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LATVIA

Human Development Report



ASPRI
Advanced
Social and Political
Research
Institute

Accountability and Responsibility

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Preface

This year's human development report is devoted to one of the most topical issues in Latvian and European public life – accountability. This issue unites the individual responsibility of each person for his or her action and its impact on the lives and environment of other people, as well as responsible public action we expect from our public administration, politicians, international organizations, as well as our countrymen.

What does it mean to act responsibly? Responsible action can mean different things in each situation, though fundamentally, in both private and public life, it is linked to long-term thinking, trust in the capabilities and integrity of people, respect for oneself and others.

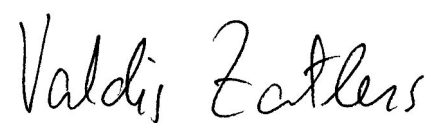
Long-term thinking can ensure social development and help overcome economic, social and political difficulties, if those with the power to determine the direction of society act while thinking of the future. Citizens have the right to demand long-term thinking from public officials, as government guided by short-term considerations cannot responsibly manage society's resources, adopt a budget that promotes economic development, and see the unique opportunities provided by the creativity of Latvia's people and an international environment conducive to innovation. Over the next year in the economic field we need to be able to place ourselves on a platform of sustainable development that would provide our country with a secure basis for development and growth in the future. In the social realm, we need to ensure that no inhabitant of Latvia ends up in a situation of extreme poverty, which is why the state must assume responsibility for guaranteeing at least a minimum level of social assistance.

At the same time, our own individual choices are just as important. We can treat the environment responsibly or we can continue to destroy it with irresponsible consumption and production that is not environmentally friendly. Our individual action and support can help our countrymen see

opportunities and solutions for the future, can embolden them to start up their own business.

Responsible action is linked to trust in the people around us. International research shows that trust in others – not only in friends and relatives – is characteristic of developed societies. In such societies, people's respect and public responsibility are self-evident, people believe in the capability of each person to develop freely and pursue their choices. But this also places responsibility on them to act responsibly so that those nearby do not suffer from our irresponsibility and short-term thinking. Without mutual trust cooperation is not possible, and without cooperation social development is not possible.

Finally, one of the most essential aspects in this context is public participation. Experience to date suggests that we have devoted unjustifiably little attention to various instruments of direct democracy and lagged in introducing, for example, local referenda, the involvement of local residents in decision-making and participation in setting local budget priorities. The growth of public participation is directly linked to the ability of Latvia's inhabitants to see their role, influence and link to governance and national development. This also means responsible action with one's vote in elections by voting for ideas and works, not the most splendid advertising, as well as our ability to achieve in Latvia the highest level of political accountability and to craft closer ties between representatives and voters.



Valdis Zatlers
State President

Preface

Today the *Human Development Report 2008/2009: Accountability and Responsibility* is submitted to the reader for evaluation. This is the tenth national human development report since the restoration of independence. The reports prepared thus far have provided essential insights about Latvian society, its problems, and the main trends in development. The human development reports have served as an important source of information for local and foreign researchers, as well as for all who are interested in the processes taking place in the country.

Since 2005 the University of Latvia's Advanced Social and Political Research Institute (ASPRI), the leading research institution in the social sciences, has prepared the human development reports. To attain a high quality result that is in line with the demands of contemporary science, ASPRI has succeeded in attracting the best experts in the field and the necessary resources to conduct large, interdisciplinary research projects. The achievements of ASPRI are largely related to the rapid development of the social sciences at the University of Latvia over the last ten years through the improvement of teaching and the expansion of research. The work that has been well done needs to be continued and we must think seriously about future development.

While integrating more intensely into global scientific networks, it is necessary to promote the significance of social science research in the context of Latvian society as well. A much greater involvement of scientists in policy-making is necessary to provide expert support to politicians and administrators. Social science specialists have and will continue to have a decisive importance in influencing public opinion through their participation in debates about the country's future development prospects.

The new human development report is an excellent testimony that our researchers realize the special role of the social sciences in a democratic society. It is worth noting that scientists at the University of Latvia were successful in attracting the participation of recognized specialists from other Latvian institutions of higher education. Riga Stradiņa University, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Daugavpils University and the Latvian University of Agriculture have all made a significant contribution to the preparation of the report and are trusted partners for the University of Latvia on the road to the creation of a knowledge society in Latvia.

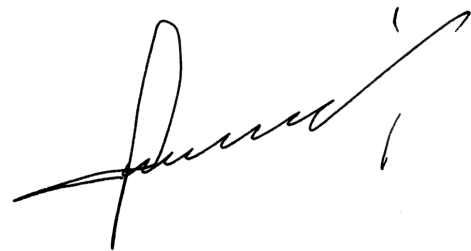
The time period covered in the report has been a complicated one. The global economic crisis of 2008 has seriously affected our country, and this was compounded by Latvia's governance problems. This was a period in

which heretofore stable growth gave way to rapid decline. Previously, development in many realms seemed to take place «by itself,» there was an overabundance of resources and general optimism, which is why the issue of responsibility was often neglected. However, the authors of this report clearly indicate problems of accountability in certain fields – from ecology to the ethics of physicians, from political participation to the preservation of the cultural heritage. Perhaps the inability to assume responsibility or to divide it clearly among individuals, groups and the state in many realms led to today's problems.

The issue of accountability addressed by the authors of this report is very salient in current socio-economic circumstances and worthy of wider debate. This is why a greater emphasis in Latvia should be put on people's ability to take responsibility for their own actions, assume commitments and think about sustainable development. The country's further growth will be possible only if we think in the long-term.

One important dimension of accountability is our country's international competitiveness. Today we live in a global, open world where transnational cooperation has an increasing role in securing every country's development. Currently, Latvia's competitiveness is dependent more than ever before on our human resources: people who are willing and able to create new, innovative knowledge and products that are in demand in the world. The economic crisis cannot be a reason to ignore the only resource that can help our country place itself on the road to sustainable development – knowledge and education. Therefore one of the most topical issues of accountability in Latvia is the quality of higher education and science and its competitiveness in the world.

I congratulate the authors of the report on a successfully completed project. I am convinced that this work will serve as a point of reference for further research and will promote broader public interest about what is taking place in our country and the role of accountability in it.



Mārcis Auziņš
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Basic facts about Latvia, 2008



Population

Estimated population (millions)	2.3
Annual population growth (%)	-0.4
Population density (persons per km ²)	35.2

Population distribution, %

Rural	32.1
Urban	67.9

Gender distribution, %

Males	46.1
Females	53.9

Age distribution, %

0-14	13.8
Working age (males 15-62, females 15-61.5)	65.6
Above working age	20.6

Ethnic distribution, %

Latvians	59.2
Russians	28.0
Belarusians	3.7
Ukrainians	2.5
Poles	2.4
Lithuanians	1.3
Others	2.9

Human Development Index rank

Global HDR in 2006 (2008 data)	44/179
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Adult literacy rate, %

99.8

Health

Average life expectancy, years	72.7
Males	67.2
Females	77.9
Infant mortality (per 1000 births)	6.7
Number of physicians (per 10,000 inhabitants)	37.2

Economy

GDP (millions of LVL)	16,243.2
GDP per capita (LVL, average prices in the year 2000)	3660
Real GDP per capita (ECU, PPP)	14,000
Real growth of GDP, %	-4.6
Unemployment rate	7.0

Distribution of employment by sectors, %

Agriculture	8
Industry	29
Services	63

Government expenditures, % of GDP

TOTAL	39.5
Of which:	
Defence	1.5
Education	6.5
Health	3.6
Social Security	9.3

Exchange rate of 1 USD vs. LVL (average)

1USD	0.4798
------	--------

Land area (km²)

64,589

Introduction

Juris Rozenvalds, Ivars Ijabs

The tradition of preparing annual human development reports began in 1990 when the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) first commissioned a group of independent experts to prepare a report on human development in the context of major global problems. Currently, the 19th global Human Development Report is being prepared dedicated to problems of migration.

Soon, individual countries began preparing similar reports. In Latvia, these reports have been published since 1995. Much experience has been acquired over the past 15 years, and human development is no longer a foreign concept to society at large (see Box 0.1).

Latvia's human development can generally be rated as positive. In the last UNDP Human Development Report (*Human Development Report 2007/2008: Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World*) Latvia ranked 45th, next to our Baltic neighbours Estonia (44th) and Lithuania (43rd). Admittedly, we have been outranked by most of the EU Member States from Central and Eastern Europe: Slovenia (27th), the Czech Republic (32nd), Hungary (36th), Poland (37th), Slovakia (42nd). However, we are ahead of Bulgaria (53rd) and Romania (60th), as well as the former Soviet Republics Belarus (64th), Russia (67th), Kazakhstan (73rd), Ukraine (76th), Armenia (83rd), Georgia (96th), and Azerbaijan (98th). After a dramatic drop in the mid-1990s (from 30th place in 1994 to 92nd place in 1998 and 1999), Latvia has constantly moved up in the UNDP human development ranking: 74th in 1999, 63rd in 2000, 50th in 2001, 53rd in 2001, 50th in 2003 and 2004, 48th in 2005, 45th in 2006. But this is no reason for complacency – achievements in human development mean growing demands for improvement of the quality of life.

During the past 19 years, Latvia has acquired a modern, democratic regime with free elections, protection of

human rights, a national economy based on private ownership, and independent media. The development that has taken place during this time has made it possible for Latvia to become a full-fledged member of the European Union and NATO. At the same time, the dynamic and for society often incomprehensible changes in all areas of public life – the economy, politics, civil society, global politics, etc. – have created new social pathologies and a values gap. Many liberal and democratic values – tolerance, the rule of law, human rights, participation – have not yet become a stable part of Latvia's culture.

Latvia is currently going through its most serious crisis since the renewal of independence, and the cause is not just poor management. Distrust of democratic institutions, civic inactivity, lack of interest in the common good all suggest that the cause of the crisis must be sought in broader phenomena. The all-embracing and frequently anarchic social transformations that could be observed in Latvia after independence have resulted in a widespread lack of accountability and unclearly defined rights and obligations in many areas of social life.

Accountability, Responsibility and Human Development

In social science, the word «development» can have several meanings linked to technological, economic, social or other change. The *human development* concept examines society's economic, political and cultural growth through the prism of human fulfilment. Latvia's previous human development reports focused primarily on the **objective trends and conditions for social development**. Less attention has been devoted the behaviour of individuals and social groups, to their readiness and capacity to assume obligations. However, society is united

Box
0.1

Latvia Human Development Reports: Themes

1995	An overview and evaluation of human development in Latvia; the impact of social transformation on people in Latvia
1996	Economic development, education reform and participation
1997	Poverty, social integration and regional disparities
1998	The state, the individual and the private sector; sustainable development, equality of opportunities, the quality of human relations, partnerships
1999	Globalization and Latvia, risks and opportunities
2000/2001	The public policy process in the context of human development
2002/2003	Human security as a precondition for human development
2004/2005	Human capability in the regions
2006/2007	Human capital, its links to social capital, social institutions and networks

not only by biological, geographic or economic ties and connections. **Society is also a system of normative relationships** that is based on acknowledgement of mutual responsibility, fulfilment of promises, and a system of sanctions. Nowadays, social development is based not only on the growth of economic welfare and administrative efficiency but also on the **growing capacity of individuals to recognize the social consequences of their behaviour and to account for these**. The major problems of our day such as degradation of the environment, the need for sustainable economic growth, disintegration of traditional forms of political participation, etc., require not only administrative solutions, but also the capacity of individuals and groups to recognize the social impact of their behaviour. A modern, democratic society requires partnership between past, present, and future generations on issues ranging from sustainable social policy to the ethics of various professional groups, from corporate social responsibility to a responsive and open attitude to the wishes of the population on the part of the public administration.

One of the basic dimensions of the human development concept is **greater opportunities to choose**. A developed society gives the individual as many opportunities as possible to make choices about different aspects of his/her life – from career and lifestyle, to interests and partners. Only when individuals are able to make independent decisions about their personal lives will they be able to apply their creativity, working capacity and initiative for the greatest possible contribution to the life of the community. This is the basic idea of the human development concept, in which the social and the individual elements are closely entwined and mutually complementary. Admittedly, this type of development is possible only if everyone – individuals, social groups, institutions – acknowledges and meets mutual obligations and observes the rules of interdependence. In this way, human development is closely linked to people's capacity to **act responsibly** in different areas of life, contributing to an optimal balance between the public interest and individual choice. Accordingly, a successful society is a society in which individuals, while carrying out their unique life plans, always consider the possible consequences of their behaviour in a broader social context. Successful human development is not possible either in a situation in which people and institutions act only in their own interests, ignoring broader public interests and contexts, or in a situation in which the individual's personal initiative and freedom of choice is restricted or suppressed.

For these reasons, **accountability** was chosen as the central theme of the *Latvia Human Development Report 2008/2009*. The capacity to acknowledge responsibility and account for one's behaviour is the «glue» that ensures sustainable ties between individuals and social or political groups. In modern society, accountability has become an indispensable component of society's value orientation. The authors of this Report examine the extent to which the demand for accountability as a component of the behaviour of individuals, social groups, or institutions is satisfied in Latvia, the extent to which Latvia's society as

a whole and each its individual members are ready and willing to demand accountability not only from others but – primarily – from themselves.

The Concept of Accountability

Since accountability has been chosen as the main theme of the Report, it is necessary to clearly define what it is we are talking about. To our mind, **«accountability» is a complex concept that comprises the capacity and need to account for one's behaviour in the broadest sense**. This includes the capacity of people to anticipate and understand the consequences of their behaviour, the readiness to exercise responsibility with concrete measures, and institutional (e.g. administrative or legal) mechanisms for determining – and enforcing – social responsibility. This makes accountability an extremely broad and complex phenomenon in which the personal morals of the individual converge with democratically forged political power. Accountability does not relate only to an individual's subjective disposition, nor only to the individual's status in the eyes of the law («criminal liability»), but rather to a symbiosis of these individual and social elements. This is why accountability is not something purely individual – it can also be applied to social groups or to society as a whole.

The theme of this Report has **two main dimensions: responsibility and accountability**. *Responsibility* is the capacity of individuals to acknowledge their moral obligations towards themselves, their families, their local community, their profession, their country, society at large, future generations. People in different societies include varying phenomena in their spheres of responsibility, to which they attach different degrees of importance. However, responsibility has meaning only if people's attitudes and value orientations are also reflected in their behaviour: responsibility cannot be simply a wish to do something – we must talk about real assumption of responsibility, activity that is carried out to exercise responsibility, with awareness of and a readiness to face the consequences.

The other dimension is *accountability*. This includes institutionalized elements of «reporting and explaining,» it also involves the enforcement of responsibility. In a modern, democratic society, public officials, members of certain professions, business people and individuals must often submit reports on their activities: elected officials must periodically, or at least at the end of their term in office, submit a report on their activities to those who have entrusted them with responsibility (especially in cases where an official is running for re-election); public servants are held accountable by the law; violations of the professional ethics of lawyers, doctors, and other professions (for example, scientists) are investigated by professional organizations (explanations are demanded and given, people are held accountable for their behaviour, required to observe certain standards, requirements); businesses are required to report on what they are doing to protect the environment; every individual has obligations prescribed by the law and can be punished for failure to meet these obligations.

Accountability as a moral phenomenon exists only in a social context that acknowledges and promotes responsibility. Socially, ecologically or professionally responsible people are not created in a vacuum, but in a framework of institutions that promote responsibility. At the same time, accountability institutions are effective only in interaction with individual responsibility. Formal rules and procedures, directions and codes, even oaths, may possibly not result in good governance, ecologically accountable corporate (or personal) behaviour, or in a democratic civil society. Accountability requires a responsible attitude. **The dialectics of responsibility and accountability in different areas of life in Latvia are the focus of this Report.** The degree of attention devoted to responsibility and accountability will vary: in some areas, for example, in public administration or international organizations, attention will be focused on accountability procedures. Other sections of the Report, for example, those in which participation are examined, will focus on responsibility. Generally, however, both responsibility and accountability, and the way that they are linked with each other, are the central elements in all sections of this Report.

Forms of Accountability

There are many different forms of accountability, but an analysis will show common aspects that are shared by all (see Box 0.2):

First of all, there is individual and collective accountability. **Individual accountability** applies to the extent to which the individual is willing and able to account for his/her own life both at the private (career, family, habits, etc.) and the public (readiness to join associations, protection of common interests) level. The analysis of individual accountability is based on the premise that humans make up a special group of beings: they behave freely, their behaviour is not determined by external circumstances alone. It would therefore be incorrect to use the word «accountability» in connection with objective processes that are not conditional on the individual's choice. We can speak of accountability only if the individual is free to choose what he does.

After World War II, public attention has been increasingly devoted to the problem of **collective accountability**. This emerges anywhere where the behaviour of supra-individual formations has certain consequences. These formations can be states, corporations, non-governmental organizations, social groups, even random groups of persons, which act without prior agreement but have a significant

social impact. The group differs from the individual, whose psychological characteristics and physical image (identity) are clearly evident. The group as a whole does not possess these characteristics. Furthermore, a group's composition and leadership can change over time and this frequently encourages the group to disclaim responsibility for past behaviour and question projections of future behaviour. Many authors see the idea of collective accountability as a threat to the principles of individual accountability and integrity. At the same time, there are many situations in which groups behave as collective persons who perform certain collective deeds, make decisions on how to behave in concrete situations. They ensure substantial advantages for the members of the group but also impose obligations that do not apply to other members of society. The law also treats groups as legal persons with a capacity to act. What is important in the context of this Report is the fact that groups may/can assume responsibility, bear the burden of this responsibility, and account for their behaviour. Modern-day social science applies range of criteria which, if met, make it possible to ascribe accountability not only to individuals, but also to groups (French 1984, 13, 14):

- the group has an organizational mechanism that allows members to take collectively binding and rationally motivated decisions;
- the behaviour of members of the group and their mutual relations are determined by mandatory requirements, and these are usually stricter than they would be for society as a whole;
- the group has internal rules that regulate power relationships between members and the outside world.

It is clear that formations such as political parties, corporations, the majority of organizations that form a civil society, certain professional groups (doctors, lawyers, journalists, etc.) meet these criteria. These, then, are the manifestations of collective accountability that the authors of this Report will examine.

Another important distinction is a temporal one between retrospective (past) accountability and prospective (future) accountability. Accountability in its various forms is characterized by the incorporation of those who must account for their behaviour into a network of social relationships and interactions and by their readiness to accept judgement of their behaviour on the basis of socially (and/or internationally) accepted values, standards, and procedures, which comprise the experience of previous generations and seek to ensure sustainable development. This means that accountability always has a temporal dimension, an interaction of **the past, the present, and**

Box
0.2

Kinds of Accountability

Intellectual and collective accountability
Retrospective and prospective accountability
Positive and negative accountability
Vertical and horizontal accountability

the future. Different forms of accountability have different temporal emphases (for example, environmental accountability generally stresses responsibility towards future generations).

Retrospective accountability involves accountability for something that has already happened, something that has in some way been conditional on someone's activity (or inactivity). I chose to act without consideration for the interests of others – therefore, I deserve to be punished. I have acted carelessly, rashly – therefore, I must assume responsibility for the consequences.

Prospective accountability is closely connected with the individual's **duty** to behave in a certain way: to live a healthy life, to take care of one's children, to help one's parents, to observe fire-safety regulations, etc. We also speak of prospective accountability when we expect certain behaviour from an individual who performs a certain social role. In this case, the motivation for accountability is based not so much on the capacity to do something as on the distribution of roles within a society, which prescribes the way in which the individual must behave. In this case the individual's behaviour is not his choice, but his duty.

Another distinction can be made between negative and positive accountability. **Positive accountability** places the emphasis on the duty to do something. **Negative accountability** underscores the duty to refrain from doing something.

Moving from the theoretical concept of accountability to considerations that could be useful for public policy, we examine different perceptions of how power is or should be distributed between individuals, groups and different levels of administration. To compare different approaches, it is useful to differentiate between vertical and horizontal accountability. Accountability is traditionally considered to be a one-way street, where the accountability of policy makers is based on the will of the voters who elect officials who control the bureaucratic apparatus and, thus, implement the classic chain of **vertical responsibility**: voters – elected representatives – bureaucratic apparatus. Frequently, however (and this is currently the case in Latvia), the question of accountability is applied only to the elected representatives and bureaucrats in this chain. Voters are entitled to demand accountability only from «them,» without inconveniencing themselves with the burden of accountability.

Horizontal accountability has at least two different lines. Alongside traditional political participation with a focus on political parties and elections, emphasis is also placed on the importance of civil society organizations, civic initiatives, media, non-governmental organizations, sponsors, etc. for making sure that both elected and appointed officials are held accountable, and on the readiness of all participants in the democratic process to assume their share of responsibility for what goes on in society. Secondly, in some of our present-day social activities – e.g. education, healthcare, law enforcement – the accountability of those who perform these activities (teachers, doctors, lawyers, etc.) is ensured not only by the demands of the rank-and-file members of society (vertical cross-section), but also by the requirements of the professional environment and good practice criteria. Of

course, serious problems can arise in situations in which, for various reasons, the professional environment is unable to clearly define these requirements in order to make sure that the common good is being served.

Preparation of the Report

For almost 10 years, the UNDP Latvia Country Office was responsible for preparation and distribution of the Human Development Reports. At the end of 2004, this task was entrusted to the Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS) at the University of Latvia. For preparation of the 2008/2009 Report, the faculty's Advanced Social and Political Research Institute (ASPRI) formed a working group of independent experts with researchers and administrators from the University of Latvia, Daugavpils University, Latvian University of Agriculture and other higher education institutions. During the course of preparation, the results of the group's work were presented and discussed at the plenary session of the annual FSS conference. In January 2009, the working group discussed its projects for the Report at a one-day seminar.

A broad population survey has traditionally been carried out in Latvia for the purposes of the Report. This year, respondents were asked to answer 51 questions on different aspects of accountability. A description of the survey's methodology and a summary of the results are included in the **Appendix** to the Report. Detailed information about respondents' answers can be found at the **FSS website**.

Objectives and Main Topics

The objective of the 2008/2009 Human Development Report was to examine different levels of accountability and the specific way in which accountability is manifested in Latvia at individual, collective, and institutional levels which come together to form an accountability «network.» The Report also compares the situation in Latvia with that in the other Baltic States, the European Union, and elsewhere in the world.

Part 1 entitled «I, We, The World,» looks at general requirements for the implementation of accountability. The baseline is the life plans and strategies of the individual. Attention is brought to the close link between an individual's responsible attitude towards his own life and readiness to share responsibility for social processes and the natural and cultural environment. A responsible attitude towards one's surroundings is examined both in the relationship between man and the environment and in efforts to reorganize and harmonize society's historical memory.

Part 1 includes interviews with experts and policy implementers in the fields of heritage protection and language policy. Unlike the treatment of individual manifestations of accountability in other sections of the Report, the interviews do not provide a systematic examination of the problem but rather food for thought, encouraging discussion about the specific character of accountability in areas that are extremely important for our present-day culture.

The question of the distribution of responsibility between the individual and the power structures, between formal control mechanisms (accounting) and moral convictions is examined in Part 2, **The State, Governance, Society**. This part focuses on the problems of accountability in areas that are most directly connected with politics, with the performance of state and public administration structures: political accountability, administrative accountability, accountability for preparation of the budget and implementation of social policy, the problem of accountability in relations between the centre and the regions, in Latvia's relations with international organizations, and with its diaspora.

Part 3, entitled **A Trade, A field of Work, Obligations**, is dedicated to accountability in areas and professions that are particularly important for society. The accountability of the medical and legal professions is examined here, as well as accountability in areas such as business, information transfer, and the media.

The authors take a look at current achievements and progress made in different areas of life in the past decades. They do not, however, attempt to conceal the many negative aspects, the ambiguities, and the self-evident contradictions. What can be noted here is the population's lack of interest in political participation, which is accompanied by heightened expectations and demands in regard to the public administration. An important aspect of accountability is also the desire of social policy makers to transfer all responsibility for public welfare to the individual, thus ignoring the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity that are so important for good governance. In some cases, a clearly absurd, in others, an unclearly defined distribution of responsibility has been a major deterrent to Latvia's human development in a number of vitally important areas.

Lack of understanding has frequently prevented a harmonious relation between responsibility and accountability in concrete areas of social life. A number of the authors point out a tendency to create overly formal and overblown control mechanisms (accounting procedures) that do not lead to a culture of responsibility but rather to exaggerated bureaucracy and formalism. But the opposite trend can also be observed, where too much responsibility is left to the individual and too little attention is paid to effective accounting procedures. In both cases, the balance between responsibility and accountability has been upset. Disenchantment with the social system, unclear future prospects, the growing marginalization of various groups, economic segregation, and an increase in violence – these are just a few manifestations of the lack of accountability.

The authors of this Report do not believe that there is just one appropriate mechanism for ensuring accountability in the economy, the social sector, education, environmental protection, and other areas. The distribution of responsibility between individuals, the public administration, non-governmental organizations and social groups, as well as the correlation between responsibility and accountability are historically and culturally determined within a concrete society. But the baseline is clear: accountability is rooted in the readiness of the individual to show concern for things that go beyond one's immediate personal

needs or those of one's kin. The authors have sought to show how accountability is understood and manifested in Latvia not by applying a seemingly universal ideal but primarily by describing and generalizing manifestations of accountability – the strong and the weak signs – in our own country. The concrete distribution of responsibility between individuals, social groups and the state, and the relationship between responsibility and accountability form and develop hand in hand with democratic and transparent decision making. For this reason, the Report's analyses of different areas of accountability can serve as a recommendation for redefining the nature and the boundaries of accountability, as necessitated by today's reality in Latvia.

This Human Development Report is not an exhaustive analysis of accountability problems in present-day Latvia. We realize that there are a number of important aspects that have not been examined in this Report. Nevertheless, we hope that the Report will encourage readers to consider and discuss issues of accountability. If so, our working group will consider its task as having been fulfilled.

A Note on the Crisis

The events of 2009 in Latvian politics and economics confirm an old insight – the flow of historical time is not uniform. Relatively calm periods, when little changes in the life of people and the state, give way to periods of drastic change, when something new and heretofore not seen is born in a short time. Such were the years of the «Singing Revolution», and it seems that 2009, when the crisis shook Latvia and drastic budget cuts affected all inhabitants of Latvia, will be remembered as such a year as well. The experience of crisis, which began to be felt during the maturation of this report, had not yet reached its culmination at the time of publication. This experience will evidently leave deep traces on the life of Latvia's inhabitants, their sense of well-being and their relations.

Work on the report was begun in the fall of 2008, when the first crisis alarm bells began to sound, the state took over «Parex bank» and the economic downturn began to take shape. The Latvian version of the report was published at the end of 2009, when it was clear that the crisis struck Latvia hardest of all the European Union's member states. Responsibility and accountability rapidly moved from topics of merely academic concern to basic issues on the public's agenda.

In public discourse, the question is raised with increasing frequency: why did the ruling elite in Latvia ignore for so long all the warnings about the unbalanced growth of the economy? What kind of responsibility is borne by the leaders of bankrupt financial institutions, whose business risks are now being paid by taxpayers? What kind of responsibility rests with international lenders – the International Monetary Fund and the European Commission? Given the topicality of the issues of accountability and responsibility, this report is timely. Events and trends in the Latvian economy and social and political life testify to the importance of responsibility as a resource – starting with the responsibility of the political elite for choosing the

correct path of national development and ending with the responsibility of each individual for himself/herself, their kin, and for the cultural, social and ecological environment in which we all live.

At the same time, it should be noted that the developments over the last year have been unprecedented in their pace. Thus, it is understandable that the report could not fully investigate all the issues of accountability and responsibility we can detect now and which brought us all to

where we are today. Research requires time, careful data collection, compilation and analysis. For this reason most of the data refer to 2008 and the first half of 2009. At the same time, the issues analyzed have clear relevance for subsequent years, the analysis of which will be the task of the next report. One thing is clear, though – the crisis marks a fundamental turning point in the significance of responsibility and accountability at all levels, in all relations and realms of life.



I, We, the World

- 1.1 INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY:
THE CHALLENGE OF THE CURRENT CRISIS
- 1.2 RESPONSIBILITY AND PARTICIPATION
- 1.3 ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY:
BEHAVIOUR AND MORALS
- 1.4 HISTORY – RESPONSIBILITY – MEMORY:
LATVIA'S CASE
- 1.5 EXPERT OPINIONS AND INTERVIEWS
A RESPONSIBLE ATTITUDE TOWARDS
THE LATVIAN LANGUAGE
RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CULTURAL HERITAGE:
ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROBLEMS

Individual Responsibility: The Challenge of the Current Crisis¹

Tālis Tisenkopfs

People have always been confronted with the question of responsibility when attempting to define the possibilities, boundaries and consequences of their behaviour. The problem of responsibility confronts all who see themselves as free individuals and citizens, responsible not only for their own lives, but also for social, national and global processes. Responsibility is the reverse side of freedom – a seemingly reflexive but actually quite practical activity, which not only anticipates the evaluation of one's behaviour and its consequences but, where necessary, changes this behaviour or makes corrections thereto. This chapter analyzes the **responsibility of the individual** for his/her own life and for the common good, advocating the view that human development is promoted if each person, acting either individually or collectively, assumes responsibility not only for himself or herself but for the overall welfare of society as well.

Spheres of Individual Responsibility, Principles and Problems

The individual is free and entitled to work in any area – the economy, politics, social life, culture – in the private or the public sphere, so that the boundaries of an individual's responsibility can be fairly expansive. The behaviour or the responsibility of the individual cannot be confined to

personal life, family, «one's own little corner of the world.» The individual exercises responsibility in any area in which he/she is active (see Box 1.1).

As a citizen and a member of society, the individual shares responsibility for areas that may seem far removed from one's sphere of influence and outside the framework of one's personal life, for example: ecology, the economy, or politics. These are areas of public responsibility, but areas in which people's «small deeds» can have great impact. By sorting waste or saving energy, the individual can make a small contribution to the resolution of global environment problems (ecological or environmental responsibility). By taking part in elections, referenda, civic movements and the work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the individual can contribute to policy quality and influence decisions at the municipal or the national level (political responsibility). By cooperating with neighbours in local initiative groups, the individual can take part in cleaning up the neighbourhood, planning development, or improving the quality of the environment (community responsibility). By working in professional associations, the individual can help to improve the competitive capacity of a business or whole sectors of industry (economic responsibility). By taking part in the negotiation of collective agreements between labour unions and employers, the individual can promote a socially responsible economy (corporate responsibility). In these ways, it is possible for every person to make a small contribution to strengthening a society's collective responsibility.

¹ The author would like to thank Ilze Lāce and Ieva Strode for their help in processing the survey data.



A society's overall level of responsibility develops through a give-and-take process in which individuals, companies, government institutions, political parties, citizen groups, municipalities, the state, and global organizations must all exercise their share of responsibility. In the private sphere, responsibility must be assumed by individuals, families, households, private companies; in the public sphere, by the state, municipalities, public enterprises, public administration institutions, political parties. The confluence of all these separate responsibilities forms a society's overall level of responsibility. On the other hand, the sum of individual cases of irresponsibility forms collective irresponsibility. Responsibility is the «reverse side» of development; it makes it possible to judge whether the exploitation of freedom is in keeping with the goals of human development.

Public accountability or responsibility for the consequences of one's behaviour in a public interest context, nowadays has four main obstacles. One is **exaggerated individualism and lack of consideration for society's common interests**. Individualism has been promoted by liberal ideology (Zobena 2007). People have started to look after only their own interests and to dissociate themselves from the common good or – even worse – to try to appropriate it, for example, by privatizing a state-owned airfield, public park or beach. Latvia's recent history is full of such examples of behaviour dictated by self-interest. By thinking only of private interests, a society destroys the framework of its existence – common values and ideals – and, in doing so, slows down long-term development. Many of those who belong to Latvia's political elite have proved to be self-seekers or have cowardly remained silent, and this has had a crushing effect on public morale. Seeing their political leaders engaged in the appropriation of public property without having to fear either moral or legal sanctions, people lose their motivation to feel any responsibility for their country.

The second obstacle is the **privatization of profits and nationalization of losses**. This problem was harshly highlighted by the global financial crisis, when governments hastened to use public finances to save private banks and companies that had acted irresponsibly. In Latvia, too,

society must now pay for the inefficiency or selfishness of many business managers (e.g. Parex Bank, Latvian Radio). The method – to appropriate profit-generating business sectors, enterprises or their subordinate units and leave the unprofitable ones to the state – was devised during the privatization process in Latvia and is still being applied. Leading politicians and interest groups connected with politicians lobby actively for economic projects that are essentially financed with public money (e.g. the small power stations from which the state-owned Latvenergo power company buys energy at double the normal rate). Persons close to the ruling parties attempt to «steal» public property (e.g. the digitalization affair with the aim of taking over Latvian Mobile Telephone shares). Invisible groupings of politicians, local government officials, and their business partners exploit large infrastructure projects as an opportunity for stealing (according to the State Audit Office, the Riga City Council deliberately hiked construction costs for the Southern Bridge and invented devious financing procedures to embezzle as much as 27 million lats) (Ērgle 2009). A vivid example of profit privatization and loss nationalization is the partly state-owned *airBaltic* airline. The director's yearly salary exceeds 300,000 lats, the company's losses in 2008 were several million lats, but the government has granted the airline subsidies in the millions to keep it flying (Jemberga 2009). Lately, self-interested politicians have started to use public-private partnerships (PPP) as an instrument of theft (e.g. the attempt of the Transportation Ministry to grant a 99-year concession for operation of the Riga Airport to the winner of a dubious bidding procedure). Even renewable energy – the hope of the future – is subject to corrupt deals and consumer exploitation.

The third obstacle to public accountability is **the weakness of collective responsibility mechanisms**. In Latvia, the institutional mechanisms of public accountability are weak (Tisenkopfs and Kalniņš 2002). People do not believe in the possibilities of collective action, lack the skills to form networks and partnerships, to cooperate. People do not trust each other. On a scale from 1 to 10 (answers to the question: «What do you think: can people generally be trusted, must one be extremely cautious in dealing

Box
1.2

To a Pupil. *Walt Whitman*

Is reform needed? Is it through you?

The greater the reform needed, the greater the personality you need to accomplish it.

You! do you not see how it would serve to have eyes, blood, complexion, clean and sweet?

Do you not see how it would serve to have such a Body and Soul, that when you enter the crowd, an atmosphere of desire and command enters with you, and every one is impress'd with your personality?

O the magnet! the flesh over and over!

Go, dear friend! if need be, give up all else, and commence to-day to inure yourself to pluck, reality, self-esteem, definiteness, elevatedness;

Rest not, till you rivet and publish yourself of your own personality.

with people?» where 1 meant «must be cautious» and 10 meant «can be trusted»), the average rating was 4.78. There is a fundamental connection between trust, capacity to act, and accountability. The self-interest of politicians and people's lack of trust is the biggest obstacle to development in Latvia. For this reason, it is important to fight corruption and learn to understand the possibilities that working together and cooperating can open up for development (Tisenkopfs, Lāce and Mierīņa 2008, 87-110).

The fourth factor that has a curbing impact on public accountability is **the silence and indifference of the people**. This is a curious symbiosis of egoism, fear, cowardice and insecurity, which silences people and prevents them from opposing incorrect behaviour. The silence is a leftover from the days of totalitarianism, when it was dangerous for people to publicly voice their opinions or oppose the regime. In a democracy, it is the duty of a citizen to speak and to act. Staying silent, accepting irresponsible behaviour, giving up when confronted with injustice, leads to participation in the absurd and ultimately – to personal distress.

It is possible to conclude that, although the boundaries of responsibility are not clearly defined, accountability

is something quite concrete because behaviour, too, is concrete. **Responsibility demands civic confidence, will and effort**. If an individual, organization, politician, or state is not ready to assume responsibility, it is better to refrain from action. Accountability completes an action, shows it in the light of sustainability, in the moral and social dimension. Accountability is stimulated by appreciation for behaviour that promotes human development and by censure, punishment for behaviour that hinders development. At present, it is important in Latvia not only to concretize responsibility but also to condemn – morally and legally – the irresponsible behaviour that has hindered human development and has led to a weak economy, debts, lack of faith, and high-level corruption.

Individual Responsibility towards One's Self

Responsibility is rightly considered to begin with one's self. To analyze individual welfare strategies and changes therein, the respondents of the 2005 and 2008 surveys were asked what they had done or planned to do to improve their lives. The question included 22 possible activities. A

Box
1.3

Life improvement activities

(Question: «Which of the below have you done in the past year or plan to do to improve your life?» The answers «have done in the past year» and «plan to do in the near future» have been totaled; % of respondents)

Activity <i>(significant increases marked in purple; decreases marked in grey)</i>	November 2008	July 2005
Has devoted / plans to devote more time to family	60	51
Has tried / plans to eat healthy food	59	65
Has started / plans to start working more	55	40
Has started / plans to start caring more for children, grandchildren	53	50
Has dealt with / plans to deal with the problems of friends, acquaintances	45	41
Has devoted / plans to devote more time to recreation	45	35
Has started to / plans to make more money	45	41
Has improved / plans to improve relations with spouse, partner	43	42
Has renovated / plans to renovate home	43	54
Has attended / plans to attend courses, seminars, has improved / plans to improve qualifications	38	37
Has looked for / plans to look for a better job	38	35
Has engaged in / plans to engage in physical fitness activities, sports	37	32
Has taken / plans to take a bank loan	26	19
Has taken / plans to take a vacation trip abroad	26	23
Has taken out / plans to take out health, life insurance	25	33
Has engaged in / plans to engage in private business	14	9
Has relocated / plans to relocate	13	11
Has deposited / plans to deposit money in the bank	12	10
Has purchased / plans to purchase real estate	10	12
Has participated / plans to participate in the work of a non-governmental organization	9	9
Has worked / plans to work abroad	9	8
Has studied / plans to study abroad	5	5

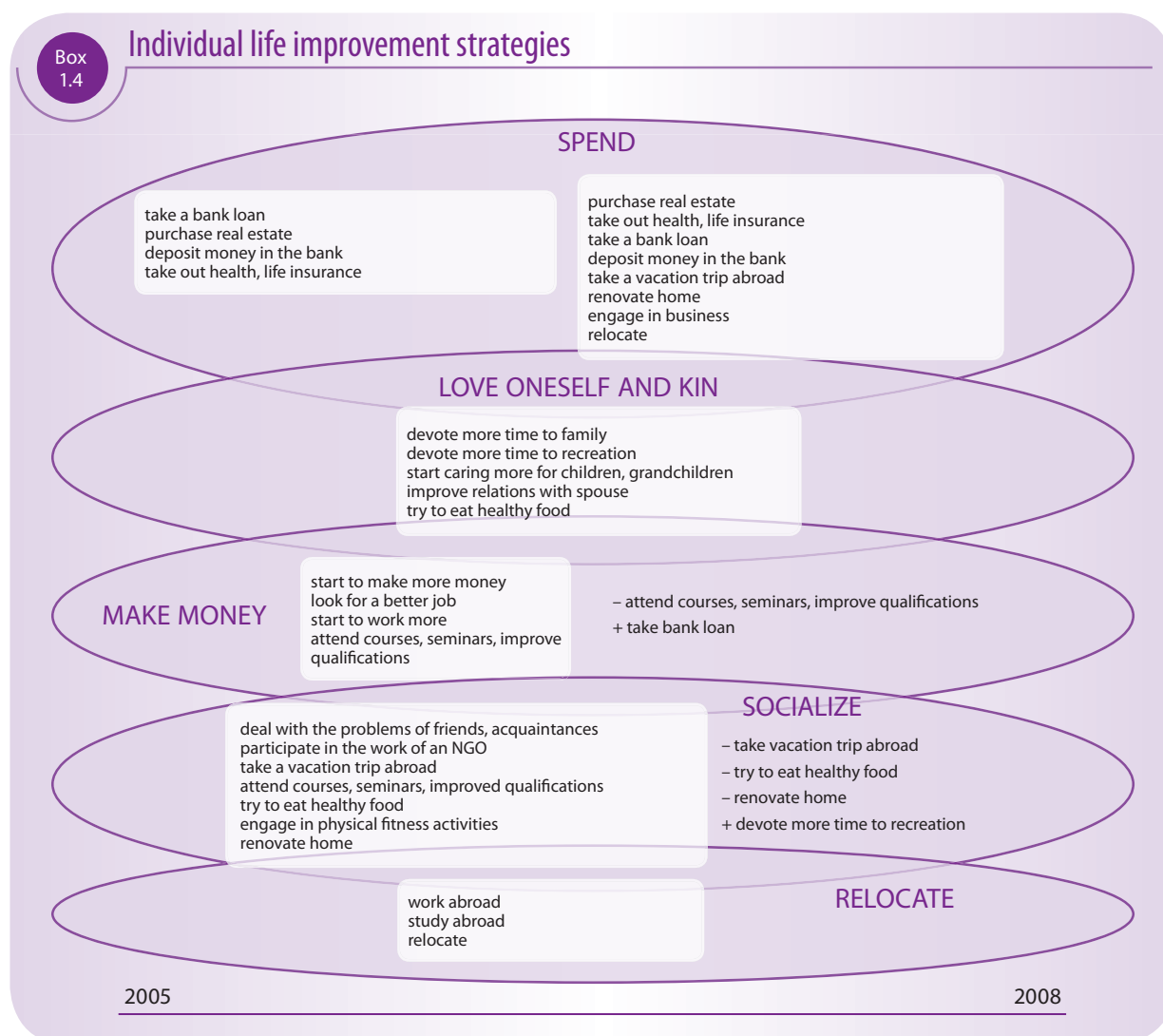
Source: SKDS 2008 (T19); SKDS 2005.

comparison of the results of both surveys (Box 1.3) shows an increase in the number of people who spend more time with their families, have started to work more, have taken bank loans, devote more time to recreation, are engaged in or plan to engage in business projects. At the same time, there is a decline in the number of respondents who have renovated their homes, insured their health, or made an effort to eat healthy food.

A factor analysis of the answers (a method that groups correlated activities) makes it possible to identify five individual life-improvement strategies and establish their dynamics. These strategies are: «to spend,» «to love oneself and one's next of kin,» «to make money,» «to socialize,» and «to relocate» (see Box 1.4). The strategies include a number of complementary activities. Any number of strategies can manifest themselves in the life of a concrete person. One of them may be the dominant strategy, but in a social context they must be interpreted as key behavioural orientations that relate to society's value orientations and determine the life model of individuals and households.

The strategy that has manifested itself most prominently in recent years is the **strategy to increase personal welfare**, which can be reduced to one word – «spending.» This is illustrated by people's efforts to increase their income and to spend this on improvement of the quality of life. In 2005,

this strategy was illustrated by activities that involved bank loans, real estate purchases, savings deposits, health and life insurance. A rapid improvement of personal finances became possible due to Latvia's rapid economic growth and expansion of the consumer market. The gross national product (GNP) 2004 – 2007 grew by 8.8%, 11.2%, 11.7%, and 9.8%, respectively (4th quarter figures). At the household level, this was manifested as higher salaries, higher disposable incomes, and improvement of family finances. Latvia's average monthly salary rose from 383 lats in December 2006 to 480 and 526 lats in December 2007 and 2008, respectively. During the period of economic growth, it was easy to find a job and get a bank loan. At the beginning of the 21st century, a consumer society was emerging in Latvia. More and more goods and services became available, and places where money could be spent proliferated: department stores and shopping malls were built, restaurants and recreation centres opened. Air traffic development opened up new possibilities for travelling and spending money abroad. This encouraged people to spend and enjoy. A society that had endured such a long time in conditions of deprivation and want was eager to adopt new forms of consumerism: people went shopping, took out mortgages, bought on credit, travelled, leased cars, etc.



Consumerism is not an abstract invasion of Western culture. It is real acquisition and spending of financial resources, which was put into practice by the people of Latvia. The 2008 survey shows that spending included more and more activities connected with satisfaction of the demands of a new lifestyle, for example: purchasing and furnishing new homes, buying durable goods, travelling and vacationing abroad, moving to new locations, etc. Plans to start a business were also frequently connected with the availability of financial resources – as a purely monetary and not a strategic idea.

The second strategy established by the survey is **to love oneself and one's next of kin**. This manifests itself as spending time with the family, caring for children and grandchildren, improving relations with the spouse or partner, devoting more time to recreation, paying attention to physical fitness. These activities are oriented towards human contacts and concern for one's body, which are needed not only for a person to work well, but also to feel well. For this reason, people try to eat healthy food, engage in physical activities, devote time to beauty care, etc. A comparison of the 2005 and 2008 surveys shows that «to love oneself and one's next of kin» has proved to be an enduring strategy, and the activities that it encompasses have not changed. This indicates that human relationships and self care are stable basic values, which are not directly connected with one's financial situation. This strategy may prove to be extremely helpful in overcoming the crisis.

The third strategy is **to work and make money**. This entails efforts to work more, make more money, and find a better job. It shows the individual as an economic being and expresses the individual's productive function: to work, produce value, make money. It is significant that in 2005 the moneymaking strategy was connected with education: attendance of courses and seminars and improvement of qualifications. In 2008, however, this strategy relates more to bank loans, and education more to the socialization function (association with others). The «alienation» of education from productivity and the association of loans with making money should be viewed with caution. It could indicate that people are wrongly beginning to subscribe to the notion that not learning but borrowing will increase disposable income. The main function of education is to develop the individual's working capacity and promote economic activity. It appears that, in recent years, education has not been the key to getting a better job or a higher income in Latvia. It has been easier to go to the bank than to go to school. The loan boom has severed the link between education and welfare, and has more or less «ousted» education from welfare endeavours. Now, this link will have to be restored.

The fourth strategy could be called **socializing**: dealing with problems together with friends and acquaintances, participation in the work of non-governmental organizations. To these activities, the factor analysis adds physical education and sports, courses and seminars. Participation in public life is connected with concern for the quality of one's own life. A comparison of the 2005 and 2008 surveys shows a less pronounced trend towards socialization, an indication that people in Latvia have become greater individualists. This is not particularly good news for human

development or for dealing with the current crisis. For example, tourism and vacations abroad, which not so long ago were collective ventures, have now become purely individual forms of recreation connected with the availability of financial resources. Home renovation and healthy food are also not as closely linked to social communication as they once were, but they too are connected with the availability of resources.

And finally, the fifth life improvement strategy is **relocation**. This means that people go (or plan to go) abroad to work or study, move to a different location in Latvia or beyond its borders. This strategy is connected with the growing geographic mobility of the population and has in recent years proved to be a stable strategy.

An individual's behaviour and responsibility are affected by the degree to which the individual is content with his/her life and by possibilities to make changes. Contentment is considered to be a subjective indicator for quality of life. In Latvia, in recent years, contentment has not increased despite the improvement of material welfare. In a comparison of survey results (EDzDAUF 2003, SKDS 2008, T17). (answers to the question: «How content or discontent are you generally with your present life?» where 1 means «absolutely discontent» and 10 means «absolutely content»), in Latvia, the average rating for contentment with life in 2003 was 5.5; in 2005, 6.1; in 2006, 5.9; in 2008, 5.87. For comparison: the average rating in the European Union is 7.1 (Bela and Tisenkopfs 2006, 29). One explanation for this relatively great discontent is Latvia's low welfare rating – Latvia is still one of the poorest EU Member States. Another is the fact that people are not happy with social conditions or with government policy.

Responsibility is also affected by people's capacity to control their own lives. In a comparison of answers to the question, «To what extent do you control your own life?» (1 means «I have no control,» and 10 means «I have full control»), the rating for 2005 was 7.02; for 2006, 6.7; for 2008, 6.98. Even the years of economic growth apparently could not strengthen people's belief in their capacity to control their lives. This suggests that the sudden economic boom did not bring about profound changes in society's capacity to take action but, instead, promoted the strengthening of consumerism as a value.

Behaviour and Responsibility in Times of Crisis

The current economic crisis is changing the behaviour and the life improvement strategies of the individual. Some of the strategies have become hard to sustain (to spend, to make money), others are helping to survive difficult times (to love oneself and one's next of kin, to socialize). New forms of behaviour are also emerging, for example: cost-cutting, economical use of resources, helping each other, physical activity, and others that could evolve into sustainable life strategies.

During times of crisis, money cannot be spent as before. In the 4th quarter of 2008, GNP declined by 11.4% as compared to the same period in the previous year; in the 1st quarter of 2009, by 18%. The recent consumption explosion has been replaced by an implosion: a large

part of the population is rapidly running out of money at the same time as needs and financial obligations remain unchanged. Salaries are being cut, incomes are dwindling, and unemployment is growing. According to the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, unemployment has gone up from 6.5% in the 1st quarter of 2008 to 13.9% in the 1st quarter of 2009. The per capita disposable income of households is declining. Many employers have cancelled premiums, health insurance and other benefits. Some companies are returning to the old practice of making under-the-table salary payments, which reduces the social guarantees of employees.

For a large part of the population accustomed to spending money, the curtailed incomes are causing economic and psychological stress, aggravated by uncertainty about the future. Those with mortgage loans are in the most difficult situation. According to the Association of Latvian Commercial Banks, 160,000 households in Latvia have mortgage loans. A survey carried out by the DnB Nord Bank in February 2009 showed that 10% could no longer keep up with their mortgage payments and 50% were having difficulties (Diena 2009). An SKDS survey shows a similar picture: 40% of Latvia's households have some kind of loan and almost all are worried about repayment (NRA 2009). All in all, 20% of those who have mortgage loans are having financial difficulties. The same applies to 40% of the population with any type of loan. And 70% – 90% of the population has had to take salary cuts.

In a situation like this, people reassess their lifestyles, consume less, and re-orientate themselves toward cost-cutting or even non-monetary strategies – toward satisfying their needs without the use of money. The crisis has encouraged people to find different ways of saving money: public transportation is used more in place of personal vehicles, heating is turned down at work and at home, daily expenses are rationalized, advantage is taken of price discounts, etc. Although this behaviour is crisis-inspired, it gets people used to leading more economical, «green,» environment-friendly lives. These are the indirect benefits from the crisis.

The crisis limits financial resources, but it does not deplete people's intellectual, cultural or social resources, which can be put to even greater use – for example, cooperation. A paradoxical benefit from the crisis is more spare time. For a long time, Latvia found itself among those countries in which people had the longest working week. Now, due to unemployment, part-time work and reduced work loads, many have spare time that can be devoted to other activities. As job opportunities dwindle, students are attending lectures more diligently, Ph.D. students are devoting more time to their doctoral dissertations, and scientists are publishing more papers because funding for laboratory work has been cut. Many are beginning to work out at the gym because they finally have the time. People have once again started gardening in their backyards, growing their own food – something that had been almost forgotten during the «fat years.»

During times of crisis people are also more focused on their private lives (love oneself and one's next of kin), concentrate on basic values, and appreciate the

importance of help and support. In answer to the question, «If you met someone in a difficult situation (no means of support, housing problems, unemployment, violence in the family), how would you be most likely to react?», 45% of the respondents said they would try to help; 31% said they would inform this person about an agency or NGO to which he or she could turn for help; 35% said they would inform a social service or social worker about this person. This indicates that, at least at the level of intentions, people in Latvia are willing to provide support for each other.

Unfortunately, the crisis has encouraged many to depart from Latvia to seek a better life elsewhere, as was the case during this century's first emigration wave in 2004-2005, when about 90 thousand people left Latvia and went to work abroad (Krišjāne 2007). People in Latvia are fairly positively disposed towards those who have recently sought work abroad: 46% of the respondents have a positive judgement of these people, 39% are neutral, and only 11% have a negative judgement.

The crisis makes people take a fresh look at their professional and social identity. Previously, the welfare of many professional groups had a speculative basis. It was easy to get money, a higher salary, speculate, raise prices. So why work, do one's best, improve the quality of goods and services? Real estate speculators, financial intermediaries, advertising agents, stockbrokers, media producers and similar groups of people were drawn into speculative sectors where they produced no new value but simply recycled what someone else had produced. Even in the productive sectors (manufacturing, construction, education) productivity was low. The crisis is making people ask themselves questions about their professional identity and future behaviour. How productive is my work? Does society need what I produce, is there a demand for it on the market? What will Latvia's economy and the global economy be like when the crisis is over? Will my know-how and skills still be needed? How can I make money and increase my income? Perhaps I should cooperate with others? The crisis is making people reassess their former strategies and encouraging individuals and organizations to come up with new ideas.

Crisis, Reassessment of Values, New Strategies

A crisis is a break in routine. The current crisis clearly highlights the weak points of Latvia's economy and policy. The economic culture and ethos of the Latvian nation are based on the idea that welfare is created by a logical and continuous process which begins with education (development of human capital), continues as productive, diligent, often hard work (productivity) that rewards the doer with the sweet fruits of labour (income, welfare). Prosperity is acquired through individual initiative, entrepreneurship, and cooperation where this should be necessary. By acting accordingly, the people of Latvia have achieved a high level of material welfare during previous periods in their history, and Latvia could at times be counted among Europe's most developed countries (at the turn of the 20th century, in the 1930s). Since the renewal of independence, the economic ethos has changed, and development has

contradicted historical experience. On the one hand, globalization and the alignment of Latvia's economy with global markets has promoted the competitive capacity of individual companies and also broadened the opportunities of the individual; on the other hand, imprudent and unilateral exploitation of the opportunities provided by globalization (loans, consumption, imports) has destroyed the nation's productive potential – manufacturing, export, innovation, the work ethic, know-how. During the past decade, many began to wrongly believe that the road to prosperity no longer began with education and continued with work and initiative but that, instead, there was a direct route from wishes to the good life by way of loans. In the worst case, this road has been a dark trail of corruption, state capture, appropriation of the common for the private good, misappropriation of public resources, at the end of which a handful of political millionaires stands out against a background of national distress. Latvia's recent history can be depicted as a pair of scissors with contradictory ups and down in the nation's economic and intellectual development (see Box 1.5).

The figure in Box 1.5 illustrates the lack of balance between the productive and the spending function at the macro-level, previously analyzed at the micro-level. It shows how human development begins to regress if increased welfare is not based on balanced economic development and increased productivity but rather on borrowing and spending, accompanied at the political level by self-interest and corruption.

The economy is the basis of human development both at the state and the individual level. Concern for welfare always calls for a critical analysis of economic processes. In Latvia, however, during the economic boom hardly anyone questioned the sustainability of an economic model based on consumer loans, the predominance of imports over

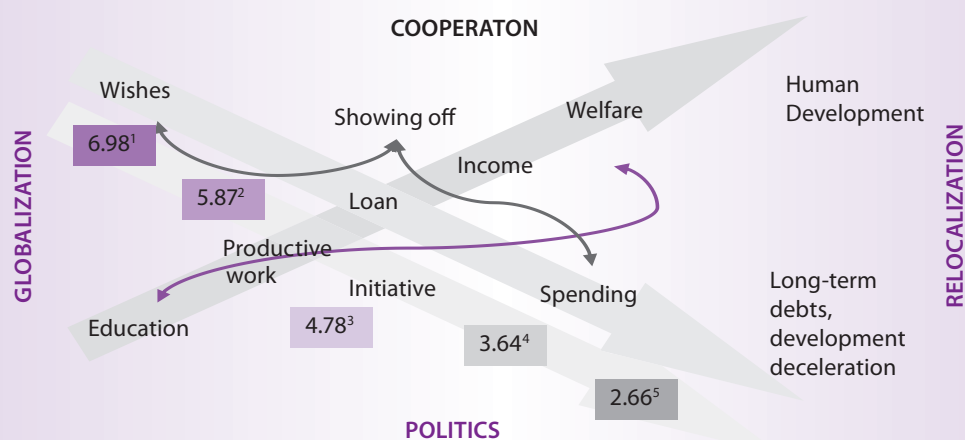
exports, middle man services, real estate speculation, and degradation of the industrial sector. Long-term economic thinking was inherent to neither the Latvian government, nor policy planners, nor a large part of the population. Prime Minister Aigars Kalvītis called this unbalanced growth the «fat years.» In reality, it was nothing but the urge to get money quickly and spend money quickly. A universal consumerism ideology was propagated and accordingly implemented by the government, the municipalities, and investors. Traditional Latvian values such as prudence, caution, and thrift could not withstand the all-embracing surge of consumerism. The generation of twenty- and thirty-year-olds, urbanites, well-paid public and private sector employees became true spending avant-gardists with no thought for tomorrow. Scandinavian banks flooded Latvia with «easy money» that created no added value but multiplied through speculation. People greedily grasped for this money. The political elite, too, rushed to join the spending spree. EU Structural Fund resources were diverted to companies owned by friends and to municipalities ruled by the right political parties; jobs were created for highly paid «counselors» and «consultants,» for members of «boards» and «advisory boards.» Appropriating and squandering taxpayers' money was the universal *modus vivendi* of the political elite.

Development is degraded not only by a general desire to spend money but also by the misuse of politics for private gain. This is why people in Latvia do not trust politicians and public officials, believing them to be concerned only with private, not public interests. When judging whether or not politicians and public officials observe public interests, on a scale where 0 means «not at all» and 10 means «absolutely,» the respondents' average rating was 3.64. People do not believe that political leaders are concerned with the interests of society. Development is

Box 1.5

Ups and downs of the nation's economic and intellectual development

(SKDS November 2008 survey results)



¹ Average contentment rating on a 10 point scale (Latvian population survey 2008)

² Average self-control/ life control rating on a 10 point scale

³ Average mutual trust rating on a 10 point scale

⁴ Average rating of politicians'/bureaucrats' observance of public interests on a 10 point scale

⁵ Average rating of citizens' capacity to influence work of Saeima deputies on a 10 point scale

undermined in Latvia largely by self-interest on the part of political leaders and distrust on the part of the people – a diagnosis of the nation's downward slide.

A particular phenomenon is the incapacity to handle money when it is available. This incapacity manifests itself in overly expensive cars that owners cannot afford, houses that cannot be maintained, unsuitable plans for highways and high-rises. The empty ghost houses, the unfinished suburban estates, the anti-human new buildings will for a long time to come remind us of wasted money that could have been spent on small but real life improvements. Indeed, nothing degrades people as much as money that is easily come by.

Now, life on credit is proving to be a mistake. Borrowed prosperity is waning. The millionaire who has lost a fortune on the stock market admits that the crisis has only taken the surplus. The son of the minister's chauffeur (a scandalous case in which former Transportation Minister Ainārs Šlesers appointed his chauffeur's son to a high position in the administration) has been fired. The time of illusory economics and easy money has come to an end, raising the poignant question: what is the economic basis of Latvia and its people? In the past, it has always been productive work: industrial production, farming, trade and commerce – industries based on skill,

know-how, and the work ethic, with added initiative, risk and financial capital. Never before has Latvia's economic basis been as fictitious and unstable as in recent years. Today, the people and the state have long-term debts: households and businesses owe foreign banks 16 billion lats, the government has borrowed several billion euros from the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund to cover its budget deficit. This means that, from now on, each human development necessity will come up against a chronic lack of money: families will find it difficult to send their children to school and pay the mortgage or rent, the government will find it difficult to pay teachers' salaries and provide healthcare. Unbalanced economic growth has placed a lasting burden on human development. Responsibility for this must be assumed by the government and the political parties, which lacked a strategic vision and were more concerned with their own welfare. The banks, the foreign and domestic investors who were interested in quick profits are also responsible. And the people, who forgot about the work ethic and tried to borrow prosperity, are also not without blame.

Nevertheless, a crisis is also a good time for innovation, and this can lead to better development. The current crisis has taught a number of important lessons (see Box 1.6).

Box
1.6

Lessons of the crisis

- The crisis clearly exposes the fundamental weaknesses of Latvia's economy: low productivity and a lack of innovation. This means that the economy of the future must be based on knowledge, innovation and good social organization.
- The crisis clearly exposes the self-interest and corruptibility of politicians, their irresponsibility and impunity. The crisis mobilizes civic consciousness, encourages people to become involved in the development of more responsible, more competent, and more honest politics.
- The crisis highlights the negative qualities that have landed Latvia in this dilemma (egotism, separatism, selfishness, foolishness) and the true values upon which development should be based (respect, knowledge, initiative, excellence, cooperation, and others) (Baumanis, Jaunzeme, Tisenkopfs 2007). The crisis encourages individuals, municipalities, sectors, businesses, knowledge institutions to cooperate.
- A time of crisis is a good time for innovation in all areas of life.

Box
1.7

The dynamics of political participation

(«Yes» answers to the question, «Have you done any of the below?» – % of respondents)

Forms of political participation (significant increases marked in purple; decreases marked in grey)	2008	2005
Participated in referendum (2008); signed appeal for referendum (2005)	52	23
Met with local government officials	18	25
Met with journalists	12	16
Attended public hearings	11	14
Met with Saeima deputies	10	13
Participated in strikes	7	2

Source: SKDS 2008, T18; SKDS 2005.

Lack of money does not in itself mean a crisis. A real crisis is when one no longer knows what to do.

Individual Responsibility for Society

As previously pointed out, the individual is responsible not only for his/her personal welfare but also for the common good. The common good describes objects that are shared by all (e.g. roads, infrastructure, biological diversity, the education system) and the principles and behaviour that provide this good (e.g. wise policies, the rule of law, adherence to democratic standards, cooperation, etc.). It is the duty of every citizen to show concern for the common public good, and the best way to do this is through involvement in collective activities.

The individual can exercise responsibility for society by becoming involved in politics. The 2005 and 2008 surveys included a question about forms of political participation (see Box 1.7).

There have been more strikes in recent years. This indicates that employees are prepared to fight for their

economic interests; it also testifies to the activity of labour unions. Membership in political parties is extremely low in Latvia. No more than 1-2% of the population has joined a political party, nor does participation in NGOs exceed 5-6%.

Civic activity is more focused on the professional, religious, cultural, or sports dimensions than on the political dimension. Studies confirm that involvement in cultural and sports organizations in particular increases the social capital and the cooperation networks of both the individual and the community, and this has a positive impact on the competitive capacity of businesses and the quality of life in the region (Tisenkopfs and Lāce, forthcoming).

Mechanisms of Collective Accountability

Individuals alone cannot create a responsible society even if they demonstrate model behaviour. Responsibility is a collective process in which the individual members

Box
1.8

Greatest Achievements, Most Serious Problems, Most Important Tasks

Major Achievements

The «small» responsibility strategies (cost-cutting, improvement of qualifications, learning, a conscientious attitude towards work, a «greener» lifestyle) are already emerging in the behaviour of individuals, and the «big» responsibility strategies (corporate cooperation, partnerships, regional cooperation, R&D projects, etc.), in the behaviour of organizations. People are gradually coming to understand that welfare requires effort, imagination, incentive, hard work and – yes – greater responsibility.

Most Serious Problem

The main problem as regards individual capability and responsibility is still widespread lack of confidence in one's own potential, lack of initiative, and poor cooperation. These weaknesses can be overcome by learning, keeping an open mind to new ideas, and seeking cooperation with like-minded persons.

Most Important Tasks

- People and organizations must be encouraged to give new initiatives and cooperation a chance. Social science experts must explain development as a collective process in which different interests and goals must be coordinated. Cooperation promotes the emergence of new businesses, strengthens collective standards, and makes it easier to deal with social problems.
- Universities, colleges, vocational schools, businesses, municipalities, public administration institutions must be involved in systematic and systemic cooperation. Universities and colleges must provide expertise and research results for commercial use. Advantage must be taken of new institutional concepts that promote innovation: business incubators, technology parks, innovation centres.
- The innovative skills of individuals and organizations must be developed: the capacity to cooperate, tolerance, the skill to resolve conflicts and manage cooperation. Innovation as a creative combination, an answer to a problem or an opportunity, is easier to effectuate collectively, involving experts from different areas. In the near future, eco-economics, environmental technologies, renewable energy resources, information technologies, creative industries, territorial management, social and education services, etc. are likely to be promising areas of innovation. Social science experts should assume the role of innovation brokers and stimulate cooperation between scientists, engineers, businesses, consumer organizations, NGOs, politicians, and other stakeholders in order to create new products and services, as well as new organizational solutions for education, healthcare, and social services.
- Idea markets, regional innovation forums, «auctions» of the work of students and researchers must be organized to promote new economic and social initiatives; good practice in cooperation must be popularized; scientists, students, businesses, potential clients and government institutions must be involved in innovations from the very start.
- For Latvia's long-term development, it is important that young professionals remain in or return to their regions once they have completed their education. This can be promoted through support for youth business activities in promising economic sectors and through the involvement of active and innovative people in wider cooperation networks.

of society align their notions of ethical, legal and socially acceptable behaviour, coordinate standards. This is why it is important to promote the mechanisms of collective accountability and take advantage of social capital. During times of crisis, it is particularly important to increase mutual trust and social activity – invaluable resources for recovery of the economy. The question of collective cooperation mechanisms is one the key questions of development. Collective approaches are needed not only in Latvia's national economy but also in education and regional development. The individual freedom of the past decades has increased individual capacity, so that the next stage in development philosophy could now be cognizance of the power of cooperation and co-creation (Tisenkopfs 2008).

Co-creation anticipates overcoming of sectoral, territorial, social and competency barriers, and collective response to challenges. It must be based on socially acceptable ideas. Co-creation requires three things: cooperation between people and organizations (the desire to cooperate, practical action), the institutionalization of cooperation (common standards, knowledge, values), and social capital (trust, cooperation). The world's most competitive economies and the highest human development indicators (income, health, education) can be found in the Nordic countries, which also have the highest social capital indicators. Latvia must make more active use of various forms of cooperation: collaboration, collective marketing, and participation in cultural and social organi-

zations that have historical roots in this country but were forgotten during the period of socialism.

In Latvia, cooperation is currently developing more at the local and regional levels than at the national level. The regions are seeing the emergence of marketing cooperatives (Tisenkopfs et al, forthcoming), service provider clusters (Tisenkopfs and Lāce 2008), urban-rural partnerships (Konsorts 2009), and innovative research and production clusters (Dimza 2006). One of the most promising areas of cooperation is renewable energy resources. For example, if a small-town manufacturer of heating systems (local economy) equips the local boiler house (technical innovation) with its product (competitive capacity) and buildings are heated with local fuel (local resources) that is supplied by forest owners (cooperation), and if the local residents agree among themselves and with the local government on heating costs (solidarity) and sign a contract with the energy producer (economic sustainability), and the government supports this initiative as part of a special alternative energy programme (political foresight), energy independence is increased at the local level (security), new jobs are created (quality of life), and environmental problems are addressed (ecological sustainability). It is possible to take much greater advantage of the potential for cooperation in Latvia. The main conclusion to be drawn from the crisis is that only individuals themselves – working either on their own or together with others – will overcome the difficulties and ensure sustainable development.

Responsibility and Participation

Ivars Ijabs

The Lithuanian-born Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas once said: responsibility cannot be preached, it can only be practiced. For the individual, practicing responsibility is always connected with personal behaviour, initiative, and readiness to apply one's time, know-how, and other resources. This is why responsibility often implies the readiness of the individual to participate in activities that contribute to the common good, to volunteer and demonstrate solidarity with others. Responsibility cannot be only what we expect of others: responsibility must be practiced not only in words but also in deeds.

In a modern, democratic society, people's lives are increasingly dictated by large-scale institutions: giant companies and corporations, the bureaucracy, the media, elections. This type of society requires individuals to cooperate with others to protect their interests and values. Today, capacity to cooperate is an indispensable prerequisite for social responsibility. A single individual can rarely prevail against the social systems that determine his/her life: the market economy, mass democracy, etc. The individual will have neither sufficient determination, nor resources, nor knowledge. However, when people learn to socialize, to form associations and work together to defend common interests, responsibility can be translated into concrete deeds. Cooperation with others brings awareness of one's own interests. Without such cooperation, people's problems would most likely fail to find concrete resonance in the decisions of the government.

This part of the Report will examine various aspects of public participation in Latvia. First, attention will be devoted to political participation – both formal (participation in elections, membership in political parties) and informal; then, to participation in non-governmental organizations, with a focus on organizations that cater to broader public interests (ecology, protection of human rights, social assistance, etc.); finally, to the values and orientations of people in Latvia that determine their readiness to participate and their attitude to democratic institutions. All these questions will be examined from a comparative perspective, looking into developments in Latvia itself and in a European context.

Political Participation

Elections and referenda

In a democracy, elections are the main form of political participation. Citizens in Latvia can take part in three types of elections (parliament, municipal, European Parliament). Latvia's Constitution also anticipates a number of opportunities for holding referenda and these have been quite frequently employed in recent years.

In a comparison with other European democracies, participation in Latvia is fairly high in all three types of elections. The highest rate of participation was registered in the 5th *Saeima* elections in 1993, when 89.9% of Latvia's citizens cast their vote. In the next three parliamentary elections, voter participation was fairly stable at about 71% (71.9% in 6th and 7th *Saeima* elections, 71.2% in the 8th *Saeima* elections). However, a significant drop in voter participation was registered in the 9th *Saeima* elections in 2006. The decline in voter activity to a level of 62.23% is a worrying phenomenon that testifies to growing civic passivity. Some researchers link this to the great «density» of elections and referendums after 2001, which could have caused a certain degree of participation fatigue (Ikstens and Runcis 2007). Voter participation in municipal elections (which traditionally have a lower rate of participation) is also on the decline: 61.98% in 2001, but only 52.85% in 2005. Admittedly, a certain role could have been played in 2005 by the newly introduced voting lists, which required voters to cast their votes in the district in which they are registered, inconveniencing many who found themselves elsewhere on the day of the elections. This was particularly evident in the big cities (SKDS, 2005).

In the past two years, referenda have been increasingly used as a way of settling political issues. From the renewal of independence in 1990 to 2007, only three referendums were held, two of which had a positive outcome. Three referendums were also held in the much shorter period from 2007 to 2008, but all three failed due to the lack of a quorum. The first referendum, in January 2007, was initiated by Latvia's then president Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga who sought to prevent amendments to the Law on National Security and the Law on National Security Institutions, which would have undermined national security. It is possible that her example encouraged politicians to apply this previously rarely used instrument and initiate two more referenda in 2008, proposing Constitutional amendments that would entitle the people to dismiss the *Saeima* and amendments to the Law on State Pensions.

None of these attempts succeeded. The greatest number of citizens (42% of all eligible voters or 629,119 citizens) participated in the August 2008 referendum on amendments to the Constitution. This was a huge number in view of the government's and the parliament's appeals to boycott the referendum. Nevertheless, the Constitution was not amended, this being possible only with an absolute majority. These incidents do, however, show certain trends in regard to civic participation.

First of all, despite the formally negative outcome, it cannot be said that the referenda produced no results. In all three cases, initiation of the referendum produced a change in attitude of the government and the parliament to the

issue in question. The *Saeima* annulled its amendments to the Law on National Security and the Law on National Security Institutions at the end of March, more than three months before the referendum on July 7, 2007. The referendum on amendments to the Law on State Pensions compelled the government to publicly declare its intention to raise pensions. Amendments to the Constitution entitling the people to initiate dismissal of the *Saeima* were adopted by the *Saeima* on April 8, 2009 – albeit, not in the version that had been proposed in the referendum – and this was largely due to the insistence of Latvia's president, Valdis Zatlers. This indicates that referenda still have huge potential not just as legislative instruments but also as a means of applying political pressure.

Secondly, the popularity of referenda is connected with growing antipathy towards the elite: people see direct democracy as a counterweight to political processes controlled by the current elite. It is from this perspective that growing demands for new forms of participation should be judged: e.g. municipal referenda, direct presidential elections, the possibility to dismiss individual *Saeima* deputies, etc.

Political Parties: Participation and Loyalty

Political parties belong to the central institutions of a modern democracy: it is in political parties that political will is formulated, young politicians are recruited, and participation is developed. Political parties serve as a special kind of «transmission belt» between the state and civil society, and the viability of democracy depends on whether or not they perform efficiently. The extent to which political parties are able to represent the values and interests of the people is determined by whether or not these interests and values are on their political agenda.

Latvia has an extremely pluralistic party spectrum. In May 2009, there were 51 political parties and alliances registered in Latvia, eight of which were represented in the *Saeima*. However, despite the fairly large number of parties, membership is not very high. In Latvia, only 1.2% of respondents admitted to membership in a political party or group. Among the Baltic Sea countries, Latvia and Poland rank lowest. For comparison: in Denmark, about 5% of the population has joined a political party; in Iceland, the figure is 20% (CBSS 2006). It should also be noted that a number of Latvia's social groups are rather poorly represented in the political parties: women, low-income groups, the population of certain regions (e.g. Latgale). At the same time, young people (aged 18-24) and older people (aged 55-74) represent a relatively high percentage of party members.

The question is whether parties themselves are interested in involving the larger public in their work. In regard to new members, the majority of parties, among them the recently founded Civic Union and the Society for a Different Politics, ask applicants to submit several recommendations from existing party members. Some parties, such as FF/LNIM, accept only Latvian citizens as members. In recent years, however, there has been more talk of increasing membership. In January 2007, the chairman of Latvia's First Party, Ainārs Šlesers, spoke of creating a powerful party with at least 10,000 members.

In February 2009, the People's Party presented a TV clip in which it invited people to join political parties. But the desire to increase membership has so far not resulted in actual increases. And the number of people who support political parties financially is also very small: only 0.9% of the population, which, of course, makes parties extremely dependent on the so-called big donors.

Another important aspect is whether or not people can identify their personal interests and values with one particular party in the long term, thus creating stable ties with this party. Due, in part, to Latvia's short period of democracy, voters display rather limited loyalty to specific parties. This leads to an unstable party system: in the first four parliamentary elections following the renewal of independence, the largest number of mandates was won by parties running for the first time. Although this trend was then broken, and the largest number of votes in the elections to the current *Saeima* was won by parties that were represented in previous parliaments, party rifts and divisions have resumed with new force in this legislative period. All this has gradually led to an alienation of voters from the party system, as indicated by the low ratings of political parties and the growing number of undecided voters.

Unconventional Participation

Since the renewal of independence, unconventional forms of participation – mass demonstrations, boycotts, civil disobedience – have not been typical for Latvia. There have been individual rallies and protest demonstrations, for example, the 1995 demonstrations against government policy in the «*Banka Baltija*» affair or the 1998 pensioner demonstration, but people have increasingly sought to express their views on political decisions through participation in public activities such as demonstrations and rallies only since 2003/2004. The first real mass events of this kind in Latvia were the 2004 protests against the Law on Education. A large part of Latvia's Russian-speaking population considered the rules on language use in minority schools to be unlawful. In the spring of 2004, the headquarters for the protection of Russian schools that had been set up in 2003 organized a variety of protest activities that included school boycotts, and rallies and demonstrations in downtown Riga with participation of several tens of thousands. Although there were a number of signs pointing to a connection between the headquarters and certain political parties (primarily, the opposition FHRUL) and political circles in Russia, the huge support for the protests showed that people in Latvia were increasingly prepared to protect their interests by way of public participation.

A new wave of public protests began after the parliamentary elections in 2007, when the ruling four-party coalition (PPP, GFU, FF/LNIM, LFP/LW) began to do things that a large part of Latvia's population considered to be unlawful. The previously mentioned amendments to the national security laws, election of the physician Valdis Zatlers to the office of president, investigation of *Saeima* chairman Indulis Emsis on suspicion of corruption, publication of a book which discredited the judiciary in Latvia, and, last but not least, Prime Minister Aigars Kalvītis' politically motivated attempt to get rid of the director of the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (KNAB),

Aleksejs Loskutovs, led to public action against the politics of the ruling coalition.

The activities that later became known as the «umbrella revolution» marked a turning point in political participation. The protests at the Saeima building on October 18 against the dismissal of Loskutovs and the rally in the Dom Square on November 9 «For the Rule of Law, for Honest Politics» signalled a confrontation between the people and the ruling coalition which was no longer based on the ethnopolitical issues that had previously dominated such confrontations in Latvia. The protests did not attract huge numbers of participants (approximately 10,000 people gathered in the Dom Square), but what they demanded was adherence to the basic principles of democracy – the rule of law and accountability of those in power. Although most of these events were seemingly ignored by the government and the *Saeima* majority, they caused a burst of activity in the upper echelons of power: Prime Minister Aigars Kalvītis resigned in December and was replaced by Ivars Godmanis, and KNAB director Aleksejs Loskutovs held on to his job until June of the following year.

A renewed wave of public protests in Latvia was provoked by the economic difficulties that began in the second half of 2008 as a result of the global financial crisis and an irresponsible domestic budget policy. The takeover of Parex Bank in November, the sharp budget cuts in December, mounting unemployment, combined with an unprecedented drop in the ratings of government and parliament led to the violent protests of January 13, 2009. The rally organized by the Society for A Different Politics escalated into spontaneous attacks on the parliament building and other public institutions, on shops and police officers. More than 50 people were injured and 106 taken into custody. The January 13 disorders and the farmers' protests that took place two weeks later on January 27 had political consequences. On January 14, President Valdis Zatlers threatened to dismiss the *Saeima* unless a number of demands were fulfilled. Among these were broadening of the government coalition, appointment of a KNAB director, amendments to the Constitution and to the Law on *Saeima* Elections. As a result of the farmers' protests, Minister of Agriculture Mārtiņš Roze resigned and farmers were granted greater government support. The president's demands were at least partially fulfilled: the head of the government was replaced and the ruling coalition broadened.

The use of information and communication technologies is becoming increasingly important for non-conventional forms of participation. Already during the so-called umbrella revolution, the Internet played a big role in the mobilization of participants. On January 30, 2009, a flashmob was organized in support of Latvian Radio, which was threatened by financial difficulties. Since 2007, there has been a huge increase in the number of Internet forums for discussing current social and political events. Some of these online debating platforms produce concrete activities. So, for example, on February 4, 2009, a group of like-minded activists from the *pingvīni.lv* portal gathered at the *Saeima* to present symbolic «gifts» to the parliamentarians. Similarly, the *glābvalsti.lv* portal carried out a vote on possible deputies for the next *Saeima*.

Public Participation

In a modern society, the practice of responsibility as a form of participation applies not only to efforts that are made to influence political decisions but also to other areas of life that require collective action. Participation in cultural, social, professional and other associations is no less important for the practical realization of responsibility than political participation. People's capacity to resolve their own problems in cooperation with others without expecting help from the state is a sign of a mature democratic society. Only in a society in which people make wide use of horizontal forms of cooperation can the state and its citizens be equal partners.

Since the renewal of independence, both policymakers and non-governmental organizations have come to understand the importance of non-governmental associations. The Law on Associations and Foundations was adopted in 2004. It simplified the registration of associations and foundations and facilitated their economic activities. Since 2005, organizations that contribute to the public good can be granted the status of public benefit organization, which makes it possible for these organizations to attract tax-deductible donations. In 2005, the Policy Guidelines for Strengthening Civil Society 2005–2014 were adopted and the Programme for Strengthening Civil Society 2005–2009 was drafted. Government institutions such as the Secretariat of the Special Assignments Minister for Social Integration, the Society Integration Foundation, and local governments have provided support for non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The organizations themselves have done a lot to improve the environment for NGO activities. For example, the Latvian Civic Alliance has a membership of about 100 NGOs, which have joined forces not only to influence government and municipal policies in favour of NGOs but also to advise new organizations on financial, legal and administrative issues. There is also the Community Initiative Foundation, which supports the efforts of local communities in social, cultural and other areas. Latvia's NGOs are learning to attract money not only from donors but also from revenue generating economic activities. Financing can also be obtained from various foreign sources: the EEA and Norway Grants, and others.

Since 2004, the number of newly registered NGOs (associations and foundations) has increased yearly, reaching a record high of 1,273 in 2008. Altogether there are 10,733 NGOs in Latvia, of which 940 have been granted the status of public benefit organizations. However, figures alone do not testify to active civic participation. Although the number of organizations has increased in recent years, the percentage of people who are active in NGOs has declined. In the 2006 survey, 61.9% of the respondents claimed that they were not involved in the work of any NGOs (BSZI 2005); in the 2008 survey, the same answer was given by 65.8% of the respondents (SKDS 2008).

Since the number of organizations has increased, these figures suggest that the majority of the NGOs has a fairly small number of members. People in Latvia are traditionally reluctant to work in organizations that concentrate their efforts on questions that are important to society as a whole (protection of human rights, corruption prevention,

resolution of social problems, help for the poor, environment protection, etc.) and not just to members of the organization. In the past four years, the situation has worsened rather than improved. For organizations that provide help for old, ill, or poor people, the percentage of members has declined from 2.5% to 0.9%; for human rights organizations, from 1.1% to 0.5%. In these four years, the percentage of trade union members has slightly increased (from 6.9% to 9.6%). Trade unions are now the organizations with the largest membership, having replaced religious organizations, which show declining membership (from 10.3% to 8.8%).

Attitudes and Values

Whether or not people in Latvia are ready to assume responsibility and take part in solving common problems cannot be determined solely on the basis of their NGO activities or the number of such organizations. Other important aspects are value orientations and attitudes. Whether or not an individual will be ready to join others in solving problems and protecting interests depends on how the individual understands his/her role in politics, on action taken by political institutions, and on the opportunities that are provided for cooperating with others.

Political institutions – parliaments, elections, governments, local governments – are always part of a specific cultural context, and they acquire meaning from the activity of people. For democratic processes and civic activities to be effective, they require citizens who consider participation in these processes and activities to be logical and necessary. Or, on the contrary, in a society in which the majority does not believe in a democratic public administration, this administration will never be optimal, nor will it act in the interests of the people.

There are various ways of looking at the political culture of a country. The best known classification of the forms of political culture identifies three general types: *parochial*, in which the citizen expects nothing of politics and does not intend to get involved; *subject*, in which the citizen is interested in political results but does not attempt to influence them; *participatory*, in which the citizen is positively disposed to participation in political decisions and to the results (Almond and Verba 1963). In every society, different people will have different political culture orientations; it is the relative proportions of these orientations that affect a country's development. Nowadays, studies on political culture also deal with trust and social capital: democratic participation is possible only in societies in which people trust each other and are willing to cooperate with others to achieve common goals (Putnam 1993). A society in which people are unable to trust others will never be completely democratic. Democracy requires cooperation, but cooperation always requires readiness to trust others.

To better understand Latvia's political culture, one should look at it in a broader, global context. One should ask a number of questions: Are people in Latvia ready to participate in the life of their country? How do they generally see their country and the role that they could play? How much do people in Latvia expect from the

government and how much from their own activities? What is the situation in Latvia in regard to social capital and trust? And finally, is Latvia's political culture more similar to the Nordic and West European model, which includes public interest in political processes and active participation, or does Latvia have more in common with East European countries, where distrust of democratic processes goes hand in hand with alienation from the state (ISSP 2006).

To be able to cooperate with others in the protection of common interests, individuals must have at least a minimum of trust in each other and confidence that their participation will not be used by others for selfish motives. Mutual trust is, therefore, an important indicator for people's capacity to cooperate. 72% of the people in Latvia claim that very few people can be trusted completely. This figure is comparable to that in other European countries. In some countries, for example, Hungary, Russia, and Poland, the figure is even higher (80.2%, 82.4% and 85.6%, respectively). In the Nordic countries (Denmark, Sweden, Finland), however, more people are ready to trust a broader circle of people (51.3%, 63% and 62.5%, respectively). And the percentage of people who believe that others will take advantage of them if they are not careful is much lower here than it is in Latvia. For example, only 42.3% of people in Denmark feel this way as compared to 74.2% in Latvia. In a regional comparison, Latvia's interpersonal trust indicators are close to average: it cannot be said that people in Latvia excessively distrust each other, but their mutual trust level is far below that which is typical for the trust culture of the Nordic democracies.

The situation differs in regard to people's belief that the ordinary citizen is unable to influence the government. Here, Latvia stands out even among the Central and East European countries. 81.7% agree with the contention that «people like me have no influence on the work of the government.» Belief in one's own ability to influence politics is lower among people in Latvia than it is in Russia, Poland, Hungary, and Croatia (77.9%, 75.7%, 77.5%, 80.4%, respectively) and much lower than in the Nordic countries, where over half of the people disagree with this statement. Their attitude towards political participation is a clear indication that people in Latvia feel greater alienation from the state than people in the majority of Europe's democratic countries and that they see no possibility of changing this situation.

The low political self-esteem of people in Latvia correlates with the estimate of their ability to understand political problems. They have a much lower opinion of their ability to understand domestic politics than the majority of people in democratic countries. In Latvia, only 30.4% claim to understand the country's main political problems. In the Nordic countries, this claim is made by the majority of the people (in Denmark, by 71.2%). Even in Russia, 38% of the people feel politically competent.

This does not mean that people in Latvia are not interested in politics. 54% claim that they are. 30.3% say they are just a bit interested in politics (this figure is similar in the majority of countries), but only 4.3% claim to be very interested. Generally, however, Latvia's society cannot be described as extremely apolitical. Although the figures

in most of Europe's democracies are somewhat higher, the percentage of people who claim to have absolutely no interest in politics is lower in Latvia (14.5%) than in Portugal, Spain, and Slovenia (36.3%, 28.1%, 19.7%, respectively). People in Latvia are no less supportive of informal civic activities – strikes, rallies, public protests – than people in other European countries.

Alienation from political institutions is also manifested as a low degree of trust in the officials of these institutions. In Latvia, 74.9% of the people feel that many or most politicians are corrupt. For comparison: in Denmark, only 3.3% feel this way about their politicians. This low opinion of politicians is reflected in the lack of trust in democratic institutions. The 2008 Eurobarometer survey shows that trust in government, parliament, and political parties in Latvia is four times lower than the EU average (Eurobarometer 2008). And the indications are that trust in democratic institutions is gradually declining.

As already pointed out in the section on political responsibility, people in Latvia generally expect quite a lot from the government. Surveys show that in most areas of social life people tend to place the main burden of responsibility on the government and not on the individual. In regard to social and economic problems, nine out of ten people in Latvia consider the government to be responsible (SKDS 2008). And the percentage of people who feel that it is the duty of the government to stimulate the economy by creating new jobs and supporting innovation is among the highest in Europe (95%) (see Box 1.9). The majority of people see a need for greater government

support in all areas of life: environment protection, health-care, education, defence, etc.

The predominant types of political culture in Latvia are the parochial and the subject types; participatory culture is rather poorly represented. The attitude of people in Latvia towards the state is quite paradoxical. Surveys show widespread support for the idea that government expenses should be cut. This view is shared by 95% of the population, in comparison with 45% in Denmark, 29% in Finland, and 66% in the Netherlands.

Where cutting expenses is concerned, the majority of people in Latvia support limited government. The reason for this is not belief in liberal principles but general distrust of government institutions. However, when it comes to concrete needs – the economy, healthcare, education, etc. – about the same numbers of people expect greater financial support from the government.

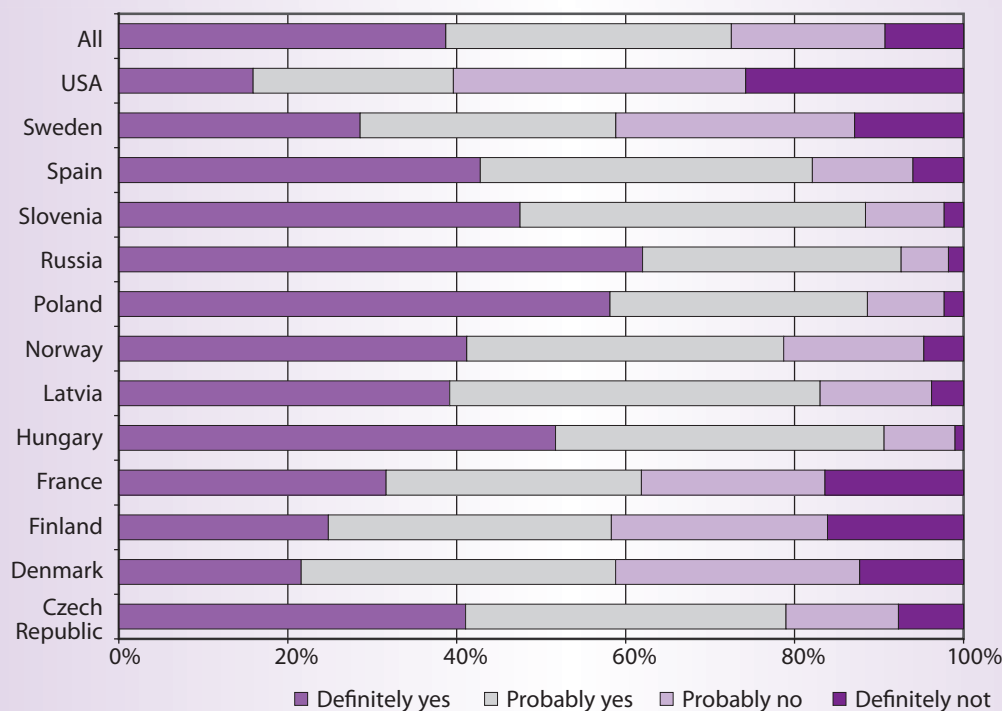
People expect a lot, even too much, from the state; but their own readiness to devote time to public welfare is relatively wanting. These contradictory attitudes must be seen together with people's alienation from the country's political life as one of the greatest weaknesses of Latvia's democracy.

Conclusion

The economic and social problems that Latvia has been confronted with in 2009 are a serious challenge to civic participation. Whether or not society is capable of rallying in a time of crisis to jointly tackle problems, participate

Box 1.9

The Government's Responsibility: Should the Government provide a Job for Everyone?



Source: ISSP 2006.

in political decision making, master a possible social and humanitarian crisis will largely determine the course of Latvia's development in the coming decades. At the same time, when considering the future, it is important to take into account what has already been achieved in regard to civic participation – both the positive and the negative aspects.

Since the renewal of independence, a democratic civil society has started to form in Latvia. Citizens take part in elections and referendums, and a large part of society takes interest in politics. In an Eastern European context, Latvia's society is not at all depoliticized. At the same time, citizen participation in politics is greatly affected by various institutional factors: first and foremost, a political party system in which the work of political parties is frequently steered by private interests, absence of internal party democracy, dependency on advertising, and low popularity ratings. It is doubtful whether these problems will be completely eliminated in the near future. This makes an increase in various non-conventional forms of participation very likely.

People in Latvia have generally started to recognize the potential of participation in NGOs. Voluntary associations have undergone substantial development in recent years and are now active in very many areas. At the same time, NGOs are not particularly popular in Latvia's society. The majority of the population is not involved in NGOs, so that activism is still the work of a fairly small group of people. Membership is particularly low in organizations that do not defend the interests of a concrete group, but those

of society at large: human rights, corruption prevention, environment protection, etc.

The low level of non-governmental participation reflects the typical incapacity of Latvia's society to see a connection between public and private interests, i.e. to see that active commitment to the protection of public interests will, in the long term, serve private interests. Instead, a large number of people would like to see politicians behave responsibly, make fair decisions, and serve the public interest, but are, themselves, not ready to contribute time or resources to protect the public interest. This creates a curious kind of vicious circle: due to poor participation, the pressure of citizens on politicians is extremely weak, and this affords opportunities for acting against the interests of society, for political corruption, and conflicts of interest. This, in turn, increases people's apathy and lack of faith in their capacity to democratically influence political decisions. This, then, leads to widespread disappointment in Latvia's democratic institutions, even to disappointment in democracy as such.

Looking to the future, there is reason to believe that social tensions will bring about an increase in the intensity of participation in Latvia. The first signs are already there. However, participation may take different forms in the future. It can manifest itself as a legitimate protest against government policy, as the articulation of serious social problems and the demand for political reaction to the wishes of society. But it can also manifest itself in nationalistic, xenophobic, or populist forms that challenge the future of Latvia as a democracy governed by the rule of law.

Box
1.10

Greatest Achievements, Most Serious Problems, Most Important Tasks

Major Achievements

The major achievement is the appearance of new, non-conventional forms of participation and the declining impact of ethnic differences on political participation.

Most Serious Problem

The most serious problem is society's low level of civic awareness, cooperation, and participation, which is exacerbated by closed-door decision making and wide use of manipulative technologies in party election campaigns.

Most Important Tasks

- Maximum «opening up» of political decision-making to public evaluation and debate;
- Reorganization of the party system, using legislative measures to reduce the influence of major donors and curb advertising in the electronic media during election campaigns;
- Introduction of modern civic education in Latvia's schools to give children at an early stage in their socialization basic knowledge about democratic values and the importance of civic participation in modern welfare democracies.

Environmental Responsibility: Behaviour and Morals

Ainārs Auniņš, Jānis Brizga, Māris Kļaviņš

A way is still being sought to identify, study and understand the interaction between Man and nature that will make it possible to deal with environmental problems at all levels, to evaluate human behaviour and support decision-making processes. One of the attempts to describe interaction between Man and nature uses two concepts for the evaluation of individual and collective behaviour: environmental responsibility and environmental accountability. Both these concepts convey not only a moral and ethical dilemma, they also serve as an instrument for evaluating behaviour at individual (and this includes corporate), governmental, and institutional levels (Li 2001; Rodrigues et al. 2006), inasmuch as environmental policy (in Latvia as well) has become an integral and important part of national policy (Vides politikas pamatnostādnes 2008).

Both these concepts are based on: 1) an understanding of the need to evaluate performance in the environmental sector (environmental policy and governance) and behaviour that can impact the environment; 2) the idea of sustainable development, where development is seen as the main factor that makes it possible to judge performance in the economic, social and environmental sectors. Accordingly, the indicators that must be used for environmental accountability and environmental responsibility are the indicators that make it possible to monitor the sustainability of society (Andrew 2001; Rodrigues et al. 2006; Lynes and Andrachuk 2008). The rationale underlying the choice of indicators is to show how processes in one sustainable development sector impact on another sector. For example, investments in the quality of the air are connected with the economy, but their impact on the quality of the air (environment) affects the health and the mortality rate of the population. Thus, application of the concepts of environmental accountability and responsibility makes it possible to identify problem sectors which show the negative effects of interaction between society and nature and their impact on human development and social processes.

The Current Situation

Latvia has comparatively high biological diversity and environmental quality. To a great extent, this is determined

not only by the country's geographic location but also by historical economic factors, which have been the main driving forces during the past century.

An important role in the conservation of Latvia's natural landscape and environmental quality is played by its forests. These spread out wherever land is left exposed to natural processes. With the decline of farming and the decrease of farmland areas during the 20th century, the country's wooded areas increased from 23% in 1923 to more than 50% today. Although industrialization did take place in Latvia, the exaggerated manifestations of this process that could be observed in a large part of the USSR were not as acute in Latvia as they were, for example, in areas where the chemical or military industries were concentrated. At the same time, like the other Eastern European countries, which for 50 years were part of the Soviet bloc, Latvia has to a much lesser degree than the economically developed Western European countries been affected by the environmental problems caused by intensification of farming and forestry. For example, in the 1970s and 1980s, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Economic Community resulted in a dramatic decline of biological diversity in the farmland of the member countries (Berendse et al. 2004). During this same time, in Latvia and in other Eastern European countries where intensification of farming was much less pronounced, species that were on the verge of extinction in Western Europe and large semi-natural habitats were preserved (EEA 2004). Similarly, Latvia's USSR frontier-territory status guaranteed low levels of anthropogenic strain on coastal areas along the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Riga, and moderate foresting activity ensured a relatively high proportion of natural forests.

Thus, it can be said that the comparatively high biological diversity and environmental quality that was typical for Latvia at the time when it regained independence was not the result of effective environment protection, but rather a combination of other factors. Most of the existing nature values had not been surveyed; furthermore, being so widely dispersed, many of them were not covered by the existing system of the protected nature territories. The starting position

Box
1.11

Article 115, Constitution of the Republic of Latvia

«The State shall protect the right of everyone to live in a benevolent environment by providing information about environmental conditions and by promoting the preservation and improvement of the environment.»

at a time when political and economic systems were undergoing radical changes provided an opportunity to ensure conservation or improvement of the environment, avoiding the mistakes made by Western European countries and learning from them.

After the renewal of independence, the role of economic processes in changes to biological diversity increased, and in different ecosystems these changes took different directions. One consequence of the critical economic situation in the first half of the 1990s – with the intensity of industrial production and farming declining – was a significant decrease in various types of pollution. As a result, in the 1990s, biodiversity in farmland even increased. At the same time, as large forest areas were privatized and timber became Latvia's main export product, commercial activity in the forests increased and biological diversity declined. Subsequent changes in the country's development affected the quality of the environment and the processes that took place in this environment. At the beginning of the 21st century, as the economy improved, a certain degree of polarization could be observed in the country's farmland. On the one hand, the areas no longer used for farming overgrew with shrubs and became unsuitable for the conservation of biodiversity; and others witnessed a decline in biodiversity due to increased intensity of farming.

Similar processes could be observed in the industrial sector. As the markets for industrial production changed, and the volume of production based on an unlimited supply of USSR resources declined, the emission of pollutants also declined; but as investments increased and the pattern of consumer demands changed (e.g., a growing demand for motor vehicles), pollution levels once again increased.

Who Can Be Held Accountable and For What?

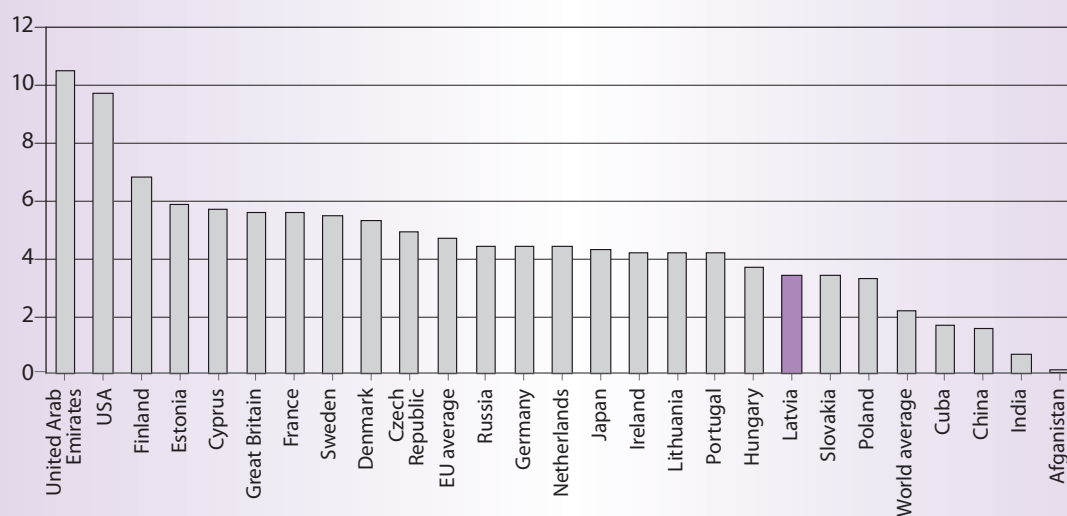
The existing legal liability and values system stipulates that a person who has caused another person's losses and/or suffering shall be punished in order to change that person for the better, and that the victim shall receive compensation in order so that the original situation can be restored. The principle of equity stipulates that the burden of legal liability must be in keeping with the gravity of the infraction and the defendant's level of guilt. A similar approach can be applied to liability for damage done to the environment. But this model cannot be applied in cases involving impact on the environment (Jamieson 1992), even less so in cases where environmental problems are global. This is because absolutely innocent activities can have devastating consequences, but the causes and effects can be widely dispersed both in regard to time as well as place (non-linear causalities and the cross-border nature of global environment problems must also be considered).

