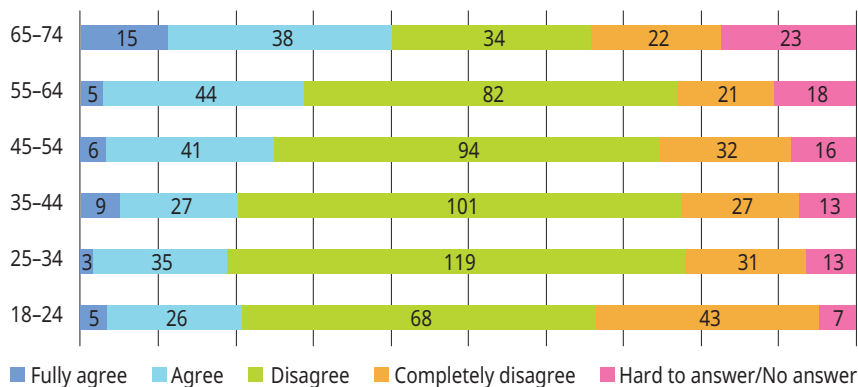


Base: all respondents,  $n = 1018$ .

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

## Box 7.12

## I have difficulties to synthesize and store the found information



Base: all respondents,  $n = 1018$ .

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

Selection and usage of information sources depend on *the ability to understand information*. The surveyed people admitted that they had no difficulty in understanding the information about culture and entertainment opportunities, 83%. Overall the understanding of health preservation and improvement-related information was given a relatively high self-assessment, 79%, answers to particular questions revealed that medical information was not always easy to understand. For example, only 47.5% of the respondents believed that they understood the medical information obtained from a doctor. 55.7% of respondents often had difficulties in understanding instructions of medication use and information materials because the texts were in exceedingly small print, and 59.7% of the respondents admitted that unknown words and symbols interfered with

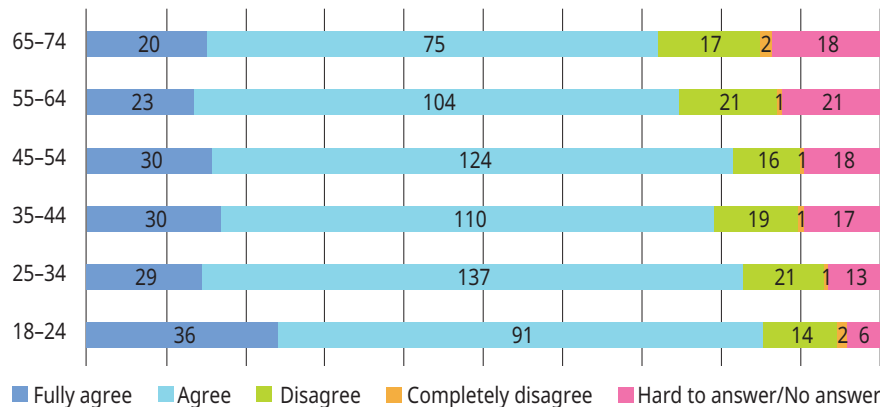
understanding the information. To summarize these points:

- elderly had greater difficulties in understanding medical information,
- 63% of the respondents believed that they understood information about finance,
- information on child raising, education and professional career development opportunities is understood only by 51%, and
- lowest self-evaluation was given to understanding the information about political events and situations, 53.6%.

No less important is the ability to *critically evaluate the information* that has been obtained. 74% of the respondents evaluated their skills in this respect positively. Here, too, the rating was more positive by people with a higher education level. Comparing

## Box 7.13

## I know how to use the found information practically



Base: all respondents, n = 1018.

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

by age groups, a slightly higher evaluation of their critical skills was given by the populations aged 45 to 66 years. Critical evaluation of the found information is also more typical of people with higher subjective well-being (83.1% of the cases). For comparison, 64.5% of the respondents with low subjective well-being characteristics critically evaluate the information they have found. A relatively high self-appraisal is also observed with regard to critical assessment of media content, 51.5% of the respondents evaluated their skills in this respect as very good or good. However, the high self-assessment is primarily explained by the constant media usage habits characteristic to the population and relatively passive position in life, and under the influence of these factors individuals choose mass media that is in line with their worldview and values.

Quite often *choosing the sources of information* may cause difficulties, because the amount of available information is extensive. 59% of the respondents agree with the statement that there is so much information that it is hard to choose the most relevant. Older respondents have more often agreed that the large amount of information interferes with choosing the most relevant information.

In order to verify *the reliability of the information* one should compare information across a number of sources. 79% of the respondents agree that they are trying to find answers using a number of information sources, and of these, younger respondents represent a higher percentage.

In some areas of life it is particularly important *to obtain additional information*, for example, regarding health issues. Interviewing the respondents about their actions in cases when it is necessary to find additional information about the medical examination or diagnosis given by a doctor, only 19.4% of

the respondents have noted that they do so often, but 30.3% never do. To navigate the various political events and processes and better understand them, one must often look for information in additional sources. The residents of Latvia assess their ability as average to find the necessary information to help make choices, for example, in elections. Looking for additional sources depends both on the knowledge of languages and, for example, on media use traditions. **The study** data show that the Latvian population has relatively fixed media use habits, 50.1% of the respondents do not alter the range of the media they use, and 42.5% rarely do so. **The study** also found that 58.2% of the respondents never compare the information provided in various media at all or compare it rarely. Culture and entertainment is a sphere where obtaining additional information can help develop skills and mastery. Examples of additional information sources are when another person expresses an opinion, or supplementary information is obtained from any source to attend cultural events or purchase a book. 46% of women and 36% of men admitted that they have chosen to attend a cultural event without resorting to additional information sources. With respect to book purchases, women and men's independence has been similar at 60%. **The study** data show that the use of additional sources about the culture and entertainment sphere is associated with levels of education. The higher the education the more independent the choice or safer and more reliable sources are used to make the choice. The other factor is gender. Women have a higher cultural capital.

When an information search and evaluation process is completed, it is important to know how *to synthesize and store the information* that has been selected to be able to use it in solving various life situations – to create new knowledge. The residents

of Latvia evaluate their skills in this sphere positively – only 23%, mainly elderly people – assert that they have difficulties in this regard.

The greatest part of the population, 55% state that the information gathering, storing and finding it again at a later time present no difficulties to them. The self-assessment of these skills is more positive in respect to women, and to the younger residents of Latvia with higher education and income levels.

### Creation

The overall self-evaluation of the third information literacy competency group – “creation” – is also high. 79% of the surveyed have positively assessed their skills to use the information they have found. Younger people and residents with a higher level of education hold a higher proportion.

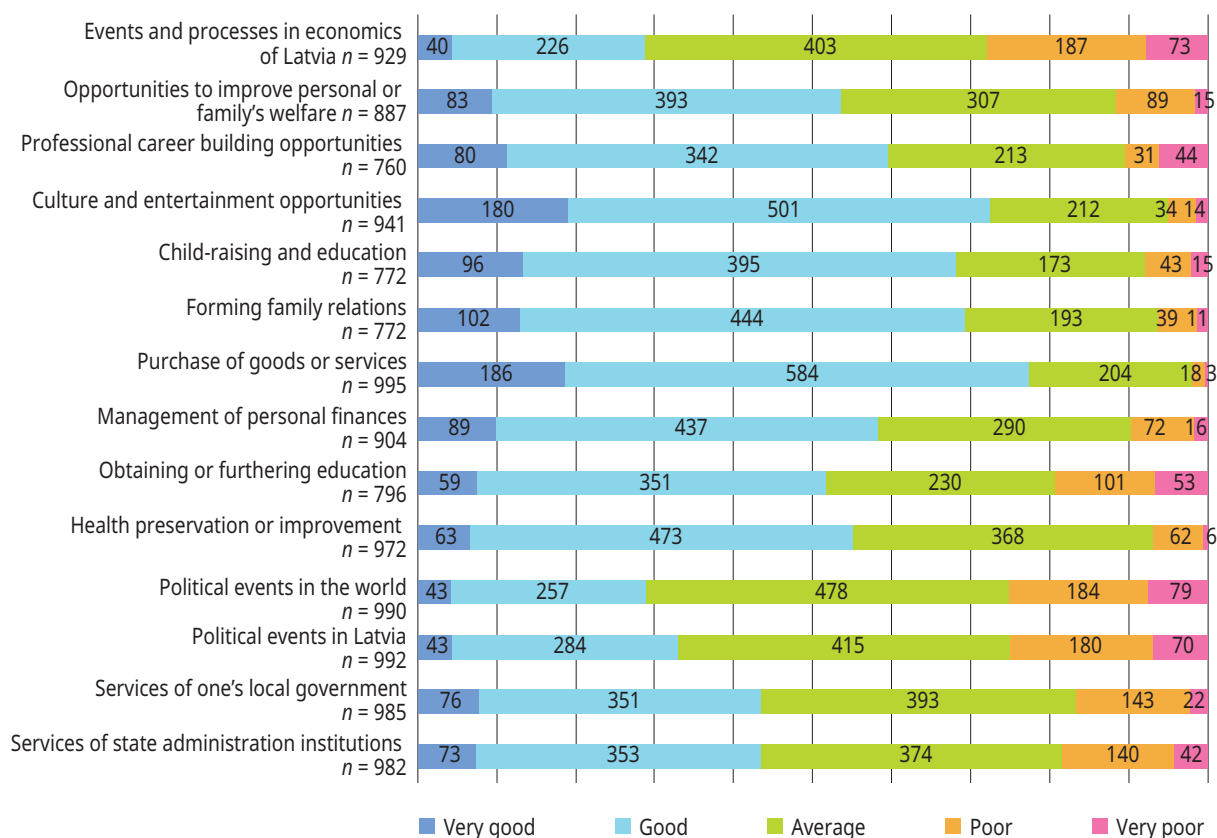
When assessing the skills – *to use the information that has been found* – they are the most positively evaluated in matters related to cultural and entertainment opportunities (86%), and health maintenance and improvement (86%). Positive responses are also given to the question about the use of particular

information relating the sphere of politics and finance; for example, 76.3% of the respondents fully or rather agree that they know how to use the information they find about the services provided by the public administration institutions, and 68% know how to use financial information. Just over half of respondents, 51% found **using** information regarding child raising issues more difficult; with similar results in using information about professional career development, 52%. In assessing the respondents' answers by high or low subjective well-being, there are significant differences in skills to apply the found information in practice. 92.4% of respondents of high subjective well-being, and 68.6% of the low well-being groups' chose the answers “Fully agree” and “Agree”. But almost 20% of the people in the low subjective well-being group pointed out that they did not know how to use the obtained information in practice.

78% of the population *willingly share the found information and help others*. This action creates a larger proportion, 89%, among the population groups with higher levels of education and younger people, as well as the respondents with high well-being characteristics.

### Box 7.14

#### Awareness level of residents in various spheres of life



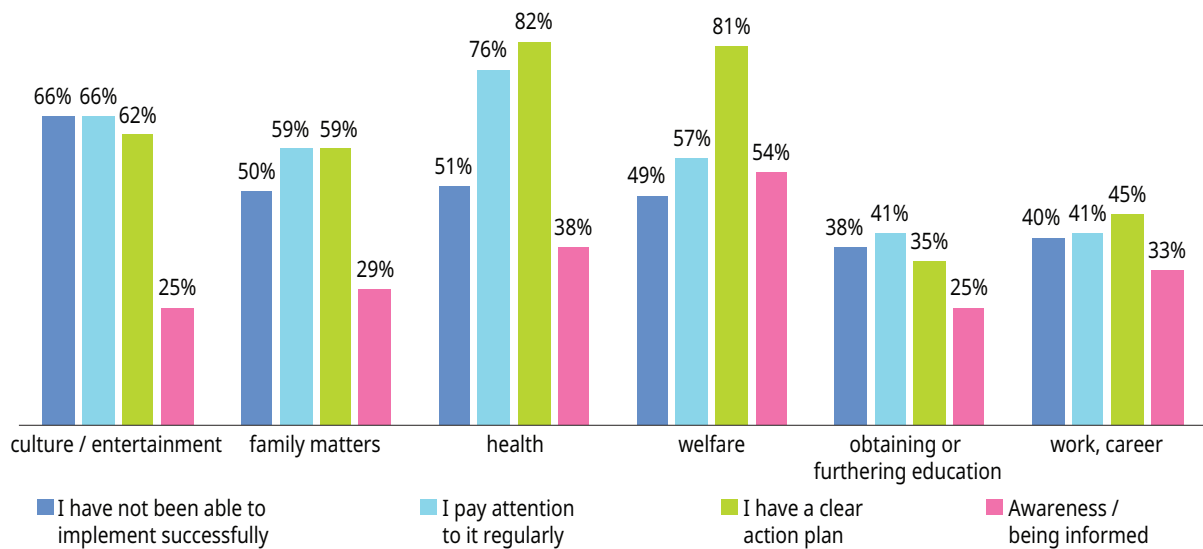
Base: the respondents, who have had interest regarding the particular spheres of life (the number of respondents (n) is indicated in the picture).

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).



## Box 7.15

## Spheres of life which have clear action plans and to which attention is paid regularly, and where awareness is the lowest and implementation of plans – the least successful



Base: all respondents,  $n = 1018$ .

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

Within the third information literacy competencies' group "creation," *social media* must be addressed. Social media offer a wide range of opportunities for communication (information exchange). **The study** regarding political and media literacy concluded that Internet social sites are mainly used to solve practical issues – people answer each other's questions, give advice, engage in donation campaigns, form various informal groups, but sites are not used extensively for development of civil society. The low level of civil activity in society primarily explains lacking this use.