For example, chemical pollution, which originates primarily in the industrial countries, also poses a threat to the population of the Far North because the fish that are the local population's main source of nourishment have been polluted with various chemical substances. Here, it is obvious that the effects of chemical pollution have been dispersed. It is not possible to identify a single offender because the pollution is caused daily by millions of people (and industrial enterprises) – driving cars, using cosmetics and household chemicals, buying new furniture or clothing. It has not been the intention of these people to harm the Inuit. What is an even greater problem – the effects of this pollution will only be felt by

Box
1.12

Ecological footprint

(hectares per person, per year, 2005 data)



Source: *National Ecological Footprint and Biocapacity Accounts*, EEA, 2005.

following generations. This means that a time lag is also involved. Therefore, it would not be correct to appeal to traditional morality in trying to assign blame for this tragedy because the harm that has been done has not been direct, nor has it been intentional. It could not even have been foreseen.

This situation of «non-liability» has brought the world to the point where the critical boundaries of ecological systems have been surpassed. Today, a widely used term in environmental science is «ecological footprint.» An ecological footprint is the total area of the Earth that is needed to satisfy our everyday needs. Measurements of the ecological footprint show that the reasons for today's environmental problems are the world's ever growing population, non-sustainable consumption and production models, and degradation of the environment (Vakerneidžels un Rīss 2000)

The Earth needs a year and three months to produce all of the natural resources and services that mankind consumes within one year, and with every passing year the situation becomes more dramatic. The industrially developed countries are responsible for most of the strain on natural capital because the ecological footprint of countries with high incomes (and Latvia is included in this group) is on average 6.4 hectares per person (Box 1.12), whereas in the developing countries, which are home to half of the world's population, the footprint is only 1.9 hectares per person, which corresponds to the average global bio-capacity (WWF 2006).

In 2005, Latvia's ecological footprint was 3.69 ha/person (Brizga 2008). This twice exceeds the global capacity. This means that Latvia's population shares the blame for degradation of the global environment. If all of the world's inhabitants lived in the same style as the average person in Latvia, two planets would be needed to satisfy their needs and absorb pollution.

The ecological footprint can be seen as a balance sheet: on one side it looks at demand – the ecological footprint; on the other, at supply – the biologically productive **areas** (cropland, pasture land, forestland fishing grounds and areas intended for the preservation of biodiversity). In this respect, Latvia is in a good situation – the country is sparsely populated, which means that there are 5.77 ha of biologically productive territory available for every inhabitant. This, in turn, means that Latvia has an ecological surplus of 2.5 ha per person, i.e. Latvia's biologically productive territory exceeds our ecological footprint (demand).

Consumer Accountability

The ecological footprint reflects the strain on the environment caused by households. Our habitual behaviour and consumption patterns determine the quality of the environment not only directly around us but elsewhere in the whole world as well. Whether or not we drive to work each day, the types of detergents that we use, the food products that we choose, and many other everyday things and activities determine our impact on the environment. This is confirmed by studies carried out in Europe showing that the direct and indirect impact of households is primarily responsible for environmental pressures (EIPRO-Study 2006; Lähteenoja et al. 2007).

The following categories of consumption are considered to have the greatest environmental impact: food, housing, and mobility (together these three categories represent 70-80% of the environmental impact of household products and services during their life cycle) (EIPRO-Study 2006). The measurements of Latvia's ecological footprint also indicate that the main household environmental pressures are connected with the consumption of food products (55% of the ecological footprint), housing (18%), and transportation (10%). This means that, in Latvia's case, food, housing and mobility represent 83% of total environment pressures. These, then, should be the main areas of individual environmental accountability. Our knowledge, values, moral standards, infrastructure and society at large determine personal behaviour models, and this includes attitudes to and treatment of the environment. Under Soviet rule in Latvia, individual environmental accountability basically involved keeping one's surroundings clean and tidy. As social and economic conditions change and consumer societies evolve, environmental accountability increasingly involves consumer habits. Today, it is basically connected with the individual's choice of consumer products and services.

To encourage environmentally-friendly consumption, many countries have prepared national sustainable consumption and production plans or programmes. Unfortunately, Latvia has not. But even among the countries that have such plans, approaches can differ (Bazin 2009). For example, Great Britain focuses mainly on the industrial sector and companies; Sweden, on the other hand, concentrates on changing consumer behaviour. These are two different approaches, and they imply different types of accountability. The consumer is responsible for the pollution that occurs during the full life cycle of a

Box
1.13

Ecologically responsible consumer behaviour

1. Abstention – doing without or consuming less;
2. Attitude – perception of consumption as a negative phenomenon;
3. Awareness – choice of products that have less impact on the environment;
4. Alternatives – choice of alternative products and/or services.

Source: Marchand and Wlaker 2006, 178

product, no matter where it is produced. This is why many consumers throughout the world are responsible for the pollution that is created by our exporting companies, for example, *Liepājas metalurģs*. On the other hand, we must also accept our share of responsibility for pollution that is created in China and in other countries whose products we so readily consume.

Individual and Collective Accountability

The distribution of accountability between the private individual and the state depends largely on the extent to which the individual is responsible for ensuring his own welfare and satisfying his needs and the role that the state plays in fulfilling these functions. Similar polarization can also be applied to the roles and accountability of the state and individuals in protection of the environment. There are those who feel that even the smallest individual effort can help and, together with many other small efforts, can bring about a positive environmental result. Others, however, feel that individual pro-environmental behaviour is of little importance if major polluters, for example, the big industrial enterprises that create the greatest amount of pollution, do not change their behaviour, i.e. their production methods.

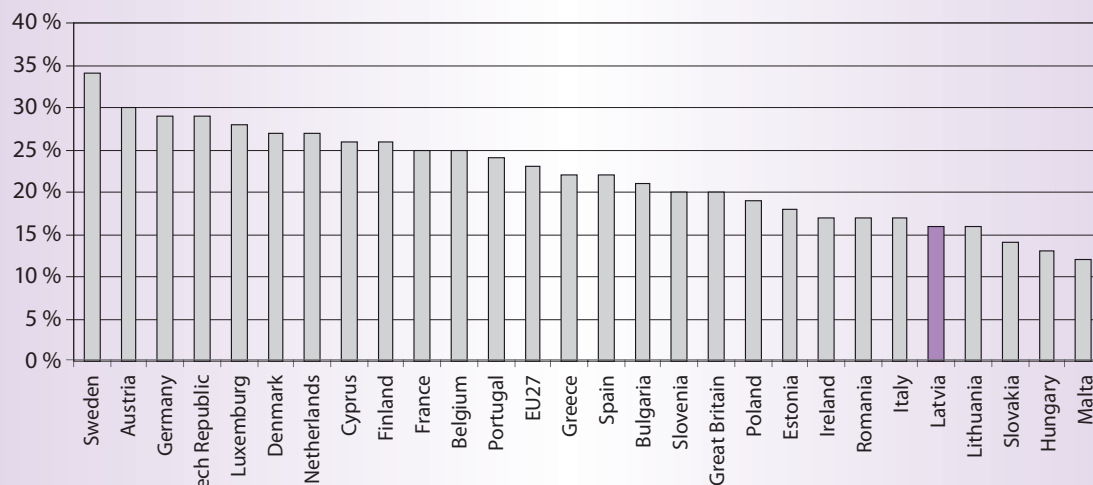
But even those who feel that individual behaviour is the crucial factor usually understand that it is not enough and that active state participation is also necessary to ensure protection of the environment. The Eurobarometer survey (Eurobarometer 2008) shows that Latvians, much like the majority of Europeans, set great store by a healthy environment, and 75% of the respondents feel that environmental problems have a direct impact on the quality of

their lives. In answer to the question about who should be held mainly accountable for environmental problems, Europeans feel that accountability should be divided between the big industrial polluters and individuals. In Latvia, respondents tend to place all responsibility for environmental protection on the big enterprises (98% of respondents) and only 71% (the lowest indicator in the poll) feel that they, as individuals, could have a significant role in environment protection.

Only 16% of people in Latvia see declining biodiversity as one of the five major environmental problems. This is one of the lowest figures in the European Union (Box 1.14). Water and air pollution are seen as greater problems, as well as the effect on people's health of the chemicals used in consumer products (Eurobarometer 2008). Latvia's relatively high biological diversity and large proportion of natural and semi-natural ecosystems makes people view these values as something that can be taken for granted, something that does not require special attention or protection and, therefore, has nothing to do with the quality of life. Even more, this creates the illusion that some of these values can be sacrificed in order to achieve a short-term improvement of personal welfare. This kind of attitude often generates opposition to environment protection measures, which is most frequently manifested as the NIMBY («not-in-my-back-yard») syndrome. This describes opposition on the part of individuals or communities to measures that benefit society at large but to some extent also affect their personal interests or impact their immediate surroundings (Freudenburg and Pastor 1992). When specially protected nature territories are established or their boundaries altered, landowners usually do not wish to undertake any obligations or accept future restrictions even in cases where this would not

Percentage of respondents who find that declining biodiversity is one of the five major environmental problems

Box
1.14



Source: Eurobarometer 2008a

involve changes to current use of the land. One reason for this is lack of faith in the government's promises regarding compensation, because the accompanying legislation was delayed and deferred time and again.

Individuals who care about nature and the environment and wish to influence processes join non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that protect their interests. There are several dozen environmental NGOs in Latvia – from professional associations and foundations, whose members are experts in their respective fields, to organizations that bring together a broad spectrum of the population. However, in Latvia, as in other Eastern European countries, public participation in environmental NGOs is far below the level of activity that is characteristic for the more developed Western European countries. For example, the number of members in the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in the U.K. exceeds 1.5% of the population (over one million members). Membership in the corresponding organization in Latvia – the Latvian Ornithological Society (with 600 members, one of the country's largest NGOs) – is less than 0.03% of the population. The low level of public participation limits the capacity of environmental NGOs and reduces their chances to actively defend their views and influence decision-making. Furthermore, in this situation decision makers can always claim that environmental organizations do not represent the views of a sufficiently large part of the population and can, therefore, be ignored. However, in recent years, NGO activities have become more effective; they are increasingly involved in decision-making, providing expert opinions on legislation, planning and political initiatives, monitoring compliance with the law, offering the administration use of their expertise and know-how – to a certain extent, assuming their share of environmental accountability.

Free Riders and the Tragedy of the Commons

There are, possibly, some who question the need for environmental policy. Why make the effort if everything can be regulated by the market! If a factory exceedingly pollutes the environment, consumers will react by refusing to buy the factory's products, forcing it to change its production methods or risk bankruptcy. But things do not work this way in real life. Examples of this can be found in Latvia as well. For instance, in order to save money, food processing plants do not install wastewater treatment facilities and feed wastewater directly into municipal sewage systems. As a result, the whole population of these cities is forced to pay for elimination of the pollution and not just the consumers of the food products. This is just one typical example; however, usually we speak about three typical free market failures.

For one, the market does not reflect all environmental and social costs. There are the so-called external costs – for example, for problems resulting from climate change – and these are not covered by those who create the problem but by all members of society collectively or by specific groups of the population. Since external costs are not included in the price of a product, this distorts the market and

encourages activities for which we must all pay dearly, but which, in the short term, give those who carry them out considerable private benefits. For example, an overloaded truck that damages a bridge or pollutes the air externalizes some of its costs, but others have to pay for the damage. In a similar way, pesticides that end up in our drinking water cause health problems for those who use the water, but they generate greater profits for those who used the pesticides. The external costs of transportation include the costs of medical treatment for people who suffer from polluted air or from traffic accidents, and they include the costs of repairing damage to the environment and fighting climate change.

Another problem is posed by «free riders». These are individuals, companies, or even countries that benefit from the activities of others, but are not willing to share the costs. The free-rider problem (Edney 1979; Grossman and Hart 1980) is particularly pressing in cases when external costs are high. International treaties are a typical example of the free-rider problem. For example, in a climate change context, the free riders are the countries that refuse to sign the Kyoto Protocol on reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. Since climate change is a global problem, these countries benefit from the efforts of others to fight climate change. However, such selfish behaviour can lead to an irrational collective decision to do nothing at all, which, in turn, will lead to a depletion of common resources, and this would affect everyone.

The market's third main failure is the management of common property, the so-called *tragedy of the commons*. Air, water, outer space and other natural resources do not belong to anyone, nor do they have a fixed market value. However, limited resources which are freely accessible and for which there is unlimited demand are doomed for depletion. A glaring example is overfishing in the world's seas and oceans; but the tragedy of the commons is best illustrated in a provocative piece by American ecologist Garrett Hardin (Hardin 1968), in which he describes grazing practices in a village. The animals eat the pastures bare, tearing out grass in tufts and leaving behind muddy fields. But ground cover renews itself very slowly. If there are no rules to prevent overgrazing, farmers try to herd more of their livestock into the pastures ahead of other farmers in order to gain maximum benefit before the grassland is depleted. There are three possible outcomes: 1) the grazing land is destroyed; 2) someone devises and implements a grazing license system; 3) the pastures are partitioned, so that the villagers can fence in their plots, maintain them, and defend them.

Latvia's economy, like that of the whole European Union, is predominantly liberal and oriented towards ensuring economic growth and creating new jobs. However, the EU's Sustainable Development Strategy postulates that development must be achieved without overexploitation of natural resources, acknowledging the value of ecosystem services. Society benefits from many of the processes that occur in natural ecosystems and from readily available resources, which means that these have economic value.

There are direct and indirect values, use and potential use values as well as existence and bequest values

(Leibenaths and Badura 2005). When planning development projects, these values can be included in the costs of the projects. This approach is not applied in Latvia, where the services provided by ecosystems are taken for granted and considered cost-free and inexhaustible. Legislation anticipates compensation only for the destruction of specially protected biotopes, species, or their natural habitats. Not even the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedure requires assessment of the degradation of ecosystems and their services unless these are specially protected nature values. This means that a project's cost-efficiency is judged only on the basis of short-term economic profits, even if the project generates long-term losses for society at large.

Failure to include the value of ecosystem services in the economic costs of a project encourages situations where protection of the environment is seen as the antithesis of «development.» Such an attitude was clearly apparent in the comments of the then Minister of Transportation, Ainārs Šlesers, after the Constitutional Court's ruling on annulment of that part of Riga's territorial plan which applied to the Riga Free Port: «A balance must be found between the interests of nature and man. The birds can move their nesting grounds to other places that do not interfere with development of the port» (LETA 2008). This example reveals not only the former minister's understanding of ecology; it clearly indicates where his priorities lie in the search for «balance.» Similar arguments are frequently used by businesses in reaction to public concern about the effects of a planned project expressed at public hearings on environmental impact assessment. The negative attitude of the business community toward stricter regulation of the environmental sector is also voiced by the general director of the Employer's Confederation of Latvia, Elīna Egle, when she points out that this would only raise costs, reduce competitiveness, and evoke counteraction from businesses. Egle feels that a «green» way of thinking can only be motivated with positive incentives and examples of good business practice (Tooma 2008).

Institutional Accountability

In Latvia, activities in the environmental sector are largely institutionalized and a lot of effort is put into resolving environmental problems. After the renewal of independence, the main driving force behind legislative initiatives in the environmental sector was the political decision to begin Latvia's integration into the global community and start the procedure for accession to the European Union. As a result, Latvia joined many global, European and regional conventions and began the integration of EU environment legislation into national legislation.

There are many environmental sectors, and a detailed analysis of them all is not possible within the framework of this chapter. For this reason, we took a closer look at two: **biological diversity** and **water management**. These are the two sectors that best reflect the responsibility that environment protection systems (not only at the institutional and legislative level, but also in people's attitudes toward

the environment) bear for the consequences of action or inaction. The conservation of biological diversity illustrates this responsibility not only from the pragmatic perspective of environmental (natural resources, forests, waters, soil, ecosystems) protection, or from the perspective of Latvia's obligations under EU and international law, but also from a moral and ethical perspective. On the other hand, activities in the water management sector can be characterized not only by their impact on the national economy, the quality of life of the population and, indirectly, on the environment, but also by the high costs of these activities (investments) and, therefore, by the need to evaluate the best options for investing resources.

Conservation of Biological Diversity: Responsibility and National Obligations

The backbone of EU legislation on the conservation of biological diversity is made up of two so-called Nature Directives: the Birds Directive¹ and the Habitats Directive.² Member States are required to provide a «favourable conservation status» for the species and habitats listed in appendices to these directives. This can be achieved through legislation, through the establishment of specially protected nature territories, or through sectoral policy. Each Member State must contribute significantly to a *Natura 2000* network. This is intended as an EU-wide ecological network for long-term conservation of the most important nature values (species and habitats of EU importance) in their natural range. The criteria for this network are the same throughout the European Union, and the European Commission judges whether or not the sites proposed by the Member States meet these criteria. The Commission also judges the performance of the Member States in providing a favourable conservation status individually for each of the habitats or species listed in the appendices. The directives stipulate that the status can be considered as favourable only if the distribution range, area and quality (for habitats) or population size and availability of suitable habitats (for species) do not decline. In the accession negotiations, Latvia was granted a transition period for the implementation of EU regulations in many other areas, but this did not apply to the Nature Directives, and Latvia was required to complete implementation of the directives prior to accession.

In the case of these international obligations, accountability manifests itself primarily as accountability for the conservation of wildlife, endangered species and their habitats for future generations. Latvia has large populations of species that are endangered elsewhere in Europe or even in the world. For example, approximately 20% of the world's population of Lesser Spotted Eagles and approximately 5% of the world's population of Black Storks nest in Latvia. The population of Corncrake which is a species of global

¹ European Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds.

² European Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora.

conservation concern in Latvia exceeds 20% of the EU population. And for many other species, Latvia, together with its neighbouring countries, ensures the existence of core populations. This means that conservation of these species in Latvia largely determines the regional or even the global situation of their populations, and decisions made in Latvia can significantly affect the situation of these species throughout their distribution range.

The second aspect is accountability for self-declared political goals. In its Sustainable Development Strategy, the European Union has set a *2010 Biodiversity Target*, which seeks to stop the decline of biodiversity in Europe by the year 2010. And the last aspect is legal liability. If we fail to meet the obligations that we made when we joined the European Union, the European Commission can initiate legal action. Ultimately, a country can be brought before the European Court of Justice. If it loses the case, it is heavily fined, which, nevertheless, does not release it from having to do what it had previously failed to do. For this reason, meeting the obligations that a country has made also testifies to a sense of responsibility for rational use of the taxpayers' money. The measures that a country has taken to make sure that it fulfils its obligations and the results that have been achieved through these measures help us to judge how responsibly a country has behaved in the conservation of its biological diversity.

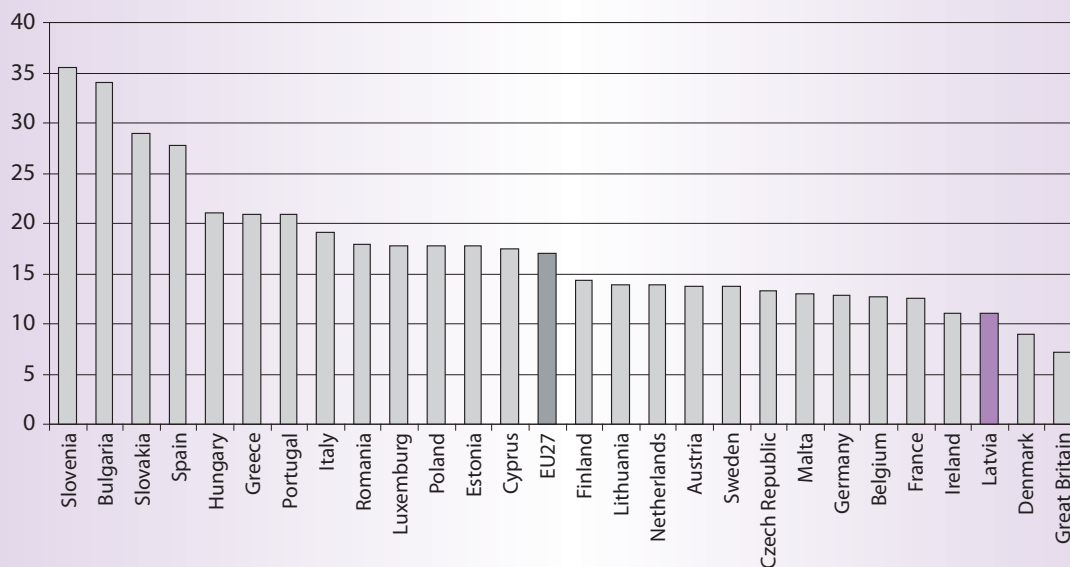
To create the *Natura 2000* network of protected nature territories as required by the EU, in 2001-2003 Latvia carried out an inventory of its protected territories to assess their compliance with the requirements of the Nature Directives and to identify new sites which, although hitherto unprotected, could improve conservation of those species and habitats that the existing system did not

sufficiently protect. This inventory was used to prepare the scientific proposal for establishment of the *Natura 2000* network. On the basis of this proposal, Latvia proposed to include 336 sites (comprising 11.9% of the country's terrestrial area) in the *Natura 2000* network. This is one of the lowest figures in the EU (see Fig. 3). The European Commission found Latvia's proposal to be satisfactory in regard to almost 90% of the species and habitats listed in the Nature Directives, which places Latvia somewhere in the middle among the EU Member States (see Fig. 4). This suggests that, although the percentage of protected areas is relatively small, they have been well targeted, and Latvia cannot be accused of the tactics employed by some other Member States of trying to compensate by not establishing some important territories while proposing large areas of commercially less interesting sites, although these do not contribute significantly to the conservation of wildlife. Nevertheless, Latvia's proposal for the *Natura 2000* network was found to be insufficient in regard to more than 10% of the species and habitats listed in the Nature Directives and Latvia has not taken sufficient steps to remedy the situation yet.

Establishment of the relevant territories is only the first stage in the protection of these sites. Further measures must be taken for successful implementation of the directives, but these were not a precondition for accession to the European Union. Now that Latvia has achieved its big political goal – membership in the EU – it must take all further steps to meet its commitments on its own initiative. Among these are measures to provide the protection regime in *Natura 2000* sites that will ensure a favourable conservation status for the species and habitats these sites have been established for and an appropriate

Percentage of dry-land areas (% of a country's total territory) designated as Natura 2000 sites in EU countries as of December 2008

Box
1.15



Source: Natura 2000 (GIS calculated values)

management to achieve this status. Since the *Natura 2000* network was created on the basis of the existing protected territories, it consists of areas having very different protection regimes. In large areas of the network, activities are allowed that can destroy nature values. No countrywide studies have been carried out to assess if existing regimes provide sufficient protection to each of the species and habitats listed in the Nature Directives.

A responsible approach to fulfilling the requirements of the Nature Directives would seem to require precise information about the localities of species and habitats listed in the directives in Latvia. However, no comprehensive surveys have been carried out in the majority of the localities, especially those outside the specially protected nature territories. In addition to all other risks, this poses the risk of «accidental destruction» of nature values. There are various objective reasons (lack of experts) and less objective reasons (lack of funding) given for the failure to carry out the necessary inventory of species and habitats.

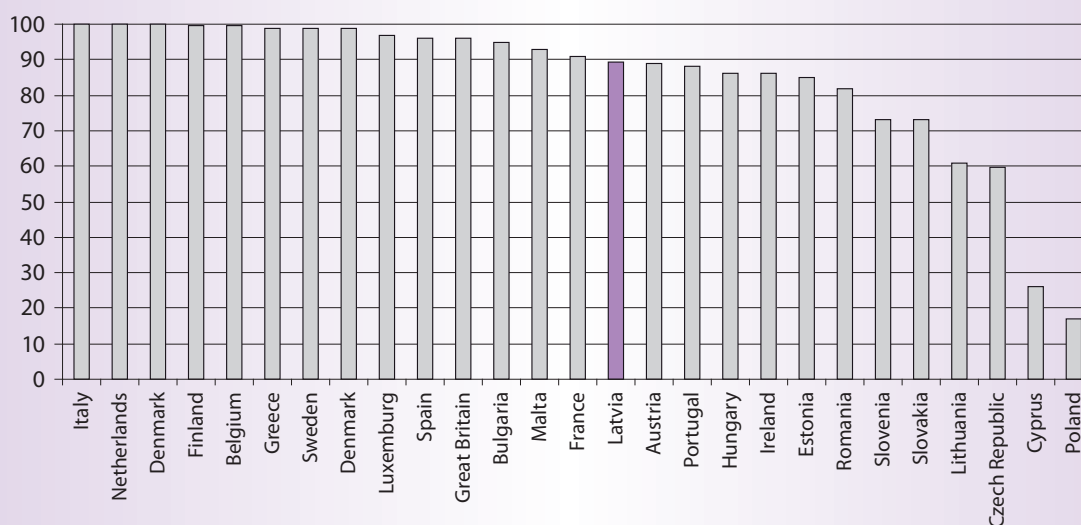
Nature management is not possible without planning and, here, there has been considerable progress in recent years. Management plans have been prepared for 139 *Natura 2000* sites or parts of sites. The plans have been implemented in considerably fewer sites – approximately 60 (there are no accurate statistics) and, even here, only a small part of the planned measures have actually been carried out. This disproportion does reflect a responsible approach to the use of resources – money is spent on planning, but plans are not implemented. In many of the sites, the planning period of the management plan will soon expire, but most of the planned priority measures have not even been started.

Contrary to the widely held opinion that Latvia has no significant problems regarding nature conservation, an objective analysis based on Latvia's fulfilment of its international obligations shows the opposite. According to Latvia's 2007 report to the European Commission on progress in implementation of the Habitats Directive, less than half of the species and habitats listed in annexes of the directive have «favourable» conservation status: 48% of the species and 33% of the habitats (<http://cdr.eionet.europa.eu/lv/eu/art17/>). In this situation, responsibility should manifest itself in the efforts of state institutions to improve the situation (inventory of species and habitats listed in the Nature Directives, monitoring of their status, and measures to improve their conservation status).

Although various monitoring programmes dealing with biological diversity have existed since the days when Latvia was part of the USSR, only the most recent Environment Monitoring Programme that was adopted in 2006 anticipates the countrywide collection of representative data on species and habitats. Implementation of the programme was launched in 2006, monitoring of the *Natura 2000* sites began only in 2008, but several of the chapters in the programme's Biodiversity sections have not even been opened. This is why there is no objective data on many of the species and habitats listed in the Nature Directives and a significant part of the aforementioned report to the European Commission on implementation of the Habitats Directive is based on expert opinions and not on quantitative data. Where experts have reported the conservation status of species and habitats to be unfavourable, they based their opinion on data that led them to this conclusion; but where situations have been reported as «favourable,» the assessment was more

The percentage of habitats listed in Appendix I and species listed in Appendix II of the Habitats Directive, for which the European Commission has found the proposals of EU Member States for the *Natura 2000* network to be adequate, as of June 2008

Box
1.16



Source: *Natura 2000* barometer

likely based on a lack of information about a decline in populations (species) or area (habitats) because no such information has been collected.

In Latvia, as in most European countries, environment protection is based primarily on networks of «sites» or specially protected nature territories. Although this is the most important and most effective component of current environment protection strategies, it alone will not ensure a favourable conservation status for species and habitats. For example, it is impossible to provide adequate protection for widely dispersed species or habitats, as they do not occur in sufficient concentration to justify establishment of a protected area. Only a relatively small part of the objects that must be protected are actually found in the specially protected nature territories. Typical examples of such widely dispersed species are the bird species for which Latvia bears special global responsibility: the Lesser Spotted Eagle, the Black Stork and the Corncrake. The conservation of such species requires additional landscape-level approaches, using mechanisms that can be applied outside the protected sites as well. This is also the key to meeting the EU 2010 Biodiversity Target. Unlike establishment of the *Natura 2000* network, landscape-level changes were not an EU pre-accession requirement. There are few positive examples in Latvia, and the financial support offered by the EU for this purpose has remained unused.

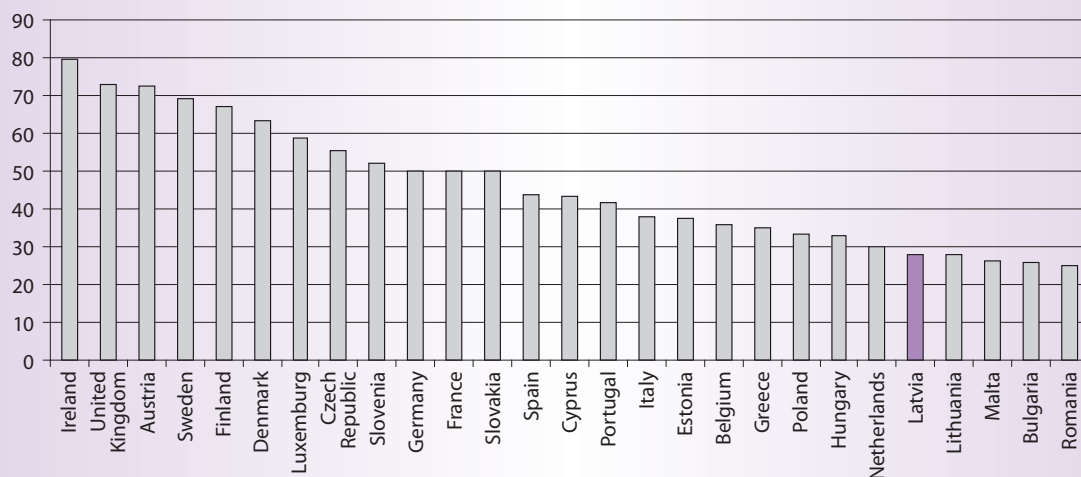
Environment protection and the discharge of international obligations are not possible without significant financial investments. Resources are available from a number of special EU programmes and funds. However, these resources are limited and they are not intended for the ongoing management of large areas, as is necessary for maintenance of the *Natura 2000* system or for landscape measures throughout the whole country. European Commission officials at different levels have pointed out

that, in addition to national funding, they see the EU funds for rural development as a source of funding that could help Member States meet the requirements of the Nature Directives. In this situation, accountable action on part of the government would demand that these EU funds be used primarily to fulfil Latvia's international obligations before satisfying the demands of various interest groups. Latvia, however, is among the countries that have earmarked only a small part of the EU rural development funds for this purpose (Rural Development Programme 2007 – 2013 (see Box 1.17).

Among the measures included in the programme, there is only one submeasure that is aimed directly at the conservation of biodiversity: «The Conservation of Biological Diversity in Grasslands.» This applies to only 1% of the country's territory and is habitat unspecific: the measures and the supporting conditions are the same for all grassland habitats regardless of their different ecological or management requirements. Biodiversity is used for justification of a number of other measures, but their contribution to the achievement of biological diversity goals is questionable and in some cases even negative. For example, the use of funding targeted for improvement of the environment for the afforestation of unused agricultural lands, as anticipated in the Rural Development Programme, is questionable because forests develop rapidly in Latvia in all terrestrial areas exposed to natural succession, and currently much of the unused farmland is naturally afforested without any financial input whatsoever. Therefore, from an environmental aspect, this can hardly be considered an urgent measure that requires financial investments. Furthermore, the rules regulating implementation of this measure do not include adequate restrictions to prevent implementation of the measure in areas that currently support high biological diversity, where afforestation could even lead

Box
1.17

Percentage of EU rural development funds earmarked for environment and landscape improvement measures in EU Member States



Source: Rural Development Policy 2007-2013.

to a decline in biodiversity. Abundant biological diversity can currently be found in land that is extensively farmed – not only endangered grassland habitats but farmland bird populations as well. Large parts of these important areas are not used for agricultural production, which makes them potential targets for afforestation measures. The efficiency of rural development measures is not adequately monitored to determine their impact on the environment, so that there is no way of checking whether or not they achieve the planned biodiversity targets. It may be concluded that current practice in setting priorities and choosing measures to support does not indicate a responsible attitude towards the use of EU funds for rural development.

Nor does the present economic crisis promote a responsible attitude towards balanced national development inasmuch as environment questions are being ignored for economic reasons. An illustrative example was the December 22, 2008 Cabinet decision to increase the cutting limits in state forests by four million cubic meters for the years 2009 and 2010. This decision was made without hearing the arguments of environment experts and despite the protests of non-governmental organizations and negative reactions from the population. The decision was not even discussed by the Advisory Council on Forests at the Ministry of Agriculture, which is responsible for helping to make and implement a balanced forest policy. It is very likely that the consequences of this decision will affect not only efforts to meet the EU 2010 Biodiversity Target but Latvia's international obligations as well. In the long term, society as a whole may be called upon to pay for short-term gains in one economic sector, both indirectly (decline of environ-

mental quality) and directly (use of taxpayers' money to pay fines for failing to meet international obligations).

Water Management: Activities, Results, Responsibility

One important environmental sector is water management, which receives the largest share of the funds invested in the environment. For the 2000 – 2006 planning period, the total amount invested was 387,969,000 million lats, of which 53% was money from EU funds and bilateral aid. It is clear that activities and investment policies in this sector are determined by the necessity to comply with the requirements of EU and international legislation. As a result, water protection has been defined as one of the main priorities of Latvia's environment protection policy. The need to find water management and water supply solutions is connected with the need to provide safe drinking water, to reduce the pollution of Latvia's inland water sources and the discharge of man-made pollutants into the Baltic Sea.

Latvia has undeniably demonstrated considerable progress in the water management sector: investment programmes are working effectively, and wastewater treatment has been greatly improved. However, these achievements result largely from the fact that the country's total volume of wastewater has been reduced twofold, the percentage of untreated wastewater has been reduced to 5% of the total volume, and pollution stemming from municipal wastewater has been reduced more than twofold. It is likely that the economic crisis will help to sustain this trend for at least two more years. At the same time, many environmental and investment

Box
1.18

Greatest Achievements, Most Serious Problems, Most Important Tasks

Greatest Achievements

The greatest achievement in the environmental field is the creation of the system of environment protection and growing awareness that the resolution of environmental problems is essential for the development of all of society. One important aspect is that environmental quality and nature resources are not the problem of individual states, therefore, a large role in the creation of the environmental protection system has been played by international policy, particularly that of the European Union. At the same time, environmental issues are among the few problems in which the public and NGOs have become actively involved, thereby strengthening democracy.

Most serious problems

Now that the goal of accession to the EU has been reached, the singleness of purpose has been lost and Latvia is not fully meeting its international obligations, running the risk not only of a decline in environmental quality, but also of sanctions imposed by the EU. At the same time, Latvia has created a broad base of environmental legislation and an institutional system that is currently being reorganized. However, the primary goal of reorganization is saving money, not improving environmental protection functions, and this can lead to neglecting important issues. Other essential problems are linked to the fact that environmental protection is largely rooted in individual responsibility, day-to-day behaviour and consumption habits. In this regard, it is necessary to create an effective system, that operates not only through external pressure, but internal necessity.

Most important tasks

Latvia must integrate environmental considerations into decision-making processes. The most effective way to do so is to implement an integrated policy of sustainable development at all levels of governance, envisaging simultaneous assessment of environmental, social and economic considerations and identifying compromises.

policy tasks remain unfulfilled (Vides pārskats 2008): a) the eutrophication of inland and offshore waters continues (decline of water quality); b) in certain areas, the quality of drinking water is not satisfactory; c) monitoring of water quality is inadequate, and monitoring results are not made available to the public or to the responsible institutions; d) water supply and sewage system targets have not been met; e) the risks of cross-border pollution and pollution risks to the Daugava River have not been averted.

It is, of course, hard, perhaps even impossible, to solve all problems (especially considering the resources that are required) in a relatively short period of time. And in time, the solution to many a problem may have to be adjusted or corrected. This means that in order to ensure development and meet the targets that have been set it is vitally important to analyze the situation, to make clear who is responsible for achieving results, and to specify the direction of further development pursuant to the results that have been achieved. Water management policy and its implementation lack a number of important aspects:

information about what has been done, i.e. monitoring of activities; open and transparent analysis of the results that have been achieved; informing the public about results. Usually, there are detailed reports on the preparation of a project, on the plans, and on the anticipated results. However, there is rarely any evaluation of what happens when a project has ended. Similarly, there is no evaluation of a project's impact on, for example, changes in the concentration of surface-water pollutants. This is largely because accountability is demanded for the execution of a project, for achieving specified targets, and not so much for long-term results. Similarly, accountability is demanded for how money has been spent on a project and not for how problems have been resolved. As we can see, despite large investments, there are still many problems in the water management sector, but an analysis of environment policy efficiency, based on the concepts of accountability and responsibility, is practically not being carried out. This enumeration of unresolved problems makes it clear that accountability for the implementation of environment policy does not really exist in Latvia.

History – Responsibility – Memory: Latvia's Case

Vita Zelče

In the past two decades, the Western world has been *rethinking* the past, and this has brought about changes in the way that people look at history. There is growing awareness that Europe's past and the past of its individual countries, of larger or smaller social groups, of individuals, has been more complex, more amoral and irresponsible than had been widely assumed in the history written and used after World War II.

There are a number of reasons for this *rethinking* of history. Some of them are anchored in a political culture aimed at creating a safe, stable and democratic Europe, one that seeks to use history as an instrument for promoting cooperation and warning about the consequences of hatemongering and tyranny. British historian Tony Judt points out that «The first post-war Europe was built upon deliberate *mis*-memory – upon forgetting as a way of life,» (Judt 2007, 829) but since 1989 Europe has been formed on the basis of memory compensating values. Europe's experience shows that only when the atrocious, treacherous and horrifying events of 20th century history have been researched, debated, denied, and admitted can states/nations begin to live with this history and leave it in the past.

Other reasons for *rethinking* history can be found in the political and geographic changes that resulted from the collapse of the USSR and the socialist system, which put an end to the confrontation between the two ideological systems that divided Europe – communism and capitalism – and the framework that this provided for the interpretation of history.

Yet another reason for *rethinking* history evolved from Central and Eastern Europe. After the fall of the communist regimes in the late 1980s and early 1990s, their memories of World War II and the difference of their post-war situations came to the fore. Unlike Western Europe, these countries underwent not one but several occupations with one invader replaced by the next. They experienced the terror, deportations and other crimes of the communist system and felt they had been betrayed by the Western powers, which had yielded to the imperialistic ambitions of the totalitarian Soviet Union (see Oberlanders 2009).

The key to the present and the future of modern-day Europe lies largely in its ability to cohabit responsibly with its history. In the spring of 2005, several European newspapers ran an essay by German politicians Matthias Wissmann and Markus Meckel on the relevance of the end of World War II to the present day. The authors ended their essay with the words: «Only those who remember the past, are able to deal responsibly with the future. Remembering makes identity possible. The European Union can create a future of peace, solidarity, freedom and justice only if it reexamines the past in all of its perspectives and contexts.

The unification of Europe on the basis of democracy and human rights means the true end of World War II» (Wissman and Meckel 2005).¹

Historian and sociologist Jeffrey Olick links historical responsibility to a policy of regret/apology and to collective regret/apology for acts (of states, nations, social groups, individuals) of genocide and hatemongering in the history of the 20th century. His understanding of responsibility is based on sociologist Max Weber's concept of the ethics of responsibility. This requires not only evaluation of the consequences of one's own behaviour; it also requires taking *realpolitik* into consideration (Olick 2007, Vēbers 2002, 27-90).

The social and moral need for history and historical responsibility are traditionally seen as the need for a lesson about the past. A popular Latin saying tells us: «*Historia magistra vitae.*» The meaning of history must be linked to practices dictated by morals, with social concepts of what is «right» and what is «wrong,» what is «allowed» and what is «not allowed.» Among the functions of history is the legitimation of social and cultural order through elucidation of the past, identification (*nosce te ipsum* – know yourself) as well as perception and appraisal of that which is different (Savel'yeva and Poletayev 2008, 355-378).

In recent decades, there has been a trend towards commemoration, remembrance, and the blossoming of memorial places and objects. French historian Pierre Nora has called the turn of the 21st century the age of the global triumph of memory and commemoration. To his mind, this is a reaction to changes in traditional attitudes towards the past and diminishing certainty about the past. The growing role of memory in political, social and everyday life has also captured the attention of social science. In the past 20 years, there has been a virtual boom of studies on collective memory in the hope that this will afford a better understanding of many mechanisms of social and power relationships, individual and collective, past and present linkages, or the prospects of for nations and national states in today's globalization processes (see Olick and Robbins 1998; Olick 2008). Undeniably, memory finds its way into almost every area of our lives: it is the social reality – which can be purposely and actively sustained by those in power – of a large or a small social group. The image of the past that lives in our memory serves to explain the present, the legitimacy or illegitimacy of present-day occurrences. It is memory that largely determines the eternal truth and therewith the eternal identity of the members of a group

¹ This article was published in *Die Welt* (Germany), *Die Presse* (Austria), *Le Figaro* (France), *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Poland), *Eesti Päevaleht* (Estonia), *Lietuvos Rytos* (Lithuania), *Diena* (Latvia) and *The International Herald Tribune*.

(Novick 1999, 4). The relationship between collective memory and history is relatively close, reciprocal, but not unambiguous. The two are not infrequently in conflict. History seeks to produce objective and distanced accounts of the past and to analyze these, but collective memory is part of the present and plays its part in the creation of a present-day identity (Wertsch 2008, 60).

The science of history and the work of historians has traditionally been closely linked to politics. As the new national states and their ideologies were forming, the duty of history was to lend legitimacy to the new political systems and rulers and to confirm these as part of the natural course of history. Historians became «the nation's explainers» and their work was assigned a specific purpose: to serve state and nation. History became aligned with politics; it became a political weapon and was granted a prominent place in the public education system (Breisach 1994, 228-290). It is impossible to envision a nation without history – be it real or imagined. There is a similar linkage between politics and history. According to historian Norman Davies, the fusion of politics and history can best be observed in ideology, propaganda, censorship, nomenclature, mythology, education and international relations (Davies 2006, 249-277). History is always a useful instrument in the arsenal of the elite. The degree of politicization of history depends on the political regime. In a totalitarian system, it is explicitly high: history openly and intensively serves the state, its rulers and their ideology. Nothing else is permitted. In a democratic system, historians are able to interpret events of the past relatively freely and evaluate the facts at their disposal – however, only in compliance with existing political and social values and morals, within the framework of the current day and age.

Academic and/or popular writing/construction of history is the intellectual resource of society, politics and memory. History is an instrument of memory, which can be used to influence social reality, individual and/or collective identities, moral values and ways of life. In a broader sense, the potential of this influence also determines the responsibility of historians for history.

In the history-memory interaction model, the term «responsibility» functions in two dimensions: 1) historical responsibility is the uncompromising exposure of past events and development of critical thought, thus assigning to history the role of moral lesson; 2) responsible treatment of history and its values means non-transmission of past hatreds, resentments and desires for retribution to the present and to the currently functioning memory, and non-exploitation of the past in *realpolitik* to avoid new conflicts and violence. Historical responsibility means the practice of tolerance and democratic values, which are based on as clear an understanding of the past as possible.

In Latvia, relations with the past have not been settled at either the collective or the individual level. For this reason, historical responsibility functions only fragmentarily and responsible treatment of history creates problems. This is also why the history of the 20th century, its interpretations, its application in politics, as well as the «truths» of collective memory frequently become prominent issues of heated public debate.

Our present-day awareness of history, formed and sustained by scientific research, the media, the arts and collective memory, has evolved rather chaotically and emotionally. This has been determined by events that led to the renewal of independence, by the wrongs inflicted during the Soviet period, by wounded feelings and ethnic sensibilities, by historical resentments, by the transformation of the post-Soviet region, by the many pressing economic and social problems, and by the real and imagined injustices of these times. This variety of influences makes it difficult to clearly define and interpret the positive/negative values of history, even more complicated by political and ethnic rifts within society, and by Russia's history policy, which seeks to strengthen Russia's influence and political position. The history of Latvia's past century is still very close at hand – sometimes receding, then again advancing and at times breaking quite vehemently into the present. To live with the history of the past century, in awareness of its savagery, destruction and absence of morals, or with complete amnesia – this is hard, next to impossible. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how Latvia currently deals with historical responsibility, at why this is so, and at the main problems.

Democratization of History: The First Wave

During the past two centuries, the history of Latvia has undergone many versions. All of them have, after a relatively short period of popularity, been abandoned and/or disowned and subsequently rewritten. The needs of rulers, the elite or the opposition for their own version of history, one that legitimizes their positions and policies, has time and again been the main initiator for the writing of history. Latvia's experience with democratic writing of history has been as short as the history of the democratic Republic of Latvia (Zelče 2000). After 1934, the writing of Latvian history was dictated by the needs of Ulmanis' authoritarian regime and the Soviet totalitarian regime. It was the duty of history to establish the legitimacy of the current political system and to create ideology and mythology. During the Soviet period, exploitation of history by the regime reached its climax. Historian Irène Šneidere has harsh words for Soviet historiography: «The strict controls and the dictates of Communist ideology led to a falsification of Latvia's history in Soviet historiography. Historical facts and occurrences that were unacceptable to the regime were concealed and outright lies became the basis for historical concepts» (Šneidere 2008, 133).

The second half of the 1980s saw the beginning of *perestroika* in the Soviet Union. This policy sought to restructure and reform the political, economic and social systems of the USSR, and one of its main components was the revision of Soviet history. The intention was to win the trust and support of the people with the help of history, to unleash the «creativity of the masses» and encourage participation in reform processes, thus giving the Soviet state a new start. But the effect was not the one that was desired: under the impact of *glasnost*, history completely discredited the idea of socialism. Each new disclosure about the crimes committed during Stalin's rule (and other

periods) created widespread disenchantment with the Soviet state and a negative attitude towards the whole system. Historical openness compromised the myths upon which the Soviet system was founded. The history of the USSR that had been forged from the matrix of Soviet ideology disintegrated – and with it the legitimacy of the regime.

The rapid decline of Soviet Latvia's historic legitimacy began in June of 1988, when the word «occupation» rang out publicly for the first time (at the plenum of the LSSR Creative Unions). More and more disclosures about the wrongs committed against Latvia in the past provided the framework for criticism of current conditions and demands for the renewal of independence (see Zelče 2005). The disclosures were indeed overwhelming: shocking facts about Latvians who had been killed or deported, their deeply personal and emotional accounts of what they had been forced to go through. The historians and history buffs who unmasked the criminal, inhuman nature of the Soviet regime acquired the role of opinion makers, even that of intellectual and political leaders. History was in great demand, and enthusiasm for uncovering what had previously been concealed was huge.

History became one of the main instruments of political mobilization in the struggle to renew independence. This newly acquired/awakened knowledge of history unleashed collective memory, which became a force to be reckoned with. It was this that united the Latvians, made them gather at the Freedom Monument, rally on the shores of the Daugava, join the «Baltic Way», create their own calendar of remembrance days, their own national symbols. Collective memory also created a future myth – the image of an ideal, free and independent Latvia – which inspired the movements of the National Awakening. Memory separated history/the past into two time periods: the «good times» that lasted up to 1940, the year of the Soviet occupation, and the «bad times», the following half-century under hostile rule. The great challenge was to renew independence, which would allow Latvians to «return» to the Latvia of the 1930s that had been ravished by the Soviets.

Public disclosure of the violations against the Baltic States (unlawful incorporation into the Soviet Union in 1940, political repressions, the national policies of the Soviets) justified the separatism of the Baltic States in the eyes of the other Soviet republics. The disclosure of Soviet crimes against the Balts played a big role in exploding Soviet myths and awakening national self-confidence in other Soviet republics. The discredited myths of Soviet history were replaced by «deep-felt historical resentments and new, nationalistic myths» (Scherlock 2007, 125-148).

The time after the end of the 1980s has been devoted to criticism of «Soviet history», filling in the «blank pages», and writing Latvian history. The authors have been historians, journalists, writers, politicians, and others. For example, in 1988 and 1989, on the initiative of the Latvian National Independence Movement, a new Latvian history textbook was written for schools. However, historians, especially those who had acquired academic qualifications, began to lose their positions. There were several reasons for this: 1) during the Soviet period, people had come to

question the honesty of historians and the quality of their work; 2) journalists, writers and politicians were able to produce new information about the past more quickly and in better accordance with demand. In the new accounts of history, rationality was replaced by emotion and personal conviction. The newly written history and collective memory united the (renewed) citizens of a renewed Latvia – the Latvian nation. It worked as a conjunctive force, which to greater or lesser extent helped to mobilize support for Latvia's political elite, the policies and reforms of the government, and sustain the unconditional acceptance of initial hardships.

Collective memory also stimulated the renewal of Latvian symbols and the practice of commemoration. Latvia regained its national anthem, its red-white-red flag, its coat of arms, its monuments. And the streets regained their former names. Kārlis Ulmanis, Oskars Kalpaks, Jorģis Zemītāns, the men who fought in Latvia's War of Independence, members of the Latvian Legion and others whose names had been erased from public memory could once again be celebrated as national heroes (see, e.g., Naglinska 2007).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the first memorials were erected to the victims of the Soviet era. In almost every populated area, monuments were unveiled to the victims of Stalin's reign of terror, the national partisans and others who fought against the Soviet occupation. These monuments were usually quite simple – large, expressive boulders with engraved texts (see Resnais 2006). Particular care was devoted to the restoration of soldiers' cemeteries, where the graves of Latvian legionnaires had been desecrated and razed during Soviet rule, and to the renewal or construction of memorial sites for persons who had been declared enemies of the state by the Soviets (for example, a search was launched for the last resting place of former President Kārlis Ulmanis). These new or renewed memorials became the venues of public (both official and private) commemoration rituals on the anniversaries of the June 14 and March 25 deportations and other national remembrance days (see Zelče 2007). Historical responsibility turned into the symbolic repayment of a debt owed to the victims of the Soviet regime (both those who had actually suffered repressions and those who had simply been forced to live in the Soviet system) for lost independence, lost lives, and lost time.

The Pain of Memory in the 1990s

In Eastern Europe, the collapse of Communism produced a state of «epistemological anarchy.» The new democracies were weak and their ideological cement of dubious quality (Tismaneanu 1998, 153). The age of illusion and fantasy had begun. East Europeans often tried to compensate for life in the Communist system and heal the inflicted wounds and inferiority complexes with nationalism, myths about the glory of their forefathers, and plans to take revenge on and punish their former oppressors and malefactors.

The collective memory of Latvians in the 1990s and their construction of history were dominated by remembrance of the victims of the Soviet regime. The memories of people who had experienced Stalin's repressions, the fates of those

who had been deported were collected, studied and made public. Anthropologist Viede Skultans claims that, for Latvians, stories about the repressions are the main feature of their identity in the same way as the Holocaust is for the Jews. The focal points of Latvians' life stories were arrest, deportation, exile and return home. These narratives were compensation for a lifetime of hurt and humiliation. The stories of Latvians told of abuse: (in the narrower sense) physical violence and (in the broader sense) the structural destruction of daily lives, prospects and plans. In these narratives, «history» was equated with «fate» (Skultans 1997, 1998). In the 1990s, the memories of those who had suffered repressions occupied a prominent place in public awareness and in the array of written/published texts. It seemed that since the 1940s Latvians had been living «by the River of the Deceased»² and were still there, unable to tear themselves away and stop watching the passing flow of victims and sufferings, or seeking to understand their own history/fate/identity.

The memories of the repressed completely overran the historical narratives created by historians, which were relatively few in number as it was. History (like other sciences) had gone into survival and self-preservation mode. This allowed a passive, wait-and-see position, in the hope that history's financial misery would eventually come to an end and the government would create the conditions required for its renaissance. The manuscripts of researchers were published primarily in local history journals, which had a small readership and therefore found little public echo (see Onken 2003). The main initiative for the preparation of education materials was taken by teachers, who were also the authors of many of the new history books. In the period from 1991 to the summer of 2001, more than 150 history textbooks, workbooks and other teaching materials were published. About 30% of these were dedicated to the history of Latvia (Gundare 2001, 246). History as a science had little impact on collective memory in the 1990s. On the contrary – collective memory formed historians' view of the past. Historians – themselves a part of Latvia's/Latvian society and its past – were more or less taken captive by collective memory. This was aided by a «Latvianization» of the historians' academic elite, which became largely monoethnic (for various reasons – career, personal, political – historians in Latvia of Russian, Jewish and other ethnicity surrendered their positions).

The shock from the horrific disclosures about the past affected the attitude of Latvians towards their present, their way of thinking and their behaviour. At the same time, this shock interacted with shock over the post-Soviet situation – the harsh realities of capitalism and the new democracy: poverty, unemployment, crime, decline of living standards, etc. Awareness of historical wrongs «convinced [Latvians] of the unique character of Latvia's situation, which in turn was coupled with the notion that Latvians were, so to say, negatively chosen – that they had suffered more than any other nation in the 20th century» (Rozenvalds 2000, 138). History became an instrument for

justifying many failures and mishaps. At the same time, this victim, stepchild, «orphan nation» fixation promoted passiveness, indecision, and the absence of responsibility for present, future and past alike.

The victim role that dominated collective memory turned Russophobia into an effective political instrument. Ethnic researcher Ilga Apine points out that Russophobia was a Soviet legacy. The totalitarian regime's Russification policy made non-Russians identify the Soviet system with Russians. All responsibility for misfortunes and injustices could, therefore, be unloaded onto the Russians. «The position of the Baltic nations at the level of mass awareness was: they came in with their tanks, spoke Russian, and we lost our native land,» writes Apine (Apine and Volkovs 2007, 81). Soviet Russification policy and the migration of peoples that this policy prescribed posed the threat for Latvians of becoming a minority in their own country. And they had already started to feel like a minority, which meant desperate efforts to protect national heritage and national memory from extinction. Awareness of the Soviet crimes and atrocities that came to light in the late 1980s and early 1990s only served to increase the Latvians' minority complex and fear of extinction.

A tendency towards victimization was characteristic not only for Latvia. It was inherent to the vision of history of other Eastern and Central European countries as well. In the eyes of Western Europe, the memory surges in Central and Eastern Europe, their nationalistic constructions of history and their systems of values appeared strange, archaic, comparable to «tribal passions, blood feuds» and primitive conflicts, which could endanger European stability (Esbenshade 1995, 73). How the words «I remember» (with their dark undercurrents of death, defeat, destruction, shame, smouldering resentment) could motivate acts of revenge was demonstrated by the events in the Former Yugoslavia, which became the living image of war, violence and ethnic butchery. There, «words of the past became a weapon of war» (Bet-El 2002). In Latvia, memory of the crimes committed by the Soviet and Nazi regimes gave rise to a culture of profound sorrow, which was institutionalized by the official calendar of commemorative dates in which Remembrance Day status was granted to all dates of historical wrongdoings and injustices (Skangale 2008).

In Latvia, the need to take revenge for historical wrongs was satisfied by bringing to trial a number of persons who had carried out the repressions of the Communist regime (for example, Alfons Noviks (1995); Vasilijš Kononovs (2000)) and by placing restrictions on the political activities of former KGB officers and members of the Latvian Communist Party who had actively opposed Latvian independence. State control over the past and identification of the guilty was entrusted to the Centre for the Documentation of the Consequences of Totalitarianism that was set up in 1992. The most far-reaching instrument for avenging and redressing the wrongs of the Soviet regime was the naturalization procedure, which affected a large part of the people who had come to settle in Latvia from other Soviet republics. Knowledge of the crimes committed by the Soviet totalitarian regime against the Latvian nation became the ticket to Latvian citizenship.

² «By the River of the Deceased» is the title of a book by Melānija Vanaga (1991), in which she writes about her arrest and deportation.

The example set by other European countries (especially France and Germany) for dealing with the past shows that a democratic, safe and prosperous society can only be achieved if conflicts and wrongs are put aside and forgotten, if revenge and reprisal are not pursued. The next step is to learn the lessons of history without fearing to face the truth about atrocities of the past in order to understand that the present must be shaped in a way that makes the killings and terror of the past no longer possible (see Lebow et al. 2006; Muller 2002; Niven 2002; Olick 2003; Walkowitz and Knauer 2004). It is also important to assume responsibility for one's own history because the history of Europe in the 20th century, with two World Wars, the Holocaust, totalitarianism, collaborationism, Nazism and Communism – all this was of Europe's own making.

Diverse Memories

Openness in regard to history during the *perestroika* period had an impact on other ethnic communities in Latvia as well. These had a different view and a different memory of the past. Many of those who were not ethnic Latvians did not (as a social group) identify with the memory of the Latvians and formed their own, which quite often diverged.

Researchers point out that the collapse of the USSR caused an identity crisis within the whole Russian nation (see Laitin 1998). In the minds and emotions of Russians living outside the Russian Federation, including those in Latvia, this crisis assumed double force. Their new status was foreigners who had arrived unlawfully during the occupation. This was exacerbated by the decline of their ethnic comfort, caused by a decline of the Russian-speaking milieu. Furthermore, the totalitarian regimes had destroyed the pre-war ethnic communities so that a revival was no longer possible. Apine points out that «the Soviet identity of the immigrants now had to be transformed into the identity of a Russian minority in Latvia» (Apine and Volkovs 2007, 50-1). This played a large role in committing a Soviet view of history to their memory. The ethnic policy of the Latvian government also played a role. In the 1990s, it evoked distrust and feelings of discrimination among those who were not Latvians, which led to alienation from the Latvian state and from the values of Latvian history and memory. It is difficult for Russians to accept the fact of «the occupation of Latvia» and its consequences – the wrongs committed against the Latvians. The lack of a culture of responsibility was promoted by isolation of those who had settled in Latvia during the Soviet period from Latvian memory, ignorance of the Latvian language, mythologization of the Soviet period with a focus on the victory of the USSR in the «Great Patriotic War», glorification of the achievements of socialism, and regret over the loss of Russia's might and empire status (Apine and Volkovs 2007, 50-51; Broks et al. 2001). Because of their alienation from the Latvian cultural (and historical) milieu, for Russians the main instrument of memory remained Soviet history with its falsification of Latvian history and concealment of the Soviet regime's injustices against the populations of the occupied countries, as well as modern-day Russian history. In the 1990s, this was dominated by reconstruction

of the past of Tsarist Russia and disclosure of Stalin's acts of terror (Scherlock 2007, 158-161). In the memory of Latvia's Russians, this history stimulated nostalgia for the lost empire and the construction of Russians as victims of repressions. This, in turn, legitimized dissociation from the Latvian culture of sorrow and pain, from Latvia's calendar of commemorative dates, and offered a competing debate on their *own* victims. As historian Eva-Clara Onken acknowledges in her analysis of Latvia's situation in the 1990s, the formation of several parallel, ethnically connoted collective memories and historical conceptions not always, but frequently, contains potential for conflict and increases divergence of political interests (Onken 2003, 120).

After the renewal of independence, collective memory formed in other ethnic groups as well. One important social group was the Jewish community, which was renewed during the first years of the Awakening. The Jewish history and memory resolutely formed by this group was focused on disclosure of the atrocities of the Holocaust and commemoration of the victims. Remembrance rituals for Jewish genocide victims have been institutionalized at the state level in Latvia. New monuments also serve to keep collective memory alive: the memorial to World War II victims – Jews, Soviet prisoners of war, civilians – erected at Biķernieku Forest (2001); the memorial to Nazi victims at Rumbula (2002); the monument to Žanis Lipke (2007) (Spāritis 2007, 96-7; Melers 2006); the museum «Jews in Latvia» and the education programmes of Latvia's Jewish community; the project «Jews in Latvia: 1941-1945: Names and Fates» in commemoration of the Jews who perished in World War II.³

The relationship between Latvian and Jewish history and memory has developed through dialogue, through a culture of listening to and hearing each other, in this way promoting tolerance and creating a foundation for historical responsibility.

The Turning Point of 1998 and Its Results

In 1998, the Latvian government began work on formulating a history policy. This was one of the requirements for the country's integration into Europe; more precisely, for accession to the European Union and NATO. In preparation for negotiations on accession to the EU, one of Latvia's tasks was to put an end to society's orientation to the past, with the amassment of historical injustices and cultivation of their commemoration, and replace this with a view to the future, with regard for the positive and responsible values of history and concern for the stability and safety of one's own country and that of Europe. Similar tasks were assigned to other post-Communist countries, among them all of the Baltic States (Ash 2002; Orla-Bukowska 2006).

A public signal of Latvia's official history and memory policy was President Guntis Ulmanis' expression of regret over the participation of Latvians in the Holocaust on February 23, 1998 in Israel. In his address to President Ezra Weizmann, he said: «Your nation devotes special

³ See project database: <http://names.lu.lv/>.

attention to historical memory. In Latvia, too, this is an issue of constant political concern. Our past has taught us the moral evaluation of history. This is why our historical awareness includes the contribution made to Latvia by its Jewish community. And it includes the names of those Latvians who took part in destroying the Jews. I admit this with deep regret. We, in Latvia, must never forget this historical truth, just as we must never forget the names of those courageous people who saved Jews during the war years. I find that we must still learn to speak about our history and to look deeply into its eyes» (LV 1998a).

The new principles of Latvia's official memory and history policy were exhaustively formulated in Ulmanis' interview «We Remember Everything. But We Must Go On» on March 20, 1998, a few days before the anniversary of the Soviet deportations and before the first big commemoration event in Riga to honour Latvia's World War II legionnaires (see Box 1.19). The president's words did not produce a positive public echo. On the contrary, they were received with a lack of understanding. The vision of history proposed by Ulmanis differed from the values highlighted in the existing collective memory, from the existing culture

of sorrow, and the sense of historical justice that functioned within this memory.

In May 1998, Ulmanis began consultations with the academic elite of Latvia's historians to explore the possibility of creating a more European vision of Latvian history (LV 1998b). During the following months, the president often addressed the need to overcome the sorrow and lamentation that reigned in public attitudes towards the past, to abstain from conflicting views, to standardize history textbooks for schools, to create a European conception of Latvian history that would be unaffected by political positions (Ulmanis 1998a; 1998b).

On November 13, on the initiative of the president, the Latvian Historians Commission was founded. Among the Commission's plans was the involvement of foreign historians and respected public personalities in its activities. The Commission's main task: to collect material on and study the topic «Crimes against Humanity during Two Occupations: 1940-1956.» Work was to be concentrated on acquiring knowledge about the Holocaust. On May 4, 1999, a bylaw passed by the Cabinet of Ministers defined three goals for the work of the Commission: 1) to promote

Box
1.19

President Guntis Ulmanis' interview with the Government Herald, March 3, 1998

«I don't think that we have to talk about these things [Soviet repressions – V. Z.] every day. Nor do I think that we should take these terrible experiences as the motivation for our daily behavior. Nevertheless, we must understand that the repressions have formed one of the distinctive features of the Latvian nation's identity – our historical self-confidence, our return. Because everything could have ended more tragically. We could have not returned. But each one of us, through our «I,» sees and feels this return.

But when forming our nation's identity, this motive of suffering should not be made the only feature of our identity. We cannot live with only one thought – that we are victims. That is not enough to shape our future and earn the respect of the global community. It is just like in relationships with other people: no one particularly likes those who are always talking about their problems. We know, of course, that others are much more likely to accept those who smile and are happy, successful and self-confident. Success and failure, these are concepts to which people attach a certain degree of power.

So, we can not keep showing other nations only our tragic side. We must show them that, despite all the terrible sacrifices that we have been forced to make, despite all that we have gone through, we are also able to take a new attitude, which allows us to look at life with different eyes....

March 25 – our Remembrance Day for the victims of the repressions – cannot be called a festive occasion, but neither should we fill it with excessive sadness. It should also be filled with other things that are characteristic of the Latvian nation. On this day, we should more consciously resolve to try to find ourselves in this world, in this life, in this state. To find ourselves. It is good if there is someone to help; however, one's own initiative, one's own energy, one's own responsibility is, I think, the crucial factor....

The identity of our Latvian nation is not just the Occupation Museum of Latvia. Our identity is also the European Union. This means European values as well, without giving up our Latvian identity....

We must live by present-day criteria and present-day principles because that is the only way that we can accomplish anything real; but at the same time we must also be Latvians. With Latvian identity, a Latvian mentality, and Latvian conviction. In Latvia, we have not talked enough about the history of our nation and state. There are individual fragments, individual people who do. We do not have sufficient historical understanding of the development of our state. We have not yet been able to achieve this with the help of our historians, philosophers, thinkers. The teaching staffs of our schools and universities have not yet come to grips with this process of history, have not yet analyzed it to the end

We must also analyze our own behaviour. The greatest foolishness in many conflicts, big and small, is the attempt to declare others the villains, but oneself – a real piece of gold.

Yes, I would like to repeatedly underline: we must not forget our past due to its many victims. It is because of this past and because of these victims that we must become wiser and look more positively to the future.»

Source: Ūdris 1998. On the interview and its context see Ūdris, 2009, 133-9.

research of Latvia's 20th-century history with special emphasis on analysis of the two occupations by totalitarian regimes – Communist USSR and Nazi Germany – and the crimes against humanity committed by these regimes; 2) to promote communication of the results of this research to the people of Latvia and the international community; 3) to promote the involvement of young historians in studying the problems of 20th century history.⁴ When considering the integration of post-Communist states into Europe, historian Tony Judt finds that «recognition of the Holocaust is today's ticket to Europe.» The readiness of political elites to assume responsibility for the crimes against humanity in their countries' past was the condition for being defined as responsible European states (Judt 2007, 887-8).

Under pressure from the European Union, Latvia's political elite was forced to put pressure on its academic elite to involve it in the policymaking process. This was necessary for acquisition of the necessary knowledge and the stimulation of public debate. Political expert Juris Rozenvalds finds that a major problem in all of Eastern Europe was the inability of the *intelligentsia* – so revered during the collapse of the Communist system – to change course from an ethics of accusation to an ethics of responsibility, thus assuming responsibility for social processes and acting as society's «critical voice» (Rozenvalds 2000, 138). The opportunity offered by the government in 1988 to help develop awareness of historical responsibility was the big opportunity of the *intelligentsia* to take part in the making of a better society, to breathe new life into tolerance, morals and universal human values. This opportunity was only partially taken.

The Latvian Historians Commission

The work of the Latvian Historians Commission that was set up in 1998 has been focused on researching the past. The results are regularly presented at conferences and in publications. The Commission functions as a research institution with its own financing (although this is included in the budget of the University's Institute of Latvian History, it is earmarked for the work of the Commission and its publications).⁵ Since 2000, the Institute of Latvian History has published 24 volumes of the «Papers of the Latvian Historians Commission».

In public, the Historians Commission has from the very start demonstrated a model of collaboration between historians and the Latvian president which, over the years, has settled into a certain routine. Almost every conference organized by the Commission begins with a speech by the president; almost every book launch takes place at the Riga Castle. The media report on the activities and achievements of the Commission as part of their reporting on the work of the president without highlighting the importance of these achievements for history as a science or for the

creation of historical awareness. The presence of the president gives credibility to the writing of history, without judgment of content or scientific quality. The Historians Commission's right to the status of *institution of truth*, both in the present and future dimension, is regularly confirmed in presidents' speeches. For example, when opening the June 13, 2002 conference, President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga underlined: «During the period of Soviet occupation, questions concerning Latvian history were dealt with in an ideological and political manner; various propaganda myths and fairytales were created. This is why one of the most important tasks of historians after the renewal of independence is to provide an objective portrayal of history. This must be a history without embellishment or distortion – true and scientifically supported» (Vīķe-Freiberga 2003, 21). Those in power tend to qualify history that has been written under their auspices as «objective history,» disregarding the timeless and inevitable relativity of historical truth or respect and tolerance for that which may differ.

Historians themselves like to take advantage of the presence and the acknowledgement of those in office to enhance the value of their work. The history of the 20th century created by the Latvian academic elite wallows in self-sufficiency and shuns intellectual independence. The Commission's publications demonstrate great discrepancies in regard to professional skill and responsibility, theoretical and methodological background, scientific and critical thinking. Truly outstanding and analytical studies can be found alongside rather stereotypical accounts of historical facts presented in a nationally conservative light.

The Commission's contribution has been the collection of historical facts and data. The research that it has sponsored has made it possible to significantly improve knowledge about 20th century history. However, the function that the Commission was initially supposed to fulfil – to give society a responsible, European understanding of history – has proved to be of secondary importance. The Commission, being an elite academic structure, rarely departs from its ivory tower to take part in the management of collective memory or development of a system of values. It is possible that Latvia's domestic policy and the integration of society would have benefited more from a historians commission that functioned not as an academic institution but as architects of history policy and management. Responsible functioning of public memory can be achieved through dialogue, not through the monologue and directives that have so far dominated in communication with the people of Latvia by those in office and the academic elite of historians.

When trust in rulers founders or is lost, the same can happen to ruler-sponsored history, inasmuch as it is not anchored in the knowledge and memory of the people, who may at some point find the collection of ruler-sponsored facts to be absolutely unnecessary.

Historical Knowledge

The Historians Commission is not the only institution in Latvia that produces historical knowledge. Other institutions do the most important work, and their

⁴ For more on the Latvian Historians Commission see: http://www.president.lv/pk/content/?cat_id=7.

⁵ For example, in 2006, the University of Latvia Institute of Latvian History had a budget of 20,104 lats for the Latvian Historians Commission and 17,399 lats for the Commission's publications. See University of Latvia Agency (2006), «Latvijas Universitātes Latvijas vēstures institūts.»

contribution to the acquisition and communication of historical knowledge is considerable, although it can (possibly) not be immediately sized up and judged. Historical research is carried out by the History and Philosophy Faculty and the Institute of Latvian History at the University of Latvia, the Daugavpils University Liberal Arts Faculty, the Latgale Research Institute and Oral History Centre, the Liepāja University Liberal Arts Faculty, and the Rēzekne University Liberal Arts and Law Faculty and *Letonics* Institute. Research is also carried out by Latvia's major archives: the Latvian State History Archive, the Latvian State Archive, and others. And there are about 200 museums in Latvia (about 130 of these are officially accredited), which also collect, study and popularize historical material.

There are three history periodicals: *Latvijas Arhīvi* [Latvian Archives], *Latvijas Vēsture* [Latvian History] and *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls* [Journal of the Institute of Latvian History]. Other liberal arts and interdisciplinary periodicals also publish studies on historical topics: *Latvijas Zinātņu Akadēmijas Vēstis* [Newsletter of the Latvian Academy of Sciences], *Letonica*, *Sociālo Zinātņu Vēstnesis* [The Social Sciences Herald], *Via Latgalica*, and others. Museums, too, have their own publications (primarily yearbooks), for example: the Occupation Museum of Latvia, the Latvian War Museum, the Ventspils Museum, and others. The number of publications dedicated to history is quite considerable. In 2000-2007, of all books and brochures published in Latvia, 89-166 per year (3.3-6%) were dedicated to history and biography. The number of copies printed in one year ranged from 90,800 to 186,900 (1.97-4.05% of all books printed).⁶ 2003 saw the beginning of a boom in the translation of major foreign historical works into Latvian, with the *Atēna* and *Jumava* publishing houses taking the lead.

From May 4, 1990 to 2006, 424 non-fiction books by Latvian authors on the history of their country and its people were published in Latvia. The majority of these (368 or 87%) were in Latvian. A much smaller number of books dedicated to Latvia's history (45 or 11%) was published in

Russian. The 20th and 21st centuries dominated; events that took place during this time were covered in 288 books (69%). Prior to 2006, most attention was devoted to the history of the pre-war Republic of Latvia, especially the period of authoritarian rule (Dribins 2007, 46-7).

School students find that history is an interesting subject. In 2006, 82% of the interviewed students claimed to be interested in history and to enjoy learning it (Dribins 2007, 55). There is a fairly large number of opportunities to get a higher education in history. In 2008/2009, four universities in Latvia offered Bachelor programmes (University of Latvia, Daugavpils University, Liepāja University, Rēzekne University); two offered Master programmes (University of Latvia, Daugavpils University); post-graduate studies were available only at the University of Latvia. In 2003, there were 159 history Ph.Ds. in Latvia, but in 2006, only 105 (under the age of 70) (LR IZM; LR CSP 2008, 519).

The infrastructure of history education and science in Latvia is far-reaching and wide-ranging, and the number of users considerable. Latvia seems almost a country of historians. And this is largely true, because Latvia's past, the pain that it has suffered and the place occupied by history in national identity promotes the absorption of historical knowledge even if one does not choose history as a profession. With a bit of idealization, historical knowledge can promote historical responsibility in the collective memory and behaviour of the population.

Knowledge of History and Historical Responsibility

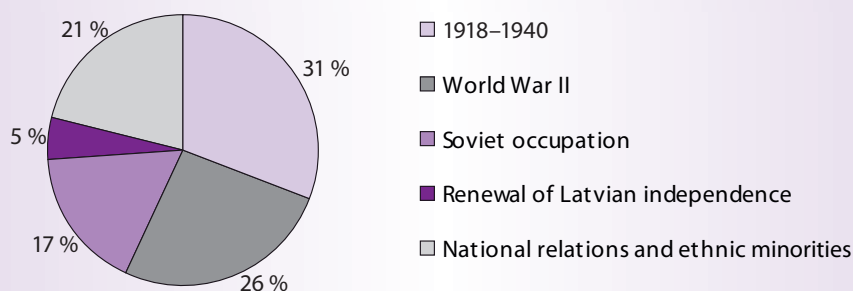
Latvia's 20th century history is suffused with countless human tragedies. The first half of the century can be portrayed as a chain of violent events, with every next one surpassing the one before. In contrast to World War II and Stalin's repressions, the first years of violence – 1905 and 1906 – seem like years of comparatively «humane punishments,» although for the people who were affected they were years of horror, despair and humiliation.

The current collective memory of Latvia's population does not reach far back into the past. It is filled primarily

⁶ National Library of Latvia Institute of Bibliography data.

Distribution of Topics in Scientific Literature Dedicated to Latvia's 20th and 21st Century History (1990-2006)

Box
1.20



Source: Dribins 2007, 46-7.

with events that have taken place since the 1930s and have crucially affected people's lives. For example, in 2005, looking back at the year 1905 from a distance of a hundred years, the Ministry of Culture offered a special programme of events to mark the centennial anniversary. However, the social impact of the programme was insignificant; debates about the events of 1905 did not reach beyond the walls of academic institutions, and the values of 1905 did not find a niche in collective memory.

Nor does collective memory see any relevance to the present day of World War I, the exploits of the Latvian Riflemen in Russia and their collaboration with the Bolsheviks, Pēteris Stučka's Soviet government in 1919, Latvia's War of Independence, or the KGB activities of Latvians who remained in Soviet Russia (Stranga 2008). An examination of these topics, analysis of the causes and effects of the violence is material for a useful lesson on historical morals, but at present it is not an item on the memory agenda.

Today, the most important place in people's relationship with the past is taken by Latvia's occupation, the Holocaust, World War II events and the place of the Latvian Legion and the Soviet Army in these, Stalin's repressions, a «lifetime» in the Soviet system, and the National Awakening. These are also the questions that divide the collective memory of Latvia's population. They polarize the Latvian and the Russophone populations on issues of the past; they allow emotions, selfishness and vengeance for the wrongs of the past to prevail over values such as public security and the non-recurrence of violence. Researchers of Latvian history admit that there is no dialogue between them about the most important events of the 20th century. What dominates is political confrontation in which one side stubbornly refuses to hear the other, and each side defends its absolute monopoly on the truth (Dribins 2007, 52-3).

At present, knowledge of Latvia's occupation, the Holocaust, the controversial events of World War II, Stalin's repressions, and the Soviet era is still being improved. However, differences can be observed in comprehension and evaluation of these events.

Holocaust Research and Lessons in Responsibility

Knowledge of the Holocaust and its integration into the collective memory of the Latvians that was once demanded by Brussels promoted qualitative and quantitative development of research on the topic. In 1990s Latvia, awareness of Latvia's complicity in the Holocaust was for a long time an extremely delicate subject, which at times became a conflict zone for Latvian and Jewish collective memory and historical values and provoked a recurrence of anti-Semitic manifestations. The universal value of human life was at times forgotten in the rivalry over history's «body count.» Hints of the anti-Jewish prejudices incited by the totalitarian regimes, references to the role played by the Jews in the 20th century tragedies of the Latvian nation appeared in the statements of individual journalists and politicians. Nevertheless, according to historian Leo Dribins, «the great majority of the people [showed] tolerance and sensitivity» and a desire to know more about the events of the past (Dribins 2001, 147-159).

A turning point for academic research on the Holocaust in Latvia was the appearance of a major work by Andrievs Ezerģailis, a Latvian historian living in the USA: «The Holocaust in German-Occupied Latvia: 1941-1944,» first published in English in 1996 and translated into Latvian in 1999. Ezerģailis finds that «the atrocities of the Holocaust are too great for any kind of explanation» (Ezerģailis 1999, 17). The next step was to dispel the myth created by Soviet propaganda about the special role and bestiality of the Latvians in implementation of the Holocaust with the aid of proven facts and detailed Holocaust research throughout the whole territory of Latvia. Research on implementation of the Holocaust and involvement of the local population in this Nazi crime has been carried out in the Ilūkste District, in Ventspils, Auce, Krustpils, Silene, Gostiņi, Malta, the Bauska District, the Valmiera District, the Kuldīga District, Valdemārpils, Jelgava, Viesīte, the Abrene District, the Madona District, the Ludza District and elsewhere. The knowledge acquired from research

Box
1.21

Historian Aivars Stranga on Historical Responsibility

The local population participated in the destruction of the Jews and subsequent events in a number of ways. The first ones were, of course, the killers themselves; their responsibility and their crimes are indisputable. Very close came those who did not actually do the shooting but guarded the Jews who were destined to die and took them to the sites of the killings. Their guilt is almost as great. Others may only have been involved in registering the Jews. Others – frequently under duress – dug the graves and filled them in after the massacres, or guarded the possessions of those who had been killed. And yet others registered these possessions ... distributed and appropriated them. This was the largest population group, whose immorality and greed was often shocking.... At the same time, while one minority group – the murderers – killed the Jews, others – another minority group – tried to save the Jews. Identical conditions created radically opposite modes of behavior. The only thing common to both groups was the fact that they were a very small part of occupied Latvia's population.... Occupied Latvia was not unique, not in any way, among the occupied countries.... The overwhelming majority – as in any occupied country – were those who stood aside and observed the great crime with either indifference or helplessness.

Source: Stranga 2008, 529-532.

into local history provides an even deeper insight into the tragic events of the past – within the narrower confines of a city or district, individual tragedies and criminal acts appear all the more glaring and, in effect, more gruesome (Stranga 2006). Research done by Latvian historians in recent years has uncovered direct and indirect participation of Latvians in the Holocaust; this part of the past has become responsible history (see Box 1.21).

Imparting knowledge about the Holocaust, comprehension of and a responsible attitude towards the past are all part of the history programme in Latvian schools. History lessons – even more, confrontation with this part of the past in students' local history – visits to memorial sites, the stories of victims and those themselves involved in the crimes have contributed to a better understanding of the Holocaust. In 2006, history teachers at Latvian schools claimed that 86% of their students saw the Holocaust as a crime that could in no way be justified. Teachers at Russian schools said the same of 82% of their students. The views of the students themselves were somewhat different: at Latvian schools 72% completely condemned the Holocaust; the corresponding figure was 79% at Russian schools and 82% at other minority schools (Dribins 2007, 54-7).

Nevertheless, knowledge does not always initiate responsibility. In 2008, in answer to the question of whether or not the present-day Latvian nation should assume historical responsibility for the Holocaust in Latvia during World War II, only 12% of the respondents gave a positive answer, but at Russian schools 45% felt that the Latvian nation should assume responsibility (Makarovs and Boldane 2008, 11).

Understanding of the Holocaust, like understanding of all of Latvia's tragedies, comes gradually. An important role is played by schools and by the media.⁷ It is ironic but true that in the USA, West Germany, Austria and other European countries the hearts and minds of people were first opened to the tragedy of the Holocaust in 1978 by the NBC mini-series «Holocaust» – a story about the fate of the Weiss family from Berlin (Novick 1999, 209-214; Kanstrein 2006, 115-6; the «Holocaust» series was aired in Germany

⁷ In 2001, at the beginning of Holocaust research in Latvia, historian A. Stranga wrote: «Understanding of the history of the Holocaust and perception of the Holocaust as a huge tragedy for all of Latvia will only come gradually through serious and persistent educational efforts. Whether this understanding can be broadened and deepened depends very much on Latvia's political and economic development. It is hard to imagine that it could be done without overcoming the fairly widespread poverty (particularly in Latgale), unemployment, and the poor material conditions of schools, teachers and students; it is hard to hope that people who are burdened by the hardships of their daily lives are likely to have particular interest in the history of the Holocaust. Understanding of the Holocaust is largely connected with the achievement of Latvia's domestic and foreign policy goals: accession to the EU and NATO. If Latvia becomes a safe and prosperous country, a full-fledged member of organizations that are not just military and political alliances or economic unions, but also organizations with common moral values, people's understanding of history, including the history of the Holocaust, will become increasingly accurate and true.» See: Stranga A. «Latvijas sabiedrības attieksme pret holokaustu.» In: Ērglis, Dz. (ed.). 2001. *Latvijas Vēsturnieku komisijas raksti. Vol. 2: Holokausta izpētes problēmas Latvijā. Starpt. konf. referāti, 2000. gada 16.–17. oktobris, Rīga un pētījumi par holokaustu Latvijā.* Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, pp. 31–32.

by ARD in 1979). A simple, emotional story, told in a way that addressed the average TV viewer proved to be more effective than education systems, historical knowledge and commemoration rituals. The possibilities of the media and popular culture to promote the development of historical responsibility are huge, but so far little advantage has been taken of such possibilities in Latvia.

World War II: the Confrontation Zone of History and Memory

World War II meant tragedy to Latvia: the loss of statehood, Soviet repressions in 1940 and 1941, occupation by Nazi Germany, the Holocaust, the involvement of parts of Latvia's population in collaboration with Nazi security organs, repressions against Latvia's population, mobilization into the Nazi army, military operations on Latvia's territory in 1944 and 1945, crimes committed by the Soviet and Nazi armies against the civilian population, and this list could be continued.

The war forced the people of Latvia to side with one or the other of the warring powers. It was impossible to stand aside and fully escape having to make a choice. It is hard to draw a line between what is right and what is wrong, what is justifiable and what is not. This would just be idle talk about the price of a life. At the level of collective memory, Latvia's people to a greater or lesser extent identify with the fates of those who fought on one or the other side, who were killed or persecuted by one or the other side. Some of Latvia's political forces still take advantage of this part of memory to attract voters and strengthen their positions both in regard to domestic and foreign policy. Another factor that makes it difficult to find a balance in attitudes towards the events of World War II and the people who were involved, and to achieve tolerance for each other on both sides, is the question regarding legitimacy of the status of different parts of Latvia's population. A large part of the population and their forebears arrived in Latvia during the Soviet period, when Latvia's statehood had been terminated and Latvia had been integrated into the USSR; yet others had taken part in the termination of Latvia's statehood and its forced Sovietization. In their memory, World War II is the Soviet's Union triumph, the crowning point in the historical existence of the Soviet/Russian nation. The pre-war population of the Republic of Latvia and their descendants, on the other hand, see the destruction of the Latvian state as the greatest loss, followed by a succession of tragedies and destructions that resulted in a desolation of living conditions coupled with inevitable moral degradation and the feelings of shame, humiliation and moral foulness that it evoked. As late as in 1988, one of Latvia's 1930s model Communists, Soviet army major and later member of the Communist *nomenklatura*, Voldemārs Kalpiņš, said of his relationship with the Soviet regime: «Seeing what was happening, I was sorry we didn't fall on Victory Day. Yes, I feel my share of responsibility and I wish we had nothing to do with all of this – only the war, the victory...» (Daugmalis 1988).

In today's Latvia, the people or the descendants of people who found themselves in opposite camps during World War II and then in the roles of loser or winner,

victim or victimizer, are the inhabitants of this country and, by force of Soviet habit, carry on with their lives side by side. What has changed is Latvia's national status, its political system, and the importance that it attributes to human rights. Latvia is a European country. Despite this, in people's memory World War II is often still going on. Latvia's domestic policy has not been able to achieve harmony in questions concerning history. All opinion polls carried out in recent years show polarization in the attitudes of the Latvian and Russophone populations towards the events of World War II (see Dribins 2007, 53-9; Makarovs and Boldāne 2008, 7-14; Ozoliņa 2005; on Victory day in European memory politics, see Onken 2007, 23-46).

The historical confrontation is exacerbated by a number of additional factors. Among them are the political passions over March 16 – the unofficial Remembrance Day to honour those who fought in the Latvian Legion – which is used to accuse Latvia of historically being a very special accomplice to the crimes committed by Nazi Germany and today's Latvia of being a bridgehead for the rebirth of Nazism.

The second factor is the influence of Russia's history policy. In 2000, on the initiative of President Vladimir Putin, Russia set out to consolidate Russian society. The plan included the use of history to give the people of Russia greater self-assurance. This meant putting an end to expressions of repentance for the crimes of the totalitarian Soviet regime and commemoration of the victims (Smith 1996, 2002) – not only in Russia but in other countries as well – and a change of course to celebration of the Soviet Union as an influential superpower, the driving force behind global progress, and the victor of World War II. This concept was applied not only in textbooks and in history literature but in products of popular culture as well: movies, television series, patriotic entertainment shows. A special role was assigned to the annual and increasingly grandiose May 9 celebrations in honour of the victory in the «Great Patriotic War». At present, this celebration is the most expansive ritual that is carried out to acknowledge the historical existence and triumph of the Russians. In 2009, Russia reinforced its history policy with a law on the knowledge of «correct history», prescribing criminal punishment for violation of the law. In his analysis of Russian policy, historian Ervins Oberlenders describes it as «a never-ending attack on memory ... memory culture and historiography in countries that were once annexed or controlled by the USSR ... and the Russian side shows practically no readiness to listen to the arguments of neighbouring countries» (Oberlander 2009). Many of the Russians living in Latvia have accepted the vision of history cultivated by Russia as their own and take it as the basis for their historical vision of Latvia and other ethnic groups living in this country. This is a crisis situation for efforts to achieve tolerance in regard to history and memory in Latvia. Its outcome will be determined by the identity values of Latvia's Russians, by their choice of affiliation – Latvia or Russia – and the motivation for this choice.

Yet another factor is the low moral standards that are a part of present-day Latvia's political culture. These allow politicians to turn history, including the wrongdoings

of the past, into a campaign instrument or a political commodity. For example, Harmony Centre leader Nils Ušakovs could support the following deal: Russians get the status of official minority language for the Russian language, education in Russian, and citizenship; in return, they admit the occupation of Latvia in 1940 (Zubarev 2006, 9).

Political observers draw attention to the fact that local Russian media have a big impact on the historical knowledge and attitudes of Latvia's Russian and Russophone populations. Many articles in the Russian press oppose the collective memory of the Latvians and the views expressed in Latvia's scientific literature, basing their arguments on Soviet and Russian historical literature and stories of people's personal experiences. What is more, mainstream Russian newspapers occasionally voice open xenophobia against Latvians and their history (Dribins 2006; Skudra 2006).

According to integration policy experts, current national policy on the integration of society has largely failed, and one of the reasons for this failure has been the significance of past events in collective memory and the inability to achieve a convergence of historical perceptions. Even in 2005, Dribins came forth with a number of proposals for ways of trying to halt society's growing historical confrontation (e.g. translating into Russian the works of Latvian historians that have been written in a democratic tradition; organizing conferences and seminars; establishing joint Latvian, Russian and other minority associations to deal with historical questions; publishing parallel versions of popular illustrated history magazines in Russian and Latvian, etc). At present, the emotional attitudes towards World War II that are stored in the collective memories of Latvia's population, the hatred that is kept alive for the historical enemy can in certain circumstances lead to confrontations that endanger public safety. Scenarios similar to those of the «Bronze Night» in Estonia in 2007 cannot be completely ruled out. Latvia has not yet found a way to deal responsibly with the history of World War II.

For research on the history of Latvia, the study of World War II events is among the priorities. A huge job has been done to collect facts and document historical narratives (Bleiere *et al* 2008, 15-71). However, they do not have a determining impact on collective memory – on the contrary, the collective memory of Latvians appears to have a greater impact on the science of history.⁸ The

⁸ One indication of this is the practice of deleting or curtailing information about Latvian military units in the Soviet army from World War II accounts. Colonel of the Latvian Guard Igors Briežkalns has this to say: «Now we are shooting ourselves in the other foot. You could say that the one-sidedness and the double standards of which Soviet historians were accused have not been forgotten here. Even today, there is a tendency to sort Latvians into «the right ones» and the «wrong ones». A book titled «Latvia in World War II» was published last year. 580 pages. Only two pages in the whole book on approximately 80,000 Riflemen, who fought for four years. The Riflemen's corps was at war from December 1941 to May 8, 1945. And in some places, the text is tendentious. Huge losses... but not a word about any cities that may have been captured.» See Avotiņš, V. «Visgudrākie tagad tie, kas pulveri nav oduši.» *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, May 9, 2009, p. 3. See also: Briežkalns, I. 2009. *No Narofominskas līdz Imulai*. Rīga: Latviešu strēlnieku apvienība.

prevalence of Latvians' collective memory over science, in turn, provokes a hostile attitude towards Latvia's history and those who write it in those who belong to the Russian collective memory group. This is exacerbated by the close links between the academic elite of Latvian historians and those in power (Skudra 2006, 144-150).

The evaluation of World War II events and the quest for the «truth» is influenced by the critical attitude towards the Communist regime that is emerging from the dialogue between Eastern and Western Europe in recognition of the regime's crimes against its own and other peoples. The taboo on comparisons between the Communist and the Nazi regimes has also been lifted. Tony Judt writes: «Even if Nazism and Communism were utterly different in intent [...] that was scant consolation to their victims. Human suffering should not be calibrated according to the goals of the perpetrators. In this way of reasoning, for those being punished or killed there, a Communist camp is no better or worse than a Nazi camp» (Judt 2007, 917). The equation of Communism and Nazism and – as was demonstrated in 2008 by Edvīns Šņore's film «Soviet Story», which followed this concept – the discussions, emotions and political campaigns that have followed make the crimes of the two regimes appear particularly gruesome. This is also evident in the works of historians because, for the Western world, the similarities, although so obvious, are a bitter revelation (see Geyer and Fitzpatrick 2009). Historian Anne Applebaum writes: «If we do not try harder to remember the history of the other half of the European continent, the history of the other twentieth-century totalitarian regime (communism – V. Z.), in the end it is we in the West who will not understand our past, we who will not know how our world came to be the way it is. And not only our own particular past. For if we go on forgetting half of Europe's history, some of what we know about mankind itself will be distorted. [...] Only our ability to debase and dehumanize our fellow men has been – and will be – repeated again and again: our transformation of our neighbours into 'enemies', our reduction of our opponents to lice or vermin or poisonous weeds, our re-invention of our victims as lower, lesser or evil beings, worthy only of incarceration or expulsion or death» (Applebaum 2003, 513-4). Recognition of the crimes and atrocities of the Communist regime can build a bridge of understanding and mutual respect between Western and Eastern Europe. When considering the history of Latvia during World War II, it is worthwhile to look back to the year 1998, when Latvia began to view history with European eyes. In the summer of 1999, upon leaving office, in his farewell speech President Guntis Ulmanis emphasized that Latvia's society must be «fair, open, honest» ... «it must forgive, but not forget» (Ulmanis 1999).

The Post-War Years

Among the painful questions of Latvia's history is the period of Soviet rule, from 1944/1945 to 1991. Exploration and analysis of this period belongs to the tasks of the future. At present, life under the Soviets is one of the «silent» questions in Latvian memory. It is hard to unambiguously describe or evaluate the relationship of

Latvia's people with the Soviet regime. The criteria «this was good» or «this was bad» cannot be applied here. Nor can the word «collaborationism» that is so widely used in Western Europe's arsenal of definitions for historical responsibility be applied in the evaluation of this almost half-century. The word is usually used to describe traitors who have collaborated with enemy invaders and occupation regimes. In Western Europe, when evaluating the events of World War II, the pinpointing of collaborationism served as an instrument for determining the guilt and malice of individual people, groups of people, institutions or political powers under occupation regimes, their responsibility vis-à-vis their native land. In Eastern Europe, where the Communist regime was in power for half a century, this definition cannot be applied. Under the Soviet regime, there were many ways in which the people of Latvia could behave; these ranged from direct participation (even initiative) in the crimes of the regime to acts of active opposition. Complete avoidance of contact, cooperation, involvement with the Soviet system was impossible; this could only be equated with avoidance of living. For part of society, for its memory, this was/is hard to accept. As a result, forgetting becomes memory's second nature.

For historians, Latvia's Soviet period is a professional challenge (Bleiere *et al*, 2008, 54-61). Even when writing national history, one question remains unanswered: what to say about the Latvians? Up until the turn of the century, the dominant approach was one that had been postulated by historian Inesis Feldmanis: «During the occupation period of more than a half-century, the Latvian nation actually had no real control over either its fate or its history. It was more the object than the subject of history» (Feldmanis 1999). This way of looking at things relieved the people of Latvia from all historical responsibility. Historian Ervin Oberlander, on the other hand, underscores in interviews with journalists that the history of the Latvian Soviet regime could be the key to relations between the present and the past because «not everyone emigrated in 1944 and returned in 1991» (Sprude 2004; see also Oberlander 2009). The history of Soviet Latvia is also the history of the Latvians, albeit a history that was neither desired nor chosen by Latvians themselves.

In the memory conflicts of Latvians and Russians, the Soviet period is beginning to assume greater importance. The glorification of the Soviet period that is cultivated by the Russian government has found an echo in the interpretations of history that appear in Latvia's Russian press. The Soviet years are treated as the «good years,» the USSR is presented as the architect of Latvia's golden age, and sovietization and the Russians as the bringers of progress. Post-war, anti-Soviet partisans are portrayed as the biggest enemies, Soviet repressions are justified, and the 1949 deportations found to have been a necessary measure (Dribins 2006). This must be seen as a categorical rejection of tolerance.

In the memory of Latvians, even today, the 1949 deportations are among the nation's main sanctities. Although the pain is no longer as great or as throbbing as it was in the 1990s, it is still there. Tribute has been paid to those who were deported with the memorial book

«The Deported,» published in three volumes, containing the names of the deported, depiction of the events and other information (Šķiņķe 2007a; Šķiņķe 2007b). «Siberia's Children,» film director Dzintra Geka's tribute in books and on film to the children who were deported in 1941 also has memorial value (Geka 2007). Perpetuation of the memory of those who were deported and various commemorative events indicate that Latvians' collective memory has assumed historical responsibility for the fates of these people, that it is trying to repay a symbolic debt for the lost years and lost lives.

History and Daily Life

Although Latvia's history and memory have many confrontation zones, these are hardly noticed in everyday life, where living in the present, with plans and hopes for the future, dominate. Western Europe has shown us that the *rethinking* of history becomes an issue in societies that are not entirely preoccupied with everyday concerns and economic or stability problems.

Despite contradictory memories, Latvia's society has been able to avoid outbreaks of violence over past injustices. Philosopher Skaidrīte Lasmane reminds us: «The past is alive in our everyday present, whether we like this or not. A selective attitude towards the past can, of course, increase or decrease its presence, but it cannot banish it into non-existence. Economy, culture, demography all testify to real, statistically sustainable effects, the causes of which must be sought in the past (Lasmane 2005, 17). Therefore, even without seeking to resurrect the past, we may be confronted with it at any given moment. The existence of two fundamentally contradictory memories and the low value attached to

tolerance contain a threat of possible conflict (in all its manifestations).

In the fall of 2008, in answer to the question «Which of Latvia's historical events are you proud of?» Latvians gave priority to the recent past: the National Awakening (the public demonstrations, the «Baltic Way» and the January barricades) and the renewal of Latvia's statehood. A much larger number of the Russophone respondents claimed that they saw nothing to be proud of or that their main object of pride was the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic (SKDS 2008, T 36 and T 37).

Another thing that is typical for recent years is active use of the past when writing national or local history (among the authors are academic institutions, social and political organizations, groups of historians, and individuals with or without an education in history), publishing memoirs, making movies or films for television, creating cults around ancient castles and art nouveau buildings, actively commemorating the anniversaries of past events, etc. All of this indicates that the age of remembering that is characteristic of Western culture has begun in Latvia as well. Active use of the past was initiated by the short-lived economic boom and the illusion that it was permanent. Among the gains is the integration of history into popular culture. Television documentaries, series, movies, biographies of prominent and popular people written by journalists, musicals and theatre productions devoted to historical topics, Latvian history books and magazines have not only been commercial successes but have also helped to reduce the distance between history and society, have encouraged critical thinking and stimulated the desire to know and understand more, and to search for values as well.

Box
1.22

Greatest Achievements, Most Serious Problems, Most Important Tasks

Greatest Achievement

The greatest achievement in Latvia's historical science is the creation of new knowledge about the past, many publications, as well as the strengthening of discussion about the past in media content. This not only creates the preconditions for further intellectual development, but also opens the possibility of nurturing analytical skills and fostering open discussions and an exchange of views, thereby creating the basis for historical responsibility in collective memory and action.