### Information literacy, being informed and mastery of life

Information literacy can be expressed as *being informed or aware, being knowledgeable* about certain life questions resulting in planning, controlling, and quality of life (mastery of life).

#### Awareness and information literacy

If awareness is compared with the assessment of information literacy in various spheres of life, people do not always feel sufficiently well informed – even if a relatively high self-assessment has been designated. For example, people have given the highest self-assessment to educational literacy (average points 2.09), but only 38.4% of the population feel

very well or well informed about obtaining and furthering education. Similar reflections can be made regarding family relationships and matters of raising children. Family literacy has been assessed relatively high (average points 2.11), but only 52.7% of the population believe they are well or very well informed about building family relations, and only 47.1% share these feelings about child-rearing issues. There are spheres where assessment of the information literacy level coincides with the awareness rating level. For example, the respondents highly rate their *awareness* of cultural and entertainment opportunities, 65.6% and also their cultural *literacy* (average points 2.11). On the other hand, the *awareness* in the spheres of finances, 51.3%, and promoting material prosperity, 47.1%, received a relatively low self-assessment, reflecting a similarly low financial *literacy* (average points 2.41). The trend continues with the low self-assessment of *literacy and awareness in both political and health literacy*.

#### Impact of information literacy and awareness upon mastery of life

To ascertain the attitudes and actions of the population regarding the mastery of life, **the study** survey included questions about the planning of life and the implementation of those plans. Questions were following.

1. Is there clear action plans?
2. Is attention paid to a certain sphere of life?

3. Implementation of which plan has been the least successful?
4. The failure to implement which plan has affected the implementation of other plans the most?

Analyzing the self-assessment given to the above questions revealed the following (see Box 7.15): the residents of Latvia have had the clearest action plans in *health preservation or improvement*, 76%, and have regularly paid attention to implementation of these plans, 82%. However, 38% of the respondents have noted that they have not been successful in carrying out the health plans. In 21% of the cases, the failure to implement the health plan has hindered realization of other life plans. It is possible that the lack of health literacy skills (average points 2.18), and the lack of awareness with only 51.2% of respondents who are “well” or “very well” informed are among the reasons why the health preservation and improvement plans have not been fulfilled. The insufficient level of health literacy is attested by the increased illness and mortality rates in recent years (Slimību profilakses un kontroles centrs, 2015). Consequently, the population’s health literacy self-assessment and actions, disease and mortality statistics in Latvia, as well as the country’s disordered health care system confirm that the population’s health literacy should be strengthened.

66% of the respondents have had clear action plans for expanding their *cultural competencies*. 62% of the respondents have regularly paid attention to this sphere, however, 25% of the respondents have recognized that they have not succeeded in raising the cultural competencies as intended. Nevertheless, culture and entertainment spheres are those about which the residents feel the most knowledgeable, 66%, and the self-assessment of cultural literacy (average points 2.11) is among the highest of the studied literacies. **The study** data also show that awareness and activity are directly related – those residents who are interested in culture and entertainment opportunities are also more active in cultural practices and more knowledgeable. Non-implementation of plans in the sphere of culture has obstructed other life plans the least often – only 1%. This suggests that the population feels sufficiently masterly in this sphere and is satisfied with its cultural consumption practices.

59% of the respondents had clear action plans regarding *forming and strengthening of family*, 59% of the respondents regularly paid attention to these matters, while 29% of the respondents admitted that they had not been able to implement these plans successfully. In 5% of the cases failure to implement this plan has obstructed the realization of other plans. Although 53% of the population believe that they are sufficiently well informed about family relationship issues and 47.1% are sufficiently well informed about the raising of children, and though family literacy is generally assessed as good (average points 2.11), other studies conducted in Latvia have identified problems in parental relationships with children,

partnerships, and balancing work and family life. This leads to the conclusion that mastery of life could be significantly better. It is disturbing that specialists are seldom used as information resources in this sphere (only 3% regarding relationships in family, and 5% regarding child raising).

With regard to *improvement of welfare*, 57% of the respondents have had clear plans, and 81% of the respondents have regularly paid attention to the matters concerning their finances, while 54% of the respondents admitted that they have been the least successful in implementing their welfare improvement plan. Non-implementation of this plan most often, 47% of the cases, has hindered implementation of other life plans. Awareness of financial matters and improvement of welfare, as well as financial literacy has been given a relatively low self-assessment by the respondents (only 51% and 45.6% of the population evaluated their knowledge of financial matters and awareness of welfare improvement as good or very good respectively, the average points in financial literacy 2.41). The study also showed that people lack knowledge to recover from the state their expenses of medical services (68.8% of the respondents know that) and education (52.0% of the respondents know that). A direct impact on the quality and mastery of life is the action of saving. For example, **the study** data show that 51.6% of the respondents build up savings, but only 8% of respondents would be able to cover all their expenses for more than six months were they to lose their main source of income. Thus, it can be concluded that this is an area in which the people of Latvia are aware that their mastery of life and information literacy should be improved.

Relatively fewer respondents, 41% have had clear plans for *obtaining and furthering their education*. While 35% of the respondents have regularly paid attention to this area, 25% of the respondents admitted that they have not succeeded in the implementation of their education. Only 8% of the respondents indicated that the failure to implement this plan has affected the realization of other plans. Population’s self-assessment of education literacy is relatively high (average points 2.09), however, a more detailed analysis of information literacy in the sphere of education reveals where to look for information is not always known. Only 38% of the respondents assessed their awareness as good and very good. This leads to the conclusion that the mastery of life in the sphere of education could be improved.

41% of the respondents have had clear plans of *professional career building*. 45% of the respondents regularly paid attention to this sphere, but 33% of the people admitted that they had not succeeded implementing these plans. Thus, this life plan takes third place among those the residents of Latvia have failed to implement successfully, and 12% of the respondents are sure that this failure has hampered implementation of other life plans. In this area of

professional career building, the residents do not feel sufficiently informed – only 40% of the respondents rate their knowledge as good and very good.

The mastery of life in the *matter of politics* was not evaluated by the existence of plans or implementation, but on the knowledge of various political matters and actions. The residents of Latvia have given political literacy (the average points 3.32) and awareness a relatively low self-assessment. Only 30–40% of the respondents rate their awareness of particular political issues, state and local government services as good or very good. Many, 46.3% of respondents noted they were not interested in politics. Poor understanding of political events and/or a lack of faith that a person can influence anything in the matters of state government could be the explanation. The knowledge of political issues is not advanced, for example, only 27.2% of the respondents correctly answered the test question “the Constitutional Court’s decision cannot be annulled by any institution of Latvia.” Since 2002, the participation of citizens in elections has fallen by 10%, and 58.3% of the respondents who think that their participation in parliamentary or local government elections has no impact on the outcome. Residents do not actively use different sources of information to achieve an improved understanding of a political event. Perhaps this is the reason why a large part of society is also relatively passive in political participation, which could be promoted by the modern online social media. In the context of political literacy, the situation is slightly better regarding e-service use for communication with state and local government institutions. 48.1% of the respondents have mentioned that over the past six months they have made use of e-services, thus the improvement of e-services’ usability could bring a major benefit to the individual’s

mastery of life, making everyday problem solving faster and more efficient.

Media literacy is a set of information skills useful in the mastery of different spheres of life. **The study** data show that the people of Latvia assess their skills of media selection and critical evaluation relatively high (the average points in media literacy 2.12), but the real actions of the population do not provide an assurance of high media literacy. For example, copyright is often not respected; 50.1% of the surveyed actually do not alter the range of media that they use; information provided in a variety of media is not compared at all or is rarely compared by 58.2% of the respondents; the residents of Latvia are not active social media content creators. In the context of the mastery of life it should be noted that media, however, do not belong to the most important sources of information in the lives of people. For example, only 13% of the respondents use the information published in the media to solve problems, 16% search for this information online using keywords, social media advice is sought by 3% of the respondents (Kruks, 2016, p. 157).

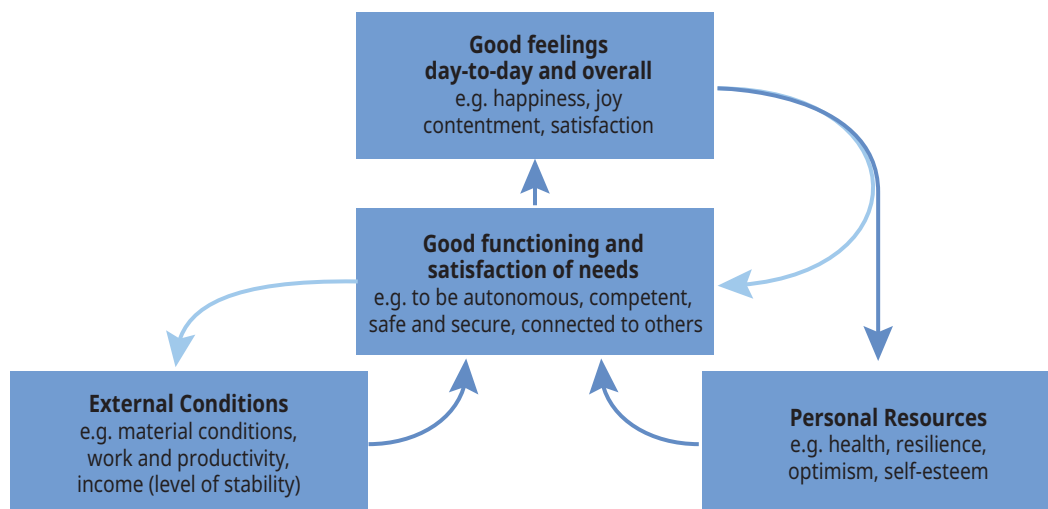
### Mastery of life and subjective well-being

The mastery of life determines the quality of life. One of its dimensions is subjective well-being, which is an individual assessment of the quality of life or satisfaction with life at the given moment (see Box 7.16 and 7.17).

In **this study** according to question responses, people are divided into two oppositely directed and comparable groups: those who evaluate their life positively, via the number of positive assertions, (high subjective well-being) vs. those who respond with

#### Box 7.16

#### Dynamic model of subjective well-being (Abdallah et al. 2011, p. 13)



**Box 7.17****Subjective well-being assessment of the residents of Latvia****Gender**

In Latvia, the subjective well-being indicators for women are considerably higher than for men, furthermore, the differences are statistically significant. Of all the respondents, high indicators are characteristic to 60.4% of women. Looking at the sample as a whole, 35.0% of women belong to the high subjective well-being group, while the same can be said only about 26.4% of men. Viewing the low subjective well-being characteristics according to gender brings similar conclusions. Of all the surveyed, low subjective well-being characteristics are exhibited by 55.2% of men and 44.8% of women. Looking at the sample as a whole, 36.8% of all the men have low subjective well-being characteristics, and 25.9% of all the women have similar indicators.

**Education**

Significant conclusions can be made from the perspective of the obtained education level. Higher subjective well-being indicators are often had by those who have completed at least one education. Out of all those with high subjective well-being characteristics, secondary education was completed by 20.6%, secondary vocational education – by 30.8%, bachelor's degree – by 13.0%, master's degree – by 8.9%, and 11.4% of the respondents had acquired higher education during the Soviet era. As the level of completed education increases, so does the share of people who in each level of education exhibit high subjective well-being characteristics. For example, 32.7% of all those who have completed secondary education, and 56.0% of all those who have obtained a master's degree, exhibit higher subjective well-being. The opposite situation is for the people with low subjective well-being characteristics. Of these, 12.4% of respondents have basic education, 14.3% – uncompleted secondary education, 19.7% – the secondary and 34.6% – secondary vocational education. Only 5.4% of those with a bachelor's degree show low subjective well-being characteristics, while the same can be attributed only to 0.6% of the graduates with master's degree. Of those people, who have completed only the basic education, 48.1% have a low subjective well-being; if the secondary education has not been completed, the low subjective well-being is shown by 50.6% of the respondents. Accordingly, these people are in the high risk group psychologically and socially.

**Nationality**

According to nationality, it can be concluded that Latvians are more likely to show characteristics of high well-being than respondents of Russian and other nationalities. 64.6% of all the respondents who have characteristics of high subjective well-being are Latvians. There are no notable differences within a particular nationality – 33.4% of Latvians and 29.2% of Russians have high subjective well-being characteristics. At the same time, of all respondents with low subjective well-being characteristics, 54.6% are Latvians, 37.5% – Russians, and 7.9% – other nationalities. This suggests that Latvians are more likely to exhibit both high and low subjective well-being characteristics, attesting to diversity in the quality of life within the limits of one nationality.

**Age**

Evaluating the subjective well-being of the population by age, it can be concluded that the highest indicators are those of the people in the age group from 25 to 34. This group comprises the largest proportion among all the groups with the highest well-being (22.3%) and the lowest proportion among the groups with the lowest well-being (12.4%). These people have grown up in the restored state of Latvia and have been able to achieve optimum adaptation to the living conditions. On the other hand, those who belong to the age group from 65 to 74 have the lowest subjective well-being. Only 8.9% of all those with a high well-being can be found in this age group, while 21.3% of all the respondents with a low well-being belong to this age group. It is essential to note that 46.9% of all the respondents in this age group exhibit low well-being indicators and 19.6% – high indicators. There is a pronounced difference between the oldest and youngest population age groups in Latvia. However, among the young people themselves a contrast situation is formed. Within the age group from 18 to 24, 40.0% show high well-being indicators, and 30.1% have low well-being. Such a contrast can lead to unwelcome side effects and creates tensions between different sections of the society.

Base: all the respondents with low subjective well-being  $n = 315$ ; all the respondents with high subjective well-being  $n = 314$ .

Source: Aptauija par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību (LU SZF, 2016).

negative assertions (low subjective well-being) (see questionnaire C5).

Looking at the questions concerning the mastery of life and comparing the answers given by people with high and low subjective well-being characteristics, it becomes **obvious that life control skills are closely related to subjective well-being**. Box 7.18 illustrates the differences between the people with different well-being characteristics (respondents had to answer the question of whether they have a clear action plan for achieving specific goals).

The obtained data testify that people with low subjective well-being tend not to consider it necessary to improve their life skills. They more often have a negative attitude towards the strategies for improvement of their lives, and these respondents believe that they do not need improvement strategies. This suggests that a part of the society does not know what action is necessary to improve their subjective well-being.

Furthermore, based on the reviewed assertions of subjective well-being, it can be concluded that one subjectively prosperous life characteristic correlates

## Box 7.18

**Respondents with high and low subjective well-being: their answers to the question, whether they have a clear action plan for achieving specific goals (%)**

	High subjective well-being		Low subjective well-being	
	Definitely, yes	Not necessary	Definitely, yes	Not necessary
To obtain or supplement education	26.9%	31.0%	8.9%	54.8%
To improve welfare	22.8%	3.2%	5.1%	13.0%
To build professional career	21.6%	22.9%	4.8%	43.2%
To preserve or improve health	27.0%	5.7%	11.4%	12.7%
To gain new experiences in Latvia and abroad	24.4%	11.4%	9.2%	30.8%
To gain new social contacts	20.8%	15.8%	7.0%	35.7%
To build and strengthen the family	27.5%	18.7%	6.7%	43.5%
To expand the cultural competency	27.9%	9.2%	9.2%	35%

Base: all the respondents with high subjective well-being  $n = 315$ ; all the respondents with low subjective well-being  $n = 314$ .

Source: *Aptauja par iedzīvotāju dzīves meistarību un informācijpratību* (LU SZF, 2016).

with other characteristics. For example, those who believe that they have clear goals in life are more likely to indicate that each day of their lives is new and different. On the other hand, those who claim the contrary, note that every day in their lives is the same as the previous one. Such conclusions are not new and reaffirm: *to improve the well-being of the country, personal development strategies should be talked about in public*. Although the subjective assessments of life experiences and conclusions will always differ, there are certain scientific conclusions and recommendations that allow individuals to achieve a better quality of life. Dissemination and establishment of these conclusions in the society must be discussed at the official level. By improving subjective well-being individuals also improve their ability to focus and strive toward a goal, increase the desire of self-improvement and career building. These are skills that positively affect not only the subjective self-assessment of life, but also economic activity.

Increasing personal welfare presents the greatest difficulties to the society of Latvia. Answering the question about the least successful aspects of life, the most common answer is increasing of welfare. To the assertion "So far, I have been the least successful in implementing the plan to increase my welfare" 12.5% have responded, "Definitely, yes" and 41% "Probably, yes." Thus, more than half the population have faced personal welfare development problems. One reason is the complex or composite nature of welfare. There is no single life strategy that leads all people to equivalent high welfare conclusions. High welfare is a combination of various aspects and strategies that individuals must realize during their lifetime. These strategies include goals in life, and a

conscious ability to interpret life events in a positive light, acquisition of self-confidence, and positive social interaction with people. If one does not succeed in improving individual skills of prosperous life, the overall subjective well-being suffers.

The second main challenge to the residents of Latvia is "Maintenance or improvement of my health", 6.7% and 31.3% have indicated, respectively, "Definitely, yes" or "Probably, yes". This is followed by "Difficulty in achieving or improving my plans of a professional career." Responses of 7.0% "Definitely" and 26.0% "Probably" indicate a third challenge to Latvians.

The data show that **the level of subjective well-being also influences information literacy**: the respondents with a low subjective well being admit that they often do not know how to choose reliable sources of information, seldom trust specialists as sources of information, assess their web tool use skills lower, and have given answers indicating less frequently trying to critically evaluate information and use it practically. Insufficient information literacy skills may not be solely brought about by low subjective well-being, but these weak skills could be the reason – **the lack of these skills prevents a person from increasing subjective well-being**. As shown by the studies and the recommendations based therein, increasing and maintaining subjective well-being is a complex set of activities that requires regular improvement of a person's knowledge and education, care for health, new impressions, establishment of new social contacts, expanding cultural competency, and new achievements. All these activities require an individual to find relevant sources of information, critically evaluate and use



them. However, as shown by the study, a part of the population does not know how it could be done.

All of the aforementioned data are significant, and they should be borne in mind when creating welfare policy. However, it must be noted that these data are not directly comparable with the indicators of other countries, thus, it cannot be concluded that the subjective well-being situation in Latvia

should be particularly accentuated. For this purpose participation in international comparative studies such as the European Social Survey (European Social Survey, 2015) is required; or carrying out a study using the methodology approved in the national statistical offices and implemented in other European countries; or application of OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being (OECD, 2013).

## Greatest achievements. Most serious problems. Most important tasks.

### Greatest achievements

1. There is a good information and communication technology infrastructure in Latvia, making digital information easily and conveniently accessible. For example, Latvia has one of the fastest Internet connections in the world (Latvia is in the top ten with an Internet average speed of 16.9 Mb/s) (Internet Speeds by Country, 2016) and the Internet is used by 82.6% of the population (Centrālā statistikas pārvalde, 2016).
2. Latvia has relatively high assessments in the E-Government Development Index (United Nations, 2014). State, municipal and private institution e-services are provided, and their skilful use can greatly facilitate solving a variety of daily life issues and promoting the mastery of life.
3. People of Latvia have access to a diverse range of media with extensive options of use – print, electronically (available on different devices), which is useful for obtaining information in different spheres of life. An increasingly important role in obtaining information for daily use and guidance is through social media and news portals.
4. More public administration and institutions (including private and non-governmental organizations) are aware of the need to educate the population in different spheres of life. They have conducted research and developed both conceptual and strategic documents, as well as educational materials to improve information literacy.

### Most serious problems

1. Although people evaluate their own information literacy quite optimistically, **the study** data show that they lack skills and knowledge about several issues of information access, evaluation and creation in all the spheres relevant to life. These are:
  - critical evaluation of information sources,
  - checking information in several sources,
  - understanding of information,
  - comprehension and compliance with copyright requirements,
  - choice of information sources, and
  - qualitative assessment of information sources.
2. Information literacy of residents and the extent to which they are informed affects their mastery of life. The implementation of life plans in the spheres where information literacy assessment is lower (such as financial management, health maintenance and preservation) often has not been successful. The residents of Latvia do not have a sufficient mastery of life in the spheres of health, finances, family relationships and child-rearing, politics, professional career planning and education. It is attested by the self-assessment, knowledge and characterisation of the actions of the population obtained in the framework of **the current study**, as well as other studies conducted in Latvia. The insufficient information literacy level of the population has a negative impact on society as a whole (for example, by improper use of finances by the residents increases the costs of social assistance).

### Most important tasks

1. Mastering of information literacy necessary for everyday life should be ensured in non-formal and formal education settings, involving various institutions that work in the respective spheres of life, and preparing interactive informative materials, and teaching aids.
2. Reaching target audiences in various segments of the population, it is important to choose appropriate training forms and methods.
3. The training in media literacy and information literacy must be ensured at the level of secondary education, therefore, proficient teachers should be prepared.
4. Promoting a more intensive use of e-services, better quality and higher usability is needed, and the skills of the users in employing these services should be improved.
5. Internet social networks and mass media use should be promoted to form a more active civil society.



# Appendices

## Survey regarding mastery of life and information literacy of the population: technical information

### Goal of the study

To obtain data regarding mastery of life and information literacy of the population of Latvia.

### Survey performer and time period

The population survey was implemented from March 10 to May 29, 2016 by SIA "Aptauju centrs".

### Sample selection

Multistage stratified random sampling was used in the study, built according to the Latvian population as indicated in the Census 2011 data of the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (CSB). 1018 permanent Latvian residents aged 18 to 74 years were surveyed,

reflecting the composition of the Latvian adult population according to gender, age, nationality and place of residence.

The survey was conducted in 121 sample points in all regions of Latvia. The random route method was used in selection of respondents. Beginning at the starting address, interviews were conducted on the basis of the random walk principle. No more than 10 respondents were interviewed in one sample point. In selection of respondents, the principle of the 'youngest man' was used, which requires that the person carrying out the survey first of all asks after the youngest man in the family, if there is none, the next youngest member of the household, which corresponds to the target group, is asked to answer the questions of the survey.

### COMPARISON OF THE ACHIEVED SAMPLE WITH THE POPULATION STATISTICS

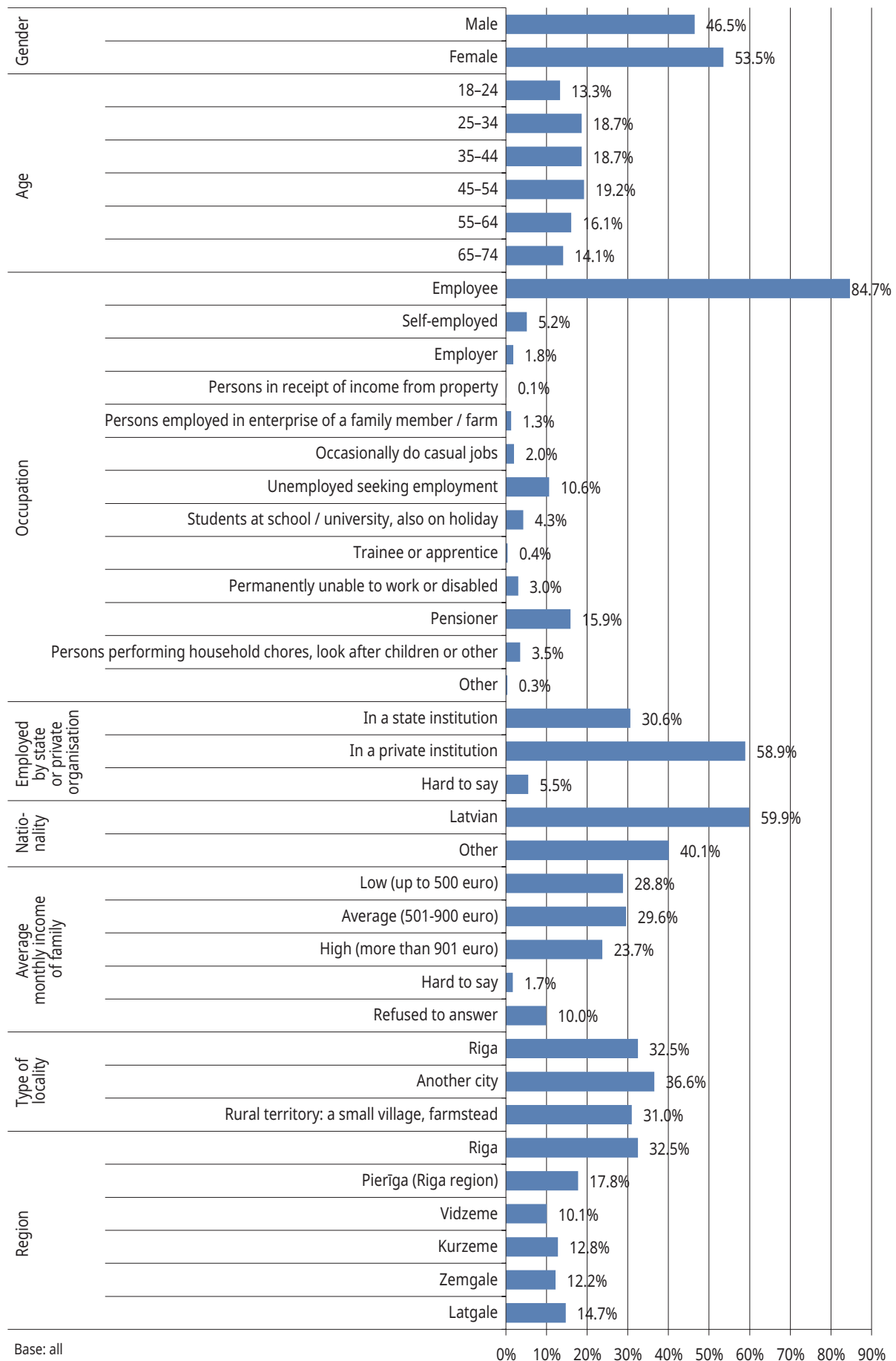
	The number of respondents in the sample (%) before weighing	The number of respondents in the sample (%) after weighing	Population statistics (CSB Census 2011 data)
<b>GENDER</b>			
Male	44.0%	46.5%	46.5%
Female	56.0%	53.5%	53.5%
<b>AGE</b>			
18-24	14.6%	13.3%	13.6%
25-34	19.7%	18.7%	18.3%
35-44	17.4%	18.7%	18.4%
45-54	18.6%	19.2%	19.5%
55-64	16.7%	16.1%	16.4%
65-74	13.0%	14.1%	13.9%
<b>NATIONALITY</b>			
Latvian	62.5%	59.9%	59.9%
Russian	32.5%	34.7%	40.1%
Other	5.0%	5.3%	

**COMPARISON OF THE ACHIEVED SAMPLE WITH THE POPULATION STATISTICS** (continued)

	The number of respondents in the sample (%) before weighing	The number of respondents in the sample (%) after weighing	Population statistics (CSB Census 2011 data)
<b>REGION</b>			
Riga	31.4%	325%	325%
Pierīga (Riga region)	17.8%	178%	178%
Vidzeme	10.6%	101%	101%
Kurzeme	12.7%	128%	128%
Zemgale	11.3%	122%	122%
Latgale	16.2%	147%	147%
<b>HIGHEST EDUCATION LEVEL</b>			
Unfinished basic education / has not studied	1.1%	1.0%	
Basic education	8.0%	7.9%	
Unfinished secondary; vocational education without secondary education	7.8%	8.7%	
Secondary education	19.5%	19.5%	
Special secondary; vocational with secondary	32.0%	32.3%	
Unfinished higher education (at least 2 full years)	7.2%	7.2%	
Bachelor's degree or equivalent education	10.9%	10.5%	
Master's degree or equivalent education	5.6%	4.9%	
Higher education obtained during Soviet time	7.5%	7.6%	
Doctoral degree	0.2%	0.1%	
NA	0.3%	0.2%	

At the achieved sample volume  $n = 1018$  the total error of the study is  $\pm 3.07\%$  with 95% probability level.

## SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS



## Survey method

Latvian population survey was conducted through face to face interviews, at the respondents' places of residence. Paper questionnaires in Latvian and Russian languages were used. Respondents were able to choose, in which language to answer questions. The average duration of an interview – 52 minutes.

The data were weighted by the following characteristics: the respondent's age, gender, region and ethnicity. The raw data used were the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia Census 2011 data.

The questions in the questionnaire were grouped according to seven topical spheres of life: education literacy, cultural literacy, family literacy, health literacy, political literacy, financial literacy and media literacy. Regarding each sphere, questions were asked about various recent activities and experience, awareness of different opportunities, self-assessment of skills, ways and channels of obtaining information.

In the section of education literacy, the respondents were asked to assess their skills to find and assess the information about opportunities to acquire education, various activities related to improving the knowledge in training courses or similar events, being informed as to whether it is possible to fully or partially reclaim the expenses of education from the state.

In the section of cultural literacy, the respondents were invited to assess their skills to find reliable information about cultural events, evaluate their quality and choose the options most relevant to oneself.

In the section of family literacy, the respondents had to evaluate their skills to care for and raise their children, cooperate, share the duties within the family, solve family budget matters, balance working and private life.

The section of health literacy included the questions about the extent of attention that people devote to their health, how accessible and understandable is the information about health preservation and healthy lifestyle matters, where is

this information usually obtained, how critically is it evaluated and whether it is used in making decisions.

In the section of political literacy, the respondents answered questions about e-service use, their skills to find reliable information about political parties, domestic and foreign policy issues.

In the section of financial literacy, the respondents were invited to assess their financial management skills, financial priorities, awareness to reclaim from the state the expenses of medical services.

The section of media literacy posed questions regarding respondents' skills to choose reliable media, assess their quality, characterising one's habits of mass media use.

In a separate group were provided the questions about everyday information literacy and general questions concerning all literacies – information acquisition habits (sources of information, their critical evaluation, synthesizing and use).

The questionnaire was concluded with questions about the mastery of life and the questions of demographic section. The questions about mastery of life were asked to establish whether there were clear action plans in various spheres of life (obtaining education, increasing welfare, health preservation and improvement, obtaining new experiences and social contacts, establishment and strengthening of family, and expanding cultural competency); how much attention is devoted to the realization of these plans; which plans interfere with implementation of other plans. The respondents were asked to use the scale of 1 to 5 to assess how meaningful or meaningless the world and their personal existence seemed to them, whether it has clear goals, whether they themselves are in control of their life, whether the daily tasks create joy and satisfaction.

The questions included in the demographic section allowed to obtain the data regarding the gender, age, education, employment, family status, religious affiliation and monthly income.

# Data tables

## A1. EDUCATION LITERACY

### A1.1.

**Within the last year, have you looked for information about opportunities to obtain or further your education?** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

Yes	31.4
No	68.6

### A1.2.

**How do you assess your skills regarding the following matters?**

(% of the respondents who have looked for information about opportunities to obtain or further their education,  $n = 320$ )

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
To find reliable information about the place of studies (institution, courses)	25.1	51.1	19.8	3.6	0.4
To select a study place (institution, courses) that corresponds to your interests	28.5	49.0	16.7	4.6	1.2
To evaluate the quality of the forthcoming training	15.4	52.7	25.3	5.5	1.0
To find learning tools	24.0	49.2	21.6	2.3	2.8
To plan your time for acquiring knowledge	20.5	45.8	28.5	4.7	0.6

### A1.3.

**Have you consulted specialists or your colleagues, as you looked for information about opportunities to acquire or further your education?**

(% of the respondents who have looked for information about opportunities to obtain or further their education,  $n = 320$ )

Yes	60.6
No	39.4

### A1.4.

**Within the last 12 months, have you furthered your knowledge in study courses or similar events?**

(% of the respondents who have looked for information about opportunities to obtain or further their education,  $n = 320$ )

I attended computer courses	6.5
I attended foreign language courses	11.1
I attended courses for obtaining a driving license (driver courses)	16.3
I attended courses or other training events in connection with my job, profession	33.0
I attended training courses and consultations organised by State Employment Agency	11.5
I attended events (workshops, seminars) organised for various creative activities	18.0
I attended courses or other training events in connection with my interests, hobby	17.0
Other	5.7
None of the above	24.7

**A1.5.**

**What were the main reasons why you have not learned or furthered your knowledge within the last year?** (% of the respondents who had not furthered their knowledge,  $n = 777$ )

No need	71.2
Occupation at work or studies in an educational institution	11.9
Occupation in household, caring for children and other family members	6.9
Prolonged illness	2.9
It is difficult to get to the study courses or events with public or private transport	1.6
High tuition fees or other significant expenditures in connection with the course or event attendance	7.4
I did not find a suitable place for studies	3.7
No interest	11.7
Other	4.4
Hard to answer / NA	2.6

**A1.6.**

**Can an income tax payer partially or completely recover the cost of his or her family members' educational expenses from the state?** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

Don't know	38.0
No	10.3
These expenses can be recovered, if the annual income declaration is completed	51.7

**A1.7.**

**Is it possible to partially or completely recover the costs of your own or your family members' education from the state?** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 526$ )

	Yes	No	Don't know
The costs of higher, all levels of vocational training and acquisition of specialty in educational institutions accredited by the Republic of Latvia or the European Union member states (including the costs of studies in preparatory units) ( <i>both in Latvia and EU countries</i> )	70.2	9.4	20.4
The costs of training for work, profession, occupation or craft to obtain and improve the necessary skills, as well as furthering one's knowledge ( <b><i>obtaining of new professional skills, profession acquisition or improvement</i></b> )	48.5	16.5	35.0
The costs of raising professional training level ( <i>improving an already obtained professional level</i> )	45.1	18.1	36.8
The costs of the part of the tuition fee used for travel costs to the place of studies and return, renting a tenement and the utilities used therein, as well as the subsistence during studies	21.3	36.1	42.6



## A2. CULTURAL LITERACY

### A2.1.

**How do you assess your skills regarding the following matters?** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor	Cannot assess
To find reliable information about cultural events	20.9	45.5	22.9	4.8	0.7	5.1
To assess the correspondence of cultural events to your interests	21.5	46.3	22.4	4.2	0.7	5.0
To assess the quality of cultural event	16.1	47.2	24.0	5.5	1.4	5.7
To choose, which of the cultural events should be attended	23.1	46.8	21.3	3.9	0.5	4.5
To choose, which film to watch	29.9	48.8	17.2	1.5	0.4	2.3
To choose a book to purchase	19.6	37.9	19.0	3.9	1.1	18.4
To choose a music record to purchase	19.1	36.1	19.1	5.0	0.8	19.9

### A2.2.

**Within the last 12 months, have you sought information about opportunities for active leisure (such as participation in courses or a hobby group, amateur collective, etc.)?**

(% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

Yes	31.6
No	63.4
Hard to say / not relevant	5.0

### A2.3.

**The last cultural event I attended was recommended to me by** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

Husband/wife	14.6
My mother	1.9
My father	0.2
My friend	22.4
Nobody	33.5
Someone else	7.2
I do not attend cultural events	20.1

### A2.4.

**The last book I read was recommended to me by** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

Husband/wife	4.3
My mother	2.3
My father	0.4
My friend	7.4
Librarian	6.0
Nobody	42.9
Someone else	5.1
I do not read books	31.6

### A3. FAMILY LITERACY

#### A3.1.

**Do you have children under age 18?** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

Yes	28.4
No	71.6

#### A3.2.

**How do you assess your skills regarding the following matters?**

(% of all the respondents with children under age 18,  $n = 289$ )

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor
To care of your children	33.4	58.5	7.0	1.2
To raise your children	29.1	60.2	9.1	1.6
To cooperate with other family members in raising and caring for the children	26.4	59.3	12.0	2.3
To cooperate with preschool and school teachers in raising and caring for the children	20.3	57.0	20.2	2.5
To build cooperation with a child	29.9	55.5	13.9	0.7
To influence the interaction of a child with family members	20.3	62.8	16.2	0.7
To influence the interaction of a child with preschool and school teachers	19.7	49.4	28.4	2.5
To influence the interaction of a child with his or her peers	13.4	54.1	28.2	4.3

#### A3.3.

**How do you assess your skills regarding the following matters?** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor	Not necessary
To ensure fair division of duties within family	13.2	49.1	20.1	3.8	0.6	13.3
To cooperate with husband/wife, partner	14.9	43.7	11.4	2.3	0.7	27.0
To cooperate with your parents	12.1	37.7	11.6	2.2	0.9	35.5
To solve psychological conflicts of the family	7.4	40.6	25.6	5.4	1.5	19.5
To organise shared events for family	17.5	47.0	19.2	3.2	1.2	12.0
To solve family budget issues	16.4	48.0	21.1	4.7	0.7	9.2
To make purchases or order services	23.7	53.6	18.0	1.1	0.4	3.2
To reconcile working and private life	13.6	45.0	16.7	2.9	0.6	21.1

#### A3.4.

**Which main factors imposed a burden on your family relationship?** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

Being occupied at work or studies at an educational institution	22.0
Being occupied with household chores	5.4
Prolonged illness	5.1
Lack of resources	21.7
Insufficient knowledge	3.3
Insufficient aptitude	3.3
Relationship outside family	3.4
Other	4.5
No factors imposed a burden on family relationship	50.8

## A4. HEALTH LITERACY

### A4.1.

**How would you assess your overall health condition? Would you say that it is ...?**

(% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

Very good	12.5
Rather good	33.6
Average	38.4
Rather poor	12.6
Very poor	2.2
Don't know / no answer	0.7

### A4.2.

**When have you last measured** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

	Within the last year	2-3 years ago	4-5 years ago	6 or more years ago	Don't remember/ don't know
Blood pressure	71.8	13.3	2.3	1.3	11.3
Cholesterol level in blood	46.8	19.7	4.1	2.2	27.3
Blood sugar level	48.4	19.2	3.8	2.2	26.4

### A4.3.

**How often do you weigh yourself?** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

I have no need to weigh myself	34.8
At least once a week	12.9
At least once a month	20.9
At least once a year	21.6
I should weigh myself, but I don't do that	9.7

### A4.4.

**Do you think that your physical activity is sufficient?** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

Yes, I have high physical activity at work	32.4
Yes, I regularly attend high-intensity workouts	13.8
I try to perform a variety of physical activities, but my physical activity is not sufficient	30.1
Although it would be necessary, I do not try to perform physical activities	23.7

### A4.5.

**Have you started to use a new analgesic or anti-inflammatory non-prescription medicine within the last three months?** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

Yes	18.5
No	81.5

**A4.6.****Where did you obtain the information about this particular non-prescription medicine?**

(% of those respondents, who had started to use a new analgesic or anti-inflammatory non-prescription medicine within the last three months,  $n = 188$ )

Recommendation by general practitioner	41.6
From an advertisement in a magazine	2.5
From an advertisement on TV	3.9
From an advertisement on the Internet	1.3
On Internet social networks	28.8
Recommended by a pharmacy employer	13.4
Recommended by a family member, neighbour, colleague at work	5.8
Other	2.9

**A4.7.****Have you used the assistance of psychics or healers to solve medical problems?**

(% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

Yes	13.0
No	87.0

**A4.8.****As you read instructions or informative materials available in hospitals and pharmacies, you conclude that** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Font size is too small to read the information	27.5	16.5	25.7	30.2
There are symbols and words you don't know	19.0	21.2	35.1	24.8
The content is too complicated for you	22.5	27.8	29.9	19.8
A long time is required to read and comprehend the information	26.8	25.2	27.7	20.3
You must ask someone's assistance to read this information for you	51.2	21.1	17.6	10.1

**A4.9.****When the doctor prescribes you an examination or gives a diagnosis, you ...**

(% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Gather information about the examination or diagnosis from various sources	30.4	23.0	27.2	19.4
Eventually you obtain the information you need	16.6	15.4	30.9	37.1
You comprehend the information you have obtained	11.8	11.2	29.5	47.5
You share your reflections about the diagnosis or prescribed examinations with someone	21.4	24.6	33.1	20.8
You use the obtained information in your everyday life	16.7	21.4	34.2	27.7
You evaluate whether the obtained information is relevant to your situation	14.2	19.7	30.8	35.2
You assess the reliability of the obtained information I	18.2	19.4	31.0	31.4
You check whether the obtained information is well-founded and trustworthy	22.0	20.8	30.8	26.3
You aggregate the obtained information to take decisions related to your health	21.0	18.2	29.6	31.2