Most Serious Problem

The relations between society with its past at both the collective and individual levels have not been resolved and put into order, and historical responsibility operates only in a fragmentary manner. 20th century history, the explanation and use thereof in politics, as well as the «truths» of collective memory often become important items on the agenda and subjects of passionate debate. European experience suggests that the creation of a democratic, secure and well-to-do society is based on forgetting and putting aside conflicts and wrongs, forgoing revenge and settling accounts. The next step is learning the lessons of history without fearing to look clearly at the truth of atrocity in the past to understand that today must be created so that the destruction and violence of the past would not be possible any more. The unwillingness or inability of society, including politicians and researchers, to deal responsibly with history creates serious problems in consolidating the country to address important issues.

Most Important Task

The most important task in creating history policy is to fully realize that history is an instrument of memory which influences social reality, individual and collective identities, moral values and agendas. The key to a secure present and future for Latvia lies in its ability to (co-)exist in a responsible manner with its history.

Conclusion

The composite picture of Latvia's history use and memory functions appears fragmented due to the many problems and contradictions that are involved, as well as the inability to find solutions.

An assessment of the level of history-memory responsibility leads to the conclusion that it is generally not high. Undeniably, many issues involving the past are ruthlessly disclosed and criticized. But at the same time, other past events and actors are wrongfully either glorified or belittled. European historical responsibility means looking at absolutely the whole past without pity or prejudice, without classifying people as «our people» or «outsiders.» A while ago – in 1993 – Andrejs Plakans, a historian working in the USA, formulated a very simple but, at the time, for many surprising definition of a democratic modus vivendi: «All

countries must be held accountable for their past; America, where I work and live, must also be held accountable for its past: for the Indians, the Blacks, the Japanese who were interned in something similar to concentration camps during the World War. At present, human rights have great importance in the world» (Pētersone 1993). A European and democratic Latvia means a country, together with its population, that has assumed full responsibility for its past.

How this feeling of responsibility develops will most certainly be affected by the values of historical responsibility in Europe and Russia's ability to assume responsibility for its past. In the context of the 20th century, historical responsibility clearly means regret/apology for the atrocities and the wrongs inflicted on others. This step, too, lies in the future. It could promote the unity, the stability and, therewith, the safety of Latvia's society.

Interviews and Expert Opinions: Language and National Heritage

A Responsible Attitude towards the Latvian Language

During the National Awakening, several years before the renewal of independence, public attention was already focussed on the situation of the Latvian language, making it an item on the political agenda. In independent Latvia, Latvian has become the only official language, an integral part of national identity and the basis for social integration. Due to the huge importance of the Latvian language in so many aspects of public life, this Report seeks to answer the question: **how responsibly have individuals, social groups, and government institutions behaved towards the Latvian language?** A responsible attitude towards language is not just a political question. Language policy has only limited capacity to influence use of a language, because, in a free society, language use is largely the choice of the individual. However, government institutions, too, can promote a responsible attitude towards language – not just with rigorous laws and proscriptive methods but also with positive measures taken to promote the prestige of the Latvian language, its creative use in different areas of public life. The role of a language develops in correspondence with other social processes that influence the language. Here are some examples: Latvia's growing involvement in the global world and in globalization processes, the change of generations, transformation of the media environment, changes in information and communication technologies. A responsible attitude towards the Latvian language demands a realistic understanding of these processes and readiness to react to them.

In order to provide an overall picture of responsibility in regard to maintenance and development of the Latvian language, the editors of this Report interviewed two language experts who are not only qualified sociolinguists but are also involved in shaping and implementing Latvia's language policy. University of Latvia professor and *Saeima* deputy **Ina Druviete** (hereafter **I.D.**) and University of Latvia professor and chairman of the State Language Commission **Andrejs Veisbergs** (**A.V.**) kindly agreed to answer a few questions to **Juris Rozenvalds** (**J.R.**) and **Ivars Ijabs** (**I.I.**) about responsibility and accountability in regard to language use.

J.R. On the issue of accountability regarding language, we turn to you as experts who know much more about this topic than we do. I will name a few of the questions that we feel should be discussed. First, to what extent can a category such as accountability be applied to language? Who can be held accountable? How do we understand the role and functions of the state in this context? Must the state provide strict rules and «rap on knuckles,» or is it the role of the state to promote development of the language? These, of course, are not mutually exclusive approaches, but what proportions do you see and recommend here?

The same applies to the objects of accountability: to maintenance, research and development of the Latvian language, also as part of the *Letonica* Studies programme. The next question addresses language in the public space. We receive a huge amount of information in other languages but, by the time it reaches the user – translated into Latvian – the quality of this information is sometimes shockingly low. It would also be interesting to look at the question of accountability on the part of the individual, the user of a language. We usually talk about the responsibility of those who are not native Latvians in regard to language use, but the question could also be addressed to those for whom Latvian is the native language. How should pressure from other languages be rated? We all know how many untranslated words are being widely used today! Will the Latvian language become un-Latvian under this pressure? We all remember the relatively recent hue and cry over *eiro*, *eira* and *euro*, the belated reaction of linguists and terminology experts. How does all this affect the public image of linguists? And one more thing: how do you rate application of the reduced 10% VAT rate to original literature but not to translations? Don't translations promote language development as well? And finally, when considering a responsible attitude towards language, what do you see as the greatest achievements, the major problems, and the most urgent tasks?

I.D. First of all, I would like to clearly distinguish between two levels of this discussion. The first level addresses stability and use of the Latvian language; the second addresses the quality of the language. These levels are, of course, closely related, but we must clearly define what we are talking about. I find that, right now, it is more important to talk about the existential aspect of Latvian language use, because the quality of the language is currently not critical. These two levels are frequently confused. There is also confusion about who is responsible for stability and development of the Latvian language. We can demand accountability primarily from persons and institutions with formal status. Here, we are talking about three groups: 1) the responsible persons in state (ministries, agencies) and appointed (language commissions, advisory councils) institutions, especially the top person of each institution; 2) persons who are connected with language in their professional work and to some extent function as role models (journalists, teachers, government officials and public figures); 3) the «whole nation,» all language users – the critical mass, not only in regard to overall language use but also to public acceptance or rejection of a new word or form.

Of course, **the same degree of accountability or lack thereof that predominates in society as a whole is also reflected in the language sector. However, where**

language is concerned, we are even more affected by myths, stereotypes and a lack of understanding than we are in other areas.

At the same time, accountability is still a fairly unclear concept in our country. For example, political responsibility is a phrase that is used very often in our texts, but it would be hard to name even a few examples of cases where this has functioned. In language policy, it is clear that political responsibility must be assumed by the respective government minister, because language policy lies within the competence of the Ministry of Education and Science. These ministers, then, are the ones who must be held accountable.

J. R. What are these myths that you mentioned?

I. D. The first myth is that Latvian is the language of a small nation. The second myth is that Latvian is an endangered language and there is nothing that can be done. The third myth is that the Latvian language is polluted, dull, uncultivated. The fourth myth is that other languages have a much richer vocabulary than Latvian. All these allegations are false. Nevertheless, they have a crucial impact on the psychology of those who speak Latvian. This is precisely why Latvians have such a low ethnolinguistic vitality index and that, of course, is connected with other identity complexes.

A. V. There is a fifth myth that a language is created, improved or degraded by linguists. We see this in the chat rooms and also in letters written to newspapers, to the Latvian president, or to the State Language Commission, with demands that the language be «straightened out.» Needless to say, the language used in these letters is rarely refined. This indicates a desire to disclaim personal responsibility.

I. D. Here, responsibility is demanded of an undefined group of people – the so-called linguists – but society at large dissociates itself from dealing with the problem. A typical example is language use: **people abstain from speaking Latvian in informal contacts but demand strict laws, punishments, and constant monitoring.** Society disclaims responsibility and places it on either government institutions or an undefined body of linguists.

J. R. We can observe this trend in many areas: we are extremely critical of institutions but much less so of ourselves.

A. V. The public is not really informed about the institutions and what it is that they do. We possibly do have too many institutions. The man on the street cannot be expected to know what the State Language Agency, the State Language Commission, the State Language Centre, the State Commission of Language Experts, etc. do. It is clear to linguists; the functions of these institutions are quite clearly defined. If the Terminology Commission comes up with a strange term, the other language institutions can chuckle, but there is nothing we can do because terminology is the domain of the Terminology Commission.

I. D. The same applies to the Toponym Commission. Take, for example, the spelling of Iceland in Latvian. Why did they have to change a word that functioned perfectly well and that people were accustomed to using? But that is the right of this commission and there is seemingly nothing that other linguists can do. In this particular case, however, it could be that the Toponym Commission has overstepped its authority and the question should possibly be reconsidered.

I. I. This is one of the things that many who write in Latvian complain about – excessive regulation. There is only one possible way of writing in Latvia, and it won't be Latvian if the responsible editor or institution hasn't approved. But let's return to the question that Ms. Druviete touched on at the very beginning – the use of language. What, in your opinion, are the reasons why people do not wish to speak Latvian, why is this ethnolinguistic vitality index so low for Latvians? Who is primarily responsible – the individual, society, institutions, the state?

A. V. There are certain historical reasons and certain traditions that are very hard to change. The same applies to many other Latvian traditions: the unwillingness to assume responsibility, unwillingness to go into business or politics, the unwillingness to «stand out,» etc. In his book, «The Baltic Revolution,» Anatols Lieven writes that, unlike Estonians or Lithuanians, Latvians are hard to describe – they generally just want to be nice. Switching to the language of the non-Latvians is also an expression of this «niceness.»

I. D. We have asked Latvians why they so easily switch to Russian when there is no special need to do so. There is a wide range of answers: «it's easier for me,» «I don't need the hassle,» «I want to be polite,» and the most frequent answer is – «none of your business.» People refuse to assume any social responsibility whatsoever. However, the language of social integration must be Latvian; Latvians must speak Latvian and, in doing so, must also assume a certain social mission.

J. R. What do you say about communication with users of other languages? In English, the range of what is known as Pidgin English is extremely wide – people speak as best they can! But with Latvians, it is often either you speak perfect Latvian or don't speak at all. This could possibly make people take a certain attitude.

A. V. Historically, this could be true. Proliferation of the French language ceased because the French wanted this perfect language. The English are more pragmatic – the main thing is to make yourself understood. Demanding perfection from non-Latvians will, of course, stifle their desire to use the official language.

I. D. It's not as bad as that. We are not as categorical or purist about language standards as, for example, the Lithuanians. Let's not talk here about concrete editors who put restrictions on the language. I would not at all like to attribute this to myself.

A.V. This is one of the myths, originating in the 19th century, that there is one correct Latvian language. Then, and to some extent even now, it was believed that the only correct Latvian language was the written language, that writers – masters of the written word – are the only ones who know how to use the language properly. People forget that language has many functions and that we use different variants of the Latvian language. It would be strange if I talked in a professorial, academic style when asking a tractor operator to plough a plot of land. Many are upset that text messaging and chats distort the Latvian language. But these too are variants of the language, and the fact alone that Latvian is used for messaging and chatting is positive. Russian or English could be used just as well. Speaking of purism – in 1995, when I published my first Latvian-English dictionary, I included the word «čau» (ciao), which we hear every day. «Ciao» has been used in Latvia since at least 1935, and especially since the 1960s when we had «Karlsson-on-the-Roof,» who said «ciao, ciao little brother» all the time. But the word did not appear in dictionaries before the mid-1990s! That too is purism.

I.D. Concepts such as «correct» or «incorrect» are not used in sociolinguistics. The sociolinguist seeks to popularize knowledge of as broad a spectrum of the language as possible, so that, depending on the situation, a person can use not only formal or poetic language but is also versed in the use of colloquial speech and can even resort to lexical vulgarism if and when this is truly called for. We must teach this in our schools and not declare any form of language out of bounds. However, in our country, people tend to seek the one correct form. When people call the consultation service for advice about use of a word or a form, they are often told: «Either one is possible.» But then the caller usually asks: «But what is correct?» You also see this in letters to the editor, in which an apocalyptic tone tends to prevail: «He again used ‘when’ instead of ‘that,» as if this were the end of the Latvian language. But the saddest thing is that this debate about totally peripheral issues obscures the truly existential problems.

I.I. Could what you have said be put this way: **at times, obsession with quality stands in the way of dealing with language use problems?**

A.V. Yes, above all, it diverts attention from questions concerning the language environment and language use. Furthermore, it is tilting with windmills. It does not have any significant impact on the quality of the language or, I would even say, on the language as such.

I.D. The trend, however, is dangerous: **if the dog has the plague, it is not the time to start looking for fleas. Today, we must deal more with language use, with functioning of the language as a full-fledged state language.** When knowledge and use of the Latvian language are no longer a problem, we can then focus attention on the quality of the language. Don't misunderstand me: language standardization is important, but right now it is not crucial for the existence of the language. We find ourselves in a situation where there is fierce competition between two

mega-languages, and we have pressure from the Russian language both from within and without. So, this is not the time for ironic comments about efforts to provide adequate legal protection for the Latvian language. Comparing the enforcement of language laws with use of the stick or demanding that language competition be left for the market to resolve testifies either to naïveté, hidden political goals, or – most often – a reluctance to look into even the elementary logic of sociolinguistics.

A.V. Here, we are talking primarily about the Russian language. There is also the impact of the English language, but this is more on vocabulary and to some extent on constructions. English does not pose any kind of threat to communication in the Latvian language. At present, it is not a threat to use of the Latvian language in Latvia. There is, of course, a small possibility that English could oust Latvian from certain areas of language use, for example, specific subjects taught at universities. The Law on Higher Education should, therefore, prevent such a possibility. With this, I don't mean to say that courses should not be taught in foreign languages, that no guest lecturers should be invited, etc. This has to be done, of course, but a foreign language must not be allowed to monopolize a certain area of use.

I.D. I am absolutely convinced that Russian should not be allowed as the language of instruction at state universities. **We must promote intellectual multilingualism.** This is precisely why the Law on Higher Education allows for the possibility of receiving one-fifth of credits in courses taught in any another EU language. And at one time, I tried to get partial studies in a foreign language to be made a mandatory requirement, not just a possibility. After all, we are now part of the single European higher education area and support orientation towards the West. Those who demand university programmes in Russian are hoping for an opportunity to export education in order to save the collapsing education system. However, these hopes are totally unfounded. Russian students will not come here because of the high costs, and students from other post-Soviet countries will give priority to studies in English. Even if we were able to attract 500 students a year, would it be worth risking a system of language policy that has been 20 years in the making for such a tiny number of students? Graduates from our minority schools are well prepared for studying in Latvian. If there were study programmes in Russian, there would be no reason to deny Latvian citizens or permanent residents access to these programmes. And you can be certain that their knowledge of Latvian would deteriorate. Such an ill-considered step could have both vertical and horizontal consequences. It would affect motivation to learn Latvian at minority schools. If the Latvian language does not dominate in higher education, the language, the terminology of science will disappear. This will affect popular-science literature and vocabulary as well. It must also be pointed out that job market requirements are encouraging more and more private higher education institutions to offer courses in Latvian.

J.R. Without getting into a long discussion, shouldn't we distinguish between two aspects? In the first place, we

are talking about competition between state and private universities. The latter are allowed to teach in Russian, which is why they attract a large share of the Russian-speaking students. Secondly, we are also talking about what is being taught and how these students are being taught. Moreover, if we talk about pressure from the Russian language, we must also mention the fact that knowledge of Russian is disastrously deteriorating, and I do not necessarily see this as something very positive. I don't believe that strengthening of the Latvian language should always occur at the expense of something else: lo and behold, we are delighted that students don't know Russian!

A.V. Then I would like to ask you: why should every Latvian know Russian? And why should failure to know Russian be an obstacle to working and making a career for a Latvian in Latvia?

J.R. Everyone doesn't have to know Russian. But in political science, for example, I always recommend that students know Latvian, English, and Russian, because the ability to understand what one part of Latvia's society with political influence is saying and thinking must be a fundamental part of the professional qualifications of a political expert schooled in Latvia.

I.I. To prevent this from turning into a purely political debate, I would like to ask our experts to what extent the state should attempt to ensure use of the state language in private communication, and how effective this has been to date. Maybe this should be taken a step further?

I.D. It may not. Period. Our State Language Law says that the state does not regulate language use in the private domain. But there is one problem here: use of the state language in a private business where there is contact with the population. This is a difficult issue. In the situation that we are in, the state does have a role. This applies to government and municipal institutions, and generally to areas subject to regulation. There are functions in which the state language must have a monopoly; there are areas where parallelism is permissible; and there are areas where the state may not interfere under any circumstances whatsoever. At present, Latvia is meeting all requirements set out in international documents. There will, of course, be discussions about certain areas, but, all in all, our language policy does not differ from policy in other EU countries that have language laws. All these questions have been debated, but every now and then they are brought up again, as if there had never been such a debate. Every time, we try to invent the wheel all over again, and I feel that, thanks to the current coalition in the Riga City Council, in the near future we will have to go back 10-20 years into the past and once again prove why the working language of local governments must be the Latvian language and why the Russian language does not and can not enjoy a special status in Latvia.

A.V. The rules on language requirements for those who work in the service industry, which were recently adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers, are quite similar to the old rules

that were in force in the 1990s. Then they were revoked. However, the rules proved to be necessary. They were recently adopted again, but now it turns out that there is no money for language tests, deadlines must be extended, and so on. But these were decisions made by the state!

I.D. Language policy requires money, of course, but what is much more important is how this money is used. The emphasis of language policy tends to change over the years. If the recommendations of professionals are heeded, a small investment in the right place can achieve a greater effect than arbitrarily dispensed thousands. Last year, I energetically advocated the involvement of language policy experts in decision making about the structure of language policy institutions. The thing is that we don't really have anything like continuity in policy. When a new minister comes along, convention demands that the decisions of the former minister be revoked or, at least, that no interest be shown for the whys and wherefores of the previous team's work.

J.R. How responsible is this kind of policy?

I.D. To ensure continuity, there exists a national sectoral development programme. Our State Language Policy Programme, which was adopted in 2006, is truly good and well thought-out. However, implementation of the programme is supervised in a rather bureaucratic manner, and the spirit of the programme is often ignored.

A.V. In language policy, as in any other policy, there are different interests and forces at work. What is really surprising, however, is the arbitrary nature of the decision making, the chaotic way in which decisions are carried out, the hedging and the wavering.

I.D. Even seemingly trivial things are important. When the agencies controlled by the Ministry of Education and Science were consolidated – in itself, the right thing to do – the word «state» disappeared from the name of the new agency. It was replaced with «Latvian» – a downgrading of the agency's status. This was a symbolically wrong decision, which could have been avoided by choosing a different model of reorganization.

J.R. What, in your opinion, would be the preferable proportion between the promoting and proscriptive components of state language policy?

A.V. It would, of course, be very nice if the state could act in a solely promoting manner – if the Ministry of Justice and the police, too, could simply educate and not punish. The promoting function is more expensive, more refined, more complicated – and slower. Without administrative decisions, the language situation would not have changed. In the case of the big languages, the promoting function can be delegated to the private sector and to competition. This is not so in the case of the small languages. If we didn't have Tilde with its Latvian software, I can't imagine how we would use computers. The small nations cannot rely on the market: there is no way that we will ever have five

big Latvian-German dictionaries by different authors. This is why government support is necessary. But who should receive it? Imagine a Latvian-Icelandic dictionary! How many people in Latvia would need it? The dictionary can be compiled by an enthusiast, but the same person will not be able to publish the dictionary. This is also why we cannot compete with Russian or American films, DVD translations, etc. Without certain requirements and without ensuring that they are fulfilled, the Latvian language will simply be ousted from the market.

I.D. Nevertheless, language policy remains a state function, it cannot be delegated to the private sector.

The role of scientific and non-governmental institutions is important, but it does not eliminate the need for a complex approach to the overall language situation and language policy in general. Latvia needs a clear language policy programme, and we already have this. We need a clear delegation of responsibility and an institutional structure. We have two institutions: one is the Ministry of Education and Science and the other is the Ministry of Justice. And I hope that there will be no more talk of consolidation of the two. Proscriptive and promoting functions cannot be found under the same roof. These functions are currently very well balanced in Latvia. Especially after 2002, when the State Language Commission started its work, and 2004, when the State Language Agency was established, language development issues have been very well managed. I have a very high opinion of the work of the State Language Agency (now the Latvian Language Agency). There we have this positive element: consultations, project management, investigation of the situation, promotion of Latvian language learning. But there is one problem – people don't know about this. And even if they do, they always have a higher opinion of the institution that imposes penalties and carries out the watchdog function than of the institution that works at popularization, cultivation of the language, the institution that supports non-governmental organizations and researchers, etc.

J.R. I have another question: the language that we hear from journalists is often very close to the language used in informal communication. What do you think of this? Should there be some kind of distance? But maybe everything is fine and nothing should be done? Or maybe there is some kind of role for the state here?

A.V. It's a question of attitude. Some will tell you that this is a degradation of the language. In view of the fact that the volume of texts spoken, read or heard has increased many times over, the quality of the texts has generally declined in comparison with, for example, the severely censored and edited texts back in the Soviet days. Then, everything was strictly regulated; now, we have freedom. One speaks as one speaks. Šlesers, for example, speaks Latvian as best he can, and when an interview with him is published word for word the whole country has something to talk about. This interview should have been edited, of course, unless there was a specific reason for not doing so. Non-literary use of a language in the public space could have a deliberate purpose. Even the Latvian president can

say a harsh word at a given moment. But you can't say that cultivated usage of the language no longer exists. There are high quality press publications, broadcasts, and stage performances.

I.D. We must distinguish between «bad in someone's opinion» and «wrong.» There are perhaps words that should be edited out. However, if someone uses a more unusual word or synonym, this is simply richness of the language. All in all, the quality of the language used on radio and television is not bad, and I absolutely disagree with those who speak of degradation.

J.R. Keeping in mind the topic of our discussion, how do you see what is currently going on in our schools? For example, the fact that teachers of Latvian are being paid ridiculously small salaries because of the economic crisis.

A.V. I think this will not affect teachers' language use. We are a bit worried about what will happen with the small Latvian schools, especially in the more distant regions where there are many Russian-speakers. But no one at the Ministry of Education and Science has been able to answer these questions. It seems that the ministry has no idea what will happen.

I.D. Latvian will suffer just as much as any other subject. However, the situation can worsen in an ethnic aspect: believe me, the upcoming parliamentary election campaign will probably focus on ethnolinguistic questions, so that we can expect new attacks on bilingual education.

I.I. The question is, should we be happy about this?

A.V. Ethnicity should not be confused with language. Language policy is not an ethnically dividing factor in Latvia. Its purpose is not to turn Russians into Latvians.

I.D. We need bilingual representatives of the ethnic minorities. This is precisely why we reject the principle that all education must be solely in the state language. In our situation, a good bilingual education is the most appropriate education. However, speaking of radicalization, we must be very careful.

A.V. Pragmatic behaviour would help against radicalization. Although I am a staunch advocate of nationalist positions, I don't understand why, for such a long time, we have had no Cabinet members who are not native Latvians. The presence in the public administration system of minority representatives who are loyal to Latvia, who are competent and speak good Latvian would only strengthen faith in this country and lessen the discontent of those who are not Latvians.

I.I. How do you rate the refusal of Latvia's public officials to give interviews in Russian?

I. D. Positively. An official represents the state. As a private person, a minister who meets a journalist on the stairs can speak whatever language he chooses. But the interviews

that he gives to the media of his country must be in Latvian because he represents the state. This is not in any way radical behaviour. It is standard behaviour in the majority of countries where everyone understands the language.

A.V. I absolutely agree with Ms. Druviete. What surprises me is something that can be observed in some of the television newscasts: in some cases, one-third, in others, as many as half of those interviewed are Russian speakers. There would be nothing to say against this if those who were interviewed answered in poor Latvian. But they are questioned in Russian. Why? If TV is worried about political correctness, then what about the other minorities? All this strengthens the conviction of the «nice» Latvians that both languages – Latvian and Russian – have equal weight in Latvia, and that everyone must know both languages. We are regressing!

I.I. Language use is obviously a very democratic matter – we use a language as we choose. This democratization has led to a situation in which we are not all that interested in maintaining the state language status in our everyday communication. For this reason, any political levers or instruments can only be partially effective.

I.D. Of course, there is a democratization of language use. There are also traditions of tolerance which, as such, must be rated positively. They have helped us to avoid an escalation of linguistic conflicts into ethnic conflicts. We shouldn't try to make this situation apocalyptic, but this factor – this tolerance of Latvians for non-use of the Latvian language – really can become a threat to the competitive capacity of the Latvian language. If you ask me whether the fact that many Latvian children do not know Russian is positive, I must answer that, paradoxically, from the aspect of language competition – yes.

A.V. Moreover, we do not live in a closed space. In 2004, when we joined the European Union, from an ethnopsychological aspect nothing really changed in regard to language. But something else happened. Our eastern neighbour became stronger and we feel this. I don't know whether the reasons are financial, or ideological, or maybe purely psychological, but «things are just great» over there. Russia is growing increasingly stronger, Putin will drown everyone in toilets, etc. There is psychological pressure from the outside, and this affects the non-Latvians in the Russian information environment. And the self-confidence of many Latvians is obviously not strong enough to withstand this pressure.

I.D. Admittedly, we do have confidence problems. Unfortunately, I have to agree with those who say that there is no other nation as set on self-destruction as the Latvians. This is apparent in linguistic behaviour as well. There have been comparative studies: it is precisely this lack of self-confidence, not the absence of laws or the superpower influence, that poses the greatest threat to the Latvian language. This cannot be influenced by the law. This can be influenced by the examples set by our representatives: a parliamentary deputy, too, must show

that he has respect for the Latvian language. And, of course, education of the people is also important. We must get rid of stereotypes. For example, that it doesn't matter that our television is largely bilingual. What we currently see in Latvia is not a country with a single official language.

I.I. How do you rate the situation in the public media – after all, we do have LTV 7 and Latvian Radio 4, which broadcast in Russian. Maybe we should, instead, create a more interesting Latvian TV channel, which those who are not Latvians would also want to watch?

I.D. This wouldn't be able to compete with the Russian channels because everyone prefers to watch television in his native language. The problem lies elsewhere: it is not possible for Latvians to live in an entirely Latvian media environment. All the time, even on LTV 1, there are interviews in Russian. If it were just once, it wouldn't be that bad, but it happens every day, and there are many of these interviews. The existence of Latvian Radio 4 is legitimate, but LTV 7 was initially not supposed to be a Russian but a minority channel. It is clear, however, that the new electronic media law does not at all protect the interests of the Latvian language and that, here, commercial interests have gained the upper hand. But that should be the purpose of the law: to prevent the unrestricted domination of business interests over public interests. I must repeat: the market regulates all kinds of things in Latvia – but not language use.

J.R. From a Latvian language perspective, how do you see the situation in the book trade, including non-application of the reduced VAT rate to translated literature?

A.V. From a language aspect, it is fairly difficult to separate translated and original literature. This was more likely a measure taken to support domestic authors rather than publishers or Latvian language users.

I.D. Well, we all know the background circumstances. Higher VAT and taxes can generally not be seen as something positive. However, we did not have the option of not raising taxes on books and the press.

A.V. I would not like to belittle writers and translators, but the impact of fiction on language processes is extremely small. Fiction represents perhaps 1% of the texts read by the average Latvian. I say this, although I myself am an interpreter and translator.

I.D. But words can become part of our passive vocabulary and be used later. This question is not that simple: after all, this is support for our national intellectuals, and who, if not they, will maintain this language.

A.V. From this aspect, everything that is created in Latvia should be supported: literature, theatre, opera, books, magazines. All this should be supported because it is «ours.»

I.D. Money must be distributed so that it has maximum effect. That is why we have these advisory councils in the agencies and elsewhere. The book trade must be

supported, but support must be given to books that will truly have a positive impact on development of the Latvian language and not to marginal works. Everything must be supported, but right now the question is: what is existentially needed to survive these hard times?

J.R. What do you see as the biggest achievement and the biggest failure in language policy, and what would be the main challenges for the future?

I.D. The achievements are consolidation of the status of the Latvian language in public administration, in the municipalities, in higher education, as well as the introduction of bilingual education in minority schools.

The failure is the incapacity of the state to guarantee the linguistic human rights of Latvians in the service industry, although this is largely dependent on how demanding the people are themselves.

From an organizational aspect, the most positive token is the establishment and work of the State Language Agency (now the Latvian Language Agency).

The most negative aspect: professionals were not consulted about development of the structure of state language policy institutions. This has led to unnecessary bureaucracy and detracted already scanty resources from language development and consolidation.

The challenges: First of all, the areas where resources will be invested must be very precisely defined to prevent

discontinuity in the implementation of state language policy during the current economic crisis. Secondly, the question of the language hierarchy in Latvia – language use in municipalities, universities, the electronic media – is unfortunately being raised again. Thirdly, we must think about focused linguistic and sociolinguistic education of the population in order to make sustainability and development of the Latvian language the responsibility of society at large.

A.V. The current situation must in itself be seen as a certain achievement. The language situation could be much worse. Bilingual education, too, is generally a good achievement.

Negative: The splitting of hairs over trivial issues. This makes us blind to the things that are really important. And, here, linguists themselves are sometimes at fault. And let's not forget the threat of a demographic catastrophe.

Challenges: Expansion of the Russian language in the media must be stopped. Without the protection of the law, we will lose in this financial, competitive, and ideological battle.

Some practical tasks: We have already started work on the language corpus to establish what we have and what we don't have in the Latvian language. A good, modern, and simple Latvian grammar textbook should also be written. This is a complicated job. And, last but not least, each Latvian speaker should understand that responsibility for the language begins with him or her.

Responsibility for the Cultural Heritage: Achievements and Problems

Conservation of the cultural heritage is one of the areas in which accountability plays a huge role. Since the cultural heritage is an extremely broad and complex area, it would have been difficult to explore all of its aspects in the time and space available for this Report. The editors, therefore, chose to interview Latvia's leading experts.

The editors of this Report, **Juris Rozenvalds (J.R.)** and **Ivars Ijabs (I.I.)**, spoke with the head of the Ministry of Culture Board of Museums Dr. **Jānis Garjāns (J.G.)**; head of the State Inspectorate for Heritage Protection **Juris Dambis (J.D.)**; professor of the History and Philosophy Faculty at the University of Latvia Dr. **Gvido Straube (G.S.)**; professor of the Architecture and Urban Development Faculty at the Riga Technical University Dr. **Jānis Krastiņš (J.K.)**; chief expert at the State Inspectorate for Heritage Protection **Vita Banga (V.B.)**; and director of the Baltic Central Library Dr. **Viesturs Zanders (V.Z.)**. The views expressed in the interviews were compiled and edited by Dr. **Ojārs Spārītis (O.S.)**.

First Interview

J.R. Let us begin with the question: how do you rate current trends? What is being done to conserve the heritage and what, in your opinion, have been the achievements

or the failures? How is responsibility distributed? How do you rate the legal basis, to what extent does it promote development?

J.G. My work is connected with what we call movable heritage. A museum collects and seeks to conserve the material heritage. Lately, much attention has also been devoted to the non-material heritage. How museums have been able to cope with this mission in the past five years is illustrated by statistics, and these show a fairly stable trend. The collections that are in the possession of state and municipal museums or in accredited private museums grow at a rate of approximately 100 thousand units per year. This is a fairly decent figure. Altogether there are about 5.5 million units in Latvia's museums – values that museum professionals have considered to be worth collecting and keeping.

Museums have always had to make an active and a passive selection. A passive selection is understood to be objects that have been gifts or donations. If we talk about a collection that is created with system and purpose, we are talking about an active selection, and here financial resources play a role. In answer to the question, how much has been bought and how much received as donations, I

must say that museums do not pay for approximately 90% of the objects that they receive each year. This suggests that people tend to trust museums as institutions. If a person wants a guarantee that an object of personal value – a keepsake, a relic – is conserved for posterity, he will usually give it to a museum.

In recent years museums have been able to acquire objects necessary for a comprehensive documentation of Latvia's national heritage with the support of the State Culture Capital Foundation (SCCF). This is extremely important for the promotion of contemporary art, because today's artists must sell paintings to make a living. Here, it would be unrealistic to expect donations. In order to develop, museums also need many different kinds of antique objects. For example, the Rundāle Castle opens a new exhibit room to the public each year. The Rundāle Castle Museum has no other choice but to buy the art objects necessary for the interior.

J.R. So, you are saying that **the positive, uniting trend is the involvement of society, and this is currently increasing**. And now, two questions related to other aspects. Do you see any systemic problems that could be the reason for failures? How do you rate the laws and regulations that apply to museums?

J.G. I will mention one problem that has had rather unpleasant repercussions. The whole museum sector received a painful slap a year ago when the State Audit Office cast doubt on the safekeeping of objects in museum storerooms. There was a difficult dialogue with the officials, and I would like to take this opportunity to underline that nothing has disappeared from the collections of museums. Of course, because there is so little space, it may appear to some that things have disappeared. The media reaction was quite unpleasant. I felt very sorry for the colleagues who had to justify themselves: «No, no, we haven't done anything wrong!» We understand that it is partly our own fault. We who work in museums haven't known how to explain to the public what it is that museums do, what the problems of museums are. As to laws and regulations, it is hard for me to judge. I have been a public servant since the mid-1990s. Back then, when the Law on Museums was adopted and all the Cabinet regulations, I was closely involved in the process.

G.S. Speaking of conservation trends, it should be pointed out that the situation is improving. But there is still a problem which manifests itself in two ways. A lot still depends on money, resources, and individuals. In Latvia, the positive examples of conservation can be seen in specific places. These are usually cities with generous budgets, where the local government is in the hands of people who have not only positive ambitions but also an understanding of heritage. A lot less is being done in the poor municipalities. When we travel through Latvia, we see many neglected buildings, churches, castles, where nothing has been done for decades.

One of the most successful examples, perhaps *the* most successful example, is the city of Ventspils. Here, huge amounts of money have been invested not only in

the restoration of architectural monuments but also in the publication of historical documents – Latvian State History Archive (LSHA) materials on Ventspils' merchants and craftsmen. In Cēsis and Valmiera, the trends are also positive.

I would like to talk about archives and their problems. The main problem is that there is no archive development strategy. All archives – the ones we call paper archives (for example, LSHA and regional archives) and the audiovisual Latvian State CinePhotoPhono Document Archive – are collecting things, as much as the availability of money and experts will allow. The problem is: what next? Latvia's archive system has not always performed without fault, because money has been spent on unnecessary functions. The primary function of archives is to collect documents and ensure their conservation. It is not their duty to prepare scrupulous descriptions of these documents. Nevertheless, huge amounts of time and money are spent doing just this, but the quality of the descriptions is poor. Good examples of the focused work of archives can be seen in European countries, for example, Germany, where archives deal only with the technical aspects of document conservation and do not waste money on processing. For example, on one shelf you have a whole pile of documents dated, say, 1700. That is work for researchers! That is the approach that Latvia, too, should take. This would make it possible to invest greater resources in the conservation of documents, which is currently not perfect. I have often been a member of archive commissions where, every now and then, I have had to sign lists of documents that must be destroyed because they have not been cleaned of the fungus that destroys paper, etc. This is where we have to invest more money, not in the description of documents.

The next problem is spontaneous submission to the rules of capitalism and the market, and attempts to make money by any means whatsoever. State archives are beginning to look at documents as a source of profit. Archive documents must often be used for education or research purposes, but the prices that are charged can prove to be a deterrent, especially if copies are needed of drawings, designs or sketches from the 17th or 18th centuries. And, Heaven forbid, a student should need a mediaeval document! That would really cost a lot. This is more than strange. We are preparing professionals who must pay for something for which the state has already paid. In the West, if you go to an archive for research, all you are asked to do is write a review and promise to send the archive a copy of your paper when it is published. The law should include provisions regulating the use of archive material for education and science free of charge.

J.R. How has this situation come about? Who is responsible, who must be held accountable?

G.S. The archivists themselves have developed the concept for how they should work. This means that it is their responsibility. Traditions also play a role – this is apparently how they worked in the good old Soviet days. If changes are proposed, they are hard to accept. It is not easy for an archive to tell part of its staff: we don't really need you anymore because we have to invest the money in other

things. I think this is a serious problem of the archive system, one that has existed for ten and more years.

How to resolve this? I think that one solution (which at the same time is also a problem) is training of archivists. For a long time, this has been extremely one-sided. For years and years, universities have delegated only professional historians who, of course, have a natural tendency to record and describe everything. But, now, archives have to largely re-orient themselves towards the conservation of documents, so that what we need even more than historians is biochemists.

J.R. You have touched on the question of personnel. Perhaps we could talk about this in a bit more detail.

G.S. Those who currently work with documents do not have the traditional education. Our weak point is the training of document restorers. If I am not mistaken, the State Archives have a Central Microphotocopying and Document Restoration Laboratory, but this is a very small unit for the whole archive system.

Regarding personnel issues, what is needed is an audit. We have to establish what the turnover of archive personnel is. There are not many archives in Latvia, and they need very few well-trained professionals. Is there any point in having university programmes for, say, paleography or the restoration of documents? Maybe it would be less expensive to send people to study at universities in the West or the East. Russia has a very strong film conservation department, where they use modern technologies.

J.R. Do we have a government policy in regard to archive personnel? The same question applies to paleography experts. I assume that these are professions which are not very much in demand.

G.S. There were programmes in the 1990s. Such programmes should really be developed with several levels of responsibility. They can't be developed by archivists themselves to make their own lives easier. Nowadays, universities make active use of both museums and archives. They should all be involved in optimization of the archive system. Of course, we still have the old view that an archive is simply a dormant repository, but archives have changed. In Germany, this policy has cardinally changed. There, it is the duty of the state to conserve documents and make sure that they can be used, and scientific processing is also differently organized. There, they don't waste time and money doing unnecessary things with little or no return on assets.

J.K. I would like to agree with Mr. Straube on the question of archives. I use their services a lot, and students who specialize in heritage protection are trained to work in archives. In the 1990s, LSHA charged 30 or 40 centimes just for ordering something. That was an absolute mistake. In the new economic conditions, archivists began to see their work as a source of profit. Actually, in the mid-1990s, scientific research was completely paralyzed.

J.R. Has the situation changed?

J.K. At the beginning of the 1990s, students would go to the archives with their own scanners and work with their own equipment. Now, this is not allowed, and you have to pay for every copy. No one can include the necessary maps in diploma papers that are much needed for this country's development. This detracts from the quality of scientific projects and hurts the national economy.

Description and identification of documents is dreadfully weak in Latvia. You can only find out from older, more experienced colleagues where to look to find something. There is no systematic inventory of the values stored in archives. Archive staff pointlessly does work that should be done by researchers, but researchers don't have access to the necessary source material.

J.R. Mr. Krastiņš, it would be interesting to hear your views on the current situation in regard to cultural monuments.

J.K. In regard to architectural or cultural monuments, I don't see that any changes have taken place in recent years. There were some initiatives in the late 1990s and the beginning of the new century. Foreign colleagues keep asking me: do you have a national programme for the protection of cultural monuments? We don't! Everything that has been done has been done on private initiative, and it is very little. The Ventspils Castle is a special case, where God put the local government in a place that could generate ample resources, which were then put to effective use. If we look at all of the other cultural monuments that have been restored – the Mežotne Castle, the Bīriņi Castle – none of them have had either state or municipal funding. Nowadays, a clear distinction cannot be made between what is good and what is bad. Just as in the Soviet days, manor houses, castles, farmsteads disappear from the face of the earth. Just look at what has happened in the past 10 years in rural areas! What used to be there is there no longer. The countryside is dying out.

Another aspect of the same positive example – the Ventspils Castle. It is good that it is there, but what we see is a falsification. If we restore something today, we must do it in a way that does not destroy the authentic values. Authentic values cannot be surrounded with falsifications. This is something that has been done massively in the case of the Ventspils Castle. Every place needs a development plan, and the most prominent negative example is Riga's most recent Development Plan. The previous plan was perfect up to the year 2005. Clever wheelers and dealers use planning and sectoral development to personal advantage. Riga's current – 2005 to 2018 – Development Plan has nothing in common with a professional planning document. It resembles a kaleidoscope, a coloured map, 18-story buildings in one section, 25-story buildings in another. Whoever pays more is allowed to build higher. No analyses have been carried out, it is all just crude business tactics. And this greatly affects the protection of cultural monuments as well.

Riga has heritage objects of special importance and value, equal to that of monuments found elsewhere in the world, but the most recent plan for conservation and development of Riga's historical centre contains nothing of what should be contained in this document. There are two reasons for this: 1) an absolute lack of professionalism,

2) business interests that have been worked into the plan. I personally tried to influence the planning strategy with the help of the State Inspectorate for Heritage Protection, even with involvement of the *Saeima*, but I had no success because there are stakeholders who support this kind of approach.

J.R. In the case of the Riga Development Plan, does most of the responsibility fall on the state, which has not provided the legal basis, or on Riga's local government, which has given in to some kind of pressure?

J.K. Both. Because planners have worked to the advantage of clients with business interests. The fact that criminal cases have been initiated against two heads of the City Council's Development Department is proof of this. The current planners are more careful. However, they have little professional experience. Although they frequently refer to the Law on Territorial Planning, which is the basic law for development, but understanding of the law is sometimes contrary to its purpose. There is another small problem: citing the Law on Territorial Planning, a number of experts maintain that each component of the plan should be devised as a special set of regulations.

Riga has developed in accordance with urban planning regulations for 150 years. These regulations were abolished during the Soviet period, but were renewed in 1995. The previous development plan was thrown out. The same was done with the previous zoning plan. Some fragments still exist, but in a hopeless muddle of texts. There is a clear purpose behind this: if anyone wants to build something in Riga, he must pay. Unfortunately, the lack of professionalism manifests itself in dogmatic approaches: for example, the fact that Riga's historical centre has 39 separate territories, each with different regulations. Does this promote the protection of cultural monuments? Certainly not! This kind of approach undermines heritage protection because nothing can be conserved through prohibition. It can be done with positive measures – tax incentives, development and construction permits – to promote investments in protection and conservation. But because development projects are flatly rejected with the argument that the environment must remain unchanged, we see a growing number of ruins, and Riga is beginning to turn into a city of ruins.

J.R. When you mentioned Germany as an example of good governance, you spoke of the relationship between the state and the owner. I have two questions: 1) in which country is the relationship between state, municipality and private owner exemplary; which model could we take as an example? 2) How do you feel about privately owned architectural monuments?

J.K. It is difficult to generalize about the responsibility of the state. In Germany, it is a tried and tested practice that every privately owned object, even if it is not listed as a monument, belongs to society. It is part of our habitat, our environment, and this must be cared for and maintained. If, as a tenant, you renovate your apartment in a house that is privately owned, you will receive some reimbursement

for the renovation costs from the municipality. You are even more certain to receive reimbursement if you are renovating an architectural monument. For us, this seems like a distant utopia, even in cases where a private individual owns an architectural monument of national importance. A similar financing model works in Latvia with the help of the State Inspectorate for Heritage Protection, but the money at its disposal is enough to repair a few church roofs and that is all.

In the current economic situation, there is no reason to hope for any changes in the near future. The trend is in the opposite direction. We are debating whether the list of cultural monuments might not be too long. The Inspectorate for Heritage Protection is trying to cooperate with the municipalities. In Riga, a Council for Conservation and Development of Riga's Historical Centre has been established, with representatives from the municipality, the inspectorate, and with independent experts who try to balance values and coordinate measures to improve the situation. What we saw in Ģertrūdes Street 10 years ago, when Gunārs Ķirsons opened a restaurant that blocked half of the sidewalk, could probably not occur today. The same applies to the Apsara Teahouse on the banks of the canal. A building of this size should not have been allowed there! The Inspectorate alleges that it is only a temporary structure, but our children will still see it in the same place. In the square in front of the station, too, it all started with a snack bar. Now, it turns out that the piece of land that it stands on has been privatized. In the middle of the station square! And the owners have already come forth with a proposal to build a four-story building here! This has resulted in chaos in which individual objects can be built without consideration for the overall development vision, objects that are not even anticipated in the development plan.

I may have started with the negative examples, but there are also many positive ones. We talk a lot about all kinds of *Stockmanns* and *Triangles*, but I believe that today it would not be as easy to build something similar. Although there were laws even then, they were ignored. Another example is the Riga Freeport's building in Kronvalda Park. The Riga Development Plan anticipated that the remains of a restaurant that was found there would be removed and the natural landscape restored. There wasn't supposed to be a building here. But it appeared all the same – along with permission to enter the park with motor vehicles.

J.R. What role does public opinion play? Does the hullabaloo over the Triangle Bastion, Stockmann and similar objects testify to a certain readiness on the part of the public to react, to get more involved?

J.K. I think that the public is now much better informed, and that people's eyes have opened to a lot of things.

J.R. A question for Mr. Garjāns: To what extent can we talk of private museums in Latvia as institutions with certain levels of responsibility as compared to state and municipal institutions?

J.G. When I speak of museums, I mean the whole sector, because the Law on Museums clearly applies to the whole

hierarchy: state, municipal, and private museums. The Board of Museums was created as an institution controlled by the Ministry of Culture, but it is responsible for all museums regardless of ownership or source of financing, including the private museums that have sought accreditation. We have about 10 private museums. But this categorization by ownership is inconvenient. If a museum belongs to a municipality, government officials will often say: it's your problem, you deal with it without government financing. This absurd situation existed in the Vecpiebalga Township, where there are three memorial museums for our great writers Austriņš, Skalbe, and the Kaudziši brothers. This is not a local matter, these are national values. I would like to say thank you to the Ministry of Culture, which we were able to convince of the necessity to support this municipality. But traditionally, a municipal institution is considered to be a municipal problem. When the Law on Museums was drafted in Latvia, we took the Danish law as our model. We saw a positive value in the approach used by the Danes: the amount of money invested in a museum by the municipality is matched by the state. This logical principle is not possible in Latvia because of the strict separation into «municipal» and «state» categories.

I would like to return to the question of archives and mention one aspect why archives and museums charge for their services. The Museum Law states clearly that the state pays for these services. But in a situation where there are insufficient budget resources, museums are expressly required to increase their own incomes. I believe that the system in libraries and archives is similar to that in museums: information about what is stored in these institutions is cost free, as is the opportunity to examine these objects. This is definitely how it is in museums. However, if you want to make copies, you have to pay a fee. The law apparently doesn't work. It is possibly our own fault because, when we drafted the Museum Law, we defined the optimal situation. Now, it is clear that we don't have the optimal situation. What should we do? The law is not being observed. Would the solution be to amend the law, to ease requirements? But this would not solve the problem.

I.I. The responsibility of the state, municipalities and private individuals for museums is one thing. Another thing is how the people who work in museums understand their responsibility? How do you see this transition from the rather conservative institutions that museums undoubtedly are to establishments that are more open to society?

J.G. A museum is based on three things. The first is heritage – the collections, the values that we collect and keep, for which we are responsible. The second is research – perhaps not so much academic research but, as Professor Krastiņš mentioned, the research that must be done by museum staff to make basic information, catalogues, available to the user. The third is communication. All that a museum possesses is returned to society in a democratic, attractive form, making it accessible to the largest number of target groups. In regard to communication – i.e. exhibits, expositions, which are the basic products of a museum – I would say that a lot is being done with the available

resources. Of course, there are financial problems, but, in situations where there is not enough money, marketing and promotion are particularly important. Museum professionals must be increasingly well-informed about what the rest of the world has to offer and must know how to present our national heritage to society in an attractive manner. There is a lot to do here. The potential of museums has not yet been exhausted.

J.R. We would also like to ask about the training of personnel. Where do you see the problems? Who should be responsible for training strategies, particularly in regard to conservation of the cultural heritage?

I.I. To what extent is the young generation – architects and all others who are involved in urban planning and development – taught to understand the value of the national heritage?

J.K. There are no problems in architecture. The Academy of Art has its own Art History Department. The Latvian Academy of Culture trains professionals. The Riga Technical University's Faculty of Material Science has material-processing experts who specialize in restoration. Our training programmes do not include heritage protection. Experience has shown that those who major only in the protection, conservation and restoration of immovable property become dogmatists, unthinking formalists. It is interesting that the best examples of the restoration of architectural monuments are not the ones that have been restored with the involvement of prominent restoration experts, but those that have been restored with a more liberal, creative approach. We have all the necessary conditions for stimulating architectural creativity because we have an excellent Architectural History Programme. The Fine Arts Programme is also extremely popular.

It was Prof. Jurijs Vasiljevs who, in his day, turned our architectural history research in an academic direction. Unfortunately, I cannot say that this was a huge gain. The results can be seen, for example, in the incorrectly restored Ventspils Castle, which many consider to be ideal. Another such mistake is the Mentendorff House in Riga's Old Town – a free flight of fancy that has nothing to do with restoration. To avoid such dogmatic mistakes, which occur in narrow fields of specialization, we need architects with a broader view.

J.R. How do you think professionals are being trained for work in museums and archives?

J.G. We currently see museums as age-old institutions, rich in tradition. I believe they should now take steps to orient themselves more towards society. There is no area or sector that couldn't have a museum. We have history museums, art museums, literature museums, nature museums, antique car museums, firefighter museums, and Bible museums. But for a museum employee to be a professional, there are two important aspects. The first: he must be a professional in his field of specialization. But is this enough? Experience shows that it isn't. This is why we talk about the second aspect – museology. Many doubt

whether this is even a science, but it is museology that addresses the broadest spectrum of questions, speaks about the diverse functions of a museum. One of the achievements of recent years is that we have managed to initiate a museum employee education system. The most we can offer in Latvia's education system is the museology programme at the Latvian Academy of Culture. In regard to future prospects, one of the functions of the Board of Museums is to provide in-service training. We offer courses, seminars and conferences, opportunities to share experiences with foreign colleagues. The next level is up to the individual, and this is self-education. This is why the Board of Museums is working on a museology library; we publish books – even a series called «The Museology Library.»

We are not satisfied with the qualifications of the administrative personnel of museums. To be able to exist and carry out our mission today, we must change. Only museum professionals will be able to carry out the changes that life dictates.

G.S. I will continue about personnel and new technologies. There are too many people with a conservative way of thinking working in the archives. If we look at what is going on in the rest of the world – there, digitalization is the norm. Archives scan documents and users can find what they need on the Internet. It is tragic if archives cling to their riches and proudly count their number of units or meters of shelf space. If we take a look at what publications or reviews there are on the archive materials to which we have access, the picture is pretty sad. The archives are terribly passive. One exception is the Latvian State CinePhotoPhono Document Archive which has published a register in, I believe, three volumes. Unfortunately, the quality of the last volumes is extremely poor. In the USA, there are similar volumes about every important historical fact. Archive material is included in presentation material, so that every researcher has access. The problem is connected with the traditional way of thinking: let something sit on a shelf, and if someone needs it, let him fight for it. At the same time, the exaggerated reverence for the conservation of documents has more to do with the sector's backward way of thinking, a reluctance to work with the new technologies.

Another matter is, of course, the training of culture professionals. I believe that there is a lack of understanding at government level about the role that the state must assume as manager of heritage conservation. The German example that was mentioned by Prof. Krastiņš was wonderful: if you do something, the state supports you. In our country, the state issues laws and sometimes, maybe, checks to see that they are observed, but it does not act as a manager. Owners are often not interested in making public the heritage objects that they have discovered. This is often the case with archeological or architectural heritage. We have an example right here in Riga, in Muižas Street. A while ago, during construction, a 17th century archaeological stratum was discovered under the construction site. What to do? Government institutions demand that archeological research be carried out, but this requires money and time, and everything stops. During

the night, along came a cement mixer – and the heritage was gone. Of course, everyone blames the builder, he has to pay a fine. But he has absolutely no guarantee or even hope that the state will help.

We have a different problem with rogue archeologists, who destroy quite a lot. The state could forbid the sale of archeological objects on the market, but I think the state should have a policy that would encourage finders to share information about their find.

In regard to education, I think we must establish whether Latvia's universities are able to assume responsibility for the result, particularly in specific areas, for example archivistics. Maybe we shouldn't try to lure people into universities and educate them in a specific profession if there is no demand for this profession on the job market. Germany has a professional education institution – the Marburg Archive School. This is not a university, it is more like a technical college, and it trains technical staff for archives. We don't always need university graduates at all levels.

J.R. I would also like to hear something about legislation.

J.K. I would like to underscore the responsibility of the state. We must make sure that the legal basis, the laws and regulations that deal with NH conservation, protection and restoration are promoting and not proscriptive. Permission that is guided by common sense will always produce a better result than prohibition. If government institutions tell a builder: you will not build anything there, you must first dig to the bowels of the earth – in the end, the archeological stratum will not be preserved. The builder will simply destroy it. Period.

J.G. It sometimes seems to me that the question of state priorities and an «umbrella law» for culture has fallen out of the body of legislation. We have an Archive Law, a Museum Law, library legislation. But here we are talking about national heritage, which combines all of the aforementioned. In real life, it is all organically connected before it ends up on a repository shelf. We need an «umbrella law» that creates a systemic concept of heritage.

J.K. We don't have one. The Association of Architects has for at least 10 years tried to devise a comprehensive architecture policy: a single national culture programme, of which heritage protection is the key component and architecture one of the major NH components, which continuously makes new contributions to our national heritage.

G.S. From time to time, politics will sneak in. The most prominent example is Basteja Boulevard. This was a street with a historical name, a cultural heritage that represented a certain period in Riga's development. I have nothing against the honourable Latvian politician after whom the street was renamed, but changing the name of this street was, perhaps, not the right thing to do.

J.R. I like the opposite example: Baznīcas Street, which was Veidenbauma Street during the Soviet period. Do we really have to change everything back to the way it

was 60-70 years ago? Poor Veidenbaums has now been left without a street in Riga. What crime has the poet committed to be stripped of a well-deserved toponym?

J.K. By the way, the Baznīcas Street case is essentially not unlike the Basteja/Meierovica Boulevard case. When Baznīcas Street was planned, a church square was anticipated at the corner of Ģertrūdes Street. So, the name of the street actually reflects the history of the city's development.

J.R. I just wanted to mention the fact that Veidenbaums' name has disappeared from the map of Riga.

J.K. There is another thing that is much worse. I was head of Riga's toponym commission, which was established by the former head of Riga's Development Department, Vilnis Štrams. The members of the commission were professionals. Now, there are politicians on this commission who have already been instructed to return to the practice of naming streets after actors and so on. Some still have this Soviet way of thinking. We tried to observe the principle that naming streets after persons should be avoided as much as possible. Because there will always be someone whose name will have to be replaced by that of someone more popular.

J.R. There is another question that should perhaps be discussed. In Paris, I see the name of a street and, underneath, a few words about the person for whom the street has been named. There is no similar information in Riga, but such things also contribute to our cultural environment. If we have named a street after a Latvian poet, composer, or politician, I would like to see – if only for the sake of tourists – a short explanation in two languages.

J.K. Right! I have often suggested this to Riga's City Council. But nothing has been done. You mentioned Basteja Boulevard. We submitted to the City Council a very serious document about the history of the boulevard, about everything that we have mentioned here. The councilmen were, of course, not interested. Afterwards, I voiced my views on television. After the interview, councilman Dainis Kalns called me, and I had to listen to a 10-minute monologue: you are old, stupid, you hate Latvia, you don't understand anything, and so on.

Second Interview

J.D. National heritage is an area that is regulated by a number of international conventions. One of the oldest ones is the Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage. On the basis of this Convention, UNESCO has declared Riga's historical centre a World Heritage Site. The world's scientists are also interested in the Struve Meridian Arc, which is included in UNESCO's world heritage list. Two points on the arc are located in Latvia, a fact that is not widely known. There are a number of other European conventions: for the protection of Europe's archaeological heritage, architectural heritage, the landscape convention, and, to my mind, one

of the most important – the Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society. This last convention is, so to say, the umbrella convention for all the other conventions. Latvia has joined these conventions, and we can be proud of the fact that our heritage legislation is much more detailed and better aligned than that of our neighbours. Latvia has a special Law on the Protection of Cultural Monuments, Cabinet of Minister regulations, and 24 other laws that make provisions for the protection of cultural monuments. This means that we not only have a special law but that other laws and regulations also include binding provisions. In addition, there are 27 Cabinet regulations on heritage. We also comply with approximately 70 international charters, resolutions and recommendations. This suggests that there is a serious legal basis. However, this does not mean that everything is just fine. We have the legislation, what we don't have is public involvement and awareness of values.

One of the biggest problems is the complicated procedure for getting newly discovered objects listed as cultural monuments protected by the state. Moreover, this list can be contested. The decision is taken by the minister, we prepare the background documentation. In Sweden, if anyone finds an object of archeological value, from that very moment the object is automatically placed under the protection of the state. When I asked them how the owner or excavator could know that it is something of value, the answer was: it's his own fault if he is so uneducated. And he is held accountable in the eyes of the law. In Scandinavia, people are more prepared to protect their heritage. Things are quite different in Latvia. Looking back, we see that our most difficult period was 2000-2003. Back then, politicians tried to push resolutions through the coordinating institutions. And then came a turning point. The Law on Conservation and Protection of Riga's Historical Centre was adopted after a considerable amount of debate. This law regulates the main issues very strictly. Back then, heritage protection came up against private interests. We were on the war path with the Riga City Council. Once the law was adopted, the City Council urged the Latvian president to return the law to the *Saeima* for reconsideration. The City Council also tried to contest the law before the Constitutional Court, but the court found the law to be in keeping with international standards and human rights...

What has changed? Before, decisions were taken in government offices; now, the most important questions are discussed by the Council for Conservation and Development of Riga's Historical Centre, with all stakeholders gathered around one table. This is not always in the interests of the cultural heritage, sometimes the vote is determined by economic interests. But at least the process is transparent.

V.B. Since I do research, write about the protection of monuments, and work for the State Inspectorate for Heritage Protection, I am confronted with these laws and regulations all the time. Mr. Dambis was right when he said that the public is uneducated. This is where the problems start, and the enormous aggression. When I explore an object and talk to the owner, the outcome can be quite dangerous. The years of economic growth perhaps made

it easier to adopt laws and regulations, but they were not favourable to monuments. Many people bought property, and the fate of monuments became dependant on uneducated or self-interested owners. The attitude was: it is mine, and I will do what I want. But we – the representatives of the state – talked, explained, educated. We need more legal experts working with these questions in order to reach the desired result. This is evident in the case of the building at Marijas Street 6 in Riga: the owners were at odds with each other and, for five years we tried to deal with the situation. In the 1990s, we didn't have things like the recent case of arson in Pulkveža Brieža Street. This is new. It means that the new owners bought these dilapidated wooden buildings with the intention of getting rid of them quickly – selling them or tearing them down and replacing them with a bigger building. On the one hand, they have no understanding of cultural values, on the other hand, it is not just the protection of the monuments. There should be some kind of higher legal principle here, and responsibility, but the state allows the worst to happen. Has anyone been punished for burning down a building? Nor have any arsonists been caught, because no one has even tried to catch them. The greedy owners will simply continue burning.

Part of the problem is our own fault, especially if we talk about the wooden buildings that now receive so much love and attention. But previously, they weren't even listed as monuments because even public officials did not understand their importance. Kalnciema Street is a very nice example of the perseverance of enthusiasts. For the State Inspectorate for Heritage Protection and the municipality, Mūrnieku Street has also become a commendable example. But it is easy to go from one extreme to the other. Pretty soon, all of the Grīziņkalns houses will be protected monuments. But, here, we have to be very rigorous – do all these standard barracks that were once built for the factory workers really have to be conserved? We can restore one building, maybe one street or block in this working-class district. But to stop development of the city here – wouldn't that be an overly conservative decision?

More success stories? It is good that Alberta Street is beginning to recover! But, speaking of failures, what upsets me is the poor quality of the new buildings in Riga's Old Town, as well as the fact that public squares are disappearing. Maybe they will appear in the suburbs, but no one will build new squares in the Old Town. And if we continue sticking to the principle that buildings must be rebuilt in places where there once were buildings back in the mediaeval days, greenery and light will disappear completely from the Old Town. The Old Town has the poorest quality of air. Eliminating the public squares means eliminating the small islands of life in a sea of stones.

J.R. For the purposes of this Report, we would like to ask about different levels of responsibility – the administrative apparatuses as something connected with politicians, political parties, and their sponsors, business people. We could also ask about the role that political considerations, political games play in a heritage context. I recently talked with my colleague Ivars Ijabs about the ado over the Victory

Column in the days of the National Awakening. It was clear that part of society subscribed to the emotional view: the monument is a negative symbol in the context of Latvian independence. Here, a certain role may be played by society's deformed historical memory. Part of society – individual wealthy persons – is not particularly responsive to national needs. How do you see the cultural influence of organized society, civil society, in this question? To what extent does the state carry out its protective and educational function? And to what extent can laws affect public attitudes?

J.D. I will name the players involved in monument protection. There is the *special institution* that is similar in all countries, and this special institution is linked to the state; then there is the municipality; then, the politicians who regulate something or indicate the direction that should be taken – sometimes right, sometimes wrong. Then, we have *non-governmental professional organizations* – associations, societies, etc. And then there are *interest groups*, which fight for ideas, principles. An example: the Environment Protection Club was actively involved in the campaign for Riga's historical centre; they collected signatures against construction in inappropriate places, and this helped. Then, we have *the rest of society* that does not belong to any interest groups. I believe the biggest problem is with this part of society, which has not voiced an opinion. I think professional organizations have defined their position. The state has also defined its policy. It is a different situation with the municipalities. We were on the warpath with Riga, but now the situation has improved. We have gotten on well with many municipalities, but with others ... it depends. In 2001-2003 politicians had greater influence, now – much less. Decision making has become sluggish.

J.R. Is society getting organized?

J.D. Yes, and this is the reason for a whole series of laws and regulations. Remember what my colleagues said about arson. The problem has been resolved in Riga's historical centre. We followed the example of other countries. What is the reason for arson? A two-story wooden building can be replaced with a five-or-more-story building. A cultural monument is burned down and the space is free for new construction. But the Cabinet regulations now have a new provision that says: if a building that is a cultural monument has been destroyed by fire, it may only be replaced with a building of the same size and the same material. This means that arson is no longer economically profitable. We no longer have fires in the centre of Riga. Therefore: **the achievement is a stop to aggression against architectural heritage.** Some examples: there was an attempt to build a row of houses along the Daugava in front of the Old Town. The attempt failed. Others wanted to build in the Station Square. We stopped that too.

I.I. But, if I understand correctly, there is a piece of land that has been privatized, on which there is a casino, right in the middle of the Station Square.

J.D. Yes, and this is in strange contradiction to logic and legislation. There were also plans to put up buildings in the

Dome Square. There have been many other plans that were not carried out, that we have stopped.

All in all, you can say that there have been achievements. I think that society at large as well as the press understood the situation. And the politicians who try to push through lobbied projects, they too have become more intelligent and have started to think twice.

The biggest failure is Riga's Development Plan. We succeeded in preventing the absurdities in Riga's historical centre, but the rest of the plan, which also affects architectural heritage on the periphery of the city centre, is chaos: five-story buildings alongside 25-story buildings. And this has been achieved by lobbyists and politicians. I think that this is the greatest setback for Riga.

V.B. The main topic of this discussion is, after all, responsibility and accountability. But there is no sense of responsibility! A crook will perhaps say: okay, now I understand! But where politicians are concerned, none of them want to assume responsibility for anything. Their behaviour is based on the principle of unprincipled «political responsibility.»

J.R. Mr. Dambis, do you have any material or figures that show how state support for heritage protection has increased? You mentioned that municipalities play a big role. It would be interesting to hear which municipalities spend the most or the least money on heritage protection.

J.D. Up to 2006, heritage experts «sacrificed themselves» and worked for a pittance. In order to keep these professionals, they were allowed to take other jobs as well. In 2006, we succeeded in raising salaries, but now there have been 30% cuts and we are back to where we started. Funding for monuments has somewhat increased, but the 600,000 lats that have been allocated for all of the country's cultural monuments – this is a ridiculous amount. It is ten times less than the calculated minimum. Funding should be in proportion with the property value of cultural monuments. But how can we calculate, for example, the value of the Freedom Monument? It cannot be expressed in terms of money. But the value of manor houses, dwelling houses, castles, can to some extent be calculated. Experts can make very precise assessments of the value of movable art. Altogether, we have reached a figure of 36.7 billion lats! This is the nominal value of our national heritage, which represents a significant part of the backing for our national currency. I think the value will increase, because the income generated by the cultural heritage goes into the budget. And I think it would only be fair to return this budget money to our heritage to fix it up even more.

V.Z. In regard to books and libraries, I think the legal basis in Latvia is good enough. The professional community in these areas is also integrated into international institutions. The question is about capacity. Those who work in the memory institutions – libraries, archives, museums – if they are true professionals, there is no issue. We just have to make sure they have the necessary material resources to do a good job. In recent years, there have been new developments and new opportunities for digitalization of

the unique material of libraries, opportunities for nationwide projects and various international projects. Perhaps it is a bit premature to call the *Castle of Light* a success story, but its prospects seem promising.

Problems? What upsets me is that people who are in high positions often make it difficult to perform in a responsible and professional manner. They are perhaps competent and energetic in their own areas, but they are dizzied by the feeling that they can do anything, that they stand close to those who have the last say. In April 2009, the chairman of the Physicians Association, Pēteris Apinis, came forth with a proposal for reorganizing the library sector. He suggested keeping the Library of Medicine, which was close to his own heart, but breaking up the Academic Library. Of course, you can't expect a competent understanding of library issues from a doctor – even if he does know how to read – but you should be able to expect it from the state secretary and others at the Ministry of Culture. It would be enough if they just listened to their own ministry experts. After all, the ministry does have an Advisory Council on Book Issues. When a decision had to be taken on a large VAT increase on books, absolutely no attention was paid to views about the possible consequences.

Heritage is not just what we might, at first glance, imagine it to be in the world of books and libraries. It is also, for example, the question of why Latvia – the first of the Baltic countries to publish a universal encyclopedia in the 20th century – now faces a crisis in regard to publication of a new encyclopedia. An encyclopedia compiled by one private individual is not a solution. Even the best geography dictionaries published in the 1990s and just recently are, like other reference literature, nothing more than a compromise. It is also a good governance fiasco when a small circle of administrators decides that state participation in the creation of an encyclopedia is unnecessary, that this can be left to the private sector, and then does away with our only encyclopedia publishing house with all of its collected material. Of course, you can say that there are other possibilities now, other information sources and other ways of seeking information, but you shouldn't so easily and thoughtlessly do away with the know-how of people who have worked on something for many years and with the resources that they have compiled. Otherwise, we will look «very nice» alongside our neighbours, and I don't mean just our brothers, the Lithuanians, who already have umpteen volumes of a new universal encyclopedia; I am also talking about the country with the last remaining dictator – Belarus.

J.R. To what extent are publishing and libraries a question of private initiative? If we compare the present day with the Soviet days, we are now seeing the appearance of libraries that are based on private donations.

V.Z. Since the renewal of independence, the situation has changed considerably. State participation in basically all cultural processes has greatly declined. There is one positive example, and that is the State Culture Capital Foundation. This is state funding to which we have become accustomed and are therefore all the more distressed when

it is hugely scaled down. The Foundation also supports many national institutions and agencies – all those memory institutions which have, thanks to SCCF, been able to make their collections accessible to the public during the years of independence. It doesn't matter whether this is the Latvian National History Museum or the Latvian State History Archive.

One of the most laudable achievements is regionalization of the publishing sector. We can now speak of major publishers outside of Riga. Previously, the traditional centres were Riga, Liepāja and Jelgava. New possibilities have allowed larger or smaller municipalities to publish encyclopaedic or historical material about city X or district Y. Those who provided the financial support possibly saw this as a great public relations opportunity for themselves, but, as a result, they have aided the creation of lasting values.

Of course, with books and libraries it is the same as with the national heritage – the possibilities and approaches differ from municipality to municipality. It is impossible to compare the publications of the Ventspils Museum with publications dedicated to the heritage of a less ancient city.

After the renewal of independence, Latvia has received several large collections as bequests. One of these is the private collection of books and other materials collected over many years by Otto Bong, a Baltic German who built up the Baltic Central Library, and bequeathed it to the Latvian National Library in the 1990s. The collections of the Literature, Theatre and Music Museum were supplemented with the extremely valuable music and music material collection of the Australian Latvian Ēriks Biezaitis, although this is not a classic library collection. Just take a look at the Latvian State History Archive's register under the headings «Archives Returned from Exile» and you will see how much of Latvia's national heritage has been preserved and how much has returned to Latvia. If only society were informed about this, if people were interested and wished to learn about these values!

V.B. Riga made a mistake when it allowed the old wooden windows of cultural monuments to be replaced with plastic windows. This erroneous process was initiated by the large number of companies that lobbied for windows made of synthetic materials. And now our architectural monuments have fewer authentic windows. I was recently in Daugavpils. The exact same thing is happening there, with energy saving used as the excuse and allegedly in the name of progress. Mr. Dambis will agree that a lot depends on the erudition and principles of regional heritage inspectors. A good example is Liepāja, where the old wharf warehouses are being renewed and reconstructed very well. The Dundaga Castle, on the other hand, is one big disaster. The castle, which belongs to the municipality, is in terrible condition. The visual appearance of the facade is awful. You want to shout: «Dear people of Dundaga, if you don't know how, don't do it! Don't ruin a historical building with ineptitude!»

It is too bad that there is no encyclopedia on monuments, which could be used to educate the public. Do we need digital material? Of course! Mr. Dambis mentioned that the question of a digitalization programme has been raised. The public is very interested in national heritage. I

used to work for the Apollo portal where I was head of the culture department. There was huge interest and response from rural areas. This is where digital material could be put to good use – to foster society's cultural patriotism!

J.R. It would be interesting to compare how, along with development of the country, the national budget and the budgets of private companies have grown over the years. Maybe this would make it possible to draw conclusions about why things are the way that they are in regard to national heritage.

J.D. I find that the national budget is drawn up absolutely the wrong way around. Yes, there are areas that must be developed. But they should first prove what it is that they need the money for and how much. Money should not be granted automatically – only when there has been substantial development as compared to the previous year. What did Prime Minister Godmanis do at the end of last year? He took the same amount away from everyone – from those who had too much and from those who had too little. When talking to colleagues from other countries, I see everyone reacting to the economic situation. The monument protection sector is particularly sensitive to fluctuations in financing. During the good years, the sector was able to carry out projects on a much larger scale. Now that financing is limited, national heritage is in jeopardy. One ruinous factor is inactivity due to the lack of financing, because objects that are not restored in time are subject to degradation. The second factor is the destruction of cultural environments through deliberate economic activity. The average proportions in Europe are: 25% decline through degradation, but 75% is destroyed deliberately.

I.I. What you say corresponds to what Prof. Krastiņš said: damage is done by prohibitions and instructions that don't allow immediate assessment of an object – this, instead of development promotion on the part of government institutions. Both sides suffer: the cultural values and the new development projects. Builders suffer because they have to pay for an assessment, and the project must be put on hold for an indefinite period of time. As a result, they try to bypass the monument protection institutions or maybe even ignore potential cultural values that have been found on a site.

J.D. It's not quite that dramatic. Under Soviet rule, everything was prohibited by law because an archaeological stratum was considered to be something similar to a museum, where nothing was allowed. Today, you can do whatever you want with a monument, as long as you don't destroy anything of value. You just have to do things in the right order. But if we compare the legal procedure prescribed in Latvia to protect monuments and at the same time promote development, the situation in Norway and Germany is much more difficult.

J.R. A question for all of you: what is the role of sacral culture, churches? Who bears responsibility and what are the problems? How do you see the Church as property owner and administrator?

V.Z. I don't see any problems in the publishing sector. The different denominations have their own publications – religious texts, church calendars. There are new players, of course. These are private publishers who have cooperated with popular clergymen for years and publish their writings now and then. But these texts are usually not the monopoly of the Church, so that scholars are also involved in their interpretation. One example is the preparation and publication of the new Bible translation.

V.B. The churches are owned by congregations, and these are responsible for sacral heritage in the broadest sense. But the congregations do not have large resources. Religious people are very respectful of their church and try to take good care of it. But for me, as an art historian, it is very upsetting to see that what they do is not always well-considered, usually based only on personal taste and understanding. Riga's New St. Gertrude's Church has been kept in very good condition, but cost cutting has resulted in a new tinplate roof that does not look good, and the quality could also prove to be substandard.

J.B. All in all, however, the situation with the churches is good. Of course, there are places where there is lack of understanding and knowledge. And then we try to do something. When St. John's Church in Cēsis planned to install a heating system with an open gas fire, we warned them that this was unacceptable not only from a fire-safety aspect but also because of the fumes – a greasy film would appear on all of the art objects. Nevertheless, the congregation wanted to go ahead with the plan. Then, we had it prohibited by law. This was an isolated case. Usually, there is dialogue and mutual agreement.

If we look at how the money that is granted for conservation is used, in 90% of the cases congregations are more economic and conscientious with the use of this money than municipalities. And when they receive 1,000 lats, they will add 3,000 lats of their own money and do a lot more. This is why we grant churches money with a light heart. We know that the congregation will behave prudently and with great responsibility. They will buy material and organize their own transportation.

But there is also a negative trend connected with church heritage, and it is something that we should talk about. The Churches own a lot of property. When a building with heritage value is sold, you see what sums are involved. And then you feel sorry for the naive members of the congregation who have been cheated. If congregations acted intelligently with the values that they own, there would be sufficient resources for maintaining this cultural heritage.

J.R. What is the situation with professionals in the heritage protection sector?

J.D. I think we don't have enough professionals. The young ones are, of course, very competent. They have acquired a good education, some have even studied abroad. But Latvia does not have a special programme for training heritage professionals. Our potential employees first get a higher education and then learn their specialty

on the job. They become professionals through learning by doing. From 1998 to 2004, we had several programmes to help us acquire European experience. Of the many Council of Europe aid initiatives dedicated to national heritage (seminars, courses, theoretical and practical training), Latvia took advantage of approximately 18%. Estonia and Lithuania – each, about 1%. Maybe our neighbours are more self-sufficient. But the situation in our country is not satisfactory. There are too few conservationists and art historians. There are also not enough architects with a deeper understanding of national heritage.

J.R. One of Latvia's problems is that people are leaving the country. Are you also losing valuable professionals? Is there a drain of important cultural values or maybe the opposite? Is Latvia becoming richer in cultural values through import?

V.Z. In the publishing sector, there is no lack of professionals in government structures. The Ministry of Culture employs plenty of consultants. They should just listen to them. The situation with education and training of new professionals is pretty sad. There is only one academic programme, offered by the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Latvia. Most of the people who work in publishing come from other fields of specialization. There are some exceptions, where professionalism and experience have been acquired in the publishing houses of the Soviet period. And there are quite a few publishers who are trailblazers, as so often before in history. Neither one of our great publishers, Jānis Misiņš or Ansis Gulbis, had any kind of special education.

We don't have to particularly worry about the migration of cultural values. For years, we have had criteria regulating the export of printed work with heritage value. There is nothing in this world that you can be absolutely sure of, but as far as the work of libraries is concerned, there has been nothing terrible that we should be shocked or ashamed about, and I hope there won't be.

V.B. Objects that have been listed as cultural monuments may not be taken out of the country. This is why they have been registered. Stolen heritage objects, frequently icons, are taken abroad disguised as art objects. Of course, a lot of 20th century paintings leave the country. These have become popular export goods and gifts. But a positive factor is the significant number of objects that are entering the country. Paintings that were taken abroad by World War II refugees or painted during the years of exile are returning to Latvia, among them masterpieces by Tidemanis, Liberts, Annuss, Purvītis. We can be happy that private collectors are building up their collections by looking for paintings that have been scattered all over the world.

There are, however, huge problems with new faces in the field of monument protection because it is something so specific. Actually, this knowledge can only be acquired by the empirical method. For example, one potential employee has studied architecture, another has studied art history. This is ideal because it comes closest to our specialty. But due to a shortage of personnel, we also

have people who are librarians or PR professionals in their main jobs. It is harder for them to understand the stylistic, the artistic value of cultural monuments or to make a competent assessment of a building's historical substance. I think we may have huge problems in the future, when the old professionals leave. Of course, you can tackle a problem from a purely legal aspect. For example, a person buys an apartment in an old building in Riga in good faith, starts to renovate, and discovers wall paintings. He did not know this when he bought the apartment and is now angry because he has an unexpected problem. But this situation has resulted from a lack of understanding. If the house itself is a monument, he should have realized when buying the apartment that that, too, is a monument with all of the inevitable consequences. In such cases, a dialogue must take place between the owner and the state or municipality, in which the professional who represents heritage interests must be a person of great erudition. So, you see, a professional working in our specialty must be universal.

J.D. We have records on the official export of cultural objects. But this is only the legal side. We know that there is also another side: stolen, lost objects that no one can check. The global black market for art and antiques is second only to the market for narcotics. This has also affected us. There was a time when old cars, motorcycles, bicycles were shipped from Latvia. But there weren't too many of these. Then came furniture, which buyers found in old farmhouses, restored, waxed and sent to different countries. It was a business. If we look at it from an ethical aspect, we have to admit that many of the things that were lying around in attics and considered to be junk would have been lost anyway. Keeping this in mind, we have to say that nothing bad has happened. I was talking to Viktors Astaņins, one of the most competent art and antiques traders, and we came to this conclusion about the current situation: there is no market for more outstanding objects of value and the prices for mediocre objects have dropped considerably, but there are no buyers for these either. Only the most inexpensive objects are being bought and sold, but these are of no interest to art historians. People are simply getting rid of the things they don't need. It is no big loss. Of course, the more old objects we have, the more beautiful our interiors. But I don't see this as a huge problem. We, as the protectors of our heritage, must become a bit more modern. The progressive approach that we see in France, Belgium, and Italy shows us that only real, authentic values are restored. They do not build copies in empty spaces, but new, modern architecture. On this score, we are above par in Latvia.

J.R. Thank you for taking part in this discussion!

Ojārs Spāritis, Summary

All those who took part in the discussion are leading experts in their field, and their views are based on many years of experience. These interviews with researchers and administrators of the main heritage sectors will hopefully give the reader an idea of the scale of administrative responsibility and the functions of each professional. The different heritage sectors, the institutional performance, the methods, and the impact on society cannot be directly compared: we have libraries and architecture, the fine arts and archives, museums and archaeology. This is why everything that makes up the material and intellectual realm of our unique national heritage is not equally well administered. This leads to system management problems, imbalance between public and private sector responsibility, and the absence of a national vision or planning in regard to heritage protection, job market research, and training of professionals. Our national heritage is declining, not increasing; it is deteriorating in quality and gradually being lost. This is why an educated nation must do all that it can to counter this inevitable process.

The discussion has brought to light:

- the deficient and imbalanced responsibility of the state for sectoral development and training of professionals in Latvia;
- the inadequate and disproportionate distribution of financing between centre and periphery for the safeguarding of national cultural monuments that are protected by law against destruction, degradation, and for preventing a general depletion of Latvia's cultural environment;
- signs of corruption and disregard for the law in the development of Riga – a city that is a UNSECO World Heritage Site – and catering to the interests of private business with planning faults deliberately worked into Riga's Development Plan;
- weak legislation on the distribution of rights and responsibilities between the state and the owner of a cultural monument, as well as the incapacity of the state to impose sanctions against deliberate destruction of cultural monuments;
- inadequate education of society in questions concerning the cultural environment and heritage protection;
- an insufficient number of experts in the government structures created after the regional reform, who are professionally trained for working with protection of cultural monuments in the regions;
- non-productive and outdated working methods in the state archive system, which lead to the inevitable destruction of documents;
- the risk that our national values – museums and their collections – will be depreciated due to insufficient financing for the system and to the transfer of objects to municipalities.



II The State, Governance, Society

- 2.1 POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN LATVIA:
AT THE CROSSROADS OF POLITICAL AND
CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY
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Political Accountability in Latvia: At the Crossroads of Political and Civic Responsibility

Jānis Ikstens

The basis of modern democracy is the idea of representation. Each time that someone is born on this planet, we find ourselves further away from the ideals of democracy that existed in antiquity. Nevertheless, political theorists and practitioners continue to think about how best to ensure the representation of the people. There has been a renewed interest in more direct models of democracy over the last several decades, but it appears that these are more similar to laboratory experiments than well-tested mass products.

The principle of representation today is linked not only to greater freedom for representatives in terms of protecting the interests of the represented, but also to accountability. If the representative has acted in opposition to the represented person's interests, then the representative must explain what he or she has done. The represented person has the right to seek sanctions against the representative. These explanations are, in the modern world, usually delivered and received via the mass media. This is particularly promoted by professional analytical journalists who operate under the framework of the freedom of speech. Citizens today are far more humane than their ancient predecessors, and when there are self-defined violations of the principle of representation, political methods are used in response. Elections have become the primary mechanism for ensuring political accountability. Good representatives are rewarded with further trust. Bad representatives are removed from the institutions of representation.

This ideal model of political accountability inevitably encounters specific difficulties. One is the ironic approach which many people in many different cultures take toward the concept of «political accountability»; Latvia is certainly no exception. These words are often used as a euphemism to describe efforts to avoid (political) responsibility. They speak to unclear delegations of authority, the representation of small groups, differences of opinion among governing coalition partners, etc.

The causes for dysfunctions in the ideal model of political accountability are easy to attribute to politicians who cannot always clearly and convincingly explain what they are doing. For that reason, the image of politicians is negatively tinted in many, many societies. Sometimes this has to do with corruption, but more often the problem is careless decisions or actions that do not satisfy the best interests of those who are represented. At the same time, however, we need to look at other factors that may affect the ability of representatives to act on behalf of the interests of those whom they are representing.

It is a paradox, but it is hard to know what exactly the public interest is at a time when public opinion research flourishes and there is a boom in information and communications technologies. Of course, fully informed citizens can know what serves their best interests, and in that case it is quite clear whether the government's actions really do represent these interests. On the other hand, it is entirely possible for citizens to have less than complete information about their (best) interests. In other cases, their own ideas may not be in line with what truly are their interests. In that case, things which governments do in line with objective interests that are not understood by people may be seen as not being representative, and this can lead to complaints about what the relevant government is doing. For instance, there are the steps which the Latvian government took in 2009 and 2010 to ensure austerity and avoid a financial collapse. The causes of the problem are not the subject of this paper, but it does seem that one of them has to do with the specifics as to how the principle of accountability operates in Latvia. These steps have not enjoyed the support of the majority in society, but their deepest goal is to protect society's best interests in the medium term.

Trends in the development of contemporary societies involve the emergence of the consumer society, atomization, and the weakening of collective identities. This, along with increasing scepticism about politics, makes it quite complicated to talk about any large and well-informed community of citizens. Even if citizens are aware of their very best interests, however, it is not easy to understand the will of the people in terms of what their representatives should do – will that is expressed in elections or in public opinion surveys. This is a paradox that was first spotted by the 18th century French philosopher and mathematician Nicolas de Condorcet and proven by the American economist and Nobel Prize laureate Kenneth Arrow – that under conditions of free choice, the priorities of the electorate cannot be reflected with any precision.

Still, we can assume in theoretical terms that the result of Condorcet's paradox is not one in which the will of the electorate is seriously distorted. The will of the people can be identified. Similarly, we can assume that this will is in line with the best interests of the electorate. One key prerequisite for this is an informed and educated electorate. In that case, we can speak of a responsive and accountable government – responsive in terms of responding to the desires of the electorate, and accountable in terms of sanctions that are implemented when politicians act against the public will. The public will, in turn, is sometimes seen as a synonym to the best interests of the electorate.

The institutional structure of a system of governance can seriously affect the representation of the popular will and the implementation of sanctions. One of the clearest mechanisms for sanctions is via procedures such as national referenda. This makes it possible to express the will of the electorate directly and relatively quickly. Another fundamental principle in promoting accountability in governance is a separation of powers that is as complete as possible, maintaining a structure of checks and balances which makes it less likely that any branch of government can assume too much power. Important in promoting accountability in politics, too, is an election system which allows people to take a nuanced look at what each political organization or alliance of political organizations is doing, also considering the extent to which each elected official's activities are in line with the express will of the people. Over the last several decades, there have been new challenges in terms of accountable politics (particularly in mature democracies) that are posed by so-called cartel parties. These are parties which seek to limit political competition and the arrival of new competitors in the political arena. Direct national budget subsidies for political parties serve to facilitate such developments.

The concepts that have been discussed thus far in this chapter offer quite a few explanations as to problems with political accountability insofar as the conventional understanding goes. These explanations can be rooted in institutional and other factors, but they don't answer the question of why politicians should be accountable toward their citizens in the first place. Is the right to represent the people linked to an obligation to explain what politicians are doing only in an ideal model? Is there something outside of the institutional framework of a representative democracy and the relevant legislative considerations which encourages politicians to be responsive to their citizens? In the ancient world, the accountability of officials was facilitated by ideas about a moral citizenry that were inculcated into people from childhood. There were sanctions ranging from temporary ostracism to the death penalty. In the modern world, by contrast, politicians who lose their jobs often receive a substantial golden parachute, and moral considerations seem to be losing all importance even before they take root. In modern (and particularly in contemporary) politics, there are, however, rational foundations for responsible action, even though

the direction of this accountability can differ from the usual definition or normative postulation thereof.

Before someone can represent others, he or she must receive the support of a certain segment of the citizenry. This is achieved in exchange for specific promises to raise subsidies, cut taxes, etc. Politicians also need financial resources to form relations with citizens – they need money for election campaigns. In many countries, politicians receive some of those resources from governments, while financing also comes from businesspeople or other groups which have money and an interest in influencing politics in ways which may not be in line with the promises that have been given to the citizenry at large. There are also citizens who are organized enough to establish public benefit organizations, civic initiatives and public movements that offer potential representatives key information about the various interests that must be represented and also affect the legitimacy of political representatives by expressing support or rejection of same.

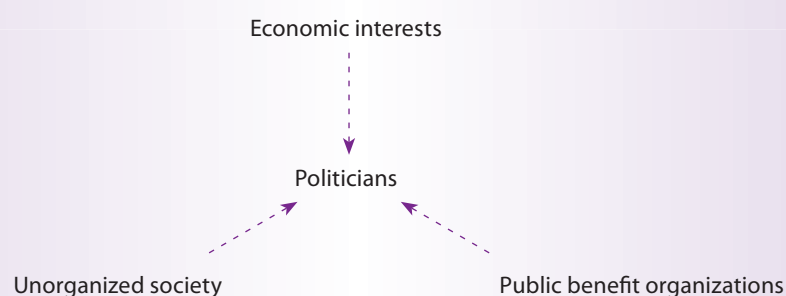
Box 2.1 suggests that politicians are at the centre of a unique triangle. The corners are made up of those people who are not particularly organized, of public benefit organizations, and of economic interests. If one of these corners is far more powerful than the others, then it will drag politicians in the relevant direction. That means that it is difficult to speak of the irresponsibility of politicians. Rather, we must speak of their accountability to some groups and not others. From the perspective of normative requirements, accountability before the citizenry is seen as the priority, but it is not much of a stretch to think about accountability to economic interests and groups in a way that provokes dissatisfaction in society about the way in which its interests are represented.

In response to such dissatisfaction, there must be mechanisms of political accountability, including votes in elections. There are, however, various problems with elections, including the fact that in this day and age, they tend to be fairly few in number – in most countries, elections are held no more often than once every four or five years.

It is useful here to once again look at antiquity and the role citizens then played in democracies. It is specifically from this ancient world that the conceptual structure of democracy has been adapted. This historical approach encourages us to think that mechanisms of accountability must function more often (at least when demanded, if not regularly), while citizens must be informed and interested

Box 2.1

The ideal model of political accountability



in public processes. This creates a separate dimension – citizens themselves are responsible for political accountability. This is something that is often ignored in public discourse and in academic research.

These theoretical thoughts are the basis for more extensive analysis of political accountability in Latvia.

The institutional system that is described in Latvia's Constitution and other legislative acts seems to offer fairly broad opportunities to ensure political accountability. The central element is parliamentary and local government elections, which are held once every four years, as well as European Parliament elections, which are held once every five years. Citizens can make clear their attitude toward each candidate on a party list, because they can put a plus mark next to a favoured candidate or cross out the name of a disfavoured candidate. This has much to do with beliefs as to how responsive the candidate would be, and citizens make fairly widespread use of this. Citizens cannot recall elected representatives, but they can try to ensure the sacking of local government deputies or the organization of a snap parliamentary election. It is important to note here that since April 2009, the procedure related to snap parliamentary elections has been simplified to a certain extent. No longer is the approval of the President of Latvia mandatory in this process.

Since 2001, citizens have been able to turn to the Constitutional Court when their interests have been violated. The court rules on claims that constitutional rights have been violated by government institutions or arrives at explanations of political decisions. In 2007, Latvia set up an ombudsman's office, which is also supposed to help in ensuring greater responsibility on the part of politicians. Constitutional guarantees in Latvia include freedom of speech, freedom of association, etc. Local residents can monitor the absolute majority of decisions that are taken by the Cabinet of Ministers, starting with the announcement of draft decisions at meetings of state secretaries and ending with the final decisions that are taken. Citizens can attend Cabinet of Ministers sessions to state their views.

Though there are various mechanisms for ensuring political accountability, and some are quite unique in a positive sense (e.g., the ability of citizens to propose the dissolution of Parliament in pursuit of a snap election), however, many people in Latvia think that political accountability has become a synonym for the irresponsibility of politicians.

One of the cornerstones for the functioning of political accountability is citizens who understand their own interests, are well informed about politics, and are interested in public processes. The attitude of Latvia's citizens toward their country involves a certain amount of dualism. On the one hand, people expect the state to resolve their various problems. Ever since the early 1990s, for instance, an absolute majority of survey respondents in Latvia have said that the state must take on the primary responsibility for the welfare and social security of individuals. Similarly, most people think that the state should play a more influential role in the economy, ensuring the more equal distribution of income among the country's residents (see NBB). Similar views were revealed in a study that was conducted by the

SKDS public opinion research firm in November 2008. On the other hand, it is also true that for a long time now, it has been evident that the people of Latvia, including the country's citizens, simply do not trust the most important institutions of state – Parliament, the Cabinet of Ministers, and the courts. Data from the Eurobarometer show that over the last two or three years, scepticism about the first two institutions has deepened, while political parties, which essentially ensure the membership of the two institutions, have become the object of nearly universal scorn. In the autumn of 2008, in fact, only 5% of respondents in a survey said that they trust Latvia's political parties (EC 2008 b). Far greater trust is enjoyed by so-called power structures (the armed forces, the police) and by international organizations (NATO, the UN).

The level of political awareness among Latvian citizens seems to be rather modest. A survey conducted in November 2008 found that nearly two-thirds of Latvian respondents said that they have the information about events in Latvia and the world that they need, but only 11% said that they needed this information in order to carry out their duties as citizens, and only 14.5% said that what they were looking for was information about social activities (including public organizations, associations, etc.) (SKDS 2008, T 3). Interest in politics has been at quite a low level over the last five to seven years. Even in parliamentary election years only 15% or so of respondents have said that they are very interested in politics, while more than one-half have said that their level of interest is moderate. True, there was a shift in 2008 and 2009, when the proportion of respondents who were very much interested in politics rose to around 30%. This, however, can be interpreted as a short-term phenomenon and as the consequence of economic problems and more active use of forms of political participation in response. Of key importance here is that in the November 2008 survey, it was very evident that local residents do not think much of generalizations – 85% of respondents said that they feel a lot or quite a lot of responsibility for the standard of living of their family, only 10.5% had a similar attitude toward their neighbours, 5.4% said the same about other residents in their city or parish, and just 5.1% indicated a sense of responsibility about all of the people of Latvia (SKDS 2008, T 47).

Distrust in political parties (which personify the political elite), a comparative lack of interest in politics, and the belief that people do not have any influence in politics – these are some of the most important factors which alienate people from politicians and do not encourage direct contacts between the two groups. This weakens the ability of citizens who are not organized to gravitate toward the right direction and it makes it even more complicated to implement political accountability in the classical sense of the concept. The November 2008 survey showed that just a bit more than 1% of respondents had ever written to the president or prime minister of Latvia, fewer than 5% had written to any government ministry, and a bit more than 9% had written to a local government (SKDS 2008, T 18). These numbers correspond to the views of respondents as to how much they are able to affect the work of these institutions. They were asked to evaluate their ability to do so on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 meant

no influence at all, and 10 meant a great deal of influence. With respect to the Cabinet of Ministers, the average score was 2.41, with respect to Parliament – 2.66, and in regard to local governments – 3.42 (SKDS 2008, T 39-40). That suggests that over the last eight years, there has been no increase in the belief of citizens that they can do anything about the country's most important political institutions.

Only 10% of respondents have ever met with an MP or a government minister, while 17% have met with a member of a local government council. Between 10 and 12% of respondents have taken part in strikes, picket lines or demonstrations. An equal percentage of respondents has tried to convince others to vote for a specific party or has taken part in an election campaign (SKDS 2008, T 18). This suggests that 10-15% of the people of Latvia make up the politically active part of the population, 30-35% will have nothing to do with politics, and the remaining 50-60% limit their political activities to casting votes in elections or referendums. Here we do have to note that people have a fairly fatalistic view when it comes to parliamentary elections. Most respondents in surveys tend to say that their vote is of no importance, because the results of the election and the effect of those results on the lives of the public will be one and the same. A slightly milder, but similar attitude is seen when people are asked about local government elections.

Political accountability also has to do with representing others, and one indicator related to this is the extent to which a political party and its supporters hold the same views. The more this is the case, the higher the level of representation. There has been no research which has analyzed the extent to which parties in Latvia and their supporters hold the same views, but provisional conclusions can be drawn by looking at expert evaluations of party positions and then comparing these to the results of survey studies. For instance, we can look at a survey of experts that was conducted in 2006 to talk about the positions of Latvia's most important parties (Benoit and Laver 2006), and then compare it to the results of a post-election study that was conducted in October 2006 among 1,300 adult citizens of Latvia by the Nikolo Group applied research agency.

In a survey of experts, quite a few parties were convincingly defined as being right wing on a scale of 1 to 20, with 1 meaning distinctly leftist, and 20 meaning distinctly rightist. The People's Party (TP) received a ranking of 18.1, New Era (JL) – 16.5, For Fatherland and Freedom/Latvian National Independence Movement (TB/LNNK) – 16.3, and the First Party of Latvia (LPP) – 13.4 points. 59% of surveyed citizens agreed or partly agreed that the state should be responsible for social security and welfare in Latvia. The percentage of party supporters which agreed with this statement was 54.1% among those who support the TP, 57.3% of those who vote for JL, and 60.3% of those who support TB/LNNK. Similarly, 58% of respondents agreed with the claim that the state's role in the economy must be substantial – 64.4% of TP supporters, 52.8% of JL supporters, and 58.1% of TB/LNNK supporters agreed with that idea.

In terms of how nationalist parties are, TB/LNNK got a ranking of 19.3, the TP got 16.0, the Latvian Alliance of the Green Party and Farmers Union (ZZS) got 15.0, and JL got 13.3. 43% of respondents in the survey agreed that

nationalism is necessary to maintain Latvian identity and to develop the Latvian state. Among the various parties, 72.6% of TB/LNNK supporters, 57.6% of TP supporters, 55.6% of ZZS supporters, and 60.4% of JL supporters agreed with that claim. Only 20% of respondents agreed that the existence of different ethnic identities is undesirable in Latvia. 32.4% of TB/LNNK supporters, 19.9% of TP supporters, 20.9% of ZZS supporters, and 30.1% of JL supporters agreed.

In terms of the urban/rural dimension, experts were asked to identify those parties that are most focused on agrarian issues. The ZZS was at the top of the list with 16.6, while TB/LNNK received a rating of 11.0. Only 26% of respondents agreed with the idea that most resources should be invested in urban development because that defines the development of the state. Among JL (7.0) supporters, 19.6% of respondents agreed with the claim. The same was true among 29.3% of LPP (7.3) supporters, 28.8% of Harmony Centre (SC; 5.8) supporters, and 23.8% of TP (8.4) supporters.

These fragmentary data suggest that there is a certain lack of correspondence between parties and their supporters when it comes to views about ethnic issues and the rural/urban issue. The most important differences, however, are seen in the traditional socioeconomic dimension.

Media consumption habits have changed substantially. People increasingly have shunned printed dailies, preferring sources of information on the Internet, as well as magazines which offer entertainment or a mix of information and entertainment. A study conducted by TNS Latvia in late 2008 and early 2009 proved a tendency that had been evident for several years – the two most widely read publications in Latvia are the gossip magazine *Privātā Dzīve* and the women's magazine *Ieva*. Among the top 30 television broadcasts in 2005 and 2006 was the investigative broadcast «De Facto,» while in 2007 and 2008 it was the Saturday evening news broadcast on LNT. Other news and analytical programmes lag far behind broadcasts of hockey games, the «Singing with the Stars» programme, and similar entertainment products (see TNS Latvia).

Also rather problematic is the way in which political information is processed and analyzed at the mass level. Approximately 12% of the people of Latvia have a higher education,¹ and a higher level of education is a factor which, in many parts of the world, encourages citizens to take part in political decision-making. Statistics show that many people in Latvia work more than 40 hours a week. A survey conducted in the summer of 2008 showed that most people of working age actually work more than 48 hours a week (LETA 2008). This suggests that many citizens redistribute their time budget in favour of dealing with existential problems – something that is in direct conflict with the fundamental principles of democracy which date back to antiquity.

NGO researchers have argued that such organizations are quite weak in Latvia (see Miežaine and Simane 2005, 154-7; Gaugere and Austers 2005; USAID 2008),

¹ This estimate is based on the 2000 census and the trend in student numbers thereafter.

which raises concern about their strength in relations with politicians. On May 1, 2009, more than 10,000 associations and similar organizations were registered with the Latvian Registry of Enterprises. Each year this number increases by 700 to 800 legal entities, but the registered addresses of such organizations are disproportionately centred in Riga. Surveys of public organizations show that such structures tend to be small,² as well as weak in financial

and administrative terms. What's more, financing for many of these organizations comes from foreign entities or from Latvian local governments which delegate social care functions to NGOs (see Curika 2007; Miezaine and Simane 2005, 153-7). This, in turn, suggests that in many cases, these organizations are basically businesses, as opposed to a means for members of the public to organize themselves. The more influential players in this area, it must be said, are sectoral associations and labour unions, but these cannot really be seen as public benefit organizations. At the same time, however, even the 2001 Report on Human Development showed that politicians were much more likely to listen to the views of these specific organizations and to take their views into account (TAP 2001, 47).

² The SKDS survey shows that only 4.6% of respondents are members or participate in the work of an NGO, about 8% participate in some form of amateur cultural collective, about 9% are members of religious congregations, about 10% are members of trade unions, but about two-thirds of respondents do not participate in any organization (SKDS 2008, T 18).

Box
2.2

Jūrmalagate: The responsibilities of politicians and citizens

In April 2005, the people of Latvia learned that the Prosecutor-General's Office had charged several politicians with bribery. After the March 2005 local government election, these people tried to influence the election of the chairman of the Jūrmala City Council in an improper way. The affair became known as Jūrmalagate.

This was a very noisy and well-documented example of political corruption, and it was facilitated by the fact that the makeup of the elected council was extremely fragmented – the 15 members of the council represented no fewer than 10 political parties or alliances thereof. It was also true that politically and economically influential persons wanted to strengthen their positions in the prestigious spa town at a time when the real estate market was booming. Of key importance in unmasking the scandal was council member Ilmārs Ančāns. He agreed to work with investigators and ensured the evidence that was needed to bring the suspects to trial.

When the trial began in the spring of 2006, case materials became more freely available to the mass media. The television programme «De facto» broadcast recordings of telephone calls not only among the men who had been charged with crimes – Gvido Harijs Volbrugs, Juris Hlevickis, Leonīds Lasmanis and Germans Milušs, but also between them and the heavyweight politicians Andris Šķēle and Ainārs Šlesers. Long before the final sentences handed down to the four men took effect in August 2008, and nearly half a year before the Saeima election of October 2008, the people of Latvia had a chance to learn about the links between the aforementioned politicians and the bribery of a politician in Jūrmala.

One of the most eloquent conversations in this process was between businessman Milušs and Šķēle. Milušs said these words: «Ančāns accepted. Then cheated.» In Latvian, the phrase can mean either «Ančāns took the money, then cheated us» or «Ančāns went and cheated us.» Šķēle has denied that he had any inkling of bribery and that he took the four words to be a single sentence without any punctuation. A sound expert indicated that acoustic investigation indicated something different – the emphasis was on «accepted,» with the rest of the words spoken at a lower tone. The expert was convinced that the phrase was not an undivided sentence. Still, the court ignored the expert's views, even though they pointed quite clearly to the far less than innocent role which Šķēle played in the Jūrmalagate scandal.

Šlesers received a similar message from Milušs, but the court ignored that, as well. The ruling from the Zemgale District Court says that on February 2, 2006, prosecutors ended their investigation of Šķēle and Šlesers because of no evidence that a crime had been committed. Here we can remember another thing which Šķēle said in that conversation – something that has become a part of political folklore in Latvia. He said that the Jūrmala City Council should elect the «biggest cretin» as deputy chairman of the council, although that is a moral, not a legal issue.

Despite the vast publicity and resonance which this crime attracted, the parties that were most directly involved in the scandal – the First Party of Latvia and the People's Party – chose a well-tested reaction. They would, both parties said, wait to see what law enforcement institutions would have to say about the matter, and only then would they start thinking about the morals of the issue. The People's Party, for instance, claimed that Šķēle was not acting on the instructions of the party and, in fact, acted as a private individual, and so there would be no reason for the party to judge him.

Jūrmalagate led Šlesers to lose his position as transportation minister for awhile, but he regained the job after the 2006 Saeima election in which he was the top candidate for the alliance between the LPP and the Latvia's Way party – an alliance which received the support of 8.58% of the electorate. Even more, up to 25% of the Latvian citizens who live in Riga said before the 2009 local government election that Ainārs Šlesers would be the most appropriate person to become mayor of the city. The Jūrmalagate scandal did not keep him from becoming deputy mayor of Riga in coalition with Harmony Centre, thus once again proving the flexible boundaries not only of the responsibilities of politicians, but also of those of the electorate.

Economic interests have organized themselves in a much better way. Along with the aforementioned public benefit organizations, there are many associations related to economic sectors. These represent the interests of their members in relations with government institutions and politicians. They have access to financial and human resources which go far beyond the capacities of most public benefit organizations. These associations are comparatively well-integrated into the process of taking decisions. They make use of various consultative institutions of the type that can be found at virtually all of Latvia's government ministries.

Party financing and campaign rules strengthen the influence of economic interests. Political parties do not receive money from the national budget, but some of them do have access to public resources which help them to carry out their functions. For instance, every list of candidates registered for a parliamentary or European Parliament election has the right to a bit of free campaign time on public television and public radio. Parties that are represented in Parliament and have set up separate factions receive a certain amount of administrative support from the parliamentary budget. Until quite recently, the governing coalition had access not just to the intellectual potential of civil servants working for ministries run by members of the coalition, but also the opportunity to appoint their own people to the councils of a variety of companies (these opportunities were radically narrowed late in 2009). It is also quite possible that parties have had an effect on public procurement procedures, pushing these procedures in the direction of their own interests.

Political campaign spending was completely unlimited until 2004, when spending ceilings were imposed. In 2009, the amount of money used for political struggles increased substantially because of amendments to the law. However, members of the public are in no hurry to offer financial support to political parties. A survey conducted in November 2008 found that only 0.9% of respondents had ever donated money to a political party. Such passiveness apparently relates not just to the level of public welfare in society and the increasing income disparities, but also to a very low level of trust in political parties. People have a dim view of party activity and there is a widespread impression about the insufficient sense of political responsibility of parties. The database of the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (KNAB) shows that in most cases, parties receive the majority of their financing via major donations. This once again confirms the plutocratic financing model of Latvian parties. It also points to the gravitational strength of economic interests when it comes to relations with politicians.

This model of gravitation is in violation to widespread normative concepts about political responsibility, and this generates alienation and dissatisfaction with the situation. That does not, however, give ground for a claim that politicians are absolutely irresponsible. Instead, they simply represent the interests of their financial supporters more intensively. In a democratic regime, where each citizen has only one voice, this strategy among politicians can prove to be risky on election day for purely mathematical reasons. There is a high correlation between campaign

spending and the number of votes that are received (Roper and Ikstens 2008, 58). This means that a certain amount of financial resources will compensate for irresponsible political actions, at least insofar as the broader (and disorganized) public is concerned. This largely becomes possible thanks to the fact that the people of Latvia have insufficient interest in politics.

If we look at the history of Latvia since the restoration of independence, we can count the number of instances in which politicians have resigned from jobs after recognizing mistakes made by their subordinates or recognizing that there is a conflict of opinion with colleagues. Alas, these incidents can be counted on the fingers of one hand – the resignation of Interior Minister Ģirts Kristovskis after a mass prison breakout in 1994, the resignation of Health Minister Ivars Eglītis in 2009 because of his refusal to accept government policies vis-à-vis health care financing, etc. There have been other resignations that have been pushed forward by the media – the resignation of Electronic Affairs Minister Ina Gudele in 2008 after a scandal involving the spending of ministry money for her birthday party.

At the same time, there has been vast publicity about those politicians who have not acted responsibly. One of the most scandalous affairs was the so-called Jūrmalagate affair, in which an attempt was made to bribe a member of the Jūrmala City Council so as to elect the «right» mayor of the city in 2005 (see Box 2.2). Despite unquestionable evidence, politicians who were involved in this process not only actively denied their participation, but also did not see any reason to resign from their jobs, at least during the period of the investigation. They delegated the entire evaluation process to law enforcement institutions. What is more, one of the participants in the scandal – Ainārs Šlesers – actively continued his political career after the court ruling in the bribery case took effect. In 2009, he did well in Riga City Council elections. This illustrates more than just the fact that some politicians in Latvia are increasingly relying on the courts when it comes to ethical issues and the inability to accept classical principles of political responsibility. It also demonstrates the short-lived memory and moral vacuum which exist in society – things which shape the environment in which the country's politicians operate.

At the same time, however, it would not be proper to place all of the blame for the weaknesses of «conventional» political responsibilities in Latvia on the shoulders of average citizens. Studies have clearly shown a deep ethnic gap in Latvia, and the behaviour of voters depends very much on their ethnicity (Ikstens 2005). This has created a situation in which the decision of voters to support a certain party is affected in *de facto terms* by the support which the relevant party has stated in terms of defending the interests of the relevant ethnic group. Opportunities for manoeuvre are narrowed here. What's more, parties have not been shy about using these considerations in their campaigns. Some openly use ethnicity as a cornerstone for a campaign, all but arguing that a vote for a party from the other ethnic group would represent ethnic betrayal. Other parties use this factor to encourage citizens who are disappointed in politics to cast votes in elections so that parties on «the other side» do not gain disproportionately

large influence. This is done regardless of the fact that many of these parties do not always act particularly responsibly in politics themselves. That was seen once again in the local government campaign of 2009. Several parties emphasized the idea of «voting for your own kind of people.»

There is an institutional nuance in this ethnic factor and its effects. A 5% vote barrier allows larger parties which overcome the barrier to receive some of the support which voters have given to the parties which have failed to do so. That happens when seats in the relevant legislative body are distributed. This is a nuance which has been noticed by citizens and political parties, among which the more popular ones tend to hint that it is pointless to vote for those who cannot overcome the vote threshold, because that would mean «losing» the citizens' vote. It is no surprise that parties look at elections in a distinctly pragmatic way, not taking into account the symbolic importance of the vote. Still, this instrumentalism sometimes is merged with the argument that the other ethnic group will gain benefits if people vote for tiny parties. This suggests that political accountability has become a hostage of the discourse about ethnic issues that is accepted by politicians and a large segment of the population.

This radical gap between Latvian and Eastern Slavic parties and the low likelihood that the Eastern Slavic parties might join a coalition (in the sense meant by Sartori) relate to another problem with political accountability, particularly at the level of parliament. The proportion of MPs from Eastern Slavic parties has increased steadily ever since 1995 – reaching a level of 25% in all. This has led to a smaller opportunity to shape a coalition of Latvian parties that differ in any fundamental way. Each new coalition has at least two parties that were members of the previous coalition and should be held responsible for what that coalition did. The limited opportunities for manoeuvre allow Latvian parties in the Saeima to believe that they are irreplaceable, and the stronger this belief is, the more careless is the approach toward programmatic positions or the need to keep promises that have been made during election campaigns. What's more, the belief of being irreplaceable seems to be more distinct among those parliamentary parties that are larger and more moderate in ideological terms (the ZZS, for instance). Here we find something of a paradox – the fact that membership in the parliament is rather fragmented in terms of parties and factions has a certain positive role to play, because a larger number of potential coalition partners can reduce the sense of being irreplaceable and the behaviours which derive from this sense. On the other hand, there have been considerable similarities in the coalitions that have been put together by various prime ministers, and that has led many people in Latvia to become bemused. People who are less interested in politics doubt whether there are any real programmatic or operational differences among the various parties. This certainly does not encourage greater interest in politics, and it also leads to scepticism about various instruments that are supposed to ensure political accountability.

The existence of coalition governments as such is another factor that has a negative effect on the principle

of political accountability. Such composite structures are the result of political compromises, and each partner in the coalition may find it very difficult to pursue their programmatic thinking or to keep the promises that they have made during election campaigns. The opposition of coalition partners can be used to explain the things which a party has not achieved while it has been a member of a governing coalition. The parties that assemble Latvia's government are supposed to take joint responsibility for the decisions that are taken by the Cabinet of Ministers, but in practice, this doesn't happen much. When there are differences of opinion among the ministries and institutions that are governed by the various parties, these disputes are often handled via the mass media. There is no immediately identifiable empirical basis for the claim that voters can precisely differentiate among and evaluate the individual achievements of coalition partners. What's more, coalitions are sometimes put together with the cunning of highly qualified lawyers – something that makes the political process far less transparent. A vivid example of this phenomenon was the coalition which supported Jānis Birks for the position of mayor of Riga in 2007-2009. The previous mayor, Aivars Aksenoks (JL) was sacked and Jānis Birks (TB/LNNK) was elected only because of the support of Eastern Slavic parties. Because TB/LNNK could not work directly with SC for programmatic reasons, a Jesuit-type structure was installed instead. It provided for an individual partnership agreement between SC and one of the coalition parties – the Latvian Social Democratic Workers Party. This provided the support of SC representatives on the City Council, while allowing other partners in the coalition to claim in public that SC was not part of the coalition (which in formally legal terms could be argued).

Another set of factors which have an increasingly important influence on political accountability or the lack thereof relates to globalization and Latvia's integration into international institutions. Obligations related to EU membership, for instance, can help politicians make excuses about what they're doing and seek to place responsibility in transnational institutions. The political biography of former Agriculture Minister Mārtiņš Roze offers a good illustration of this problem. When Latvia's economic crisis began, politicians were very active in blaming the global financial crisis while totally ignoring what they themselves had done to ensure that the crisis would be very serious in Latvia. Only some of the people who were secondary players ever apologized, and that happened only in June 2009 at the insistence of Latvian President Valdis Zatlers.

Conclusions

«Political accountability» is a concept which has taken on a very negative meaning in Latvia, and on an everyday basis, it is seldom used to discuss ways in which politicians have explained their work to the public at large or taken responsibility for what they have done. Instead, the concept is used as a euphemism for a lack of responsibility. There are several mechanisms in Latvia which are supposed to ensure the accountability of politicians, and some of them are all but unique at the global level (i.e., the direct right of the people of Latvia to vote in favour of a

snap election). These mechanisms have not been brought to bear to a sufficient degree, however, and this is largely true because of weak public interest in politics, little in the way of political participation (except for elections), a low level of self-organization in political terms, scepticism that the average citizen has any political influence at all, alienation from the state, the flourishing of the consumer society, and changes in media usage habits. All of this points to another dimension in political accountability – the responsibility of citizens to ensure the governance of society. This is something which clearly emanates from the essence of democracy, and it is clearly visible in the antique model thereof.

Insufficient civic responsibility has weakened links between the political elite and the rest of society, and given the effects of election campaigns on voting results, as well as the increasing importance of financial resources

in the battle over power, it is quite logical that the political elite's accountability to (narrow) economic interests has become stronger. At the same time, however, there is no reason to claim that the ability of parties to represent the views of their voters is negligible. There has been a moral collapse among the political elite, as seen in the much more common fact of irresponsible decisions, but there are a number of other factors that affect the ability of the elite to ensure political accountability – the distinct ethnic gap in Latvian politics, the fact that all governments in Latvia are coalition governments, globalization, and the fact that Latvia is involved in international organizations. Still, there are many examples to show that political accountability before the public is possible in Latvia thanks to mass media pressure or the use of institutional mechanisms that require a high level of motivation, as well as certain knowledge and skills.

Box
2.3

Greatest Achievements, Most Serious Problems, Most Important Tasks

Greatest Achievement

The greatest achievement in ensuring political accountability is the range of institutional opportunities for public participation aimed at ensuring that politicians are responsible in what they do. These opportunities were, in part, enshrined in Latvia's 1922 Constitution. Changing times and public pressure have led to an expansion and deepening of these factors ever since the restoration of Latvia's independence in 1991.

Most Serious Problems

Among the most serious problems in Latvia is the fact that the people of the country engage in political participation only in reaction to something specific, but they do not make sufficient use of the institutional opportunities that are given to them in terms of dealing with everyday political decision-making. There is politicization that is based on the ethnic gap, allowing politicians on both sides of the gap to encourage voters directly or indirectly to do strategic things which often are a smokescreen to hide the lack of political responsibility. Politicians gravitate toward narrow economic interests, and these are often in contradiction to the public interest. This causes further alienation between the political elite and the rest of the country's residents.

Most Important Tasks

One way to strengthen political accountability would be to return to the three-year term in office of MPs, as was enshrined in the 1922 Constitution. There should also be improvements to campaign regulations to reduce the influence of financial resources on election results.

Administrative Accountability

Iveta Reinholde

The last twenty years in the development of public administration¹ are noteworthy with the appearance of criticism against the actions, ethics, responsibility and accountability of public administration, as well as the pursuit of new approaches. The transition to democracy in Latvia and the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe raised great hopes for the improvement of governance. Administrative accountability depends on the traditions of the administrative apparatus, as well as political culture, economic models and public values. Furthermore, in times of economic trouble there is a necessity to review state expenditures. In this context, collective accountability implies that the public administration should take the initiative and act according to public expectations, while individual accountability means that the actions of every individual bureaucrat are subjected to evaluation.

The essence of administrative responsibility is simple – making bureaucrats do a better job by creating conditions where they act taking into account public demands in full awareness of the consequences of their actions. Of course, public demands reflect the interests of many social groups and are often contradictory. Ideally, the bureaucrat is able to act in a way that achieves the most satisfying solution for the public in general and not just a certain social group.

In analyzing responsibility and accountability one can distinguish two sides – the subject of responsibility (the bureaucrat, public administration) is accountable toward the object of responsibility (society, politicians, the law). Furthermore, the object of responsibility usually has the right to demand further explanations concerning the subject's irresponsible or inadequate actions, and if necessary, apply sanctions. This system can fully function only if both sides are aware of their roles. Furthermore, administrative responsibility is a much broader concept than administrative accountability. Administrative accountability is connected with those areas of a bureaucrat's activity that are laid out and defined in laws and regulations and include formalized forms of control – reports, explanations and official summaries. Accountability is like a well worked out and functionally important mechanism, which is lacking fulfilment in terms of content and values, but these are contained in administrative responsibility. Administrative responsibility foresees a person's individual sense of obligation and a moral necessity to provide an explanation and justification for one's actions. The bureaucrat's behaviour reflects values and standards, as well as public expectations (Wood

and Winston 2005, 86; Dubnick 2003). Responsibility encompasses striving toward increasingly higher ethical standards.

Administrative responsibility and accountability are not a monolithic phenomenon – it is possible to differentiate several important and mutually intertwined aspects. Box 2.4 displays the different dimensions of administrative accountability. The horizontal axis «bureaucrat – public administration» shows to what degree the bureaucrat's individual accountability appears in the respective accountability dimension, and to what degree responsibility must be assumed by public administration as a collective formation. The vertical axis – «politician – client, inhabitant, society» shows various characterizations of the object of accountability i.e. who is entitled to demand an explanation from the bureaucrat and the public administration for inadequate action.

The accountability of public administration toward society must be analyzed from two aspects. First, when speaking of accountability toward the public, we mean the public as the entire nation's population and the realization of public interests. The second aspect is the accountability of institutions and officials toward different groups of society, which are directly influenced by the respective institution's actions, decisions and the consequences of these decisions. For instance, a municipality's accountability toward the population of this municipality can manifest itself as the population's satisfaction or discontent with the municipal administration's actions, or through assessments of the quality of life within the municipality. Public opinion surveys show that satisfaction with the quality of life is higher in the different regions of Latvia than in Riga (APST 2007-2008, 53). A look at the cities that were evaluated shows negative ratings for Riga (8% satisfied respondents), Jūrmala (10%), Rēzekne (12%), and positive ratings for Madona (79%), Aizkraukle (77%) and Līvāni (74%) (APST 2007-2008, 176). Although a population's satisfaction with the quality of life in a certain city depends on the city's current problems, the local business, cultural and educational environments, a municipality has rather broad possibilities for influencing problem solving and accessibility to services. Thus, one can conclude that a local municipality's accountability toward its population is less related to the municipality's prosperity, prestige or power, but has more to do with a municipal administration's ability, desire and capability to react to public needs – by ensuring accessibility to services and information and enabling the public to take part in the decision-making process and resolving problems.

The accountability of a public administration is well displayed by trust in the public administration. Unfortunately, trust in public administration has been low in

¹ Hereafter the term «public administration» includes the central, regional and local levels of administration.

Latvia since the renewal of independence, and all in all, has now reached a critical level. At the beginning of 2007 only 20% of respondents trusted the executive branch. In fall of 2006 more respondents trusted the executive – 32%, and back then this indicator was significantly higher than average in the EU-25 countries (EC 2007, 3; EC 2006, 3). In 2008 only 15-16% of respondents trusted the executive (EC 2008a; EC 2008 b). This data demonstrates the public's general perception of the combined work and actions of the Cabinet of Ministers, civil service and municipalities, which in the public's view do not comply with public expectations and society's perception of a responsible fulfilment of obligations. At the same time, public trust of the executive is connected with politicians' attitudes toward public administration. When politicians accuse public administration of incompetence and the inability to implement policy, this increases distrust of the public administration as well as the politicians. If the politicians accuse the bureaucrats in such a belligerent manner, then the public becomes suspicious of the grounds for this action – the bureaucrats' counteraction against the politicians' interests. By accusing the bureaucrats, do the politicians wish to improve their own ratings, or are the bureaucrats truly being incompetent and negligent?

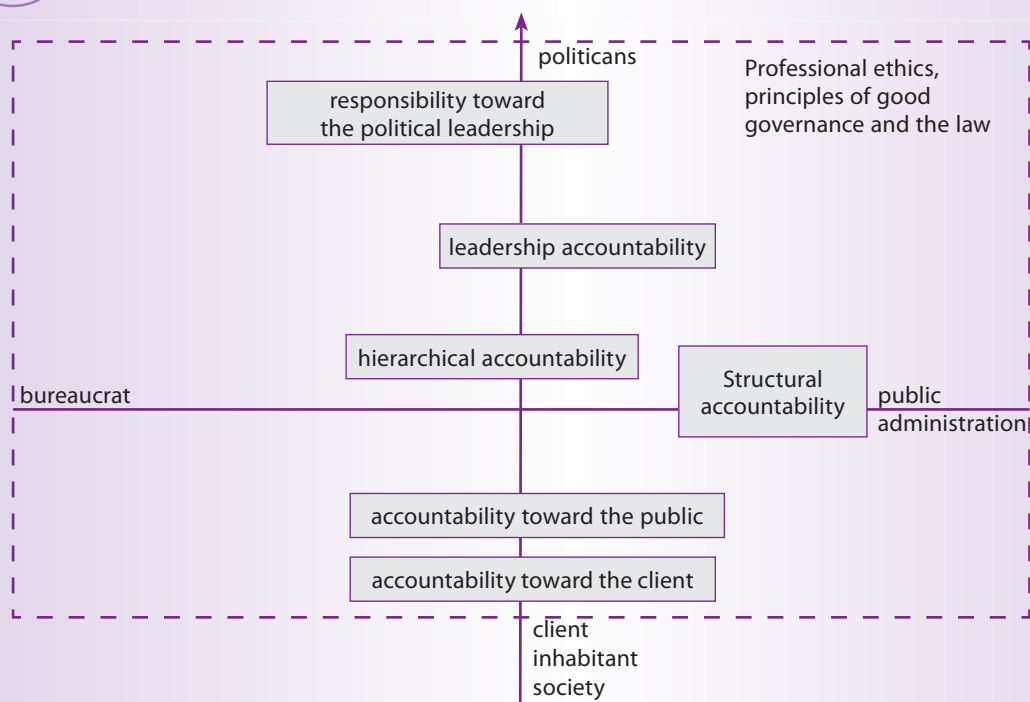
From the previous regime society has inherited the historical division – «we – society, the people» and «they – bureaucrats and politicians,» where public administration and politicians were invulnerable, and mechanisms of accountability concerning public administration

did not work. This division attests to the public's lack of understanding about the role of bureaucrats and politicians in society, and demonstrates ignorance concerning the public's rights in the policy process. Although social and public interests are rather abstract concepts, when developing long-term, medium-term and short-term strategies, action plans and legislation, most often public administrators are those who project in these plans their own perception of what the public needs now and what will be needed in several years. Thus, it is important that new policies are formed following comprehensive research, and not only because political equilibrium must be ensured in the government and thus a minister's post is needed – and then for this minister a specific policy area is selected or demarcated, for which narrowly specialized agencies are created so that this specific policy area can be implemented. In principle, there would be no objections to this practice if only the selected or specially prioritized policy area were not artificially detached from other issues that are fundamentally related to this area. For instance, children's and family issues were artificially removed from the welfare system. New agencies were created, which partly duplicated the work of already existing agencies.

In general, the prevailing public opinion is that neither politicians nor bureaucrats take into account public interests. Public opinion surveys indicate that in observing public interests politicians and bureaucrats receive mostly low ratings – on a ten-point scale the dominant ratings are from 2 to 5. This is the opinion of 56.6% respondents

Box
2.4

Correlations between the Dimensions of Administrative Accountability



Source: Lawton and Rose 1991; Peters 1995; Weber 1999; Thomas 2002.

(a rating of «2» was given by 11.7%, «3» – 16.3%, «4» – 14.2%, and «5» – 14.4% of respondents) (SKDS 2008, T 21). Data from public opinion polls reveal that with an average public rating of 3.6, in the view of the public, politicians and bureaucrats are not capable of defining and understanding or acting in accordance with public interests. This data also partly explains the inability of the politicians and bureaucrats to define a long-term national development model.

The low ratings are connected with inadequate and insufficient explanations of administrative decisions. Presently, laws and regulations are available on the Internet; ministries and a large portion of the subordinate institutions have homepages where explanations are offered concerning the agency's functions, offered services and information about the branch in general. Also, within the homepage of the Cabinet of Ministers, anyone can follow along on the Internet the process of legislation, starting with State secretary meetings and ending with ratification at the Cabinet of Ministers. Still, an important deficiency is inadequate substantiation for the reason why the legislation in question is necessary. One must point out that on the homepage of the Cabinet of Ministers one can follow legislative proposals on a national level, while administrative decision-making at agencies and municipalities is not such an open process, and here the public is not given adequately clear argumentation concerning the necessity or justification for a given decision.

Accountability Vis-à-vis the Law

This dimension of accountability can be identified relatively easily – society is fairly quick when it comes to detecting an infringement of the law or even suspicions thereof. At the same time, accountability vis-à-vis the law is a complicated form of responsibility. Here an individual's personal conviction of the law's justness overlaps with an official's potential interpretations of the law, and this intertwines with society's values and common attitudes toward the law.

Not abiding by the law leads to certain consequences for the individual – punishment. The individual often feels that the punishment that follows a violation of the law is too harsh or even unjust. A wave of disappointment sometimes also surges over the public when a sentence imposed by the court seems too harsh or too mild. Therefore, it is especially important that officials provide explanations for their decisions. A full understanding of accountability vis-à-vis the law is not possible if it remains undisclosed to what extent a person (an individual or a State official) is able to comprehend and separate «the spirit of the law» and «the letter of the law.» The letter of the law reflects what is written in the law, but after analyzing the law through a prism of values, one may discover a purpose for which the law was created or what the law should change in society. Furthermore, coexistence of the letter of the law with the spirit of the law or values is extremely important from the viewpoint of public legal awareness and democratic development. Values and ethics reinforce rules and

regulations as a whole and these can be viewed as a sign of official virtue.

In a public survey in Latvia in 2008 the respondents were asked: «To what extent, in your opinion, do public administration officials (at the ministries and municipalities) fulfil their obligations vis-à-vis the law (i.e. the spirit of the law, not the letter of the law)?» The responses received showed that more than half the respondents (56.8%) gave a rating between 3 and 6 on a scale of 10 («3» – 15.3%, «4» – 13.3%, «5» – 17.1% and «6» – 11.1%) (SKDS 2008, T 20). The average rating received by the public administration official – 4.31 – is a very poor result. A schoolchild who is given a 4 is characterized as someone who has mastered the main issues, can differentiate between what is insignificant and important, and who uses traditional methods of inquiry when following the teacher's instructions. By applying this evaluation to public administration officials, one can conclude that they use traditional and tried methods in their work, and when carrying out the instructions of their superiors, they strictly follow the written law and do not think beyond to the law's true meaning and essence. In this context one must ask whether a bureaucrat can violate the law insignificantly, in order to meet the law's purpose and not endanger the public interest? Actually, this is an irresolvable dilemma – on one hand, there can be no significant or insignificant violations of the law – the law must be obeyed. On the other hand, the bureaucrat may end up at an ethical crossroads where it is necessary to help an individual, but the law prescribes something else.

The legislative framework is based on defining punishments, coercion and certain requirements. Over the past years the Latvian administrative apparatus has been geared to improving the legislative framework. An attempt was made to fully upgrade the laws and regulations that define an agency's or official's expertise. On the one hand, this approach means strict and precise regulation of the actions of an agency or official. On the other hand, it diminishes flexibility and initiative in resolving non-standard, complex, interdepartmental situations. For instance, for a long time the ministries of Economics and Agriculture were unable to reach agreement on the division of expertise concerning biofuel. Each agency referred to a lack of regulations, until in December 2008 the Cabinet of Ministers defined a division of functions. Similarly, laws and regulations define what knowledge, skills and attitudes are necessary for an official to be able to work at a public administration agency. However, if knowledge and skills can be measured on an objective scale – it is very difficult to measure attitudes.

Equally importantly, the accountability of public administration is affected by its ability to work in accordance with the law, in the public interest, and in observance of ethical norms. In the eyes of the public, over the past years there has been a drop in the legitimacy and effectiveness of the public administration. Surveys from 2004 and 2008 show a growing tendency of viewing public administration workers as unprofessional. In 2004 34.2% (BISS 2005, 215) of respondents felt that public administration officials were incompetent

and their actions were ineffective; in 2008 this opinion was held already by 40.6% respondents (SKDS 2008, T 22). This marks a peculiar and dangerous tendency – immense distrust of executive power and the increasingly widespread viewpoint that public administration is ineffective and incompetent. This dangerous tendency can be a serious threat to policy implementation – when the population refuses to accept policy and fulfil required obligations regardless of the policy's quality and the public administration's work. This, furthermore, fosters an increase in control on the side of the public administration, and thus creates a spiral of distrust and control that can be broken only through the initiative of the public administration and the politicians.

Any corruption scandal, large or small, evokes discussions concerning **professional ethics**. These discussions are particularly acute in situations when the scandal involves officials, lawyers, judges, physicians or teachers, i.e. representatives of important professions who are publicly visible. Politicians remain behind the scenes, as a politician is not only a profession and an occupation, but also a calling and a mission. The ethics issue is not publicly debated concerning the representatives of many professions. If a professional works in the private sector, his or her ethical or unethical actions affect chiefly that individual's income and career growth. Regulated professions in Latvia include architects, structural engineers, pharmacists, veterinarians, certified land surveyors, real estate appraisers, tourist guides, and professions in the branches of freight forwarding, seafaring and aviation.² In order to work in a regulated profession, the main requirement is to meet certain qualifications, and not the observance of a professional code of ethics, which is simply an extra condition (LR Saeima 2001). People in the aforementioned professions work principally in the private sector. Thus, one could say that the free market and

competition are the solution to a professional's unethical actions. As a result of unethical actions, a professional will lose clientele, and accordingly, income. However, underrating the significance of professional ethics can strongly impact the industry in question as well as society in general.

From an administrative viewpoint, the professional ethics of officials must also be evaluated. Less important are the divisions defined by the law – employee of a State-level administrative institution, municipal employee or official. More important is the fact that any employee of a state or municipal agency must observe a united body of ethical norms. Professional values (i.e. ethics) and the process of professional socialization are the two most important factors that determine the formation of responsibility and accountability (DeLeon 2003, 574). Although an official is not defined as a regulated profession, in truth, the work of officials as a whole can be considered a regulated profession as professional ethics is a very important aspect for officials as well. The Latvian Cabinet of Ministers Instruction No. 1 «An Official's Principles of Behaviour» (Jan 9, 2001) is actually a code of ethics for officials in the civil service. Codes of ethics exist for separate agencies (e.g. the ministries of Education and Science, the Anti-Corruption Bureau, the State Revenue Service, the State Police, the Ministry of Agriculture, etc.) and even for separate branches. However, an official code of ethics still does not mean that an agency or branch will provide quality work that is effective. Experience shows that codes of ethics often are declarative and formal in character. Even when discrepancies have been ascertained in an employee's behaviour, the subsequent punishment is just as declarative as the code of ethics. Often, disciplinary sanctions are imposed when an official has committed a violation. Thus, for instance, misconduct toward another person when on duty or indecent and disrespectful behaviour when off duty are the same kinds of disciplinary offences as the misuse of state secrets or

² For the full list of regulated professions, see LR MK 2006.

Box
2.5

Ethics, Strawberries and Gifts

The State Audit Office conducted an audit at the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and ascertained the following: on June 20, 2008, the MES held a Midsummer celebration at the War Museum for the employees of the ministry and subordinate agencies. To ensure a successful event, strawberries (a total of 9 kg at 9 LVL per kilo) and *Jāņi* cheese (5 kg at 18 LVL per kilo) were purchased.

November 25, 2008, the Cabinet of Ministers decided that agencies must minimize administrative expenses and must refrain from organizing year-end festivities with State budget resources. In accordance with the report from the State Audit Office, precisely on November 25-27, 2008, the MES signed an agreement concerning the procurement of representation items (USB memory sticks, clocks, notepads, umbrellas, business-card cases and key-chains).

The Latvian Cabinet of Ministers Instruction No. 1 «An Official's Principles of Behaviour» states that an official must behave in a way that will foster public trust in public administration; the MES code of ethics states that when fulfilling one's obligations, a ministry employee must be honourable and make decisions that are in the public's and the State's interests. In the context of the aforementioned facts, it is doubtful whether with their actions the MES officials fostered public trust and whether they acted honourably concerning the compliance of their decisions to the interests of the public and the State.

Source: LR VK 2009; Diena 2009; LR MK 2008b; LR MK 2001; MR IZM 2009.

the violation of defence regulations, other unauthorized divulgement of law-protected information, malfeasance, the loss or damage of property or the loss of money (LR Saeima 2006 a). Admittedly, the punishments for these violations are somewhat differentiated.

The Law on the State Civil Service specifies an official's values – loyalty to the government, professionalism, political neutrality; the Law Governing Public Administration notes lawfulness, openness, effectiveness and accessibility (LR Saeima 2000b; LR Saeima 2002b). The Law Governing Public Administration also precisely defines the working principles of public administration – acting in the public interest, good administration and effectiveness. However, Latvia's biggest problem is that ethical values are encompassed in the laws, but they do not take root in real life, and rarely are any sanctions imposed against violations of these values.

When analyzing the **public administration's accountability toward the political leadership** one must examine to what extent politicians can, are able to and want to supervise officials, and not rely just on one criteria – how well do public administration decisions and the behaviour of the officials correspond to political demands (Weber 1999, 454). Administrative accountability is part of the system of democratic legitimacy. Public administration enforces and implements the resolutions of politicians. It is not possible to review administrative accountability separately from political accountability. Only by analyzing both types of accountability together can we reach general conclusions concerning the extent to which the administration becomes more accountable to the public during the process of democratic development. In modern society there is a so-called dual or even a triple state of accountability, i.e. the public administration is responsible toward all of society, separate individuals-clients, and toward the political decision-makers.

The Latvian Parliament does not subject to scrutiny the public administration's operations, and the Parliament's interest regarding public administration is confined to endorsement of a new government, where the political parties have previously agreed upon a division of ministers' portfolios, different ministries and sectors. The instruments prescribed by the parliamentary rules of procedure – questions and requests – are used quite rarely. In the fall session of 2008 the members of the Saeima submitted six requests and posed sixty questions to the Cabinet of Ministers (LR Saeima 2008b). During the spring session of 2008 the members of the Saeima displayed even less interest with three requests and eighteen questions. This means that the members of the Saeima have little interest about public administration processes. Furthermore, the public administration can justify its incompetence with inconsistent political and government priorities, as the work of public administration is subordinated to the government's declaration.

Accountability toward the client is a relatively new dimension of public administration accountability, and it can be linked to the implementation of private sector management methods in public administration. The term «client» has been introduced in the public sector relatively recently. In essence, this dimension of account-

ability must be viewed as part of accountability vis-à-vis the public. Only in this dimension is there special emphasis on an agency's responsibility toward the inhabitants and those groups of society that receive services from the agency in question. Undoubtedly, the term «client» that has been adopted from the private sector determines that the relationship between the agency and the client will be regulated in a manner that is characteristic of the private sector. In other words, with his or her attitude a client should be able to determine the quality level of an agency's work and services and the volume of rendered services. Still, the use of the term «client» also presents a problem – in the private sector the quality of services is greatly affected by the client's ability to choose a service provider, and this is almost impossible in the public sector. The client has no possibility of comparing the quality of received services with the quality of another agency's offered services, or this comparison is possible only in rare cases. For example, one can compare the activities of a municipal office with those of a regional branch of the central administrative level. As a result, the client actually has no possibility of influencing the quality level and volume of needed services, and he or she must rely upon the officials' professionalism and ethics. Thus, the term «client» in public administration refers to a process of rendering services where the basic values are courtesy, competence, reliability, integrity and the clarification of information (Löffler 2001, 9-10). For instance, a visitor as the client of an agency is not competent to judge how much time is needed to issue a document, which involves the preparation of the document and verifying the accuracy of the data. The employee of the agency must prepare the requested document and must also explain why the accuracy of the data must be verified.

In the public sector accountability concerning demeanour toward the client is connected with an agency's personalized relations with those groups of society that use the services of the agency in question. In September 1999 SKDS conducted a survey and posed the question: «*In general, how do you rate the work of state agencies?*» The responses indicate a peculiar tendency: about 44.5% of respondents gave a negative rating for work carried out by state agencies, and 18.6% had difficulty formulating their rating (SKDS 1999). In 2008 the civil service once again was rated as incompetent – this was the opinion of 40.6% respondents (SKDS 2008, T 22). One can assume that the population has come to its ratings of state agencies based on personal experience and contact with a certain state agency.

Here it should be noted that accountability toward the client can be rated in a very contradictory manner. Accountability can compel an agency to work in a way to achieve a client's or client group's maximum satisfaction, but at the same time the public interest may be jeopardized. For instance, a situation like this could arise if agencies that provide social assistance were to provide assistance to anyone without assessing the visitor's actual needs. Possibly, in this case, assistance would be received by the most active and best informed inhabitants and not by those who are socially least protected.

Hierarchical Accountability and the Responsibility of Leaders

The Law Governing Public Administration states that a hierarchy exists among officials and individual agencies (LR Saeima 2002b). An indivisible component of the hierarchical system is a superior's supervision of his or her subordinates, which is considered a sufficiently effective and stable mechanism of accountability. Unfortunately, this is deceptive, as a hierarchical system creates a peculiar form of collective accountability. In this case, an official who has made an unsound decision or who has prepared an inaccurate document has the chance to evade responsibility for the incident and protect him or herself from moral self-reproach by asserting that the decision was made and the document issued by everyone working in the system. As a result, there is collective accountability, and it is assumed that everyone working in the system is responsible, but in reality no one is responsible. In practice hierarchical accountability is clearly visible in the system of document endorsement – in order to issue a document, it is prepared in two copies. One copy goes to the addressee, and the other is signed by various officials at the agency who thus certify that they are familiar with the content and accept responsibility for the document. The time-consuming signature system works as long as there are no problems. Any problems immediately lead to discussions and internal inquiries to find whoever is responsible for the inadequate document – the person who prepared the document (usually a subordinate official) or superiors who have acknowledged their responsibility for the document with a signature. The effectiveness of hierarchical accountability is very difficult to measure. Furthermore, the tendency is to consider each official individually responsible for his or her actions. In this case, it is of essential importance for the official to know that he or she can be punished for fulfilling obligations inadequately.

According to the Law on Disciplinary Responsibility of Civil Servants the head of an agency is the public official who must ensure monitoring of subordinate public officials by motivating them to do their job and, if necessary, by punishing them. An important issue is whether an official is punished for a violation per se or, on the contrary – the lawful right to punish is used to get rid of «undesirable» or «bothersome» officials. And what should the head of a public agency do with those employees who are not civil servants in the official sense? In principle, the issue here is the **accountability of the manager of a public agency**; basically, the top official is responsible for the operation of the agency. Thus, it is less important to differentiate in a judicial sense between «civil servants» and «employees» of the public agency. More important is the fact that any employee at a central level or municipal agency is a public servant. The existing division in legislation between a «state civil servant» and an «employee of a State or municipal agency» has lost its initial meaning, and it would be logical if the requirements that are applied to state civil servants would be applied to employees of state public administration and municipal agencies. This approach would foster the formation of a united public

administration identity and would put an end to mutual accusations of incompetence, incorrect policy-making and budget appropriation between state-level public administration and municipal agencies.

Public administration structural accountability includes mutual accountability between the different levels of administration (central level and municipal), accountability between agencies of one level in various sectors (e.g. food distribution inspections), mutual accountability among agencies of one level or sector regarding policy implementation (the Ministry of Health, the Health Compulsory Insurance State Agency, hospitals and family doctors are all responsible for health policy implementation) and accountability for administrative solutions for problems between different sectors. From the perspective of policy implementation, the structural accountability dimension is very important. Only with the existence of mutual accountability between the different administration levels is it possible to ensure public policy implementation and reach designated goals. In this case, the central point of discussion is cooperation and coordination between central and local administrative levels. The goal of cooperation is to improve in general the implementation of public policy and also ensure the availability of services as close as possible to the members of the population. In the EU White Paper on «European Governance» (EC 2001) coordination is one of the basic principles geared toward cooperation between the different administrative levels. In the context of the EU White Paper and in terms of mutual responsibility between administrative levels, in Latvia the central administrative level and the municipalities must change their mutual approach from competitive to coordinated action, where the main objective on a public official level would be to refrain from reciprocal reproaches concerning an unjust division of functions and unfair budgeting.

Responsibility for administrative solutions to complex problems between sectors must be linked to the impact of globalization. As a result of globalization, people are confronted with new, complex problems where solutions can be found only through the involvement of agencies from different sectors. Problems of this kind are on the rise. For instance, a migrant worker is not merely a problem for the business community or the State Employment Agency. The migrant worker could become ill (the healthcare system), the migrant worker might want to study (the education system), or the migrant worker can get mugged on the street (the law enforcement system). Coordination problems may also arise between different sectors on a policy level – e.g. Latvia's indecisiveness in resolving administrative coordination issues concerning bio-energy and renewable energy – the failure to decide which ministry should assume the leading role – the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Economics, the Ministry of the Environment or the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government.

The observance of public interests is clearly visible when viewing the process of how new policy initiatives take shape – events, projects and activities that are encompassed in government-supported planning documents and laws and regulations, which need funding

for implementation. To some extent, new policy initiatives should attempt to solve cross-sector problems. The new policy initiatives in Latvia appeared only in 2007 – it is not yet possible to evaluate fully the effect of this innovation. However, it is doubtful whether the new policies will truly force the ministries as policy-makers to resolve the problems between the sectors, as the assessment criteria for new policy initiatives do not mention the need for a cross-sectoral approach (LR MK 2007).

Summary

According to the European Union and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), public involvement in policy formation is a precondition

for good administration and administrative accountability. The bearer and claimant of accountability need to be aware of their role in the system. The chief claimants are the general public and any individual. Laws and regulations provide the individual with the right to judicial review of administrative provisions adopted by the public administration. There have been no other real sanctions or reactions against public administration from the general public as the claimant of administrative accountability. This has allowed the public administration to work as an isolated guild that protects the interests of its members but which lacks self-regulation and ethical principles. This is important – by inflicting disciplinary punishment upon an official, the official does not automatically change from a bad to a good official.

Box
2.6

Greatest Achievements, Most Serious Problems, Most Important Tasks

Greatest Achievement

The laws, regulations and policy documents of the Republic of Latvia contain the minimum conditions necessary to put accountability into practice in the public administration. Moreover, under the influence of economic restructuring, the public has begun to be aware of the importance of administrative accountability in development processes.

Most Serious Problem

The existing accountability mechanisms are geared toward public administration as a whole and not toward the individual official. This allows the official to evade accountability for the consequences of past actions and permits the official not to change his or her work customs and habits. Furthermore, the ethical regulations currently in use (codes of ethics, principles of behaviour) have not been put into practice. This means that the public administration as a whole is stagnating in the phase «accountability – sanctions,» and not striving toward accountability as a moral necessity. Thus, not using ethical regulation in practice is one of the most serious problems on the path to accountability.

Most Important Tasks

- In order to ensure a reaction from the public and real sanctions against the public administration, more attention needs to be given to the accessibility of information and elucidation of the motivation for adopted resolutions.
- In order to react to the challenges of globalization and the problems resulting from these challenges, it would be advisable to create a new mechanism for administrative coordination between the agencies that would be based on principles of accountability and good governance.
- Increased accountability on the level of the individual official, as well as ethical behaviour and compliance with ethical regulations in the official's work performance must become equal conditions in assessing an action's compliance with laws and regulations.

Responsibility and Accountability in Budget Planning

Andrejs Jakobsons

From a conceptual viewpoint, responsibility in the context of creating a budget has several important meanings. The broadest meaning is associated with the dialogue that takes place between the public and the planners of government expenditures, until both sides reach a spending plan that is acceptable for achieving public goals. In this case, the concept of accountability is a characterization of whether the resources that are at public disposal will be used wisely and in accordance with the public interest. In this process the procedure of defining these interests and goals is of utmost importance – a solution imposed by budget planners without dialogue could significantly hinder the other side's interest in supporting implementation of the budget.

The closely related concept «accountability» is linked with the transparency of budget planning, its judicial regulation and control and public involvement in this process. It is even more important to assess whether members of society feel involved in the government expenditure planning process and trust it. This chapter will pay more attention to the concept of responsibility linked with the relations between decision-makers and the public in budget planning, implementation, and evaluation of achieved goals. Greater focus will be placed on the time period after 2000, which marked the beginning of rapid growth in the Latvian economy. Consequently, the volume of resources that flowed into the budget increased, thus providing greater meaning to the discussion of sensible use of resources. Issues that are connected to the second concept, i.e. accountability, will be examined only in context with the concept of «responsibility.»

Short-term and Long-term Aspects of Responsibility

During a crisis it is easiest to ascertain to what extent we have planned our budget sensibly and whether we have taken into account our long-term priorities. A crisis situation usually leads to a critical evaluation of decisions that have been made over the past years. In Latvia the growth of government revenues and expenditures was very rapid from 2000 until 2007.

From a macroeconomic viewpoint responsibility for planning and implementing the state budget could be formulated by differentiating between short-term (one budget cycle, i.e. one year) and long-term aspects (what impact budget policy has on national economic development over the medium and long term). The level of the budget deficit and short-term sources of financing for the budget could be used to describe the short-term result. Long-term results must be obtained by analyzing the impact of the previous year's budget planning and

implementation on economic development and the level of public welfare. In both cases, the achieved results in figures are not the only important factor. Equally important is the public's assessment of the extent to which state resources were spent usefully.

No special group of indicators has been developed that would characterize responsibility in budget planning on a macroeconomic level. However, this could be defined as prudent fiscal policy-making with the objective of ensuring stable and sustainable economic growth. The dialogue between budget implementers and the public often results in the definition of other more specific goals for which resources are necessary. In view of the last ten years in Latvia, joining the European Union and NATO could be seen as achievable goals of this kind. One must also stress that another goal emerged following joining the EU and subsequent endeavours to accelerate the introduction of the euro in Latvia. This goal, in the context of implementing the convergence (or the so-called Maastricht) criteria is limiting the country's budget deficit so that it does not exceed 3% of gross domestic product (GDP). Fulfilling this objective would be one of the preconditions that would allow Latvia to introduce the common European currency.

On a macroeconomic level it would be possible to assess responsibility in state-level planning of revenue and expenditures by examining to what extent the government utilizes its macroeconomic policy instruments in order to stabilize economic growth and ensure a rise in welfare. The theory of economics postulates that budget expenditures should be geared toward equalizing fluctuations in economic growth (i.e. they should be countercyclical). Thus, it would be possible to limit the growth of consumption during a period of rapid economic growth, and stimulate consumption when the economic situation deteriorates. In other words, taking into account the rapid fluctuations in private consumption, to a certain extent, they should be stabilized with the help of government consumption. Taking into account that Latvia has an open economy that is becoming increasingly integrated with the global economy, consumption fluctuations have the tendency to intensify. This is influenced by the flow of investments, which significantly increase during economic growth, as optimism increases concerning the country's prospects for development.

Economic theory professes that state budget expenditures can be used to stabilize economic growth, thus decreasing potential economic and social problems that may arise during a period where there is a slow increase or even decrease of revenue. During a period of rapid growth it is desirable to limit growth by decreasing government expenditures in order to avoid an overheated economy. This is also a time where it is possible to save

money for more difficult times by forming reserves. In Latvia's case savings of this kind were not made as trust was placed in optimism concerning future potential for economic growth. Even in the years when GDP growth was around 10% and state budget revenue increased up to 20-30%, a small budget deficit was the best result that the Latvian government was able to achieve. This problem was emphasized by international organizations and rating agencies at the beginning of the decade when Latvian economic growth had only begun to increase. We have missed the opportunity to accumulate savings for difficult future times with the help of the budget surplus that was accumulated during a period of rapid growth. Difficult times took hold starting with the problems in the Latvian financial sector in 2008.

With the exception of 2008, macroeconomic data concerning Latvia's state budget suggest a certain amount of progress. Up until 2006, despite the fact that GDP growth was very rapid, Latvia finished each year consistently with a budget deficit (albeit relatively small and not exceeding the limit defined by the Convergence criteria – 3% of GDP). In 2007 the next step was taken, and the year was concluded with a balanced budget. However, it turned out that this achievement came too late and the rapid growth of government expenditures had already become one of the factors that fostered the growth of inflation within the country (and the ensuing rapid drop in economic growth). In general, these tendencies allow one to conclude that the 3% deficit limit is one of the basic principles that the Latvian governments have tried to adhere to consistently. Unfortunately, most likely it will not be possible to continue these achievements. The serious deterioration of the economic situation caused the 2009 budget deficit to extend significantly beyond the 3% limit,

and it was necessary to seek foreign financing to support budget expenditures. More detailed information about GDP growth rates and the budget deficit level in Latvia is compiled in Box 2.7.

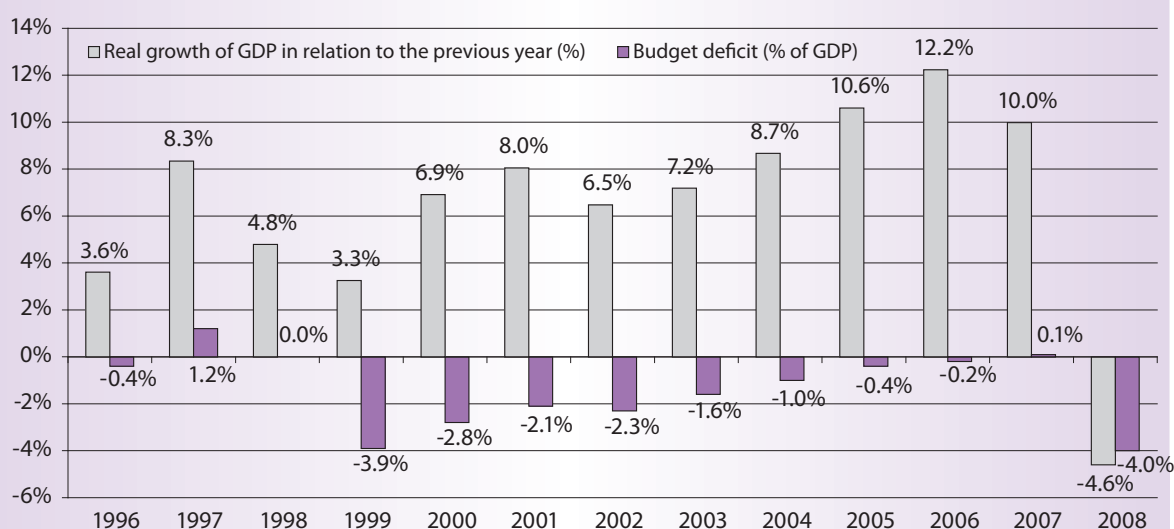
Box 2.7 demonstrates that from 1999 Latvia was successful in substantially decreasing the level of the budget deficit. However, the events that took place at the end of 2008 lead to the conclusion that this achievement was insufficient in terms of long-term responsibility. Even though the government sector had not accumulated a large foreign debt, the link between private sector debt and government debt has created a situation where the State is forced to take over a part of the private sector's external liabilities. During the years of rapid growth only very small reserves were set aside for these goals, and the reserves turned out to be insufficient.

Responsibility on a Government and Household Level

A look at the development of Latvia's economic situation at the beginning of the 21st century **on the level of the entire economy** (the size of the state budget deficit and government expenditure structures) suggests parallels between financial management on the state and household levels. Until the beginning of 2008 the state succeeded in maintaining a rather conservative policy in relation to the size of the national debt (at the beginning of 2008 the debt grew only to 1.3 billion Ls or 9.5% of GDP). This indicator was one of the lowest in the EU and demonstrates that during the period of rapid economic growth the government had acted with sufficient responsibility. At the same time, taking into account external circumstances and the flow of various types of private

Real growth of GDP in Latvia and the consolidated general State budget balance from 1996 to 2008

Box
2.7



Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Latvia

financial resources into Latvia, one must note that this was relatively easy to do during the period of rapid economic growth.

In Latvia, after joining the EU, along with rapid economic growth one could observe unusually fast growth in private consumption. This growth was largely influenced by external factors, the flow of capital into the economy from foreign banks and other lending institutions. It must be noted that one of the most important differences between private and government consumption is that private consumption is influenced to a greater extent by attitude changes of market participants. These changes can lead to significant fluctuations in the economy, while government consumption theoretically could be utilized to stabilize macroeconomic processes. In Latvia excessive optimism led to a situation of very rapid growth in the private sector's foreign debt. Up until the second half of 2008 the size of the national debt was small. There was no doubt that Latvia would be able to pay back the country's debts by spending future revenue from collected taxes. However, the situation deteriorated significantly due to the fact that relatively little attention was paid to the rapid increase in the private sector's foreign debt and restraining private consumption with the aid of taxes. Initially, it might have seemed that under market conditions the government would not need to concern itself over the increase of the private sector's foreign debt. However, the events at the end of 2008 showed that restraining private consumption during rapid economic growth could have become a good example of responsible budget planning and tax policy.

Admittedly, in assessing the decision concerning state macroeconomic policy one must not forget the political context. In simple terms, after joining the EU, curbing government expenditures in Latvia was understood in the following manner: if the budget deficit does not exceed 3% of the gross national product, there is no great need to

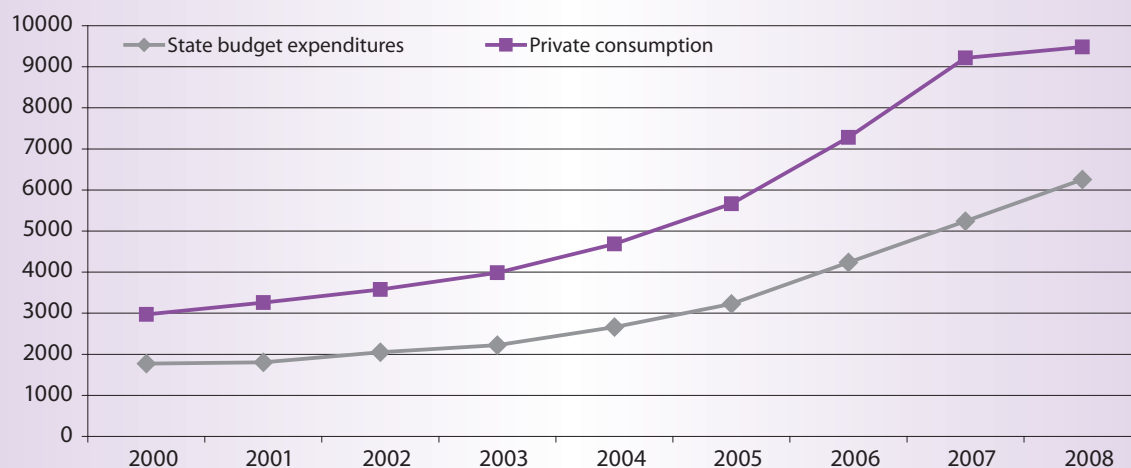
further limit government spending. During the period of rapid economic growth no attempts were made to set up reserves of free assets (part of the budget overflow) that could be used in conditions of economic decline. In Latvia the potential budget surplus was regularly apportioned, taking into account the current political context. One positive factor was that during the period of rapid economic growth a relatively low level of foreign debt was maintained in Latvia. Still, increasingly larger indirect liabilities accumulated for the Latvian government (e.g. debts in the private sector which the government might be forced to take over, in order to preclude a collapse of the banking system), which could significantly increase government liabilities in the case of economic breakdown. In 2008, as the result of precisely this kind of scenario, the Latvian government was forced to take over a portion of private sector liabilities (the government takeover of Parex Bank) and significantly increase its foreign debt for the next years.

The impact of the economy's rapid growth on the budget could be described after reviewing private consumption tendencies in Latvia. In general, until 2008, state credit and budget policy was rather conservative, while households exhibited more activity. The rapid increase in income convinced a large portion of households that the use of loans for increasing private consumption should be embraced, and the volume of extended credit quickly went up. This period was marked by an increase in issued mortgages, consumer loans and other types of credit.

Box 2.8 displays the growth of State budget expenditures and private consumption in Latvia. Starting in 2004 the pace of growth significantly increased. On the state budget level this could signify the need to co-finance investments that are linked to the use of EU resources, while on the level of private consumption these dynamics

State budget expenditures and private consumption in Latvia from 2000 to 2008 (millions of Ls)

Box
2.8



Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia

indicate a rise in public optimism. A significant portion of private consumption was financed through a rapid increase in extended credits, and this increase was not always proportionate to an increase in income (see Box 2.9).

Since 2005 the growth rate of consumer loans has significantly exceeded the growth rate of income. This demonstrates that the public made an increasingly frequent use of easily accessible credit. This trend was favourable for the development of the banking system, while only certain banks adhered to a policy of prudent borrowing. The decrease in the economy's growth rate and the rapid drop of GDP from 2008 to 2009 have confirmed concerns that this behaviour was not responsible from a long-term perspective. Many households have not adequately assessed the risk that is connected to a potential decrease of income. In the near future this problem could have a negative impact on welfare and could limit consumer spending.

A comparison of state and household budget dynamics reveals similar tendencies. On a household budget level expenditure growth has also rapidly risen. This is especially true of households where the majority of inhabitants are economically active (i.e. persons with relatively higher incomes and a greater interest in improving their material well-being). Still, a risk was present during the credit boom period that households would not be capable of adequately assessing their future incomes and would assume too much debt. The consequences of this risk gradually began to manifest themselves already in 2008 when economic growth slowed down and commercial banks began to evaluate household solvency more critically.

The connection between the profligate actions on household and government levels became strikingly apparent in the second half of 2008. It became clear that the quality of the banking system's assets was deteriorating.

To a large extent, this could be explained by excessive growth in the volume of loans and also by a negative change in external circumstances. Many households were forced to re-evaluate their spending and redefine expense priorities. On a household level priorities are usually easy to identify – they are connected to expenses for housing, food and indispensable items.

An evaluation of household budget survey results from previous years shows that, in general, the level of material welfare increased until 2007. Data indicate that over the past ten years there has been a decrease in the proportion of household budget expenditures for food, which dropped from 50.9% in 1996 to 25.1% in 2007 (in 2008 this percentage slightly increased to 25.6%). This trend indicates a certain rise in material welfare. Still, most likely, starting with 2009 we will be able to observe the opposite tendency. During this period of economic decline the proportion of household expenditures for indispensable items once again will increase.

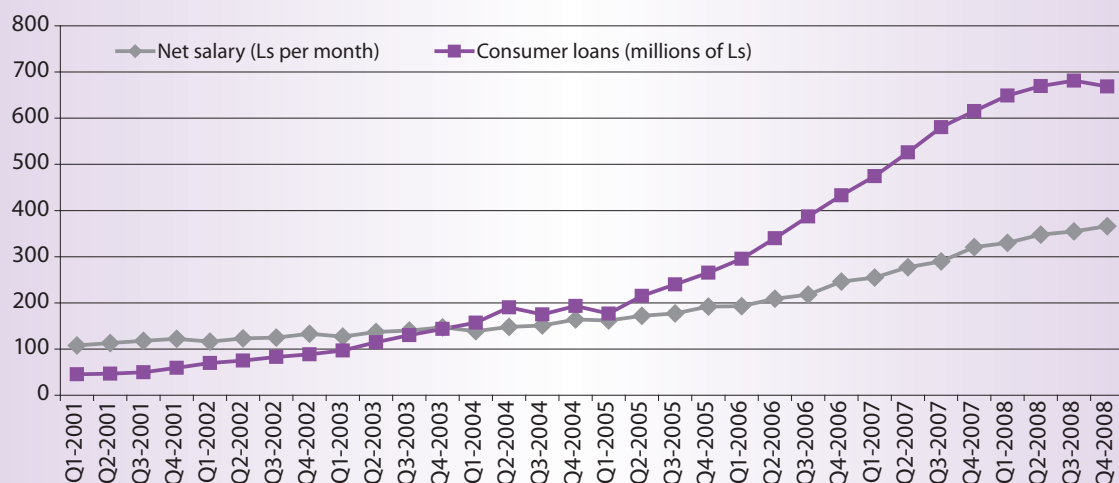
The Public's Assessment of Responsibility in Budget Planning

It is important to understand the public's attitude toward decisions in the budget-planning context on household and state levels. In order to characterize the public's attitude toward responsibility in budget planning on State and household levels, a survey was conducted during the preparation of the Report. Respondents were asked several questions concerning State budget planning in the context of responsibility, and they were asked to rate the responsibility of household decisions. The most important survey results are compiled in Box 2.10.

The survey shows that, in general, the public has a rather sceptical view of the responsibility of the state budget planners toward society. Only 15.7% of

Box
2.9

Average income levels and the volume of consumer loans in Latvia from 2001 to 2008



Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, Bank of Latvia

respondents answered that they agree or mostly agree with the assertion that the state budget is planned responsibly. The political context of the period when the survey was conducted (second half of 2008) should be kept in mind, but it is interesting to note that the proportion of positive assessments only slightly differs between various population groups. This indicates that generally doubts about the responsibility of state budget planning exist in all population groups. Persons with a higher education expressed relatively greater trust that responsible actions govern the planning of the state budget. Among persons with a higher education approximately 25% responded that they agree or mostly agree with this assertion. A similar situation exists among workers in managerial positions. The unemployed have the most sceptical outlook (only 8.7% of respondents agree), as well as persons with a low level of education and non-citizens.

In order to ascertain the public's reasons for scepticism questions were also posed concerning possible public participation in budget planning and the accountability of budget planners in relation to the public. It is commonly known that most of society perceives the planning and passing of the state budget as a process, on which public influence manifests itself only in individual cases. This was confirmed by the survey's results. Only 17.3% of respondents agreed that the public has sufficient opportunities to participate in budget planning; 71.4% disagreed. The rural population views with relative scepticism possibilities of participating in the determination of budget priorities (only 10.6% assessed possibilities of participation as sufficient); a similar opinion is held by persons with a low level of education (13.3%).

In order to ensure public confidence that budget expenditures would be used responsibly, one approach could be to reinforce control mechanisms. Survey results indicate that most respondents feel that the budget planners do not sufficiently account for their decisions

toward the public – only 17.1% of respondents agreed that budget planning decisions had been sufficiently accounted for. Managers, persons with a higher education and specialists/officials were most convinced that budget planners sufficiently account for their decisions toward the public, but even in these groups the highest rating did not exceed 27.2%. The most sceptical attitude concerning the accountability of budget planners toward the public was displayed by pensioners, the unemployed, persons with a primary education and persons with a low income.

The survey also included questions that would make it possible to characterize the public's attitude toward the prudence of household budget spending and reaching future goals. In general, households are of the opinion that their expenditures are prudent (78.2% of respondents agreed with this assertion). Relatively more positive responses to this question were given by the elderly population.

In response to the question concerning household expenditure planning in a long-term context, 76.6% of respondents felt that long-term goals are taken into consideration when planning the household budget. Paradoxically, older persons try to allow for more consideration of long-term goals; another group that displays a similar tendency are state sector employees.

The public is more positively disposed toward reaching their own long-term goals on a household budget level, while maintaining a very sceptical attitude toward the state budget and the determination and implementation of state budget priorities. An explanation might be that people have relatively more trust in decisions made with their own participation. Possibly, this could be largely explained by relatively small public involvement in the budget-making process. Public involvement would mean more widespread discussions concerning the next year's budget priorities, and an account of the dilemmas that the decision-makers encounter.

Answers of respondents to questions concerning State and household budget planning (percent of respondents)

Box
2.10

Assertion	Responses		
	Agree	Disagree	Difficult to say/ No answer
In my opinion, State budget planners publicly account for their decisions in a sufficient manner	17.1	74.7	8.2
In my opinion, the public has sufficient opportunities to participate in the determination of State budget priorities	17.3	71.4	11.3
In my opinion, the State budget is planned responsibly	15.7	71.5	12.8
In my opinion, the resources at my household's disposal are spent prudently	78.2	12.4	9.3
When planning household expenditures, I also take into account goals that I want to achieve in the future	76.6	12.4	11.0

Source: SKDS 2008, T 48

The Latvian State Budget – Public and State Interaction

Publicly elected politicians approve the government and the budget that it drafts. An important aspect is whether members of society feel that they can influence their elected officials in the period between elections. Another essential issue is that of accountability toward the public.

It seems that the most promising (although, possibly, the most utopian in the short-term) approach would activate public involvement and participation in the formulation and making of decisions. This would include the involvement of individuals and public organizations. Another approach would be ensuring the compliance of budget procedures with the help of more rigid control mechanisms. In this case, the public would be «convinced» of the prudent use of budget resources – there would be regular controls of prudent spending and its connection to outlined goals. Still, in this case, an initial formulation of outlined goals would play a very important role.

There have been several attempts to generate a united perspective on public goals and priority lines of development for the use of government spending. The latest attempt in this context was drafting the National Development Plan (NDP). Even before this document there has been an entire series of documents of a strategic nature, in which attempts have been made to highlight Latvia's priorities and paths of development. Still, the chief problem usually has been the lack of a precisely fixed link between the achievement and the financing of the proposed goals over a longer period of time. In the 1990s connecting these kinds of strategic priorities and financing was complicated, as the state budget was planned based on a short-term perspective (one year). Over recent years the situation has gradually improved. A medium-term budget concept allows for hope that resources allocated for achieving strategic goals will be easier to include in the State budget. It should also be easier to ensure mutual agreement concerning which resources will be accessible for achieving certain strategic goals. Still, the link between the drafted NDP and financing is very unclear, and is further intensified in the present situation where the government is forced to carry out a mechanical reduction of government expenditures.

The State budget-planning process became especially tense in 2008. Still, it seems that the problems that we have confronted lately were not unexpected for those who were informed about the process of planning and approving the budget in Latvia. The governments headed by Ivars Godmanis and Valdis Dombrovskis also usually only stressed numerical goals in decreasing budget expenditures, thus generating a sceptical public attitude. Symptomatically, more exposure has been given to news that budget expenditures will be decreased by «x» percent, and less to news that there are priority areas where spending cuts will be smaller. Conceptual issues concerning budget cuts have been discussed very little – attempts to identify priority areas (areas in which, possibly, budget cuts may be less desirable from the viewpoint of national growth).

Although over the past ten years gradual progress has been observed in the process of formulating and adopting the state budget in Latvia, the issue of the budget's suitability to public interests still remains open. This is demonstrated by protests expressed by various population groups and also survey results. The survey reveals a rather sceptical public attitude toward the process of defining priorities, as well as distrust of accountability in the process of budget planning and implementation.

In general, the budget-making process has become more transparent, and the public can acquaint itself with documents that are prepared during the course of this process, e.g. the yearly Cabinet of Ministers (CM) directive on budget goals and priorities (e.g. the directive «On medium-term budget goals and priority lines of development for 2009 to 2011» was already published in March 2008). However, upon reading the listed areas of development in these documents it seems that this is simply a list that does not answer the question of which priorities are more important and for which priorities more resources will be apportioned, if the opportunity arises. A document like this would have more value if it attempted to identify the most important priorities and involved in these discussions the general public (and thus attempted to gain public support). Furthermore, the present deterioration of the economic situation has created yet another type of issue – which expenditures will we decrease if state revenue goals are not fulfilled as prescribed by the budget? Evidently, in search of solutions to these issues, over the past few months the government has been forced to employ very extreme solutions which have evoked protests from various population groups.

Responsibility in Budget Planning – the Next Steps

In discussing future prospects, we can try to sketch the most important development trends on the state and household levels. The most important conclusions could be grouped together in three main areas.

Defining Goals and Priorities, Public Participation

From a formal viewpoint, the mechanisms in Latvia for formulating and adopting a budget function adequately, but the larger parties should seriously consider possibilities of making the process for formulating short-term and long-term budget goals more transparent and understandable. As trust in government institutions in Latvia is presently quite low, more open discussions about budget goals could help foster public understanding and support in this process. Defining priorities and linkage with documents of a strategic nature would be an important next step.

The survey conducted shows that the public has significantly more trust in decisions that have been made with public participation. This was demonstrated by the attitude of respondents toward responsibility in State budget planning compared to responsibility in household budget planning. Though this process will likely retain a political colouring (if only for the reason that adopting the budget is one of the most important annual events in the Parliament), it would be very important to promote public

participation in this process. Explanatory information about how documents of a strategic nature (e.g. NDP) are connected with State budget priorities would be significant from the viewpoint of public participation.

The Long-term View

This year and over the following years an increasingly pressing issue will be deciding which of the priorities mentioned in the NDP and the government declaration are the most urgent in the event of even more limited resources. Another increasingly pressing issue concerns a more fundamental evaluation of each government institution's defined goals and associated costs. In the context of implementing a medium-term budget and also from a long-term perspective it would be important to formulate more clearly government priorities in connection to strategic documents (NDP, etc.). Also, more extensive

public discussions should be encouraged about the link between budget expenditures and government priorities defined in these documents.

Budget Surplus Usage

The economic slump has highlighted the problems of long-term budget planning. As already mentioned, Latvian governments did not attempt to create mechanisms that would ensure the formation of budget reserves during a period of rapid growth. Hopefully, this lesson will be remembered, as the example of Estonia demonstrates that this effort can be of vital importance during a crisis. It is unlikely that in the near future Latvia will have an opportunity to put aside budget reserves. Still, this does not mean that the principles should not be laid out to be implemented upon the return of economic growth.

Box
2.11

Greatest Achievements, Most Serious Problems, Most Important Tasks

Greatest Achievement

Though progress in putting into practice long-term budget planning in Latvia has been rather slow, government activities suggest that efforts are being made. During the period of economic decline defining priorities in budget spending has become more important, and this is an important step toward the implementation of a long-term budget planning process.

Most Serious Problem

The political sensitivity of the budget process could be mentioned as one of the most serious problems. In Latvia this has even led to the collapse of the government. In the case of unstable coalitions, long-term budget expenditure planning could help avoid threats to government stability. Furthermore, the process of defining budget priorities is largely based on resolving short-term issues. Public involvement in this process is still insufficient. The most serious problem is linking clear goals to budget priorities. In this realm, Latvia is only at the beginning of the path, and the situation was exacerbated by the budget crisis of 2009.

Most Important Tasks

It would be important for Latvia to continue the course toward long-term expenditure planning. This would limit the possibilities of politicians to freely manipulate with the state budget under the cover of achieving short-term goals. Surveys indicate that public involvement in state budget planning activities could increase understanding of the accessibility of state resources and the utility of their spending. It is important to continue the dialogue concerning the long-term priorities of the Latvian public by attempting to identify resources necessary for the implementation of these priorities and creating a clearly comprehensible link between goals and resources allocated for their implementation. A reciprocal relationship must be created with the public, providing accounts of achieved results and defining expenditure priorities for the next years.

Accountability and Social Policy

Feliciana Rajevska, Laura Romanovska

Social policy is redistribution policy. The basic function of social policy is to provide for social reproduction. In the stricter sense, the functions of social policy are the regulation of social inequality, the integration of disadvantaged social groups, the alleviation of social tensions with the help of redistribution mechanisms, and investment in human development.

A social state is defined as a state where, in market economy conditions, the government assumes responsibility for the welfare of its citizens. Latvia is not defined as a social state in any of its official documents. Although Latvia's Constitution includes certain social rights, it is not as clear as, for example, the Constitution of Germany, which says that «the German Federal Republic is a democratic and social state.» However, social responsibility is imposed by the commitments that Latvia made when it joined the European Union.

The European Social Charter entered into force in Latvia in 2002. Latvia has ratified 10 articles of the Charter. These apply to the right to employment, the right to freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, the right of employed women to special protection, the right to vocational training, the right to protection of health, the right to social medical assistance, the right to benefit from social welfare services, the right of families to social, legal and economic protection, the right of mothers and children to social and economic protection. The government must submit a yearly report to the Council of Europe on application of the provisions that it has accepted.

Latvia has also taken the next step. In 2007, it signed the Revised European Social Charter, which contains a number of new rights and has not yet been ratified. Where the compliance of Latvia's domestic law with the requirements of the Revised Charter is concerned, Latvia's Ministry of Welfare predicts difficulties with the application of a number of the provisions. Among these are: the right to fair remuneration (in view of the fact that the minimum wage is less than the subsistence minimum); the right of employed foreigners and their families to protection and assistance; the right to protection against poverty and against social inequality. In regard to the last two points, there are a number of factors that must be taken into consideration. As indicated in the National Report on the Social Protection and Social Inclusion Strategy for 2008 – 2008, the poverty risk has increased significantly for families with children, and there is a relatively big risk of poverty for large families (two adults and three or more children). Family allowances are still relatively small and do not provide sufficient assistance once a child has reached the age of two. Moreover, in its conclusions regarding Latvia's second report (for 2004-2005) on the compliance of domestic law with the articles

of the European Social Charter that Latvia has ratified, the Council of Europe brings attention to the inadequately low guaranteed minimum income (GMI) (in 2007-2008, this was 27 lats or 38 euros per person/month). In 2006, according to EUROSTAT data, the poverty threshold was 88 lats or 127 euro per month per equivalent consumer. The duration of the GMI benefits (nine months in one calendar year) was also considered to be incompatible with the requirements of the European Social Charter (Conclusions 2008).

A number of articles in the European Code of Social Security are also to be ratified in 2009 – an indication that Latvia is actively harmonizing its social legislation. Nevertheless, the introduction of higher social security standards is currently unrealistic. Experience shows that all intentions to improve the welfare of the population, no matter how firmly these are anchored in legislation, are immediately forgotten when it comes to the redistribution of resources. Bureaucrats and politicians tend to hide behind each other to avoid having to assume responsibility for satisfying the needs of the population. This inevitably raises the question: is Latvia really a social state? The answer is rather no than yes. In his reflections on the events of January 13, 2009, philosopher Igors Šuvajevs was quite categorical: «...the social state is a fiction in Latvia... if only because a social state is not possible without responsibility» (Šuvajevs 2009).

In 2006, a group of left-wing politicians proposed amendments to the Constitution, rewording Article 1 as follows: «Latvia is an independent, democratic and social Republic.» The main objective of the deputies was to get the «social state» principle incorporated into the Constitution. To their mind, this would make it possible to strengthen the social orientation of the whole legal system (LR Saeima 2006 b).

Social responsibility demands that, after the incorporation of such a provision into the Basic Law, the government undertakes to draft and implement a social policy that offers social rights and creates social equality. Such a provision is nothing unusual – provided the government has at its disposal the necessary financial and human resources to ensure the promised level of welfare. In Latvia's case, the constitutional amendment was not even included in the agenda of the *Saeima*.

Distribution of Responsibility in Different Welfare Regimes

Danish sociologist G. Esping-Andersen groups welfare regimes into three ideal types: the liberal, the conservative, and the social-democratic. In each regime, responsibility for the welfare of society is distributed differently

among the state, the market, and the family (see Box 2.12). Individual solidarity is usually considered to predominate in a *liberal welfare state*, where welfare is based primarily on market principles. Social assistance is granted only to those who meet poverty or other criteria and who request such assistance. An individual's talents and skills are a commodity that can be offered, for example, on the job market. The state does not hasten to provide assistance if the given commodity does not meet market requirements. In a *conservative welfare state*, on the other hand, solidarity based on business and family connections predominates, and here responsibility for the welfare of society is conceded primarily to the family. And finally, in a *social-democratic welfare state*, solidarity can be seen as universal and the state as the main actor concerned with the welfare of the population.

A **liberal welfare state** has low social expenditures. Social assistance is granted on the basis of means tests and for a specified period of time. The rules for granting social assistance are complicated and strictly limit the categories of people who are eligible. In this model, policy is oriented towards support for the middle class. Low-income groups are not considered to deserve social assistance.

In a **conservative welfare state**, the generosity of social programmes depends strictly on the contributions of each individual. These are usually oriented towards maintenance of a family's social status in the case of social risks. As a result, there are significant differences between the welfare levels of different social groups. The conservative model is characterized by high social expenditures, but social services are not sufficiently developed, and job market policy is passive.

The basic principle of a **social-democratic welfare state** is social citizenship, which anticipates the right of every person living in a country to social assistance regardless of the size of the contributions that have been made. Assistance is universal, social benefits are high, services are good, and job-market policy is active.

The Distribution of Responsibility in Latvia: Historical and the Institutional Dimensions

Throughout the various periods of Latvia's history, the distribution of responsibility for social security has changed substantially. During the period of independence between the World Wars, Latvia had an effective health insurance model with active participation of the state, the employer and the employee. Well-considered, comprehensive labour laws had been adopted, the foundations had been laid for a social assistance system, and the first steps taken to create a pension system based on pension insurance. After Latvia's annexation and incorporation into the Soviet Union, the insurance system was terminated and the social security system was based on the principles of universal security. During the Soviet period, the employer was responsible for the income, health, and recreation (in cooperation with labour unions) of the employees. The state guaranteed employment, education, healthcare, housing, pensions, and family allowances. The family, too, had a key role in securing the welfare of the individual. The family as the base cell of society was an important element of the Soviet system. The individual, on the other hand, was

Box
2.12

Summary of welfare regime characteristics

	Liberal regime	Conservative regime	Social Democratic regime
Dominant mode of solidarity	individual	kinship/corporatism	universal
Dominant locus of solidarity	market	family	state
Role of family	marginal	central	marginal
Role of market	central	marginal	marginal
Role of state	marginal	subsidiary	central
Degree of decommodification*	minimal	high (for breadwinner)	maximum
Eligibility criteria	demonstrated need	record of contribution	citizenship
Mode of benefit distribution	dualism – low-level public benefits, private benefits for the rich	status-maintenance	high-level universal flat benefits

* Decommodification – a process which reduces the degree to which an individual's welfare depends on participation in the job market, i.e. increases the range of services that are available to all regardless of their employment or financial status. In many countries, education and healthcare are the two major services provided by the state. After World War I, but especially after World War II, there was a rapid increase in the range of universal services in almost all European countries. Since the end of the 20th century, however, the trend has gone in the opposite direction, which could be defined as recommodification because access to a good education, good healthcare, social care, etc., is becoming increasingly dependent of the individual's purchasing power.

Source: Esping-Andersen 1999, Table 5.4.

generally reduced to the role of supplicant and recipient, which did not promote responsibility of the individual for personal welfare.

A closer examination of how responsibility is distributed among different institutions in present-day Latvia requires a quick look at a number of resources without which institutions cannot assume responsibility. The degree of responsibility is strongly affected by an organization's (government, municipality, local agent, etc.) qualities or capacity to achieve the goals that have been set. A government with a large capacity can effectively formulate its public policy: first of all, by establishing what the stakeholders want in order to seek a political compromise, then exploring the costs and benefits of various solutions and, finally, by choosing the most appropriate approach (social programme or service). There are a number of key resources that are necessary for a government to assume responsibility and function efficiently. Among these are trust and ties between the different actors (Moore and Teskey 2006). Trust is closely connected with the development of ties between people. Trust is necessary if there is to be a positive link between the needs of the population and the responsiveness of the political elite (Schrader 2004, 193-4).

Trust as such can be divided into personal trust (whether or not an individual trusts other individuals) and institutional trust (whether or not an individual trusts public administration institutions, the president, the judiciary, etc.). Since the 1990s, the degree of personal trust has been constantly low in Latvia (e.g. in 1994, 12% of the population found that most people could be trusted; in 1999, this was the opinion of 17% (BISS 1994, 1999). Institutional trust, on the other hand, has experienced highs and lows. Many institutions in Latvia have a poor reputation – a typical phenomenon in transitional societies. The degree of trust in political parties (see Box 2.13) was and remains lowest. Trust in the parliament and the government has experienced the greatest decline. Only the ratings for trust in public officials remain unchanged. It must be noted, however, that a high degree of trust is not necessarily a good sign: it suggests the absence of a critical attitude, which provides opportunities for manipulating the population.

Although the overall degree of trust is comparatively low in Latvia, this is quite normal in societies that have recently undergone changes in values and, to some extent,

in social status. In the 1990s, changes in social status were a common phenomenon in Latvia.

A low degree of trust indirectly testifies to a personal conviction that politicians cannot be relied on, and the principles upon which Latvia's political system functions have done little to encourage accountability on the part of public officials. Among these are the way in which the parliament is currently elected, making elected deputies accountable only to their political parties and not their voters. Another factor is the way in which laws are adopted, without sufficient explanation (or absolutely none) of the immediate or long-term consequences of a political decision for the population.

The ties that exist within a society can be divided into informal and formal ties. Informal ties are created by relationships between family members, relatives, friends, partners, neighbors. Formal ties, on the other hand, are manifested as participation in public or political organizations. Figures for the previous years show that both types of ties are widely employed. At first glance, this seems to be positive: with the help of formal ties, people become «audible» to politicians, and informal ties help in situations where the state does not provide sufficient assistance. However, ties – formal or informal – should not have to compensate for the incapacity of government institutions to carry out the functions with which they have been charged. Nor can ties compensate for the inadequacy of the government's investment in areas for which it is responsible (for example, the healthcare system).

During the 1990s, the government's role and responsibility for the welfare of the individual declined. This became apparent in housing policy and in the social policy reforms that affected pensions, social insurance and social assistance. The role of municipalities and communities in providing individual social assistance increased significantly.

Family responsibility for welfare of the individual is anticipated in Latvia's legislation: social benefits are granted on the basis of means tests that take into consideration the combined incomes of all family members. The law anticipates the mutual responsibility of family members: children are responsible for the welfare of their parents; parents, for the welfare of their children. This provision of the law is a relic from the interwar period and to some extent counters the pronounced individualism of the liberal approach, but it meets with no opposition from the

Box
2.13

Trust in public institutions (%)

Year	Saeima	Government	Parties	Bureaucrats
1996	32	42	14	32
2006	14	28	10	31*

* data for 2003

Source: SPP 1997; EC 2003; SPP 2005.

population and its functions. The results of an SKDS survey carried out in 2008 show that the individual expects help primarily from the family (relatives). This marks a change from 2003, when data published in the Human Development Report showed people as relying primarily on themselves (see Box 2.14) for support in difficult situations. It can be assumed that this change in attitude has been influenced by the emigration of more self-reliant people in recent years: those who are accustomed to relying on themselves are more mobile and consequently now fewer in number in Latvia.

People give priority to informal ties, but this situation cannot always be judged as positive. Theoreticians maintain that poor people tend to form ties with other poor people, which does not help to improve their situation because neither have sufficient resources at their disposal. This results in a vicious circle of poverty.

In the event of social risks, individual security depends greatly on the social insurance payments made by the **employer**. The employer is responsible for concluding job contracts, for paying wages on time and sick benefits from the 2nd to 14th day of sick leave (since 2008, from the 2nd to 10th day). The employer is also responsible for maintaining healthy and safe working conditions and – in cooperation with the National Employment Agency – for improvement of professional skills and/or retraining of employees. The National Employment Agency (NEA), the State Revenue Service (SRS), and the State Labour Inspectorate (SLI) all cooperate with employers (the last, particularly in fighting illegal employment). In these times of crisis, the main social security burden has shifted from the workplace to the place of residence, which tends to increase the role of the municipalities.

Municipalities have an important, even deciding role in the development of a responsible social policy because they are directly confronted with the troubles and needs of the population. Local governments are responsible for establishing social services systems, educating social workers, providing homes for orphans and former prison inmates, and for the payment of housing benefits to low-income population groups. However, development of the social services system has not eliminated social inequality.

Since all municipalities do not have the same financial resources, social inequality has even increased.

The state is responsible for providing free elementary and secondary education, and equal opportunities to acquire higher education. All in all, the state copes efficiently with these responsibilities. The state is also responsible for the healthcare system. Latvia has no mandatory health insurance and healthcare is financed by the government. Certain facts indicate that the state does not perform this function satisfactorily: for example, in comparison with other European countries, people in Latvia, especially men, have a relatively short lifespan, a high death rate, and a high incidence of various diseases. A lack of consistency and clarity in modeling the healthcare system has not contributed to accountability in the use of financial resources. The chairman of the Latvian Union of Local and Regional Governments, Andris Jaunsleinis, is quite right in his criticism: «It is not quite clear why a single healthcare policy was adopted, a hospital network established, equipment financed; because now we are told that hospitals are not the right solution, that outpatient care is less expensive. So, what will we do now with the buildings, the equipment that has been purchased on credit, which will have to be repaid by the taxpayer?» (Lulle 2009).

To illustrate the absence of a well-considered government policy, let us take a look at how responsibility is distributed between the state and the municipalities in regard to housing policy. Latvia is the only country in the European Union (EU) in which the state is basically not concerned with housing policy, leaving the housing issue in the hands of the people themselves. Housing policy is usually considered to have three main actors: the state, the municipalities, and the market. In Latvia, governing political parties supported the view that the market would take care of everything. All the government had to do was to provide a legal basis for housing denationalization and privatization and adopt a law that would ensure that rents are paid on time. The legal basis was provided. Latvia's 1993 Law on Rental Housing disciplined tenants in regard to the payment of rent, but it also increased the number of homeless persons. Subsequent amendments humanized

Box 2.14

Comparison of selected security providers (Average value*)

	All		Men		Women	
	2008	2002	2008	2002	2008	2002
Relatives	2.09	2.24	2.19	2.35	2.00	2.13
Myself	2.21	1.88	2.08	1.82	2.33	1.94
Friends	2.80	2.90	2.74	2.85	2.86	2.95
Colleagues	4.37	4.52	4.27	4.35	4.46	4.66
State and municipal institutions	4.75	4.73	4.85	4.86	4.66	4.61

*Values: 1- most reliable support, 7 – least reliable support

Sources: SKDS November 2008; HDR 2003, 23.

the process by specifying the categories of people who could not be evicted from their homes without providing alternate living accommodations.

If we go by the assumption that the objective of a state housing policy is to create conditions that will allow each person to choose living accommodations in accordance with personal needs and resources, we come to the conclusion that the Latvian state completely ignores this responsibility. A government that is aware of its social responsibility must intervene in the housing market with laws and regulations to achieve liberalization of the market. The question of state-funded, low-cost housing has never been discussed in Latvia. From 1996 to 2004, all housing construction was privately funded. In the 2003 housing statistics for EU countries, in the column for «direct state and municipal housing subsidies» Latvia had a blank; the same applied to the columns for «public housing loans» and «public sector guarantees.» The answers of neighboring Lithuania and Estonia to the question about public sector guarantees for housing were positive. The extremely high percentage of privatized housing reduces the maneuverability of both the state and the municipalities. In 2006, the government introduced a relocation allowance for the tenants of privatized housing, but this assistance has declined in 2009 as a result of the economic crisis.

Dealing with the housing needs of low-income population groups has been left almost entirely up to the municipalities. There is not enough social housing. The majority of people who belong to social marginalization risk groups live in old buildings, in substandard flats without modern amenities. The relatively high cost of heating and water makes up a disproportionate share of the expenses of those with low or medium incomes. To illustrate the irresponsibility of Latvia's government policy in an area that is vitally important to every single person, let us compare the housing structure in Latvia and in other EU countries. In neighboring Estonia and Lithuania, the percentage of social housing is also not high (only 3%), but it is 30 times higher than in Latvia (0.1%).

State subsidies for housing construction were introduced only in 2006. Municipalities began building rental and social houses, and the government took on part of the costs. Four municipalities received government subsidies earmarked for the construction and renovation of 168 social apartments.

In the opinion of the authors, the Latvian government has made a fairly large contribution to Latvia's real estate bubble, because people were given no alternative to buying on credit to satisfy their housing needs. The demand for social housing became increasingly hard to satisfy: in 2005, the satisfaction rate was 33.4%; in 2006, 26.6%; in 2007, 22.8%. In Riga, the percentage of people who rent social apartments is extremely low (% of those registered as being entitled to social housing): 5.6%, 3.7%, and 7% for the years 2005-2007, respectively. The crisis in the real estate market has made it possible for the Riga City Council to expand the rental housing sector, including social housing, and in this way to demonstrate its responsibility towards the voters and the people of Riga.

Responsibility requires two things: sufficient resources and freedom of action. Municipalities – as local-level social assistance providers and their clients as recipients – can be made responsible and held accountable only if they are granted sufficient resources and entitled to use their own discretion (Bonvin 2008). The question of sufficient resources is made particularly acute by the high cost of public utilities.

Transparency and Readiness to Engage in Social Dialogue

Signs of political accountability are transparency and the communication of information. The annual social reports of the Welfare Ministry are widely accessible. The State Social Insurance Agency publishes a Public Annual Report and in the past 10 years informed its clients individually about their yearly social insurance contributions and the status of their pension accounts. But the trend is negative. In 2009,

Box
2.15

Social rental housing in EU countries, 2003

	% of total rental housing	% of total living space	% of new rental housing construction	% of total new living space
Czech Republic	80.0	20.0	99.0	25.5
Denmark	43.0	20.0	75.0	40.0
Estonia	no data	3.0	no data	no data
Germany	12.5	6.5	12.2	3.2
Ireland	45.0	8.0	no data	9.0
Latvia	1.5	0.1	0.0	0.0
Lithuania	27.0	3.0	0.0	0.0
Poland	no data	23.4	no data	6.8

Source: Huber, Maucher and Sak 2006, 190.

the agency ceased to send its clients yearly social insurance statements, giving cost cutting as the reason.

It is the opinion of the authors that this is just an imitation of cost cutting. Regardless of the seemingly large cost reduction in absolute figures, the only one to benefit from this measure is the State Social Insurance Agency (SSIA), and the losses are disproportionately high. The agency's cost-dictated failure to inform its clients increases the population's sense of instability at a time when financial markets are already unstable. The responsibility to check whether the employer is making all social insurance payments has been placed entirely on the employee. If the employee wishes to be informed about the status of his/her social insurance account, he/she must now request a statement each year from the SSIA. In this situation, it is clearly more difficult for the client to defend his or her rights in social risk cases, and especially to calculate the size of a pension after several decades. A formal yearly statement on the status of a pension account (even if it is negative) is, after all, an official document which confirms that contributions have been made. At the same time, it provides a motivation to assess the performance of the account administrator and to make changes if necessary.

In order to maintain the institutional responsibility/accountability framework and to educate, discipline and involve the population in making decisions about personal social insurance, it would be advisable to return to the previous policy of sending clients yearly statements. Only this could be considered a responsible attitude towards the client.

Government policy in regard to the financing of healthcare cannot, even with the best of will, be called responsible (3.4% of GDP, the lowest indicator in the EU). The government has been cutting costs at the expense of healthcare since the renewal of independence. Public health has been left in the hands of doctors who, due to corporate interests, are not inclined to concern themselves with the health of society at large.

Since 1993, the National Council for Trilateral Cooperation has been organizing a three-way social dialogue between employers' organizations, government institutions, and labour unions to coordinate their interests in social and economic questions in order to guarantee social stability in Latvia. The formal institutional framework is functioning: government institutions maintain regular contacts with labour unions and employers, as well as with the Latvian Pensioners Federation – Latvia's largest non-governmental organization (NGO). However, the dialogue suffers from a hierarchic approach – it is not a dialogue between equal partners. From its power position, the government imposes its point of view on labour unions, employers and pensioners alike.

A knowledge-based economy demands huge investments in the development of human capital. The question is: who and in what proportions must pay for regular, in-service training of employees – government, employer, or employee? In Latvia, the question has so far been more or less left to take its own course (not, however, in the case of the public service). In the long-term, a socially responsible company is an efficient company. In the medium- and short-term, however, social expenses make it

harder to increase productivity and are even considered to negatively impact production. And yet, programmes that provide generous and long-term support (for example, in the Scandinavian countries or Switzerland) confirm the opposite: the greater the resources that are redistributed, the greater the productive capacity.

The economic crisis that began in 2008 activated both the Employers Confederation of Latvia and the Association of Free Trade Unions. At the same time, it promoted cooperation between these organizations and provided publicity for their work.

Resources Needed for Responsible Policy

Social policy involves primarily the distribution and redistribution of existing resources. The distribution mechanism and the degree of redistribution provide valuable information about the social groups for which decision makers feel responsible. In a situation where there is a clear shortage of resources, the capacity to administer these resources efficiently becomes particularly important. In social policy, distribution and redistribution will be considered efficiently managed if they are reconcilable with widely accepted principles of social equity. Each society lays down the rules for distribution and redistribution of resources in its legislation, specifying who is entitled to receive deductions on medical, rental, transportation, or tax payments, the size and validity term of the deductions, mechanisms for requesting and receiving deductions, etc. Such principles are anchored in Latvia's laws and regulations as well.

Tax rebates are the generally accepted mechanism for helping people with low incomes. Latvia has a proportional income tax. From the renewal of independence to the end of 2008, the income tax rate was 25%. In 2009, it was reduced to the current 23%, but in 2010 will be raised again. This tax is easy to collect. A positive trend has been observed since Latvia's accession to the European Union – a constant increase in the size of non-taxable income (see Box 2.16), calculated not only for the tax payer but for each dependant as well. This is a way of providing incentives for those who are active in the job market.

This policy had the support of the population because it benefited all legally employed persons but, most of all, those with low incomes. Lowering of the non-taxable income to 35 lats (from July 1, 2009) on account of the economic crisis means that each month the government takes 12.65 lats from every employed person. If we assume that there are about one million working people in Latvia, this means additional monthly revenues of about 12 million lats.

A positive fact, one that testifies to responsible policy, is that non-taxable income for dependant children was not lowered. This means that, in addition to the modest family allowance of 8 lats per child, a family receives 14.50 lats (23% of the non-taxable 63 lats) per month.

Guaranteed minimum income (GMI) – the wording alone exudes responsibility towards households and their members. What it really means is that a formula has been devised, a clear method of procedure, to determine

the additional sum needed by persons with low incomes to reach the minimum income guaranteed by law per household member. The size of GMI benefits is set each year by the Cabinet of Ministers in agreement with the Latvian Union of Local Governments and is paid by the local governments. This means that municipalities are not free to choose – pay or not pay. The only restriction prescribed by the law is that GMI benefits may not be paid for longer than 9 months per year. Among those who receive these benefits, fairly many come from the so-called «undeserving poor» part of the population: addicts, homeless people, former prison inmates, large families. The rules for receiving the benefits are very strict: the incomes of all family members are taken into consideration, and all working-age recipients are required to assume participation obligations. There is quite a lot of preparatory work, but the benefits are extremely modest. The 37 lats guaranteed minimum income (see Box 2.17) means simply that a person is guaranteed payment of the difference between 37 lats and his/her actual income. The figures for 2007 show that the average GMI payment was 16 lats, varying between 25 lats in Rēzekne and 3 lats in the Balvi District. This means that the guaranteed minimum income cannot guarantee subsistence inasmuch as the sum that is paid does not even cover subsistence-minimum food costs. In 2009, GMI is only 41% of the official poverty level for the current year.

Before accession to the European Union, Latvia's social legislation was harmonized with EU standards, which anticipate responsible social policy. And this includes definition of the poverty level. In Latvia, the poverty level has been defined rather arbitrarily: half of the minimum wage per family member. This means that the level rises each

year – not much, but constantly. The figures for Latvia's social security benefits are a pointed illustration of how the state assumed responsibility for its underprivileged citizens during the «fat» years. It would be more correct to speak of a complete lack of responsibility: in 2003, social security benefits exceeded the poverty level; in 2004-2006, they were equivalent to the poverty level; since 2006, they have not changed and now represent only half of the poverty level, which in turn is half of the minimum wage, or 180 lats (at the beginning of 2009).

As can be seen in Box 2.18, the minimum wage in Latvia is rising even though the rate at which it is rising is below average. However, the minimum wage is still not half of the average wage, as planned by the Cabinet of Ministers. In 2003, in preparation for accession to the EU, the Cabinet adopted regulations for fixing and reviewing the size of the minimum monthly wage. These regulations anticipated that the minimum wage would be pegged to the previous year's average wage and gradually raised until it reached 50% of the previous year's average wage in 2010.

As the table shows, the minimum wage has not reached the planned level and is still around 40% of the previous year's average wage – and in some years, considerably lower. After taxes, the minimum wage is still less than the subsistence minimum. This kind of policy testifies to a low degree of political responsibility towards those who are in need of social protection.

Pensions and Intergenerational Responsibility

«Pensions constitute a central link between work and leisure, between earned income and redistribution,

Box
2.16

Non-taxable income (LVL)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009, I–VI	2009, VII–XII
Non-taxable income	21	26	32	50	80	90	35
Non taxable income for dependants	10.5	18	21	36	56	63	63

Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia

Box
2.17

State defined indicators of need and social assistance benefits 2003-2009 (LVL)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Guaranteed minimum income (GMI)	15	18	21	24	27	27	37
Poverty level	30	40	40	45	60	80	90
Social security benefits	35	40	40	45	45	45	45

Source: Ministry of Welfare data.

between individualism and solidarity, between the cash nexus and social rights» (Esping-Andersen 1990, 79).

Over the past 10 years, the proportion of Latvia's GDP that is allocated to old-age pensions has steadily declined: from 10.7% in 1997 to 6.6% in 2002 and 5.0% in 2006. Currently, it is one of the lowest in the EU. Pensions (calculation formula, size, mode of payment) are a good indicator of a sense of responsibility – responsibility not only towards today's senior citizens but, actually, towards the whole of society. Responsibility towards those who retired during the Soviet period; those who retired after the renewal of independence but before the new Pension Law took effect in 1996; those who receive their pensions in accordance with the new law but were born before July 1, 1951 and are therefore entitled to only the first-level pension; those who belong to the middle generation (born July 1, 1951 – July 1, 1971), who believed in and voluntarily joined the government's second-level pension scheme; and those born after July 1, 1971 who had no other choice but to join the pension scheme after July 1, 2001.