## A5. POLITICAL LITERACY

### A5.1.

**Within the last six months, have you used e-services provided by state or local government institutions** (for example, those available in the portal *Latvija.lv* or the services of Road Traffic Safety Directorate; State Revenue Service electronic declaration system, have sent electronically signed documents, requested a certificate or statement, declared place of residence electronically)? (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

Yes	46.7
No	53.3

### A5.2.

**What are the obstacles that most often discourage you from the use of e-services provided by public authorities?** (% of those respondents, who replied that they had not used e-services provided by state or local government institutions,  $n = 542$ )

There are no particular obstacles	40.3
I have no access to Internet	14.9
I do not have sufficient knowledge	17.5
I do not have sufficient skills	16.3
I do not trust e-services	8.1
Use of e-services is incomprehensible and inconvenient	13.7
Other reason	10.5
Hard to say / NA	1.6

### A5.3.

**How do you assess your skills regarding the following matters?**

(% of all the respondents (questions only to citizens of Latvia),  $n = 890$ )

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
Ability to assess party candidates before election	3.7	21.1	41.9	21.1	12.2
Ability to assess party programmes before election	2.8	18.5	35.8	26.9	15.9
Ability to find reliable information about the impact of particular political decisions on yourself or your family	2.1	17.7	37.6	27.7	14.9
Ability to find reliable information about the impact of particular political decisions on development of Latvia	2.2	16.3	38.5	27.3	15.8
find reliable information about the impact of your local government's decisions on yourself or your family	2.5	23.0	38.5	23.4	12.5
Ability to find reliable information about foreign policy issues	2.5	18.0	37.2	26.6	15.7
Ability to find reliable information about preparation and passing of political decisions	1.7	14.1	35.8	29.7	18.6

### A5.4.

**Does your participation in parliamentary or local government elections influence their outcome?**

(% of all the respondents (questions only to citizens of Latvia),  $n = 890$ )

Yes	40.9
No	59.1

**A5.5.**

**How often does the political situation in Latvia seem so complicated that you really do not understand what is going on?** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

Never	8.8
Rarely	24.9
Often	34.3
Almost always	19.1
Don't know / no answer	12.8

**A5.6.**

**What were the main obstacles to your better understanding of the political situation in Latvia?** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

Being occupied at work or studies at an educational institution	12.0
Being occupied with household chores	5.5
Insufficient knowledge	22.1
Insufficient aptitude	9.8
I am not interested in politics	45.8
Other	6.9
There were no obstacles	21.0

**A5.7.**

**Which institution can revoke the decision of the Constitutional Court?** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

The Cabinet of Ministers	8.8
The President of the state	18.7
None of the institutions in Latvia	27.2
Don't know / no answer	45.3

**A6. FINANCIAL LITERACY****A6.1. 1.**

**How do you assess your skills regarding the following matters?** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
Keeping track of your expenditure	28.5	47.7	21.0	2.5	0.2
Keeping track of your income	32.7	51.4	14.4	1.2	0.2
Covering your monthly costs	22.2	47.9	23.1	5.9	0.9
Using the benefits, tax incentives	12.4	26.8	33.3	22.0	5.5
Defending your rights as a consumer	13.2	25.1	33.8	21.2	6.7



**A6.1. 2.****How do you assess your skills regarding the following matters?**(% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

	I have not used this type of service	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
Assessing the bank loan (study or consumer credit, mortgage, etc.) conditions	51.3	9.2	18.2	13.6	5.6	2.0
Assessing non-bank creditor ("quick loans", and similar) loan conditions	58.5	7.2	14.7	10.0	6.9	2.7
Assessing the financial risks or possible losses incurred by the pawnshops and other types of pledges	65.3	6.2	9.3	9.4	6.5	3.3
Assessing the goods/services finance lease conditions	47.6	10.7	21.4	12.3	5.5	2.5

**A6.2.****How do you create savings?** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

I save regularly, putting away a particular sum of money for that purpose weekly / monthly	12.8
I save occasionally, putting away different sums of money at my own discretion	15.3
I spend one type of income (for example, salary) and save other income (for example, the revenue from renting out an apartment)	2.0
We save the income of one family member and spend the income of another family member	2.4
I save what is left over at the end of the month	19.2
I don't save	47.7
Other	0.6

**A6.3.****Do you control the profitability of your second level pension savings?** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

I don't have a second level pension account	22.0
I control the profitability of my investments annually	5.8
I control the profitability of my investments once in two or three years	5.3
More seldom	6.9
I do not control it	59.9

**A6.4.****What are your three current financial priorities?** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

To pay the bills	83.9
To put money aside for emergencies (illness, accidents, etc.)	36.6
To live as well as possible on the existing means	44.6
To safeguard my family in case of sickness / incapacity for work	21.5
Credit / debt repayment	19.3
To save for old age	8.9
To pass the money / savings on to one's children / grandchildren	7.7
To purchase property (apartment, house, land)	9.0
Other	4.0
I do not have any priorities	7.3
I don't know	2.1

**A6.5.**

**If you / your household were suddenly deprived of its main source of income, how long would you be able to cover all the expenses from savings (without borrowing from relatives / friends, using unemployment benefits, etc.)?**

(% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

Approximately a week	14.9
At least a week but not a month	15.3
At least one month but not three months	26.0
At least three months but not six months	13.9
More than six months	8.7
I don't know	21.0

**A6.6.**

**How often within the last three months have you sought information about the following matters?**

(% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

	Once a week or more often	Several times a month	Approximately once a month	Once or twice within three months	I have not sought this information	Hard to say / NA
Opportunities to build a professional career	3.8	5.1	5.9	8.4	72.0	4.8
Events and processes in the economy of Latvia	9.1	5.8	7.8	8.2	63.4	5.7

**A6.7.**

**Can income tax payers partially or completely recover the expenses of medical services used by themselves or their family members from the state?** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

I don't know	26.8
No	5.4
These expenses can be recovered, if the resident's annual income tax declaration is completed	67.8

**A6.8.**

**Is it possible to partially or completely recover the expenses of medical services used by themselves or their family members from the state? The types of expenses**

(% of those respondents, who responded in affirmative that an income tax payer can partially or completely recover the expenses of medical services used by themselves or their family members from the state,  $n = 690$ )

	Yes	No	I don't know
The costs of those health services not covered by the state-funded health care	64.4	9.5	26.2
The paid patient contributions	64.6	12.6	22.8
The costs of treatment in rehabilitation facilities	55.6	11.9	32.4
The cost of medical supplies (medical products, medicines and vitamins), medical equipment and the purchase of goods, which are not covered by the state-funded health care	28.6	39.4	32.0
Dental services, including full compensation of expenses related to dental prostheses	73.2	12.4	14.4

## A7. MEDIA LITERACY

### A7.1.

**How do you assess your skills regarding the following matters?** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor	The question does not concern me ( I do not read, watch, use)
To choose a newspaper relevant to my interests	22.9	46.1	7.9	1.4	0.8	20.9
To choose a magazine relevant to my interests	27.4	46.4	8.6	1.6	0.3	15.6
To choose a radio station relevant to my interests	30.2	50.6	8.2	1.1	0.1	9.9
To choose a TV channel relevant to my interests	37.8	52.1	4.8	0.4	0.2	4.8
To choose a news portal relevant to my interests	26.8	44.9	10.3	2.7	1.1	14.2
To evaluate the quality of the medium	13.1	37.7	33.8	7.3	1.7	6.3
To evaluate particular journalists	9.9	27.4	31.4	15.2	4.0	12.1
To assess the credibility of the facts published by mass media	10.7	28.4	36.2	12.2	3.0	9.5

### A7.2.

**Is it easy for you to choose, which TV channel to watch?** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

Very difficult	0.7
Difficult	1.3
Neither difficult nor easy	17.1
Easy	40.4
Very easy	35.5
I don't watch TV	5.1

### A7.3.

**Which assertions characterise your habits of mass media use most accurately?**  
(% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

I most often use (read, listen to, watch) only my favourite mass media	50.9
I basically use my favourite sources, but now and then look into the offer of other mass media	41.9
I do not regularly use any particular media, as I prefer to explore new ones	7.3

### A7.4.

**How often do you compare the information provided in various mass media?**  
(% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

Always	8.7
Almost always	11.2
Often	22.2
Rarely	36.6
Practically never	21.3

**A7.5.****You use mass media...** (% of all the respondents, *n* = 1018)

Only in my native language	31.0
I use media in my native language more often, but comparatively seldom – in foreign languages	45.3
I use media equally often in my native and foreign languages	21.6
I use media in foreign languages more often, but in my native language – comparatively seldom	1.5
Only in foreign languages	0.5

**A8. EVERYDAY INFORMATION LITERACY****A8.1.****Please, assess your habits related to obtaining the information necessary in daily life**(% of all the respondents, *n* = 1018)

	Definitely agree	Agree	Disagree	Definitely disagree	Hard to say/ NA
Most often, I understand what information I require	35.8	59.3	2.1	0.5	2.3
Most often, I obtain the necessary information with assistance of personally known people – family members, friends, colleagues	12.8	45.8	29.8	8.1	3.4
I trust only specialists	9.8	36.8	37.4	6.8	9.2
When searching for information by using Internet search engines, I usually choose one of the first three sources offered	6.8	28.3	32.8	9.5	22.5
I know how to choose reliable sources of information	13.1	59.0	12.7	0.9	14.3
I try to critically assess the information I have found	16.5	57.8	17.0	2.3	6.4
There is so much information that it is hard to choose the most appropriate	13.2	46.8	30.4	4.7	4.9
Synthesizing and holding/storing the found information is difficult to me	4.2	21.0	48.8	16.7	9.3
Most often, I look for information only in my native language	22.7	40.2	27.6	5.8	3.7
I know how to use the obtained information practically	15.9	63.1	10.7	0.7	9.7
Finding information is hindered by my insufficient knowledge of foreign languages	9.3	34.4	36.6	12.7	7.1
I try to find the answers, using various sources of information	17.0	62.3	13.1	1.8	5.9
I willingly share the found information and help others	20.2	58.5	11.6	2.2	7.5

**A8.2.****How often do you have difficulties to synthesize and store the found information and to find it again later?** (% of all the respondents, *n* = 1018)

Always	1.1
Almost always	5.4
Practically never	29.8
Never	24.4
Hard to say	11.9
I do not synthesize information	27.4

## B. GENERAL QUESTIONS (ALL LITERACIES)

### B1.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement that you know where to find reliable information regarding the following matters? (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

	Definitely agree	Probably agree	Probably disagree	Definitely disagree	Don't know / NA	This information is not necessary
Health preservation or improvement	22.3	51.8	13.0	2.7	1.9	8.3
Management of personal finances	16.5	39.3	17.0	4.2	2.2	20.9
Culture and entertainment opportunities	30.5	49.6	7.6	1.2	1.2	9.9
Services of public administration institutions	19.6	48.2	18.3	2.2	2.4	9.3
Forming family relations	12.8	33.2	11.2	2.0	3.2	37.6
Child-raising and education	14.2	32.3	5.8	1.3	1.8	44.7
Professional career building opportunities	13.3	33.4	9.5	2.5	1.5	39.9
Opportunities for acquiring or furthering education	16.3	37.2	6.1	1.9	1.2	37.3

### B2.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement that you have no difficulty to comprehend information about the following matters? (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

	Definitely agree	Probably agree	Probably disagree	Definitely disagree	Don't know / NA	This information is not necessary
Health preservation or improvement	29.3	50.3	10.7	1.9	1.2	6.6
Management of personal finances	22.4	40.8	14.6	2.3	1.9	18.1
Culture and entertainment opportunities	37.5	45.2	5.2	1.1	1.1	9.9
Services of public administration institutions	22.7	45.4	17.9	3.0	1.5	9.5
Forming family relations	21.5	33.4	6.9	1.1	1.9	35.2
Child-raising and education	19.6	30.8	4.2	0.7	2.0	42.8
Professional career building opportunities	18.6	32.4	7.4	1.8	1.6	38.2
Opportunities for acquiring or furthering education	20.7	33.8	5.7	1.5	1.5	36.9

### B3.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement that you know how to use the found information about the following matters? (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

	Definitely agree	Probably agree	Probably disagree	Definitely disagree	Don't know / NA	This information is not necessary
Health preservation or improvement	32.3	53.4	5.9	0.7	1.4	6.3
Management of personal finances	24.5	43.0	9.5	1.6	1.6	19.7
Culture and entertainment opportunities	38.6	46.6	3.9	0.2	1.1	9.6
Services of public administration institutions	25.2	50.5	11.8	1.3	1.4	9.8
Forming family relations	21.3	34.5	6.0	0.4	2.3	35.5
Child-raising and education	18.8	32.2	3.1	0.3	1.5	44.1
Professional career building opportunities	19.0	32.7	6.2	0.8	1.3	40.0
Opportunities for acquiring or furthering education	21.6	34.2	4.5	1.1	1.1	37.6

## B4.

**Where did you last obtain the most useful information for you regarding the following matters?**(% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

	Personally known people – family, friends, colleagues	Consulting state, local government, non-governmental or commercial organisation specialists	In mass media	State, local government organisations' webpages	Non-governmental or commercial organisations' webpages	Internet social networks	Other	I have not sought such information
Health preservation or improvement	21.2	27.0	8.5	1.3	1.1	13.3	16.2	11.4
Management of personal finances	15.0	13.0	6.5	3.2	2.6	9.4	8.1	42.3
Culture and entertainment opportunities	23.7	2.5	22.6	2.6	2.0	26.9	3.7	16.1
Services of public administration institutions	8.7	18.1	9.6	25.6	2.1	14.2	2.7	19.0
Services of your local government	9.2	17.3	9.3	25.1	2.1	12.9	2.4	21.7
Forming family relations	15.2	1.4	6.3	0.9	1.6	13.4	5.1	56.1
Child-raising and education	13.6	2.3	5.7	2.4	1.3	12.5	4.9	57.4
Professional career building opportunities	7.2	6.6	5.4	3.6	3.0	16.7	6.4	51.2
Opportunities for acquiring or furthering education	5.8	7.6	5.2	4.8	3.2	21.3	5.2	47.0