First, we will take a look at responsibility towards today's senior citizens, keeping in mind that they are not a homogenous group. In 2008, those who had retired before 1996 were in the majority (58%). The pensions of these people are close to the average, with fluctuations not exceeding 50-60 lats. In regard to the size of their pensions, they are a relatively homogenous group that for natural reasons is becoming smaller both in number and in proportion. Their pensions are not taxable even if they exceed 165 lats. There is a completely different situation in the growing group of pensioners who retired after the new law was adopted. In this group, the average size of the pension is as poor an indication of the true situation as the average temperature in a hospital. There is a huge number of persons who receive the minimum pension and a small group that receives large pensions (but the pensions of this group raise the average quite significantly).

Although in the years 2006, 2007 and 2008 the social insurance budget showed a large surplus, for some rationally unexplained reason, during the so-called «fat

years,» the Latvian government failed to increase social security benefits, leaving them unchanged at 45 lats per month. This remained so in 2009. The reason was not by any means the large number of recipients but rather the fact that the minimum pension was pegged to the state's social security benefits – and these are calculated on the basis of the recipient's length of employment. If the size of the social security benefit had been systematically reviewed and readjusted in 2007 and 2008, there would not have been the huge discrepancy between average wage and pension, which in 2008 led to a referendum on the question of pensions. A regular increase in social security benefits would have yet another positive effect testifying to a responsible attitude: the index-linked pensions would increase as well. From 2006–2009, pensions that did not exceed 135 lats (or three social benefit payments) were indexed twice yearly, and pensions that did not exceed 225 lats (or five social benefit payments), once yearly. All pensioners whose pensions exceeded 225 lats were considered to be sufficiently well-off and supposedly unaffected by inflation. Pensioners are the largest social group whose sense of responsibility in regard to the country's financial situation was invoked by politicians when they cut all pensions by 10% from July 1, 2009. The contribution that working pensioners are forced to make to saving the country is a 70% deduction from their basic pension.

The State Social Insurance Agency started accumulating reserves and deposited these in the State Treasury. The outcome is well known. The government used this money (almost one billion lats) to save Parex Bank from bankruptcy, i.e. social budget funds were diverted to save a private bank. Although this was done in an emergency situation, it cannot be considered a demonstration of either social responsibility or public accountability on the part of either politicians or public officials.

In this context, we must also examine the question of the distribution of funds between the first pension level (redistribution) and the second level (savings). The introduction of separate pension levels is clearly responsible policy in regard to future generations, and in the past 10 years this approach has gained popularity.

Box
2.18

Planned and actual minimum wage increases, 2004-2009

Year	Average wage	Minimum wage	Minimum wage, % of previous year's average wage; planned	Minimum wage, % of previous year's average wage; actual
2004	211	60	43 %	31%
2005	246	80	44 %	38%
2006	302	80	46%	33%
2007	398	120	47%	40%
2008	479	160	48%	40%
2009		180	49%	38%

Sources: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia; Cabinet of Ministers 2003; authors' calculations.

The reason is the distribution or diversification of risks. The type of risk is different for each of the levels. A typical redistribution-level risk is always considered to be the possibility that politicians may interfere in the way that funds are redistributed. The typical savings-level risks, on the other hand, are inflation, bank insolvencies, fluctuations in financial markets – in other words, everything that the world witnessed in 2008-2009.

In February 2000, Latvia's parliament adopted a Law on State Funded Pensions. The transition regulations anticipated a fairly radical and quick redistribution of pension capital (made up of 20% of the salaries of all insured persons) in favour of the second, i.e. savings, level. According to the law, initially (2001-2006) the lion's share of all contributions was to be allocated to the redistribution level, and only 2% of the 20% to the savings level. By 2007, this figure was to be 4%; by 2008, 8%. By 2010, almost half of all contributions were to be diverted to the savings funds (see Box 2.19).

The authors are in full agreement with the repeatedly voiced view that the distribution of social insurance contributions between the first and second pension levels is no longer in keeping with today's economic growth trends and even contravenes the solidarity principle of the pension system. This method of distribution does more to support private pension and investment funds than to improve the living standards of today's pensioners or to develop the pension system as such. The powerful influence of the banks and their lobbying efforts in regard to the Law on State Funded Pensions – resulting in many amendments – is also admitted by the director of the Social Insurance Department at the Ministry of Welfare, Jana Muižniece (see Muižniece 2009).

In a public accountability context, the persistent and consistent efforts of the parliament to exclude the State Treasury from administration of the so-called long-term deposits (which is what pension fund capital in reality is, since today's contributors will demand their money only in decades) also deserve comment. Until January 1, 2003, the State Treasury was the only administrator of this money. From the aspect of Latvia's national interests, it is hard to explain why, on October 31, 2002 (at the last session of the 7th Saeima), amendments were made to the transitional regulations of the law, requiring the Cabinet of Ministers to evaluate the 2003 performance of the funded pension scheme and submit proposals to the parliament

by December 31, 2004 on future involvement of the State Treasury in administration of the pension funds. This gave the newly elected 8th Saeima an unmistakable signal that the State Treasury was to be cut off from administration of the «long-term deposits» and even set a concrete deadline for this measure.

However, the State Treasury performed well and the profits generated by its pension fund were not smaller than those of other funds. Consequently, although the number of participants declined as a result of the aggressive advertising of competitors, it still remained fairly high. The years 2007, when the funded pension scheme would receive not 2% but 4% of contributors' salaries, and 2008, when the figure would go up to 8%, were quickly approaching. The stakes were high, matters could not be delayed. Behind-the-scenes activities escalated and were rewarded with the necessary resolutions. On September 28, 2006, at the last session of the parliament before the upcoming elections, when public attention was focused on the last acts of the election campaign, the outgoing parliament adopted a resolution of national importance: termination of the State Treasury's administration of the funded pension scheme. Starting August 1, 2007, those pension scheme participants who wished to choose or change the administrator of their pension capital were no longer given the option of choosing the State Treasury. When in the summer of 2008, in a discussion prior to the pension referendum, Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis mentioned the possibility that the State Treasury could once again be entrusted with administration of the funded pensions to facilitate the government's access to additional financial resources – something that would be extremely useful for investment projects during the economic crisis – a bank representative hastened to call this a relic of socialism in the prime minister's thinking. The circumstances of the many amendments to the Law on State Funded Pensions show to whom Latvia's lawmakers truly feel accountable.

From the aspect of accountability in regard to social policy, the question of where pension funds are invested is also important – in Latvia or abroad. Analysis of the geography of second-level pension fund investments shows a year-by-year decline in the share of investments made in Latvia: 85% in 2004, 71% in 2005, 56% in 2007. Investments in OECD countries, on the other hand, have

Box 2.19

Distribution of pension insurance contributions between first and second pension levels (%) according to the 2001 Law on State Funded Pensions

	2001–2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
According to initial provisions of the law	18+2	16+4	12+8	11+9	10+10	10+10
In reality	18+2	16+4	12+8	12+8 18+2	18+2	16+4

Source: LR Saeima 2000a; Note: In 2009, distribution of the contributions was frozen at the 2008 level; for the period starting May 2009 to the end of 2010, distribution has been fixed at 18%+2%, bet starting January 1, 2011, at 16%+4%.

rapidly and steadily increased: 9.4% in 2004, 22% in 2005, 35% in 2007 (VSAA 2005; VSAA 2006; VDAA 2008). The top three countries in regard to the volume of investments are Luxemburg (8.3%), France (8.3%), and Germany (7.6%).

In 2009, the administrators of the largest pension fund holders all agreed that Latvia's legislation does not promote the use of pension fund resources for development of the national economy and should be amended without delay. It is hard to say whether this attitude comes from the negative performance of the funds in the past year, from the fact that the money allocated to the second-level has been frozen at 2% (up to 4% in 2011), from the global crisis, or from the lessons learned in recent years. However, considering and weighing proposals should be one of the premises of responsible policy.

Voluntary participation in the second-level pension scheme is a clear indication that people are ready to assume responsibility for their financial security after retirement (see Box 2.20).

The number of participants in the third-level pension scheme (launched in 1998) has also significantly increased: from 17 thousand in 2001 to 68 thousand in 2005 and 168 thousand in 2008 (See FKTK). For contributions that are made by the participants themselves and do not exceed 20% of the contributor's pre-tax income, it is possible to receive a 25% income tax rebate. In this way, the state is motivating people to think about the future and the size of their old-age pensions. The geography of these pension plans shows that 60% of the investments were made in Latvia and 40% abroad (of these, the largest share, or 7%, in Luxemburg).

As suggested by the answers to an SKDS survey (SKDS 2008, T 13), the predominant sentiment in people's judgement of the social insurance system is insecurity about the future in the event of social risks. Only 5% of the respondents claim that upon losing their main source of income they would still be able to maintain their usual standard of living with the help of social benefits.

Conclusions

In regard to social policy and responsibility, Latvia can generally be grouped together with the liberal welfare regimes. This means that the solution of many questions is left primarily to the market (particularly in regard to

housing policy), the main responsibility for personal welfare is in the hands of the individual, and the role of the state is marginal. At the same time, people in Latvia still rely on the family and are certain that this is where they will find support when the going gets hard. And this tendency is increasing. Despite their lack of trust in state institutions, people still tend to trust municipal institutions, whose areas of responsibility are increasing in disproportion with the financial resources that municipalities are granted. Social services have been established and are functioning at the municipal level. The qualifications and skills of social workers have noticeably improved.

Accountability is understood as the duty to account for the consequences of one's decisions and actions, readiness to expose one's performance to public scrutiny, readiness to engage in a social dialogue and, last but not least, readiness to educate the public about social problems.

If the state lacks certain resources (money, administrative capacity, trust), it becomes difficult to determine the desires and needs of the population or to demonstrate social responsibility and public accountability. Typical for Latvia's situation is a distinct deficiency of important resources, among them administrative capacity. The links in the chain of responsibility – «politician – public servant – public» – are burdened with distrust, suspicion, exaggerated expectations, and a low degree of reliance. This weakens the whole chain – and not just in one place.

A proliferation of many different types of networks is also typical for Latvia. However, in Latvia's fragmented society they are not particularly inclusive. They do not render society and the public sector dependent on each other. Money – this important resource – has always been allocated to social needs according to the surplus principle, i.e. as little as possible. The individual, the individual's concerns and improved welfare have never been officially declared as the state's ultimate goal. Social accountability cannot develop in a situation where, despite approaching elections, neither the members of government or parliament are asked or expected to answer questions about their concrete contributions, their concrete achievements, the tangible benefits of their activities for the man on the street. The only accountability that can be expected is accountability to one's own political party and to the party's sponsors, who are represented as the incarnation of state interests.

Box
2.20

Number of second-level pension scheme participants in Latvia

	2004 absolute figures	2004 %	2008 absolute figures	2008 %
Mandatory participants	409,466	64.6	614,540	57.7
Voluntary participants	224,219	35.4	451,024	42.3
Total number of participants	633,685	100	1,065,564	100

Sources: VSAA 2005; VSAA 2009

Box
2.21

Greatest Achievements, Most Serious Problems, Most Important Tasks

Greatest Achievements

A modern social insurance and social assistance system with qualified workers has been established in conformance with the liberal model of social policy. The social budget was separated from the state budget and, for a long time, showed a surplus. Introduction of the three-level pension scheme, the huge popularity of the funded second level and, herewith, the diversification of pension fund capital must also be judged positively. The second and their-level pensions funds have accumulated a significant amount of money.

Most Serious Problems

Typical for Latvia has been the stability of the country's political elite, which makes it unnecessary to reckon with the voter when deciding and implementing social reforms, and the extreme fragmentation of society, which makes social dialogue difficult and at the same time undermines implementation and functioning of social accountability. Politicians and bureaucrats know perfectly well that the public has practically no way of exercising oversight over what they do, and this is what plays a key role in the distribution and redistribution of resources. The social sector has always found itself in the role of the unwanted stepchild, even in the years of rapid economic growth. The reason for this was the widely held misconception that the resolution of economic problems would automatically solve social problems. In reality, social and economic policies should be mutually complementary. However, each one has its own functions and goals: for the one, it is efficiency and profit; for the other, application of the principle of social equity and support for individuals or groups in need.

Leaving key sectors of public life (healthcare, housing) for the market to deal with or letting matters take their own course, persistent evasion of problems, and inadequate allocation of financial resources have all led to the privatization of these sectors and to unclear institutional responsibility and sometimes even chaos.

Most Important Tasks

Clear rules of the game must be established and explained to the public, different views must be considered, plans must be corrected and, in the end, carried out. For example, if the inevitability of raising the retirement age is publicly discussed, it must be made clear early on in the debate which age group this will affect, when the process will begin, and how quickly it will proceed. It would be wise to examine Lithuania's experience, where the retirement age was raised very slowly (2-4 months per year). People tend to plan their lives at least a few years ahead.

Soup kitchens, distribution of food and food stamps are becoming a reality of life in Latvia's municipalities. More low-cost municipal housing and social housing is urgently needed. If we fail to cope with this problem, we will see a swift increase in the number of homeless persons and in the crime rate.

In the healthcare sector, it must be clear not only to doctors but also to patients (and this means all members of society) which services our state will guarantee in the coming months and years and who will be entitled to these services. The cost of these services must be proportional and correspond to the true purchasing power of the public.

Responsibility in Relations Between the Centre and the Regions

Laima Barisa, Voldemārs Bariss, Dina Bite, Signe Dobelniece, Viola Korpa, Valda Kronberga, Jānis Ūsis, Vladimirs Menšikovs, Līga Rasnača

Generally, the term «region» is synonymous with the term «territory,» though in the context of contemporary Latvia the term «region» is usually used when referring to the broadest territorial divisions in Latvia. Regional subdivisions can be used for various objectives. In Latvia there are cultural, historical, electoral, statistical and planning regions, of which the boundaries do not overlap. There are also plans to create administrative regions or districts. This chapter of the report will examine mainly regional divisions in development planning. A planning region is a geographic territory that is suited for the preparation and implementation of a development plan in order to resolve problems at a regional level (Glasson 1992). Latvia has five planning regions – Kurzeme, Latgale, Rīga, Vidzeme and Zemgale.

The «centre – periphery» distinction is also often used when reviewing regional issues. In a broader sense, a periphery refers to the outskirts of a territory as opposed to the centre. In a social science context, the centre is the place from which processes are managed, and the periphery is understood as a part that encompasses and is subordinated to the centre (ODE 2006, 280). Centre-periphery relations can be characterized from various aspects: social and economic processes, the prevalence of innovations and the aspect of dynamic historical development. The division of political and administrative power emerges at the forefront of *public administration*, and this is manifested in the degree of centralization or decentralization. The centre is associated with the location from which management is ensured through the use of formal administrative structure: the capital – regional administrative centres – the governable «province,» etc. This structure coincides with administrative-territorial divisions. In terms of *economic and social development*, differences are important in the level of development between the centre and the regions, as well as between the regions, and these differences are connected to the quality of life of the inhabitants. Usually, a more developed centre is contrasted to a less developed periphery. In the context of *innovative processes*, the centre can be viewed as the location where innovations are developed or taken over from elsewhere and further disseminated. The periphery, on the other hand, accepts innovations with delay or ignores them. The three aforementioned aspects of centre-periphery relations show these relations statically, i.e. in a certain territory and time. The *dynamically historical* conception analyzes processes that form centres and peripheries over a longer period of time.

In describing centre-periphery relations, it is often stressed that the centre is something more important and significant than the periphery as a less developed and distant territory where modernization processes are slower; the periphery is the source of resources and the consumer of innovations that are created by the centre (or transmitted to the periphery). However, according to normatively neutral conceptions, the periphery is not perceived as secondary and/or backward – there is no prejudiced attitude. Stress is placed on the significance of the periphery's unique cultural and historical heritage in spite of often deficient economic, political, scientific and technical resources. According to this approach the territorial structure is viewed as part of a bipolar or multi-polar model, where there is space for centres of modernization and traditionalism. For instance, from this viewpoint one can speak of a poly-ethnic and multicultural Rīga as a centre of innovation and predominantly Catholic Latgale with unique Aglona as one of the centres of traditionalism.

In many regional studies authors have stressed the need to reduce regional disproportions within the country, although «*World Development Report 2009: Reshaping Economic Geography*» offers the conclusion that the **concentration** of economic mass is inevitable and, in general, a desirable phenomenon. However, steady territorial differences in the standard of living are neither desirable nor inevitable within a country or among countries (WDR 2009). In other words, it is not necessary to quickly eliminate differences between the regions, though care should be taken to even out the standard of living in Latvia's regions. In this sense, politicians, researchers and publicists have paid special attention to Latgale, which from an economic perspective has been the most complex region in Latvia for a long time. This chapter will focus mainly on public administration and socio-economic processes.

The distribution of functions and responsibility between the centre and the periphery, and among municipalities of various levels, is closely linked with issues of centralization and decentralization. Centralization means that administrative functions are carried out by the state administration, and decentralization means that, when possible, administrative functions are passed down to independent agencies, municipalities, funds, and other legal entities. As intermediary administrative institutions they are subordinated to state supervision concerning the legitimacy of their activities, and also partly in relation to the goals of their activities and the utilization of financing.

Centralization is necessary when common goals must be achieved and for programmes where a united political and standard approach is needed, when national and super-regional tasks are more important than local or sector plans, or in cases where the jurisdiction of the local institutions is insufficient for effective operation. Excess centralization can alienate the administration from the public. Central agencies become overburdened with information and detailed decision-making, which, in turn, fragments the activities of these institutions. Higher levels of management often lack thorough and precise information about concrete situations. Centralization represses the initiative of the employees, and they begin to expect that even the most insignificant decisions must be made by the highest manager.

Decentralization divides administrative tasks into manageable administrative sectors and frees central institutions from the need for many concrete decisions. It provides an opportunity to involve the general public in administrative processes, especially decision-making. The public gains knowledge and experience, and learns how to solve problems independently, without expecting all benefits to come from the state or the municipality. Decentralization fosters the development of democracy, and directly or indirectly, influences civil society's development. Being well informed about each concrete situation makes it possible to reach decisions faster and make decisions that are more in the public interest. Decentralization increases the administration's flexibility.

Effective decentralization is based on the principle of subsidiarity. It is interesting to note that one of the first precise definitions of this term was given in Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* of 1931: «private individuals who live in a community cannot be denied tasks that

they can carry out on their own initiative. It would also be unjust and completely wrong to undermine social order by denying lower layers of society those functions that they can carry out by themselves, and entrust these functions only to a group that is broader and on a higher level» (*Quadragesimo Anno* 1931). In contemporary practice this means that the public should make important decisions at the administrative level that is located as close as possible to the public itself.

Decentralization also requires securing the responsibility of subsidiary agencies, as decentralized institutions influence with their decisions other areas and territorial units, and coordination must ensure unity in policy implementation. Greater freedom of action and decision-making, and the lack of monitoring can lead also, figuratively speaking, to the «risk of local capture,» when local leaders begin to operate solely in their own interests. Thus, on the one hand, there exists a contradiction between involving the public and civil society, i.e. subsidiarity, and on the other hand, ensuring common coordination and responsibility for regulation. This is why one of the most difficult tasks of management is finding the right decision-making level for each problem.

As a result of the surveys that have been conducted in Latvia, a general methodology has been developed for the assessment of regional/territorial development – by standardizing and weighing several objective economic and demographic indicators (Krastiņš un Vanags 2004, 36-38). For instance, the following indicators are used for calculating a region's development index: GDP per capita, the unemployment level, the income tax amount per capita, non-financial investments per capita, population density, the level of the demographic burden, changes in the number of permanent residents, and the number

Box
2.22

Most Important Social and Economic Indicators of Latvian Statistical Regions

	Average in Latvia	Riga Region		Vidzeme Region	Kurzeme Region	Zemgale Region	Latgale Region
		Riga	Greater Riga (Outside of Riga)				
Regional development index in the planning regions, 2007		0.999		-0.853	-0.647	-0.516	-1.267
GDP per capita, 2006, Ls	4 882.84	9 272.00	3 258.00	2 632.00	3 390.00	2 635.00	2 236.00
Proportion of job seekers among economically active population, 2007, (%)	6.3	5.9	5.1	6.8	5.4	6.6	8.2
Non-financial investments per capita, 2007, Ls	1482.38	2926.24	2443.29	1168.19	1507.16	1286.13	792.2
Average gross monthly income, 2007, Ls	398	452	382	309	334	325	277
Number of economically active business enterprises per 1000 inhabitants, 2007	57	68	49	60	55	50	48

Source: LR CSP 2008 a; VRAA 2009.

of economically active business enterprises per 1000 inhabitants. With 0 as the development index basis for comparison, and an index number between 1 and 2 indicates good development, a number between 2 and 3 – very good, from -1 to -2 – poor and from -2 to -3 – very poor. If the development index exceeds 3 or is lower than -3, development is rated as extreme (Krastiņš and Vanags 2004, 41).

According to social and economic development or the weighted development index, the Riga region has been the unquestionable leader since the 1990s and has surpassed the other regions convincingly. According to 2007 data, the development index for the Riga region was 0.999. All the other regions had various negative figures (see Box. 2.22).

Considering the aforementioned, it makes sense that the issue concerning the relations between the centre and the regions became crucial right after Latvia regained independence, and when the first ideas and concepts emerged concerning public administration reform. The first plans were drafted for reviewing the relations between the centre and the regions, and for the regional and administrative-territorial reform. The common purpose behind both reforms was to create administrative territories that would be capable of economic development. Local and regional municipalities would be set up that would be able to ensure quality services to the public, and would decrease economic, social and territorial differences between the regions. The municipalities would increase Latvia's ability to attract EU funds, and would carry out combined work for the government and the regional administrations.

This chapter seeks to address two sets of issues:

- 1) How does the division of responsibility between central and regional administration affect territorial cohesion or the equalization of development differences in Latvia?
- 2) Would implementation of the administrative-territorial reform increase municipal responsibility and accountability for prescribed duties in the eyes of the State and the public?

Objective Circumstances for Ensuring Responsibility and Accountability

The specific features of responsibility and accountability that apply to relations between the centre and the regions in Latvia are reflected in Latvian and European legislation: the Constitution, the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the State Administration Structure Law, the Law on Local Governments, the Administrative-Territorial Reform Law, the Law on the Status of Members of City Councils, District Councils, Regional Councils, and Councils of Rural Municipalities, the Law on the Formation of Administrative Territories in the Republic of Latvia and Defining the Status of Populated Areas, the Law on the System of Development Planning, and the Law on Administrative Territories and Populated Areas and other laws and regulations.

Since the beginning of 2003 areas of competence in regional development have been divided among various institutions: the Cabinet of Ministers (CM), the National Regional Development Council, the Ministry of Regional

Development and Local Government (MRDLG), the State Regional Development Agency (SRDA), and the development councils and administrations of five planning regions. The activities of several other ministries are also tied to regional development issues.

In accordance with the Law on Regional Development (2002), the Cabinet of Ministers adopts regional policy guidelines and the National Development Plan, and defines the procedure for implementing, evaluating and financing undertakings that support regional development. The MRDLG is the leading agency in the development and implementation of state regional policy and in coordinating the implementation of state supported regional development undertakings. In the process of planning, managing, financing, monitoring and assessing regional development the ministry observes the basic principles of concentration, programming, partnership, supplementation, openness, subsidiarity and sustainability (LR Saeima 2002 a). All of these principles are closely interconnected and demand readiness to adopt responsibility for relations between the centre and the regions from all players involved in regional policy.

With regard to responsibility and accountability, the **sustainability principle** has the greatest significance. In accordance with this principle the next generations must be secured with a quality environment, balanced economic development, a rational use of natural, human and material resources, and the preservation of our natural and cultural heritage.

As the responsible agency, the goal of the SRDA is to implement a balanced state development support policy, thereby ensuring the implementation of national, EU and other financial instruments, necessary research work and quality services. For the co-ordination of the development of a planning region a Planning Region Development Council is set up in each planning region. It is elected from members of local governments by a general assembly of the local government chairmen from the planning region. In each planning region the aforementioned council creates the planning region's administration. Regional and local municipalities develop and approve their own development plans. Unfortunately, many municipalities lack sufficient financial and intellectual resources for the preparation of quality development plans. The self-organization of local governments is very important in reaching common goals, and in the presentation and defence of local public interests. To meet this objective, on December 15, 1991, the Union of Local and Regional Governments of Latvia was founded (ULRGL), which unites on a voluntary basis the local governments of various levels (town, district). In accordance with Paragraph 96 of the Law on Local Governments, the ULRGL has the authority to represent the municipalities in discussions with the Cabinet of Ministers.

The Law on Local Governments that was passed in 1994 and related regulations broadened local government functions as a whole. In public administration a function is defined as the total of individual tasks, which also includes responsibility for their implementation. Thus, a division of responsibility between the state and the local governments took place in education, culture,

social assistance, infrastructure maintenance and development, and other areas, thereby greatly increasing the level of responsibility of the local governments. However, one must remember that one can be truly accountable only when sufficient resources for ensuring necessary activities are at one's disposal. Experience has shown that local government financial, information and human resources are lacking for the implementation of the delegated tasks. At that point in time state policy set the course toward a non-deficit budget, which was achieved in 1997 and 1998 (respectively, a 1.2% and 0.1% surplus in relation to GDP). Thus, no additional financial support was planned for the municipalities. Improvement of local government work was linked to the idea of resource concentration, which can be considered the main justification for the administrative territorial reform (ATR).

An important objective for both reforms, regional and the ATR, is to lessen regional economic, social and territorial differences. This makes the employers important actors in this process – thanks to their activity and ambition, new jobs are created, which then is reflected in municipal revenues and the population's level of welfare.

Socio-economic Backwardness in the Latgale Region: Who Is to Blame?

Latgale has long occupied a special place among Latvia's regions, and this has been determined largely by the region's distinct history. Following the break-up of Livonia in the 1560's, for two centuries Latgale became Poland's most remote province. Even after Latgale was joined to Russia, which already ruled over the other Latvian-inhabited lands, the territory of Latgale was governed according to different standards. Printed books appeared in Latgale later than in other Latvia's regions, and serfdom was abolished almost fifty years later than in Kurzeme and Vidzeme. Even after the abolition of serfdom essentially different agrarian relations took hold in Latgale, which led to widespread small farms. Only in 1919 did Latgale join with the other Latvian regions in one united state.

However, distinct socio-economic differences remained during the pre-war period, the Soviet era, and the years since the restoration of independence.

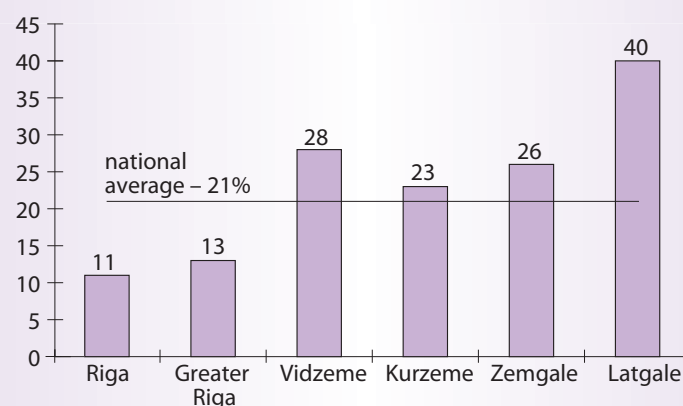
In 1994 the inhabitants of Latgale composed 16% of Latvia's total population. On the other hand, the volume of industrial production in Latgale made up only 10.9% of Latvia's total manufacturing. In the aforementioned year the average net salary in Daugavpils was LVL 55.3, in Rēzekne – LVL 51.8, in Riga – LVL 68, and in Ventspils – LVL 118 (national average – LVL 60.3 Ls) (Menšikovs 1997, 120). At the beginning of the 21st century the situation further deteriorated. In 2006 15.8% of Latvia's population lived in Latgale, but Latgale's total volume of manufacturing made up only 6.6% of the country's total production. The survey conducted under Brigita Zepa entitled «Salaries and Factors Affecting Them» shows that in Latgale salaries are lower than in Latvia's other regions in the public and private sectors. In 2005 salaries for full-time work under equal conditions were 35.8% higher in Riga than in Vidzeme; in Latgale salaries were 6.6% lower than in Vidzeme (Zepa 2006, 118). In 1998 GDP per capita in the Riga planning region was 2.4 times greater than GDP per capita in the Latgale region. In 2002 the difference was 3 times greater, and in 2006 – 5.6 times greater.

Latgale is a stable «leader» in Latvia in terms of the unemployment level. In March 2009 the lowest unemployment level in Latvia was registered in Tukums District – 7.1%, in the city of Riga – 8.2%, and in the city of Jūrmala – 8.4%. Once again the highest unemployment levels were registered in Latgale: in the Rēzekne District – 23.1%, in Ludza District – 19.0%, in the city of Rēzekne – 17.8%, and in Balvi District – 17.0% (LETA 2009 b).

Poverty, which is one Latvia's most painful current problems, manifests itself more acutely in Latgale than in other regions. Nowadays the risk-of-poverty indicator is widely used in assessments of the socio-economic situation. Everyone whose income is less than 60% of the average income per capita in a given country is subject to the risk of poverty. Income equals a household's total disposable income divided by the number of household

Box
2.23

Risk-of-poverty index in Latvia and its regions in 2007 (%)



Source: LR CSP 2008 b

members. For instance, the risk-of-poverty threshold for a one-member household in 2007 was LVL 117 per month, and for a household with two adults and two children younger than 14 (taking into account the equivalent number of consumers per household) – LVL 245. The largest proportion of the population at the risk of poverty is in Latgale; the lowest risk of poverty is in the capital and in the Greater Riga region (see Box 2.23).

The scientific potential outside Riga continues to be low, and existing potential is not put to sufficient use. In general, in Latvia the tendency is a rather passive use of high technology in manufacturing. In 2003 approximately 69% of total added value that was produced in manufacturing consisted of low-technology branches: manufacturing of food products and beverages, the production of tobacco products, textile manufacturing, and the manufacturing of wood pulp products (furniture, paper, cellulose, etc.). The proportion of production from high- and medium-technology companies in the total volume of production is small – respectively 1.9% and 29.4% (high-technology branches include pharmaceuticals and medicine, computers and information technology, radio, television and communications, etc.).

Unfortunately, even in the Riga Region high-technology manufacturing makes up only 2.7% of added value, in the Latgale Region – 1.3%, in the Kurzeme Region – 0.7%, and the Vidzeme and Zemgale regions have no high-technology production (see Box 2.24). Although out of all Latvian regions the proportion of high-technology manufacturing is second highest in the Latgale Region, there is little hope that in the near future the volume of high-technology manufacturing could reach the necessary critical volume that could amount to this region's chief growth factor.

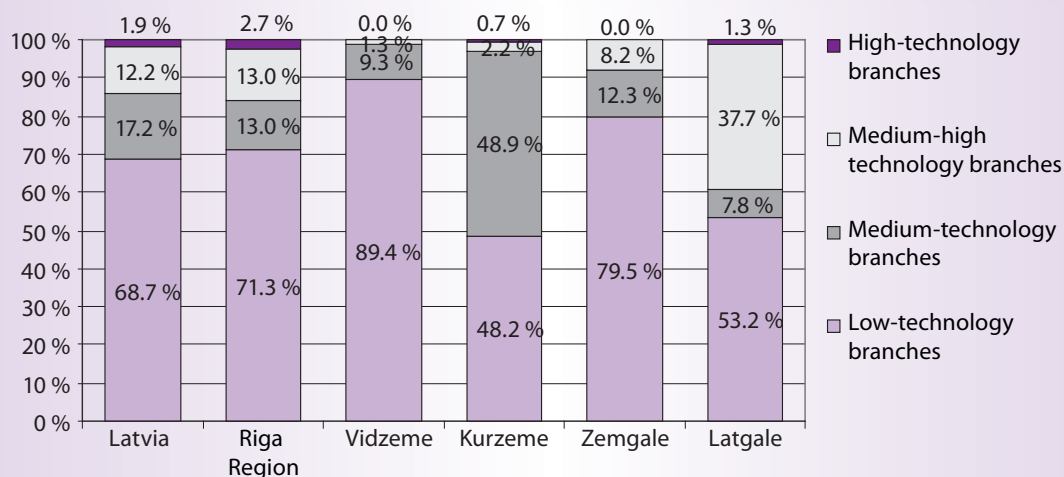
The economic situation in the regions is also characterized by the income tax (IT), as a large portion

(80% in 2008) remains at the disposal of the municipalities. In Latvia this is an opportunity for competitive territories to develop without a financial equalization mechanism. They can be donors to the less prosperous municipalities, as the volume of these resources per capita differed almost tenfold in 2008 between the most affluent and the poorest municipalities (LVL 71 in the Biķernieki rural township, Daugavpils District as opposed to LVL 700 in Garkalne County, Riga Region). Ten years ago a municipal financial equalization fund was created which regulates the distribution of finances between the most affluent and the poorest municipalities. For instance, among the local governments of the major cities and regional centres the largest donors to the municipal equalization fund in 2008 were Riga (LVL 46.5 million), Jūrmala (LVL 3.2 million), Jelgava (LVL 1.7 million), Ogre County (LVL 1.7 million) and Ventspils (LVL 1.4 million), and the main recipients were the municipalities of the Latgale Region.

The aforementioned demonstrates that there must be a special State support mechanism that would allow underdeveloped regions to vie for greater support than the stronger regions. Not only are financial resources necessary, but they must also be ensured with organizational instruments, and strong specialists in project management, business management, the generation of innovations, organization, administration, etc. Co-financing from EU structural funds, which has been available to Latvia since 2004, should become one of the most important instruments in the equalization of disproportions. Unfortunately, the apportionment policy of structural fund financing was not linked to the level of regional development and was not geared toward the reduction of underdevelopment and differences. On the contrary, an objective assessment reveals that it became an instrument for deepening regional disproportions, as economically more powerful territories attracted a larger

Box
2.24

Distribution of low-, medium- and high-technology branches (by added value) in Latvia's regions in 2003



Source: Voronovs et al. 2006, 120.

portion of financing. By February 2009, the lion's share of EU structural fund financing had been received by the Riga Region – 48%, followed by the Kurzeme Region – 20%, the Vidzeme Region – 10%, the Zemgale Region – 9%, and with the Latgale Region in last place with 8% of EU structural fund financing (see Box 2.25). If we compare this data with the previously viewed development indexes, it becomes apparent that according to indicators of received EU financing, the regions rank in the same order as in the development indexes. In other words, the economically strongest regions attract more financing than the weaker regions. The volume of financing for completed structural fund projects per capita from 2004 to 2006 was LVL 210 in the Riga Region, which precisely corresponds to the average indicator in Latvia. In Kurzeme, which was the leader in attracting structural fund financing during this period, this indicator was LVL 321. In Vidzeme the figure was LVL 197, in Zemgale – LVL 156, and in Latgale almost two times smaller than the national average – only LVL 110. Who is at fault?

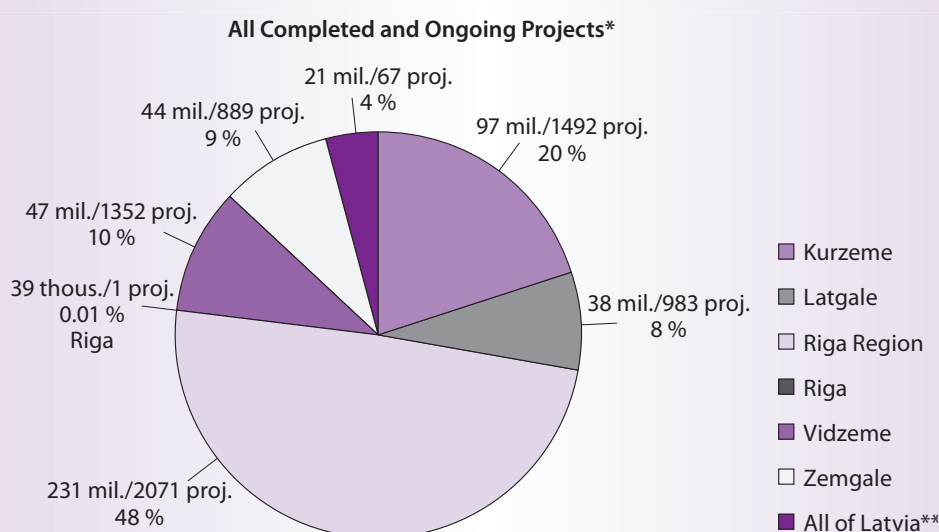
Balanced regional development is one of the goals of the EU. Still, implementation of EU regional policy does not mean automatic implementation of national regional policy. On the European scale, Latvia qualifies as the type of region toward which the larger portion of European support is aimed (NUTS II). A special effort is needed from the Latvian side so that purposefully designed regional policy can promote European support of regional development on a national level. Admittedly, in determining EU co-financed projects, regional development aspects are barely taken into account. In the criteria for project evaluation the regional component is included on a formal level, and project evaluators are not

held responsible for proportionate, balanced development in Latvia. In accordance with Regulation No. 124 «Regulations on Criteria for Granting State Budget Subsidies to Municipalities and Planning Region Development Agencies for the Implementation of Projects Co-financed by European Union Structural Funds» (3 February 2004) (LR MK 2004 a), the weaker municipalities can receive State subsidies up to 60% of the necessary national financing for the implementation of projects co-financed by EU structural funds. For now, this support has been of little significance. State support that is more goal-oriented, precise and socially effective must be ensured to underdeveloped regions and weaker municipalities for attracting EU structural funds. These important changes are possible only together with changes in the political arena. The political parties and politicians must employ their energy toward resolving the regional problems and not waste it through bickering. One possible solution is the establishment of a two-chamber parliament, where all of Latvia's regions would be represented on equal terms, and where representatives would be mandated (and thus responsible) to defend the interests of their region's population.

The sociological survey commissioned for this report (SKDS 2008, T 28) indicates that a large portion of respondents are convinced that administrative and political reasons are at fault. 30.3% of respondents stressed the lack of a quality National Development Plan, and 28.5% of respondents felt that the Latvian political elite lacks sufficient responsibility for the situation in the individual regions. Financial and economic factors were rated by respondents as secondary: 17.8% of respondents stressed an insufficient amount of goal-oriented investments for

Box 2.25

Completed structural fund projects from a regional perspective (2004-2006)



* If the implementation of the project had an impact on the development of several regions it was possible to check off «All of Latvia» in the project proposal.

** Including technical assistance

Source: ES fondi

regional development, and 14.9% of respondents felt that Latvia simply does not have sufficient financing for regional development. It is interesting to note that 28.8% of respondents in Vidzeme and 20.0% of respondents in Latgale were of the opinion that the MRDLG should be located precisely in one of the underdeveloped regions and not in Riga. A significant number of respondents feel that the Latvian foreign policy sector provides insufficient support to the regions – not enough foreign policy means are used to foster international cooperation, support business ventures, etc. It makes a big difference whether a region borders EU countries – Estonia and Lithuania, or neighbours Belarus and Russia, as in the case of Latgale. Here the importance of foreign policy activities is particularly important for promoting regional development. Clearly, this is the reason why the proportion of respondents that critically rate the cooperation between Latvian foreign policy institutions and the Latvian regions is significantly higher in Latgale (14.5%) than in Vidzeme (6.8%), Kurzeme (7.5%) and Zemgale (7.5%).

According to the Latvian population, another important reason for disproportionate regional development is the municipal employees' low capacity and ineffectiveness in their work. The sociological data compiled in Box 2.26 show that in comparison with respondents in other regions, the population of Latgale was more critical of municipal employees in terms of competence. The populations of the Riga and Kurzeme regions showed more dissatisfaction than others that their municipal employees are highly dependent on large companies.

The underdevelopment of Latvia's regions, especially Latgale, is greatly influenced by the attitude of the local population and a frequently encountered lack of motivation. Let us mention here two characteristic examples: the first example refers to the population's desire and preparedness to initiate independent business activities. According to the number of businesses per 1000 inhabitants, in 2008 the most private businesses were in Riga and Greater Riga, with the smallest number of businesses in the districts of Krāslava, Daugavpils and

Box 2.26

Distribution of responses to the question «How would you characterize municipal workers?»

	Works professionally and in accordance with the law	Work depends on the influence of business representatives	Works incompetently, work is ineffective	No answer
Riga	16.8	42.9	32.5	19.6
Greater Riga	21.1	36.2	41.7	16.0
Vidzeme	34.8	22.3	40.0	10.8
Kurzeme	14.1	41.7	30.0	15.0
Zemgale	19.3	26.7	38.0	18.5
Latgale	11.6	23.9	47.5	20.2
Total	18.5	34.6	37.4	17.5

Source: SKDS 2008, T 23

Box 2.27

Proportion of responses «high» and «very high» to the question: «To what extent do you feel responsible for the standard of living of...» (%)

	Riga	Greater Riga	Vidzeme	Kurzeme	Zemgale	Latgale
...your family	87.2	86.4	89.3	72.4	86.9	85.1
...your neighbours	14.2	8.0	5.9	11.1	8.2	9.3
... the inhabitants of your township/city	9.3	2.7	0	8.2	2.4	4.3
...the population of Latvia	9.5	4.6	0.9	4.2	0.8	2.9
...the population of Europe	5.1	3.2	0	5.0	1.6	0
...humanity	9.9	4.7	0	4.4	6.9	2.7

Source: SKDS 2008, T 47

Ludza. The number of businesses in these districts is almost three times lower than in the Riga Region (Rudzitis 2009). In Latgale the number of registered businesses per 100 inhabitants is only 51% of the average number in Latvia. Although business association activity is relatively low in Latvia in general, Latgale lags behind also in this category. Out of 30 business associations that are registered in Latvia, only some have branches in Latgale (see the Latvian regional development portal).

The previous chapters of the Report have noted the importance of mutual trust among individuals, and their concern with the general welfare in civic activities. The same can be said for socio-economic development in general.

The data compiled in Box 2.27 demonstrate that most of the population in Latvia's regions (on average more than 90%) feel no responsibility for the standard of living of the population of their city or district. In Latgale *very high* and *high* was the response to this question by only 4.3% of respondents, and this is two times less than in Riga (9.3%). Public activity is mostly limited to taking part in municipal elections – according to survey data, 65.9% have participated in local elections. 17.5% of respondents have met with local government representatives, 9.4% have written letters to the local government, and 9.2% have taken part in discussions concerning the rural township's development plan. Public activity is also seriously limited by a lack of information. For instance, data from the research centre «Providus» reveals that 20.9% of respondents in Riga are well informed about political corruption in Latvia, while only 8.6% of respondents are well informed in Latgale. A low level of public activity and a lack of information on the municipal level are among the most important reasons why regional reforms and also administrative-territorial reforms have not been fully implemented in Latvia for the longest time. Sociological data shows that less than 20% of respondents were informed about the goals of these reforms. A lack of information leads to suspicions and resistance, as the unknown is often perceived as something threatening.

Attitudes Concerning the Administrative Territorial Reform

At the end of 2009 the Administrative Territorial Reform (ATR) finally came to an end. Passionate debates have accompanied the reform since independence. Since July 1, 2009, Latvia has 118 municipalities as opposed to 548, nine large cities and 109 districts. Still, this does not mean that all debates concerning the reform have abated. Certain municipalities that were dissatisfied with the central administration's policy and the newly-drawn district borders have disputed the government's actions and gone to the Constitutional Court. The central administration's viewpoints are reflected in various planning documents and the mass media, but the positions of the local governments often remain on a local level, although the local governments are the implementers of central policy. Therefore, it is still of current interest to be aware of the viewpoints held by

the various parties involved. At the forefront is the issue of the extent to which this reform will serve as an agent of regional development policy.

Initially, ATR was associated mostly with the unification of rural townships or towns, which would lead to larger and more powerful municipalities that would be able to carry out their functions effectively and ensure necessary services to their populations. Over the course of time the arguments in favour of ATR have changed: the economic ineffectiveness of the small municipalities, the inability of the small municipalities to ensure accountability, which manifests itself as a lack of legitimacy of adopted resolutions, accounting transgressions, non-submittal of obligatory reports, etc. The municipalities were unable to ensure the obligatory services to their populations, and thus were unable to implement responsible administration. The reasoning behind ATR contained almost no arguments that reflected specific interests or priorities of the political parties. The idea of the reform's necessity was maintained mostly on the agenda of a certain group of officials and experts. The course of the reform on a political level mostly depended on two factors: the viewpoint, will and possibilities of a concrete minister charged with responsibility, and the direct support of the prime minister.

However, State policy met with and continues to be confronted with resistance from the municipalities. State agencies have explained resistance to the reform with the fact that the reform threatens the relations that have taken shape between the top officials and employees of the municipalities, and the relations between the public and the municipal employees of a concrete location. Another explanation for resistance was a threat to the population's sense of belonging to a certain location/name and cultural and historical identity. An unwillingness to unite was explained by unfavourable relations between neighbouring rural townships, and was confirmed by the public announcements of individual municipal top officials.

Several qualitative studies that were conducted between 2006 and 2008 within the confines of projects carried out by Latvian Agricultural University and the University of Latvia were very useful in ascertaining the viewpoints of municipal top officials, specialists and employers concerning ATR (LLU SZF 2006; LLU SZF 2007; LU SPPI 2008).

The Viewpoints of Municipal Officials and Specialists Concerning the Administrative Territorial Reform

In terms of the categories mentioned in the introduction to this Report, a municipality is a case of collective accountability. While the views of municipal employees must be evaluated as an expression of collective accountability, it is also possible to talk of individual accountability in local government work. All interviewed municipal employees see the ATR as an important turning point in the future work of the municipalities and territorial development. Very often the reform is perceived as fatal and as a phenomenon that is independent of local employees:

«...I would be happy if this local government unification were left in our own hands – we could approach it gradually, if we feel the need for it, the necessity. Well, but the others have planned it out better than us. We'll get married off like indentured servants. It's a kind of serfdom.»

This statement demonstrates that the ATR is located outside the municipal sphere of influence. The respondents describe the course of the reform in their municipalities and previous models of unification, but in the final outcome they admit their limited ability to adopt, in their opinion, the best decision. It should be noted that initially the ATR concept called for voluntary unification of the rural townships and formation of districts, but not everyone made use of this opportunity. Thus, reproaches against the government that the local governments and the public were not listened to over the course of the reform's implementation do not stand up to criticism. They were given sufficient time to voice their viewpoints. If any municipality failed to do so, hoping that the reform would not be implemented to the end, the responsibility lies with the municipality itself. State agencies and politicians can be reproached only for insufficient consistency in implementation, which possibly served as the basis for these hopes. The experience of other countries has also demonstrated that voluntary unification means the reform does not get implemented and can stretch over decades (Vanags and Vilka 2005, 249). The statement by Professor Edvīns Vanags is also confirmed by individual municipal employees:

«In reality, this process in Latvia is «painfully» perpetual and strongly depends on the type of government coalition in power. The frequent changes in government have strongly influenced the process of the reform and, hence, the development of the entire country. If the reform would have taken place as planned – until 1996, first, there would have been no small rural townships with a population of up to 1000 left, and there would be none of this irrational dispersal. Thus, resources would have been used more rationally. Second, we have disorganized legislation (the voting law, the law on municipalities, the law on financial equalization), and the frequent change of coalitions. Every government has its own legislation concerning matters of local government. The municipal leaders are tired and are becoming partially apathetic.»

At the same time, diametrically opposed viewpoints are being expressed in interviews. Surveyed individuals stress that large municipalities do not promote development, as they lead to large centres with distant peripheries that receive no attention. The supporters of this view feel that the size of the territory and the size of the population must be proportionate. Thus, all municipal representatives stress that the reform's course of implementation cannot be evaluated in a straightforward manner – admittedly, although democratic principles are partially taken into account, political interests and frequent changes in government have hindered the successful progression of the reform.

Presently, in most cases, accepting a concrete version of the reform amounts to reconciliation and not active acceptance: «Initially, I was an absolute opponent to the reform, but now that there are no other possible scenarios,

we must do what is possible so that the public doesn't need to suffer.»

Thus, ATR has created a breach in the work of the local governments, and consequently, also in accountability. The municipalities recognize the **necessity** of being responsible for their actions. However, the decision made «at the top» concerning the formation of districts does not foster the **ability** of the municipalities to take full responsibility for their actions.

In the context of prospective accountability the municipal employees are worried about the future welfare of their municipality's population. They are reckoning with the fact that in the new districts responsibility will change on an individual and a collective level – who will be the new council representatives, and will they be interested in the development of the district's entire territory, etc. The answers of the respondents also indicate problems that have posed difficulties in the past, and which in their opinion may have a negative influence on the formation of «new» responsibility:

«We have done our best to avoid changes, to preserve the available services. But when elections come and a new council is elected, will this model be acceptable to them? – that is an entirely different issue. If the new council consists of a large number of urban representatives, the money may remain here in the city. Who knows whether local service centre managers will be able to change anything, whether any civic representation will be available on a local level? Perhaps everything will run according to the party system – if you are not in my party, forget it...»

This is a very precise example that can be used to describe the responsibility of municipal employees. Understanding the inevitability of the reform, they have done the best they could. Still, they are aware that after the next local elections everything they have achieved might disappear. At the same time, local government leaders and specialists point out unresolved state-level issues that will have an impact on regional development. One of these issues is the infrastructural difference between emerging district centres:

«In Valka all these institutions will be intact, but here they are all incomplete. You see, there are the agencies that are not quite structured; we are concerned about this from a development viewpoint. ...Those will now be the proper districts, where everything flows smoothly, and then there will be the districts that are not quite right.»

After compiling the opinions expressed in the interviews, one can conclude that many municipal leaders and specialists object to the ATR in its present version. Until now, the municipalities have made more use of so-called vertical connections (power structures of different levels) for their territory's development. For various reasons, horizontal connections with neighbouring municipalities have developed slowly. According to municipal employees, the reform should be implemented incrementally by allowing organic bonds to form between the municipalities. Presently, due to the reform, mechanical bonds will take shape between the municipalities. Important changes are foreseeable in ensuring public welfare and territorial development, as well as in all aspects of responsibility and accountability.

Social Inclusion in Latvia's Rural Municipalities in the Context of the ATR

One important dimension is the issue of social exclusion and inclusion. Social inclusion is a process that ensures persons who are at the risk of poverty and social exclusion possibilities and resources that are needed for complete participation in economic, social and cultural life. Further aims are to achieve an acceptable standard of living and welfare, and greater opportunities for participation in decision-making processes and access to individual basic rights (LR LM 2003).

In the context of social inclusion (Abram et al. 2007), responsibility and accountability mostly can be viewed as a process that contains three important segments: the awareness and acknowledgement of responsibility («we are responsible» or «we should be responsible»); an analysis of the situation and possibilities, an evaluation and an action plan («what we must do and can do in order to act responsibly») and action («responsibility in action»). These aspects can be applied to individuals and also to different institutional levels.

The concepts of «centre» and «region» are understood and used in various ways. There are rural township centres, planned district centres, regional centres, large regional cities and Riga as the centre. For the most part a «region» is understood as a rural territory, the periphery, especially the outskirts in relation to various centres. Thus, the issue of the accessibility of resources and services in the centre and the periphery moves to the forefront, as does responsibility for fostering accessibility. It is anticipated that the ATR will make it possible to concentrate resources, raise municipal administrative capacity, provide greater opportunities for the implementation of more large-scale projects and offering new social services.. The study «Social Inclusion in Rural Municipalities in the Context of the Administrative-territorial Reform» (LLU 2008) provides a glimpse at the assessment of social workers in rural municipalities concerning the implementatin of social inclusion up to now and the changes in connection with the ATR. The opinion of social workers is important, as they are the chief implementers of social inclusion.

In the context of the ATR the social workers mentioned the formation of a specific group that is at risk of social exclusion – those who live on their own farms and homesteads far away from the township centres. The social workers who work in municipalities that are located far away from cities indicated: «...maybe people don't perceive it that way themselves, as they have always lived in these conditions and on the outskirts, but in reality, compared to the cities and those who live closer to cities, the locals are very excluded.» The social workers confirm individual and collective responsibility for the municipal territory's population. The largest emphasis in the municipalities is social assistance – ensuring benefits for different categories of the population. Several social workers stressed the significance of moral responsibility: «A person needs help, even if it's simply moral support. There should be an organizer of social assistance in every rural township. There must be someone on site with whom people can discuss their

problems. A social worker accepts responsibility for the people in the rural township.» The social workers affirm their sense of responsibility and understanding of groups at risk of social exclusion, and possibilities of providing help while keeping in mind the limitations of the municipality's social budget.

The study indicated the following tendency: social workers who will work in the emerging district centres have a more positive outlook on the ATR, while social workers who had previously worked in rural townships that will now be on the outskirts of the emerging districts expressed concern and anxiety concerning resolving the problems of social inclusion. The issue regarding relations between the centre and the periphery is unclear. There is the concern that the districts will experience the same problem that exists throughout Latvia currently: «beyond the city limits of Riga everything comes to an end.» Although a district is not merely the district centre, in the final result, all resources and opportunities actually are concentrated solely there. It is important to note that even representatives of existing districts emphasize centralization tendencies which can foster even greater social exclusion. This is vividly confirmed by the following statement: «They promise that only the district will be able to resolve everything, but we can't resolve things in the rural township today, and the city can't do it, and the regional council is also not resolving the problem... Where in the district will this come from – the power and the means to solve the problem?!»

The chief problem concerning social inclusion in the context of the ATR is that the problem-solving mechanism is unclear. To what extent will social services be closer and more accessible to the individual, and to what extent will resolving the problems of social exclusion become more complicated or more remote for the people who are most affected by this problem? It is also unclear who makes the decisions – will each case be reviewed at the district council or social department, and what will be the responsibility of the social worker? Several social workers doubt the competence of government representatives in reviewing concrete cases. There is no clear understanding of the division of responsibility – what will be decided by a local or more remote centre, and what will be entrusted to the social workers.

Several respondents mentioned various gains and losses that might be created by the ATR in relation to social inclusion, e.g. a district would have better chances of getting a loan, and thus, resolving housing problems, i.e. building social housing. Another advantage mentioned was that the rural township's population would be able to use the possibilities and advantages offered by the respective district centres' services – «we won't be put behind their people in the second or third queue.» Another potential gain that was discussed was the possibility that social work may become more specialized and cooperation may be established more intensively with other social workers in resolving social cases. Several municipalities have considered the possibility of forming a mobile assistance team or a unit of social workers to foster the accessibility of services to the population that lives on the outskirts of a district. In evaluating the various gains and losses that might be created by the ATR in relation to social

inclusion, the responses were dominated by the weakening of the social supervision factor and concerns about service accessibility for persons living on a district's outskirts.

In the interviews the social workers indicated at least three aspects that would decrease social exclusion in the rural municipalities: recognizing responsibility for fellow human beings (finding opportunities not to become alienated from fellow human beings, especially those living on the outskirts); responsibility in action (considering how one could reach the client at home, and not waiting for the client to come to the social service centre and see a social worker); fostering responsibility (considering possibilities of allowing a social worker to make a decision concerning a social case independently, especially concerning necessary immediate assistance).

In the formation of districts social inclusion is secondary in relation to issues of district administration. In resolving the issues of social exclusion in rural municipalities, social supervision and strong social bonds have always played an important role, while the district model calls for intensified bureaucratization of the social inclusion process. On the one hand, information gained from the study and current social tendencies indicate that the problem of social exclusion in rural municipalities is increasingly on the rise. On the other hand, resources for resolving the problem are limited. The immediate issue concerns the possibilities of a district's inhabitants to shape their own social conditions. On an individual level it is important to be aware of one's position and possibilities – to be the victim of social conditions or a creator of social conditions. Furthermore, it is important on a community, regional and state level to create and foster opportunities for individuals and social groups (regardless of whether they live in centres or regions) to be creators of social conditions.

Employer Viewpoints on the Administrative Territorial Reform

Employers in Latvia's regions are also giving the Administrative Territorial Reform cautious and contradictory ratings. Employers in the regions have been interviewed within several projects of the University of Latvia's Advanced Social and Political Research Institute (LU SPPI 2008). Although employers describe their attitude toward the ATR differently, for the most part the characterizations are negative or indifferent. Some of those who hold a negative opinion are convinced of the centre's responsibility for the implementation of ATR, which is making the situation of the regional employers less advantageous than that of the employers in Riga, Greater Riga and other large cities. Others believe that objective development tendencies are responsible for regional labour market problems.

Those who hold the central government responsible for the implementation of an ATR that worsens the regional labour market situation mention an unbalanced economic support and employment policy, and a lack of interest in the current situation in the regions:

«Of course, it is somehow very painful for me that the country's leadership and government... thinks very little about how... to create jobs and organize labour in a way

that there would also be work on the outskirts,... because we are located near the border. Unfortunately, this is the situation. Of course, without a doubt ... the distance from the centre determines a great deal. And not only from the centre! The distance from the large cities too...» (employer, public sector).

The representatives of this group see the local municipality as one of their own kind, who do what is in their power, but where everything is determined by a dependency on the centre all the same. The actions of local leaders are rated as responsible, as people perceive in these actions a desire to help the local population.

Others link their negative attitude toward the ATR with relations between the centre and the regions in a broader context. Respondents emphasized the connection between labour-market relations and the possibility of living in the countryside, in view of the government's responsibility in resolving demographic and regional policy issues: *«I wish... that a State policy would be possible that would allow people to live not only in a big city, but also where they want to live, even in a forgotten place like Alūksne»* (employer, private sector).

The implementation of the ATR is seen as an objective global development tendency by employers who also rate the ongoing situation negatively, but who do not express their views actively. Instead, they try to avoid becoming involved in political and administrative processes:

«Again, this is one of those segments of globalization where everything gets centralized. When one agency gets centralized, this is bad enough... But here many people will lose their work...services become less accessible...the reaction time has increased...»; *«Most likely, this is advantageous only to the ruling policy, the system, to centralize everything – then it's easier to have control... As opposed to small independent cells... It's easier to have something big, subordinate, dependent on some kind of subsidies, financing, etc.»* (employer, private sector).

Those who are indifferent feel that ATR solutions have no effect on businesses and other employers in the regions. For this reason they do not demand responsibility for decisions that are made by the central government or by local government representatives: *«Orders are placed [at the company] from all over Latvia...We could be located just as well in the middle of the woods;»* *«...I think the ATR will have no effect [on our activities]»* (employer, private sector). At the same time, this employer has experienced various types of incompetence in the work of government and municipal agencies, but the employer does not connect possibilities of improvement with the ATR.

The employer has given careful thought to distancing himself from existing processes, has formulated a set of opinions, and concentrated responsibility on personal action. Responsibility for one's life is not imposed on the State or the local government, while at the same time the shortcomings of public administration are recognized.

Conclusion

There is a varied understanding of the concepts «centre» and «region» and the terms are used in various contexts, with a stress on the existence of the centre and the

outskirts and their problems. Responsibility and accountability in relations between the centre and the regions is an important factor that has great significance in sustainable and balanced development. The division of responsibility between the centre and the regions, the existence of the necessary financial, institutional and human resources for the implementation of responsibility, the subjective readiness to assume responsibility on a state level, in the municipalities and within civil society all have an essential influence on Latvia's regional socio-economic development and the population's standard of living.

Public institutions observe the following basic principles in the planning, administration, financing, monitoring and

evaluation processes of regional development: concentration, programming, partnership, supplementation, openness, subsidiarity and sustainability.

The planning, administration, financing, monitoring and evaluation processes of regional development demand from all subjects who are involved in regional policy a readiness to assume responsibility in relations between the centre and the regions, and to be aware of this responsibility. These issues are defined in policy documents, but little attention is paid to mechanisms for implementing responsibility and accountability. At the forefront are issues of resource and service accessibility in the centre and on the peripheries, and responsibility for fostering accessibility.

Box
2.28

Greatest Achievements, Most Serious Problems, Most Important Tasks

Greatest Achievements

Important legislation and policy documents have been adopted that aim at forming local and regional municipalities capable of economic development, ensuring quality services to their populations, and reducing economic, social and territorial differences between the regions. The municipal financial equalization fund is operational. The Union of Regional and Local Governments of Latvia has become an important social partner to the Latvian government.

Most Serious Problems

Essential differences continue to exist between the regions in socio-economic development, and overcoming these differences is not a sufficiently pressing issue on the present agenda of the political parties and structures of public administration. The procedure for distributing European Union Structural Fund financing does not promote overcoming regional underdevelopment. No clear division of responsibility exists between the various levels of public administration. There is a low level of municipal involvement in planning-region activities, as local interests dominate here, and these interests are often linked solely with lobbying for local businesses and lack vision in a broader context of social development. Public interest in the local region's development and improvement of the standard of living is also rather low; more than 90% of respondents feel no sense of responsibility for the living conditions in their district or city. Public initiative is poorly developed. Equally underdeveloped is the ability to unite in order to resolve issues of improving one's life environment and the ability to become involved in administrative processes. Municipalities that have no public support are incapable of effectively defending their population's interests in the central administrative structures.

No dialogue has taken shape over the course of planning and implementing the administrative-territorial reform. Most of the municipalities have displayed reservations or have even exhibited resistance. State agencies have use of pressure tactics, but the public has not been sufficiently informed about the reform's pluses and minuses. Relations between the «centre» and «the periphery» have already become acute in the newly-created districts.

The Most Important Tasks

Ensuring balanced regional development must become one of the priorities of state policy. Not only financial resources are needed, including EU Structural Fund priority support for underdeveloped regions, especially for Latgale. In addition, support is needed with organizational instruments, specialists in project management, the creation of innovations and administration.

Public knowledge about local governments must be increased, and the public must effectively be provided with information about current municipal issues. The development of a civil society and various forms of partnership must be promoted on a regional level. In implementation of the subsidiarity principle, municipalities must further involve non-governmental organizations and the private sector in carrying out certain municipal tasks.

International Organizations and Accountability: Latvia and the European Union

Daunis Auers, Toms Rostoks

After the Second World War, the number of international organizations increased and began to play an ever greater role in international affairs. Participation in international organizations testified to membership in the international community. Today, the international system has become a conglomerate of global, international and regional organizations. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and renewal of independence, Latvia had no doubts about how it would demonstrate its statehood and affiliation with the West: membership in various international organizations was seen as necessary and natural. And Latvia's Western partners were supportive.

By the end of the 1990s, Latvia had already joined the Council of Europe, the UN, the World Trade Organization and other international and regional organizations. The Baltic states had not, however, gained admittance to the most important regional organizations – NATO and the European Union (EU). Pre-accession requirements that were difficult to satisfy and differing views among the member states of these organizations did not allow Latvia and the other two Baltic states to join NATO and the EU before 2004.

Latvia has now been an EU Member State for five years. For Latvia, this is undoubtedly the most important international organization. It affects almost all aspects of the lives of people in Latvia, which is why this chapter will take a look at Latvia's options for demanding accountability from the European Union.

The long and grueling accession process shows that a country must assume serious responsibilities and obligations when joining the EU. Adoption of the *acquis communautaire* and the enactment of new legislation significantly increased the workload of Latvia's lawyers, judges and public administration officials. The EU's legal provisions affect nearly all areas of public life, from internal affairs and justice to ecology and environment protection. Although membership in the EU has many positive aspects, it remains a fact that Latvia is only one of 27 EU Member States, that it is represented by only nine deputies in the European Parliament (785 deputies), and that it has only four of 345 votes in the Council of Ministers. This means that Latvia is bound not only by the laws and regulations that it has supported, but also by those that it has opposed and that might possibly be against our national interests. In other words, Latvia's accession to the EU means that its citizens have less democratic control over national legislation, and this inevitably raises the question of Latvia's right to demand liability and accountability from the EU.

Accountability and the European Union

Accountability is a concept that has become extremely popular in academic circles in recent years. The term is increasingly used by the media as a widely applicable word for criticizing the government (Mulgan 2000, 555-573). However, what does the term «accountability» really mean, if part of the country's sovereignty is shared with other countries (Bogdanor 2007, 6)? How can the people in Latvia demand accountability from their government's ministers, if the position of these ministers is the position of a minority? It is clear that the question of accountability should be one of the major issues in debates about the European Union.

A distinction is made between democratic and political accountability (Harlow 2002). *Democratic accountability* describes a situation in which the population regularly elects and re-elects its representatives and in doing so forces them, at least to some extent, to act in the public interest. In an EU context, the question of democratic accountability has focused the discussion on the question of sovereignty and deficit of democracy. In the EU institutional system, only the European Parliament is elected directly, but since these regular elections do not lead to changes in government or policy, the concept of democratic accountability cannot be widely applied in an EU context.

The concept of *political accountability* is more interesting in the context of this chapter. Political accountability is connected with the idea of responsibility/answerability. Political accountability can be defined as a situation in which «the actor is required not only to give an account or explanation of disputed actions, but also, where appropriate, to suffer the consequences, take the blame or undertake to put matters right if it should appear that errors have been made. Accountability is, in other words, explanatory and amendatory» (Oliver, 1997; quoted from Harlow 2002, 9). This definition has three important elements: «explanation, taking the blame and amendment of the situation» (Harlow 2002, 9).

Explanation is necessary so that institutions and actors may explain their behaviour and the motives for such behaviour, so that the individual may understand why something has been done, who has done it, and what the consequences have been. The explanatory dimension of accountability can also be said to comprise three elements. The first is *transparency and access to information*. Not all information will be systematically

conveyed to the recipient, which is why institutions and actors must provide opportunities for the public, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the government to receive information. Openness and transparency increase public trust and support for concrete institutions and politicians. Explanation also includes *widespread public participation* during the course of which the opinions of experts and interested groups are made public. Thirdly, explanation includes *regular reporting and performance assessment by decision-making institutions and individuals*.

The second element of political accountability – *taking the blame* – anticipates the possibility to determine where a decision has been made and who has made it. Identification of the responsible person or institution makes it possible to administer punishment, should this be necessary.

The third element – *amendment of the situation* – anticipates the need for a mechanism that would help to amend the consequences of an erroneous decision.

Who are the actors who could demand accountability from the EU? It is possible to identify three such groups: government, civil society and voters/EU citizens. The *governments* of national states take part in the EU decision-making process and are bound not only by the decisions that serve their interests, but also by those that they have accepted with great reluctance. As already pointed out, not all decisions that are made can be in the interests of all Member States. The decision-making process can leave any one of them in the minority. Furthermore, national governments not only feel the influence of the European Commission and the European Parliament, they are also subject to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice (ECJ).

Civil society is made up of non-governmental organizations, which, as observed by Joseph Nye, are self-appointed, not elected (Nye 2001). NGOs protect the interests of their members, provide expert opinions in specific areas, and carry out watchdog functions. *Individuals*, too, can protect their interests and demand accountability from EU institutions.

This section specifies three elements of *political* accountability and three groups of actors that can demand accounting. The following sections will take a look at the five major EU institutions – the European Commission, the European Parliament (EP), the Council of Ministers, the European Council and the European Court of Justice – in order to determine the extent to which Latvia's actors (government, civil society, and individuals) could demand accountability from these institutions. Attention will be paid not only to theoretical possibilities, but also to the practical implementation thereof.

The European Commission

The European Commission is a unique institution that is formally politically independent of Member State governments. It represents and protects the interests of the EU as an integrated whole. The European Commission has a unique right of legislative initiative and may submit its proposals to both the European Parliament and the

Council of Ministers. The European Commission is the executive power of the EU, responsible for implementing the decisions of the European Parliament and the European Council. The Commission is, however, a hybrid organization, combining executive functions (College of Commissioners) with administrative functions (services provided by the Commission).

The Commission has no formal mechanism for reporting back to the Member States. As an institution that is supposed to work in the interests of all members, the European Commission reports back to Member States through informal contacts at commissioner and officer level. Although the commissioners have sworn to serve only common European interests, in practice they also defend the interests of their own countries in the College of Commissioners and report back to their governments on the activities of the European Commission (Economist 2007). This is why governing coalitions usually tend to nominate their own people for the job of Commissioner. Since 2004, Latvia's Commissioner has been Andris Piebalgs, who was appointed following Ingrida Ūdre's abortive nomination. Although Piebalgs is not currently a member of any political party, he has formerly been Latvia's Minister of Education and Minister of Finance, has served as a diplomat and as Deputy State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, two of the top people in Piebalgs' «cabinet» – Andris Kēsteris and Agnija Rasa – are Latvians and maintain informal contacts with institutions in Latvia.

The European Commission reports back to the citizens of EU countries through the European Parliament. The EP approves the members of the Commission (in 2004, the Parliament forced Commission President José Manuel Barroso to make changes to his team and replace the Latvian and Italian candidates for Commissioner). The President of the Commission acquaints EP deputies with the Commission's agenda for the coming year, and Commissioners and Commission officials regularly provide oral or written answers to questions from EP committees. Since the 1990s, the Commission has prepared so-called green and white papers, and holds public hearings and consultations. In the policy formulation stage, the Commission invites consultants, scientists, experts, government officials and business representatives to take part in the work of its committees. In this way, governmental and non-governmental interest groups have an opportunity to influence Commission decisions and policies. Admittedly, it is not known to what extent the recommendations of experts are heeded because the work of these committees is not entirely transparent. Since 1978, the European Commission has reported to the European Court of Auditors on budget spending and, since 1995, to the European Ombudsman. In 2001, a decision was taken on transparency in EU institutions, improving public access to documents for EU citizens (European Communities 2001). It is possible to conclude that today the European Commission is open to outside influence and that it formally and regularly reports back to the European Parliament and other institutions. However, many of its decisions are extremely technical and therefore not easily understandable for the wider public.

The European Parliament

The European Parliament is seen as the most democratic EU institution inasmuch as its deputies have been directly elected since 1979. Consequently, the EP is frequently cited as the solution to the EU's «democracy deficit» problem. Notably, if the European Parliament were given greater power and authority, for example, to elect the Commission (creating a link between EP elections and appointment of the Commission), the EU would become more democratic. At the same time, the European Parliament is seen as the weakest EU institution, and it has only in recent years and with some effort achieved co-decision rights with the Council of Ministers. The EP has actively supported the accountability of EU institutions – to some extent, because it hoped to take advantage of the process to strengthen its own role in the making and implementation of policy. In the 1990s, the EP fought with the Council of Ministers over opening of the Comitology Process to allow participation of the European Parliament (Peterson and Shackleton 2002, 108-109). Admittedly, this was more of an effort to improve transparency than accountability.

Latvia is represented in the European Parliament by nine deputies.¹ EP deputies work independently of their national parties and governments. In view of the fact that the proportion of Latvian deputies in the EP is just a little over 1%, it is clear that they cannot have great impact on the lawmaking process. This means that Latvia's formal influence in the European Parliament is rather minimal. The EP is open to the influence of NGOs and interest groups, and EU institutions are currently preparing a single EU lobby register; however, for financial reasons, Latvia's NGOs are rather poorly represented in Brussels. Although EP deputies are grouped according to ideological and not national affiliation (Social Democrats, Greens, etc.), Latvia's deputies, although elected from different parties, usually coordinate their activities (often with deputies from neighbouring countries), especially in foreign policy issues (Russia policy, European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), etc.) (Rostoks 2008). Latvia's deputies have previously gained valuable experience in the government and the national parliament (one former prime minister, two former foreign ministers, etc.). As a result, their influence has been greater than could normally be expected of the deputies of a new Member State.

The European Parliament is the most transparent institution in the EU system. Debates in plenary sessions and committees are open to the public and transcripts of the debates are available on the Internet. The EP has set up a network of «information centres» throughout Latvia, and individual deputies as well as the Parliament itself invest a lot of time and money in explaining their activities. Nevertheless, the EP is frequently criticized for the way in which it goes about resolving issues. So, for example, in 2002 the British House of Commons Select Committee on European Scrutiny criticized the European Parliament as follows: «In practice, there is considerable use of 'trialogues', consisting of the Council, EP and Commission, meeting in private to ensure that any EP amendments are acceptable

to the Council or to agree the text. Trialogues may meet at first reading or second reading, and matters subject to conciliation may also be resolved at a triilogue rather than going to formal conciliation. The conciliation stage is always in private» (House of Commons 2002). This shows that even in the case of the European Parliament, at least part of the discussions on lawmaking issues are conducted in informal settings.

Every five years, European voters can bring changes to the European Parliament by taking part in the EP elections. However, these elections are organized and carried out as 27 national elections and not as concerted European elections. In these elections, people tend to vote on national issues and do not judge the work of the deputies in the European Parliament. The EP also has a legitimacy problem – voter participation has a tendency to decline with each new election, and there is not much public interest in the work of the Parliament.

The Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers is the heart of EU decision making. The purpose of this institution is to ensure control of the Member States over the integration process, which is why the Council of Ministers has been endowed with fairly broad legislative and executive functions (Lewis 2007, 155). The Council of Ministers is controlled by the governments of the Member States and, in the negotiation process, representatives of the Member States defend their national interests (Wallace 2005, 60-61). All lawmaking initiatives that come from the European Commission must go through the Council of Ministers, and only when they are approved by the Council do they become part of EU legislation. Formally, there is only one Council of Ministers, but in reality it is a rather complicated structure: depending on the issues to be discussed, meetings take place at ministerial level in nine different sectoral configurations, not to mention the working groups that convene at expert level and the regular meetings of the permanent representatives.² For this reason, the Council of Ministers can be described as a «pyramid of meetings» (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 2006, 14). This system makes it possible to coordinate the views of the Member States at different levels, usually leaving final decisions in the hands of the Ministers.

Each EU Member State has developed its own mechanism for defining its national interests and making sure that these are represented in the Council of Ministers. Latvia has participated in the work of the Council from the very start, immediately following accession to the EU. During this time, it has created a system for coordinating EU issues in Latvia. A series of regulatory enactments have been passed to provide the legal basis for coordination.

¹ With entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty Latvia will be represented by nine deputies in the European Parliament.

² Since 2002, the Council of Ministers meets in nine different configurations. Prior to 2000, it would meet in 22 different configurations and, prior to 2002, in 16. The Council's decision-making process is supported by more than 250 working groups in which experts and permanent representatives of the Member States take part. See the Council of Ministers' Internet website for background information on the Council at <http://consilium.europa.eu/showPage.asp?id=426&lang=en>.

The principal coordinating institution is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but other ministries and involved actors have also been given key roles. Principles have been established for defining Latvia's position, and a mechanism has been devised for preparing and coordinating this position.³ Latvia is represented in the Council of Ministers at all levels. However, the quality and the quantity of the national representations can greatly differ. For example, in 2004 the Permanent Representation of Germany to the EU had 112 employees, whereas the Latvian Representation had only 36. Altogether there were 1,498 persons (experts and diplomats) employed by the permanent representations in 2004 (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 2006, 235-236). National interests are also represented by experts and representatives of national ministries who regularly attend the meetings of working groups, so that the total number of officials and experts who take part in working groups and deal with EU issues in the governments of the Member States is estimated to be as high as 40,000 (Lewis 2007, 157).

The Council of Ministers is the least transparent EU institution. Up until ratification of the Treaty of Maastricht, the Council of Ministers was a closed institution where the ministers of the Member States could take refuge from the huge attention of the media and the public that they had to put up with in their home countries. It has only been due to insistence on part of some of the Member States (initially the Netherlands, later Finland and Sweden) and the media⁴ that the Council has become more open. Today it is possible to gain access to Council documents, but there is still a pronounced reluctance to make the work of this institution more transparent (Dinan 2005, 243). The media and representatives of the general public are still not allowed to attend Council meetings. The few public debates that are broadcast on television are rare exceptions. The ministers have found a good way of avoiding media and public attention: they meet at working lunches that are not even attended by their advisors. In effect, the Council of Ministers can still be considered as the least accessible EU institution.

It is almost impossible to determine to whom the Council of Ministers must answer. The EU treaties do not make the Council answerable to any one institution, so that, even today, although the Council is being urged to cooperate more closely with the European Council, the members of the Council of Ministers are more likely to answer to their national governments, parliaments and electorate.

Accountability to national parliaments can take different forms. The Danish parliament, the *Folketing*, cooperates very closely with the government on EU issues. The *Folketing's* Committee on European Affairs meets once a week to present proposals to ministers who are expected

to attend the next EU Council of Ministers meeting. Other countries have other systems. In Great Britain and Ireland, for example, the parliament has a committee that monitors the decisions of the Council of Ministers (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 2006, 240-241). In many other countries, government ministers or the prime minister are regularly invited to report to the parliament on how national interests are being protected. Latvia has a similar system, although with a somewhat unusual twist: special *Saeima* attaches are dispatched to Brussels, to Latvia's Permanent Representation to the EU, to ensure a better flow of information between Riga and Brussels.⁵ This system keeps the *Saeima* informed about legislative initiatives being discussed within the Council of Ministers system and improves the monitoring mechanism. Before Latvia's national position is made public to the Council of Ministers, it must first be approved by the *Saeima's* Committee on European Affairs.

Accountability is greatly influenced by the way in which the Council of Ministers reaches its decisions. There are a number of different decision-making procedures, but despite the existence of simple-majority and qualified-majority procedures, voting takes place in only about 20% of the cases (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 2006, 17). Compromise and unanimity are deeply rooted in the Council of Ministers, and country representatives usually try to find solutions that are acceptable to all Member States. This means that bringing an issue to a vote is not customary, and country representatives have every opportunity to defend their position and try to convince the others of the need for compromise. National parliaments have no reason to criticize the government if its position is voted down in the Council. However, since voting is carried out fairly infrequently, and countries are usually prepared to compromise, the question could arise why voting has taken place at all, why the government's representative has been voted down, why compromise solutions have not been sought or not been found.

It should be kept in mind that approximately 70% of the decisions are not coordinated and made during the meetings of the ministers, but already before. Important decisions are reached at the working group level, where it is impossible to ensure transparency and accountability. In the working groups, decisions are prepared by representatives of government ministries and the European Commission, as well as co-opted experts. In this process, it is difficult to pinpoint the actors who have prepared a decision.

Whether or not civil society and NGOs can take part in the decision-making process is determined by how they cooperate with ministries at the national level. If cooperation is close, NGO representatives and experts may be invited to take part in the decision preparation process. Frequently, the European Commission also becomes involved in the consultations. At the national level, consultations take place between government, parliament and ministries. It is possible for civil society organizations and interest groups to influence develop-

³ More information on coordination of EU issues in Latvia can be found on the website of Latvia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/iv/eu/3863/3864/>.

⁴ In 1994, with support from the European Parliament, the Netherlands and Denmark, the British newspaper *The Guardian* took legal action against the Council of Ministers for refusing to provide access to its documents, and the European Court of Justice ruled in favor of *The Guardian*.

⁵ The functions of the *Saeima's* Committee on European Affairs. Available at http://www.saeima.lv/Elkom/par_mums_funkcijas.html.

ment of the national position, but this requires elaborate scrutiny of EU policy making and good contacts with the respective ministries. NGOs often have neither the time nor the expertise to prepare recommendations and influence the national position.

The efforts of the electorate to demand accountability from the Council of Ministers are limited and mainly connected with gaining access to information. Over time, the work of the Council of Ministers has become more open. However, the last significant improvements were made back in 2006, during the presidency of Finland, when a number of measures were taken to increase transparency: for example, the opportunity to follow open Council meetings on the Internet and access not only documents that have been approved, but also documents that are still under debate. Admittedly, a large part of the discussions are still closed to the public. Greater accountability could therefore be achieved by ensuring greater transparency in government institutions at the national level.

The European Council

The Council of Ministers is made up of government ministers from the Member States and the commissioners responsible for concrete sectors. The European Council is in a «higher weight category.» It is the most influential EU institution, bringing together the heads of government and state and the president of the European Commission. The main task of the European Council is to deal with controversial issues and reach decisions that have found no agreement at Council of Ministers level (Dinan 2005, 225). It is the task of the European Council to define the strategic course of the EU, which is why only the most important issues are dealt with at European summits: institutional reform, the budget, EU expansion, common foreign and security policies, the distribution of votes in the Council of Ministers, etc. These questions have proved too complex to be resolved by the Council of Ministers and have therefore been set aside to be dealt with at the very highest level. Since the early 1970s⁶ when the European Council was first established, the meetings of this institution have attracted growing media and public attention. Nowadays, more than a thousand journalists regularly cover the meetings of the European Council, with some meetings attracting as many as 4,000. Protest demonstrations take place during these summits, the loudest of them in Gothenburg in 2001 (Lewis 2007, 158). A final document is usually adopted at the end of the European summits, outlining common positions and setting guidelines for further development of the EU.

Since joining the EU, Latvia is also represented at meetings of the European Council at the same level as all other Member States. In the case of the Council of Ministers, the larger EU Member States are at an advantage because they can afford to maintain larger representations in Brussels. In the case of the European

Council, on the other hand, only heads of government or state and foreign ministers may take part at the meetings and, in specific cases, the ministers of finance. Delegations of the Member States may, of course, include other officials as well, but the meetings of the European Council are supposed to give European leaders an opportunity to talk freely and openly in as informal an environment as possible. The meetings of the European Council are transparent and this promotes accountability. Transparency is ensured by the great number of journalists and analysts who cover the meetings. On the one hand, the informal character of the meetings (the leaders are not obliged to stick to a specific agenda) reduces transparency because journalists are not given an opportunity to cover the talks; on the other hand, there is so much attention paid to the meetings of the European Council that all controversies and – thanks to information provided by the delegations of the participating countries – the positions of the different countries do become public. The meetings of the European Council are somewhat dual by nature: they give the political leaders of the Member States a chance to meet and talk in an informal setting, but at the same time, they are extremely formalized events, planned in great detail from A to Z (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 2006, 168).

The meetings of the European Council can be seen as huge public relations events, important not only because of the participation of the EU's political leaders but also because of the weight carried by the decisions that are made here (Dinan 2005, 242). The meetings of the European Council are widely covered by the media, so that the majority of people in the Member States who follow international processes are well informed about them. There are not many who actually read the final documents, but the media coverage of major decisions allows people to stay informed about the work of the European Council without having to seek special EU information sources. After the meetings, political analysts carefully analyze contents of the final document and statements of the political leaders, providing additional information about the summit's decisions and highlighting the more important ones.

The European Council defines the political agenda of the EU: the final documents of the meetings indicate what the EU agenda will be in coming months or even years. This is important in an accountability and transparency context because it makes the work of the EU predictable and provides EU citizens with information about measures that can be expected in the future, giving those population groups which will be most directly affected by the agenda sufficient time to mobilize.

It is possible to conclude that accountability is most prominently exercised in the case of the European Council. There are three reasons for this. First, the meetings of the European Council are widely reported and this information usually reaches the people of the Member States. Second, the decisions reached at the end of the summits help people to understand the functions and common goals of the EU and indicate where changes can be expected in the near future without going into details that could seem too complicated for the man on the street. Third, the

⁶ The first European Council meetings took place at the beginning of the 1970s. In 1974, the European Council was informally institutionalized, but only in 1986 did it become part of the EU institutional structure.

formation of an EU civil society and NGOs is stimulated prior to the European Council meetings that outline the future development of the EU. Many of the issues on the agenda capture the attention of non-governmental actors in numerous Member States simultaneously, opening the way to cooperation between NGOs and interest groups of different Member States, which, in turn, improves the accountability of EU institutions and increases the transparency of the political process.

The European Court of Justice

When the European Coal and Steel Community was founded in 1951, it became necessary to address the question of the rule of law and compliance with the law in the European integration process. It was clear that a mechanism was needed to enforce the laws that were enacted and to create a stable legal basis for European policies – a final authority in interpretation of the European treaties and other European-level regulatory provisions (Wallace 2005, 67). Otherwise, situations could occur in which European treaties and legal provisions were interpreted differently in each Member State. The European Court of Justice (ECJ) was founded in 1952 and was seated in Luxembourg. The Court is made up of 27 judges and eight Advocates General. With adoption of the Single European Act in 1986, foundations were laid for the Court of First Instance, much needed because the number of proceedings brought before the court was gradually increasing. From its founding until 2006, the Court of First Instance had heard over 5,200 cases.⁷

There are several ways in which a case can come to the attention of the Court of Justice. One of them: the Court may receive a request from the court of a Member State for a preliminary ruling on any point of Community law on which that court requires clarification. There are, of course, cases that are addressed directly to the ECJ; however, direct access to this court is generally available only to the privileged actors – Member States and the European Commission. Member States can challenge the validity of a law made by an EU institution, and the Commission can bring proceedings against a Member State for failure to comply with Community law. Over the years, the ECJ has acquired greater powers and can now impose fines both on businesses and Member States for violation of Community law. Member States can be penalized for incorrect administration of Community law.

Since the early 1960s, a series of important ECJ rulings has helped to strengthen the principles of Community law: for example, the principle of Community law superiority over national law, the principle of Member State liability for violation of Community law, etc. As a result, in certain areas of EU policy the European Court of Justice can be considered a key actor, whose performance – thanks to its systematic interpretation, explanation and application of Community law – has promoted European integration. This is particularly true for the situation in the 1970s, when the integration process had subsided (Dinan 2005,

289). Although it is sometimes said that the governments of Member States have become more cautious, that in certain areas (foreign and security policy, internal affairs and justice) they have gone to some length to make sure of finding themselves beyond the competence of the ECJ (Wallace 2005, 74), practice shows that at least the internal affairs and justice pillar is slowly becoming «communized» and, as a result, the role of the European Court of Justice is gradually expanding.

Currently, Latvia's representative at the European Court of Justice is Egils Levits, who is one of the 27 judges.⁸ However, more important in the context of this chapter is the question of how the principles of accountability and transparency function in relations between Member States, EU institutions and the ECJ. One way of examining implementation of the accountability principle would be to examine the way in which the ECJ accounts to Latvia's government, civil society and the general public. However, this approach would be unproductive because the Court's annual reports are primarily an account of its professional performance and the financial aspects thereof. The transparency principle is ensured by the fact that the oral part of court proceedings takes place in open hearings (although the ECJ works primarily with written documents). However, the outcome of the judges' vote is not made public, nor the opinion of the minority.⁹ In other words, adherence to the accountability principle is guaranteed by the open hearings and by accessibility to information on the work of the Court.

Another way of analyzing the Court's role in implementing EU accountability and transparency principles is to examine the ECJ as an instrument that can be used to ensure accountability within the EU institutional and political system. From this angle, the ECJ is an instrument that Latvia's government, courts, non-governmental and other organizations, and public can use to clarify interpretation of Community law, to take action against the state for malpractice, to demand annulment of legislative action, to sue for inaction, to submit appeals or demand revisions of a ruling. The ECJ is an instrument that can be used to help resolve disputes between countries (which rarely occurs, because Member States usually ask the Commission to take action against a country that may have violated Community law), or to settle arguments between Member States and the Commission about the interpretation of Community law.¹⁰

⁸ In the Court of First Instance, Latvia is represented by Judge Ingrida Labucka.

⁹ It should be pointed out that the opinion of the Advocate General has been introduced in the European Court of Justice.

¹⁰ There are two ways in which the case of an individual person may come before the European Court of Justice. This may be in an indirect way, when the court of a Member State decides that in a situation where Community law must be applied to a case involving an individual person it must request the interpretation of the European Court of Justice. Or a person may directly challenge the decision of an EU institution before the European Court of Justice if the decision specifically applies to or directly affects this person. See Consolidated Version of the Treaty Establishing the European Community. Official Journal of the European Communities. C325/126,24.12.2002. See also: The European Court of Justice. Frequently Asked Questions. <http://curia.europa.eu/en/instit/services/dpi/faq1.htm#5>.

⁷ Court of First Instance. Judicature. See http://curia.europa.eu/lv/instit/presentationfr/index_cje.htm.

To date, no proceedings have been initiated against Latvia. This does not mean that Latvia's institutions or businesses have not been involved in ECJ proceedings. Latvia was involved in the *Laval* case, but this came before the ECJ at the request of a Swedish court. The *Laval* case is one of the cases that are extremely important and are discussed long after the court has handed down a ruling. There are several other pending cases, in which Latvian companies (for example, airBaltic) or public administration agencies (for example, the State Revenue Service) are involved either as claimants or respondents. There have been cases where Latvia has become involved in proceedings although it is not directly affected. One such example is the Court of First Instance case regarding language use in ads for senior executive jobs placed in the Official Journal of the European Communities. The announcement of an opening for the job of general director of the European Anti-Fraud Office had been published in only English, French and German. This prompted Italy to take action to achieve annulment of a resolution that allowed publication of similar announcements only in the aforementioned languages. Latvia and Spain became involved in these proceedings because they supported Italy's claim. Although the Court of First Instance ruled in Italy's favour and not only had the concrete job ad withdrawn but also revoked the disputed resolution of the European Commission, it did not, however, accept a number of the arguments put forward by Italy (and therewith by Latvia and Spain) (Republic of Latvia Ministry of Justice 2008). As previously pointed out, an extremely important component of accountability is amendment of the consequences of an erroneous decision, and since it is within the competence of the European Court of Justice to pronounce judgements that are binding for Member States and EU institutions, the ECJ functions as a corrective instrument and thus

promotes accountability. Transparency, accountability and amendment are promoted by other EU institutions as well: the European Ombudsman, the Civil Service Tribunal, and the Court of First Instance.

Conclusions

The above analysis shows that an accountability problem does exist in the European Union and that the problem has quite a few angles. In some EU institutions there is an accountability problem, in others – a transparency problem. And some do not have to account to anyone for anything. This chapter did not examine the EU agencies that were initially established to carry out studies and provide EU institutions with reliable information, but which in practice take part in policymaking and are accountable to no one.

Latvia's options for ensuring EU accountability are limited by a number of problems. For one, Latvia does not have any big Euro-sceptical parties, so that there is no political power that might focus on EU transparency and accountability in its political platform. Secondly, the majority of people in Latvia receive information about the EU from the media, but there is hardly any Latvian media presence in Brussels, Luxemburg or Strasburg. This means that most information about the EU reaches Latvia through the filter of foreign media and news agencies, or through EU information centres, politicians, officials and experts whose interest in the EU is connected with their professional duties. And thirdly, people in Latvia show relatively little interest in the European Union – and little support as well.¹¹ If there is little interest, there is also

¹¹ In the fall of 2008, only 27% of people in Latvia had a positive assessment of Latvia's membership in the European Union. See EC 2008 b, 33.

Box
2.29

Greatest Achievements, Most Serious Problems, Most Important Tasks

Greatest Achievement

The issue of accountability has become an inalienable part of the EU agenda. Since the Maastricht Treaty, a trend has emerged whereby various groups have demanded greater transparency and accountability from the EU. For the time being, Latvia can be considered a relatively new Member State, therefore the issue of demanding accountability from the EU has not been a priority until now, but Latvia gains from the fact that other governments and civil society organizations think the issue is essential.

Most Serious Problem

The demand for accountability from the Latvian public vis-à-vis the EU is rather low. This has two basic reasons: first, public interest in the EU is very low. Eurobarometer data show that in spring 2009 only 25% of Latvia's inhabitants rated Latvia's membership in the EU positively, placing Latvia in last place among EU Member States. Second, the weak capacity of various actors in Latvia hinders demand for accountability. Interest groups from many EU Member States have representations in Brussels, but Latvian civil society and even business organizations have insufficient capacity to ensure the representation of their interests in Brussels. If interests are not represented, demanding accountability becomes impossible.

Most Important Tasks

Given the fact that voters and civil society are too weak to implement their interests with regard to the EU without the mediation of the state, the ability of state institutions to demand and ensure accountability from EU institutions should be strengthened. State institutions should provide support to various social groups in their efforts to attain accountability from EU institutions.

little demand for accountability and transparency. At the individual level, demands for accountability are also made difficult by the complexity of the EU's political process.

EU accountability to Latvia – or to any other country – should, of course, be increased inasmuch as the flow of laws and regulations from Brussels will most likely not decline. Community law affects Latvia, and this is why it is necessary to ensure accountability. A good way of improving EU accountability would be to render the decision-making mechanism more transparent, making it easier for those who are interested to find out what the

Council of Ministers is doing. This would also improve the chances of civil society to become systematically involved in decision making. Admittedly, with people's relative lack of interest in the EU, a lot depends on the capacity of Latvia's public administration institutions to demand accountability from the European Union.

It should, however, be kept in mind that accountability and accounting functions in both directions. Just as Latvia can ask other EU Member States and EU institutions to account for their actions, these can ask Latvia to do the same.

Responsibility in Latvia's Relations with the Diaspora

Nils Muižnieks

Historically, many governments have asserted a moral and political responsibility for the welfare of their ethnic kin or co-religionists living in other countries. Governments in many contemporary European countries, such as Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine even have a constitutional obligation to tend to their kin living abroad (See ECFTL 2001, 3-4). The government of Latvia has no such constitutional obligation, but in recent years has assumed a certain responsibility for supporting, cooperating with and informing Latvians living abroad.

However, it should be born in mind that in European history there have been many cases when the real or declared concern of a government for its kin abroad has been accompanied by coercion or imperialism, leading to inter-state tensions or even war. Here, Nazi Germany's policy towards the Sudetenland Germans, Serbia's policy towards Serb minorities outside of Serbia during the Yugoslav wars, and more recently, Russia's declared aim of protecting its citizens in the breakaway Georgian territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia all come to mind. While certain forms of government-diaspora relations can lead to inter-state tensions, this has not been the case in Latvia's relations with its diaspora.

While concern by governments for co-ethnics or co-religionists living abroad carries the potential of generating tensions, it was also one of the driving forces behind the emergence of the European minority rights regime. Recently, the High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE HCNM) sought to codify permissible action by a country in support of its diaspora, arguing that «States should ensure that their policies with respect to national minorities abroad do not undermine the integration of minorities in the States where they reside or fuel separatist tendencies» (Bolzano Recommendation 2008, 2). Thus, in exercising support for minorities abroad, governments have a responsibility not only towards those minorities, but also towards the host governments and societies, as well as the broader international community.

Do diasporas have responsibilities towards their countries or governments of origin? It is important to examine the circumstances under which the diaspora emerged, the nature of the bond between it and an «external national homeland¹», and the kind of policies pursued by the external national homeland. Diasporas emerge in various circumstances. States are created that do not encompass all members of an ethnic or religious

group. Border changes after wars, the fall of empires or decolonization can divide peoples. Diasporas emerge due to forced migration because of internal conflict and/or persecution. Diasporas can emerge due to voluntary migration to escape poverty or for other reasons. Sometimes, diasporas emerge because a state could not exercise its responsibilities in protecting its own population, guaranteeing welfare or remaining sufficiently accountable to its citizens. In such cases, diasporas sometimes demonstrate responsibility towards the home country by providing economic assistance (remittances, investment, humanitarian assistance), lobbying their host countries to support their home country, keeping alive democratic ideals, and maintaining the language, culture or religion of the home country.

When a state becomes able to protect its citizens, provide for their welfare, and become more accountable towards them, it often assumes responsibility towards a diaspora as well. While governments often invoke a moral imperative to assist their kin, there are often good practical reasons for doing so, as maintaining contact with a diaspora and supporting it may be the first step towards promoting its return migration. Even if all or parts of the diaspora do not return, the diaspora can serve as a valuable diplomatic, political, economic and cultural resource for the country. This has been the case in Latvian-diaspora relations as well.

The Latvian Diaspora: Four Waves of Departure²

In 2006, more than one tenth of all Latvians or more than 150,000 persons of Latvian origin lived outside Latvia, with the largest communities living in the United States (50,000-60,000), the Russian Federation (30,000) the United Kingdom (21,000-24,000), Ireland (15,000), Canada (no data), Australia (no data), Germany (no data), Brazil (10,000), Ukraine (5000), Lithuania (2955), Belarus (2239) and Estonia (2238). More than 80,000 citizens of Latvia lived outside Latvia (SKDS 2006, 13-15). At the same time, a significant number of Germans, Jews, and Russians of Latvian origin lived outside Latvia as well.

Latvia's diaspora is diverse and emerged through at least four different waves of out-migration and/or flight. **The first wave** took place in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and included land-hungry Latvian peasants (primarily to Russia), political refugees from the 1905 revolution (primarily to the United States), and religious

¹ This terminology was coined by Rogers Brubaker (1996), *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

² Though SKDS 2006, 10 speaks of four «waves of departure,» the period from 1939 to 1949 can be divided into two or even more «waves».

missionaries (primarily to Brazil). Some of the descendants of these three groups, particularly those living in Russia, continue to live in compact settlements, maintain a distinct identity and seek contacts with Latvia.

The ten years from 1939 through 1949 witnessed a mass displacement of the population of Latvia from which it never recovered demographically. This **second wave of migration**, overwhelmingly forced migration, took place primarily for political reasons and included not only ethnic Latvians, but Baltic Germans and Jews as well. In 1939 Nazi Germany «repatriated» almost all of Latvia's Baltic Germans, a community with centuries-long traditions in Latvia. After Soviet forces invaded Latvia in 1940, they engaged in a reign of terror, deporting more than 14,000 people to Siberia and the Soviet Far East in 1941, including Latvians and a disproportionate number of Jews. When Nazi forces began their invasion in 1941, some of the Jews remaining in Soviet-occupied Latvia retreated with Soviet forces and sought refuge in Soviet Russia, but almost all Jews remaining in Latvia were killed by the German Nazis and their local collaborators.

At the close of World War II tens of thousands of political refugees, most of them ethnic Latvians, fled West with the retreating German army to avoid persecution by the arriving Soviet forces. At the same time, tens of thousands of Latvian soldiers, most of whom had been conscripted by the occupying German forces, ended up outside of Latvian territory at the end of hostilities, mostly in Western Europe. The return of Soviet rule at the close of World War II was accompanied by mass repression and several additional rounds of deportations in 1944-5 and 1949. A recent survey of the diaspora estimated that 80% of all Latvians in the United States and Canada, as well as 40-45% of those in Germany and Russia hail from this second wave of forced migration (SKDS 2006, 10).