## B5.

**How do you assess your skills to find information regarding the following matters?**(% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor	Don't know / NA
Services of public administration institutions (e.g., The State Social Insurance Agency, the Road Traffic Safety Directorate, the State Revenue Service)	7.1	34.0	37.0	14.3	4.1	3.4
Services provided by your local government	7.1	34.6	38.3	14.7	2.1	3.2
Political events in Latvia	4.2	28.2	40.1	18.1	6.7	2.7
Political events in the world	4.2	26.0	40.6	18.6	7.5	3.0
Health preservation or improvement	6.2	45.0	37.1	6.8	0.6	4.4
Acquiring or furthering education (about educational institutions, study courses, opportunity to obtain professional qualification, etc.)	5.6	32.9	22.8	10.5	5.5	22.8
Management of your finances	8.4	42.9	28.1	7.3	1.5	11.8
Purchase of goods or services	17.7	57.6	20.3	1.8	0.2	2.4
Forming family relations	9.5	43.2	19.2	4.1	1.0	23.0
Child-raising and education	8.9	38.1	17.3	4.3	1.4	29.8
Culture and entertainment opportunities	16.7	48.9	21.4	3.6	1.5	7.8
Professional career development opportunities	7.2	32.8	20.6	8.6	4.5	26.2
Opportunities to improve personal or family's welfare	7.8	37.9	30.8	8.7	1.7	13.2
Events and processes in economics of Latvia	3.8	22.5	39.2	18.6	7.0	8.9



**C. MASTERY OF LIFE****C1.****I have a clear action plan regarding** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

	Definitely yes	Probably yes	Probably no	Definitely no	It is not necessary
Obtaining or furthering education	15.8	25.3	11.0	4.1	43.9
Welfare improvement	13.7	43.6	27.3	7.7	7.6
Career building	12.1	28.5	17.1	7.9	34.4
Health preservation or improvement	18.9	56.8	12.9	2.4	8.9
To gain new experiences (in Latvia and abroad)	15.3	41.5	17.0	4.1	22.1
To acquire new social contacts	12.0	40.7	16.4	4.2	26.8
To establish or strengthen family	16.0	42.9	9.1	2.9	29.1
To expand cultural competency	15.5	50.2	10.3	2.6	21.4

**C2.****Failure to implement which plan hinders execution of other plans most significantly?**(% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

Plan of obtaining or furthering education	7.5
Welfare improvement plan	47.1
Career building plan	12.1
Health preservation or improvement plan	21.0
Plan to gain new experiences	3.7
Plan to acquire new friends	1.7
Plan to establish or strengthen family	5.1
Plan to expand cultural competency	1.5
NA	0.2

**C3.****I regularly devote attention to the following spheres of life** (% of all the respondents,  $n = 1018$ )

	Definitely yes	Probably yes	Probably no	Definitely no	It is not necessary
Obtaining or furthering education	11.9	23.4	19.3	7.2	38.1
Welfare improvement	25.2	55.3	12.3	3.0	4.2
Career building	11.8	33.7	14.6	5.5	34.5
Health preservation or improvement	27.3	54.6	10.6	1.3	6.3
Gaining new experiences (in Latvia and abroad)	14.7	48.1	18.1	4.0	15.0
Acquiring new social contacts	9.8	36.7	26.3	6.1	21.1
Establishing or strengthening family	18.6	40.1	10.7	3.9	26.7
Expanding cultural competency	11.7	49.8	18.8	3.1	16.5

## C4.

## So far, I have had the least success in implementation of these plans

	Definitely yes	Probably yes	Probably no	Definitely no	Had no plans like that
My educational plan	5.6	19.1	25.0	16.3	33.9
My welfare improvement plan	12.5	41.0	30.0	7.3	9.1
My career building plan	7.0	26.0	24.8	9.8	32.4
My health preservation or improvement plan	6.7	31.3	38.2	12.4	11.4
My plan to gain new experiences	4.5	23.0	36.0	13.7	22.8
My plan to acquire new social contacts	4.1	16.0	34.6	13.5	31.8
My plan to establish or strengthen family	7.8	20.7	29.0	16.6	25.9
My plan to expand cultural competency	4.8	20.3	35.8	15.3	23.8

## C5.

## How accurately are your feelings at the moment characterized by the following statements?

(Assessment on the scale from 1 to 5) (% of all the respondents, n = 1018)

	1 entirely new and different	2	3	4	5 exactly the same as the previous one
Each day of mine is	12.1	20.0	34.3	16.0	17.5
In my life, I	1 have clear goals	2	3	4	5 have no goals
	26.1	32.0	27.2	8.8	5.9
Most often, I am	1 full of enthusiasm	2	3	4	5 bored
	23.3	30.9	34.3	7.2	4.2
If I had a choice, I would prefer	1 to live nine more lives like my current one	2	3	4	5 not to be born
	15.3	33.7	40.4	6.5	4.1
My personal existence is	1 meaningful	2	3	4	5 entirely meaningless
	29.1	37.9	26.8	4.4	1.8
Everyday tasks	1 bring me joy or satisfaction	2	3	4	5 bore or disappoint me
	19.0	36.8	34.1	7.2	2.9
I am	1 very responsible	2	3	4	5 entirely irresponsible
	36.8	37.9	21.8	2.9	0.5
My life	1 is fully controlled by myself	2	3	4	5 is fully controlled by external factors
	26.6	31.1	28.4	10.2	3.6
Evaluating my life, the world to me is	1 meaningful	2	3	4	5 entirely incomprehensible
	20.6	34.3	36.2	6.5	2.4
My main goals in life	1 I have achieved	2	3	4	5 I have not achieved
	9.2	23.4	40.1	17.2	10.0

# The Human Development Index and statistical tables

The first Human Development Index (HDI) was published in the 1990 Human Development Report, and ever since then it has been of much interest among politicians, journalists and scholars. There have always been discussions about the components of HDI and about the way in which it is calculated. The HDI calculation method and the choice of indicators is continuously improved and altered since 1990.

For the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of HDI, that came on 2010, the criticisms and discussions about the calculation methods were summarised and the indicators upon which the index is based and the calculation method were changed. More detailed information about these

changes can be found at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev>.

The HDI is a combined indicator which helps to evaluate long term progress in three major areas of human development – health, education and income. The HDI clearly shows that development involves more than merely economic growth.

Detailed information about the method of HDI calculation can be found at

[http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2015\\_technical\\_notes.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2015_technical_notes.pdf).

The following table shows how the method for calculating the HDI has changed over time..

Period	Indicators			Calculation method
	Health	Education	Income	
1990	Life expectancy at birth	Proportion of literate individuals among people aged 25+	Real per capita GDP PPP \$ (log)	Arithmetic average
1991–1994		(2/3) Proportion of literate people among adults (1/3) Average years spent obtaining an education	Real per capita GDP PPP \$ (adapted)	
1995–1998		(2/3) Proportion of literate people among adults (1/3) Proportion of attendees at educational institutions at all levels		
1999		(2/3) Proportion of literate people among adults (1/3) Proportion of attendees at educational institutions at all levels	Real per capita GDP PPP \$ (log)	
2000–2009		(2/3) Proportion of literate people among adults (1/3) Proportion of attendees at educational institutions at all levels		
2010–2012		(2/3) Average years spent obtaining an education (1/3) Expected number of years to be spent obtaining education	Real per capita GNP PPP \$ (In)	Geometric average

Until 2010, the HDI was calculated on the basis of a simple arithmetic average from indicators describing health, education and income. In 2010, the structure of three dimensions for the index was preserved, but new indicators were chosen for the segments of income and education, and the calculation method was changed from the arithmetic average to the geometric average. The arithmetic average method allows low achievements in one dimension to be compensated with high achievements in another. The geometric average method reduces likelihood of replacing the various

dimensions in the index with one another, and it offers a more adequate reflection of the actual situation.

As of 1913, the HDI published in Human Development reports is no longer comparable with the indexes published in previous reports because of the differences in the calculation methodology.

Due to the changes in the HDI calculation method and choice of indicators, we have republished Latvia's HDI from the Human Development Report of 2015. The full text of the report can be found at [http://issuu.com/undp/docs/hdr\\_2015\\_en](http://issuu.com/undp/docs/hdr_2015_en).

## Human Development Index: Latvia

	Ranking in HDR 2013	Human Development Index	Life expectancy at birth, years	Average no. of years in education	Expected no. of years in education	Real per capita GNP (PPP 2005 \$)
2014	46	<b>0.819</b>	74.2	11.5	15.2	22 281

The internationally comparable data that are used to calculate the HDI come from the following sources of information:

- per capita gross national product from the World Development Indicator database of the World Bank (2014);
- the average amount of time spent in education and the expected amount of time to be spent in education (2014);
- the expected lifespan of newborns from the 2011 revised report of UNDESA Global Resident Perspective 1950–2050 (UNDESA, 2011).

Information in the Human Development Report 2015 shows that in the period from 1980 to 2014 Latvia's HDI has risen from 0.675 to 0.819 annually, placing Latvia in the 46<sup>th</sup> place among 188 countries of the world. More detailed information about this can be found at <http://report.hdr.undp.org/>.

The next table shows the changes in each of the HDI indicator value. This information comes from the publication Human Development Report 2015 and is not comparable to the Central Statistical Bureau's information. Life expectancy has increased by 5.1 years, the average number of years in education – by 5.2 years, but the estimated number of years to be spent in education – by 1.9 years.

	Life expectancy at birth, years	Expected no. of years to be spent in education	Average no. of years in education	Real per capita GNP (PPP 2011 \$)	Human Development Index
1980	69.1	13.3	6.3	...	...
1985	69.9	13.5	6.9	...	...
1990	69.0	12.7	7.5	10 081	0.693
1995	68.6	11.6	8.8	6 147	0.673
2000	70.6	14.2	9.4	8 518	0.732
2005	71.8	15.6	10.4	12 870	0.784
2010	73.0	15.0	11.5	13 793	0.802
2011	73.3	15.0	11.5	14 293	0.805
2012	73.6	14.8	11.5	14 724	0.814
2014	74.2	15.2	11.5	22 281	0.819

Tables of indicators related to human development have been prepared in accordance with the indicators of the UN Development Program (UNDP). The following 18 statistical tables feature the information about the main aspects of human development. The tables reflect the most important indicators in describing social processes: health, education, the environment, employment, etc. The source of information is data from the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB), supplemented as necessary with data from government ministries and institutions, as well as international organisations.

The statistical information in the tables is based on international methodologies. Since 2000, some of the indicators in the tables have been redefined, with new methodologies and classifications. Information has been reviewed, and data have accordingly been adjusted for the entire period. The data tables also use data from random cohort studies conducted by CSB and other institutions. In the tables calculated according to population, the information is converted according to the results of 2011 Census. Information in the tables is based on the Central Statistical Bureau data at September 1, 2016.

## Human development

	Life expectancy at birth, years	Maternal mortality		Number of inhabitants per physician	Enrolment at all levels of education, % of those aged 7-23	Higher education students % of those aged 19-23		Per capita GDP, PPP <sup>1</sup>
		per 100 000 live births <sup>0</sup>	number of cases			Total	Women	
2000	70.2	24.8	5	289	86.3	62.4	79.8	...
2001	69.9	25.4	5	300	88.2	68.3	85.4	...
2002	70.2	5.0	1	290	89.6	73.0	91.7	...
2003	70.7	14.3	3	289	90.9	76.2	96.6	...
2004	71.0	9.8	2	278	91.6	76.4	98.3	5200
2005	70.7	4.6	1	271	91.1	75.7	97.8	6100
2006	70.6	13.5	3	267	90.0	73.7	96.3	7800
2007	70.8	25.8	6	270	89.3	72.1	95.0	10300
2008	72.0	12.5	3	257	89.2	71.0	92.7	11200
2009	72.7	46.1	10	266	88.1	65.6	84.4	8700
2010	73.1	26.1	5	262	88.5	63.7	79.4	8500
2011	73.7	5.4	1	259	89.0	63.5	77.4	9800
2012	74.0	20.5	4	255	90.3	64.9	78.7	10 800
2013	74.2	24.7	5	250	91.4	65.6	77.6	11 300
2014	74.3	14.0	3	251	93.4	67.9	83.0	11 800
2015	74.7	55.2	12	250	96.2	72.9	88.7	12 300

<sup>1</sup> Source: European Union Statistical Bureau homepage:

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tec00001&plugin=1>

Data recalculated after 2011 Census.

## Human distress

	Unemployed people as % of economically active residents	Unemployed people with basic school or lower education aged 25-64, % <sup>1</sup>	Proportion in income between 20% of richest and 20% of poorest residents	Annual inflation rate in comparison to previous year, %	Deaths in traffic accidents per 100 000 residents	Divorces as % of marriages	Children born out of wedlock, % of all children	Suicides per 100 000 residents		Per capita SO <sub>2</sub> emissions from stationary sources, kg per resident <sup>2</sup>	Slāpekļa (NOx) emissions from stationary sources, kg per resident <sup>2</sup>
								Men	Women		
2000	8.7	...	5.5	102.6	25	66.6	40.4	56.3	11.8	5.1	3.5
2001	8.3	...	...	102.5	22	62.0	42.1	52.3	11.2	3.8	3.7
2002	7.7	...	...	101.9	22	61.1	43.1	49.0	12.0	3.3	4.0
2003	7.2	...	...	102.9	22	48.3	44.3	45.8	9.8	2.6	4.5
2004	7.3	15.9	6.2	106.2	23	50.8	45.3	43.7	8.6	2.0	3.9
2005	6.2	14.2	6.7	106.7	20	50.6	44.7	43.1	9.8	1.4	4.3
2006	4.5	12.7	5.8	106.5	18	49.6	43.8	39.9	6.7	0.9	4.8
2007	4.0	9.4	6.5	110.1	19	47.8	43.2	35.3	7.9	0.8	4.7
2008	5.2	13.0	6.7	115.4	15	48.0	43.2	42.4	8.4	0.5	3.7
2009	11.5	26.5	6.5	103.5	12	51.4	43.5	41.9	8.5	0.5	3.4
2010	12.6	29.1	6.2	98.9	12	53.1	44.4	39.1	5.4	0.7	4.0
2011	10.4	27.5	6.2	104.4	10	77.2	44.6	38.8	6.7	0.5	4.1
2012	9.9	22.9	6.0	102.3	10	65.0	45.0	39.6	6.6	0.6	4.5
2013	7.8	22.6	6.1	100.0	10	61.5	44.6	34.8	5.6	0.3	1.5
2014	7.2	23.6	6.1	100.6	12	50.1	44.0	34.0	6.6	0.3	1.7
2015	6.7	22.4	...	100.2	11	37.8	41.5	33.6	7.6	0.2	1.8

<sup>1</sup> Source: European Union Statistical Bureau homepage:

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=tps00066&language=en>

<sup>2</sup> Data of Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre.

Data recalculated after 2011 Census.

## Gender differences (women as % versus men)

	Life expectancy at birth, years	Number of inhabitants (beginning of year)	Secondary education enrolment	Secondary education graduates	Tertiary education enrolment (students aged 19-23)	Employed <sup>1</sup>	Unemployed	Wages and salaries in the country
2000	117.3	117.1	106.4	100.5	157.4	96.2	82.4	78.6
2001	117.6	117.3	104.8	112.3	142.1	98.3	81.4	80.2
2002	117.9	117.7	104.8	104.7	138.8	96.9	84.4	81.5
2003	115.7	118.0	104.4	101.4	140.0	96.5	97.4	83.5
2004	116.2	118.0	96.4	111.0	144.3	96.7	101.3	84.4
2005	117.6	118.0	96.7	111.9	145.8	95.8	94.4	81.9
2006	117.1	118.0	98.2	113.3	152.7	96.1	88.0	82.4
2007	116.7	117.9	99.2	106.4	156.9	95.8	81.1	83.9
2008	116.4	117.6	100.4	111.2	154.3	98.5	82.1	84.8
2009	115.0	117.9	99.0	108.9	150.4	108.9	67.9	83.9
2010	114.7	118.4	95.3	103.1	144.3	111.3	73.7	81.5
2011	114.4	118.9	93.0	101.0	139.5	107.0	74.8	83.4
2012	114.2	118.7	92.5	100.3	134.4	104.5	87.8	83.2
2013	113.7	118.4	91.7	122.3	147.8	102.9	89.4	83.1
2014	114.8	118.3	91.8	115.7	143.0	101.8	82.7	83.0
2015	113.8	118.0	...	116.2	...	101.8	77.3	83.9

<sup>1</sup> Data of Labour Force Survey. 2000–2001 persons from 15 and older, after 2002 – persons aged 15 to 74.

Data recalculated after 2011 Census.

## Status of women

	Life expectancy at birth, years	Average age at first marriage	Maternal mortality		Secondary education enrolment, % of women aged 11-18 <sup>1</sup>	Secondary education graduates, % of women aged 18	Tertiary education enrolment, % of women aged 19-23 <sup>1</sup>	Proportion of women among the employed, % <sup>3</sup>	Proportion of women among managers, specialists, % <sup>3</sup>	Proportion of women among Members of Parliament, %
			per 100 000 live births	number of cases						
2000	75.8	24.9	24.8	5	86.5	94.0	79.8	46.9	57.7	17 <sup>4</sup>
2001	75.5	24.9	25.4	5	87.7	92.7	85.4	48.0	59.4	17 <sup>4</sup>
2002	75.9	25.4	5.0	1	87.2	75.2	91.7	49.2	58.3	18 <sup>5</sup>
2003	75.7	25.4	14.3	3	88.9	70.7	96.6	49.7	57.7	18 <sup>5</sup>
2004	76.1	25.6	9.8	2	89.8	81.9	98.3	50.2	57.8	18 <sup>5</sup>
2005	76.3	26.0	4.6	1	89.1	85.1	97.8	50.8	58.7	18 <sup>5</sup>
2006	76.1	26.3	13.5	3	71.2	84.3	96.3	54.5	58.0	19 <sup>6</sup>
2007	76.2	26.4	25.8	6	71.3 <sup>2</sup>	84.5	95.0	56.3	60.8	19 <sup>6</sup>
2008	77.4	26.7	12.5	3	71.3 <sup>2</sup>	87.9	92.7	57.5	61.9	19 <sup>6</sup>
2009	77.6	27.1	46.1	10	70.0 <sup>2</sup>	87.4	84.4	52.9	60.9	19 <sup>6</sup>
2010	77.9	27.4	26.1	5	69.6 <sup>2</sup>	91.5	79.4	51.1	60.1	19 <sup>7</sup>
2011	78.5	27.7	5.4	1	68.1 <sup>2</sup>	90.2	77.4	52.1 <sup>1</sup>	60.5 <sup>1</sup>	19 <sup>7</sup>
2012	78.7	28.0	20.5	4	87.1	78.6	78.7	53.5	59.4	19 <sup>7</sup>
2013	78.8	28.5	24.7	5	84.4	75.6	77.6	55.3	58.9	19 <sup>7</sup>
2014	79.3	28.9	14.0	3	83.4	77.0	83.0	56.0	59.2	16 <sup>8</sup>
2015	79.3	29.2	55.2	12	...	77.7	88.7	57.8	60.7	16 <sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Data recalculated after 2011 Census.

<sup>2</sup> According to Cabinet of Ministers Regulations on the classification of Latvia's educational system (11 April 2006) the first phase of secondary education covers Grades 7-9 (13 to 15 year olds), while the second phase covers Grades 10-12 (16 to 18 year olds).

<sup>3</sup> Data of Labour Force Survey. 2000–2001 persons from 15 and older, after 2002 – persons aged 15 to 74.

<sup>4</sup> The results of parliamentary election on 3 October 1998.

<sup>5</sup> The results of parliamentary election on 5 October 2002.

<sup>6</sup> The results of parliamentary election on 9 October 2006.

<sup>7</sup> The results of parliamentary election on 2 October 2010.

<sup>8</sup> The results of parliamentary election on 5 October 2014.



## Demographic indicators

	Population, millions (beginning of year)	Annual population growth rate, %	Total fertility rate	Proportion of dependents, %	Proportion of population aged 60 and over, % (beginning of year) <sup>2</sup>	Life expectancy at age 60	
						Men	Women
2000	2.4	-1.19	1.242	41.1	21.0	15.2	20.7
2001	2.4	-1.38	1.219	39.7	21.4	15.1	20.6
2002	2.3	-0.93	1.254	39.2	21.8	15.0	20.7
2003	2.3	-0.99	1.321	37.6	22.1	15.2	20.6
2004	2.3	-1.18	1.291	37.2	22.2	15.1	20.9
2005	2.2	-0.97	1.388	36.1	22.4	14.8	21.0
2006	2.2	-0.85	1.463	35.6	22.4	14.9	20.9
2007	2.2	-0.77	1.543	34.4	22.5	15.3	21.0
2008	2.2	-1.32	1.590	33.8	22.6	15.5	21.5
2009	2.2	-1.96	1.470	34.0	23.0	15.9	21.8
2010	2.1	-2.16	1.363	34.2	23.6	15.9	21.8
2011	2.1	-1.44	1.338	35.8	24.1	16.3	22.3
2012	2.0	-1.00	1.444	36.4	24.6	16.4	22.2
2013	2.0	-1.1	1.524	35.9	24.9	16.8	22.4
2014	2.0	-0.77	1.645	36.3	25.2	16.7	22.8
2015	2.0	-0.86	1.707	36.9	25.5	17.1	22.7

Data recalculated after 2011 Census.

## Health care indicators

	Death from circulatory disease, % of all deaths <sup>1</sup>	Death from malignant tumours, % of all deaths <sup>1</sup>	Number of inhabitants per physician <sup>2</sup>	State expenditures on health, % of total State expenditures	State expenditure on health as, % of GDP
2000	55.5	17.3	289	10.5	3.9
2001	55.9	17.4	300	9.2	3.2
2002	56.0	17.4	290	10.3	3.7
2003	56.1	17.9	289	9.7	3.4
2004	55.9	18.2	278	9.8	3.5
2005	55.1	18.0	271	11.9	4.1
2006	53.6	18.2	267	12.5	4.5
2007	54.6	17.9	270	11.9	4.0
2008	53.3	19.8	257	11.7	4.3
2009	53.7	19.9	266	10.5	4.6
2010	54.1	20.1	262	9.4	4.2
2011	54.9	20.6	259	10.6	4.1
2012	56.1	20.7	255	10.6	3.9
2013	57.0	20.8	250	9.9	3.7
2014	57.0	21.2	251	10.2	3.8
2015	57.3	20.9	250	...	...

<sup>1</sup> Data of Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Information is calculated according to 2011 Census.

<sup>2</sup> Calculation, using Centre for Disease Prevention and Control data and Central Statistical Bureau data.

<sup>3</sup> Data recalculated after 2011 Census.

## Education-related indicators

	Enrolment at all levels of education, % of population aged 7-23 (bruto)	Enrolment at primary schools, % of population aged 7-15 (bruto)	Enrolment at secondary schools, % of population aged 16-18 (bruto)	Enrolment at tertiary educational institutions, % of population aged 19-23 (bruto)	Expenditure on tertiary education, % of all education expenditure	Students funded by state and local government, % of all tertiary students	State expenditures on education, % of total State expenditures	State expenditures on education, % of GDP
2000	86.3	92.5	102.3	62.4	22.7	33.7	14.6	5.6
2001	88.2	95.0	98.5	68.3	23.4	29.9	16.0	5.7
2002	89.6	96.0	97.2	73.0	24.1	27.1	16.1	5.8
2003	90.9	95.9	100.9	76.2	24.6	24.2	15.8	5.6
2004	91.6	97.1	102.1	76.4	25.5	23.5	17.0	5.1
2005	91.1	97.8	101.4	75.7	27.6	22.8	15.7	5.1
2006	90.0	98.0	100.4	73.7	27.2	23.3	15.7	5.1
2007	89.3	99.2	99.7	72.1	26.7	25.0	16.3	5.1
2008	89.2	99.3	102.2	71.0	25.5	26.6	16.8	5.7
2009	88.1	101.1	104.7	65.6	21.1	30.4	15.5	5.6
2010	88.5	102.4	106.1	63.7	25.1	34.1	14.0	5.0
2011	89.0	102.2	108.5	63.5	17.5	35.9	14.9	5.0
2012	90.3	102.9	110.2	64.9	17.9	36.9	14.7	4.6
2013	91.4	102.5	113.4	65.6	17.6	38.5	15.6	4.8
2014	93.4	103.0	115.2	67.9	17.3	40.4	15.8	...
2015	96.2	102.7	118.1	72.9	...	41.4	...	...

Data recalculated after 2011 Census.

## Human intellectual potential

	Scientists and technicians per 1000 inhabitants	Total expenditures on research and development, % of GDP	Secondary education graduates, % of inhabitants aged 18	Tertiary education graduates, % of inhabitants aged 23	Graduates who have obtained scientific degree, % of all graduates
2000	2.3	0.45	51.9	63.0	0.3
2001	2.3	0.41	57.1	59.8	0.2
2002	2.3	0.42	55.3	66.9	0.3
2003	2.1	0.38	48.5	76.3	0.3
2004	2.9	0.42	45.3	82.2	0.4
2005	2.4	0.56	52.7	82.6	0.4
2006	2.8	0.70	56.5	81.2	0.4
2007	2.8	0.59	58.1	69.9	0.5
2008	2.5	0.61	59.7	75.4	0.6
2009	2.5	0.46	61.0	77.4	0.7
2010	2.7	0.60	63.2	79.9	0.5
2011	2.7	0.70	65.4	77.6	1.2
2012	3.2 <sup>1</sup>	0.66	69.9	69.6	1.2
2013	3.8	0.60	67.3	73.7	1.2
2014	4.1	0.68	69.0	60.6	1.5
2015	4.0	...	69.8	63.5	...

<sup>1</sup> According with Eurostat methodology, since 2012 science support personnel is also included.

Data recalculated after 2011 Census.