A **third, smaller wave of migration** took place from 1950 through 1990 and involved people from Latvia moving to other areas of the Soviet Union primarily for professional or family reasons. Here, we will not include the many thousands of persons who arrived from other areas of the Soviet Union to work in Latvia for a brief period, only to depart again for other areas of the Soviet Union to continue their careers or retire elsewhere. This latter type of return migration to the East continued even after independence, as persons who arrived during the Soviet era witnessed the collapse of the Soviet Union, then chose to return or were required to leave Latvia as a consequence of the inter-state agreement on troop withdrawal.

A **fourth wave of migration** has taken place from Latvia to the West from 1990 to the present. After the mass displacement during and immediately after World War II, this has involved the largest numbers – up to 100,000 persons. This has included both Latvians and Russian-speakers, and the largest portion has been labour migrants who took advantage of the free movement of labour within the European Union after Latvian accession in 2004. The largest concentrations of migrants have been to Ireland and the United Kingdom, which, along with Sweden, were the only «old» EU member states to permit virtually unrestricted labour migration from Latvia from 2004.

As the overview above suggests, most of the diaspora comprises ethnic Latvians, though it also includes Baltic Germans (in Germany), some Jews (in the US, Israel) and, recently, some Russians (Ireland, UK) as well. Some Baltic Germans have maintained a link with Latvia, engaging in cultural exchanges, tourism or providing humanitarian assistance to Latvia after the restoration of independence (Dribins and Spāritis 2000, 211-215). Many of the Latvian Jews who survived the Holocaust and the war subsequently emigrated to Israel, the United States and elsewhere, and some have maintained a link with Latvia and Latvia's Jewish community. While the number of Russians and other minorities of Latvian origin who emigrated to the West in recent years is significant, no research has been conducted on the extent to which this group feels an affiliation towards Latvia or has joined émigré Latvian organizations with contacts to Latvia.

Latvia-Diaspora Relations: The Soviet Period

World War II and the advent of Soviet rule scattered Latvians throughout the world. There are no precise figures on the number of Latvians who were deported to Siberia and other parts of Russia who survived and returned to Latvia during the Soviet period. Those who remained or were forced to remain in the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic or other places of exile often had to hide their ethnic affiliation for fear of repression, thereby increasing the likelihood of their assimilation. The Soviet authorities had no interest in promoting the maintenance of ties between ethnic Latvians on Latvian territory with their ethnic kin elsewhere in the Soviet Union.

After World War II until 1991, Latvia was in no position to assume any responsibility for its diaspora in the West due to the Soviet occupation. Soon after the end of World War II, the Soviet authorities sought to lure refugees in the West back to Soviet-occupied Latvia, but these efforts met with little success. Subsequently, the Soviet authorities engaged in a systematic propaganda effort both within the Soviet Union and internationally to portray all Latvians who remained in the West after World War II as Nazi sympathizers at best and war criminals at worst (see Ezergailis 2005). This propaganda effort, which also sought to portray political refugees as economic opportunists and traitors to Latvia, had a lingering impact on the attitudes of some in Latvia towards the Western diaspora.

The vast majority of the cohort of World War II-era Latvian refugees to the West was highly educated and, after it became established in the United States, Canada, West Germany, the United Kingdom and elsewhere, quite successful in economic terms. This diaspora organized and created a far-flung infrastructure which initially sprung up around religious (primarily Lutheran) congregations with their Sunday schools and associated community centres in many major cities. These community centres also often featured folk dance troupes, choirs, theatre groups, local printed media outlets, veterans support groups and credit unions. The exile community was imbued with a sense of political mission and sought to impart this to second and

third generation Latvians at summer camps, summer high schools, a full-time Latvian *gymnasium* in Munster, West Germany, and a full-time Latvian studies programme at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in the United States.

While the Latvian community organized national umbrella organizations within different countries, such as the American Latvian Association or the Latvian National Association in Canada, eventually all the major national exile organizations came under the umbrella of the World Federation of Free Latvians. By the same token, second and third generation youth activists came together under their own national (e.g., the American Latvian Youth Association) and global umbrella groups for youth. These groups not only engaged in cultural and self-help activities, they also mobilized politically to inform their local communities and host governments about the situation in Latvia, to lobby governments to maintain non-recognition of the Soviet annexation, to broadcast information into Latvia via the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and to publicize the cause of Latvian independence in the West (see Celle 1998 a; Celle 1998 b).

Contacts between the Latvian diaspora in the West and their kin in Soviet-occupied Latvia were virtually non-existent until East-West détente emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Then, under tight KGB supervision, some cultural and scientific figures from Latvia began to receive permission to travel to the West, creating huge controversies among exile organizations about whether and to what extent such KGB-supervised contacts should be supported. By the same token, similar controversy was provoked when limited visits by exile Latvians to Latvia were permitted for cultural exchanges and tourism (for an overview of exile debates, see Zaķe 2008, 123-52). The aim of the Soviet authorities was to create splits within exile organizations in the hope of rendering them less effective.

Until the late 1980s, exile Latvians could do little to influence political and economic processes in Latvia. However, new opportunities arose when the Soviet government led by Mikhail Gorbachev initiated reforms and independent social and political organizations emerged in Latvia after 1986. Then, foreign radio broadcasts assumed a new importance, as people learned of new demonstrations or the establishment of new organizations via these broadcasts. When opposition groups acquired greater freedom to publish in 1988 and 1989, exile organizations provided badly needed technology, such as computers, printing presses, fax and copying machines. When the Popular Front and other independent political groups sought to address foreign governments, exile organizations served as indispensable go-betweens, arranging meetings and serving as an incipient diplomatic corps. Everywhere Latvian contacts with rightist, anti-communist forces were stronger than those with European social democrats or greens.

Perhaps the most important contribution of the exile community in the restoration of Latvian independence was Western contacts and know-how, ranging from language and inter-cultural communication skills to training in electoral campaigning which helped forces within Latvia

win elections and successfully restore an independent, democratic Latvia in August 1991.³

Latvian-Diaspora Relations after Independence: The Role of «Returnees»

Even before the full restoration of independence in August 1991, several younger Latvians from the West had already moved to Latvia to work together with the independence movement. After independence several hundred more resettled from the West, while a handful arrived from the East as well. Though small in numerical terms, the «returnees» played a very important role in Latvia's Westernization, as they knew the western mentality, standards, and languages and could use this knowledge to promote reforms in Latvia and bring it closer to membership in the EU and NATO. However, the early honeymoon in relations between the diaspora and Latvia was quickly overtaken by a number of disagreements.

Tensions initially arose regarding the issue of citizenship, as early legislative initiatives did not envisage the possibility for Latvians in the West to have their Latvian citizenship restored without losing the citizenship of their adopted countries. Eventually, a compromise was found, as Latvians in the West who themselves had been citizens of interwar Latvia or whose descendants could restore citizenship and maintain another citizenship if they acted before July 1995. This provision, however, did not apply to Latvians living in Russia and the CIS, and a double standard was created.

Another point of tension involved property issues. Many of the exiles who had fled Latvia at the end of World War II belonged to the propertied middle and upper classes during the interwar years. They and their descendants naturally sought to regain ownership of land or buildings that had been nationalized by the Soviet government. In the early 1990s, the Latvian government chose to reconstitute property rights before promoting privatization, and many Latvians living outside Latvia regained title to their old property. However, this occasionally led to tensions, as many residents of Latvia had long resided in the (now) reconstituted apartments or invested their own resources in improving land or other real estate. Reconstituted owners often sought to either sell their property or maintain it by charging market rates for rent. The government provided no assistance to tenants at risk, but merely imposed rent controls, thereby absolving itself of any responsibility for resolving disagreements and foisting this social conflict onto an ineffective court system.

While some returnee Latvians were resented for their ostensibly privileged status in the realms of citizenship and property rights, many came to play an important role in politics, cultural life, and the economy. Almost all who returned to Latvia had at least one university degree and often more. Often, they knew each other well from exile Latvian organizations and networks, and that eased cooperation, mutual assistance and the exchange of information in Latvia. Most visible have been the returnee Latvians who entered Latvian politics. While Vaira Vīķe-

³ The role of Western Latvians has been analyzed in detail by Ivāns 2001; see also Celle 1998 c.

Freiberger, president of Latvia from 1999-2007, is the most well-known example of a former exile to have a successful career in Latvian politics, she was not alone.

In the 5th Saeima, the first post-independence parliament elected in 1993, 15 «émigrés» were elected, including several former leaders of exile organizations. Subsequent elections brought fewer returnees to parliament (7 were initially elected to the 6th Saeima in 1995, 3 to the 7th Saeima in 1998, 2 to the 8th Saeima in 2002, and 2 to the 9th Saeima in 2006). Returnees have held several prominent parliamentary posts, including as chairperson of the Human Rights and Social Affairs Commission and the Commission on European Affairs.

It should be noted that «returnees» have enjoyed some political success despite the fact that the political activity level of Latvians abroad («old» exiles and new émigrés alike) has been very low. In the 2006 parliamentary elections only 7490 citizens of Latvia living abroad (or 10% of the approximately 80,000) voted. The largest number of ballots was cast in the United States (1473), Great Britain (924), Canada (692), Australia (609) and Ireland (537). The most votes from Latvian citizens abroad went to New Era (38%), Fatherland and Freedom/Movement for Latvian National Independence (17%), and the People's Party (14%). For citizens voting in Latvia, the distribution of support differed – in first place was the People's Party (19%), the Union of Greens and Farmers (17%), and New Era (14%). Interestingly, voting patterns outside of Latvia differed substantially by country – in the countries of the «old» emigration, such as the United States, Australia and Canada New Era was the frontrunner by far, garnering 56%, 65% and 46%, respectively, of the votes cast. At the same time, in Ireland, which hosts many recent emigrants, including many Russian-speaking citizens, first place with 20% of the tally was won by For Human Rights in a United Latvia (LR CVK 2006, 198).

While active in the national legislature, returnee Latvians have also assumed a number of ministerial posts. The government of Prime Minister Valdis Birkavs (1993-4) had 3 returnee ministers and two state ministers, while that of Māris Gailis (1994-5) had 3 returnee ministers and 4 state ministers. The governments of Andris Šķēle (1995-1996), Einārs Repše (2002-2004), Indulis Emsis (2004) and Aigars Kalvītis (2004-2006) each had 1 minister or state minister with an exile/émigré background. The posts held by returnees have included a wide array of responsibilities, including Defence, Welfare, Justice, Economy, Finance, State Reform, and Social Integration Affairs. While active in national politics, returnees have also been elected to the Riga and Liepāja City Councils. Returnee Latvians involved in politics have been members of various political parties, including Latvia's Way, Latvia's Movement for National Independence, For Fatherland and Freedom, the Farmer's Union, the People's Party, New Era, and the First Party. The political effectiveness of the «returnees» was occasionally hindered by naivete and a lack of experience in the behind-the-scenes games common in Latvia. They also lacked the wide network of contacts, which the «homegrown» elite developed in the education system, in sports or in Soviet-era institutions.

Returnee Latvians have often served with distinction in a variety of state posts, representing Latvia abroad or

representing other international organizations within Latvia. For example, returnee Latvians have served as ambassadors to the United States, the United Nations, NATO, the Council of Europe, Greece, Portugal, Spain and France. They have also been appointed judge from Latvia to the European Court of Human Rights and the European Court of Justice and served in high-level posts in the European Commission. Returnee Latvians have served as directors of the Latvian Institute, which is responsible for distributing information about Latvia and crafting Latvia's image internationally. At the same time, returnee Latvians have also directed the European Parliament Information Bureau and the Nordic Information Office.

Returnee Latvians have headed a number of state institutions, including the Citizenship and Immigration Department (now Citizenship and Migration Affairs Board), National Human Rights Office (now the Ombudsman), the National Programme (now Agency) for Latvian Language Training, the Centre for Translation and Terminology, and the Constitutional Protection Bureau. Returnee Latvians have also served several terms on the National Radio and Television Council and been promoted to the rank of major in the Latvian armed forces.

While active in state institutions, returnee Latvians have also been prominent in the NGO sector, academia and the media world. Returnees have headed the Soros Foundation – Latvia for many years, the Latvian Institute of International Affairs, the Latvian Centre for Human Rights (from 1993-2003, Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies), the Public Policy Centre *Providus*, the Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation (LAPAS), the gay and lesbian rights NGO *Mozaika*, and the European Movement in Latvia. Returnees have also served in a number of prominent academic positions, including as rector of the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, prorector of the Riga Graduate School of Law, head of the Department of Theology and the Advanced Social and Political Research at the University of Latvia. In the media world, returnees have served as director of Latvian public television, co-founder and editorial page editor at the daily *Diena*, journalists at LTV and Latvian Radio, editor of *The Baltic Observer*, executive director of Radio Skonto, head of Latgales Radio, and national correspondent for *Bloomberg*.

Returnees, particularly younger generation returnees, have also assumed a number of prominent posts in the economy, including director of the Riga Stock Exchange, head of Latttelecom, head of several different commercial banks, partners in several well-known law offices, head chef of Latvia's top-rated restaurant, head of a prominent oil company's branch office in Latvia, as well as managers of several different hotels. Other branches of the economy in which certain returnees have made a name for themselves include construction, real estate development and management, and translation and interpretation services.

Of course, many returnee Latvians have not advertised their origin or assumed positions of prominence, but merely sought to blend in or retire quietly. At the same time, not all returnee Latvians have been successful – some could not adapt or failed in their endeavour to carve out a niche for themselves in independent Latvia and returned to their adopted homelands in the West after brief stints in

Latvia. While attitudes towards returnees were initially very welcoming, they swung to highly critical in the mid-1990s, only to return to a middle position in recent years in which each person is judged on an individual basis.

State Responsibility towards the Diaspora since Independence

Only a small share of Latvians abroad returned to live and work in independent Latvia, while out-migration continued and accelerated after accession to the European Union. Throughout the 1990s, the Latvian government lacked resources to assist Latvians abroad in any meaningful way, and it was Latvian organizations in the West that assisted Latvia in countering Russian propaganda attacks and furthering Latvia's NATO and EU accession. In the United States in particular, American-Latvian lobbyists worked hand-in-hand with Latvian diplomats to promote Latvia's NATO bid (see Auers 2008).

In 2004, after consultations with Latvian organizations abroad, the Latvian government adopted a Latvian Diaspora Assistance Programme, the first policy document of its kind in Latvia. The policy document envisaged intensifying cooperation between Latvians abroad and the Latvian government, local governments and NGOs in Latvia by promoting cultural, educational and religious exchanges and providing financial support for projects. Throughout its brief existence from 2002 through 2008, the Secretariat of the Special Assignments Minister for Social Integration Affairs, as well as the Society Integration Foundation provided financial assistance to both Latvian groups abroad and organizations within Latvia working with Latvians abroad (see LR MK 2004 b; on implementation see ĪUMSILS 2008). After 2004 and a spike in out-migration to Ireland and the United Kingdom, a new focus of attention became ascertaining the reasons for the new out-migration and the possibility of attracting the emigrants back to Latvia.

Research suggests that economic conditions were the primary, but not the exclusive reason for recent out-

migration, and that quality-of-life issues were also very important (see, e.g, Indāns et al. 2006). Research also suggests that both the «old» and the «new» diasporas are very alienated from the Latvian government and its representatives, distrust the government, and are disappointed in Latvia (SKDS 2006, 13-16). It is unlikely that more effective diaspora policy alone could address these problems, although that could be a good start.

Diaspora policy has not been very well-known or popular within Latvia either: according to the survey conducted in 2008 for this Human Development Report, 46% of all respondents did not know anything about diaspora policy, 13% assessed it positively, while 20% assessed it negatively. This lack of awareness suggests that diaspora policy has been neither well-marketed, nor high on the public agenda. Interestingly, the prerequisites for a more active diaspora policy are in place. According to the same survey, 28% of Latvia's inhabitants have relatives abroad (mostly recent emigrants) and 36% believe that recent emigrants should be supported. 46% assess recent emigrants positively, while only 10% assess them negatively, but there are no data available regarding attitudes towards earlier exiles and migrants.

Conclusion

The current economic crisis in Latvia will likely have a number of consequences on both the diaspora and diaspora policy. Firstly, it is likely that the size of the Latvian diaspora in the West will grow, as increasing unemployment and decreasing living standards prompt a new wave of out-migration (see Boxes 2.30 and 2.31). Secondly, austerity measures imposed by the government suggest that diaspora policy will not receive any significant material or human resources in the coming years. By the same token, public awareness of the diaspora as a resource is bound to remain low, which, in turn, holds the risk that Latvia will continue to fail to employ the diplomatic, political, economic, and cultural potential inherent in its diaspora.

Box
2.30

The Crisis and a New Wave of Emigration?

After accession to the EU a significant number of people from Latvia migrated in search of work, primarily (80% of the total) to Great Britain and Ireland. In the wave of outmigration from 2004 until 2008 most migrants moved abroad for a time, then returned to Latvia. With the onset of the economic crisis, are migratory trends changing?

The conclusions of experts and media reports suggest that many emigrants now believe that it is safer to stay abroad than return to Latvia. Moreover, some Latvian emigrants in Great Britain and Ireland are considering attempting to move on to Australia or Canada.

Experts predict a new wave of outmigration in the crisis. Given the fact that many in Latvia already have migration experience within their circle of family or friends, the psychological barrier to migration is lower than it was five years ago. Another «pull factor» is the existence of emigrant networks abroad which have strengthened and can help newcomers get settled.

In November 2009, the SKDS company conducted a survey in which 52% of respondents stated that, if given the opportunity, they would like to move abroad to live in the West. This figure marks a significant jump from the usual 30% and suggests that outmigration will probably intensify in the coming months and years.

Box
2.31

Greatest Achievements, Most Serious Problems, Most Important Tasks

Greatest Achievements

The government has adopted a policy framework for cooperation and, for a time, this framework was implemented in a decentralized manner, by granting funding to diaspora organizations and their cooperation partners in Latvia. Moreover, a number of representatives of the diaspora have returned and integrated well into Latvian political, social, cultural and economic life. These returnees are an underused resource in strengthening Latvia's relations with the diaspora.

Most Serious Problems

In a context of economic crisis diaspora policy will no longer be funded and implemented. This will heighten the alienation of the diaspora.

Most Important Tasks

In order to build public support for a more active, well-funded diaspora policy, it is first necessary to raise awareness about this diaspora, its past and potential contribution to Latvia, and Latvia's responsibilities towards it. At the same time, better communication between Latvia and the diaspora is urgently required. Here, the government could use returnees to address the diaspora, as well as intensify its communication efforts on the World Wide Web. When government finances permit, special posts for cooperating with the diaspora should be established in countries with large émigré communities, such as the United Kingdom, Ireland, the United States and Canada. If Latvia assumes greater responsibility towards its diaspora, the diaspora is more likely to reciprocate.

By reforming citizenship policy, the government could reach out to many members of the Latvian diaspora at no cost. As noted earlier, Latvian exiles from the Soviet occupation living in the West could renew their citizenship without losing the citizenship of their host countries only until July 1995. Latvia should rescind that cutoff date and permit all those in the West who would like to restore their citizenship the opportunity to do so without losing their host country citizenship. Moreover, the government should permit Latvians living in Russia the opportunity to have dual citizenship as well. At the same time, current legislation does not allow children of recent emigrants to Ireland, Great Britain and other countries to have dual citizenship. To ease their children's integration into their new host country, parents often choose their new country's citizenship over Latvia's. The government should permit dual citizenship, thereby retaining the legal bond between the child and Latvia. By easing citizenship conditions for the diaspora, Latvia would symbolically recognize the link between these individuals and Latvia and increase the likelihood that these individuals would maintain a link with Latvia in the future.



A Trade, A Field of Work, Obligations



- 3.1 DOING BUSINESS RESPONSIBLY
- 3.2 THE PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY OF PHYSICIANS
- 3.3 ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE LEGAL PROFESSIONS
- 3.4 RESPONSIBILITY IN INFORMATION TRANSFER
- 3.5 MEDIA RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Doing Business Responsibly

Mārtiņš Kālis

For the purposes of this report, businesses are an extremely interesting topic because it is in their nature to limit the responsibility of owners. This is why the most common form of business in Latvia is called a «limited liability company.» The price of this is greater regulation. How does this affect corporate responsibility? Do Latvia's businesses agree with American economist and Nobel Prize winner Milton Friedman (1912-2006) who claimed that the only responsibility of a business was to make money, or do they have a broader view of their responsibility, as it is usually understood in discussions about responsible business practices? What provides a greater stimulus for doing business responsibly – government legislation or a sense of moral responsibility? These are the main questions that we will seek to answer in this chapter.

In order to talk about responsible business practices, often defined as corporate social responsibility, it is necessary to explain what this means. In this report, the term «responsible business practices» is used to describe an economically motivated, profit generating business process that incorporates responsibility for the environment and society. In Latvia and elsewhere, there can also be other interpretations of this term; however, the widely accepted basis for discussions about corporate responsibility has recently been the UN Global Compact that was adopted in 2000. The Global Compact defines 10 basic principles of corporate responsibility. Initially there were nine principles that were divided into three groups: human rights, labour standards and the environment. Another principle was added in 2004: anti-corruption. We will apply the same categories here as well.

Implementation of the Global Compact is supported in each country by a voluntary alliance of businesses and not a standard UN agency. In Latvia, 13 companies have officially joined the movement. Since 2005, the Employers Confederation of Latvia has been the official partner for implementation of the Compact. Only one organization has joined the movement: the private high school *Patnis*. The Global Compact does not impose legal obligations, and in this report we will treat compliance with laws and regulations as just one form of corporate responsibility and concentrate more on voluntary corporate initiatives.

In view of the fairly widespread negative attitude towards business as such, it should be pointed out that business can also contribute to public benefit. First of all, business produces necessary goods and services; if this were not so, no one would pay for them. Secondly, business is the main source of employment, and corporate taxes also pay for jobs in the public sector. For these and other reasons, it is important to keep in mind that through their activities almost all companies generate public benefit. However, specific circumstances can encourage

a responsible company to do more than just carry out its main function – make profits. Such circumstances can best be illustrated through the concept of external costs.

External Costs

Among the reasons named to explain the need for corporate responsibility are the secondary effects of production, usually called *external costs*. These are not necessarily always negative. Secondary effects are the effects on third persons who are neither buyers nor sellers. Since these third persons are not party to a transaction, its effect on them is not considered when fixing the price of a product or service. One good example: the external costs of energy produced by coal-fired power plants, which emit huge quantities of CO₂. This affects the whole population and the environment; however, the impact of each individual transaction on buyer and seller is too small to be included in the price. In this case, the choice that is open to the company – to take responsibility for the secondary effects of its activities or not – is gradually being taken over by the state. The USA and the European Union are gradually introducing CO₂ quotas and CO₂ markets to include the external costs of energy production in the direct production costs. In other areas as well, the European Union is trying to introduce a «polluter pays» principle, but the state cannot apply taxes or duties to all external costs. This is where the need appears for responsible businesses that voluntarily seek to reduce or reimburse the external costs that they generate.

The Business Environment in Latvia

According to Lursoft data, there are currently more than 162,000 companies in Latvia, the majority of which – almost 98,000 – are limited liability companies; 32,000 are farms, 28,000 are private companies, and just a little more than one thousand are public companies. Other forms of business are even fewer in number. With the exception of the early 1990s, the past few years have seen the greatest number of newly registered companies. In 2007, total turnover of all companies in Latvia was 33.6 billion lats, and profits after taxes were 1.6 billion lats. For comparison, up to the year 2004, corporate profits had never exceeded 0.21 billion lats. In the World Bank's «Doing Business» report in late 2007/early 2008, Latvia's business environment was ranked 29th among the world's most business-friendly environments. Compared to other countries, it was easier at that time to meet contractual obligations or get a loan in Latvia, but it was harder to dissolve a company, register property, or get a building permit. Relationships with employees and recruitment of new employees were also seen as more difficult.

When examining the impact of Latvia's legislation on corporate responsibility, it is important to mention the Law on Public Benefit Organizations. To support corporate philanthropy, organizations in Latvia can be granted the status of public benefit organization, which allows businesses to make donations to societies, foundations and religious organizations that contribute to the public benefit and to receive tax rebates of up to 85% of the donated sum (during preparation of this report, the rebate was reduced to 20%). The maximum possible tax rebate is 1/5 of a company's income tax. This is the most significant form of government support for corporate charity.

Businesses themselves evaluate government support rather negatively, classifying it as the second greatest obstacle to doing business responsibly after a lack of finances. However, many responsible corporate initiatives have nothing to do with the state and are therefore not regulated, so that the above result must be seen critically. The following sections will show that legislation does provide rules to promote responsible behaviour, but many businesses simply ignore them. Approximately half of Latvia's companies have not carried out job safety or environmental impact assessments, although these have been anticipated in legislation. Businesses may see these rules as unnecessary bureaucracy, but experience shows that they often help to identify possibilities for improving the work of a company. The conclusion is that Latvia's legislation would help to increase corporate responsibility if it were observed by all. During the preparation of this report, measures were also being taken to optimize the work of government institutions. These included efforts to reduce bureaucracy, which leaves room for hope that cooperation between the public and the private sector could improve in the future.

Corporate Responsibility in Latvia

In Latvia, understanding of corporate responsibility is still in its early stages. The most frequently mentioned reason for various programmes is the desire to «do the right thing,» although the right thing is rarely defined. The external cost factor could help businesses to understand the need for corporate responsibility and convince employees, owners, customers and others who are involved, but, at present, for the majority of Latvia's businesses it is still an unfamiliar notion. In a 2005 survey on the attitude of businesses towards corporate responsibility in Latvia (King and Pētersons, 2009), only 1% of the interviewed company officials found «corporate social responsibility» to be a clearly useful notion. However, 45% of the businesses had some kind of responsible business programme and 10% had truly effective programmes. There could be two explanations for this: either Latvia has responsible businesses that just don't like the expression «corporate social responsibility,» or businesses develop these programmes under public or other pressures although they don't find the notion of corporate social responsibility particularly useful. The majority of the businesses did not define any priorities, and 10% simply did not understand the idea of corporate social responsibility.

In the cases where businesses had defined their priorities, these could be divided into four groups: 1. achievement of the company's goals (17% named this as their priority); 2. welfare of the employees (13%); 3. concern for social problems (10%); 4. protection of the environment (6%). Interesting and extremely limited is the respondents' understanding of the term «stakeholders.» For 71% this included the owners of the company; for 57%, the employees; for 50%, the customers; for only 12%, the government, for 4%, the local community; and for 1%, non-governmental organizations.

The most frequently named reason for development of a responsible business programme are the values of company owners and managers, which persuade them to «do the right thing.» The second reason is the coordination of marketing and responsible business activities. The third reason is similar: better achievement of the company's goals, something that is often connected with improvement of the company's reputation.

Latvia's businesses can be divided into three groups according to their attitude towards corporate responsibility. In the first group are those who find that their only responsibility is to generate profits and reap private gains. The only reason for this group to comply with laws and regulations is the avoidance of penalties. In the second group are businesses that also show concern for social standards and voluntarily comply with laws and regulations. In the third group are those – usually led by values, ethics and a desire to «do the right thing» – that also engage in voluntary social and other responsible business activities.

Readiness to Assume Responsibility

In a survey carried out in 2005, senior executives (96% of the respondents) and company owners (4%) claimed that owners were the ones who showed the greatest support for responsible business practices (Mazurkiewicz 2005). According to the respondents, employees were somewhat less positively inclined, and the government and non-governmental organizations much less so. Although these results were influenced by the selection of respondents, they are to some extent true. Many company owners and managers would like to see greater responsibility in their company, but there are several deterrent factors. One factor, which is mentioned most often as an obstacle to corporate responsibility, is the financial factor. Being a pioneer of corporate responsibility in any industry frequently means higher costs and, consequently, lower profits, but making profits is the main function of a business. The second factor is public reaction: many businesses, often quite rightly, agree with the saying: «Good deeds do not go unpunished.» For example, if a company increases the transparency of its operations, it risks attracting greater attention from analysts who will highlight the company's slightest mistakes simply because data from other companies is unavailable. So, in a certain way, the words of a bank manager, spoken at a conference, were quite justified: «We want to be one step ahead of what the public understands as corporate responsibility, but not more.»

And so, step by step, we come to the individual: how ready is each member of society in Latvia to «put his money where his mouth is» in regard to responsible corporate behaviour? Although we will not get a direct answer to this question, we can get a vague idea from a survey on responsibility carried out by the SKDS Marketing and Public Research Centre at the end of 2008. More than 80% of the respondents said that the government was primarily responsible for solving the country's economic problems and that it was currently not doing enough. At the same time, the respondents had a very modest rating of their own influence on the parliament and Cabinet: just a little over 2 points on a scale from one to 10. These results indicate that people in Latvia are not ready to assume responsibility, preferring to pass it on to those they cannot control. The situation with corporate responsibility could be similar: in words, people would like businesses to show more responsibility, but are themselves not ready to do the same by paying more for the products and services of responsible companies.

Corporate Involvement in Addressing Social Issues

In a survey carried out at the beginning of 2005, 2/3 of the companies interviewed claimed to have taken part in social projects unconnected with the company in the period from 2002-2004. To the question about their plans for the next five years, approximately the same number of companies answered that they would be taking part in social projects; a large part of the companies that had not been involved in social projects could not say whether they would take part in such projects in the next five years.

Most companies become involved in such projects to improve their public image, to develop a corporate brand, or to ensure long-term existence of the company. Of the companies that had taken part in social projects, 2/3 had cooperated with non-governmental organizations, 50% with municipal institutions, 40% with government institutions, and 25% with other companies. The most

popular target groups for corporate social projects were children, young people and society at large (60% of the companies), people with special needs (30%), older people (25%), the local community (15%), unemployed persons (15%), and ethnic minority groups (5%). When asked about social projects in which they were involved, three-quarters of the companies named educational projects, three-fifths named health-care projects, one-quarter named training projects, one-fifth named housing projects, and the same number of companies named projects connected with development of the local community. Every tenth company claimed to be involved in projects that support ethnic minorities. Data collected in 2007 show different priorities.

Finance Ministry data for 2007 show public benefit organizations as having received 42 million lats in donations (financial and non-financial). Although not all donations came from businesses, and approximately 6 million lats came from foreign legal and natural persons, Box 3.1 gives a rough idea of corporate priorities in regard to donations. Sports organizations frequently receive support because they give the sponsor a lot of publicity. Many experts have pointed out that this is not in keeping with the Law on Public Benefit Organizations, but at present the law still allows tax rebates on donations made to professional sports organizations (see Politika 2006).

A survey commissioned by the AB.LV Public Benefit Foundation in 2008 showed that 26% of Latvia's businesses engaged in some form of charity. 51% of these donated money, 39% donated products or services, 37% also involved their employees in charity projects: invited them to donate products (44%), or time (32%), or involved employees in fund raising for public benefit activities (23%). The fact that businesses engage in different forms of charity, often involving their employees and in this way increasing their motivation, must be judged positively. The RIMI donation boxes and other projects are good examples of successful cooperation between public benefit organizations and businesses.

The years 2005-2007 were particularly good ones for business and prompted individual initiatives that could

Box
3.1

Use of Donations for Public Benefit Activities in 2007

Use of donations	Million lats	%
Use of donations for public benefit activities	32.01	100.0%
Sports	15.41	48.1 %
Charity; help in emergency situations; social welfare for poor and underprivileged groups	6.29	19.7 %
Protection of human and individual rights; development of civil society	4.02	12.6 %
Culture	2.79	8.7 %
Education and science	2.59	8.1 %
Health care	0.86	2.7 %
Environment	0.06	0.2 %

Source: Ministry of Finance 2009

become extremely important in the future. Four corporate charity foundations were established during this time.¹ These were set up as separate entities, making their decisions less dependent on business interests. Being less affected by profit fluctuations, they are also more reliable sources of support for public benefit organizations.

Corporate responsibility will undoubtedly be affected by the economic situation in the coming years. On the one hand, businesses will no longer have the staggering profits that could be freely used to support social projects; on the other hand, they will have to come up with ways of reducing unnecessary costs and increasing productivity in order to survive and by doing this they will promote responsible behaviour towards the environment and their employees.

Corporate Involvement in Environmental Protection

As indicated, companies do not always pay great attention to environmental issues: of all donations spent on public benefit activities in 2007, only 0.2% or 57,000 lats were allocated to environmental projects. It is not surprising that with such poor support there are no data or surveys available in Latvia on corporate activities in the environmental sector.

In a survey carried out in 2005 in the Baltic states, 60% of Latvia's businesses claimed to have participated in projects connected with environmental protection in the previous three years. In Lithuania, the figure was 68%; in Estonia, 50%. In the case of Estonia, however, relatively many of the respondents (15%) could not say whether or not their company had been involved in such projects. Of the companies in Latvia that had taken part in environment projects, 14% had taken part only in external projects unconnected with the company's business; 53% had taken part only in internal projects connected with the company's business; one-third had taken part in both types of projects. As compared to the previous three years, in the following five years companies planned less participation in solely external environment projects, but more participation in a combination of internal and external projects. There were fewer companies that did not plan any involvement in environment projects, but more companies that could not give a definite answer.

Of the companies that took part in external environment projects, the majority (two-thirds) cooperated with municipal institutions. These were followed by government institutions, non-governmental institutions, other companies, local community organizations, and others.

Sorting waste was not particularly popular in late 2004/early 2005. About one-third of the respondents said waste sorting was possible in their company. About one-third of the companies also had an eco-management certificate. Nearly half of the companies claimed to have carried out an environmental impact assessment. However, in view of

the fact that in job safety questions the opinion of experts as to whether or not a company met its legal obligations was considerably lower than that of company managers or owners, and the fact that companies overrated their contribution to the education of employees, the above results must be viewed critically, keeping in mind that companies tend to exaggerate their sense of responsibility.

But the positive examples should also be mentioned here. One of the most visible ones is *Mammadaba* [MommaNature], a Latvian State Forests initiative that seeks to bring Latvia's population and forest visitors towards more responsible recreational activities in natural environments. Latvian State Forests is also an active supporter of the volunteer clean-up movement that has become extremely popular in recent years and is supported by many other companies as well. Support for the participation of company employees in volunteer clean-up activities is one of the best examples of corporate responsibility: it benefits the environment, motivates employees, promotes corporate team spirit, gives the company additional popularity, and raises its prestige. This makes it a simultaneous investment in the company, the community and the environment.

Addressing Employment Issues

One of the main missions of business is to provide jobs. For this reason, good employer-employee relations are a significant sign of corporate social responsibility. Nevertheless, the improvement of working conditions frequently has nothing to do with employers' concern for their employees or pressure from the employees but rather with financial motives. The authors of the «Workplace Conditions and Risks» survey that was carried out in 2007 revealed that conditions in companies that were least often inspected by the State Labour Inspectorate were least likely to meet the requirements of the law (Matisāne and Vanadžiņš 2007). The motivation is clear: if a company is more likely to be inspected, it will attempt to create a workplace that meets the requirements of the law to avoid the payment of fines. There is also a significant correlation between companies that make under-the-table salary payments and companies that ignore the requirements of the Labour Law.

Job safety improvements are proceeding at the same rate as in previous years. In 2007, 73% of employees found that safety had not improved at their place of work. Almost every fifth respondent said that safety had improved slightly or considerably, but only 1.4% claimed that safety had worsened. This last figure is three times less than it was in the surveys of previous years.

Employers are often unaware of problems in their company. For example, half of the interviewed employers who claimed that their company fully or almost fully (at least 9 points out of 10) met the requirements of the Labour Law had not carried out a workplace risk assessment, which provides the basis for a company's workplace safety system. This was confirmed by a comparison of ratings regarding compliance of the workplace with the requirements of the law. The average rating given by employers was 8.1 points out of 10; the average rating given to the same companies by job safety experts was only 5.6 points.

¹ The Grindeks Foundation for Support of Education and Science, the AB.LV Public Benefit Foundation, the Rietumu Banka Charity Foundation, the CEMEX Opportunity Foundation for the Brocēni and Saldus Districts. The *Ziedot* and the *Iespējamā misija* foundations are also good examples of corporate charity.

Only 22% of the companies had fully and another 22% had partially carried out a workplace risk assessment, although this requirement has been anchored in Latvia's legislation since 2002. Of these 44% companies which have the basis for preparing a preventive measures plan (preparation of such a plan is also prescribed by the law), only half have done so. Very rarely do workplace risk assessments fail to uncover problems. This suggests that approximately half of the companies that have carried out a risk assessment have done so purely for the sake of form.

In contrast to the majority of other areas where numerous obstacles were named to the implementation of responsible business practices, in this case 61% of the respondents claimed there was nothing to prevent the implementation of job safety measures, but only 22% of the employers had prepared a preventive measures plan. However, it is possible that employers are simply unaware of obstacles to job safety measures because they are uninformed about the need for such measures. 62% of the interviewed job safety experts named not only a lack of money but also a lack of understanding and support from employers as obstacles.

Where job safety is concerned, there are apparent differences between Latvian and foreign companies. 55.4% of companies with local ownership had not carried out a workplace risk assessment, but for companies with foreign or partly foreign ownership the figure was lower – 42.8%. There is an even greater difference between companies that work only for the domestic market and those that work for foreign markets: no risk assessment had been carried out in 56.0% and 36.8% of the companies, respectively. Reasons for such divergences could be cultural or differences in the size of the companies. Many foreign companies apply their internal rules to the Latvian subsidiaries, and these often include measures to improve workplace safety. On the other hand, companies that work for foreign markets or have foreign owners tend to be larger than domestic companies and are therefore more often prepared to spend administrative resources on the implementation of Labour Law requirements.

Social Dialogue

Social dialogue is consultation between the government, employers and labour unions. Although this is one of the most important instruments for improving working

conditions, it is fairly undeveloped in Latvia. Only a quarter of those employed in Latvia have collective agreements, which is one of the lowest figures in the new EU Member States and significantly lower than in the old Member States, where – with a few exceptions – 80% of those who are employed have collective agreements. Furthermore, in Latvia, in nine out of 10 cases, collective agreements have been negotiated at company level, which suggests a poorly developed social dialogue at the national level. However, this is largely because employees themselves are more concerned with income than with job safety.

At company level, the social dialogue partners on the employee side are authorized employee representatives who negotiate labour issues; authorized representatives who negotiate work safety issues; and labour union officials who negotiate both issues. Box 3.2 shows that big companies (250 or more employees) are more likely to have official employee representatives since it is much more difficult for each employee of a large company to negotiate separately with the employer. However, there are still many companies, among them large ones, that do not have employee representatives or work councils.

Even when companies do have an employee representative, this does not always guarantee an active social dialogue. 18.6% of the managers in such companies found it difficult to name the problems most frequently discussed with employee representatives. This could be one of the reasons why employees do not always see the point of joining a labour union. Next to the 16% who had already joined a union, somewhat less than one-third claimed that they wanted to or were likely to want to join a labour union. On the whole, Latvia's employees are rather inactive: almost three-quarters of the company managers claimed that employees had not submitted proposals connected with labour issues or work safety. The issues most frequently discussed with employee representatives were: working conditions (49.2% of the companies with official employee representatives), salaries (29.4%), working hours and overtime (23.2%).

Employee Education

An important aspect of the improvement of a company's competitiveness, productivity, and sustainability, as well as for the development and future prospects of its employees is employee education and in-service training. Here, Latvia's

Box
3.2

Employers and Employees Who Claim that the Company Has an Employee Representative (%)

	Employers	Employees	Employers in large companies
Authorized employee representative	8.7	8.0	46.1
Work safety representative	3.7	8.5	36.0
Labour union official	9.1	10.5	37.8

Source: Matisāne and Vanadziņš 2007

employers have a marked tendency to overestimate their investment. In the corporate management survey, only 1% of the respondents said they did not offer their employees any education opportunities. 37% said they trained employees when this was necessary, 13% claimed to provide continuous education opportunities, but 49% said they used both methods.

According to *Eurostat* data, in 2005, professional education opportunities were provided by 30% of Latvia's companies. This is significantly less than the figure for Estonia (56%) or the EU-27 average (49%). Latvia also had fewer employees – only 15% – taking part in professional education programmes, whereas the average figure in the European Union was 33%. The reason given by the majority of companies for their failure to provide professional education opportunities was that their employees all had the required knowledge and skills, making further education unnecessary. This, however, contradicts the frequently voiced dissatisfaction with Latvia's education system and the poor productivity of Latvia's companies and their employees.

The Fight against Corruption

We usually talk about corruption and anti-corruption issues in a public administration context; however, companies also play an important role – not only in their dealings with public administration institutions. There are also problems within companies themselves, where corruption causes losses for the owners and distorts the business environment. In 2004, the UN Global Compact movement acknowledged the importance of the corporate battle against corruption by adding a 10th principle to the Global Compact: businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery. In this part of the chapter, we apply the definition of corruption used by the international anti-corruption organization Transparency International: «The misuse of entrusted power for private gain» (see United Nations Global Compact).

In Latvia, the two major players in the popularization of anti-corruption measures are Transparency International Latvia (Delna) and the Global Compact movement, which is coordinated by the Employers Confederation of Latvia. In recent years, however, the Global Compact movement has not showed any activity. Transparency International Latvia (Delna) has carried out a number of surveys and created the *businesspretkorupciju.lv* [business against corruption] homepage, which, however, ceased working during the preparation of this report.

In a survey carried out in 2007 on the encounters of German companies in Latvia with corruption (Garanča, Hillig and Putnis 2007), 16 of the 19 respondents had heard about corruption in their area of business; of these, 12 had heard about this after Latvia's accession to the European Union. Two of the respondents admitted to participating in various forms of corruption to obtain advantages. Two others did not answer the question about whether or not they had engaged in corrupt activities, but one respondent who had disclaimed such methods later admitted to making illegal payments to traffic police officers. All this

suggests – albeit indirectly – that corrupt methods might be applied at company level as well.

The survey confirmed once again that businesses do not always have an objective view of their possible behaviour in regard to corruption. When asked whether they would end cooperation with a corrupt business partner (supplier, buyer, etc.), 10 of 19 respondents gave a positive answer. Nevertheless, doubts are raised by the fact that in only four of these 10 cases the company's anti-corruption principles were also binding for the business partner. The anti-corruption principles of the remaining six companies had not been put in writing, which made it difficult to explain them to a potential business partner. Six of the 19 respondents said they would not end cooperation with a corrupt business partner, giving the high costs of breaking a contract as the reason.

A population survey commissioned by Latvia's Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau at the end of 2007 also revealed that people rank private companies among the most dishonest and potentially corrupt organizations. Problems in Latvia's business sector are also suggested by the money laundering schemes involving hundreds of companies that were recently disclosed by the State Revenue Service and the Financial Police.

A report on anti-corruption measures in the banking sector (Kālis and Nītiņa 2008) showed that the situation has hugely improved in the past four years and that bank officials no longer see corruption as a significant problem or threat, although, according to some of the interviewed officials, when central or local governments seek financing for their projects, tenders are occasionally still written with specific banks in mind. One important problem that was identified in the report was the mentality of employees, which made it difficult to achieve reporting of corrupt activities. It was much more likely that the incorrect behaviour of a colleague would be taken up with the colleague rather than reported to the management, although this would help to deal with corruption problems more objectively and effectively.

Summary

Understanding of corporate responsibility has developed in Latvia only in the past 20 years together with the market economy, and compared with countries in the West it is still in the early stages of development. In this chapter, we have looked at the problems and the positive examples; both show that responsibility still has to fight for its place on Latvia's list of corporate priorities, but there are hopeful signs.

Although this chapter has focussed primarily on collective responsibility, in reality everything still comes down to the individual. It is hard to blame companies for not including external costs in the price of their products if customers are not willing to pay a higher price for responsible business practices. And it is hard to blame companies for not conducting a social dialogue if employees are not ready to take part in the dialogue. If all employees refused to accept under-the-table salary payments in favour of safer working conditions for themselves and their colleagues, if clients were ready to pay more for responsibly produced goods, if

company owners were willing to accept smaller profits in the short term to ensure the company's existence in the long term, businesses would find ways to show more responsibility and means to do so profitably. There are also things that businesses themselves should improve: they should take a more critical attitude towards their achievements in regard to job safety, social dialogue, employee education; they should reassess whether the donations for which they have received tax rebates truly are donations and not sponsorships; they should provide greater transparency to make it possible for clients to judge and choose the products and services of the most responsible companies. The public and private sectors should try to achieve a balance between curtailment of bureaucracy and regulations to ensure a certain level of responsible business behaviour.

The aforementioned individual responsibility is at the root of many excellent initiatives. Corporate philanthropy is on the increase in Latvia. On the initiative of company owners, several charitable foundations have been established in recent years, which ensure better quality and transparency in decisions about public benefit projects and more reliable support for such projects. Among the truly fine examples is the volunteer clean-up movement, which is fairly specific for Latvia and combines many of the benefits of responsible business practices: enhanced corporate prestige, employee motivation, and an improved environment. Such examples can serve as a good starting point for companies that are only gradually becoming aware of the importance of responsibility in their work.

Box
3.3

Greatest Achievements, Most Serious Problems, Most Important Tasks

Greatest Achievements

The greatest achievement is the desire of businesses to be responsible. Several of the charitable initiatives mentioned in this section have been launched by company owners or managers. They should serve as examples of responsible corporate behaviour to raise client demands on other companies, eventually making responsibility an integral part of successful business operations.

Most Serious Problems

The greatest obstacle to the development of corporate responsibility in Latvia is lack of demand. Although in surveys people appear to understand the importance of responsible business practices and even demand them, this does not affect peoples' choice of products or services. However, without visible impact on customer choices it is difficult for businesses to justify investments in activities that do not or do not seem to generate profits.

Most Important Tasks

Responsible businesses must make their good examples public and work on creating a positive environment for the development of corporate responsibility. At present, companies are able to demonstrate that, in the long term, responsible business means successful business. The public must see the positive effects of the tax payments made in previous years, of the investments in employee education, of the cautious use of resources and other forms of responsible business behaviour. This is also a time of reform in the public sector and businesses must take advantage of this opportunity to change the rules that have until now prevented them from demonstrating corporate responsibility.

The Professional Responsibility of Physicians

Vija Sile

Responsibility and Accountability

Above all, responsibility is *the ability to recognize the consequences of one's actions*. This ability is an indicator of an individual's moral maturity and is closely connected with a physician's areas of professional activity and responsibility.

Responsibility also indicates *an awareness of obligation*. As a result, a professional recognizes the obligation to provide information about prospective actions, subject these actions to critical evaluation and predict the outcome of undertaken initiatives. Furthermore, a professional is also prepared to accept responsibility (legal liability and moral responsibility) for errors in the case of inaccuracy or malpractice. Therefore, responsibility is the ability to recognize the consequences of one's actions as well as acceptance of the responsibility for a patient's life, health and welfare.

At the same time, one of the most complex issues in medicine and healthcare is defining the dimensions of moral responsibility. Moral responsibility can apply to the individual as a moral subject, or to the state or individual institutions, or even to several moral subjects simultaneously. Responsibility can be measured in a vertical dimension (hierarchically) and horizontally. In addition, these measurements will manifest themselves based on the character of the responsibility (the consequences of an action).

To an equal extent, just as there exist differences between individual and collective responsibility, there are differences in the sanctions for deliberate and unwitting actions. An assessment of responsibility is rendered more complex by an evaluation of the consequences or result, and by determining the motives for action. Certain questions must be answered: the object of responsibility, *vis-à-vis* which institution and when (before or after the action), what defines the action (values), etc. However, the answers to these questions depend on the situation. Treatment is received by the individual and not by the illness. Therefore, responsibility is formed by an analysis of three interconnected elements of competence – the physician's knowledge, skills and attitude.

Unfortunately, the area of professional ethics is limited, as it concerns only one element of competence (and criteria at the same time) – the shaping, determination and development of *attitudes*, and sanctions. However, the assessment of an action includes other aspects as well: the judicial, the psychological, the social, etc.

It is difficult to measure the connection between responsibility and accountability as the objective consequences of an individual's actions. No obligatory healthcare quality standards have been implemented in Latvia. There are no measuring instruments, no precise indicators for a cause and effect analysis of healthcare results, which are directly affected by the presently functioning healthcare-system

model – a model that has resulted from ongoing reforms that were begun in 1992. In defining the moral subject, who is responsible, there are certain voluntary assumptions, or rhetoric, behind which one can successfully conceal irresponsibility or transfer responsibility to another moral subject.

The physician is the first and main moral subject from whom responsibility is demanded on an individual level; on a collective level this is the State. In Paragraph 1.1 of the Latvian Physicians' Code of Ethics one finds a definition of the physician's individual moral and social responsibility: «Together with the rest of society a physician is responsible for the improvement of the public's general health and a fair healthcare system» (LĀB 1995). However, it must be taken into account that a physician is a working professional in the state healthcare system, and the system determines the frame of the physician's activities. Thus, the physician's individual responsibility must be viewed in the context of the healthcare system. The determination of the physician's individual ethical responsibility correlates to the regularity, tendencies and most characteristic symptoms that pertain to the way that the system functions.

The socialistic healthcare system in (Soviet) Latvia concentrated on specialization, research activities and the construction of healthcare facilities. This system encompassed the entire population equally, although there was a clearly defined lack of responsibility for the individual patient (Tragakes et al 2008, 32). A healthcare system of higher quality, in terms of diagnostics and treatment, was ensured for a certain sector of the population – the party functionaries and their family members. This special contingent was provided with a separate network of facilities (clinics, hospitals and sanatoria).

The first feature of the old system that the healthcare organizers of newly independent Latvia confronted was pronounced centralization. This is illustrated by the fact that in 1994 35 health insurance funds were founded. Their task was the apportionment of funds from the state budget, based on legal obligations with the healthcare providers. Thus, the state as the main entity responsible for the healthcare system delegated responsibility in a financially decentralized manner to the social institution under its jurisdiction. Private healthcare also continued to develop within the healthcare system. Presently, one third of the system consists of private healthcare, and two thirds of the healthcare is state financed. There is a trend towards an increase in the proportion of private healthcare as a reaction to the state's inability to offer the public comprehensible, accessible and comprehensive healthcare on all levels.

General distrust of existing healthcare will create more fertile soil for the demand for various alternative (i.e., folk healers, Eastern medicine, seers, chiropractics, etc.) health

services, which will take the form of protester/patient-financed healthcare.

Since the reform of the Latvian healthcare system was initiated there have been several forms of financing: the state budget, patient co-payments and services for fees. All of the aforementioned financial sources function simultaneously within one healthcare institution. This makes it unclear how the social rights of patients can be guaranteed, although Paragraph 4.3 of the State Agency for Compulsory Health Insurance (SACHI) statutes states that one of the main functions is «to provide information on publicly available healthcare services and their procurement procedures, and to provide necessary assistance to the public to ensure their social rights through the receipt of healthcare services» (LR MK 2002). On the one hand, SACHI guarantees the implementation of social rights and provides information. On the other hand, the existing quota system simultaneously guarantees and limits accessibility. As a result, social rights remain partially unimplemented and exist on a rather declarative level.

There is a clear separation between healthcare services paid by the state and services that are not covered by the State. This separation is clearly defined in the Republic of Latvia Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 1046, adopted December 19, 2006, «Procedures for the Organization and Financing of Healthcare.» However, it is difficult for the patient to distinguish between these services within one healthcare institution, i.e. which type of payment is in effect at the moment when the patient arrives at the healthcare institution. The state guarantees payment of healthcare for every inhabitant of Latvia according to quotas. However, the patient does not know to which state-paid services the quotas apply – however, the patient does not feel well and desires medical assistance.

Admittedly, during the past ten years attempts to reform the healthcare system have not been very successful. The explanation for this is due largely to the fact that the healthcare system's management is more political than professional. Attempts to implement changes in the healthcare system «at all costs,» while ignoring basic givens, has led to an even larger gap and misunderstandings between the service providers, patients and Ministry of Health officials. Being an agency that pays for healthcare services, SACHI is often equated by patients with the entire healthcare system. In reality, SACHI merely uses financial and human resources that are available to the agency in order to implement «creations that have been concocted» in the Ministry of Health. The communication between SACHI and physicians, patients and journalists is not always successful. One is left with the impression that SACHI, an institution intended for implementing social rights, has lost its general purpose: improving the accessibility and quality of healthcare services for the Latvian population. The responsibility of healthcare institutions and medical personnel to provide healthcare services as permitted by state financing does not ensure constitutionally guaranteed rights to State-paid healthcare. The state's actual duty to guarantee patients' social rights becomes a mere proclamation, and as a result, the subject responsible for the situation «evaporates.» Who is responsible? – the Ministry of Health, SACHI, the healthcare institution, the concrete physician

or the medical personnel? From the aforementioned we can conclude that potential of collective responsibility is very small. Furthermore, in order to determine individual responsibility, it would be necessary to scrutinize the areas for which each physician is responsible individually. It would also be necessary to examine how the general approach to medical ethics operates in reality.

Variables and Constants in Medical Ethics

The role of medical ethics within the professional ethics of physicians is constant. This is confirmed verbally when the Hippocratic Oath is taken and the professional physician undertakes basic ethical obligations which, in turn, are implemented in practice. The preamble of the Latvian physicians' Code of Ethics emphasizes that the Hippocratic Oath expressed the wish of the physicians of that day and age to create ethical norms in their personal life and in the practice of medicine. These norms have always been recognized by physicians as highly important. Since the times of ancient Greek healers, technology and the study of medicine have undergone essential changes, although the Hippocratic Oath has remained a cultural and historical value. The use of a modernized version of the Hippocratic Oath has become a contemporary Latvian tradition at the graduation ceremonies of physicians and other medical personnel. This is a solemn promise that the new medical and healthcare specialists read in Latin, Latvian and English.¹

Changes in the organization and functioning of Latvian medicine and the healthcare system have lasted almost two decades. At the same time, medical ethics as a branch of professional ethics that determines the basic principles of doctor-patient relationships has undergone essential transformations. These changes have not affected the content of these principles, as much as their usage.

Since the 1980s the indispensability of **the observation of patients' rights has become increasingly pronounced. As a result, there has also been a change of emphasis in the relationship between patients and medical personnel – especially in the relationship between patients and physicians.** Slowly but surely, the issues surrounding patients' rights are gaining ground in Latvian society. The functions of education and support, and the protection of patients' rights are most actively addressed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Latvian Office of Patients' Rights (LOPR) was one of the first NGOs whose chief purpose was the protection of patients' rights. As noted by the authors of «Latvia: a Report on the Healthcare

¹ «In reality, it is completely unclear which treatise was written by Hippocrates himself, though it is known for certain that the physician's oath which medical personnel give today when they receive their diploma, was not formulated by him,» asserts the translator of «Hippocratic writings» Agnese Gaile in the April 2002 edition of the journal *Doctus*. At the same time, in an article devoted to this topic in the February 2009 edition of the same journal, J. Vētra un A. Lūse stress that the Hippocratic oath is one of the cornerstones of medical ethics which attests to belonging to the professional community and grants the physician's profession a particular status, emphasizing the ethical position of the doctor and his or her responsibility before the public.

System»: «Improvements in the area of patients' rights began in 2001 with... the creation of the Latvian Office of Patients' Rights» (Tragakes et al. 2008, 46). LOPR fostered the protection of patients' rights, conducted relevant research, and also actively organized information campaigns and promoted the initiation of state policy in the area of patients' rights. LOPR was in operation from August 21, 2001, until November 30, 2007. LOPR had become a recognized organization that patients turned to with their complaints about the quality of healthcare. For instance:

- in 2002 LOPR received 647 patient complaints,
- in 2003 – 1071 complaints,
- in 2004 – 1372 complaints,
- in 2005 – 1188 complaints,
- in 2006 – 1083 complaints.

The increase in the number of complaints received by LOPR reflected a rise in awareness more than a sharp deterioration in the provision of healthcare services. An intense increase in the number of complaints appeared after information campaigns were carried out. Presently, the Latvian Ombudsman's Office (see Tiesībsargs 2008) is working actively in the area of protecting patients' rights. In addition, since September 2008, the Ministry of Health has supported the introduction of a Patients' Ombudsman at the Eastern Clinical University Hospital of Riga. The main objectives of the newly-installed Patients' Ombudsman are to ensure patients' rights by informing and educating medical personnel and patients, and resolving conflicts through mediation. The Patients' Ombudsman is still a very new institution, which makes it too early to judge the effectiveness of its activities.

The Ombudsman's activities cover a broad spectrum of rights issues. According to the 2007 Ombudsman's Report

(Tiesībsarga birojs 2008), 72 written and 46 oral complaints were received concerning the right to healthcare. The most urgent issues that came up in this period included the quality of healthcare, limited access to reimbursed medicines, the range of medical services, access to medical information, confidentiality, and complaints about a specific physician's decision, e.g. refusal to station a patient in the hospital. The Ombudsman stresses that healthcare institutions, medical products and services must be physically securely accessible to all social groups, especially to the underprivileged – the elderly, children, the disabled, etc. «Possibly, rare and costly procedures may be available only at selected locations in the country, but first-aid products and services must also be available in rural areas. Therefore, the Ombudsman considers that **the State is obligated** (my emphasis – V. S.) to assess and ensure adequate access to medical products and services. This opinion was sent to the Ministry of Health as well» (Tiesībsarga birojs 2008).

Unfortunately, under the pretext of limited available financial resources and a decrease in financing for the healthcare system in general, there have been no improvements in this area. An important counterargument to the position of Ministry of Health officials can be found in the aforementioned Ombudsman's Report: «Of course, state support can be provided within the bounds of available resources. Still, one must take into account that a person's health embodies one of the greatest values, and an individual's right to healthcare is fundamental» (Tiesībsarga birojs 2008, 34).

The state is not merely obliged to respect these fundamental rights – this is a responsibility that cannot be transferred to another moral subject. However, there

Box
3.4

The Hippocratic Oath

I swear by Apollo, the healer, Asclepius, Hygieia, and Panacea, and I take to witness all the gods, all the goddesses, to keep according to my ability and my judgment, the following Oath and agreement:

To consider dear to me, as my parents, him who taught me this art; to live in common with him and, if necessary, to share my goods with him; To look upon his children as my own brothers, to teach them this art.

I will prescribe regimens for the good of my patients according to my ability and my judgment and never do harm to anyone.

I will not give a lethal drug to anyone if I am asked, nor will I advise such a plan; and similarly I will not give a woman a pessary to cause an abortion.

But I will preserve the purity of my life and my arts.

I will not cut for stone, even for patients in whom the disease is manifest; I will leave this operation to be performed by practitioners, specialists in this art.

In every house where I come I will enter only for the good of my patients, keeping myself far from all intentional ill-doing and all seduction and especially from the pleasures of love with women or with men, be they free or slaves.

All that may come to my knowledge in the exercise of my profession or in daily commerce with men, which ought not to be spread abroad, I will keep secret and will never reveal.

If I keep this oath faithfully, may I enjoy my life and practice my art, respected by all men and in all times; but if I swerve from it or violate it, may the reverse be my lot.

Source: National Institute of Health

are attempts to do this, and thus patients and physicians, especially family doctors, become hostages to the situation.

The large number of patients that are registered under a single family doctor is another negative factor within primary healthcare. The SACHI homepage contains data on the number of patients that are registered to individual family doctors in the city of Riga: out of 438 doctors several dozen have 2000 and more registered patients, and some have more than 2500 and even 3000. It is doubtful whether such a large number of patients allows a physician to maintain an individual approach, provide a thorough examination and have time to listen to the patients' worries and needs.

In connection with international law, **there have been changes in the application of the basic principles of medical ethics.** Prime examples include: «The Declaration on the Promotion of Patients' Rights in Europe» (1994) and «Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine: Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine» (1997). Changes in the area of the protection of patients' rights, international regulation and the transition in post-socialistic countries (Latvia included) to a market economy have led to concrete results: slowly but surely, the physician-patient relationship is changing. The change is from a paternalistic approach on the side of the physician to a mutual partnership (not without paternalistic setbacks from both sides). There exists a type of patient who requires a patronizing attitude and who has no wish to be freed of this, and there are also physicians for whom this attitude is a deliberate approach or determined by routine.

The healthcare reform in Latvia is a transition from physician-oriented healthcare (the socialistic healthcare system) to relationship models that are dictated by a market economy (a patient-oriented healthcare system). Furthermore, healthcare is now also understood as a sphere where services are rendered, and this sphere, as in pharmacy, is connected with earning a certain income. Thus, the basic principles behind the patient-physician relationship must be evaluated not only from the viewpoint of medical ethics, but also from the aspect of business ethics. Of course, this is not an issue of profit, but a certain amount of income from one's professional activities affects the personal interests of any working individual and provides motivation for honest professional activity.

Much has changed during almost twenty years since the breakdown of the socialistic system, but the basic approach has remained constant – a physician must be an «honest professional.» Any professional in a specific area of activity is responsible for the result of his or her professional activities, and also for the ethicality of these results. However, medicine is the only area with the heaviest burden of responsibility – the issue here is human life and health, humanity and justice. In this sense, more is demanded of the healthcare professionals: the ethics of responsibility are a component of everyday work. The defining moral requirement is to be «an honest professional,» and not just a knowledgeable and skilful physician. A dishonest attitude inescapably leads to being unprofessional, as it manifests itself in one's *attitude* toward patients, colleagues and society in general. A physician who accepts «envelope money» or unofficial payments under the pretext of a deficiency of funds is an unethical professional.

An SKDS survey conducted November 14-27, 2008 (see the appendix to this Report), affirms that 39.9% of respondents have made «unofficial payments» (see Box 3.5 and SKDS 2008 T 14).

In most cases these «unofficial payments» were made by women age 55 to 74, with a secondary, special secondary and higher education, women from Riga, pensioners, specialists, and officials with a medium-high level of income (201-300 lats). The second answer can be understood as a hint that an «unofficial payment» should be made, and the third answer can already be classified as extortion.

This question was also asked in the «Survey on Patients' Rights» (see Daukšāne et al. 2003) that was commissioned by the Latvian Office of Patients' Rights (LOPR). Questioned were patients who had been treated at one of Latvia's healthcare institutions between October 27 and November 28, 2002, as well as relatively healthy individuals. 46% of the persons surveyed had made «unofficial payments» (see Box 3.6).

The survey conducted by SKDS in 2005 commissioned by the Anti-Corruption Bureau and Transparency International – Latvia (*Delna*) illustrates the situation with the following figures: in order to resolve a problem at a clinic or hospital 10.8% of respondents made use of unofficial payments or gifts up to a value of 5 lats, and 20.9% paid five lats or more (Ričika and Lapsa 2007).

Box
3.5

Have you given «unofficial payments» to a healthcare provider?

Have you ever given «unofficial payments» to a healthcare provider?	Yes, in this way I wanted to express my appreciation.	22.8 %
	The healthcare provider hinted that I should do this.	14.5 %
	The healthcare provider refused to provide services until receipt of the «unofficial payment.»	3.2 %
	I have never made «unofficial payments.»	60.0 %
	I cannot answer	0.9 %

Source: SKDS 2008, T 14.

On the level of basic guidelines there is no ambiguity – this is an unethical practice. Furthermore, there is a certain constant duplicity that is quite clear to the medical personnel. For instance, according to Director of «Health Centre 4» Māris Rēvalds, this is a manifestation of society's dual morality or duplicity – while undervaluing the work of physicians, the public expects the physicians themselves to resolve this issue. Gunta Ancāne, MD, Head of the Department of Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy at Riga Stradins University is of a similar opinion: society pretends that physicians are adequately reimbursed for their services, and physicians pretend that they are willing to work for the reimbursement that they receive (Ričika and Lapsa 2007). Unfortunately, in real life this kind of pretence is quite widespread in Latvia. There are various reasons for this – economic, social, moral, historical, etc. This type of duplicity is acceptable for Latvia, a post-socialistic country where the healthcare system is being kept in a «reform regime» and where there is an inability to reach a concrete final solution: «To a certain extent, it is to the state's advantage that patients pay extra. Knowing that the income of physicians is not even so small, it is possible to stretch the issue of higher wages. On the other hand, this would be misleading the public, because we pay triple: through the social tax, by using private medicine, and through envelopes,» explains Liene Šulce, Director of the LOPR. Furthermore, a certain amount of physicians are personally interested in the envelope system, as for some physicians this ensures a fairly good source of income. Māris Rēvalds notes, «As long as no one seriously goes after these physicians, they will cling to the envelopes» (Ričika and Lapsa 2007).

In the near future there are no plans to tackle this issue. In several interviews the former Minister of Health Ivars Eglītis² has asserted that in the existing situation «envelope money» is not the most urgent issue. This problem started out with «the issue will resolve itself» (LETA 2008 a) and developed to the stage of «establishment of a task force,» (LETA 2008 b) and has returned to the stage «Not urgent and most likely the issue will resolve itself.» This unresolved situation further exacerbates the issue of those areas of responsibility that are so typical of the physician's profession.

² At the time of writing, Health Minister Ivars Eglītis resigned, justifying his move with his inability to carry out structural healthcare system reforms in the context of the planned budget.

The Dimensions of a Physician's Responsibility

Professional Competence

The demand for professional competence as the manifestation of a lifelong education is largely included in the codes of medical ethics. Paragraph 1.3 of the Latvian Physicians' Code of Ethics reads: «The physician is responsible for his or her professional competence and raising his or her level of theoretical and practical knowledge. The physician is expected to participate actively in improving the standards of medical education and the applied practice of medicine. By accepting responsibility and obligations or by assigning these tasks to others, the physician evaluates his or her own knowledge and abilities,» along with his or her skills and attitude. Professional competence is not sufficient if any of these components are missing. The most contradictory element in the characterization of competence is attitude. This is determined by communication (education), social tradition and possibilities for reciprocal manipulation on both sides (physician and patient). Thus, to an equal extent, there are possibilities for manipulation with payment and accessibility of services and honest professionalism. Possibilities for manipulation also exist concerning honesty, which is not always combined with adequate professional performance in terms of skills and knowledge, i.e. a young, promising albeit inexperienced specialist. For instance, a patient addresses a physician: «You look like you're young and smart. Help me, I'm tormented. I cannot deal with my problems. The doctors that I have been to – they don't understand a thing. And the medicine doesn't help.» Aware that a young professional is taking part in this interaction, this could be a typical example of the patient's (not the physician's) wish to manipulate the attitude of the physician in order to achieve a desired result.

Another stumbling block concerning responsibility is the cooperation between physicians and pharmaceutical companies, which are very active in the education of physicians and sponsoring recreational events. Unfortunately, this cooperation often significantly decreases a physician's autonomy and independence. However, when ethically carried out, it is professionally useful. August 14, 2007, the Latvian Medical Association (LMA) and the pharmaceutical industry, which was represented by the Association of International Research-based Pharmaceutical

Box
3.6

«Unofficial Payments» in Latvian Health Care Facilities in 2002

Type of payment	% of those who have made payments	% of all persons surveyed
Gratitude	63	29
Hint	26	12
Extortion	11	5

Source: Daukšāne et al. 2003.

Manufacturers (AIRPM), and the Latvian Generic Medicines Association (LGMA) adopted a common declaration «On the interaction and principles of ethics between physicians and the pharmaceutical industry.» In practice, the actual relationships are still far from what has been proposed by the declaration. The declaration calls for the establishment and implementation of guidelines for developing relationships between pharmaceutical companies and physicians. The actual introduction of a declaration and its guidelines affirms a desire to develop the cooperation between the pharmacists and physicians ethically, although reality is governed by the usual ignorance and moral concessions in the face of preferred conditions. For example, Paragraph 7.2 of the aforementioned declaration states that physicians must decline unwarranted hospitality, or gifts/support that are expensive and/or incongruous with the practice of medicine. This demand remains largely unobserved by the pharmaceutical companies. Concerning gatherings that are organized or sponsored by pharmaceutical companies, it is said that hospitality at these meetings must be on a customary level, in strict accordance with the purpose of the event. The organization of sports or recreational events is prohibited, but there are no signs that events of this kind are held less often, or that physicians are no longer interested in participating.

The Achievement of Professional Goals

The objective of a functioning healthcare system and the purpose of an individual physician's professional activity are the patient's welfare, its improvement and preservation. The physician is unable to address these objectives with sufficient responsibility, because not everything depends on him or her as a professional. The healthcare process is the sum of several elements consisting of healthcare organization on three levels (primary, secondary and tertiary),³ infrastructure and human resources. Indirectly, the result of the healthcare process is influenced by the structure of the healthcare system and the quality of the organization of the healthcare process. Furthermore, the importance of each factor varies at the primary, secondary or tertiary healthcare level. In secondary and tertiary healthcare the main problem is connected with reorganization of the network of healthcare institutions; in primary healthcare, the chief problem is the inability to create an effective primary healthcare team and ensure it with adequate financing. Effective primary healthcare is a precondition for a healthcare system in general.

The same legislation governs the healthcare process at all levels. However, the laws of the market often dominate. For instance, primary physicians have the opportunity to earn supplementary income from the selection of state-paid healthcare services, and also by providing additional services, e.g. issuing a doctor's note for an employer or car driver

concerning the health condition of a patient, issuing licences for the use of weapons, vaccinating patients, etc. In primary healthcare the physician acts as a businessperson who decides on the further use of available financial resources. This model could be considered sufficiently effective if the manner of obtaining income were connected to clearly defined quality requirements. Quality standards for healthcare services were outlined in the 1990s, although presently they are not applied due to the high costs. Thus, quality issues become important only in the context of the patient-physician relationship – and they can be measured mostly subjectively, not objectively. Sometimes a good patient-physician relationship and positive healthcare results partially compensate the lack of teamwork in primary healthcare organization.

In secondary and tertiary healthcare the deciding factor is the state-defined payment model, although in conditions of insufficient financing it distorts the patient-physician relationship. Thus a tolerant attitude emerges toward unofficial payments, which further exacerbate existing negotiations. The use of these funds is not geared toward the development of healthcare services, but is an additional source of income for the physician.

The situation is further aggravated by the fact that at the state level there is no clear or purposeful concept concerning the specialists that are needed for a primary healthcare team. Furthermore, due to hospital lobbies, financing is preserved for the maintenance of an expensive secondary and tertiary infrastructure. However, the individual **physician, as an employee, cannot be held responsible for the infrastructure of the healthcare system.** At the same time, the way the infrastructure functions directly affects the physician's ability to achieve professional objectives. This makes the physician jointly responsible along with the infrastructure's administration since the patient does not distinguish between these divisions of responsibility.

Effective healthcare standards are necessary for the achievement of professional objectives. With the help of these standards it would be possible to evaluate the quality of rendered services. A prudent infrastructure administration is needed that would ensure sufficient human resources and effective use of available financial resources. Contrary to prevalent notions, in Latvia there is already a shortage of qualified medical personnel. For instance, the number of family doctors per 100,000 inhabitants is half of the average in European Union member states (Tragakes et al. 2008, 146). There is also a shortage of nurses. The number of nurses in 2005 (544.5 per 100,000 inhabitants) was less than the average indicator in EU member states (699.7 per 100,000 inhabitants). Physicians are assuming part of the responsibilities of nurses, and this is affecting the quality of the physicians' work and quality of care. One positive factor is that there are enough pharmacists, and the number of dentists per 100,000 is even greater than the EU average (in Latvia – 63 dentists, in the EU – 61) (Tragakes et al. 2008, 147).

Only if standards, resources and management are ensured at all healthcare levels can there be moral grounds to demand from the physician a responsible attitude concerning the achievement of professional objectives. For now, the physician is burdened with the chief responsibility for present deficiencies in the healthcare process, vis-à-vis the individual patient and all of society.

³ Primary care is the inhabitant's first contact with the health care system outside the hospital. Usually, this is ensured by a general practitioner and supporting specialists (primary care nurses, social workers, physical therapists etc.). Secondary care is ambulatory (outside the hospital) specialist consultations and in-patient assistance which is implemented through referrals by the primary care physician. Tertiary care is complicated, specialized and high cost health care that is offered in specialized centres or university hospitals.

Observing Expediency Criteria

Mutual trust is a precondition necessary to maintain the healthcare process. In planning certain procedures, the physician's opinion regarding their usefulness may differ from the notions and desires of the patient. The preparation of guidelines for different types of medical personnel and the use of these guidelines in the daily practice of healthcare is a recommended and sufficiently effective type of solution for these situations. However, in the implementation of guidelines, one should remember that these are merely professional recommendations in order to offer an action plan in situations where *different courses of action* are possible. Therefore, the significance of these guidelines increases, as they are based on reliable documentation that has been compiled by representatives of the speciality in question. Therefore, the observance of criteria regarding expediency is an ethical norm, and the implementation of this norm is the sole responsibility of the physician.

Collegiality

Collegiality in healthcare is an essential manifestation of horizontal responsibility, although its implementation among physicians is quite problematic. These demands are clearly formulated in codes of ethics, and it seems that there should be no problems in their implementation. Still, the situation is not so clear. For instance, the International Code of Medical Ethics provides a formula for the «golden mean»: «A physician shall behave towards colleagues as he/she would have them behave towards him/her» (see Sile 1999, 143). The practical embodiment of this formula requires a certain respect toward the colleague in all its manifestations – starting with documentation for mutual communication, forms of address and ending with seeking advice. Often information is handed down carelessly. The colleague's shortage of time is not taken into account, the actual possibility of preparing a response, etc. «Often memos are impersonal, e.g. «Exclude superfluous fluid.» A phone call or a meeting would be of more value so that the specialist could express his or her diagnosis. Then my examination would be more purposeful,» considers the radiologist M. Radziņa (see Šturma 2005).

A physician must not steal away colleagues' patients, must not judge the actions of his or her colleagues or discuss these actions with patients. Criticism of this kind from colleagues can backfire – the worst that physicians can do to one another and their patients is to question a colleague's judgement in the presence of the patient. Radziņa continues, «In this way we confuse the patient and fill the patient with doubt about ourselves and the physician in charge. By explaining that the colleague has reached one conclusion and that over the course of the examination I have reached another conclusion, I will not degrade my colleague and the patient will be satisfied. We never see an incorrect attitude concerning this issue at private healthcare facilities, as financial returns correct our attitude toward the patient» (see Šturma 2005).

Comments by other physicians are similar – physicians agree that a lack of mutual communication is the main cause of conflict. A collegial supporting attitude is needed by everyone, especially in complex situations. Young specialists admit that they often miss this attitude.

One pragmatic solution would be to increase the amount of study hours devoted to the psychology of communication and interaction, personality psychology, conflict psychology and medical ethics in the preparation process of future physicians and also in recertification courses for physicians.

Respecting Patients' Rights

Progress has been made in the protection of patients' rights, although in certain areas the number of complaints has not dwindled. A large number of complaints concern violations of disability rights. This has been experienced markedly at the Physicians' Commission for Determining the Ability to Work (PCDAW). When having the grade of disability determined, in many locations in Latvia people have experienced humiliating situations, **where doctors' referrals and the opinions of specialists have been doubted**. There are cases where people have very serious health problems and are unable to work, but they are given only a Grade 3 disability (Greiema 2006). However, Paragraph 1.2 of the Latvian Physicians' Code of Ethics states, «The physician will respect the patient's trust and will act only in the interests of the patient, especially if it is expected that the patient's mental and physical state will deteriorate. If another person's actions pose a threat to a patient, the physician's first obligation is to defend the patient's interest and only thereafter the interests of other persons or society.» In practice there exists an irresolvable contradiction: how to combine the interests of the patient with the evaluation of a collegial institution's action if it is in contradiction with the patient's interests? Under what grounds can PCDAW assume the role of a judge and demonstrate mistrust toward the professionals in its field? Where does collegial responsibility set in? Lawyers and NGOs also become involved in resolving this situation, but the physician is left in face of a moral dilemma. While respecting a patient's rights, the physician must be aware that this might be to his or her disadvantage – the patient has the right to decline the healthcare offered at any point in time.

In 2003, Lars Falberg, a World Health Organization expert, visited Latvia. His objective was to determine whether there was a need to improve patients' rights in Latvia. Through an analysis of collected information, special areas were pinpointed where legislation was insufficient for ensuring the protection of patients' rights, and necessary legislative amendments were recommended. The expert's conclusions encompassed many areas, although inadequate respect toward confidentiality and privacy was particularly emphasized:

Regulations that affect confidentiality apply only to practicing physicians. Other professionals – nurses, physical therapists, medical students – are not mentioned in these provisions.

- There are no regulations at all that apply to minors' access to medical information.
- Medical practitioners have the right to furnish their colleagues with confidential information when a certain objective must be reached through medical treatment. This definition is very broad. These provisions not only need to regulate the way that one physician passes information to another, but must also regulate the access of healthcare professionals to medical information in

general. Furthermore, this access can only be allowed during the time that an individual is directly involved in the medical treatment and care of a patient. Medical records are confidential, though the layout of the facilities does not always guarantee the safe storage of medical documentation and does not always rule out access to these documents by unauthorized personnel. It is also unacceptable that a health expert can access medical information out of sheer curiosity. However, in an uncertain case, when it is unclear whether access should be given to medical information, the patient's permission must be obtained.

Patient *confidentiality and respect of a patient's private life is the basis for healthcare services*. However, implementing this in practice presents the physician with ethical dilemmas. Physicians tend to express dissatisfaction with the fact that privacy at the hospital is difficult to guarantee during the process of ascertaining a medical history. One hospital ward contains many patients and this may directly influence the quantity and quality of the information obtained. Physicians are interested in confidentiality and respect for privacy, although improvements concerning this issue depend on all participants in the healthcare process.

Ensuring Justice

The re-edited preamble of the «Lisbon Declaration on the Rights of the Patient» offers an essential indication to the meaning of implementing justice and the physician's role in this area:

While a physician should always act according to his/her conscience, and always in the best interests of the patient, equal effort must be made to guarantee patient autonomy and justice. Physicians and other persons or bodies involved in the provision of healthcare have a joint responsibility to recognize and uphold these rights. Whenever legislation, government action or any other administration or institution denies patients these rights, physicians should pursue appropriate means to assure or to restore them (see Sile 1999, 149).

What does that mean for Latvia in the current situation? The main problem is highlighted – access to medication according to quotas. According to information available on the SACHI home page (VNC 2009), based on financing that is prescribed by the law on the state budget for the current year, each physician is allowed a certain volume of reimbursable prescription drugs for the year. Factors taken into account include the number of patients registered with the physician and the structure of the patients' illness, i.e. if the physician has patients with serious chronic diseases who need certain drugs, this is taken into account when determining the physician's yearly budget. In circumstances when quotas are applied to healthcare the physician is placed in an unenviable situation.

The physician commits discrimination in regard to the same diagnosis – based on the same criteria, the medicine for one patient is reimbursed, while reimbursement for the other patient is refused based on limited financing or due to quotas.

- SACHI prescribes and imposes fines against physicians when the quotas have been exceeded.

- Refusal of reimbursement is practiced in the case of patients with chronically debilitating diseases and illnesses that potentially decrease the patient's lifespan (cancer and rare diseases). This raises the issue of the possibility in Latvia for *humane and just* healthcare.

The physician is rendered accountable in an area where no ethical solution has been found on a state level. On the contrary, a conscious violation of patients' rights is being practiced at an institutional level. Pretexts based on a lack of financing make this further unethical. What does this mean for the practicing physician? A rhetorical question with the following answer: obvious participation in the practice of institutional injustice.

May 26, 2008, Professor Georgs Andrejevs, member of the European Parliament and author of the resolution «On the Fight against Cancer in the Expanded European Union,» called for a discussion «On Equal Rights to Live!»: «We call for a gradual elimination of the quota system in Latvia. The Ministry of Health must seek possibilities to find additional financing for healthcare, including within EU funds. In addition, more emphasis must be placed on the patients' interest in their own health – prevention and education are essentially important» (PR Centrs 2008). Juris Bundulis, Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry of Health, stressed in this discussion that as much as possible, the ministry is trying to increase the budget for reimbursable medicine. He was also forced to admit that this budget is smaller than in neighbouring Lithuania and Estonia. Precisely due to the limited budget the ministry is forced to try to explain why, for example, medicine is reimbursed for twenty patients, but the next patient must wait in line. *In the present situation the ministry sees no possibility to completely eliminate the quota system.*

Daina Mezīte, director of the patients' organization «Dzīvības koks» (Tree of Life), has concluded that «after long discussions and consultations over the course of years at the Parliament and the Ministry our public organization has reached the conclusion that one of the chief problems is the short-term political field of vision and a lack of continuity within legislative and executive institutions.» While seeing the injustice of what is going on and trying to understand its causes, it's not difficult to reach the conclusion that without cardinal changes in the area of healthcare (as also presently demanded by the International Monetary Fund) no real improvements regarding justice can be expected.

Ethical Use of Professional Authority

The impact of unofficial payments is a threat to the ethical status of physicians, and a threat to the authority and integrity of the physicians in the eyes of the patient. In view of this, back in 1949 the World Medical Association wrote the following words in the «International Code of Medical Ethics»: «A doctor must always maintain the highest standards of professional conduct. A doctor must practice his profession uninfluenced by motives of profit.

The following practices are deemed unethical:

- Any self-advertisement except such as is expressly authorized by the national code of medical ethics;
- Collaboration in any form of medical service in which the doctor does not have professional independence;

- **Receiving any money** in connection with services rendered to a patient other than a proper professional fee, even if the patient gives it willingly (see Sile 1999, 142).

Once again, this is an issue of professional honesty and the ethical use of one's professional authority. Ģ. Brīģis and other authors explain the existing phenomenon of unofficial payments as a widespread practice from the years of the Soviet occupation, i.e. an inherited Soviet tradition in combination with the present deficiency of State resources. This explanation is missing the psychological component of offering unofficial payments: in this way a patient pays for an engaged and professional attitude toward him/herself, which is obviously missing. SKDS surveys conducted in 2002, 2005 and 2008 indicate a steady trend – unofficial payments have remained in everyday usage approximately on the same level.

The consequences of this are a decrease in the prestige of the medical profession in the eyes of the public, and public opinion that rates healthcare as one of the fields most susceptible to corruption. An SKDS survey conducted in July 2000 showed that 16.5% of the Latvian population considered the field of medicine as the fifth most corrupt sector (after politics, state institutions, spheres of business and municipalities), and this opinion was held mostly by older respondents (age 55 and older). Analogous results were obtained by the SKDS survey from July 2001, except that the proportion of people with this opinion was 17.8%.

This enumeration could be continued, but it is already clear that a mere increase in wages alone can no longer resolve the problem. The way of thinking must change in order to reach a level where the physician will perceive any type of additional payment as unethical – and not because this is formulated in the code of ethics, but because this is unacceptable to the physician as an honourable professional. And this is every physician's individual responsibility – a responsibility in the face of one's conscience. Thus, establishing and fostering an ethical attitude is one

of the most urgent tasks in fostering the professional responsibility of physicians, parallel with structural reforms and the search for adequate financing on the state level.

Conclusions

1. Physicians in Latvia work in a healthcare system that does not demand the enforcement of basic moral values (respect, humanity, justice, etc.) in everyday practice and even allows for a certain unethical factor as state-level responsibility is transferred to the shoulders of the individual physician, thereby rendering the physician as the chief responsible person in ensuring the quality of healthcare.
2. At an institutional level the organizers of healthcare have an insufficient understanding of ethical action in the division of limited resources – regarding this issue responsibility is also transferred to the service providers.
3. Inconsistency of healthcare administrators in resolving ethically controversial issues (unofficial payments, etc.) does not promote progress toward a publicly acceptable solution – a change of attitude, and this places the physicians a priori in a dubious situation.
4. Although mostly at the NGO level, progress can be observed in the area of protecting patients' rights. Here one can also observe the tendency to transfer responsibility from State institutions to NGOs.
5. The consequences of a lack of quality standards is the domination of subjective judgement in the interpretation of quality and access to services.
6. The attitude of physicians toward their work continues to be the largest problem and cause for differences of opinion with patients and healthcare administrators. The attitude of healthcare administrators toward physicians could also be more collegial, as all healthcare specialists share the same objective – care for human health.

Box
3.7

Greatest Achievements, Most Serious Problems, Most Important Tasks

Greatest Achievements

Several positive trends can be observed: the attitude towards patients' rights has changed and there is more understanding and respect on the part of physicians (largely as a result of NGO activities); medical ethics has been included in the professional standards for physicians and taken a stable place in the education system (the department of humanitarian sciences at Riga Stradiņa University provides the necessary methodological support); ethical aspects of doctor-patient relations are paid greater attention not only from medical professionals, but also from the media. Information on these issues, particularly the «hottest» issues, appears regularly.

Most Serious Problems

«Unofficial payments» remain the most unresolved problem. Evidently, profitability and convenience trumps ethics: doctors do not have to pay taxes, supervisors do not have to exert any effort, administrators have sufficient problems without having to address this one.

Most Important Tasks

The moral understanding of the public (awareness raising, education) about the necessity of ethics in physician-patient relations as well as political will and legal sanctions could reduce the neutral attitude towards «unofficial payments» and generate intolerance towards givers and receivers. This cannot be done in a day – «reform» of ethical consciousness is a question for the future, though it would be a good investment in the development of the health care system.

Accountability in the Legal Professions

Lauris Liepa

Over the last several years, there have been extensive discussions in Latvia about the functions of the courts, the role of the legal professions in ensuring the rule of law in the country, and the need to support the interests of society in this regard. There has been increasing public interest in the legal professions and their duties. In the professional environment of legal specialists and at public forums of various kinds, there have been evaluations of the standards which underpin the relationship among people in the legal professions. There have been questions, for instance, as to whether there can be informal communications between a judge and a party to a case that the judge is hearing. What are the relations between lawyers on opposite sides of a case outside the courtroom? How can one be sure that the fee that is paid to a lawyer is really in line with the work that has been done? There has been increasing public interest in major court cases, and there have also been increasing demands vis-à-vis officials in the judicial system, as was seen when justices of the Constitutional Court and the chief justice of the Supreme Court were elected in Parliament in 2007 and 2008 respectively. Public interest has shifted from regulations related to individual legal issues to far more general issues that are of importance to society. Among these is the matter of the responsibilities which the legal professions have toward the public.

It is a paradox that people generally offer fairly favourable views as to the work of an individual member of the legal professions, while at the same time, there are complaints about visible shortcomings in the functions of the legal professions and the judicial system – very slow court proceedings, problems in corporate insolvency processes, the work of commercial arbitration courts, and the like. This reminds one of a paradigm that was in place during the Soviet system – «The system as such dissatisfies me, but I have found an appropriate place within it for myself.» That means that in Latvia, people use different measuring sticks when evaluating the individual responsibility of a lawyer and the overall responsibility of the profession. There are no unified standards when it comes to the responsibilities of individuals and that of the profession, as can be seen in the next section of this chapter, «Professions in the Judicial Sector.»

Critics point out that shortcomings and inadequacies today can be traced right back to the long-lasting influence of the Soviet legal system and its traditions. This is partly true, and this will be considered in greater detail in the section entitled «Retrospective accountability.» The responsiveness of the legal profession is manifested in a retrospective and a prospective way. In other words, we have to look at how specific activities affect the legal system. Retrospective accountability is manifested via

the way in which the past actions, statements, attitudes and judgments of members of the legal profession affect legal reality today. Prospective accountability means that members of the legal professions must work in a targeted and purposeful way in ensuring that the rule of law prevails in Latvia. The appropriate legal standards must be introduced, and European traditions and the principle of the rule of law must be enshrined.

Before looking at the duties toward society which the legal system has in common, however, the profession has to take a look at internal standards, the duties of people in the legal professions, and the constitutional nature of the profession. Here are the questions: On the basis of what principles was the legal profession created? What are the relationships among professionals? Do people who are part of the court system have a sufficient sense of responsibility when it comes to their professional role and their duties in ensuring the upholding of relevant standards? Answers to these questions lead to the issue of whether representatives of the legal professions in Latvia are promoting the emergence of the rule of law in the country and facilitating that process or, on the contrary, whether they are selfish people who are trying to maintain an unclear approach toward the rule of law, ensuring the influence of factors that exist outside of the profession and the system.

One of the most important tests of Latvia's judicial system and the relationships among various people in the related professions was a 2007 book that was called «Justice as a Bazaar» (Brūklenis 2007). The book became the most important test of the last decade in terms of ascertaining trust in the Latvian court system and its representatives. The book contains an account of phone calls involving lawyers, attorneys and judges that took place in 1998-2000. The section on «Ethical Standards in the Work of Judges» examines the consequences of this book and the report by the commission created by judges about the conformity of the discussions referred to in the book with ethical standards.

Professions in the Judicial Sector

Roscoe Pound, who was a distinguished American jurist and dean of the School of Law at Harvard University, wrote that legal professions involve educated people who work on behalf of the public need. While admitting that such work is a source of one's daily bread, Pound also wrote that «pursuit of the learned art in the spirit of a public service is the primary purpose» (Pound 2001).

The legal professions include judges, prosecutors, lawyers, notaries and court bailiffs. These are people who perform a special role in the country and in

society, and they all belong to the judicial system. The precise description would be professions in the judicial system. These are people who ensure court procedures, implementing and guaranteeing the right of each individual to a fair trial. Article 92 of the Latvian Constitution states «Everyone has the right to defend his or her rights and lawful interests in a fair court. Everyone shall be presumed innocent until his or her guilt has been established in accordance with law. Everyone, where his or her rights are violated without basis, has a right to commensurate compensation. Everyone has a right to the assistance of counsel.»

In everyday practice, professions in the legal system ensure that these fundamental rights are implemented. That is why the rights are regulated by law, with a relevant regime of disciplinary liability in place. Latvia's law on the judicial system states that persons who are part of that system are prosecutors, sworn attorneys, sworn notaries, and sworn court bailiffs (section 16¹). The theses that are in the law on the judicial system are made more concrete in the laws which regulate the conduct of each relevant profession. Thus, for instance, the law states that court hearings are conducted by judges who are independent and subject only to the law (Article 10, sections 4-7). Furthermore, Article 51 of the law states that only highly qualified and honest jurists can work as judges (LR Saeima 1992).

In a survey that was conducted during a professional training programme in 2009, honesty was declared to be the most important characteristic of judges not only by judges, but also by prosecutors and attorneys (LTMC 2009). The law on the bar, in turn, describes the profession of attorneys: «A sworn attorney is an independent and professional jurist who offers legal aid by defending and representing the lawful interests of individuals at court and during pre-trial investigations, also offering legal consultations, preparing legal documents, and conducting other legal processes. Attorneys are independent in their professional activities and subject only to the law» (LR Saeima 1993 a, Article 3, 6).

Prosecutorial institutions and prosecutors represent the state in pre-trial investigations and criminal prosecutions, upholding charges in legal proceedings and making sure that institutions which engage in investigatory activities obey the law. The Prosecutor's Office is a unified system of government institutions, but because it is an institution of the judicial system, it is subject to legal acts which regulate the system. Prosecutors take decisions on the basis of their own convictions and the law. They must ensure that all people are equal before the law and the courts, they must observe the presumption of innocence, and they must uphold truth and the law. Prosecutors, in other words, are government officials, but they are also independent and sovereign in carrying out their professional duties as part of the judicial system. The guarantee of professional independence that is enshrined in the law on prosecutors is very important here: «A higher-ranking prosecutor has no right to order a prosecutor to act in violation of the lower-ranking prosecutor's convictions» (LR Saeima 1994a, section 1). This confirms that the overall standard of independence and professionalism that is enshrined in the

law on the judicial system is more important for all legal professions than are any hierarchical relations within an institution or the individual interests of one of the specific professions.

Like prosecutors, sworn notaries are government officials, but also representatives of a free legal profession. Notaries face a dual situation – they are independent in their work, but they are also under the supervision of the courts. The law on notaries states: «A sworn notary shall be subject exclusively to the law and shall fulfil his or her duties as an independent and neutral guarantor of the civil rights and lawful interests of individuals and legal entities» (LR Saeima 1993 b, section 1).

Sworn court bailiffs are not only representatives of the free legal professions, but also state officials. The basic function of court bailiffs is to ensure the implementation of rulings by courts and decisions by other relevant institutions if the addressee thereof fails to satisfy the requirements voluntarily. According to the law on bailiffs, sworn bailiffs work in the judicial system, but they are independent and subject exclusively to the law in their work (LR Saeima 2002 a, section 1).

Government institutions are not permitted to interfere in the work of the legal professions. This applies to government officials, including judges and prosecutors, and to representatives of the free legal professions – lawyers, notaries and court bailiffs. All of the acts which regulate the judicial system emphasize the individual responsibilities of jurists. First and above all, they must be professional and independent. Professionalism refers not only to the necessary knowledge, experience and capabilities, but also an honest and ethical attitude toward the relevant professional's duties. These requirements are enshrined in the codes of ethics of all of the aforementioned legal professions,¹ and they are mandatory for prosecutors, judges and government officials and for all representatives of the free legal professions. When professional ethical requirements are violated, the profession has the right to apply ethical or disciplinary sanctions.

Ethical Standards in the Work of Judges

In September 2007 the book by Jānis Brūklēnis «Justice as a Bazaar» was published along with publicist Lato Lapsa's preface and commentary.² It immediately became a bestseller and attracted the attention of lawyers as

¹ The Code of Ethics of Judges, Canon 2, was approved at a conference of Latvian judges on 20 April 1995. The Code of Ethics of Sworn Attorneys was approved at a meeting of Latvian sworn attorneys on 21 May 1993. The Code of Ethics of Latvian Prosecutors was approved by the Council of the Prosecutor-General on 17 June 1998. The Code of Ethics of Latvian Sworn Notaries, Part 1, was approved at a meeting of Latvian sworn notaries on 8 April 1994. A new version of the code was approved by a new meeting of sworn notaries on 17 October 2003. The Code of Ethics of sworn bailiffs was approved by a meeting of Latvian sworn court bailiffs on 21 February 2003.

² Brūklēnis 2007; the book is available in electronic format on the internet (see, e.g. <http://parlielupesbiblioteka.blogspot.com/2007/09/lasi-skandalo-gramtu-tiesans-k-is.html>); see the author's commentary at <http://www.neliesi.lv/content.php?prieksvards>.

well as the broader public. The book contains accounts of telephone conversations among judges and sworn attorneys, as well as sworn attorneys and clients. The author of the book gave participants imaginary names, which are quite similar to the names of professionals working in the judicial system in the period 1998-2000. It is during this period, the author indicates, that the discussions described in the book took place. Immediately after the book's publication, the Supreme Court's plenum created a working group to evaluate the compatibility of the alleged discussions with ethical standards for judges and the responsibility of participants in the discussions. Two months later, it published a report (see Box 3.8).

Based on information provided by the Security Police, the working group asserted in the report that on the dates indicated in the book, the persons mentioned did call one another. The working group concluded that the telephone conversations given to it to evaluate had been acquired illegally, that the tapping of the conversations had taken

place in violation of the legal norms in force at the time. This is why the working group did not evaluate the guilt or innocence of participants in the conversations. However, since the publication had significantly undermined trust in the courts, creating suspicions about improper influence in the courts and the work of certain judges, the working group decided to evaluate the content of the conversations as well.

The working group heard out the opinions of each of the judges alleged to have participated in the conversations. If a judge denied that he had participated or could not remember it, the working group did not conclude that any ethical violations had taken place. If a judge allowed that a telephone conversation with the published content could have taken place, the working group judged the book's account as being only the possible content of the conversation. The working group's conclusion about violations of ethical norms in such cases was expressed only in hypothetical form. If a

Box
3.8

Supreme Court Working Group Report on Violation of Ethical Norms in the Action of Judges*

November 30, 2007
Rīga

The Supreme Court of Latvia

A REPORT

On violations of norms of ethics in the work of judges

[1] On September 17, 2007, the plenary of the Supreme Court established a working group made up of five judges (Senators Roberts Namatēvs, Voldemārs Čīževskis and Normunds Salenieks and Judges Aivars Keišs and Eduards Pupovs) to evaluate the ethics of those justices of the Supreme Court who may have been involved in a telephone tapping scandal that led to doubts about the independence of the courts and the honesty of judges. [...]

[4] The working group has studied ethical practices among judges in several European countries, finding that these differ from one country to another. In countries with powerful democratic traditions, telephone contacts or other types of contacts between judges and lawyers are not seen in and of themselves as a process which could threaten the independence and objectivity of the judge. In countries where democratic traditions are not yet fully in place – particularly in the countries of Eastern Europe – private contacts between judges and attorneys cause suspicions as to whether the relevant judges might be improperly influenced. [...]

[7] [...]When it comes to the ethics of judges, the scientific literature indicates that judges must avoid anything that might reduce the authority of the judicial system. Judges must not harm the prestige of the judicial branch because of their own interests or the interests of others. The work of judges must satisfy high moral requirements, and the moral properties of judges are a necessary prerequisite for public trust in the courts. It is the courts and the sense of justice among judges that ensure the authority of the judicial branch, the prestige of judges, and the reputation of judges as objective servants of the law who cannot be influenced improperly. [...]

The things which judges do when they are not on the bench must not create any suspicion that they are not objective, just or ready to accept bribes. [...]

The Universal Charter of the Judge, which was approved on November 17, 1999, states in Article 5 that when doing their work, judges must appear and also be objective[...]

United Nations Resolution 2006/23 speaks to fundamental principles related to the conduct of the judicial branch, stating that in doing their job and taking decisions that are sovereign, judges must be independent of their colleagues in the legal professions. Judges must demonstrate and promote high standards in terms of legal behaviour so as to enhance public trust in the courts – something that is of key importance in maintaining the independence thereof. Judges must make sure that they do everything that they can to reduce the number of instances in which they are forced to accept recusal in a specific case. Where there are personal relations with other representatives of the legal profession, judges must avoid any situation that might create suspicions that they would show specific favour to any party to a case or have an interest in the results of the case (ECOSOC 2006/23, Strengthening the Basic Principles of Judicial Conduct).

Continued on page 156

judge acknowledged that conversations reflecting those in the book took place, the working group assumed that the conversations had taken place and gave an evaluation of whether the action of the judge contained elements that were in violation of ethical norms. The law on the disciplinary responsibility of judges states that a judge can be called to disciplinary responsibility for gross violations of the judge's code of ethics (LR Saeima 1994 b). The law does foresee a statute of limitations: a disciplinary punishment may be meted out on a judge no later than three months from the day the disciplinary or administrative violation has been discovered, but no later than two years from the day the violation was committed (LR Saeima 1994 b, article 4). If the conversations took place in 1998-2000, as stated in the book, the judges cannot be called to disciplinary account, as more than two years had passed since the alleged violation. Though the statute of limitations had expired, the working group acknowledged that violations of judge's ethical norms could still be subject to moral sanctions, which are not binding on the judge. This conclusion is of broader significance: though an ethical judgement of professional

activity has no binding sanctions, it is not subject to the statute of limitations and formal reservations about correct standards of evidence or procedural conditions.