## Employment

	Employed, % of total population	Distribution of employed, % of total number of employed <sup>3</sup>			Increase / decrease of income of employed, %	Length of work week, hours
		Agriculture	Industry	Services		
2000	51.4	15	26	59	5.7	41.4
2001	52.2	15	26	59	6.1	41.3
2002	53.9	15	26	59	8.0	41.9
2003	54.5	14	27	59	10.9	41.7
2004	54.9	13	27	60	8.8	40.9
2005	55.9	12	26	62	17.0	41.3
2006	59.7	11	28	61	23.1	41.3
2007	61.6	10	28	62	32.0	40.6
2008	62.0	8	29	63	22.5	39.4
2009	54.3	9	24	67	-2.3	38.9
2010	52.0	9	23	68	-7.5	38.4
2011	54.0	9	23	68	4.5	38.5
2012	56.1	8	24	68	3.9	38.3
2013	58.2	8	24	68	5.6	38.3
2014	59.1	8	24	68	8.6	38.6
2015	60.8	8	24	68	7.6	38.3

<sup>1</sup> After 2008 – Statistical classification of economic activities NACE Rev. 2.

Data recalculated after 2011 Census.

## Unemployment (end of year)

	Number of unemployed, thousands	Unemployment rate, %		Unemployed young people (15–24), % of all unemployed	Spending on unemployment benefit, % of all State expenditures <sup>3</sup>	Proportion of long-term (12 mo. +) unemployed
		Total <sup>1</sup>	Women <sup>2</sup>			
2000	93.3	7.8	7.3	18.2	1.2	29.0
2001	91.6	7.7	6.9	19.5	1.0	26.6
2002	89.7	8.5	6.5	19.4	1.1	26.2
2003	90.6	8.6	6.6	20.1	1.1	29.2
2004	90.8	8.5	6.8	20.4	1.0	28.0
2005	78.5	7.4	5.6	18.3	1.2	26.2
2006	68.9	6.5	3.9	24.5	1.1	21.2
2007	52.3	4.9	3.3	22.4	0.9	17.7
2008	76.4	7.0	4.4	22.0	0.9	15.3
2009	179.2	16.0	8.7	22.6	2.5	21.7
2010	162.5	14.3	10.0	20.6	2.1	39
2011	130.3	11.5	8.3	19.1	1.3	41.2
2012	104.1	10.5	8.7	18.6	0.9	37.4
2013	93.3	9.5	6.9	17.9	1.1	32.1
2014	82.0	8.5	6.1	15.7	1.1	28.2
2015	81.8	8.7	5.5	13.8	...	26.4

<sup>1</sup> Data of State Employment Agency (NVA).

<sup>2</sup> Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia calculation using the number of unemployed (women) registered at NVA.

<sup>3</sup> After 2007, this indicator is calculated on the basis of the government function related to support for unemployed people, which includes spending on benefit payments to unemployed.

Data recalculated after 2011 Census.

## Priorities in government expenditures

	State expenditures on defence, % of GDP	State expenditures on health, % of GDP	State expenditures on education, % of GDP
2000	0.9	3.9	5.5
2001	0.9	3.2	5.4
2002	1.1	3.7	5.7
2003	1.2	3.4	5.5
2004	1.3	3.5	6.1
2005	1.2	4.1	5.4
2006	1.4	4.5	5.7
2007	1.4	4.0	5.6
2008	1.5	4.3	6.3
2009	1.2	4.6	6.7
2010	1.0	4.2	6.2
2011	1.0	4.1	5.9
2012	0.9	3.9	5.7
2013	0.9	3.7	5.7
2014	0.9	3.8	5.9

Data recalculated after 2011 Census.

## Natural resources

	Territory, thousands of km <sup>2</sup>	Population density, people per km <sup>2</sup> (end of year)	Agricultural area, % of all land <sup>1</sup>	Forests, % of all land
2000	64.6	37	38.5	44.4
2001	64.6	36	38.4	44.3
2002	64.6	36	38.3	44.5
2003	64.6	36	38.3	44.7
2004	64.6	36	38.2	45.0
2005	64.6	36	38.1	45.2
2006	64.6	35	38.0	45.4
2007	64.6	35	37.9	45.5
2008	64.6	35	37.7	45.7
2009	64.6	35	37.6	45.8
2010	64.6	33	37.6	45.9
2011	64.6	32	37.3	46.3
2012	64.6	32	37.1	46.5
2013	64.6	31	36.9	46.7
2014	64.6	31	36.7	47.0
2015	64.6	31	36.5	47.2

<sup>1</sup> Data of State Land Service.

<sup>2</sup> Data of Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre.

Data recalculated after 2011 Census.

## National income indicators

	Gross Domestic Product (GDP), million euro	Agricultural production added value, % of GDP	Industrial production added value, % of GDP	Services, % of GDP	Private consumption, % of GDP	Development of domestic gross equity, % of GDP	Tax revenues, % of GDP <sup>1</sup>	State expenditures, % of GDP	Exports, % of GDP	Imports, % of GDP
2000	6847.7	5	20	75	62.3	25.2	29.3	37.3	36.9	44.9
2001	7457.5	5	19	76	61.4	27.4	28.6	34.8	38.1	48.5
2002	8389.5	5	19	76	61.2	24.6	27.9	35.2	36.6	46.8
2003	9541.6	5	18	77	61.0	24.8	27.5	33.5	36.2	48.7
2004	11038.1	5	18	77	61.4	28.9	27.7	34.8	39.1	54.7
2005	13581.8	4	16	80	60.1	31.3	28.0	34.3	43.2	57.7
2006	17073.1	4	15	81	62.9	34.2	28.8	36.2	40.0	60.7
2007	22552.4	4	15	81	58.8	36.5	28.3	34.1	38.5	57.6
2008	24314.3	3	14	83	56.9	32.1	27.8	37.3	39.6	52.5
2009	18808.4	4	16	80	59.4	22.6	27.3	43.7	42.6	44.3
2010	17921.5	4	19	77	62.6	19.4	28.0	44.8	53.7	55.2
2011	20244.4	4	18	78	60.5	22.2	27.9	39.1	58.0	63.0
2012	21810.5	4	18	69	59.7	25.5	28.7	37.2	61.5	66.0
2013	22762.9	4	17	79	60.3	23.2	28.6	37.0	60.4	63.6
2014	23580.9	...	...	...	60.0	22.9	29.0	37.5	59.5	61.8
2015	24377.7	...	...	...	60.3	22.8	...	37.2	58.8	60.2

<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the European System of Accounts (ESA 95) methodology.

Data recalculated after 2011 Census.

## Economic development trends

	GDP growth/decrease (in comparative prices from the year 2010), %	Per capita GDP growth/decrease (in comparative prices from the year 2010), %	Inflation rate, % compared to previous year	Budget surplus or deficit, % of GDP (in actual prices)
2000	5.4	6.4	102.6	-2.7
2001	6.5	7.8	102.5	-2.0
2002	7.1	8.4	101.9	-2.2
2003	8.4	9.5	102.9	-1.6
2004	8.3	9.6	106.2	-1.0
2005	10.7	11.9	106.7	-0.4
2006	11.9	12.9	106.5	-0.6
2007	10.0	10.8	110.1	-0.7
2008	-3.6	-2.6	115.4	-4.1
2009	-14.3	-12.9	103.5	-9.1
2010	-3.8	-1.7	98.9	-8.5
2011	6.2	8.2	104.4	-3.4
2012	4.0	5.3	102.3	-0.8
2013	3.0	4.1	100.0	-0.9
2014	2.4	3.3	100.6	-1.6
2015	2.7	3.6	100.2	-1.3

Data recalculated after 2011 Census.

Violence and crime<sup>1</sup>

	Prisoners per 100 000 inhabitants <sup>2</sup>	Juveniles, % of all convicted criminals	Reported number of rapes per 100 000 inhabitants <sup>2</sup>	Drug-related crimes per 100 000 inhabitants <sup>2</sup>	Intentional or attempted homicides by men within year, per 100 000 males <sup>2</sup>	Reported number of rapes per 100 000 females
2000	370.8	14.2	5.6	27.5	20.0	10.4
2001	368.5	13.8	5.1	35.3	19.8	9.5
2002	360.1	14.2	4.6	27.1	19.4	8.4
2003	357.6	13.5	5.3	43.4	20.9	9.9
2004	336.7	13.5	14.0 <sup>3</sup>	50.4	19.1	25.9 <sup>3</sup>
2005	311.1	12.5	10.8 <sup>4</sup>	46.6	12.3	19.9 <sup>4</sup>
2006	297.9	13.5	5.5	44.8	14.5	10.2
2007	296.4	11.9	4.2	64.9	11.5	7.8
2008	313.6	10.4	4.6	114.6	11.8	8.4
2009	326.2	8.6	3.2	106.7	11.0	5.9
2010	319.7	7.8	3.7	103.2	8.4	6.9
2011	316.3	7.1	2.4	94.8	9.6	4.4
2012	299.1	6.7	3.4	134.5	12.2	6.2
2013	254.6	7.0	3.6	80.9	8.1	6.7
2014	237.1	5.8	3.7	138.1	9.3	6.9
2015	222.0	4.3	3.0	177.7	9.5	5.6

<sup>1</sup> A new version of the Criminal Procedure Law took effect on October 1, 2005, and it introduced a new system of registering criminal offences. Accordingly, the data are not comparable to previous years.

<sup>2</sup> Data recalculated after 2011 Census.

<sup>3</sup> In accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of May 20, 2003 No. 264 "Regulations for the Register of Criminal Offences" Section II, Para. 11.2, in 2004 in one case of criminal proceedings of rape additional episodes of the criminal offence were registered separately, consequently, the number of recorded criminal offences during the period has increased significantly and the data of the number of recorded offences are not comparable with the previous period.

Data recalculated after 2011 Census.

## Prosperity, poverty and social expenditures

	Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in purchasing power <sup>1</sup>	Industrial production added value, % of GDP	Income ratio between the richest 20% and the poorest 20% of inhabitants <sup>2</sup>	State expenditure for social security, % of GDP	State expenditure for education, % of GDP	State expenditure for health % of GDP
2000	...	19.6	5.5	13.1	5.5	3.9
2001	...	19.3	...	11.9	5.4	3.2
2002	...	18.9	...	11.4	5.7	3.7
2003	...	17.8	...	10.8	5.5	3.4
2004	5200	17.6	6.2	10.4	6.1	3.5
2005	6100	16.2	6.7	9.3	5.4	4.1
2006	7800	15.1	5.8	8.9	5.7	4.5
2007	10 300	14.5	6.5	8.0	5.6	4.0
2008	11 200	14.4	6.7	9.1	6.3	4.3
2009	8700	16.0	6.5	14.0	6.7	4.6
2010	8500	18.9	6.2	14.2	6.2	4.2
2011	9800	18.0	6.2	12.3	5.9	4.1
2012	10 800	17.7	6.0	11.4	5.7	3.9
2013	11 300	17.2	6.1	11.5	5.7	3.7
2014	11 800	16.6	6.1	11.5	5.9	3.8
2015	12 300	16.4	...	...	...	...

<sup>1</sup> Source: European Union Statistical Bureau homepage:

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tec00001&plugin=1>

<sup>2</sup> Data recalculated after 2011 Census.



## Communication

	Cinema visits per capita <sup>1</sup>	Museum visits per capita <sup>1</sup>	Copies of daily newspapers per 100 000 inhabitants <sup>1</sup>	Book titles published per 100 000 inhabitants	Passenger cars per 1000 inhabitants (end of year) <sup>1</sup>
2000	0.6	0.6	9.5	104.2	234
2001	0.5	0.7	9.4	104.8	249
2002	0.5	0.7	9.4	97.7	267
2003	0.5	0.7	10.9	110.4	282
2004	0.7	0.8	11.1	110.9	301
2005	0.7	0.9	11.6	102.7	330
2006	1.0	1.0	11.1	106.2	369
2007	1.1	1.1	11.7	122.1	410
2008	1.1	1.2	12.0	126.9	426
2009	0.9	1.0	11.3	101.1	418
2010	1.0	1.2	9.3	93.5	300 <sup>2</sup>
2011	1.0	1.2	10.0	100.0	295
2012	1.1	1.3	12.3	99.3	302
2013	1.2	1.3	12.0	107.0	314
2014	1.2	1.5	12.7	106.0	329
2015	1.2	1.6	12.7	107.3	342

<sup>1</sup> As of 2000, the data is recalculated after 2011 Census.

<sup>2</sup> With the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 1080 "Regulations of the Registration of Motor Vehicles" (30 November 2010) a new norm was introduced – exclusion of motor vehicle from the register.

Data recalculated after 2011 Census.

## Urbanisation

	Urban population, % of total population (end of year)	Increase/decrease of urban population each year	Population of major cities, % of all urban population (end of year) <sup>1</sup>	Population in cities with more than 40 000 inhabitants, % of all inhabitants (end of year)
2000	68.0	-0.9	76.0	47.7
2001	67.9	-1.0	75.9	47.5
2002	67.8	-1.0	75.8	47.4
2003	67.8	-1.0	75.7	47.3
2004	67.8	-1.0	75.7	47.3
2005	67.8	-1.0	75.6	47.2
2006	67.9	-1.0	75.6	47.3
2007	67.9	-1.0	75.6	47.4
2008	67.9	-1.0	75.6	47.3
2009	67.9	-1.0	75.5	47.3
2010	67.8	-1.0	75.5	45.3 <sup>2</sup>
2011	67.8	-1.0	75.5	45.3 <sup>2</sup>
2012	67.6	-1.0	75.4	45.2 <sup>2</sup>
2013	67.5	-1.0	75.4	45.2 <sup>2</sup>
2014	67.8	-1.0	75.4	45.5 <sup>2</sup>
2015	67.9	-1.0	75.4	45.6 <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since Valmiera and Jēkabpils are major cities, the number of residents was recalculated.

<sup>2</sup> The number of Ventspils inhabitants have decreased and is not equal to 40 000 anymore.

Data recalculated after 2011 Census.

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