The report adopted by the working group of the plenum of the Supreme Court in 2007 served as an important catalyst: Latvia's judges condemned the model of «conversations in the kitchen.» At the same time, the guidelines offered in the report helped draft a model for future relations. Personal relations or academic cooperation between sworn attorneys and judges should not be hidden or condemned, but they should not influence professional activities. A judge cannot allow personal interests or a subjective opinion to prevail over objective and disinterested leading of procedures and examination of the circumstances of a case.

In contrast to judges, sworn attorneys refrained from evaluating their relations with judges. The Collegium of Sworn Attorneys publicly condemned phone-tapping and publication of conversations between attorneys and clients, indicating that trust was the most important precondition for the existence of the free legal professions (LETA 2007 a; LETA 2007 b).

[15] In judging the possible violation of ethical norms, we must take into account the realities and practices which existed when the tapped phone calls allegedly took place. In the 1990s, the courts and the judicial system were outcasts in the state system. Neither society, nor politicians ensured that the resources needed for the proper and quality work of the courts were made available, but courts were expected to hand down rulings that were just and in line with the rule of law. Judges did not have the material, technical or human resources that were needed – no computers, no Internet connections, no legally qualified assistants who could help to prepare cases for trial. Courts did not have and still do not have libraries of the latest judicial literature, whether produced in Latvia or abroad. There have, however, been many cases that have been sufficiently complicated to ensure that there have been objective difficulties in terms of conducting the trials in a sensible timeframe. Accordingly, judges did find that it was necessary to speak on the phone with parties to the case to deal with specific technical issues such as paying a state fee, postponing a hearing, etc. Similarly, there had to be calls to legal specialists to learn their views about certain complicated legal issues. Attorney Grūtups at that time represented both categories of people. Accordingly, the phone calls that were made at that time were in line with existing practice. The working group so states without analyzing the specific content of the calls. Even though the calls might be unacceptable in terms of ethical understandings today, the fact is that they were in line with the realities and objective needs of the relevant period of time.

In accordance with this, the working group concludes that possible ethical violations among Supreme Court justices that have been described in the book «Justice as a Bazaar» can be identified only in two specific situations. The working group finds that the justices of the Supreme Court observe the norms of ethics in their work, and there is no reason for the public to distrust the justices. What is more, it is now practically impossible for lawyers to communicate with judges as they did between 1998 and 2000, because the phone numbers of judges are not publicly available, and most judges have assistants who can deal with technical issues that are related to the various cases that are being heard.

[16] At the same time, the working group also finds it necessary to point out in this report that judges who establish and maintain professional or other relations with representatives of other legal professions must observe the following fundamental principles:

If judges have personal relations with representatives of other legal professions, they must recuse themselves from any case in which the relevant individual is a party to the case or a representative of a party to the case. Personal relations include joint visits to public places such as restaurants or cafés, attending entertainment events together, or appearing at public or private events at the request of the relevant individual. Personal relations also include giving or receiving flowers or gifts.

In establishing professional relations with representatives of other legal professions, judges must ensure that they maintain objectivity. The conduct of a judge must never create the impression among members of the public or parties to the case that the judge might be particularly favourable toward a participant in the case. Professional relations include public debates about legal issues at conferences, seminars or in the literature, as well as private conversations at events which the two individuals have attended independently of one another.

*The full text of this document can be found at <http://www.at.gov.lv/lv/about/operation/plenum/decisions>

The Free Legal Professions: A Professional Monopoly

There are several factors characterizing the free legal professions. The professional practice of a lawyer involves practical work that is not aimed at earning a profit. The work of lawyers is of key importance to those to whom the results are addressed, and so they have an increased level of responsibility in providing legal assistance. Representatives of the profession join professional organizations to make sure that professional conduct is supervised appropriately and the need for responsibility is upheld. Historically, legal professions have been concentrated in a range of specific professions that are known today as regulated professions (LR Saeima 2001, article 30). The state entrusts (delegates) specific legal functions to one or more legal professions, banning people who do not belong to the profession from doing such work. Professional organizations are entrusted with organizing legal practices, overseeing them, organizing ongoing education for lawyers, defining professional ethical standards, and applying disciplinary sanctions. The number of professionals is limited, and the professional organizations usually determine that number. In professional doctrine, this is known as a professional monopoly (Rhode and Luban 2001, 77).

A professional monopoly is typical of legal systems with a rich and uninterrupted tradition of legal practice. In Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Sweden, many other European countries, South American countries, Japan and the United States, for instance, legal activities such as preparing, approving and submitting legal documents and representing people before the courts are restricted to a limited range of people – representatives of the specific legal profession (Rhode and Hazard 2002). The professional monopoly of lawyers is characterized by the following:

1) The state **limits** the provision of legal assistance in specific **areas** by allowing only appropriately qualified members of the legal professions to offer such services in public. For instance, applications to register a real estate transaction in the Land Book in Latvia are prepared and confirmed by notaries, criminal charges are upheld by prosecutors, defendants are defended by attorneys, and court rulings are implemented by bailiffs.

2) Lawyers join **professional organizations** that are autonomous subjects of public law and handle functions delegated to them by the state. Organizations of professionals in the judicial system are instructed by the state not only to serve functions of internal organization, but also to make sure that state-guaranteed obligations such as ensuring a person's constitutional rights to legal representation are ensured.

3) The state **protects** the rights of the professional monopoly. In countries with professional monopolies, criminal laws speak to unlicensed practices. That means that people without the appropriate qualifications and experience are banned by law from offering and providing assistance in this important field.

4) Professional organizations draft and implement rules concerning professional practice – rules that are

traditionally known as **professional norms of ethics**. These internal norms, as discussed below, can be used by clients and other persons who are not members of the relevant organizations.

5) When a profession receives the right of professional monopoly, it undertakes the duty of **servicing the public**. This obligation is enshrined in the professional rules of all professions in the judicial system, although it is usually expressed in abstract form. The content of the requirements is determined in each specific case.

Undeniably, the main duty for representatives of the legal professions – lawyers, notaries and bailiffs – is to do what clients instruct them to do and to act in accordance with client interests. This is not, however, an absolute requirement. The law and professional ethics must be observed no matter what the job is. The chairwoman of the Ethics Commission of Latvian Sworn Attorneys, Ilze Krastiņa: «This freedom is the goal of the free professions. It is characterized by the challenge of serving the public, and this does not disappear just because these professionals also earn money. The mission of serving the public by awarding advantages to professionals such as independence, professional secrets, etc., is justified by their special role in society» (Krastiņa 2009).

The most powerful prerequisite for a professional monopoly is the **independence** of a legal practitioner in terms of offering quality services to clients in a conscientious way. This is, indeed, the most important demand that is made against the legal profession (Rhode and Hazard 2001, 41). Practitioners in the professions of the judicial system must be independent in their professional and corporative activities. This covers the professional dimension in terms of taking decisions and fulfilling duties on the exclusive basis of legal resources, doing so independently of any external influences or threats.

Judges must evaluate evidence by abstracting themselves from any influence that might threaten the objectivity of his or her judgement. The independence of judges can be threatened by the interests of the persons involved, as well as by public opinion. Judges receive criticism in the public sphere for decisions that are too lenient or too harsh, as well as for opinions expressed during proceedings (Shaman et al., 308).

There are also threats against the independence of the free legal professions. Codes of ethics specifically speak to the risk of personal interests. Attorneys, for instance, are not allowed to buy property which is related to a court case in which one of their clients is involved (Article 2.7 of the Code of Ethics of Latvian Sworn Attorneys). The code of ethics of notaries emphasizes the special status of this legal profession – providing legal assistance to parties to a transaction while maintaining neutrality and not taking sides (Article 16 of the Code of Ethics of Latvian Sworn Notaries).

There is also an economic aspect to a lawyer's independence. It is not recommended for representatives of the free legal professions to become involved in business relations with their clients, thus becoming economically dependent upon them. The requirement of professional independence also applies to the way in

which the practices of lawyers are organized. A lawyer is subject to higher risk, for instance, by offering legal aid to a single client alone. If the «exclusive» client provides enough work and money, the lawyer can become dependent upon the client and be forced to sacrifice professional and legal standards on the altar of the client's short-term interests.

The law on the bar says that a law firm can belong only to a lawyer. Lawyers are not allowed to be in a joint practice with people from other professions, including representatives of other legal professions (LR Saeima 1993 a, Articles 115-117). As is the case in several other European countries, lawyers are not allowed to co-own a firm with notaries, court bailiffs or auditors (EKT 1999).

This means that the practices of the free legal professions do not relate to commercial principles that are aimed at earning a profit. The professional monopoly ensures that the relevant legal professions can organize their practices and ensure high service standards and professional responsibility.

A second, equally important argument in favour of a good professional monopoly has to do with **responsibility vis-à-vis** the service recipient and the judicial system. A lawyer's responsibility means that instructions from clients must be followed in a precise, timely and quality way. What is more, the services must correspond not only to the client's instructions. Lawyers are not allowed to ignore legal and ethical norms.

A specific element in this is the monitoring and evaluation of individual activities. The work of lawyers, notaries and court bailiffs is first evaluated by the relevant professional organization when disciplinary or ethical violations are suspected. If the decision of a disciplinary or ethical commission dissatisfies the party to the case, the courts are asked to evaluate the disputed issue of professional responsibility. This means that the relevant legal profession takes public responsibility for the quality of services of the lawyer, an objective evaluation of possible violations, and the application of relevant sanctions when necessary. This is one of the most hotly disputed theses in the concept of the professional monopoly.

In the legal literature, there are often questions about the profession's ability to evaluate professional violations and apply appropriate sanctions against a colleague. In several countries, including the United States, the liability of lawyers for professional violations is evaluated not just by the relevant profession, but also by the public (Dzienkowski 2003, 291). Questions about disciplinary liability are illustrated by an ongoing discussion in Great Britain and Ireland at this time – the question of whether state regulations related to financial services should also be applied to the legal practices (For more on professional monopolies and their gradual repeal, see Stephen and Love 1995 in Davis 2002; Philips 2004).

Latvia at this time allows a partial monopoly in the professional practices of professions in the judicial system. **Sworn court bailiffs** are entrusted with making sure that rulings handed down by courts and other institutions are obeyed. The state has delegated to the bailiffs the right to do this when the relevant individuals refuse to obey a ruling voluntarily.

Sworn notaries handle the relevant duties by preparing relevant documents and confirmations and handling inheritance cases. These duties are exclusively delegated to the notary system. Notaries and bailiffs also collect state fees for the services that are provided.

The professional monopoly of attorneys is formulated in the law on the bar, as well as in relevant procedural regulations. In practice, however, the monopoly has shrunk down to a narrow area – defending suspects and defendants and representing witnesses in criminal proceedings (LR Saeima 2005, Article 79). Section 113 of the law on the bar offers a broader explanation of the professional monopoly in terms of legal defence: «Only sworn attorneys and sworn assistants to attorneys shall have the right to offer legal assistance in court cases and to advertise such assistance» (LR Saeima 1993 a). Though there is no monopoly on procedural practice, the Competition Council applied the norm when punishing so-called «street corner lawyers» who offer assistance primarily through anonymous advertising.³

In other words, the professional monopoly in Latvia has been enshrined for notaries and bailiffs, while the exclusive competence of attorneys only applies to criminal proceedings. Both lawyers and notaries, however, preserve a monopoly on making public offers and advertising their professional services. Advertising one's practice is significantly limited by internal legal regulations (Code of Ethics of the Latvian Sworn Notaries, Article 38-45; Code of Ethics of Latvian Sworn Attorneys, section 5).

Unregulated legal practices in the form of lawyers with individual practices or commercial enterprises ensure serious competition in the bar when it comes to legal services that are offered, thus stimulating the free development of the market, as well as necessary competition. Experts have noted that in Latvia, as in the other Baltic countries, there is a high level of competition in the sphere of legal services (Hodgart 2009) – here the unrestricted activity of the unregulated legal professions plays a role. However, this practice creates several important risks that can be dangerous to service recipients.

First of all, there is no mechanism for oversight and supervision over service providers and the issue of whether their services are in line with the law and the necessary quality standards. Legal aid can be offered by individuals without an appropriate education and professional experience. If the client's problem is not resolved or the service provider's unskilled work causes losses to the client, then the only resource is a new court case, this time against the former representative of the client's interests.

If this situation occurs in relation to a representative of the regulated legal professions, then the relevant professional organization can, in accordance with the law and professional regulations, call the guilty colleague to account with disciplinary proceedings. In truth, it has to be said, this is not always done. In 2008, for instance, the Council of Sworn Attorneys received 107 petitions and complaints, but it did not launch any disciplinary case.

³ Competition Council cases No. EO2-36, EO2-37 and EO2-38, 2 April 2008.

Indeed, over the course of five years, the council has submitted only five cases to its disciplinary commission (overviews by the chairman of the Council of Sworn Attorneys and the chairman of the council's disciplinary commission at a meeting in Rīga on 8 May 2009). These figures raise questions about the effectiveness of the disciplinary system.

Auditing Professional Monopolies

The professional monopoly of Latvia's bar was narrowed several times by the Constitutional Court (see Constitutional Court cases No. 2003-04-01, 2003-08-01 and 2003-10-01). In Case No. 2003-04-01, the court ruled that in a country where the rule of law prevails, rights must not only be declared, but also ensured in practical terms. Article 92 of the Constitution says that any individual has the right to legal counsel. Existing norms, however, are clearly insufficient in guaranteeing that right. There is no financing to ensure that poor people receive assistance from a state-financed lawyer when they are involved in civil or administrative cases, as well as cassation appeals in the courts. In this case, the Constitutional Court revoked the cassation monopoly of sworn attorneys that had been enshrined by the parliament in the Law on Civil Procedure on 31 October 2002.

In its ruling on Case No. 2003-08-01, the Constitutional Court provided an expansion of the concept of «assistance from an attorney,» ruling that the concept covers the individual's right to legal aid as an inviolable component of a fair trial, thus hoping to make sure that timely, accessible and quality legal aid is available in all civil, administrative, criminal and constitutional procedures (See the ruling of 6 October 2003 in judgement No. 2003-08-01, Section 1.3 of the conclusions drawn by the court).

In this case, the court expressed doubts as to whether the legal regulations which applied to the bar at that time (2004) were sufficient to ensure timely, accessible and quality defence to all criminal defendants, thus guaranteeing the right to a fair trial. The court found that the legislature had not sought to limit the right of individuals to a fair trial in its definition of the concept of assistance from a lawyer, and so the bar had no reason to preserve its professional monopoly if the practice did not fully ensure the rights enshrined in Article 92 of the Constitution.

In Case No. 2003-10-01, the Constitutional Court ruled that in civil proceedings, a person could be represented by **anyone whom the court permitted to offer that representation**: «In hearing a specific case and deciding on the person's selected representative in civil proceeding, courts of general jurisdiction shall take into account the ideas expressed in this ruling and in Article 84 of the Law on Civil Procedure, and they shall have the right to apply Section 92 of the Constitution directly.» There were objections from legal institutions and academic lawyers (Torgaņš 2003), but the Constitutional Court nevertheless adjusted the professional monopoly of the bar so as to ensure that the conditions enshrined in Article 92 of the Constitution would never be violated, and fair trials would always be available. In repealing one system, however, the court did not create a new one. Its concern for the need to

ensure «access to courts» did not take into account the no less important criterion of the quality and security of the services that are rendered. The recipient of legal services can choose representation from a fairly wide range of offers, but the risk that there will be lower professional liability and quality has been increased, because it is not possible to ensure sufficient oversight and control over «any person» who is neither licensed nor registered. It's not possible to know precisely how many people offer legal aid or what these people have in terms of education, experience, qualifications and professional liability. This fact has encouraged lawyers to overhaul their professional regulations to a very significant degree (Rone 2009).

It must be noted that over the last decade, other European Union member states such as Britain have reviewed the principle of professional monopolies, particularly since the European Commission declared that one of its priorities was to liberalize the market for free professions in Europe (Philips 2004). One of the reasons for this is that the European Commission wants to make sure that there is always free access to fair trials. The Commission has argued that «because of consumer interests, it is necessary to increase competition in the provision of professional services» (EK 2004).

It is also true that ever since May 1, 2004, when Latvia joined the European Union, the country's bar has had to observe a professional monopoly for lawyers when it comes to transfrontier legal assistance (European Council Directives 77/249/EEC and 98/5/EC). That means that residents of EU member states can receive professional assistance only from sworn attorneys when it comes to legal issues in Latvia. At the same time, sworn attorneys allowed to practice in other EU countries have the right to practice alongside Latvia's sworn attorneys and their assistants in Latvia (LR Saeima 1993 a, part 7 «The Activities of European Union member state attorneys in Latvia»).

Retrospective Accountability

During the first half of the 1990s, transformations in Latvia's legal system involved a discussion about the retrospective accountability of the legal professions. When Latvia restored its independent statehood, materials concerning cases against dissidents heard by Soviet courts were disclosed.⁴ In public debate, people denounced the work done by judges and prosecutors, arguing that the Soviet legal system was one in which people in the legal professions were influenced by and dependent upon the institutions of government and the Communist Party. Scholars concluded that the Soviet legal system was fully subject to the institutional regulations of the regime, as governed by the Communist Party (Meļķis 2001, 8). The concept of «telephone law» entered the lexicon of the profession, referring to the ability of government officials or party functionaries to instruct courts in relation to rulings in specific cases. The discussion about the respon-

⁴ The most notable was the case of Gunārs Astra in 1983 (see the final statement of Gunārs Astra at http://www.historia.lv/alfabets/A/AS/astra_g/dok/1983.12.15..htm; as well as the indictment at <http://www.ltn.lv/~gastra/a-rozkalns.htm>).

sibilities of the legal profession, however, was reduced to a debate about the guilt or innocence of specific persons. Systemic solutions were not applied, the debates created no practical consequences, and the judicial institutions of newly independent Latvia did not undergo radical staff or structural changes which were a necessary precondition for the transformation of the judicial system, as well as an evaluation of the responsibility of officials in the justice system.

When we look at the opportunities that were not used, we have to look at legal proceedings that had everything to do with the collective accountability of the legal profession 60 years ago. Between 1947 and 1949, the case *The United States of America vs. Joseph Altstötter, et al* was pursued through America's court system.⁵ The case involved the responsibilities of professionals in German's Nazi court system, looking at whether the principles of morality were being observed and whether inappropriate work was done in the profession.

There were several important dimensions in evaluating court proceedings in an authoritarian system. One was the conflict between a judge's personal moral choices and the requirements of the system. Another was the legitimacy of unfair laws and the responsibility of a judge for decisions which formally were in line with the norms that were in force at that time, but were also in evident violation of universally accepted and fundamental principles of the rule of law. All legal systems are dominated by the principle that judges are not personally responsible for rulings that have been handed down on the basis of legal norms which have been approved by legislatures and

are in force (See Shaman et al., 439-450; for Latvia see LR Augstākā padome 1992, Article 13.5, part d). What's more, during the first half of the 20th century, legal theories were dominated by the doctrine of legal positivism, with only the grammatical text in *stricto sensu* of norms approved by legislatures considered to be the source of people's rights (Liepa 1999, 108).

Still, these considerations do not mean that the obligation of evaluating legal norms in terms of moral evaluations disappears, nor do they mean that judges should not face the burden of ethical choices. «The most unfair rules in the Nazi legal system were laws, rulings and similar acts which, because of their formal nature, were applied by judges as 'laws' despite their obvious injustice. German judges prayed before the altar of the law, and they slavishly followed the letter of the law. They were not influenced by intellectual doubts as to the questioned justice of the norm that was applied as long as the state had approved it. They did not even stop to think about whether the regime was or was not legitimate.» Those words were written by a German jurist called Karl Loewenstein, who was involved in the creation of the legal system in West Germany after World War II. He was writing about basic issues that were reviewed by the Nuremberg tribunal (Loewenstein 1948, 432).

The tribunal, like other international proceedings⁶ which evaluated human rights violations during military conflicts in Yugoslavia and Africa over the subsequent 60 years, proved the priority of the moral dimension when it comes to court rulings. Legal systems today are not based

⁵ Information about the case can be found at <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/nuremberg/alstoetter.htm>.

⁶ See the case law of the UN International Criminal Court (<http://www.hrw.org/legacy/campaigns/icc/>) and the UN International War Crimes Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (<http://www.icty.org/action/cases.4>).

Box
3.9

Evaluating Collective Accountability in Strategic Litigation: the Nuremberg Trial, 1947-1949

As part of the «Tribunal of Judges,» the case of *The United States of America vs. Josef Altstötter, et al* involved a US military tribunal that was set up to assess the personal responsibility of 16 employees of the judicial system, including judges, for participation in Nazi war crimes. Judges were charged with the formal and «blind» application of obviously inhumane and amoral legal norms that had been approved by the legislature of Nazi Germany, as well as the initiative of judges in handing down stricter sentences than those provided for by law for crimes that were criminalized specifically by the authoritarian Nazi regime. One example was Judge Oswald Rothaug, who sentenced a Jewish man called Leo Katzenberger to death for unlawful cohabitation with an Aryan woman – this despite the fact that the law said that persons convicted of that crime were to be sentenced to a prison term. The military tribunal's work represented the first time in the history of a judicial system in which the liability of a judge for applying a legal norm that had been approved by a legislature was evaluated. Judges from the judicial system in Nazi Germany were convicted of applying evidently inhumane norms. The process liberated Germany's legal system from an oppressive and unjust historical heritage. West German lawyers who established a new legal system no longer had to apply legal norms in the same way as judges during the Nazi era had done – applying norms to specific facts whilst ignoring the moral dimensions of the law. The Nuremberg rulings also expanded very substantially the range of responsibilities for the legal professions, supplementing good practice requirements (observing the interests of the client, handling cases honestly, etc.) with the public duty of ensuring justice and observing the requirements of morality.

The story of the 1949 proceedings was brought to the cinema screen in 1961 by Stanley Kramer in his much-honoured film «Judgment at Nuremberg.»

For more on the case, see Asimov, M. «Judges Judging Judges: Judgment at Nuremberg», <http://www.usfca.edu/pj/articles/Nuremberg.htm>. For more on the film, see <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0055031>.

just on normative and written laws, but also on general principles of law (Peczenik 2009; Iljanova 2005, 49). The task for professionals in the judicial system is to observe these standards in practice when the law is applied.

Prospective Accountability

The role and accountability of professions in the judicial system must be evaluated in the context of their duties. The Constitution speaks to the principle of a fair trial (Article 92). The principle of a fair trial requires courts to make reasoned rulings that are based on the law, the evidence that has been presented, and an evaluation of circumstances based on logic. When resolving a dispute between participants in proceedings or deciding on a sentence to hand down for a convicted defendant, the court must take the principles of justice into account. The application of those principles has become far more common in Latvian court practice over the last two decades. For that reason, instances in which a court's judgment is not in line with public opinion have created public dissatisfaction and may well increase distrust in the judicial system. Increased public attention is always focused on poorly argued court rulings in important cases (for illustrations, see Neimanis 2009; Skujniece 2003).⁷ Still, the main guidelines of courts must not be forgotten if people demand that rulings be in line with standards that the public can accept and understand. Courts must take the law into account, and they cannot ignore or arbitrarily change the norms of the law.⁸

The principle of a fair trial covers a fundamentally important set of procedural factors aimed at striking a balance in the influence of the executive branch and the legislative branch of government (Plēps et al. 2004, 541). Many European countries have set up constitutional courts which are entrusted with supervising and correcting the work of legislatures. In Latvia, the Constitutional Court considers the extent to which laws and binding regulations issued by the national government or local governments are in line with higher-standing legal norms, the Constitution, and the general principles of the law. The Constitutional Court has the right to declare that a norm is unconstitutional and thus null and void (LR Saeima 2000 c, parts II and III). Petitions before the Constitutional Court may be lodged by government officials, institutions and individual residents if they feel that their fundamental rights have been violated. Other courts, when hearing cases, may ask the Constitutional Court to evaluate whether a legal norm is in line with a higher-ranking legal norm if they feel that a norm that applies to the case is of

questionable constitutionality. In such cases, the relevant case is suspended until the Constitutional Court hands down its ruling. Considerations of justice are often the issue at hand when a court asks the Constitutional Court for a ruling on a norm's fairness (Augstākās Tiesas Senāts 2009). This allows the courts to supervise the work of the legislature by constantly testing whether legal norms are in line with the principles that are at the foundation of the state itself.

The principle of a fair trial that is enshrined in Article 92 of the Constitution is of great procedural importance in the operations of Latvia's modern and multi-level court system, creating a foundation for the existence of that system as such.⁹ The influence of the principle of a fair trial goes beyond procedural issues in court operations. Indeed, that principle relates to a person's fundamental rights. Former Constitutional Court justice and University of Latvia professor Ilma Čepāne has argued that this principle, indeed, is the key to ensuring all other rights (Čepāne 2005). In order to ensure that this fundamental principle is upheld, the state separates judicial institutions from other institutions of national governance (Jansone et al., 2002, 71), also granting autonomy to the legal professions that are part of the judicial system. All of the representatives of legal professions who are involved in this process – judges, prosecutors, attorneys, notaries and bailiffs – are directly responsible for ensuring that the principle of a fair trial is always upheld. Thus **the role of the professions of the judicial system is to ensure that the rule of law is observed in relations between the state and individuals**. True, the professions differ in terms of status and of procedural duties, but they are all joined together by the goal of strengthening the judicial system.

Legal Ethics: Values and Binding Instructions

When we look at the fundamental principles which characterize each of the professions, we see clearly that they are brought together by characteristics that could be described as the fundamental principles of their professional conduct. In legal theory, that is known as the professional ethics of lawyers or deontology (Rhode and Luban, xv). There is a shortcoming in this description, however. Ethics have to do with what is good and evil, they are based on human choice. Professional ethics narrow the range of choice and apply the discipline of ethics to professional conduct. This means that in the area of professional ethics, aspects of values and choice apply to everyday professional activities. Consider, for instance, the selection of a judge to whom to assign a case. If the system is entirely random, it is possible that a judge might be assigned a case which involves a close friend. Even if other parties to the case remain unaware of this relationship, the judge must inevitably decide on whether it is right to rule on a case involving the friend

⁷ For an illustration of this, see Neimanis, J. «Koncentrēšanās uz detaļām aizēno lietas būtību» (Concentrating on Details Overshadows the Essence of the Case), *Latvijas Vēstnesis, Jurista Vārds*, 21 April 2009. See also Skujniece, V. «Latvijas tiesu spriedumu kvalitātes problēmas» (Problems with the Quality of Latvian Court Rulings), Providus Public Policy Centre, 2003. See <http://www.providus.lv/public/26774.html>.

⁸ As Socrates put it: «Judges are there not to take decisions based on favour, but to make judgements on the basis of justice. They have taken an oath which says that they will not treat people as they like, but instead that they will rule in accordance with the law.» *Plato: Socrates' Defence*. Latvian translation Riga: Zinātne (1997), p. 63.

⁹ For more on the importance of the principle of a fair trial in the judicial system, see Čepāne 2005; see also the ruling of the Constitutional Court in Case No. 2004-10-01, 17 January 2005.

and another person whom the judge does not know. Can a judge preserve neutrality in handing down an objective ruling in this case? What if the judge has at some point in the past offered advice to the friend as to what to do in resolving such a dispute? Here we can apply general ethical guidelines which have to do with as important an area of legal proceedings and the right to a fair trial. That is why professional ethical requirements have been turned into mandatory norms with precise descriptions of the rules.

All of the professions in the judicial system have approved mandatory rules for conduct as internal normative acts (see footnote 1 in this chapter for the full list). These offer precise guidelines about conduct, and the law requires the representatives of the relevant professions to observe the requirements of the relevant code of ethics. In Case No. AA 1040-04/5, the Administrative Regional Court referred to the code of ethics as an internal normative act: «A sworn attorney must observe the principles of professional conduct that are enshrined in the Code of Ethics of Latvian Sworn Attorneys, as approved a meeting of Latvian sworn attorneys on 21 May 1993.» Thus the court awards the right to people not involved in the professions to demand that lawyers do what professional ethics require them to do.

This is ensured by the identification of legal consequences. For instance, when judges decide on whether to accept a case or whether to hear a case in which they would have a hard time in coming up with objective decisions, they must not only formulate their ethical position, but also take into account the conduct that is indicated in legal norms so as to avoid unfavourable legal consequences. In other words, judges who choose to act ethically do so on the basis of the system of ethical values that they have learned as part of their personal growth, while also respecting the norms

of law and deontology. Judges avoid unfavourable legal consequences that would occur if they failed to satisfy legal requirements, and they also respect justified public demands vis-à-vis court proceedings.¹⁰ Professional organizations and their binding rules of conduct help to make sure that lawyers exhibit professional responsibility.

There are three main dimensions in regulations which relate to the work of jurists:

- 1) Accountability to the client (for sworn attorneys, sworn notaries and sworn bailiffs), as well as responsibility for direct professional duties (for the aforementioned professions, as well as for judges and prosecutors);
- 2) Accountability to the legal profession, manifested as the duties of professionals towards their colleagues under the framework of professional organizations, also working with colleagues in other legal professions in relation to the judicial system (e.g., the subordinated duties of the defendant and his or her lawyer in criminal proceedings);
- 3) Accountability towards society – the collective responsibility of the legal professions.

In each of these areas, there are important duties that are based on professional values. The three areas overlap, but the main thing that brings all of the professions of the judicial system together is the duty which lawyers have toward society in terms of their responsibility for making sure that each person has the right to a fair trial.

¹⁰ In a similar case, a judge from the Riga Regional Court recused herself from Case No. 440/6, 9 April 2009. In Case No. C21020507, C23/078, 1 July 2008, a judge from the Limbaži District Court recused herself from the case, announcing that she saw no objective reason to do so, but she would recuse herself anyway so as to erase any doubts about her objectivity. She made reference to the Code of Ethics of Judges, Canon 2, which states that judges must act so as to promote public trust and honesty.

Box
3.10

Greatest Achievements, Most Serious Problems, Most Important Tasks

Greatest Achievements

Over the last two decades, the legal professions have accomplished a significant task in improving the Latvian legal system from an instrument of the totalitarian state for influencing society to an autonomous branch of authority in an independent, democratic order. The independence of the judiciary is based on the independence of the legal professions, which is only possible if lawyers are guided by generally accepted ethical standards in their everyday practice and in their profession overall.

Most Serious Problems

Though professional ethical standards are formulated in the codes of ethics of the various legal professions and the judicial system's ethical and disciplinary institutions apply them in practice, the general recognition of ethical norms is insufficient. Latvia's lawyers still have a long path to tread before professional ethical standards are completely implemented and observed in practice.

Most Important Tasks

The task for the decade to come is unification of standards in the profession. To the extent possible, various legal professions should apply unified ethical requirements; the application of divergent standards in the legal professions and in the activities of unregulated lawyers should be prevented.

Responsibility in Information Transfer

Baiba Sporāne, Līga Krūmiņa

Responsibility in Information Transfer: The Current Context

The information transfer cycle promotes cooperation between individuals and social groups and is one of the key requirements for sustainable social development. Today, a society's level of development can largely be determined by its capacity to become an *information society* in which the skill to obtain, utilize and create new information is the main criterion for an individual's opportunity to enhance his or her personal welfare and social value.

An information society is characterized by a developed *information environment* – a synthesis of various factors, resources and processes that demonstrate the knowledge already accumulated and used by a society, community or individual, as well as the opportunities for obtaining, creating, increasing and using knowledge (Kumar 1995). In this new environment, knowledge supports changes in the forms and customs of social communication, in the formats of information resources, and in the functions and operating principles of the information media. The quality of the information environment depends on how responsibly members of society carry out the transfer of information.

To be productive, information transfer requires a responsible attitude from all participants in the process. Responsibility for the quality of the information transfer cycle must be assumed not only by the *authors of information sources* but also by the *mediators* – among them information institutions (information centres, memory institutions: archives, museums, libraries, information services, education institutions, mass media, etc.) and individuals (information professionals, social contacts) – and by *information users* with their information needs and their skill to obtain and use information – an indication of their level of information literacy.

The question of responsibility in regard to the transfer of information within a society involves two specific aspects: 1) whether the necessary conditions for information transfer exist (e.g. legislation, infrastructure); 2) whether the professional qualities of mediators and the skills of users suffice to obtain and wisely use information. This makes it necessary to examine whether there is an appropriate legal basis for information transfer, whether information institutions have at their disposal the necessary store of information and the infrastructure to perform the functions assigned to them by the law, whether their staff have the professional skills to supply users with the required information, whether users have the level of knowledge that will allow them to use the information sources and mediators that are increasingly based on digital technology.

To judge the level of responsibility of the participants in Latvia's information transfer system and the quality of the objective conditions, we have used data on Latvia's information institution networks, reports on completed and planned projects (e.g. the Latvian National Library project (LNB AB 2009 b), and others), the results of population surveys (e.g. a population survey on accessibility and use of information and communication technologies and the functional role of libraries in Latvia (KIS 2009 a) and others), the self-evaluations of professionals employed in the information institution system regarding the quality of their work, and the views of information professionals whose performance depends on the quality of the information transfer system (ICT experts, SIA «Tilde» board member Andrejs Vasiljevs; media expert, *Nedēļa* editor Māris Zanders; local government and culture expert, Ventspils City Council executive director Aldis Ābele).

The Legislative Basis for Information Transfer

One of the objective requirements for a good information transfer system is a good legislative basis. Here, we are talking about the role of government, parliament and public administration in the organization of information transfer systems. The criterion for assessing responsibility is whether or not legislation covers the public functions of information authors and mediators. An analysis of the laws and regulations that govern information transfer makes it possible to judge whether or not legislation promotes responsibility on the part of those participating in the information transfer system. Since the renewal of Latvia's independence, a number of laws have been adopted to regulate processes in the information transfer cycle, among these: **the storage of information** (e.g. Library Law, Museum Law, Law on Archives), **the use of information** (Copyright Law), **the operations of information providers** (Law on Electronic Communications, Law on State Information Systems), **the quantity and quality of services** (Law on Information Society Services), **the transfer of documents** (Law on Legal Deposit, Law on Electronic Documents, Law on Information Transparency, Law on State Secrets), **the security and freedom of expression of information users** (Law on Protection of the Data of Natural Persons, Law on the Press and Other Mass Media), **the rights of information users** (Law on Education).

In the laws that deal with creating, storing and providing access to information (documents), these tasks are delegated to information mediators such as libraries, museums and archives. The functions of information

mediators are regulated in laws that cover various aspects of information services. These define the operating principles of public information systems, registration procedures, rights and obligations of the holders, rules for the retrieval of information (LR Saeima 2002 b), and general technical and security requirements (regulated by the Cabinet of Ministers). Laws and regulations deal with the transfer, storage and security of electronic documents (LR Saeima 2002 c). They provide the definition of an «information society service»: this includes electronic merchandising of goods and services, electronic commercial notifications, offers to find, access and obtain information, and services that provide information transmission through electronic communication networks or access to such networks. The law regulates the obligations, rights and operating principles of these service providers (LR Saeima 2004). Laws and regulations deal with information access levels, state secrets, the use of classified information, liability in the case of violations (LR Saeima 1996; LR Saeima 1998 a), and lay down the requirements that information providers must meet. The law holds information institutions accountable for data protection, investigation and implementation of new technologies, and for the way in which information is dispensed. All this serves to promote responsible information services.

The law also anticipates the responsibility of information users. Each person living in Latvia is guaranteed the opportunity to enhance his/her intellectual and physical potential in order to become an independent and intelligent individual (LR Saeima 1999 b). Depending on the age and needs of the individual, he/she is provided with opportunities to: 1) acquire knowledge and skills in the liberal arts or sciences; 2) acquire the knowledge, skills and experience needed to take part in public life; 3) pursue moral, ethical, intellectual and physical development, and become a knowledgeable, skilled and cultivated personality. In this process, the individual is entitled to freely express and stand up for his/her views and opinions, use the facilities, libraries and other information repositories, reading rooms, and teaching materials of education institutions, and receive information about all questions involving education (LR Saeima 1998 b). At the same time, the law regulates the rights and the obligations of information users, anticipating punishment for offences, guaranteeing the inviolability of information sources and copyright protection for their authors (LR Saeima 2000 a).

The law regulates the way in which all manner of operations with personal data (e.g. collection, registration, storage, transformation or use of data) must be carried out. It regulates relations between the persons to whom data pertains and the holders of data, their rights and obligations, and provides rules for storing and retrieving data (LR Saeima 2000 b). Laws and regulations support personal freedom of expression: every person or group of persons, public or private institution has the right to freely express their views and opinions, make announcements to the press and other media, and receive through the media information about any question of interest (LR Augstākā padome 1990). The law prescribes the responsibilities of the press and other media in regard to the dissemination of information (LR Augstākā padome 1990. article 7), and

the individual responsibilities (rights and obligations) of information authors.

Good practice in regard to the information transfer cycle is also addressed in a number of European Union Framework documents. For example, the principles of information transfer through the Internet are set out in European Commission guidelines on public access to information and freedom of expression in networked information (EC 2000). This document deals with public access to information, in particular that of children, and prescribes quality requirements for Public Access Points, information safeguards, and Internet use policy. In May 2009, the European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA) in collaboration with the National Authorities for Public Libraries in Europe (NAPLE) adopted the Vienna Declaration (ELIBDA 2009) which seeks to strengthen the role of information institutions (in this case, libraries) in supporting the European Knowledge Society. One of the courses of action set out in the declaration is the improvement of copyright legislation, making provisions for reasonable exceptions in the case of libraries.

The above laws and guidelines show that standards and rules do exist for key information transfer processes, which makes it safe to say: the law is potentially a promoter of responsibility on the part of information system participants. Nevertheless, there are problems that make it difficult to realize this potential. The main problems: there is no mechanism for enforcing the provisions of the law or supervising their application; in certain areas, there are no competent mediators between authors of information and users; development of Latvia's digital information environment is hampered by irrational copyright regulations. There are several solutions (also mentioned by information experts Andrejs Vasiljevs and Māris Zanders) to these problems: a system must be created (a good mediator) to ensure cooperation between authors and users in the new media (for example, quotation of authors and use of video materials in Internet encyclopedias) in compliance with the law but without laborious procedures; greater activity on the part of law-enforcement institutions must be achieved to ensure greater responsibility on the part of information users (for example, to fight computer programme piracy); access to laws and regulations must be more rationally organized, providing users with a clearly structured system for finding documents by topic; copyright regulations must be adopted to meet the special demands of today's digital information environment.

Latvia's Information Transfer System: Components and Areas of Responsibility

Information Sources

Information sources (documents, in the broadest sense of the word) are the data carriers – of any material whatsoever – available to man, which comprise the theoretical and practical knowledge needed for a society to function and develop (see Encyclopedia Britannica 2009)

Information sources have concrete forms and types, which are chosen by users according to their personal needs and the importance of these sources in dealing with everyday concerns. On the other hand, information sources may initiate intentions on part of the user and motivate individual or collective activity. Analysis of a society's habits regarding the use of information sources (areas of life where information is needed and preferential types of information source) as well as the quality criteria applied to these sources by users makes it possible to determine the areas of responsibility of source authors.

Choice of Information Source

A survey (SKDS 2008, T3) carried out in Latvia shows that people most often need information in the following areas: current events in Latvia and elsewhere in the world, healthcare, products and services, work and career, legal issues. Information about current events in Latvia and elsewhere was most important in the 45-54 age group; healthcare issues, in the 55-74 age group; information about products and services as well as work and career issues was most important to respondents aged 18-24. Information professionals (Māris Zanders, Aldis Ābele) find that information about legal issues («know your rights»), the quality of products and services, participation in social networks and in their creation (comprehension of social development and one's own place therein) is important to active members of a civil society. Accordingly, a responsible individual will be interested in this type of information, and it is up to the authors of information sources to provide it.

People in Latvia choose information sources according to their areas of interest. The mass media are given priority: these cater most directly to the interests of the population and most effectively satisfy information needs. Television was the first choice of 87.5% of the respondents, this was followed by newspapers (66.9%), radio (56.6%), magazines (43.4%) and news portals (42.7%) (SKDS 2008, T 1). The appeal of the mass media as a source of information obviously lies in the fact that these provide information about all priority areas of interest in a concentrated form. The next most important source of information for people in Latvia are books and reference literature. These were named as sources of information by 24% and 23% of the respondents, respectively. Science, popular science and fiction, as well as dictionaries, encyclopedias and handbooks are of interest to students and the working-age population (respondents aged mainly 18-24 and 45-54). This obviously has to do with books as a source of information that plays a key role in education and career-building: in a book, a subject is treated in greater depth and detail.

A number of positive aspects can be mentioned to illustrate the diversity of information sources in Latvia: the variety of forms and types of sources (the possibility to receive and use information as needed); the accessibility of sources (the possibility to compare sources and choose the best); the correspondence of sources with the interests of the user (the possibility to receive information that helps to deal with daily matters). This indicates that the supply of information sources meets the habitual demands of society.

The Quality of Information Sources

The survey also provides answers to the question of quality criteria in regard to information sources (SKDS 2008, T 2). According to the respondents, the main indications of quality are: the up-to-datedness of information (38.8% find this most important), the reliability (38.8%), and the usefulness of the content (31.6%). It is interesting to note that the main indications of quality differ by age group.

The greatest number of respondents (43.5%) who found that the most important criterion for the quality of an information source was the *up-to-datedness* of the information that it provided was aged 18 to 24. This choice is obviously connected with the dynamic lifestyle of the respondents in this age group. The *reliability* of information was most important for respondents aged 55 to 74 (this group most actively uses newspapers as a source of information). The *usefulness of content* (the possibility to use information in dealing with specific questions) as a sign of quality was most important to respondents aged 24 to 34, i.e. in the career-building stage of life. The respondents in this age group were most active in using news portals as a source of information and named usefulness of content as a very important sign of quality when judging news portals as an information source.

Examination of information sources as components of the information transfer system showed a positive trend in general development (variety of forms and types, accessibility, compliance with user interests). But a number of problems were also identified, which have a negative impact on information transfer within a society (these were also mentioned by information professionals): the immense quantity and fragmentation of the available information; the price of information sources (which, in the case of books, for example, does not promote reading as an intellectual and emotional exercise); the quality of information sources. Responsible behaviour in dealing with these problems is, for example, the education of users (to develop the skill of finding the best source and judging the quality of the information that is obtained); enforcement of the law in cases where the public is misled or misinformed; quality control of information sources (legislation prescribes basic quality requirements); a basic package of services guaranteed to every person in Latvia.

Information Mediators

The function of information mediators within a society is to provide information users (consumers) with quickly accessible, comprehensive and appropriate information, which when employed by a user is transformed into knowledge, thus giving the society added value. The more mediators there are and the wider their network and service coverage, the better the transfer of information and the greater the opportunities for responsible use of this information. The main quality indicators in the case of mediators are reliability and accessibility (physical and intellectual). Information mediators can be either institutions or individuals.

The *institution-mediator* role in Latvia's information transfer system is performed by information institutions (e.g. information centres, libraries, museums, archives, government and municipal information bureaus,

information services), education institutions, and information departments at places of employment. The World Wide Web is also an information mediator.

Individuals are mediators if they take active part in the creation of information networks. They can be divided into two groups. One group are the information professionals for whom mediation is their job: for example, librarians, information service operators, etc. The other group is made up of family members, friends, acquaintances, or knowledgeable persons who, with recommendations and advice in concrete situations, function as mediators between information and its user.

Institutions as Mediators

The responsibility of institutions as mediators manifests itself as the ability to competently carry out their public duties and perform the socially important functions that result from historical experience and are strengthened in laws and regulations.

The functions performed in the information transfer system by *institutions-mediators* are:

- 1) the memorial function: institutions collect information, accumulate and organize documents for storage and further use;
- 2) the informational function: institutions provide free access to the collected information, transforming this into knowledge;
- 3) the educational function: institutions develop the informational culture of the user;
- 4) the socialization function: institutions give users the opportunity to obtain information regardless of their level of education, culture, or place in the social hierarchy, thus promoting self-realization of the individual and his/her inclusion in social processes.

The areas of responsibility disclose both the retrospective dimension of responsibility (to store information about

everything that has been fixed in information carriers since the memory of mankind has been recorded) and the prospective dimension (to collect, organize, store, and ensure future access to present-day information). A particularly important mediation role in Latvia's information transfer cycle is played by institutions such as libraries because they traditionally carry out all the above functions, are accessible throughout the territory of Latvia, and offer the public a great number of information sources.

Latvia's Cabinet of Ministers' Regulations on the Local Library Network (LR MK 2001) anticipate at least one municipal library in every township with a population of up to 2,000. Statistics show (LR KM 2008) that there is one library to every 1,502 people in Latvia's regions. In other words, there are enough libraries to ensure the transfer of information throughout Latvia. The density of the library network in, for example, Latgale can be seen on the Culture Map prepared by the Ministry of Culture (see Box 3.11).

The influence of libraries in the information transfer system is also characterized by indicators such as the size of their collections, the average number of information units per library, the proportion of library users among the population, and the accessibility of libraries (number of inhabitants per library).

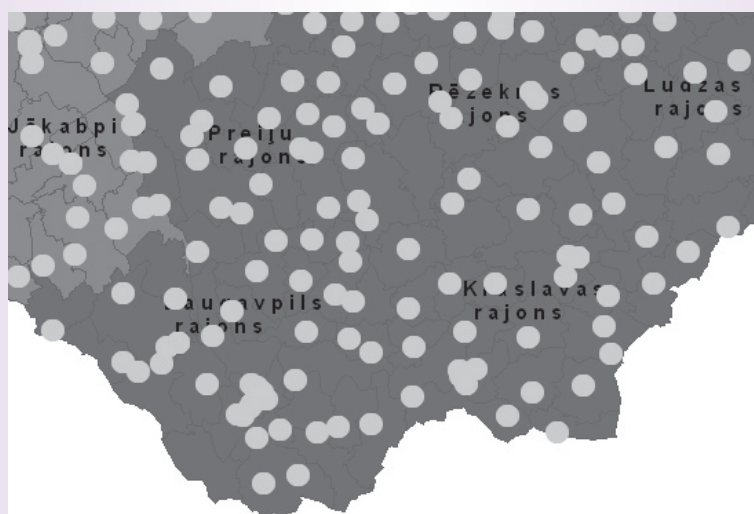
In a comparison with neighbouring Estonia (see Box 3.12), people in Latvia are less active library users (45.6% of the population); each user has a smaller number of information units at his/her disposal (34.5 units); and each library has a smaller average number of information units (38,768 units). This means that to achieve an optimal situation in regard to library number and distribution, libraries in Latvia must continue to enlarge their collections and improve their popularity (public image).

The role played by libraries in the information transfer cycle is indicated not only by the number of libraries and the size of their collections but also by the range of

Box
3.11

Density of the library network in Latgale

(in the Preiļi, Rēzekne, Ludza, Daugavpils and Krāslava districts)



Source: LR KM 2009

information services available to users in Latvia. As the survey shows (KIS 2009 a), people in Latvia consider the following services provided by Latvia's public libraries to be important: loan of books, magazines and newspapers for reading at home (82.4%), use of library reading rooms (70.9%), cost-free Internet (37.4%), reference services provided by librarians (34.2%), advice from librarians about the use of computers, Internet, databases (28.7%), possibility to seek information in an electronic catalogue (27.3%) and, last of all, access to online databases (16.7%). These ratings show that in the performance of their *informational* and *educational* functions libraries offer users a variety of necessary information services. It must be underlined here that a variety of services is one of the most typical indications of the quality of a user-friendly information institution.

The survey shows a positive rating of the services offered by libraries (see Box 3.13, a «very positive» rating was given by 52.9% of the respondents). This means that variety of services and responsibility for the quality of these services is a way of promoting the popularity of libraries. Information professional Aldis Ābele also finds that, in the case of libraries, information is responsibly collected, organized, incorporated into the e-environment, and proficiently offered to the user. Libraries link together the e-environment with traditional resources, offer access to central databases and electronic catalogues. Libraries employ professionals who can familiarize users with the tools necessary in the e-environment; furthermore, libraries are the institutions that teach users a responsible approach to information and the ability to judge what is offered. Thus, the work of libraries is important not only

Box
3.12

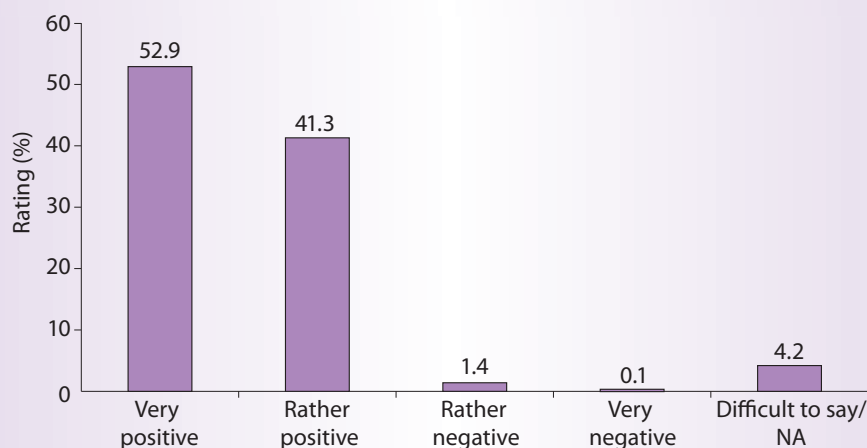
A Statistical Comparison of Libraries in Latvia and Estonia

Indicator	Latvia (December 2007)	Estonia (December 2007)
Total number of libraries	2,021	1,151
Total number of users	1,036,033	811,318
Total number of documents (information units)	78,350,479	78,739,925
average number of information units per library	38,768	68,410
average number of information units per inhabitant	34.5	58.6
Total number of inhabitants	2,270,000	1,342,409
of these, library users (%)	45.6 %	60.4 %
number of inhabitants per library	1,123	1,166

Source: for Latvia, LNB Bibliotēkas attīstības institūts 2008, unpublished material; for Estonia, Library Statistics, National Library of Estonia, 2008, available at <http://www.nlib.ee> and Statistics Estonia 2009, available at <http://www.stat.ee>.

Box
3.13

User Evaluations of Library Services



Source: Pabērza 2008

in the traditional information environment but also in the e-environment. Libraries promote a more serious and in-depth use of information sources.

Libraries perform not only the informational and educational function but also the *socialization* function (promoting communication and social inclusion, tackling social problems), which puts particular emphasis on the social usefulness of libraries. According to a survey (KIS 2009 a), the highest ratings are given to the assistance that libraries provide in finding jobs (this was mentioned by 94.6% of the respondents, a particularly high rating was given by NGO leaders), educational assistance (94%, especially mentioned by local government officials), assistance in communication with government or local government institutions (88.7%, especially NGO leaders), support for the use of e-services (86.7%, especially government officials and NGO leaders), support for money-saving measures (82.7%, especially SMEs), help with the procurement of goods and services (82.6%). The above data shows libraries as active social partners in organizing information transfer and providing reliable information as required.

Development of the Library Infrastructure

To promote the participation of libraries in the information transfer cycle, information and communication infrastructure development projects financed by the Latvian government and international foundations are currently being carried out in Latvia. The projects provide financing for: 1) development of the library network (development of a single national information system); 2) procurement of computer equipment.

The Latvian National Library project has been on the agenda since 1991, when Cabinet of Ministers' Resolution No. 175 on Construction of a Latvian National Library was adopted.¹ The project involves development of a State Unified Library Information Network or *Web of Light* and construction of a new library building or *Castle of Light*. The goal of the Latvian National Library project is to make information accessible to each and every person in Latvia regardless of domicile, social status, age, or other criteria. The project seeks to reduce the gap between those who already have access to all the information that they require for work, studies or business and those who do not yet have this opportunity (LMB AB 2009 a). The social usefulness of the project is illustrated by the results that have been so far achieved with the funding for both lines of the project (*Castle of Light* and *Web of Light*).

According to the latest estimates, 86 million lats could be needed for construction of the *Castle of Light* (LETA 2009). Once the work has been completed, users will have a new, modern library building with 45,205 m² of public space, reading rooms for 1,200 readers, space for 6 million books, and an environment and infrastructure suitable for modern-day learning needs (Jaunie Trīs Brāļi 2007). The *Castle of Light* project is supposed to be completed by November 18, 2012.

¹ For legislation connected with development of the project see <http://www.j3b.gov.lv/index.php?sadala=11>

In 2006, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation announced its participation in the *Web of Light* project. The signing of an agreement between Latvia's Ministry of Culture and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in November 2006 launched the *The Father's Third Son* Public Library Development Project (Latvia's share in the project is 21,169,000 USD; the foundation's share, 16,231,000 USD, raised to 17.8 million USD in February 2008) (KIS 2007).

With the available funding, the *Web of Light* project has produced the following results: 1) approximately 4,000 fully equipped computers and 956 multifunctional devices for copying, printing, scanning have been installed in all 874 libraries in Latvia (an average of three new computers and one multifunctional device for each public library); the computers are also equipped with data card readers for work with electronic signatures; 2) 17 libraries were connected to the Internet for the first time; 3) Internet access was improved at 853 libraries; 4) equipment was installed in 874 libraries to provide wireless access to the Internet (use of Internet and computers is cost free); 5) librarians were trained to work with computers and provide support for users (a wide training-base network has been set up throughout Latvia: 10 fully equipped stationary and 10 mobile training classes); 6) 7,700 library users have been taught basic computer skills; 7) special computer hardware and software for visually impaired library users has been supplied to the Latvian Library for the Blind and its branches throughout Latvia. The project affects all municipal public libraries in Latvia and 70% of Latvia's population (80% of the computers have been installed in libraries that service less than 10,000 inhabitants). It promotes librarians' professional education (1,455 librarians were trained to work with computers and provide support for users), and provides access to information and communication technologies (ICT) (all libraries have 1 MB Internet access). As part of the project, quantitative and qualitative surveys are being carried out throughout Latvia to examine the functional role of public libraries and the use of computers and the Internet by society in Latvia (KIS 2009 b).

It can generally be said that government-level projects are oriented towards development of the intellectual potential of Latvia's society. The infrastructure and training opportunities that have been provided by the *Father's Third Son* project can be used by any person in Latvia. This means that the social usefulness factor of these projects is high, and the promotion of such projects must be seen as responsible behaviour in the development of information systems. Nevertheless, public opinion regarding the need for the *Castle of Light* and *Web of Light* projects is rather negative. The image of these projects that has been construed by the media is in the majority of cases contradictory. They are contrasted with other projects, presented as damaging to Latvia's economy, as an inexpedient use of finances, as something that the people of Latvia have no need for (for example, of all publications in the Latvian and Russian-language press in 2007, 54% take a negative attitude towards construction of the new Latvian National Library (see Šarmanova 2007)).

An objective analysis of the project makes us agree with the position of Latvia's Minister of Culture Ints Dālderis,

voiced at a May 2009 discussion organized by Transparency International Latvia (*Delna*) on the need for a new National Library:

«The question of the new National Library is, possibly, the longest ongoing cultural issue in the history of Latvia. You know this very well. The quarrelling and bickering has not abated in 80 years. It would, therefore, be nonsense to attribute the desire to build the library to one government or political party. It is clear that many find the project hard to understand, when day after day we hear talk of crisis, tightening of belts, slowing of the economy. But it is also necessary to understand that the government must do what it can to stimulate the economy: today, every country in the world is seeking to invest in the infrastructure because building costs are currently lower and building is one way of stimulating the economy. A library is the same kind of infrastructure project as insulating a building or repairing the roads. Therefore, the question is not whether or not we should build – but how we can build better and at lower cost» (Jaunie Trīs brāļi 2009).

The population survey carried out for this Human Development Report shows that users do need libraries. The solution to the problem is promotion of a dialogue that is based on objective facts.

Individuals as Mediators

Information transfer in Latvia is provided not only by institutions but also by individuals, especially those for whom the mediation of information is their job, i.e. information professionals (for example, librarians). Responsibility criteria for information professionals are not just information literacy but professional ethics as well.

Information literacy is the skill to prepare a search plan, identify an information site, choose a source, apply modern technology, judge the usefulness of information, and use the acquired information. Analysis of the information

literacy of Latvia's information professionals is based on the self-evaluations of librarians and on the views of library users and the general population.

One indication of the ability of information professionals to provide competent transfer of information is their self-evaluation in regard to ICT use and communication skills (KIS 2009 a). A positive estimate («very good» and «rather good») of their ICT skills was made by over 90% of the respondents (aged 20-44); skill in using Internet search engines, by 96%; finding local government information on the Internet, by 96%; using the Internet, by 96%; finding information provided by government institutions, by 93%; sending e-mails with attachments, by 91%; and advising library users about finding information on the Internet, by 90% of the respondents. Their own skills in working with the public and the media were also judged positively by the respondents, who claimed that they could «very well» or «rather well» form and maintain contacts with regular library users (95%), with potential users (92%), with the library's closest neighbours (90%), and with local government officials (77%). Generally, their communication skills were positively judged by respondents aged 20-24 and 55-64.

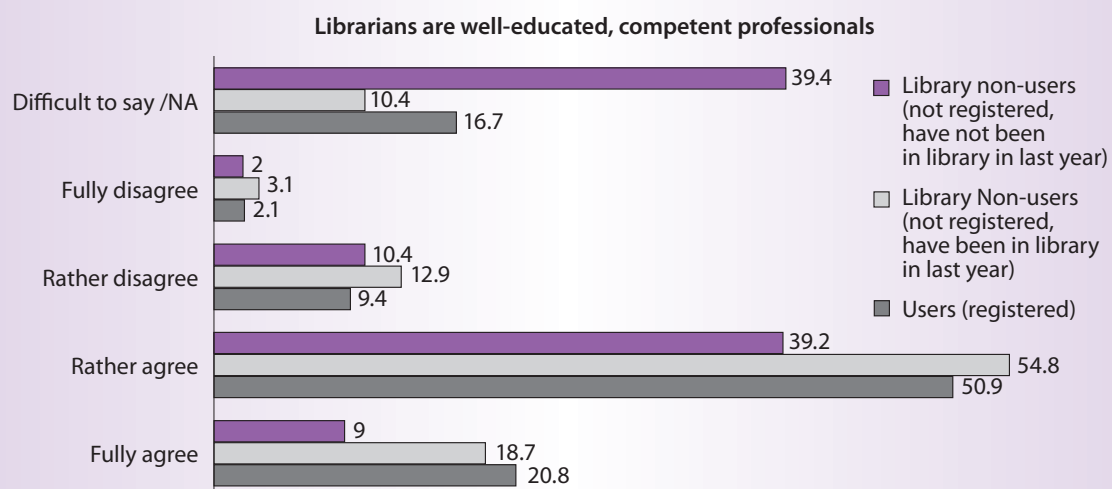
The public (both library users and non-users) has also expressed its views about the competence levels of information professionals (see Box. 3.14).

The answers of the respondents show that librarians are seen as well-educated, competent professionals by both library non-users (48%) and users (71%). It must be pointed out that the assessment of the users is based on personal experience.

The high rating of the skills of information professionals is supported by the fact that users choose information institutions (and the information professionals employed by these) as the third most important information provider (next to the media and personal authorities)

Box
3.14

The competence of librarians as rated by library users and non-users



Source: Pabērza 2008.

(SKDS 2008, T 4). This means that the competence and skills of Latvia's librarians as individual information mediators are sufficiently good to ensure functioning of the information transfer system.

One of the criteria for judging the responsibility of information professionals is adherence to a professional code of ethics. The Latvian Librarians' Code of Ethics (LBB 2007) defines the areas of responsibility of librarians as information mediators: for example, to store, rationally organize, and ensure access to information resources; to support the freedom of expression and the freedom to distribute and receive information. In a survey carried out in 2007 (Ragozina 2007), information professionals found the Librarians' Code of Ethics to be necessary (55%) and desirable (45%). 67% found that the Code of Ethics facilitated communication and improved the quality of work; 72% found that it increased the prestige and self-assurance of the profession. Inasmuch as the principles set out in the Code of Ethics are supported by the majority of librarians in Latvia, this encourages a responsible attitude towards information transfer processes.

When examining the role of individuals as information mediators in the information transfer cycle, attention must be paid to their importance as critical judges of information. This is acknowledged by information professionals (Andrejs Vasiljevs, Aldis Ābele, Māris Zanders), who point out that help from acquaintances (professionals in specific areas) is extremely useful when analyzing and judging professional information and updating information on issues of interest. Information institutions operate with the mediation of information professionals. The individual (the information professional) is an important information mediator if he/she has taken part in creating or processing information. There are cases where the results produced by information mediators can be judged as incomplete, simplified. This is because information is often prepared for use by a broad target group and not for those who need it for their professional duties. One way to solve this problem would be to regularly analyze the needs of information users.

Information Users

Information users are information consumers – individuals who use information sources and mediator services, and on the basis of the information that they have acquired, make decisions and act both at private and public levels, enhancing their personal quality of life and creating added value for the society in which they live. The responsibility of information users manifests itself primarily in the ability to find, understand and evaluate information. The second – and no less important – aspect of user responsibility is the way in which information is used for private or public needs. These skills are indications of information literacy. To take part in information transfer processes, these skills must be developed not only by information professionals but also by information users. Analysis of the information literacy of users is based on the self-evaluations of Latvia's information users regarding their ICT skills (ICT skills are a key element of information literacy, in

particular due to the growing proportion of digital sources) and on signs of literate behaviour.

A survey on accessibility and use of information communication technologies (KIS 2009 a) shows that 44% of the respondents rate their ICT skills as good (in the 16-34 age group these skills have been acquired in school or at work); 41% rate their skills as satisfactory; 13% say their skills are poor, and 2% admit to having no such skills. 50% of the respondents have acquired ICT skills in school; 48% are self-taught or have acquired these skills with the help of friends; 21% have attended courses; 17% have learned on the job and 14% at a library. Those who have acquired ICT skills at a library are generally older than 45.

Closer examination of the ICT skills of the population shows that, in a situation where the information environment is being increasingly transformed by digital information sources, these can be competently (with good skills) used by less than half of Latvia's population. In this situation, education of the population is important, and development of the population's ICT skills is the responsibility of every information institution. To improve these skills, it is necessary for all information institutions to cooperate and offer/organize training for all age groups. A situation where 44% of the respondents in the 16-34 age group have acquired ICT skills at school but only 14% at a library is logical. It is possible for libraries as information institutions to focus on all population groups, especially those who have already finished school but find their ICT skills to be satisfactory or poor. In recent years, funds allocated to government projects have been used to develop the skills of information users. In the middle of 2008, training of public library users was launched as part of the *Father's Third Son* project. 7,700 public library users/non-users have been involved in the project, as well as 100 visually impaired or blind persons. Nine training courses have been carried out with a total of 264,962 hours of instruction. Courses will continue up to the year 2010 (Niedra 2009).

A responsible attitude on the part of information users is demonstrated by efforts not only to upgrade ICT skills but also to improve one's ability to judge the usefulness of information and to apply information. Information professionals (Aldis Ābele, Māris Zanders) name a number of characteristics that an individual must have to be qualified as a responsible information user: 1) the individual must assume responsibility for legal and ethical use of information (without inflicting damage on other individuals or society); 2) the individual must assume responsibility for whatever he/she publishes anonymously in the electronic information environment (at times, this may constitute a criminal offence); 3) the individual must assume responsibility for his/her choice of information mediator (library, information professional, etc.) to guarantee the reliability of information; 4) the information user must assume responsibility when judging the quality of information. In other words, the information user must be a judge of quality and a responsible user of information sources. The responsible information user establishes quality criteria for both mediators and sources. It is the duty of a civil society to educate the user to become a knowledgeable and literate information user. This is particularly important in circumstances where there is a huge amount of information

and the individual may choose the simplest way to obtain information (the «Wikipedia phenomenon»), thus acquiring superficial and frequently substandard knowledge. Critical analysis of information is the most important skill of a responsible information user, which should be perfected by improving information literacy.

A typical phenomenon in the current information transfer system is the formation of social networks (social groups, peer groups, interest groups). According to information professionals, an important aspect of social networks is the fact that people's views, emotions and behaviour are not determined primarily by their own qualities but by the type of relationship in which they are involved. The network concept emphasizes the fact that each person has links with other persons who also have

links with others, and so on. The social network concept applies to a community and to the links between the members of the community (Kronberga 2009). The social network functions as an information mediator because participation in a network gives people access to resources (including information) that they would possibly not have on their own. For example, the price of products and services is discussed in social networks and members are warned against bad purchases; ICT issues are debated, new ideas presented and advice offered. It can therefore be said that social networks are a means of ensuring quality control for day-to-day matters. Social networks provide an opportunity for information users for «self-organization», which is why the sign of a responsible information user is active participation in these networks.

Box
3.15

Greatest Achievements, Most Serious Problems, Most Important Tasks

Major Achievements

An optimal legal basis has been created (laws and regulations cover all major information transfer processes); various government and international projects have promoted the development of information and communication technologies (particularly in the library sector, where the infrastructure is available to every person in Latvia); a library information network has been established, and Latvia's libraries are taking part in the digitalization processes of European and global information sources.

An optimal library network has been set up in Latvia in proportion with the size of the population. Over the years, information professionals have been trained, and their services are highly rated by the public. Government projects have produced training programmes for information users with various levels of training opportunities: formal (academic and professional) or informal.

Most Serious Problems

There is no mechanism for enforcing or controlling the implementation of laws and regulations, which makes it difficult to fulfil the potential of the law in regard to information quality; furthermore, irrational copyright regulations hamper development of the digital information environment in Latvia. On the one hand, there is a variety of forms and types of information sources (it is possible to receive and use information as needed), the sources are accessible (it is possible to compare sources and choose the best) and cater to the interests of users (it is possible to obtain information that helps to deal with everyday matters). On the other hand, there is an incredible amount of information, it is fragmented, and it is often prepared for use by a broad target group and not by professionals in a specific area. The quality of the information does not inspire trust; due to lack of skills, digital information sources can be used by less than half of the population; moreover, the price of information sources is more than many can afford. Another problem is the public attitude towards libraries as information mediators. Although the library infrastructure is optimal, Latvia's population (in comparison with that of neighbouring Estonia) is less active in using libraries, and there is a smaller number of information units available to each user.

Most Important Tasks

Law enforcement institutions must do more to ensure responsible behaviour on the part of information authors and users. Corrections must be made to copyright legislation to address the specific character of the digital information environment. Quality control of information sources must be enforced (basic quality requirements are defined by the law), and a basic package of services must be guaranteed for every person in Latvia. Responsible behaviour in dealing with the aforementioned problems would be, for example: promotion of the public image of mediators (particularly libraries), regular research into the needs of information users, and training of the population, inasmuch as a knowledgeable and literate information user is one of civil society's major objectives.

Media Responsibility and Accountability

Ilze Šulmane, Ingus Bērziņš

The Concepts of Responsibility and Accountability in the Media

Let us consider the media a special product – their creation and distribution are not regulated by the free market alone, but the producers must be conscious of their special role in society. If this is the case, we can speak of **media responsibility** as a normative value that is characteristic of the social responsibility approach and the concept of a public sphere. Responsibility functions more weakly in circumstances where the media are commercialized, where the only criteria and regulating factors are ratings, media profit and consumer demand. Responsibility is connected with the theory and notions of the role of media in society, the reflections of journalists over their activities, their influence and possible consequences. Responsibility determines which social needs will be satisfied by journalists; responsibility defines suitable and desirable media activities.

Responsibility is more subjective and semantically more difficult to define than **accountability**, which is considered a way of ensuring responsibility – i.e. answering the question of how society ensures that the media explain and account for their actions and carry out their responsibilities. Media accountability resolves problems on various levels – it ensures the obtainment of an answer, the correction of mistakes and an apology. It raises the quality of news reportage if a medium knows that it must explain and account for its performance. Due to modern possibilities of interaction this reaction must be sufficiently quick (Krogh 2008, 9).

Elements of accountability mentioned by scholars are liability, moral sanctions and answerability (Christians 1989, 40). The chief elements for ensuring accountability are 1) training – educating the public and the journalists; 2) observation – investigative monitoring to pinpoint deficiencies; 3) evaluation – positive and negative criticism from media professionals and scholars; 4) feedback and public interference – offices of ombudsmen, letters to the editor.

Mechanisms of media accountability can be **internal** – a common credo and code of ethics for journalists, corrections of errors, internal criticism in the editorial office, media-conducted readers' surveys and self-regulation. **External** accountability mechanisms include the existence of alternative media, press reviews, ethics courses organized by press councils, criticism in the media and in scholarly publications and public opinion surveys on the media. **Cooperative** mechanisms can also be used, e.g. press councils, which have representatives from the media and the public (Bertrand 2008, 31).

A journalist's work in the media is **individual** – a journalist signs prepared materials with his or her own

name and is accountable for his/her own work before the public and the law. At the same time a journalist's work is **collective**, and includes divisions of labour and discussions about the end product. Thus, the end result of a journalist's work can be considered subjected to collective responsibility and accountability. This end product is also collective in the sense that in many media, especially the press, a journalist's work is anonymous, and the journalist's name plays a smaller role than the medium where the journalist works.

Codes of ethics, legislation, the training process of journalists and their practical activities include positive and negative media accountability – readiness, norms and sanctions to work or not work in a certain way. Media legislation, the rules of codes of ethics and labour contracts contain to a greater degree components of **prospective** accountability. On the other hand, a journalist's activity, and the publication of materials in the absence of preliminary censorship, as is the case in Latvia, are connected with **retrospective** accountability – the consequences may ensue following publication.

Vertical accountability appears as media accountability in relation to other social institutions and individuals – accountability toward the owners, the power of the State, customers, audiences, civic society and advertisers. **Horizontal** accountability is accountability in the professional environment, in the professional community. In a situation where representatives of the audience and the public become involved in the creation of media content, responsibility relationships become more complicated.

The Impact of External Factors on Media Responsibility and Accountability

Media activity is influenced by socio-political and economic pressure, media relations with power and media relations with audiences.

First, it is important to be aware of the *factors that promote or hinder the implementation of media responsibility and accountability*. Factors in play include the media's attachment to a certain type of media system, legislation, socio-political and economic pressure, influences on the media and technological development. Other factors that create change in the media environment and foster the implementation of responsibility and accountability and which are mentioned by media scholars include competition, commercialization and globalization. The latter bring about obscurity and even a crisis when public broadcasting and responsible, independent journalism

confront the challenge of a media culture that is oriented toward business.

A rather high level of political parallelism dominates the Latvian media environment – the connection between media organizations and concrete parties. Journalism often is not kept apart from political activities; journalism is used as a weapon of political propaganda for narrow inner circles.¹ Market orientation and the commercialization of the media lessen the accountability of journalists vis-à-vis the public. Often the main criteria are profit, interest, demand and cheaply produced information. In this sense audiences are perceived as consumers and not as the public or participants of the public arena.

Second, it should be stressed that responsibility and accountability manifest themselves and function differently in various types of media. The main *difference here is between private media and public media* (public broadcasting organizations). The former have more freedom in decisions and more responsibility toward the public. Private media are oriented mainly toward consumer target audiences, and their relationship with these audiences is episodic and mostly determined by the market and business. The essence of public broadcasting organizations is to serve the public – i.e. the public plays a greater role in determining what it expects from these media. On the other hand, the media organizations must publicly account for how resources are spent and how public needs are met.

Third, the relationship between the State and the media must be analyzed; this relationship is influenced by *financing and legislation*.

In contrast to Scandinavia, the Latvian state basically provides no financial support to media organizations. Thus, they have difficulty competing in the market – maintaining high-quality, expensive publications or publishing a second newspaper that can provide competition in a city or district. This can lead to the sudden shutdown of a publication due to financial circumstances, even if the readers find the publication attractive.

Thus, the media in general and journalists must work in an environment that does not always provide stability, autonomy and possibilities for building trust and a continuous relationship with their audiences and consumers.

The legislative framework, the adoption of specific economic measures, or inactivity in a certain area can influence the media's ability to ensure audiences access to their product, a certain level of quality, or the general existence of a popular, trustworthy or quality product. As was already ascertained in the democracy audit (Kruks and Šulmane 2005; Šulmane and Kruks 2007), legislation that concerns the media (the Press Law, anti-monopoly legislation, the Law on Information Accessibility) generally ensures the media's ability to function, although limits are not fixed precisely. For example, the limit is not precisely defined, which, when transgressed by the dominant owner in a certain media market sector,

can lead to problems in the media market with quality, pluralism or freedom.

The media's ability to function in Latvia is hindered by several circumstances, some of which have existed already for quite some time. Here we can mention the following facts: public media is not available in all parts of Latvia, the high cost of distribution services for the press, the protracted implementation of digital TV, the extensive dispute concerning public media's obscure status – between state and public media, its sources of financing, the mechanism for nominating candidates for media management and the National Radio and Television Council (NRTVC) and its representativeness. This creates tension, as the state sees the public media as state media and, for instance, objects to the prevalence of «bad news» and conflicts with the Latvian TV news office,² or journalists' freedom of speech is suppressed, as financing comes from the State.

All of the aforementioned circumstances were intensified and became more pressing as the result of measures that were adopted at the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009. These measures were brought about by the economic crisis and can influence the quality of journalism. These measures include raising the VAT for the printed press and reducing the state budget for public electronic media.

Fourth, media responsibility is tightly linked with public trust or distrust of the media. If relations with the audiences are episodic – merely as with media product consumers, and if the audiences mistrust media messages or are not critical toward the media, the journalists' responsibility vis-à-vis their audiences can diminish.

In comparison to other social institutions, trust of the media in Latvia traditionally has been high. This was confirmed by data from the 2008 SKDS survey. The media, in particular, were mentioned as important among the many sources that the public uses for obtaining information.³ In second place, following up-to-datedness, respondents mentioned trust as an important factor that affirms the quality of the source of information.

In an overall evaluation of Latvia's journalists, half of the respondents agreed with the statement that «*in general, Latvia's journalists carry out the job of providing information to the public responsibly and candidly,*» while only 15% of respondents disagreed. More than half of the respondents feel that «*due to economic interests, the information offered by the media tends to be one-sided,*» and almost just as many respondents agreed that «*as a result of political inclinations, information provided by the media tends to be tendentious*» (SKDS 2008, T 6).

The role of media management, a united media image and, thus, the role of *corporate responsibility* is increasing in the successful functioning of the media. As a result, some media activities that are intended mostly for reputation consolidation and successful business can simultaneously

¹ It could be said that Latvia has the hallmarks of both the Mediterranean polarized pluralistic and liberal democratic corporate models. See Hallin and Mancini 2004; Jakubowitz 2007.

² Part of the public perceived the publication of journalists Ilze Jaunalksne's wiretapped telephone conversations as the government's revenge against someone who engaged in criticism.

³ TV – 87.5%, radio – 57%, journals and portals – each about 43%.

create a link with the public, and actually help some social groups or create the image of a responsible media organization. Here we can mention the newspaper «Diena» and commercial television's participation in charity events, where collected contributions are used to support vulnerable population groups.

Elements That Ensure Accountability in the Latvian Media Environment

Education on various levels of journalists and *specialists* in other media and communications takes place at almost all universities⁴ in Latvia, and this guarantees competition.

Representatives of the media industry often criticize education's weak link with practice and the poor writing ability of the graduates of journalism studies. On the other hand, educators can reproach media managers for underrating the new specialists and hiring people who lack an education and life experience. People like this are easier to socialize in desirable directions for media organizations, and these directions may be distant from the values of balanced and responsible journalism that have been learned at the university. Newcomers in the media are not guaranteed competitive salaries, which often leads ambitious journalists to seek better-paid jobs in public relations or advertising.

Media managers with a Soviet education in journalism tend to have a weaker education than their subordinates – this especially applies to regional media. Often graduates who return to work in their home towns complain that it is not possible to change the editorial office's style of work to comply with knowledge gained at the university. Talented young people from the regions who could modernize the media of their home towns are absorbed by Riga, and the regional media level continues increasingly to suffer.

It would be necessary to found a school of journalism and found a system of courses and seminars that would ensure a certain level among all who work in journalism, regardless of age and education. Regular updating of knowledge would also be ensured.

The worst situation exists in *public education*. In public schools there are still no programmes or classes that address how the media should be consumed, how programmes are created, how media content is constructed and the relations between the media and the public. Basic knowledge of this kind would make it easier to understand possible influences of the media, media problems and their role in society, and would foster a critical approach to media content.

In Latvia *monitoring and evaluation* functions are carried out by media experts, university lecturers, socio-political organizations and research companies. For instance, the non-governmental organization «Providus» and the sociological research company TNS monitor and examine the observance of prescribed volumes of

political advertisements and possible hidden ads. The evaluation and monitoring of media activities takes place at all universities that offer media studies. Unfortunately, few journalists participate in the presentations of large-volume survey reports or books that have resulted from these surveys, although the journalists are the main target audience of these works. As well-trained watchdogs who criticize others, journalists and editors themselves perceive criticism with difficulty. For instance, the link of the industry with the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Latvia is incomplete, although academic studies conducted there could serve as a basis for discussions on media practice, accountability and ethical problems, for which there is a shortage of time in daily practice.

Media criticism in the mass media is irregular and fragmentary. There is no special topical magazine in this area. Some media, e.g. «Diena,» publish the comments and blogs of media experts in an internet version of the newspaper, and content that rates media activities sometimes appears in TV programme inserts in newspapers. Unfortunately, the place in «Dienas Izklaide» that was set apart for published readers' comments and the responses from the TV management has been, for the time being, relocated and reduced.

The blog portal *nozare.lv* of the LETA news agency experts has an active media section, although it is more focused on the evaluation of technological development in the media and hardly ever addresses issues of social responsibility. The only space accessible to the general public where it is possible to become acquainted with the latest media criticism is the portal *www.politika.lv*, which publishes the results of media studies, e.g. the study on possible hidden ads in the media during the pre-election period, which had broad repercussions, as well as reviews and comments on these studies. The portal also publishes the works of media specialists and other representatives of the social sciences on debatable media practices and problems, e.g. the role and financing of public media, and the existence of two separate media spaces of two ethnic communities. There are few readers' comments on these articles (on average, 3-20), though they usually have better argumentation than the discussions evoked by the popular portals.

Internal or cooperative mechanisms of accountability exist in the form of the practice of many media, e.g. Latvian Public Radio, Latvian TV, and the newspaper «Dienas bizness,» of inviting media experts and public representatives to evaluate their content for internal purposes.

Growing possibilities of interaction create *reciprocal ties*, and *public involvement* as the manifestation of an accountability mechanism. Better access for public representatives and audiences to media evaluations makes it possible to take note of the evaluation of the journalists' performance shortly or long after the appearance of material in public space.

Letters to the editor are gradually disappearing from daily newspapers, especially newspapers that have internet versions. These letters as an important element of the reciprocal tie have remained in magazines. Since several media have created blog sections where they have allowed

⁴ The full cycle from bachelor's to doctoral studies, and special programmes in the University Latvia, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Riga Stradiņa University, the Business College Turība, the Baltic International Academy, the Latvian Academy of Culture and others.

readers to participate, once in a while the aspect of media responsibility is mentioned.⁵

In a survey of the Latvian public almost 34% of respondents agreed that «*a journalist's work is not sufficiently evaluated or criticized.*» In response to the question of who should evaluate and control the work of journalists, the largest portion (35%) responded that this should be done by the media management, 29% felt that this should be done by the general public, almost 19% of respondents felt that this should be done by other journalists and an equally large portion felt that an evaluation should be entrusted to a special state (!) institution.

The survey also clarified public opinion on whether journalists are influenced by external criticism at all. 37% of respondents agreed to the statement that «*Latvia's journalists do not take into account criticism of their work.*»

Let us compare these responses with the responses to the question that stressed the role of legislation, i.e. the respondent's attitude to the statement «*As long as a journalist abides by the law, he/she can do whatever he or she wants*» (40% of respondents answered affirmatively). From this we can conclude that in general the public does not value the role of ethics or professional self-regulation and feels that the main regulating factor in a journalist's activities chiefly is legislation.⁶

In evaluating elements of the media accountability system, it should be underlined that publicly accessible information on media activities (i.e. the audience's right to know) must be rated as encumbered. On the other hand, formal procedures that allow for consideration of the interests of the audience (the media's obligation to respond to a complaint or publish revisions of errors) function rather ineffectively.⁷ The operation of the accountability system is closely linked with the audience's activity. In Latvia there is no organization for consumers or viewers that would defend the general interests or the interests of a special social group in the media.

Media Self-regulation

Although there is a Latvian Journalists' Union (LJU) and a code of ethics was introduced in 1992, it should be underlined that the union carries out its functions rather formally. The union has no prestige in the professional environment of journalism, the number of members is small, and the code of ethics does not function effectively as a self-regulatory element. Also, no monitoring institution exists that could function as «the watchdog's watchdog,» thus evaluating the work of journalists in various media, resolving controversial incidents and

demanding brisk action – a change of position or a public apology in the case of a journalist's incorrect actions. The lack of an organization that would ensure enforcement of the code and review public complaints concerning journalists (press council, ombudsman) maintains a situation where the code exists on a formal level and disputable professional activities by journalists are not evaluated publicly. Thus, in place of lighter sanctions (censure and apology, admission of error), legal liability immediately takes effect.

As an alternative guarantee of media accountability one can mention codes that have been adopted by individual media for internal use.⁸ The code of ethics of the «Diena» journalists functions effectively (it must be signed along with the labour contract and be observed); codes have also been created for «Latvijas Avīze» and the LTV News Agency. Mainly, each individual media organization's understanding of ethics is in effect, and the journalists are accountable to the management of their media organization. The lack of shared, publicly announced criteria also does not allow the public to observe whether the media and journalists act in accordance with these criteria.

Upon review of the codes, one must conclude that in content they do not differ to an extent that would hinder the journalists to agree upon common criteria. However, it must be noted that there is no consensus among the professionals and media specialists concerning the issue of whether a universal code of ethics is even necessary and possible in Latvia's diverse media environment where different journalism cultures (Latvian and Russian) coexist (Šulmane 2007). Thus, opponents stress that a journalist's activity can be determined only by the general humane morals of the individual. Another opinion asserts that the existing code is obsolete; it must be reviewed first, and then signed by all the main media. Media researchers are of the opinion that the codes truly render the criteria for journalistic activities more transparent to the public. They serve as an instrument that enforces responsibility and accountability and as a protective factor for the journalists against pressure from media owners and management.

In 2007 interest grew concerning the problems of journalism in the academic and professional environment – in publications and discussions at conferences of various levels, and in discussions on issues of journalism in internet portals and traditional media. The discussions broadened in connection with the organization of the LJU congress, its repeated convening and differences of opinion concerning the legitimacy and further activities of the board and the union. Initially the desire appeared to raise the union's prestige and increase activity by attracting new-generation journalists and creating an ethics council. At the congress victory was achieved by the faction that perceived threats

⁵ For example, the «Kurmiša» [Little Mole] blog in the NRA portal, the «Sestdiena» [Saturday] blog in the Diena portal. There is a trend for authors to criticize the work of competing media, dependence on share-holders or political sympathies, but to defend the host of one's blog.

⁶ The statement «while a journalist observes the law, he can do whatever he wants» is supported by 40% of respondents, almost the same proportion (39%) neither agree nor disagree, while 20.5% disagree 9SKDS 2008, T 7).

⁷ Some countries have special institutions to review complaints or have web pages in which members of the public can fill out complaints forms on-line.

⁸ Here, one must mention the code of professional ethics for Latvian press, radio and television journalists signed on 14 May 2001 by the leaders of the newspaper *Dienas bizness*, *NRA*, *Rīgas balss*, *Jaunā avīze*, *Chas*, *Respublika*, *Sporta avīze* and *Radio KNZ*. But this is binding only on certain media, some of which no longer exist or have changed format.

to its freedom by the code of ethics and the council, and which was satisfied with the status quo.⁹

The present council does not represent all types of media, and the chairman of the board represents an editorial office where on a public and professional level the strongest doubts exist concerning autonomy from the owners.¹⁰

The LJU also does not serve as a labour union that can lobby for its members' rights. This renders the members vulnerable and leads to the conclusion that the social and professional security of journalists is insufficient. Thus, one must agree with other scholars of post-communist media that freedom of the press, a free market and the existence of a code of ethics for journalists alone do not guarantee the development of ethical and responsible journalism. The media elites themselves sometimes maliciously take advantage of the freedom of the press, and feigning self-regulation, protect their interest in making the largest possible profit. The model of social responsibility does not work in places where state media policy is entirely liberal, but civic and political culture is undeveloped (Lauk 2008).

Latvia also lacks an enforcement mechanism for horizontal accountability – a professional magazine or media club. Thus, there are no discussions or reciprocity in a broadly represented professional environment.¹¹

The only activities that may result in some criteria for quality journalism are competitions held by the LJU and the media industries.¹² Still, as Latvia's journalists are not united, awards like these that are presented by an organization that is not supported by all of the profession's representatives are not taken seriously.

Other Industries

Media and media-related industries that chiefly represent employers' interests are well organized: LAPP (Latvian Association for Publishers of the Press), LAA (Latvian Advertising Association), LAPRP (Latvian Association for Public Relations Professionals), LAPRC (Latvian Association of Public Relations Companies).

⁹ The split among journalists is also demonstrated by two home pages – the new board's LJU site www.zurnalistusavieniba.lv and the alternative www.journalists.lv. Neither is very popular or very interactive, as renewal and maintenance of content requires certain funding and people, as well as interested journalists who are not overworked and have time to discuss professional issues.

¹⁰ Here, we speak of *NRA* and *Juris Paiders*. The majority of *NRA* journalists have publicly and in research interviews asserted that a code of ethics is impossible and not desirable, that working for a newspaper is similar to producing chairs – the main thing is that there are buyers.

¹¹ Such an informal discussion has developed in the internet, in which journalists who were in the minority at the congress have united. The discussion revolves around various ethical dilemmas, journalist's dependence on owners, salaries; an open letter on press freedom was organized, draft legislation on a new electronic media law was discussed, issues pertaining to media responsibility in relation to the riots of 13 January were discussed – should videos be given to the police, etc.

¹² The «Journalism hope of 2008», TV viewer voting in «Nedēļa» for the year's best broadcasts, hosts, producers.

They¹³ typically have highly informative home pages where one can find information about the industry's history and development and information about current events, and discussions. They contain news about creative competitions and their results, and the codes of ethics of the different industries are also published here. For instance, the LAA has its own ethics council (committee) that reviews advertising's compliance with legislative and ethical norms. If desired, the makers of ads can submit their advertisement to the ethics council to be reviewed before the ad is launched (*copy advice*). The associations have also underlined the fact that they have joined the international codes of ethics of their industries. Codes of ethics also mention accountability – toward the client, customers, the industry, and consumers and the public in general.

The LAPP also holds conferences on publishing industry problems and conducts training for editors. The materials used also appear on home pages and partially are available to a broader set of readers. Once a month the public relations industry holds «Good Practice Afternoons.»¹⁴ In these industries criticism and discussing a colleague's achievements are also problematic, but at least specific demands can be made of new members if their activities do not comply with the codes.

Media Accountability in Various Media Environments

The Press

A reader profile survey and indicators of confidence in the national press show that audiences that are gathered around national-level publications trust the publications in their own language group, and distrust publications in another language. Media content analyses have confirmed that differences exist in types of argumentation, used sources and the daily agenda offered by the different media. The scope of one publication is dominated by one viewpoint, and a reader who consumes only one press publication does not always have an opportunity to get a general idea regarding all points of view – including opposing viewpoints. Mass media consumers mostly wish to receive ready-made judgements and confirmations of their own values. They do not want to carry out an analysis based on offered facts, and journalism continues to maintain this polarization.

In this situation it would be important to know at least which political and economic powers are represented by the specific media organization, as survey results reveal that this is not always clear to the audiences.¹⁵ A lack of transparency in issues concerning media owners, financing and ownership changes do not foster the establishment of this sort of understanding.

¹³ See www.lpia.lv, www.7guru.lv, www.lra.lv.

¹⁴ Information on these is available on the web pages of the associations of public relations.

¹⁵ In evaluating the statement «I know which interests are defended by concrete press publications in Latvia» respondents split evenly between those who agree, disagree and do not have a clear position (all about 30%).

Upon surveying the journalists, commentators and editors¹⁶ of Latvian and Russian national daily newspapers, it became clear that the majority see themselves as dynamic players that have an impact on society. A portion of respondents stressed that they use journalism mostly as a weapon of political contention where all methods are good, including simultaneously playing the role of a journalist and a politician (public representative). Admissions were made that the editorial office works as an implementer of political party public relations. If a party line is to be supported, an agreement is made concerning information support to the party during a campaign. The participation of journalists in writing advertisement interviews is often accepted practice, especially in cases where the article is signed with a pseudonym. This practice is supported with the argument that the audience does not care, or that it will never find out about this fact. Thus, judgements here are not made using categories of responsibility and trust. As already mentioned, the journalists mostly are accountable toward their management and the owners of the press, and not toward the audience.

Still, some journalists have expressed concern about the lack of common professional criteria for all of Latvia's journalists. This places the journalists in a relation of uneven competition, where some attempt to honestly present balanced news and diverse viewpoints, while others occupy themselves unchecked with hidden ads and active propaganda.

Commercialization and tabloid tendencies do not manifest themselves radically in the Latvian media. We have no distinctly «yellow» pulp publications, which by securing public interest in scandals and the private lives of celebrities would operate in a way that their product would provoke mass protests and lawsuits concerning breach of privacy or libel. On the other hand, Latvia also does not have publications that fully comply with the criteria of quality journalism – most newspapers are oriented toward the mid-market. Thus, the editorial policy, form and content that are formulated by these media organizations are marked by elements of accountability and high quality journalism, and also by elements of popular tabloids.

Since it was founded, the newspaper «Diena» has stressed its image and mission as a high-quality newspaper, but it has also changed its format, and several elements of its form and changes in content demonstrate the desire to expand its readership and gain popularity. Some of the methods used by the newspaper do not comply with standards of quality journalism and have led to discussion concerning ethics in the process of gathering facts.¹⁷

Responsible, quality journalism has not become a product in Latvia that is esteemed and which can be affordably manufactured and purchased – this is demonstrated by the poorly-developed weekly analytical magazine market. The magazine «Nedēļa» (The Week) did not achieve the necessary influence for this type of product

on opinion leaders and decision makers, and as a result of the crisis it ceased to exist.

On the other hand, the weekly magazine «Privātā Dzīve» (Private Life) and similar publications are operating successfully. Journalists who work for these publications must reckon with the possibility of getting sued for the violation of privacy. The court cases that have actually taken place demonstrate that this type of external and quite painful mechanism of accountability enforcement is used against the journalists of the respective publications and against representatives of daily newspapers who reveal publicly important information.¹⁸

Stiff competition in the media market, political engagement and the support of certain political and economic powers generates a desire on part of the press publications to position themselves against direct competition within similar audiences of the same language (*Diena* against *NRA*, Soros supporters against *Ventspils* supporters, etc.), and also against traditional opponents (publications in Russian and Latvian), thus reducing accountability. This decrease in accountability that is dictated by competition includes concealment of the true media owners, hidden third-party ads and agreements with large advertisers on not publishing critical information that has landed on the public agenda. Editorial and advertising content sometimes is merged so much that the reader has difficulty separating them. During various elections journalists have often carried out public relations functions, as opposed to critically evaluating the candidates, and this does not demonstrate responsibility toward the audiences or the voters.

The press is a private business that is not supported by the government in Latvia. It is possible that some newspapers or magazines may die a «natural death» if there are too many players on one field. Still, perhaps certain cases should be anticipated where the state could provide financial support or prevent the disappearance of publications that ensure healthy competition and pluralism of viewpoints and thus promote accountability and confirm concern about a publication's reputation.

Electronic Media

Upon analyzing comparative data on trust in public broadcasting organizations and commercial channels (both radio and TV), one must point out that in general the public has more confidence in the first category.¹⁹ This provides them with the responsibility of acting responsibly toward their audiences, which are considerably larger in size than those of the press.

Documents that set forth the tasks of public broadcasting organizations, the national remit or development visions for the future do not stress essential differences

¹⁶ Some results are compiled in publications: Šulmane 2006; Šulmane 2007.

¹⁷ The journalist's experiment with former Minister Oskars Kastēns in the effort to demonstrate his dual morality, when a family man and representative of the «pastors' party» meets with a young woman.

¹⁸ For example, the conviction of journalist Uldis Dreiblat for not revealing his sources in a publication that reflected the telephone conversation of a businessman revealing his ties with parliamentary deputies; Kristīne Dupate's legal proceedings against the magazine *Privātā dzīve* for violation of private life.

¹⁹ The only difference is the Russian public's trust in Russia's channels. One half of the respondents in Latvia trust Russia's channels available in Latvia, while more educated persons trust them less (46%). 33% of Latvians trust them, 29% do not trust them, while 73% of Russians in Latvia trust them and only 10% do not.

between public broadcasting organizations and commercial channels. Moreover, public procurement that would ensure access to the media and fulfilment of the needs of particular population groups is vaguely formulated and not reviewed in the context of responsibility.

Furthermore, a decrease in financing for Latvian Radio may reduce the audience's access to public media and concrete programmes in general. Of course, a certain portion of the blame must be assumed by Latvian Radio, Latvian Television and their management, which has made uneconomical decisions and acted without transparency, thus encumbering the organizations with an increasing burden of debt.

In conditions where Russian channels are easily accessible in Latvia and where language restrictions for Latvian commercial channels are decreasing, priorities and a service minimum should be clearly defined. This minimum should be achieved by public broadcasting organizations so that they can engage in providing the Latvian public with balanced information, educational materials and preserving the cultural heritage. They should also formulate policy and specific tactics on how to involve non-Latvians in the public media and thus foster social integration.

A comparison of the commercial channels and public broadcasting organizations, together with the situation in Latvia, lead to the conclusion that LTV and the Latvian Radio are not typical public broadcasting organizations. They are not responsible to the public, but to the state (the funder) and the rather politicized National Radio and Television Council (NRTVC). In the battle for better ratings the content policy of public television tends to copy the commercial channels. Due to its dependency on the state and politicians and under circumstances of limited financing, public television often is unable/does not know how to ensure important functions and observe public interests.

The functions of public broadcasting organizations are partly being taken over by commercial channels. Due to commercial goals, they are beginning to offer services that essentially correspond more with a public channel. Their programmes include news, analytical programmes, and they offer a swift reaction to current events. Examples include a live discussion on LNT and a documentary film on TV3 dedicated to the riots on January 13, 2009, repurchasing the popular serial «Neprāta cena,» and luring professionals away from public television.

In the current crisis conditions public confidence in the media is being undermined by the obscure use of financing and the lack of responsibility associated with it, the elimination of radio and TV programmes and scheduling changes without public debate.²⁰ No clearly formulated standards of responsibility or mechanisms for guaranteeing accountability exist in public procurement or in regulations that control its implementation or financial administration.

²⁰ One hour of silence on the first channel of Latvian Radio was, perhaps, a well thought out initiative to attract publicity to financial troubles and to gain public support. However, this initiative did not attest to responsibility before one's audience and reduced trust, as radio has survived more difficult circumstances, when it was threatened with closure by force during the independence struggle.

In over ten years it has not been possible to introduce a public media subscription fee, as in the example of Great Britain's *BBC* model. The inability to implement a subscription fee can be explained by the fact that state subsidized radio and television are easier to control, and the legislature has no desire to make unpopular decisions. The unpopularity of a subscription fee among the public demonstrates that society is not fully aware of the role of public electronic media and the advantages of this model of financing. The existing model does not promote public involvement in the debate on which programmes should be offered or eliminated. Possibly, accountability systems are more effective in countries where public broadcasting is financed by the viewers, as this creates a stronger basis to demand accountability concerning the utilization of resources and the content of the offered broadcasting.

In conformance with regulatory documents of European public broadcasting, the Latvian NRTVC is responsible for the content of public broadcasting organizations, observing programme standards and the prescribed volume of commercials. The NRTVC has monitoring instruments and sanction possibilities that are not used to their full extent. However, the review and outcome of complaints rarely are publicized.

As in other Eastern European countries, Latvia's viewers and viewer or consumer organizations are not represented in the aforementioned broadcasting organization councils, thus they have no voice. Viewer organizations that operate, for instance, in Great Britain and Germany,²¹ have not been formed in Latvia. Thus, one can say that the quality of public involvement is mutually connected with the quality of accountability. If viewers more actively addressed the media with criticism, media organizations would be forced to become involved in discussions.

In the current crisis conditions an audit is urgently needed of the economic management of both public broadcasting organization buildings and the utilization of finances in general. A guaranteed minimum of programming should be drafted, while predictions about the possibility of broadcasting and the impact of funding reductions on the quality of remaining broadcasts should be publicly discussed. There should also be discussion about whether and how access to public broadcasting for local audiences will be guaranteed, and what will be done, for example, if commercial stations do not broadcast in Latgalian.²² Here, the issue is not only normal business competition. As a result of this competition, for example, a part of the audience can not receive information in its language or of a certain quality.

Journalists working for public broadcasters often claim that the NRTVC is politicized and represents the government. Thus, any NRTVC criticism is perceived with suspicion. The current mechanism for selecting members of the NRTVC does not permit it to become a full-fledged institution that ensures accountability.

²¹ «Consumer panel» in Great Britain, «Media meeting» in Germany.

²² As a result of changes in radio ownership, a radio station switched from broadcasting in Latgalian to Russian, retaining Latgalian only on late night shows, thereby prompting protests from Latgale's musicians.

The Internet

In the internet environment, current public debate revolves around topics related to four different kinds of accountability: 1) media accountability, which can be expressed as 2) corporate accountability (not only in internet media, but on the part of other technical service providers as well), which is only partially regulated; 3) legal norms of accountability, as well as 4) individual internet user readiness to assume responsibility for the public welfare.

It should be stressed that in the nine years since the first internet news portals began to operate the status of internet media has not yet been defined in any law. This is so, even though it seems self-evident that information in portals such as *delfi.lv*, *apollo.lv*, *tvnet.lv*, *diena.lv*, *latvijasradio.lv*, *tv3.lv* should be subject to the same legal principles that regulate the press.

Thus, the leading internet portals and the internet versions of traditional media de facto operate according to norms of editorial responsibility which de jure are not demanded of them. They observe the restrictions included in the law «On the Press and Other Mass Media» and the procedure for recalling false information, etc., as if these norms should be applied to internet media, as they consider them to be self-evident for ensuring quality, professional journalism.

Corporate responsibility, which is dictated by the desire to enhance one's reputation (and therefore business interests), is in this case a more significant incentive than legislation, which is lacking. By the same token, internet media refer to the rights foreseen in the Law on the Press regarding not divulging one's sources and other articles envisaging media and journalists' rights.

There have been numerous attempts to amend legislation to legitimize the status of internet media, but all have failed. The reason for failure has not been the quality of the proposed amendments, but rather a superficial approach and/or the responsible officials' belief that the issue is not that important.

In 2004 the Ministry of Transport, which was then responsible for electronic communication policy, prepared amendments to the Law on the Press which were positively evaluated by the three main internet media outlets at the time – *delfi.lv*, *tvnet.lv* and *apollo.lv*. The essence of the amendments was first, to state that the Law on the Press also concerns internet newspapers and magazines, internet portals and other means of electronic information; second, to divide the aforementioned internet resources from the web pages of private individuals and legal entities (possibly, now, when private individual's home pages serve as blogs or micromedia, such a formulation could be debatable); and third, to separate the content created by the editors from that created by users.

The latter aspect is the most important in the context of accountability in the on-line environment. Here we are speaking of the principle that an internet media that provides the opportunity to make public content created by users (comments, messages in a forum or blog, photo and audiovisual materials, and the like) should not be legally liable for that content. This legally defined

separation is necessary, because making the internet media's editorial office responsible for user-created content would make it vulnerable to provocations which would quickly lead to the destruction of all the major internet resources, as it is possible for users to insert content on all. This is even leaving aside the fact that social networking sites, such as *draugiem.lv* and *one.lv* and others, are little more than technical platforms for user created content.

In May 2003 the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a Declaration on communication freedom on the internet, which notes that Council of Europe member states should not require in their legislation that internet service providers monitor content they broadcast or save, and should not foresee liability for such content. Co-responsibility for illegal content enters into force if the service providers refuse to act to erase such content or deny it access. It is also noted that member state legislation should respect the right of internet users to anonymity to guarantee freedom of expression, information and conscience.²³

The separation of the editorial office's and user's responsibility has not hindered the Latvian courts from observing the principle that that which is illegal in the real world is also illegal in cyber-space. The most striking examples include several guilty verdicts: an internet user who inserted a comment on the «Delfi» portal threatening to blow up the building hosting the Eurovision song festival, youth who inserted videos in the internet resource *sniegaklubs.lv* depicting cruel treatment of animals, as well as administrative punishment of parents of students at the Nordic gymnasium who had inserted abusive texts about their classmate in the child's portal *draugiem.lv*.²⁴ As is evident from the case law, there is a consensus that the person who should be held accountable for an offence is the perpetrator, not the maintainer of the platform used for the offence.

It must be concluded that at the end of 2008, though internet resources are not considered to have the status of media, the case law testified to a certain amount of consistency in proceedings linked to legal accountability. One unresolved issue pertains to possible changes in civil procedure which would facilitate opportunities for persons offended on the internet to turn to the courts with a civil suit on violation of honour and dignity in cases when, initially, the perpetrator's identity is unknown. This problem could be addressed by a norm which envisaged that the judge has the right to review such a complaint, while asking the internet media to provide information on the identity of the user. Such an initiative was also included in recommendations on necessary legislative amendments pertaining to the on-line environment presented to

²³ The declaration only has the force of a recommendation. For example, in Estonia in at the end of 2008 the first instance court ruled against the internet provider *delfi.ee* in a case on offending someone's dignity, even though the content in question was user created.

²⁴ At the same time, there has also been an acquittal of the main editor of *delfi.lv* in a private complaint by the businesswoman Vija Kilboka, who thought that a reader's comment on *delfi.lv* offended her dignity.

industry representatives in November 2008 by the Special Assignments Minister for Electronic Governance Affairs.

The leading internet media outlets practice the principles of corporate accountability – every day special moderators review user created content and erase unethical, crude, offensive, racially and national hatred inciting and other illegal content. The obligations of the moderator include blocking the access of particularly persistent illegal content authors to the relevant media. Moreover, all the leading internet resources have placed announcements on their web pages about which content is deemed unacceptable.

Though about one half of all respondents trust the internet, only 26% of respondents agree with the statement that «*I feel sure leadership of the internet portal will not reveal data about me to law enforcement agencies or make it public.*» The most suspicious towards the leadership of portals were the youngest respondents.²⁵ Responsibility for user created content is placed on the editors: 64.5% of respondents agree with the view that «*Insulting, indecent comments should be erased (censored).*»²⁶

The question arises as to why media foresee expenses for the post of moderator? The most common answer in the industry is that this takes place in the interest of one's reputation – the better a media's reputation in the eyes of advertisers, the better for one's commercial interests.

In 2006 a number of internet portal editors, NGOs and state institutions drafted and signed a *Declaration on respect, tolerance and cooperation in internet space*, which aimed to lessen and combat intolerance and manifestations of hatred on the internet without denying freedom of expression therein. The signatories committed to include these principles in their corporate policy, for example, in their discussion moderating strategies.²⁷

Finally, the issue remains of the internet user's individual readiness to assume responsibility for the general welfare. In the last few years, there has been no research conducted which would permit conclusions as to whether content placed on the internet has become more responsible or whether, on the contrary, legal and ethical norms are violated more often. As a positive example, one could mention the tradition introduced by social networking sites of internet users not being afraid of publicly revealing their true identity, which might mark a general turn to more open interactive communication in the internet, thereby reducing the negative role of anonymity. The development of technology and the influence of the blogosphere phenomenon have changed the style of communication. Currently, a typical blogger will not risk destroying his personalized virtual image and thus, will not conduct any illegal activity.

²⁵ Uncertain or disagreeing with the statement were 41% in the age group 18 to 24.

²⁶ The youngest and oldest respondents disagree the most: in the group 18-24 14% disagree, while the same holds true for 13% of those 55-74. Mostly middle-aged and well-educated persons support erasing.

²⁷ The declaration states: «We understand intolerance as appeals to violence, discrimination, threats, insults addressed to a person or group of persons because of their race or ethnic origin, religious affiliation or conviction, language, sex, sexual orientation, age, health status or citizenship.»

Conclusions

Commercialization and heightened competition for advertising and audiences, «wars» between political and economic elites, pressure from media owners and the forces behind them all promote the journalist's accountability not to the public as a whole, but towards those who pay or on whom they depend in various ways. The reduction in advertising income deriving from the crisis leads one to predict the growth in questionable practices in the media (e.g., making clips for pay without informing the audience). The risk of losing one's job often prevents journalists from preserving their integrity in fulfilling such tasks and hinders their involvement in discussions about professional, ethical dilemmas.

Possibly, journalists can meet the expectations of their audience and their community, but not be accountable to the public as a whole. On the one hand, the absence of a united community of professional journalists, organizations defending journalists (trade unions) and self-regulatory mechanisms creates risks to the defence of the journalist's free expression (against vertical accountability, media leaders, owners, the desire of the state to regulate «inconvenient» media). On the other hand, these factors do not promote journalism's accountability towards the public about creating bad quality, manipulative, trivial content.

Reliance on legal regulatory instruments or the use of external measures of accountability alone can threaten journalistic freedom. While the community of journalists has not come to a consensus about an institution that could evaluate the quality of their work when representatives of the public complain, the most urgent task would be the creation of a journal or interactive internet portal to host such discussion, criticism and reflection on a regular basis.

With the development of new media and the increased involvement of media users in creating content, the issue of professional and non-professional responsibility for content has come to the fore. Thus, it is necessary to improve the legislative basis governing the internet.

At the level of state policy, the obligatory minimum in public broadcasting has not been guaranteed, and the broadcasting organizations themselves lack vision about priorities in various crisis/non-crisis circumstances, flexibility and creative ideas about how to ensure continuity in supply and their link with the public. There is also a lack of responsible action to help preserve and increase public trust. For instance, public participation and co-responsibility in creating content (civic journalism) could be promoted by offering air time to various social groups for self-expression, at least at the local level.

Public broadcasters have not ensured sufficient transparency in decision-making about content, nor have they answered to the public and convinced it of the rationality of their financial activities and the proper use of funding.

Latvia has not formulated a national level media policy that would outline criteria and mechanisms for ensuring responsibility and accountability.

Journalistic culture reflects political culture in Latvia – opposing views are combated, positioning prompted by competition takes place not only against ideological opponents (outlets reflecting more or less right and left

ideological stances), but also towards ideological close competitors. Conflicts of interest and criticizing others can be observed, but the media themselves avoid criticism and responsibility.

In the media field employers and the organizations that represent them are better organized than employees. The imbalance between these forces, as well as the sharp political and economic competition between owners, creates and maintains a lack of professional journalistic

community solidarity. This decreases the opportunity to defend one's colleagues or to explain one's actions and react to criticism in the public space and efforts to limit freedoms, as well as professionally analyze errors in one's environment and instances of ethically dubious journalistic practice.

On the whole, one can conclude that it is mainly external factors – the socio-economic and political situation in the country that reproduce and heighten the lack of responsibility in the media sphere.

Box
3.16

Greatest Achievements, Most Serious Problems, Most Important Tasks

Greatest Achievements

Distinctly «yellow» press publications or TV channels are not popular in Latvia and overall there is a certain amount of professionalism and accountability.

Most Serious Problems

The most serious problem is journalists' dependence on owners, whose interests are determined by belonging to various political and economic elites, as well as an orientation towards linguistically separate target audiences, rather than the public as a whole.

Most Important Tasks

The most important tasks involve improving the legislation, funding and accountability mechanisms in public broadcasting and internet media. Other tasks involve amending legislation so as to make media ownership more transparent and promoting media criticism and media education.

Survey on Accountability 2008

Methodology

The 2008 study on accountability in Latvia is based on a sociological survey commissioned by the University of Latvia to acquire information on the stances and opinions of Latvia's inhabitants on various issues. In this study, accountability includes aspects such as information, the social sector, politics, culture, regional development, history and others.

Creating the Sample

The survey used a stratified random sample based on data from the Citizenship and Migration Affairs Board's (CMAB) Population register on inhabitants of Latvia. 1000 residents of Latvia aged 18 to 74 were polled. The sample is representative of Latvia's inhabitants as a whole in this age group according to gender, age, ethnicity and place of residence.

In creating the sample 110 data collection points were randomly chosen from a list of all of Latvia's inhabited places (arranged by region and level of urbanization), using the number of inhabitants in the locations as the measure of proportionality. The smallest unit was the parish.

At each polling point the interviewer selected no more than 10 households in accordance with instructions setting the itinerary and starting address.

Implementer and Time of the Survey

The survey was conducted in November 2008 by the public opinion research centre SKDS.

Survey Method

The survey was conducted using direct (personal) interviewing in the domicile of the respondent. Interviewing took place in Latvian or Russian according to the respondent's choice.

Respondents were asked to respond to questions about these issues:

- Sources of information used, quality criteria thereof;
- Information needs;
- Attitude towards the mass media, trust in them;
- The social sector, possibilities to receive and offer support;
- Views about desirable differences in income in society and the reasons for poverty;
- Views about trust in other people;
- Participation in political and social activities;
- Possibilities to influence politics;
- Evaluations of the activities of politicians;
- Evaluations of the work of persons working in public administration;
- Views about the defence of the cultural heritage, cultural monuments becoming private property;
- Views about regional development in Latvia and problems in the regions;
- Evaluations of events in Latvia's history;
- Views about the desirable role of the state in various spheres;
- Evaluations of personal responsibility towards society;
- Attitudes towards the Latvian diaspora abroad.

T 0

Sample reached in comparison with data on inhabitants, in percentage terms

	Number of respondents before weighing	Number of respondents after weighing	CMAB Population reg. Data on 01.07.08.
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0
REGIONS			
Riga	33.1	32.2	32.2
Pierīga	17.7	16.8	16.9
Vidzeme	10.3	10.2	10.2
Kurzeme	12.8	13.1	13.1
Zemgale	12.2	12.3	12.3
Latgale	13.9	15.3	15.3
GENDER			
Male	45.6	46.9	46.9
Female	54.4	53.1	53.1
ETHNICITY			
Latvians	62.3	57.1	57.1
Others	37.7	42.9	42.9
AGE			
18–24	15.1	15.0	15.0
25–34	17.8	19.1	19.1
35–44	17.3	18.5	18.5
45–54	20.6	19.3	19.3
55–74	29.2	28.2	28.2
CITIZENSHIP			
Citizens of Latvia	85.2	83.6	
Respondents without Latvian citizenship	14.8	16.4	

Data were weighed by region, ethnicity, gender and age

About the Study

The main goal of the study was to analyze and evaluate various aspects of accountability in Latvia, to investigate its manifestations in various life realms in Latvian society, as well as to seek to ascertain which factors promote or hinder its implementation. On the basis of the research

it is possible to draft recommendations to political and administrative decision-makers, the media, entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders to raise the level of accountability and promote sustainable development in Latvia.

Survey on Accountability in Latvia 2008

Tables

T 1

Which sources do you use to acquire information?

(All appropriate answers marked)

Books (scientific, popular science, fiction)	24.1%
Reference publications (dictionaries, encyclopaedias, handbooks)	23.5%
Magazines	43.4%
Newspapers	66.9%
Television	87.5%
Radio	56.6%
State and local government documents, financial and economic reports, statistical atlases, etc.	6.7%
Internet portals	42.7%
Data bases (electronic catalogs as well)	7.9%
Information events (meetings with authors, exhibits, library and other courses)	5.9%
Other	1.6%
Difficult to say/NA	1.5%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

Category «other» includes:

From people (friends, acquaintances, teachers, relatives)

Posters

Company presentations

Depends

Own experience

Information service 1188

Telephone calls

mentioned 10 times

mentioned 1 time

mentioned 1 time

mentioned 1 time

mentioned 1 time

mentioned 1 time

mentioned 1 time

T 2

In your opinion, what testifies to the quality of an information source?

Please mark two factors you think are most important!

It has a well-known author (an expert in the field)	18.3%
Its content (amount of facts, depth of analysis). it corresponds to the purpose for using it (for fun, education, research)	30.4%
Its content is useful (I can use it to resolve issues)	31.6%
The information in it is topical	38.8%
The information in it is trustworthy	34.7%
The information in it is written in a way I can understand I understand the meaning of the terms)	25.6%
Other answer	0.1%
Difficult to say/NA	7.7%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

The category «other answer» includes:

Independent of political influence

mentioned 1 time

* The data in SPSS format is available at: <http://szf.lu.lv/lat/petnieciba/sppi-instituts/petijumipublikacijas/>

T 3

About which realms of life do you need information?

(All appropriate answers marked)

Health	54.5%
Emotional well-being (friendly relations, romantic relations, family relations, etc.)	21.0%
Physical security (first aid, etc.)	17.8%
Events in Latvia and the world	62.9%
Products and services	32.9%
Using personal money	9.6%
Social activities (social organizations, societies, etc.)	14.5%
Citizen's duties	11.2%
Educational interests (elementary, secondary, tertiary, lifelong)	22.1%
Work responsibilities and career	29.4%
Legal issues	29.1%
Creative activities (amateur activities)	9.2%
Popular culture (concerts, exhibitions, competitions, etc.)	25.3%
Fashion	13.2%
Self-actualization (place among my peers, meaning of life)	10.7%
Religion	9.0%
Cultural heritage	15.1%
National belonging and consciousness	10.7%
Difficult to say/NA	6.2%
<i>Basis: all respondents, n=1000</i>	

T 4

Which information providers do you choose for acquiring information?

(All appropriate answers marked)

Information institutions	69.7%
Information centres	8.1%
Libraries	19.4%
State and local government information offices	6.7%
Telephone information services (1180, 1188, 1189)	48.5%
Information specialists in libraries (librarians, information service operators, etc.)	8.5%
Direct conversation	27.9%
e-mail	15.8%
Telephone conversation	29.1%
People I know	77.2%
Direct conversation	66.7%
e-mail	17.3%
Telephone conversation	43.8%
Education institutions	25.8%
Teachers	15.8%
Lecturers	15.8%
Workplace	20.1%
Mass media	94.3%
Radio	57.9%
Television	87.5%
Newspapers	66.8%
Magazines	45.8%
Internet	43.5%
Others	0.2%
Difficult to say/NA	0.9%
<i>Basis: all respondents, n=1000</i>	

Included in the category «other»:

Posters

Books at home

mentioned 1 time

mentioned 1 time

T 5

Please indicate to what extent you trust the following mass media: completely trust, somewhat trust, somewhat distrust, completely distrust!

	Completely trust	Somewhat trust	Somewhat distrust	Completely distrust	Difficult to say/NA
Latvian Public TV (LTV1, LTV7)	14.7%	61.6%	8.5%	1.6%	13.6%
Latvian commercial TV	9.3%	54.1%	15.5%	2.0%	19.1%
PBK	6.6%	35.6%	13.8%	2.7%	41.3%
TV channels from Russia	7.9%	42.1%	16.2%	5.0%	28.8%
Latvian public radio	11.9%	51.2%	5.1%	1.8%	30.1%
Other radio stations	6.0%	43.3%	9.2%	1.2%	40.3%
Press in Latvian	8.6%	55.0%	9.4%	1.7%	25.4%
Press in Russian	6.5%	39.7%	14.7%	5.0%	34.1%
Internet news portals	6.2%	42.6%	7.8%	1.6%	41.8%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 6

Please indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements!

	Completely agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Completely disagree	Difficult to say/NA
I know which interests are behind press publications in Latvia	2.7%	29.7%	37.3%	22.8%	7.4%	0.1%
On the whole, Latvia's journalists inform the public in a responsible and honest manner	6.4%	44.4%	34.3%	11.1%	3.7%	0.1%
Information in the media is one-sided because of economic interests	8.7%	48.9%	32.2%	5.5%	4.4%	0.3%
Information in the media tends to be tendentious because of political sympathies	9.9%	45.1%	32.9%	6.3%	5.4%	0.4%
I feel sure that the leaders of internet portals will not publish or reveal data about me to law enforcement	7.4%	18.6%	39.2%	18.2%	16.1%	0.5%
Insulting, improper comments in the internet should be erased (censored)	35.2%	29.3%	23.8%	5.1%	6.4%	0.1%
Latvia's journalists do not take criticism of their work into account	6.0%	31.1%	44.3%	10.5%	7.9%	0.2%
As long as a journalist obeys the law, he can do whatever he wants	9.2%	31.1%	38.9%	13.8%	6.7%	0.3%
If a media defends a position I disagree with, I stop reading/listening to/watching it	9.4%	28.5%	34.2%	20.4%	7.4%	0.1%
The work of journalists is insufficiently evaluated, criticized	5.3%	28.2%	49.1%	8.5%	8.7%	0.2%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 7

Who should evaluate, supervise the work of journalists?

(All appropriate answers marked)

The leadership of the media	35.2%
Other journalists/ a journalists' organization	18.8%
A special state institution	19.0%
The public at large	29.3%
The work of journalists should not be supervised	11.5%
Difficult to say/NA	19.5%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 8

Please indicate if you have done one of the following!

(All appropriate answers marked)

Inserted photographs, video materials in the internet	25.0%
Wrote an internet diary (blog)	6.7%
Commented articles in newspaper internet versions or portals	14.9%
Chatted	23.1%
Wrote letters, called to media editorial offices	6.3%
Participated in electronic media organized telephone votes (e.g., Domburs' programme, TV shows)	10.7%
None of the above	55.0%
Difficult to say/NA	3.7%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 9

What do you think, if you needed help in a complicated situation (lack of money, illness, unemployment), who could offer you the most reliable support? Please arrange in order of significance

(judged from 1 to 7, where «1» means most reliable support, but «7» the least reliable support)

	1 – most reliable support	2	3	4	5	6	7– least reliable support	Difficult to say / NA	Average value
International organizations	0.9%	1.1%	1.9%	5.0%	8.7%	20.9%	56.5%	5.0%	6.24
State and municipal institutions	4.1%	4.6%	8.0%	17.1%	31.3%	22.0%	8.5%	4.3%	4.75
Social (non-governmental) organization	0.9%	1.5%	3.4%	10.0%	32.7%	35.6%	10.9%	5.0%	5.34
Work colleagues	2.1%	3.2%	14.4%	41.8%	14.4%	8.9%	10.2%	5.0%	4.37
Relatives	33.1%	39.5%	14.5%	5.0%	1.4%	1.7%	1.2%	3.5%	2.09
Friends	6.9%	33.4%	39.5%	8.7%	3.5%	2.8%	1.1%	4.1%	2.80
Myself	50.1%	13.9%	14.6%	7.7%	2.8%	2.4%	4.5%	4.0%	2.21

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 10

If you met a person in a complicated situation (lack of money, housing problems, unemployment, domestic violence), what would you likely do?

(Up to two answers marked)

I would try to help myself	44.7%
I would inform about an institution or NGO where one can turn for help	31.0%
I would inform social services or a social worker about this person	34.6%
Other answer	0.1%
I would do nothing, as everyone has to find their own solutions	6.4%
I don't know what to do in such situations	14.7%
Difficult to say/NA	7.1%
<i>Basis: all respondents, n=1000</i>	

Included in the category «other»:

I would inform the person's relatives mentioned 1 time

T 11

In a democratic society operating on the principles of a market economy, income differences are unavoidable. In your opinion, how big should such differences be in contemporary Latvia?

They should be much smaller	53.0%
They should be slightly smaller	26.9%
They are acceptable	12.0%
They should be a little bigger	3.6%
They should be much bigger	4.2%
Difficult to say/NA	0.4%
<i>Basis: all respondents, n=1000</i>	

T 12

In your opinion, why are there poor people in Latvia? Indicate the two most important reasons!

In each column, only one answer is marked

	1 st most important	2 nd most important
Because they are losers	7.7%	10.7%
Because they lack willpower and they are lazy	26.0%	23.5%
Because society is unjust	33.3%	17.0%
Because that's an inalienable part of contemporary progress	19.3%	23.7%
None of the above	12.2%	22.2%
Difficult to say/NA	1.6%	2.9%
<i>Basis: all respondents, n=1000</i>		

If you lost your main sources of income, for example, in the event of illness or unemployment, to what extent would the social insurance system and benefits take care of you?

T 13

More or less sufficiently, to ensure my current living standard	5.0%
I could survive	17.2%
Not in accordance with my needs	54.8%
I don't know	23.1%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

Have you made «unofficial payments» to a health care provider?

T 14

(All appropriate answers marked)

Yes, because I wanted to express my gratitude in that way	22.3%
The health care provider made me understand that I have to do so	14.8%
The health care provider refused to offer services until receiving an «unofficial payment»	3.4%
I have never made an «unofficial payment»	60.1%
NA	0.9%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

What do you think, people on the whole can be trusted or one must very careful in relations with people?

T 15

Evaluate, please, your attitude on a scale of 1 to 10, with «1» meaning «must be careful in relations» and «10» meaning «can trust»

1 – must be careful in relations	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – can trust	Difficult to say/ NA	Average value
10.6%	6.5%	10.7%	14.6%	18.9%	12.9%	13.1%	7.1%	1.9%	1.8%	2.1%	4.78

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

Please evaluate to what extent you are the master of your life?

T 16

Evaluate your attitude on a scale of 1 to 10, in which «1» means «I can't influence it at all» and «10» means «I can completely influence» my life!

1 – I can't influence at all	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – I completely influence	Difficult to say/ NA	Average value
1.6%	1.9%	2.4%	5.4%	13.4%	12.8%	16.0%	19.6%	13.4%	12.1%	1.4%	6.98

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 17

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your current life as a whole?

Please evaluate your attitude on a 10 point scale, in which «1» means «I am completely dissatisfied» and «10» means «I am completely satisfied»!

1 – completely dissatisfied	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – completely satisfied	Difficult to say/ NA	Average value
2.6%	2.9%	6.9%	11.0%	19.9%	14.3%	18.2%	13.9%	6.5%	2.2%	1.4%	5.87

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 18

Have you done any of the following?

(One answer in each row)

	Yes	No	Difficult to say/NA
Participated in parliamentary elections *	78.7%	20.6%	0.7%
Participated in local elections *	77.5%	21.5%	1.0%
Participated in organizing an election campaign	7.2%	91.5%	1.3%
Tried to convince someone to vote for a certain political party	11.4%	86.9%	1.7%
Participated in a referendum*	60.70%	38.10%	1.20%
Participated in events organized by trade unions	10.6%	88.3%	1.2%
Participated in organizing a referendum campaign	4.0%	94.5%	1.5%
Tried to convince someone to express an opinion about a certain political issue	8.1%	89.9%	1.9%
Signed a petition to convoke a referendum*	33.7%	64.9%	1.4%
Participated in meetings, demonstration, pickets	11.5%	87.0%	1.5%
Participated in strikes	7.0%	91.9%	1.1%
Written letters to the State President, Prime Minister	1.2%	97.5%	1.3%
Written letters to a ministry and state institution	4.5%	94.2%	1.2%
Written letters to a local government	9.4%	89.5%	1.1%
Written letters to newspapers, other media	7.9%	90.9%	1.2%
Met with parliamentary deputies	9.9%	89.0%	1.1%
Met with local government deputies	17.5%	81.5%	0.9%
Met with ministers and civil servants	10.1%	88.6%	1.3%
Met with journalists	12.0%	86.8%	1.1%
Participated in public discussion events	11.4%	86.3%	2.2%
Participated in discussing the development plan of my city, parish	9.2%	89.1%	1.7%
Work within, am a member of a political party	1.3%	97.7%	0.9%
Work within, am a member of an NGO	4.6%	94.0%	1.4%
Purposefully spread information about a political issue	1.2%	97.5%	1.2%
Donated money to a political party	0.9%	98.3%	0.9%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

Basis: Citizens of Latvia, n=852

T 19

What have you done in the last year or plan to do to improve your life?

(Only one main answer for each row)

	Have done in the last year	Plan to do in the near future	Plan to do in the distant future	Have not done and do not plan to	Difficult to say, does not apply to me
Have searched for/ plan to search for a better job	18.4%	20.1%	13.0%	37.7%	10.8%
Have attended /plan to attend course, seminars, have raised my / plan to raise my level of qualification	21.7%	16.3%	13.7%	38.2%	10.1%
Have begun to / plan to earn more	16.3%	28.7%	14.9%	27.1%	13.0%
Have taken / plan to take out a loan in a bank	17.6%	7.9%	8.9%	55.7%	10.0%
Have acquired / plan to acquire real estate	5.3%	4.8%	12.7%	65.8%	11.4%
Have invested / plan to invest money in the bank	7.5%	3.8%	8.5%	70.6%	9.6%
Have participated / plan to participate in the work of an NGO	4.4%	4.5%	5.8%	73.0%	12.4%
Have addressed / plan to address problems in my circle of friends	32.7%	11.5%	6.6%	35.0%	14.2%
Have begun to / plan to work more	22.3%	22.5%	10.7%	31.7%	12.8%
Have spent more / plan to spend more time relaxing	19.4%	25.9%	19.4%	25.0%	10.2%
Have spent more / plan to spend more time with my family	32.1%	27.5%	11.8%	18.1%	10.5%
Have been involved with / plan to be involved with business	7.6%	5.9%	12.1%	61.5%	13.0%
Have been involved with / plan to be involved with physical culture, sports	21.5%	14.8%	10.4%	42.1%	11.1%
Have tried to / plan to try to eat healthy food	37.5%	20.9%	12.3%	20.7%	8.5%
Have renovated / plan to renovate my apartment, house	24.1%	19.0%	19.9%	28.2%	8.7%
Have changed, plan to change my place of residence	5.9%	6.9%	11.2%	63.2%	12.7%
Have insured / plan to insure my health, life	16.2%	9.2%	11.9%	52.5%	10.3%
Have studied / plan to study abroad	2.2%	2.9%	6.4%	75.0%	13.5%
Have worked / plan to work abroad	3.3%	5.5%	10.2%	66.8%	14.2%
Have been / plan to go on a tourist trip, vacation abroad	12.2%	14.1%	19.8%	45.2%	8.7%
Have improved / plan to improve relations with my spouse	29.0%	14.4%	5.3%	24.2%	27.1%
Have begun / plan to begin to take more care of my children, grandchildren	36.6%	15.8%	6.5%	19.2%	21.9%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 20 In your opinion, to what extent do public administration workers (in ministries, local governments) fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with the law (i.e., the spirit, not the letter of the law)?

Please evaluate the situation on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means «never fulfil» and 10 means «always fulfil»!

0 – never fulfil their duties in accordance with the law	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – always fulfil their duties in accordance with the law	Difficult to say/ NA	Average value
4.1%	5.0%	8.6%	15.3%	13.3%	17.1%	11.1%	8.6%	4.3%	1.0%	0.7%	11.0%	4.31

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 21 Do politicians and bureaucrats ensure the observation of the public interest?

Please evaluate the situation on a scale from 0 to 10, where 1 means «do not ensure at all» and 10 means «completely ensure»!

0 – do not ensure at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – completely ensure	Difficult to say/ NA	Average value
7.1%	8.6%	11.7%	16.3%	14.2%	14.4%	9.2%	4.8%	2.6%	0.3%	0.4%	10.5%	3.64

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 22 How would you characterize the civil service?

(All appropriate answers marked)

Works according to the law, professionally	12.4%
Work is dependent on the influence of business representatives	38.0%
Workers are often incompetent, their work is ineffective	40.6%
No answer	18.7%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 22 How would you characterize local government workers?

(All appropriate answers marked)

Works according to the law, professionally	18.5%
Work is dependent on the influence of business representatives	34.6%
Workers are often incompetent, their work is ineffective	37.4%
No answer	17.5%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 24

How do you rate the fact that a cultural monument is private property?

	Completely support	Somewhat support	Somewhat do not support	Completely do not support	Difficult to say/NA
That churches are the property of congregations	32.9%	41.4%	8.8%	3.5%	13.4%
That estates are private property	12.9%	36.8%	23.7%	9.0%	17.5%
That Jugendstil buildings are private property or the property of other legal entities	9.5%	33.0%	25.8%	10.3%	21.4%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 25

In your opinion, how well does the state defend the cultural heritage?

Very well	1.9%
Somewhat well	34.6%
Somewhat poorly	33.6%
Very poorly	9.8%
Difficult to say/NA	20.1%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 26

What, in your opinion, should be the participation of the state and local governments in the maintenance, renewal and restoration of cultural monuments that have ended up as private property?

The state or local government should offer 100% financial support	17.2%
The state or local government should offer partial financial support	40.3%
The state or local government should not participate in maintaining private property	23.4%
Difficult to say/NA	19.1%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 27

What do you think, are these confessions able to maintain their sacral cultural heritage (churches, icons, shrines, etc.)?

	Definitely can	Somewhat yes	Somewhat no	Definitely cannot	Difficult to say/NA
Catholics	33.4%	43.2%	3.3%	1.1%	19.1%
Lutherans	28.8%	44.3%	5.0%	1.4%	20.5%
Orthodox	36.6%	40.6%	3.2%	1.2%	18.5%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 28

Why, in your opinion, does balanced regional development not take place in Latvia?

(Up to two answers indicated)

	All (n=1000)	Riga (n=331)	Greater Riga (n=177)	Vidzeme (n=103)	Kurzeme (n=128)	Zemgale (n=122)	Latgale (n=139)
The Latvian political elite lacks responsibility for the situation in certain regions	28.5%	30.4%	26.5%	33.3%	22.4%	20.7%	34.9%
The lack of a quality National development plan	30.3%	36.8%	25.9%	23.1%	23.6%	34.6%	28.4%
The country has insufficient investment	14.9%	20.5%	8.1%	9.7%	10.5%	20.4%	13.6%
Insufficient targeted investment for regional development	17.8%	22.1%	12.0%	11.6%	19.5%	19.0%	16.9%
The regions do not have legal autonomy	8.3%	7.5%	6.9%	8.4%	9.5%	8.2%	10.6%
Insufficient administrative capacity at the local level	7.2%	8.2%	6.9%	8.7%	5.7%	6.0%	6.9%
The regions have varying degrees of geographical attractiveness	12.5%	13.4%	16.1%	10.3%	9.7%	15.8%	8.0%
Current foreign policy has a variable effect on the regions	10.7%	13.2%	8.8%	6.8%	7.5%	9.1%	14.5%
In the view of the EU Latvia is one region	5.7%	2.5%	8.4%	13.4%	3.2%	4.7%	7.1%
The Ministry for Regional development should be located in one of the backward regions, not Riga	12.2%	6.9%	12.5%	28.8%	8.0%	6.6%	20.0%
Other	0.4%	0.5%	0.5%	0.9%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Difficult to say/NA	19.2%	13.4%	25.2%	16.4%	32.0%	22.6%	13.2%

Included in the category «other»:

Large difference between the regions is historically determined
Bureaucrats do not see the true situation, flying in the clouds
Investments should be divided proportionately to all regions
It's dependent on belonging to a concrete party

mentioned 2 times
mentioned 1 time
mentioned 1 time
mentioned 1 time

T 29

Do you support the idea of creating second level local governments (regional self-government)?

	Total (n=1000)	Riga (n=331)	Greater Riga (n=177)	Vidzeme (n=103)	Kurzeme (n=128)	Zemgale (n=122)	Latgale (n=139)
Yes	16.2%	23.6%	12.1%	12.8%	9.3%	10.1%	18.4%
No	33.6%	18.7%	35.1%	51.6%	49.2%	40.1%	32.9%
Difficult to say/NA	50.2%	57.8%	52.8%	35.6%	41.5%	49.8%	48.7%

T 30

In your view, which problems are currently most evident in your region?

Up to five answers allowed

	Total (n=1000)	Riga (n=331)	Greater Riga (n=177)	Vidzeme (n=103)	Kurzeme (n=128)	Zemgale (n=122)	Latgale (n=139)
Irresponsibility of the local administration	17.4%	13.3%	24.1%	8.5%	11.1%	17.2%	30.0%
Unemployment, effective employment problem	61.8%	50.2%	56.3%	87.3%	63.7%	62.9%	72.7%
Housing problems	26.1%	38.6%	20.3%	21.8%	16.8%	30.8%	13.4%
Public transportation problems	19.8%	22.4%	18.1%	19.1%	24.7%	17.5%	14.3%
Road conditions	41.0%	34.5%	36.0%	50.7%	45.2%	52.1%	41.1%
Environmental situation	9.3%	10.0%	6.5%	9.6%	7.2%	16.9%	6.5%
Competitiveness of the education available	7.9%	7.7%	5.5%	6.9%	14.0%	7.9%	6.8%
The scientific basis for the restructuring of the region	5.2%	4.8%	5.9%	5.4%	7.9%	4.7%	3.1%
Social order situation, crime	17.9%	25.8%	14.0%	14.3%	12.8%	18.6%	11.7%
Situation in public utilities (including heating problems)	26.0%	27.7%	28.8%	19.3%	22.2%	30.2%	23.9%
High prices	48.9%	53.4%	37.4%	50.3%	46.7%	48.8%	53.1%
Alcoholism, drug abuse	35.5%	36.8%	32.9%	29.7%	35.0%	39.1%	36.7%
Objectivity in the local mass media (TV, radio, press)	2.2%	4.6%	0.9%	1.9%	0.0%	0.8%	1.7%
Public health	24.8%	28.4%	16.2%	28.5%	20.7%	25.6%	27.0%
Inhabitants' irresponsibility for the situation in the region	8.6%	7.7%	7.9%	9.5%	8.5%	11.5%	8.5%
Youth problems (creating families, free time, sports, etc.)	18.2%	15.4%	21.1%	23.3%	17.3%	10.9%	24.2%
Social security problems (pensions, child care, old people's homes, etc.)	25.9%	32.0%	29.6%	30.7%	23.9%	17.4%	14.5%
Spiritual cultural problems, indecency, imposition of inhumane views	4.6%	5.5%	7.0%	4.0%	2.6%	3.1%	3.3%
Ethnic relations problems	2.8%	2.5%	3.8%	1.1%	3.4%	0.7%	4.9%
Corruption, bribe-taking	14.5%	17.8%	16.1%	4.9%	12.6%	7.4%	19.6%
Others	.5%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%
Difficult to say/NA	5.2%	3.8%	6.0%	4.1%	11.8%	0.7%	5.9%

Included in the category «other»:

Gambling houses
Economic problems
Infrastructure, traffic jams
Destroyed industrial enterprises, now we buy it all from abroad
No problems

mentioned 1 time
mentioned 1 time
mentioned 1 time
mentioned 1 time
mentioned 1 time

T 31

Should the commemoration day of the Latvian legion on 16 March be observed?

	Total (n=1000)	Latvian (n=623)	Russian (n=311)	Other (n=66)
Yes	43.6%	61.0%	21.5%	15.4%
No	31.6%	14.0%	50.6%	75.3%
Difficult to say/NA	24.8%	25.0%	27.9%	9.3%

T 32

In your opinion, should USSR victory in World War II day be observed on 9 May in Latvia?

	Total (n=1000)	Latvian (n=623)	Russian (n=311)	Other (n=66)
Yes	47.1%	32.5%	65.9%	70.0%
No	34.0%	47.9%	13.7%	23.5%
Difficult to say/NA	18.9%	19.6%	20.5%	6.5%

T 33

In your opinion, should the monument in Riga in Pārdaugava to honour the liberators of Latvia from fascism and the USSR victory day in World War II be torn down?

	Total (n=1000)	Latvian (n=623)	Russian (n=311)	Other (n=66)
Yes	17.7%	24.3%	9.5%	6.2%
No	62.1%	51.3%	74.7%	84.1%
Difficult to say/NA	20.2%	24.4%	15.8%	9.7%

T 34

In your opinion, should the graves of German soldiers who fell in World War II and the remains of German soldiers be reburied in cemeteries?

	Total (n=1000)	Latvian (n=623)	Russian (n=311)	Other (n=66)
Yes	64.6%	70.5%	56.2%	59.5%
No	12.8%	11.2%	14.6%	15.8%
Difficult to say/NA	22.6%	18.2%	29.2%	24.7%

T 35

In your opinion, who should be primarily responsible for maintaining the burial places in Latvia of Soviet soldiers who fell in World War II?

	Total (n=1000)	Latvian (n=623)	Russian (n=311)	Other (n=66)
Latvia	45.7%	42.0%	50.1%	53.5%
Russia	24.3%	28.8%	17.9%	20.2%
Difficult to say/NA	30.0%	29.3%	32.0%	26.2%

T 36

Which 20th century historical events in Latvia are you most proud of?

(Up to 5 answers)

	Total (n=1000)	Latvian (n=623)	Russian (n=311)	Other (n=66)
Events in the 1905 revolution	6.0%	4.3%	9.3%	4.3%
Riflemen struggles, the Christmas battle, in Nāves island, Tīreļa marsh, etc.	20.6%	29.5%	9.3%	5.9%
The battles of the Latvian Red Riflemen during the Russian civil war	9.3%	5.2%	16.0%	9.0%
The creation of a democratic Latvia in 1918	29.2%	39.7%	13.7%	22.4%
Victory in the independence war and the defence of independent Latvia	23.6%	31.4%	14.4%	7.5%
The economic achievements of Latvia during the first period of independence	16.0%	20.7%	8.5%	16.0%
The 15 May putsch of Kārlis Ulmanis and the creation of an authoritarian Latvia	7.1%	9.6%	3.7%	4.9%
The struggles of Latvian soldiers in the Red Army against Nazi Germany's army	12.2%	4.8%	19.4%	33.9%
The struggle of the Latvian SS Legion against the Red Army	3.7%	5.4%	1.7%	0.0%
The struggles of the National partisans and the resistance movement	7.2%	8.8%	5.1%	4.3%
The people repressed by the institutions of the Soviet occupation	3.8%	4.5%	3.1%	1.5%
The Latvian SSR as one republic of the USSR	9.2%	1.1%	19.9%	19.6%
The period of Awakening (the Baltic Way demonstration, barricades, etc.)	32.2%	45.7%	12.6%	22.0%
The renewal of Latvian state independence	30.0%	40.3%	15.3%	20.6%
Entry into the EU and NATO	18.0%	20.9%	15.1%	9.5%
The existence of the Latvian people	26.4%	36.3%	12.5%	16.6%
Other	0.6%	0.8%	0.0%	1.5%
I am not proud of anything	16.5%	11.0%	23.8%	23.5%
Difficult to say/NA	12.7%	7.6%	20.8%	14.0%

Included in the category «other»:

Proud of all of Latvia's history
The Song Festival
Our ex-president Vaira Viķe-Freiberga

mentioned 3 times
mentioned 2 times
mentioned 1 time

T 37

Which 20th century events in Latvian history are you most ashamed of?

(Up to five answers)

	Total (n=1000)	Latvian (n=623)	Russian (n=311)	Other (n=66)
Events in the 1905 revolution	2.1%	2.3%	1.9%	1.8%
The support of the Latvian Red Riflemen for the Bolsheviks and Lenin	11.8%	16.7%	5.6%	4.3%
The liquidation of the democratic order and the dismissal of parliament during the putsch of Kārlis Ulmanis on 15 May 1934	4.9%	4.4%	4.8%	9.3%
The lack of Latvian military resistance to the Soviet occupation in June 1940	13.2%	18.5%	6.1%	6.1%
Latvia's occupation in 1940, the proclamation of the Latvian SSR, and incorporation into the USSR	13.2%	20.4%	3.4%	4.4%
Latvian cooperation (collaborationism) with the Soviet occupation regime (1940–1991)	12.2%	19.4%	2.8%	1.6%
Latvian cooperation (collaborationism) with the Nazi occupation regime (1941–1945)	16.1%	14.4%	16.9%	25.0%
Latvian participation in the Holocaust	26.0%	26.5%	21.8%	41.3%
The creation of the Latvian SS Legion, its activities	13.6%	7.5%	18.2%	38.0%
Latvian participation in the USSR repressions	24.8%	32.7%	12.7%	21.7%
Latvian SSR as one of the USSR republics	6.1%	9.1%	2.3%	1.5%
The period of Awakening, the end of the Latvian SSR, the renewal of Latvian independence	3.6%	1.3%	7.6%	3.1%
Latvia's state activity since the restoration of independence	13.4%	13.1%	13.4%	15.0%
Latvia's participation in the EU, NATO	8.4%	5.5%	12.5%	12.1%
Other	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%
I am not ashamed of anything	27.0%	26.5%	28.9%	21.5%
Difficult to say/NA	17.0%	13.2%	24.2%	12.5%

Included in the category «other»:

Proud of all of Latvia's history

Song festival

Our ex-president Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga

mentioned 3 times

mentioned 2 times

mentioned 1 time

T 38

To what extent can average citizens influence the activity of local government politicians?

Please evaluate this possibility on a scale of 1- to 10, where 1 means «no influence» and 10 means «very large influence»!

	0 – no influence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – very large influence	Difficult to say/NA	Average value
Total (n=1000)	14.1%	10.6%	14.6%	12.5%	10.0%	14.7%	6.0%	6.9%	3.7%	1.1%	1.1%	4.8%	3.42
Citizens (n=852)	12.9%	10.6%	14.5%	12.8%	10.2%	14.7%	6.4%	7.2%	4.0%	1.2%	1.0%	4.6%	3.49
Respondents without Latvian citizenship (n=148)	19.9%	10.1%	14.9%	11.3%	8.8%	14.6%	4.2%	5.5%	2.2%	0.7%	1.5%	6.2%	3.04

T 39

To what extent can average citizens influence the activities of politicians in the parliament?

Please evaluate this possibility on a scale of 1 to 10, where 0 means «no influence» and 10 means «very large influence»!

	0 – no influence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – very large influence	Difficult to say/ NA	Average value
Total (n=1000)	20.4%	13.3%	17.4%	13.0%	11.4%	8.4%	5.4%	2.2%	1.8%	0.5%	1.1%	5.2%	2.66
Citizens (n=852)	18.8%	13.0%	17.6%	14.0%	11.4%	8.5%	5.9%	2.3%	1.9%	0.4%	1.0%	5.2%	2.73
Respondents without Latvian citizenship (n=148)	28.3%	14.6%	16.6%	8.0%	11.4%	8.0%	2.7%	2.0%	1.5%	0.7%	1.5%	4.8%	2.32

T 40

To what extent can average citizens influence the activity of the Cabinet of Ministers?

Please evaluate this possibility on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means «no influence» and 10 means «very large influence»!

	0 – no influence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – very large influence	Difficult to say/ NA	Average value
Total (n=1000)	23.1%	17.8%	15.1%	11.2%	10.2%	8.0%	3.9%	2.6%	1.7%	0.2%	0.9%	5.2%	2.41
Citizens (n=852)	21.9%	17.9%	15.3%	11.6%	10.4%	8.0%	4.2%	2.7%	1.6%	0.2%	0.7%	5.4%	2.45
Respondents without Latvian citizenship (n=148)	29.0%	17.5%	14.2%	9.5%	9.4%	8.2%	2.6%	1.9%	2.3%	0.0%	1.5%	4.0%	2.24

T 41

Thinking about the extent to which voting in the elections influences our lives, please, evaluate whether the party you vote for in parliamentary elections has a large influence on the life of society or whether it has no meaning at all which party you vote for – the result will be the same anyway.

Please evaluate your answer on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means «no matter how you vote – the result will be the same anyway» and where 10 means «who you vote for means a lot»!

	0 – no matter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – means a lot	Difficult to say/ NA	Average value
Total (n=1000)	11.4%	10.3%	8.9%	10.5%	12.3%	14.3%	6.8%	6.9%	5.1%	2.0%	4.0%	7.5%	3.98
Citizens (n=852)	11.4%	10.0%	8.7%	10.2%	12.1%	15.1%	7.6%	6.9%	5.3%	1.9%	4.5%	6.4%	4.06
Respondents without Latvian citizenship (n=148)	11.7%	12.0%	10.1%	12.0%	13.3%	10.6%	2.7%	6.7%	4.1%	2.1%	1.9%	12.7%	3.54

T 42

And how important is the party or party list you vote for in local government elections?

Please evaluate your view on a scale from 1 to 10, where 0 means «no matter how you vote, the result will be the same anyway,» and 10 means «who you vote for means a lot»!

	0 – no matter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – means a lot	Difficult to say/ NA	Average value
Total (n=1000)	8.2%	6.6%	7.6%	7.7%	10.4%	15.5%	9.9%	9.3%	8.2%	2.9%	5.0%	8.6%	4.71
Citizens (n=852)	8.2%	6.7%	7.7%	6.5%	10.3%	16.0%	10.6%	8.9%	9.1%	3.2%	5.6%	7.2%	4.80
Respondents without Latvian citizenship (n=148)	8.0%	5.9%	7.5%	13.6%	11.1%	12.8%	6.8%	11.5%	4.0%	1.5%	1.9%	15.5%	4.21

T 43

In your opinion, has the collapse of governments in Latvia been linked to responsibility for the work of the government or with the mutual disagreements of politicians?

	Total (n=1000)	Citizens (n=852)	Respondents without Latvian citizenship (n=148)
Completely responsibility	6.0%	5.9%	6.4%
Somehwat responsibility	16.7%	17.0%	15.4%
Somewhat disagreements	35.1%	34.9%	36.0%
Completely disagreements	25.1%	25.4%	23.6%
Difficult to say/NA	17.1%	16.7%	18.6%

T 44

I will read you various fields/ please indicate in which you think that the state should have a larger role, the same role as now, or a smaller role?

	Larger	Same as now	Smaller	Difficult to say/NA
Economy	85.6%	7.8%	1.1%	5.5%
Social care	85.0%	9.5%	.3%	5.3%
Ecology	56.3%	34.2%	2.7%	6.8%
Education	69.8%	23.8%	1.2%	5.2%
Culture	46.5%	43.4%	4.3%	5.8%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 45

Who should assume the main responsibility in these areas??

	State	The person him/herself	Difficult to say/NA
Resolving economic problems	90.2%	6.8%	3.0%
Resolving social problems	87.9%	9.1%	3.0%
Environmental protection	58.9%	33.7%	7.4%
Acquiring Education	49.9%	46.5%	3.7%
Cultural activities	46.5%	45.2%	8.3%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 46

Which of the following organizations have you been involved in or are a member of?

Religious and church organization, congregations	8.8%
Trade unions	9.6%
Political parties and groups	1.2%
Professional associations, societies	3.4%
Environmental protection organizations	1.4%
Ethnic minority organizations	0.7%
Youth clubs, organizations, student fraternities	2.8%
Women's movements	1.5%
Voluntary health protection societies	1.1%
Sport, recreation organization and clubs	6.1%
Organizations that provide assistance to old, ill, poor people	0.9%
Organizations that participate in addressing human rights issues	0.5%
Organizations that participate in addressing local problems	0.6%
Amateur artistic collectives (choirs, folk or modern dance collectives, rock groups, etc.)	7.7%
Other organizations	0.5%
Do not participate anywhere	65.8%
No answer	2.7%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

Included in the category «other»:

A garage cooperative organization

NGO

Patriotic rearing and military hand-to-hand combat school

Association of the repressed

Home guard

mentioned 1 time

mentioned 1 time

mentioned 1 time

mentioned 1 time

mentioned 1 time

T 47

To what extent do you feel responsibility for the living conditions of...

	Very much	A lot	To a certain extent	Not a lot	Not at all	Don't know	NA
...Your family	61.0%	24.0%	11.0%	1.5%	0.7%	0.7%	1.1%
...Your neighbours	2.5%	7.9%	21.9%	27.2%	32.3%	5.9%	2.4%
...Your parish, city inhabitants	1.3%	4.1%	20.9%	26.1%	38.1%	6.4%	3.0%
...our country's inhabitants	0.9%	4.2%	17.2%	25.2%	41.6%	7.3%	3.7%
...Europe's inhabitants	0.6%	2.4%	9.4%	20.5%	52.4%	10.2%	4.5%
...humanity	1.8%	4.1%	12.0%	20.3%	45.4%	11.3%	5.2%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 48

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements!

	Completely agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Completely disagree	Difficult to say/NA
I think that those who create the state budget are sufficiently accountable before the public	3.2%	14.0%	37.7%	37.0%	8.2%
I think that the public has sufficient opportunities to participate in the determination of state budget priorities	4.5%	12.8%	38.7%	32.7%	11.3%
I think that the state budget is created responsibly	1.7%	14.1%	43.3%	28.2%	12.8%
I think that my household disposable means are spent sensibly	32.7%	45.6%	9.4%	3.0%	9.3%
In planning my household expenditures, I take account of the goals I want to reach in the future	34.5%	42.1%	10.5%	2.0%	11.0%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 49

Does the Latvian government have a duty to support the Latvian diaspora abroad?

	Definitely should support	Somewhat should support	Somewhat should not support	Definitely should not support	Difficult to say/NA
People who left Latvia in the last 10-15 years	8.9%	28.0%	23.4%	12.7%	26.9%
People who left Latvia earlier (e.g., end of the 19 th century, during the war, etc.)	9.0%	22.4%	22.5%	16.6%	29.5%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 50

People have various evaluations of those who have gone to work abroad recently. What is your view of these people?

Very positive	16.2%
Somewhat positive	30.0%
Neither positive, nor negative	39.0%
Somewhat negative	8.5%
Very negative	2.0%
Difficult to say/NA	4.3%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

T 51

How do you evaluate the government's policy towards the Latvian diaspora abroad?

Very positive	1.3%
Somewhat positive	12.1%
Somewhat negative	16.0%
Very negative	4.8%
Don't know anything about this policy	46.3%
Difficult to say/NA	19.5%

Basis: all respondents, n=1000

A Brief Overview of Human Development Indicators 2007/2008

Since 1990 the human development index (HDI) – a numerical indicator of human development – has been calculated for all United Nations member states. The HDI is calculated based on three basic human development dimensions:

- Life expectancy and health (life expectancy),
- Knowledge (adult literacy and the proportion of educational institution attendees in the relevant age group),
- An adequate standard of living (real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in European currency units or US dollars in purchasing power parity).

The concept of human development is always broader than its basic indicators. The HDI alone does not provide a comprehensive picture of the state of human development. To acquire a broader view of human development, the HDI must be supplemented with other important human development indicators.

The brief overview of human development indicators uses as its base Latvian Central Statistical Bureau information for 2007 and 2008 (the situation on 1 July 2009), as well as information acquired through surveys. Data on household disposable income are published with a two year delay – the source of information for this data is the Community Statistical Income and Living Conditions survey. Comparative data on education from the «Eurostat» data base on the European Union's 27 member states are published with a one year delay.

Health and Length of Life

In 1948 the World Health Organization defined health as complete physical, spiritual and social welfare, stressing that it is a wider concept than a state without illness or incapacity. These indicators are considered the main human health evaluation criteria: birth rate and mortality rate, natural population growth, infant mortality, as well as newborn predicted length of life. In Latvia all of these indicators, as well as the trends thereof, are unfavourable: the birth rate is low, the natural rate of population growth is negative, mortality is high, but the life expectancy for newborns is one of the shortest in Europe.

For children born in 2008 the average life expectancy was 72.7 years (67.2 for males and 77.9 for females).

There is a significant difference in length of life between males and females in Latvia, with males living 10.7 fewer years than females. The difference in life expectancy between genders in Latvia is almost twice as big as in other European Union countries.

The public health strategy adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers on 6 March 2001 states that by 2010 the average life expectancy for a newborn in Latvia must approach at least 95% of the average indicator of the European Union member states.

Calculations on mortality and length of life show that, for example, men who reached the age of 60 in 2007 have an average further life expectancy of 15 years, while women

P 1

Average Life Expectancy in Some EU Member States (Years)

Country	Year	Males	Females
EU-27	2006	76.3	82.4
Sweden	2007	79.0	83.1
Italy	2006	78.5	84.2
Germany	2007	77.4	82.7
Spain	2007	77.8	84.3
Greece	2007	77.1	81.8
Latvia	2008	67.2	77.9
Lithuania	2007	64.9	77.2
Estonia	2007	67.2	78.8

Source: European Community Statistical Bureau «Eurostat» data base *NewCronos*. Data from national statistical organizations.

reaching the same age have another 21 years. The European Union average for these indicators is 20 and 24 years.

The trend of population decline is continuing in Latvia. Compared with the previous year, in 2008 the number of inhabitants declined by 0.4 percent. Since 2000 the total number of inhabitants has declined by more than 110,000 persons or 4.7%.

In 2008 Latvia had the highest birth rate since 1994. 23,900 children were born, which was 675 more than in 2007. The total fertility rate (the average number of children who could be born to one woman during her life span to maintain the relevant years birth rate level in 2008 was 1.45 (in 2007 – 1.41).

Data characterizing population mortality suggest that the situation has not changed fundamentally in the last two years. The number of deaths in 2008 was 31,000, but the total death coefficient (number of deaths per 1000 inhabitants) was 13.7. In 2008 mortality exceeded the birth rate by 1.3 times.

The basic causes of death are unchanged. As in previous years, the three major causes of death are diseases of

the cardiovascular system, tumours and various external causes.

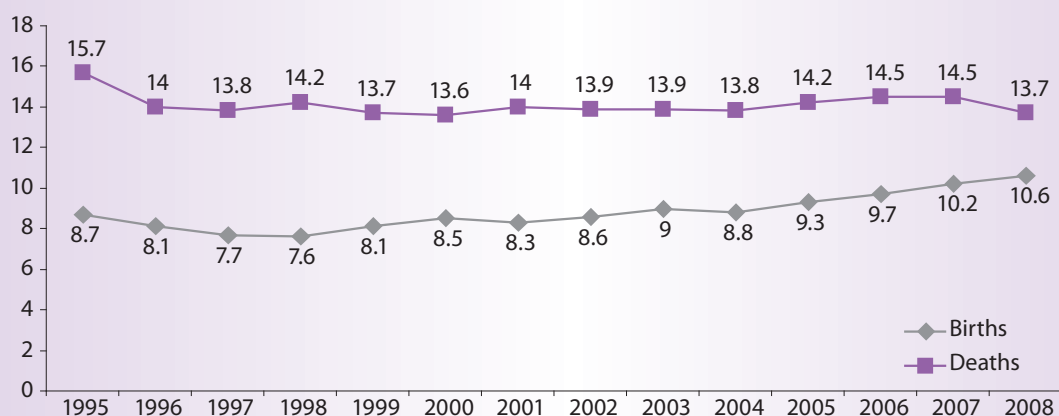
The most common cause of death in Latvia is cardiovascular diseases. In 2008 16,500 persons or 53.3% of total deaths were due to this cause. The second largest cause of death is tumours. In 2008 5,900 persons or 19.1% of all deaths were due to this cause. Male mortality due to tumours is larger than that for females. The third most common cause of death is external causes (deliberate self-inflicted injuries, accidents, poisoning, traumas). In 2008 2445 persons or 7.9% of all deaths were caused by unnatural causes. Male mortality due to external causes is three times higher than that for females.

In the last few years no fundamental improvement in the public health situation can be observed. The first place is still occupied by heart and cardiovascular diseases. Latvia's indicators are among the highest in Europe.

In 2008 the number of cases of tuberculosis reached the lowest level in the last 12 years, though it remains high – 41 cases for 100,000 inhabitants (in 1990 – 27 cases).

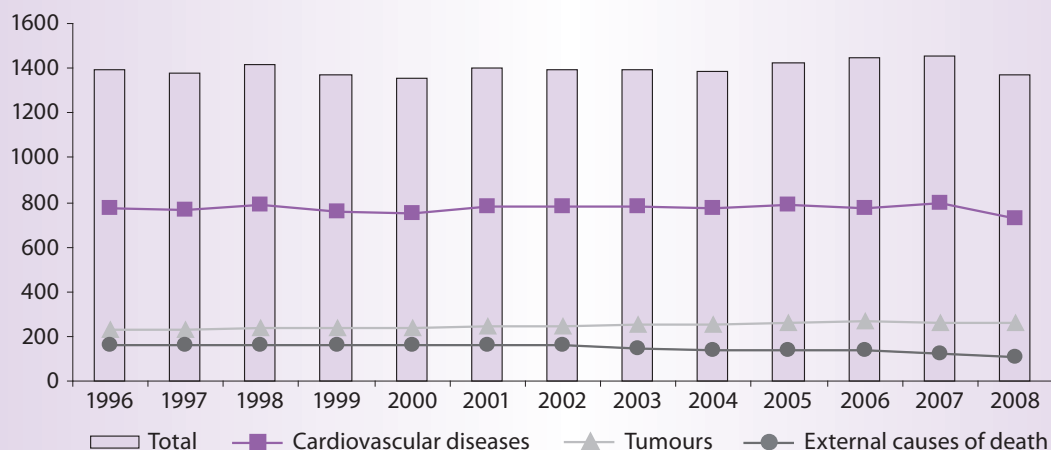
P 2

Births and Deaths 1995–2008 (per 1000 inhabitants)



P 3

Main Causes of Death 1995–2008 (Number of Deaths per 100,000 Inhabitants)



In recent years the number of cases of malignant tumours has increased. In 2008 9,300 patients were diagnosed for the first time (in 2007 – 9,200).

The rapid spread of HIV is alarming. The number of incidences of HIV infection in 2008 compared to 2007 increased from 15.4 to 15.8 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. Morbidity with AIDS has also increased from 1.6 cases per 100,000 inhabitants in 2007 to 4.0 cases in 2008.

In 2008 the CSB participated in a survey of European inhabitants in which, among other issues, people's subjective evaluation of their health was measured. The information obtained in the survey suggests that the largest percentage of inhabitants considers their health situation to be average or good.

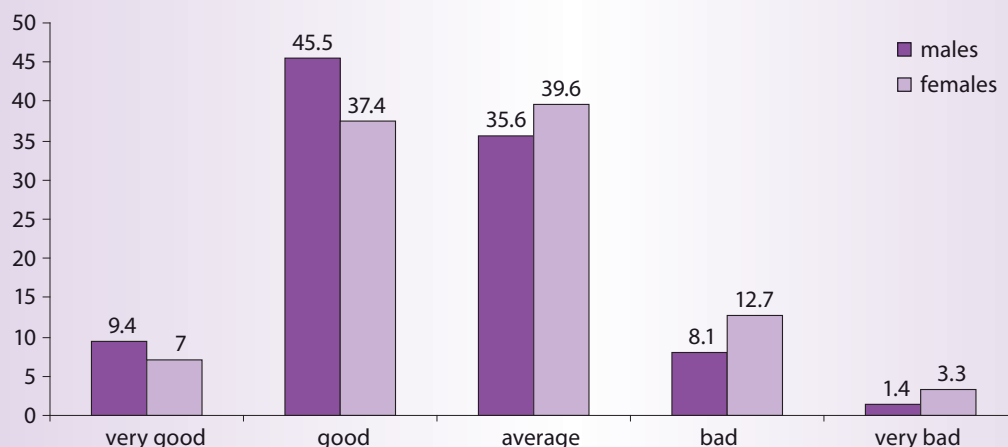
Lifelong health is one of the main basic postulates for health policy implementation, which cannot be ensured without public participation in health maintenance and

protection. An integral precondition for purposeful action is a correct understanding of health and its determining factors. Excess weight, obesity, insufficient physical activity, alcohol and drug use and smoking are all significant factors that influence an individual's health condition. Quality health care reform cannot provide the desired results without simultaneously raising the level of public knowledge and awareness on health issues.

In the aforementioned survey on health 24% of inhabitants mentioned that they «cannot afford it, is too expensive» as the main reason they had to do without the help of medical specialists. Total expenditures on health care as a share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declined in 2007 as compared to 2006, and the share is 6.2%. Government expenditures on health as a share of GDP in 2008 were unchanged compared to 2007 and were 3.6%, which is less than in 2006 (3.9%).

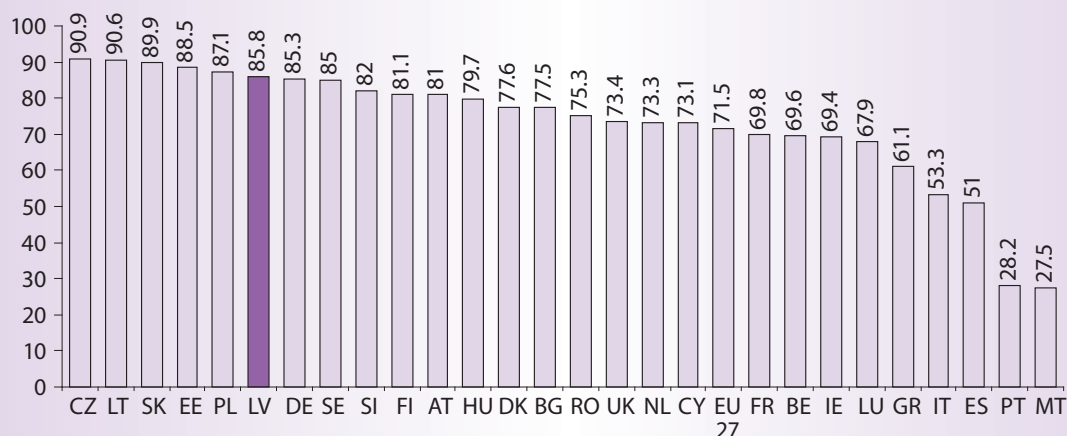
P 4

Health Self-Assessment by Men and Women in 2008 (%)



P 5

Share of the Population with a Secondary Education in the Age Group 25–64 in the European Union in 2008, (%)



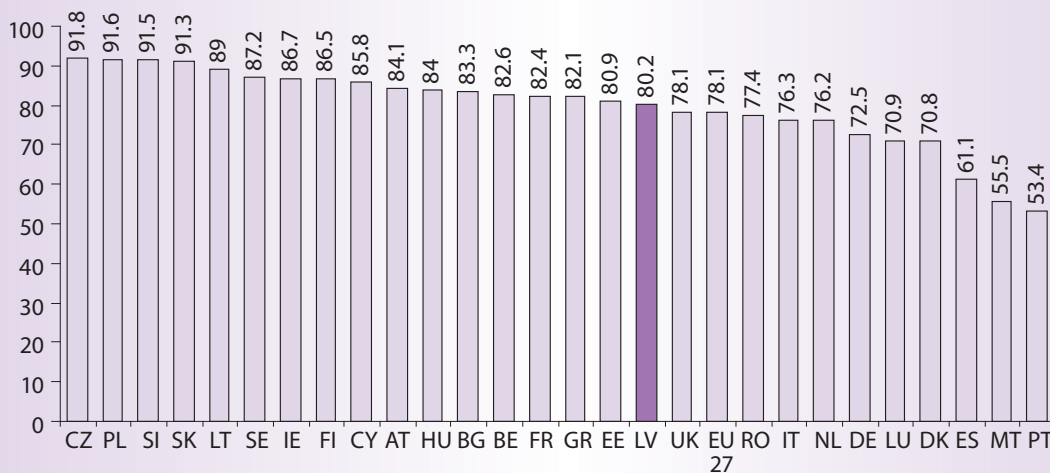
Source: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>

Education

The legislative and executive branches and political organizations of every country link their future with promoting and supporting education. Education means not only the growth of the spiritual wealth of a country, but also the strengthening of its statehood, economic growth and public welfare. Education has been identified as one of the main factors in combating poverty and raising the standard of living. A person needs at least a secondary education in order to participate actively in social and economic life.

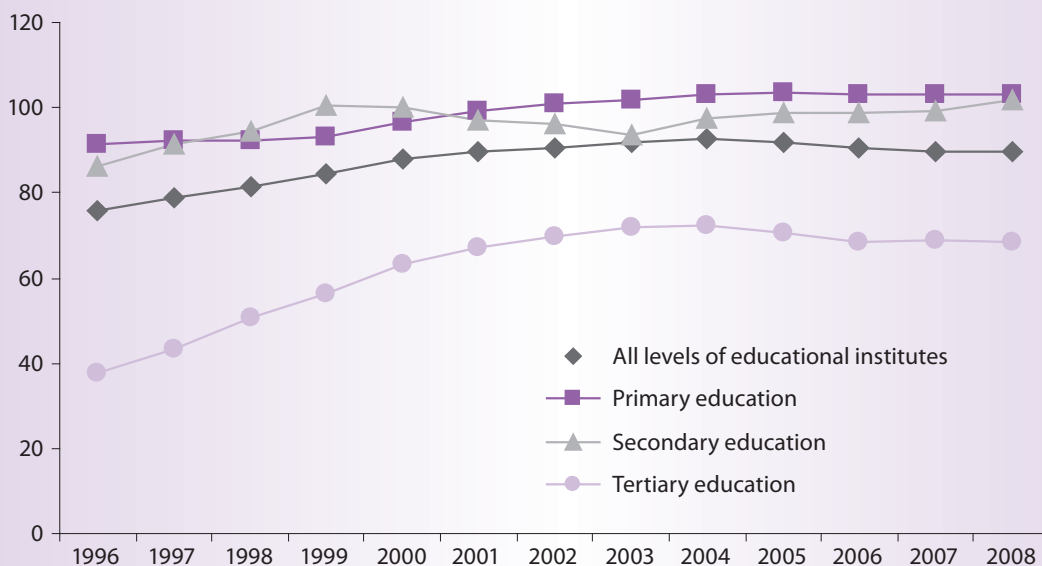
Latvia's priority directions of work to reach the goals set out in the Lisbon strategy are promoting knowledge and innovation and improving education and skills. The Lisbon strategy envisages that in 2010 at least 85% of youth aged 20 to 24 will have acquired a full secondary education. In this realm the situation in Latvia is better than the European Union average. Thus, 86.2% of 18 year-olds in Latvia are involved in education, whereas the average in the EU is 77.4%. 32.9% of youth aged 20 to 24 are involved in higher education, which is the fifth best result in the EU (the EU average is 28.2%).

P 6 Share of Inhabitants Who Have Acquired a Secondary Education in the Age Group 20-24 in the European Union Countries in 2007, (%)



Source: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>

P 7 Education Indicators, (%)



Traditionally, the number of pupils/students in Latvia has been high. For example, the number of tertiary students per 10,000 inhabitants is one of the highest in the EU, reaching 563 in 2007 (EU25 in 2005 – 375).

982 institutions of general education with a total of 249,400 students started the 2008/2009 academic year. In comparison to the previous year, the number of students decreased by 14,500 or 5.5%.

In recent years the number of primary education students has continued to decrease. In 2008 28,200 children finished their primary education and more than 1/3 of them continue in professional education institutions, 63% in general education secondary education institutions, and about 5% do not continue studies immediately.

In the 2008/2009 academic year 20,300 students or 412 fewer than the previous year acquired a general secondary education. About ¾ of all those finishing secondary school entered higher education institutions that same fall, 3% continued in professional education institutions, 22% do not continue studies.

In the 2008/2009 academic year Latvia had 63 special education institutions (schools for children with physical

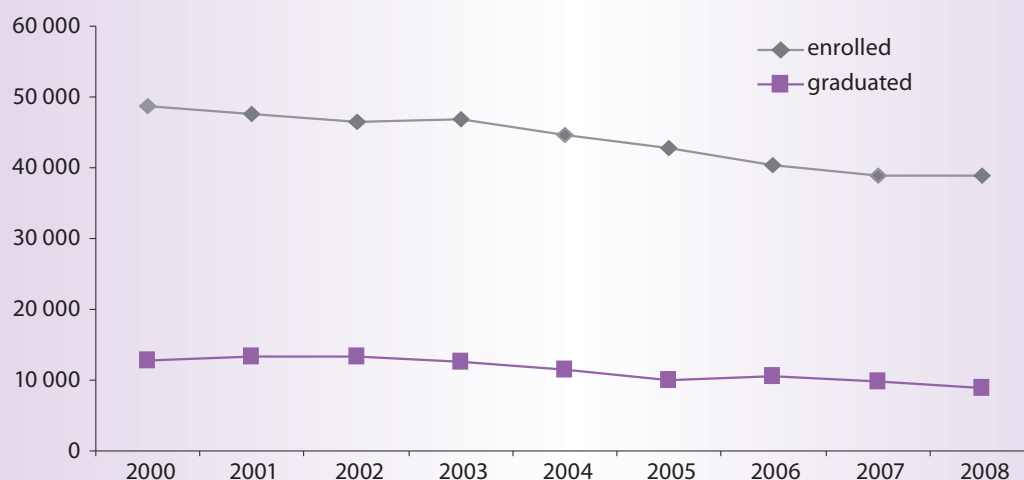
or mental disabilities), where 2.7% of all schoolchildren acquire an education. 1432 children with special needs (0.6% of all schoolchildren) are integrated into general education schools.

In the 2008/2009 academic year 38,800 students were learning in 92 professional education institutions and 8,900 finished such institutions. Every year the number of students in professional education has decreased. In comparison with the year 2000, the number of students has declined by 10,000.

Higher education in Latvia can be obtained at 60 institutions of higher education – 34 universities (20 state and 14 private institutions) and 26 colleges (18 state colleges and 8 privately founded colleges). During the 2008/2009 academic year 125,400 students were enrolled at universities and colleges, which amount to 2400 fewer than in the previous year. The number of students accepted at universities decreased as well from 43,900 in the 2007/2008 academic year to 41,600 in the 2008/2009 academic year. In 2009 24,200 students graduated with an academic degree or qualification. A comparison of enrolment and graduation figures

P 8

Enrolment Trends at Professional Education Institutions 2000-2008



P 9

Enrolment and Graduation Trends of Students at Universities and Colleges (2000–2008)



indicates that approximately 25-30% of students do not finish their studies.

The most popular subjects for students are the social sciences, business and law (52.9%), engineering sciences, manufacturing and construction (11.3%) and education (9.0%). In the 2008/2009 academic year the number of students whose studies were financed by the state increased, though 73% of all students paid student fees themselves.

In order to implement the requirements of the Lisbon strategy, Latvia, along with other EU Member States, must contribute to the promotion of lifelong education. In order to ensure this, on 9 April 2008 the Cabinet of Ministers adopted a programme on the Basic Postulates of Lifelong Education 2007-2013 for implementation in 2008-2010. The primary result of implementing the programme is to be the attainment by 2010 of a level of 12.5% involvement of the lifelong education target

group (25-64 years). In accordance with labour force survey data, 6.8% of persons from the relevant age group were involved in lifelong education in 2008.

Financing is one of the cornerstones of education. The financial sources of Latvia's educational institutions are the state budget, local government budgets, funding from natural and legal entities, and foreign assistance.

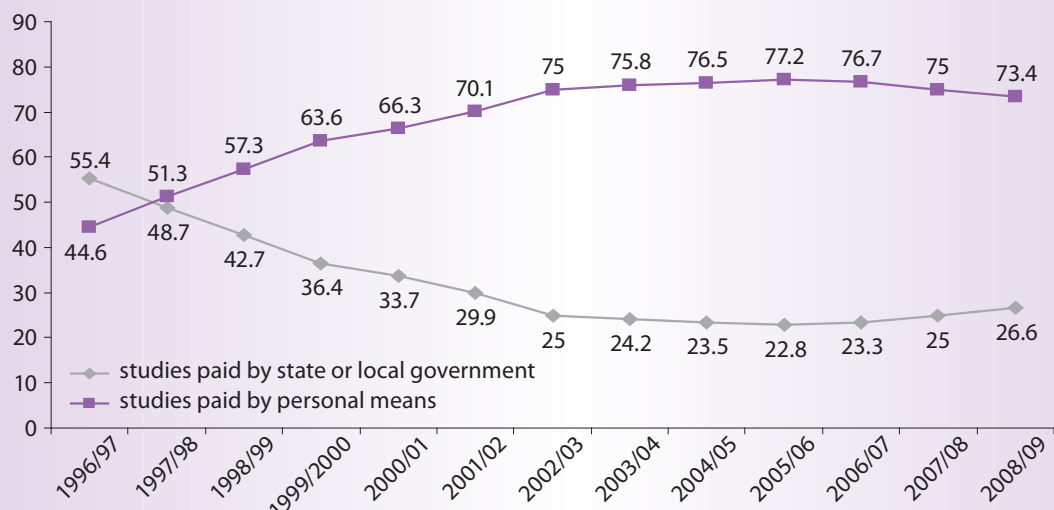
Economic Indicators

Dynamics of the Gross Domestic Product

The essence of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the added value from economic activity that has been created over a certain period of time in all sectors of the economy. In the period from 2005 to 2007 Latvia had rapid economic growth and GDP grew each year by an average of 11% (in 2007 – by 10.0%). The high rate of

The Number of Students in Universities and Colleges According to the Source of Funding for Studies (Beginning of the Academic Year, %)

P 10



P 11

Funding for Education

Year	Percentage of the State Budget	Percentage of GDP
2000	16.9	6.8
2001	18.3	6.9
2002	18.5	6.5
2003	17.5	6.1
2004	16.5	5.8
2005	17.3	6.1
2006	15.6	5.6
2007	16.2	5.8
2008	16.9	6.5

growth was mostly due to domestic demand. Private consumption and investments increased significantly. In 2007 GDP growth was facilitated by growth in the following sectors: finance (22.5%), mining and quarries (14.7%), construction (14.4%), and trade (12.7%). In mid-2007, the pace of growth began to slow and in 2008 GDP fell by 4.6% in comparison with 2007. The most important element in the fall in overall GDP in 2008 was caused by the decrease in trade services and the volume of manufacturing. The decline in construction was also significant.

According to «Eurostat» data, in 2008 GDP per capita in Latvia in purchasing power parity was 55.7% of the EU-27 average.

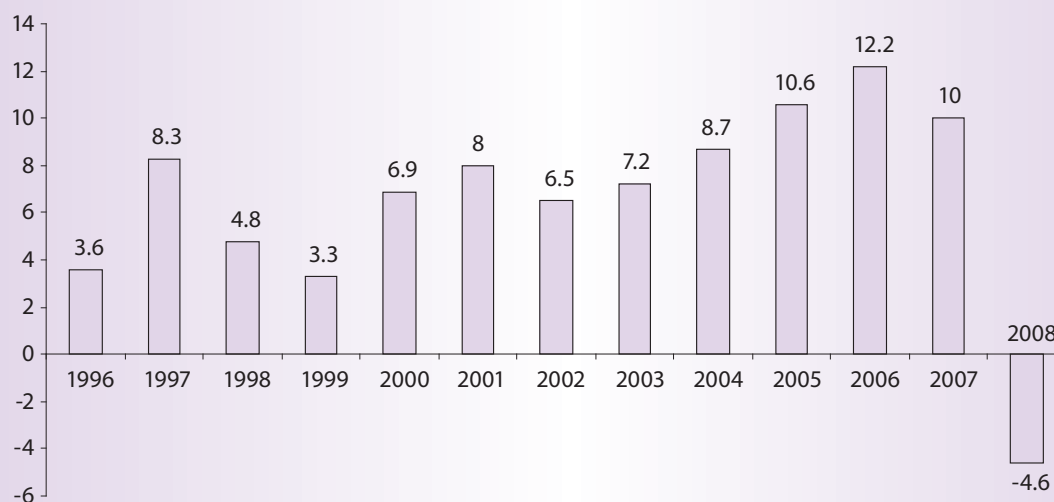
Income Distribution and Expenditures

In recent years economic growth was accompanied by a growth in incomes as well. In 2006 the average household disposable income per household member per month reached LVL 154.16. In comparison with 2005 figures, that represented growth of 26%. More rapid growth in disposable income could be observed in rural households – 34%. Most (74%) disposable income came from wages, while almost a quarter came from social transfers.

Significant differences continue to exist between the regions, especially between Riga and other regions. In 2006 household disposable income was a third higher in the Riga region than the national average, but was the lowest

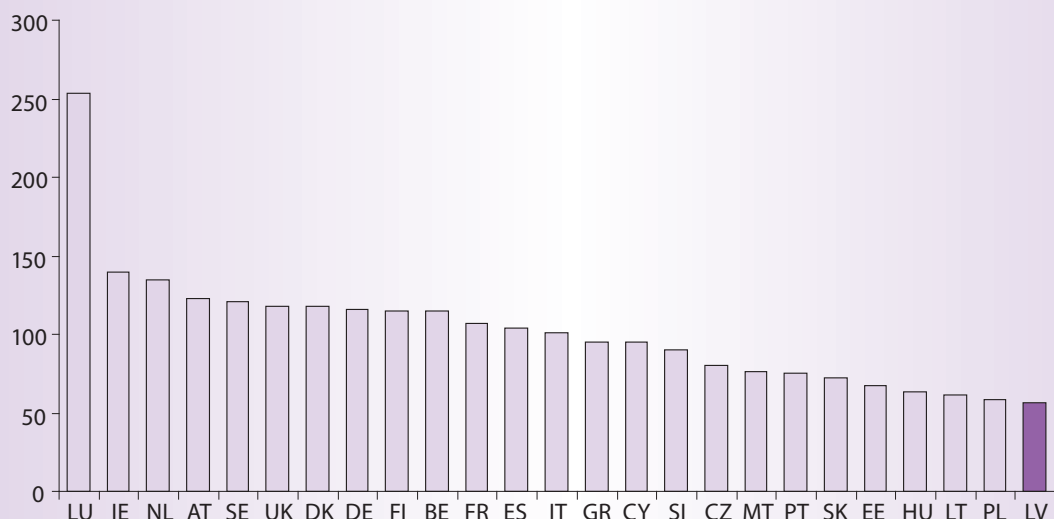
P 12

Trends in the Gross Domestic Product (in 2000 prices), %



P 13

Gross Domestic Product per Capita According to PPP in 2008 (ES-27=100)



in the Latgale region, where it was LVL 99 per household member per month.

In 2007 private household consumption expenditures grew by 27%, which was the most rapid growth in recent years. The main priority in household consumption was expenditures for food, which is one of the internationally comparative indicators of material welfare. In 2007 households spent an average of 25% of all their expenditures on food. A significant portion of consumption is accounted for by transport (16%) and lodging (10%). In 2007 the most rapid growth in expenditures was for health – by 70%.

In 2007 the average gross monthly salary for persons employed in the economy was LVL 286, which was 31.8% more than in 2006. In real terms, accounting for inflation, this was an increase of 20%. In 2008 the average gross monthly salary was LVL 479 (net salary – LVL 350), which was an increase of 20.4% over a year. However, when inflation is factored in, the increase was only 6.2%.

Employment and Unemployment

Rapid economic development, which could be observed in Latvia until 2007, had a positive impact on the labour market. In the previous years (2004-2006) the employment level increased by 4.5 percentage points. In 2003 the employment level in Latvia compared to the EU average was 0.7 percentage points lower, but in 2007 already exceeded the EU average by 2.9 percentage points. In 2007 the level of employment reached 62%. The Lisbon strategy set the goal of reaching 70% employment by 2010.

In 2007 1,119,000 inhabitants were employed in the national economy or 62% of all inhabitants aged 15-74 (68% for males, 57% for females). In 2007 there was an increase in the number of employed persons and also an increase in the proportion of employed persons among the total population. In 2008 the largest share of the employed worked in the service sector (62%), followed by industry (28%) and agriculture (11%).

An increase in the proportion of women in the labour market can be observed in Latvia, which may be explained

P 14

Disposable Income 2004–2006 (LVL per Household Member per Month)



P 15

Disposable Income in the Regions 2004–2006 (LVL per Household Member per Month)

	2004	2005	2006
All households	100.20	122.40	154.16
Kurzemes region	83.38	106.32	140.25
Zemgale region	82.58	99.35	134.14
Latgale region	73.28	79.93	99.24
Vidzeme region	77.72	92.45	122.26
Riga	134.65	175.45	201.03
Greater Riga	102.41	110.63	162.77

Source: Community Statistical Income and Life Conditions Survey (EU SILC) data

P 16

Average Annual Economically Active Population (in Thousands)

	Economically active inhabitants	Including	
		Employed	Job seekers
1996	1196	949	247
2000	1100	941	159
2001	1107	962	145
2002	1123	989	135
2003	1126	1007	119
2004	1136	1018	119
2005	1135	1036	99
2006	1167	1088	80
2007	1191	1119	72
2008	1216	1124	92

by economic factors, as families often have difficulties making ends meet with only one salary. The proportion of women in the labour market was 57% in 2007 (55% in 2006). The economic activity of women in Latvia exceeds average EU indicators.

The decline in economic activity which began at the end of 2007 and the beginning of 2008 is reflected in

employment indicators as well, as the unemployment rate has risen. Overall in 2008 1,124,000 people were employed (62.6% of all inhabitants aged 15-74).

Labour force survey data indicate that in 2008 Latvia had 91,600 job seekers (7.5% of the economically active population), while in 2007 the number was 72,100 or 6.1%.

Statistical Appendix

The statistical tables in this Appendix have been prepared in accordance with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) indicators. The information included in the tables characterizes human development and shows how people have been able to use economic achievements to improve their lives. The tables reflect the most significant indicators that characterize social processes, e.g. health, education, the environment, employment, etc. Information has been compiled from the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (CSB) and if necessary, additional data has been obtained from ministries, institutions, and international organizations.

As noted in the *Global Human Development Report* and as can be seen in Latvia's *Human Development Reports*, certain indicators for Latvia, including the human development index, differ. These differences derive from the fact that the Human Development Report Organization (HDRO), in using national data, evaluates them so that they are internationally comparable. Moreover, the HDRO uses information from other international organizations. For example, «life expectancy at birth» is taken from *World Population Prospects 1950–2050: The 2006 Revision*; the data for the indicator «Adult literacy rate» is from the UNESCO Statistical Institute, the source for «GDP per capita, USD» for calculating the human development index is the World Bank.

The statistical information shown in the tables has been obtained in accordance with international methodologies. Data obtained from sample surveys conducted by the CSB and other institutions has also been used. The information in the tables is based on data available to the CSB as of 1 July 2009.

In some cases, the data published for prior periods has been revised. In some tables data for 2007 pertains to the previous period and was adjusted in 2008. For example, in 2009 the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was revised, and thus, so were indicators referring to GDP.

In order to approximate the methodology of the most significant macroeconomic calculations to the demands of the European accounting system, in the third quarter of 2005 GDP values were changed in actual and relative values for the years 2000 to 2005. Therefore, the data for 2000 to 2005 cannot be compared to the previous period.

Information from the Statistical Office of the European Union has been used in publishing data on the «income ratio between the richest 20% and the poorest 20% of inhabitants.» This was aligned with data from the survey «Community Statistics on Income and Living Conditions.»

In calculating the human development index, data from the World Bank on real GDP per capita, USD in PPP were used (<http://www.worldbank.org>).

Human Development Index: Latvia*

	Life expectancy at birth, years	Adult literacy rate, %	Proportion of people attending educational institutions at all levels	Real GDP per capita, (PPP USD) ¹	Life expectancy index	Education index	GDP index	Human Development index
1999	70.4	99.8	84.4	...	0.76	0.95	0.70	0.803
2000	70.7	99.8	87.8	8010	0.76	0.96	0.71	0.809
2001	70.7	99.8	89.5	...	0.76	0.97	0.72	0.816
2002	71.1	99.8	90.5	...	0.77	0.97	0.75	0.825
2003	71.4	99.8	91.7	...	0.77	0.97	0.75	0.830
2004	72.1	99.8	92.5	...	0.79	0.97	0.76	0.840
2005	71.8	99.8	91.8	12 880	0.78	0.97	0.79	0.847
2006	71.3	99.8	90.4	14 980	0.77	0.96	0.82	0.849
2007	71.2	99.8	89.7	16 770	0.77	0.96	0.84	0.857
2008	72.7	99.8	89.5	16 740	0.79	0.96	0.87	0.877

* Adjustment of the human development index is not foreseen.

¹ <http://www.worldbank.org> Key Development and Statistics.

Human Development

	Life expectancy at birth, years	Maternal mortality per 100,000 live births (number of cases)	Number of inhabitants per physician	Enrolment at all level educational institutions, % of inhabitants, age 7-23	Enrolment at tertiary educational institutions, % of inhabitants, age 19-23		Real GDP per capita, in European currency units, PPP ¹
					Total	Women	
1995	66.7	37	294	70.8	26.6	...	...
1996	69.3	40 (8)	283	75.9	37.8	45.5	...
1997	70.0	42 (8)	288	78.8	43.3	51.7	...
1998	69.9	43 (8)	301	81.5	50.7	63.5	...
1999	70.4	41 (8)	296	84.4	56.2	72.7	...
2000	70.7	25 (5)	291	87.8	63.2	79.6	...
2001	70.7	25 (5)	303	89.5	67.0	84.0	7700
2002	71.1	5 (1)	294	90.5	69.7	87.8	8400
2003	71.4	14 (3)	294	91.7	71.9	91.3	9000
2004	72.1	10 (2)	287	92.5	72.2	93.1	9900
2005	71.8	5 (1)	278	91.8	70.5	90.9	10900
2006	71.3	14 (3)	274	90.4	68.6	89.3	12400
2007	71.2	26 (6)	283	89.7	68.8	90.4	14 400
2008	72.7	8 (2)	269	89.5	68.4	88.9	14 000

¹ Data from the European Union's home page «Economics and finances», 2009.4.XI.

Human Distress

	Unemployment rate, % of economically active inhabitants	Adults age 15 and older with incomplete secondary education, %	Income ratio between the richest 20% and the poorest 20% of inhabitants ³	Annual inflation rate compared to the previous year, %	Number of deaths in traffic accidents per 100,000 inhabitants	Divorces, % of marriages	Children born to unmarried mothers, %	Number of suicides per 100,000 inhabitants	
								Men	Women
1995	6.6	39.6 ¹	...	125.0	25	70.6	29.9	72.0	14.9
1996	7.2	39.6 ¹	...	117.6	22	62.8	33.1	65.3	13.4
1997	7.0	39.6 ¹	...	108.4	22	63.0	34.8	62.8	13.9
1998	9.2	39.6 ¹	...	104.7	26	64.4	37.1	61.0	12.5
1999	9.1	39.6 ¹	...	102.4	25	63.9	39.1	53.9	13.3
2000	7.8	34.9 ²	5.5	102.6	25	66.6	40.3	56.5	11.9
2001	7.7	34.9 ²	...	102.5	22	62.0	42.1	52.2	11.2
2002	8.5	34.9 ²	...	101.9	22	61.1	43.1	48.5	11.9
2003	8.6	34.9 ²	...	102.9	21	48.3	44.2	45.1	9.7
2004	8.5	34.9 ²	...	106.2	22	50.8	45.3	42.8	8.5
2005	7.4	34.9 ²	6.7	106.7	19	50.6	44.6	42.0	9.6
2006	6.5	34.9 ²	7.9	106.5	18	49.6	43.4	38.7	6.6
2007	4.9	34.9 ²	6.3	110.1	18	47.8	43.0	34.1	7.7
2008	7.0*	34.9 ²	...	115.3	14	48.0	43.1	40.9	8.2

* End December 2008.

¹ 1989 census data.

² 2000 census data.

³ Data from the European Union's Statistical Bureau home page «Inhabitants and living conditions», 2007.17.IX. Available :<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>.

Human Distress (continued)

	Sulphur dioxide (SO ₂) emissions from stationary sources, kg per capita	Nitrogen (NO _x) emissions from stationary sources, kg per capita
1995	15.3	3.2
1996	18.3	3.5
1997	13.9	3.9
1998	13.2	3.8
1999	9.8	3.4
2000	5.1	3.5
2001	3.8	3.7
2002	3.3	4.0
2003	2.6	4.4
2004	2.0	3.8
2005	1.4	4.2
2006	0.9	4.6
2007	0.8	4.6
2008	0.5	3.2

Gender Differences (% women in relation to men)

	Life expectancy at birth	Number of inhabitants (end of the year)	Secondary education enrolment	Secondary education graduates	Tertiary education enrolment (students age 19-23)	Employed ¹	Unemployed	Overall salaries in the country
1995	120.3	116.9	108.0	120.1	155.2	...	109.7	78.3
1996	118.3	117.0	103.5	...	149.7	92.0	120.8	78.5
1997	118.2	117.0	101.8	132.1	145.1	94.8	146.2	79.7
1998	117.9	117.0	101.0	124.1	146.4	92.7	141.1	79.3
1999	117.4	117.1	99.7	122.3	157.4	92.6	134.6	80.0
2000	117.0	117.1	98.1	100.3	152.5	96.2	136.1	78.6
2001	117.6	117.2	98.0	113.8	142.1	97.8	134.6	80.2
2002	117.4	117.3	97.1	111.7	138.8	96.0	142.2	81.5
2003	116.7	117.1	98.0	101.4	140.0	94.8	140.9	83.5
2004	115.1	117.0	100.5	111.0	144.3	95.0	143.6	84.4
2005	118.0	117.0	102.2	111.3	145.8	94.0	149.3	81.9
2006	116.6	117.1	104.0	111.9	152.7	94.5	155.7	82.4
2007	116.2	116.9	104.3	111.6	156.9	95.1	160.2	83.9
2008	115.9	116.8	102.1	130.9	175.2	96.7	...	84.8

¹ Labour force survey data. Persons age 15 and older 1996–2001, and age 15-74 from 2002 onward.

Status of Women

	Life expectancy at birth, years	Average age at first marriage	Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births		Secondary education enrolment, % of women age 11–18	Secondary education graduates, % of women age 18	Tertiary education enrolment, % of women age 19-23	Proportion of women among the employed, % ²	Proportion of women among managers and specialists, % ²	Proportion of women among members of parliament, %
1995	73.1	23.3	37	...	...	...	...	...	...	8 ³
1996	75.6	23.7	40	8	84.3	...	45.5	47.9	60.5	8 ³
1997	75.9	24.1	42	8	85.9	85.4	51.7	48.7	60.5	8 ³
1998	75.5	24.5	43	8	85.8	86.4	63.5	48.1	59.1	17 ⁴
1999	76.2	24.7	41	8	86.9	91.4	72.7	48.1	58.4	17 ⁴
2000	76.0	24.9	25	5	88.2	87.6	79.6	49.0	57.7	17 ⁴
2001	76.6	24.9	25	5	89.0	96.1	84.0	49.4	59.1	17 ⁴
2002	76.8	25.4	5	1	88.9	98.5	87.8	49.0	57.6	18 ⁵
2003	76.9	25.4	14	3	90.5	82.2	91.3	48.7	57.5	18 ⁵
2004	77.2	25.6	10	2	88.9	81.1	93.1	48.7	57.5	18 ⁵
2005	77.4	26.0	5	1	92.4	77.1	90.9	48.4	58.5	18 ⁵
2006	76.8	26.3	14	3	92.9	83.2	89.3	48.6	58.1	19 ⁶
2007	76.5	26.4	26	6	74.8 ¹	82.9	89.1	48.8	60.3	19 ⁶
2008	77.0	26.7	8	2	85.3 ¹	92.1	88.9	49.2	64.8	19 ⁶

¹ In accordance with Cabinet of Ministers regulations about the classification of Latvian education (11.04.2006) the first stage of primary education includes grades 1-6, the second stage includes grades 7-9.

² Labour force survey data. Persons age 15 and older 1996–2001, and age 15-74 from 2002 onward.

³ Parliamentary election results of 30 September 1995.

⁴ Parliamentary election results of 3 October 1998.

⁵ Parliamentary election results of 5 October 2002.

⁶ Parliamentary election results of 9 October 2006.

Demographic Profile

	Population in millions (end of the year)	Annual population growth rate, %	Total fertility rate	Proportion of dependents, %	Proportion of population age 60 and over, % (end of year)	Life expectancy at age 60 (additional years)	
						Men	Women
1995	2.5	-1.2	1.27	43.1	19.3	14.2	19.3
1996	2.4	-1.0	1.18	42.3	19.7	14.8	21.2
1997	2.4	-1.0	1.13	42.2	20.1	14.2	21.3
1998	2.4	-0.9	1.11	41.0	20.5	14.3	20.9
1999	2.4	-0.7	1.18	40.6	21.0	14.1	21.5
2000	2.4	-0.7	1.24	41.1	21.5	14.8	21.3
2001	2.3	-0.8	1.21	39.7	21.9	15.4	21.5
2002	2.3	-0.6	1.23	39.2	22.1	15.1	21.8
2003	2.3	-0.5	1.29	37.6	22.1	15.1	21.5
2004	2.3	-0.6	1.24	37.2	22.2	15.9	21.6
2005	2.3	-0.5	1.31	36.1	22.1	15.0	21.8
2006	2.3	-0.6	1.35	35.6	22.1	15.0	21.5
2007	2.3	-0.5	1.41	34.4	22.1	15.3	21.1
2008	2.3	-0.4	1.45	33.8	22.3	15.6	21.7

Health

	Death from cardiovascular diseases, % of all deaths	Death from malignant tumours, % of all deaths	Registered alcohol consumption, litres per adult ¹	Number of inhabitants per physician	State expenditures on health, % of total State expenditures	State expenditures on health, % of GDP
1995	55.8	14.1	9.1	294	9.7	4.0
1996	55.5	16.0	8.4	283	9.9	3.9
1997	55.5	16.3	8.4	288	9.9	3.8
1998	55.5	16.4	8.9	301	9.4	4.1
1999	55.2	17.1	8.8	296	9.1	4.1
2000	55.5	17.3	8.4	291	8.9	3.6
2001	55.9	17.4	7.8	303	9.1	3.6
2002	56.0	17.4	8.5	294	9.0	4.0
2003	56.1	17.9	9.4	294	9.2	4.1
2004	55.9	18.2	8.9	287	11.0	4.0
2005	55.1	18.0	8.7	278	10.8	3.7
2006	53.6	18.2	9.5	274	10.8	3.9
2007	54.6	17.9	10.0	283	10.0	3.6
2008	53.2	19.1	10.8	269	9.3 ²	3.6 ²

¹ Provisional.

² The 2008 overview of the Republic of Latvia on the implementation of the state and local government budgets.

Education

	Enrolment at educational institutions of all levels, % of population age 7-23	Enrolment at primary schools, % of population age 7-15	Enrolment at secondary schools, % of population age 16-18	Enrolment at tertiary educational institutions, % of population, age 19-23	Expenditures on tertiary education, % of all education expenditures	Total average expenditures per student at public tertiary educational institutions, LVL	State expenditures on education, % of total State expenditures	Total State expenditures on education, % of GDP
1995	70.8	89.3	82.6	26.6	16.3	...	17.0	6.9
1996	75.9	91.4	86.3	37.8	18.7	...	14.6	5.8
1997	78.8	92.2	91.5	43.3	18.5	...	14.6	5.7
1998	81.5	92.4	94.6	50.7	19.7	...	15.7	6.9
1999	84.4	93.3	100.4	56.2	20.8	...	15.1	6.8
2000	87.8	96.5	100.0	63.2	22.7	970	16.9	6.8
2001	89.5	99.4	97.0	67.0	23.4	950	18.3	6.9
2002	90.5	101.0	96.1	69.7	24.1	1014	18.5	6.3
2003	91.7	101.7	93.6	71.9	24.6	1004	17.5	6.0
2004	92.5	103.1	97.6	72.2	25.5	1173	16.5	5.8
2005	91.8	103.4	98.7	70.5	27.6	1657	17.3	6.1
2006	90.4	103.3	98.7	68.6	27.2	1945	15.6	5.6
2007	89.7	103.2	99.4	68.8	26.7	1917	16.2	5.8
2008	89.5	102.9	101.9	68.4	...	...	16.9 ¹	6.5 ¹

¹ 2008 overview of the Republic of Latvia on the implementation of the state and local government budgets.

Human Intellectual Potential

	Scientists and technicians per 1000 inhabitants	Total expenditures on research and development, % of GDP	Secondary education graduates, % of inhabitants age 18	Tertiary education graduates, % of inhabitants age 23	Science graduates, % of all graduates of tertiary educational institutions
1995	2.1	0.52	74.9	21.7	...
1996	1.9	0.46	71.6	28.2	...
1997	1.8	0.43	73.6	30.9	0.3
1998	1.8	0.45	76.4	32.2	0.5
1999	1.8	0.40	81.2	33.2	0.5
2000	2.3	0.45	85.6	47.9	0.3
2001	2.3	0.41	88.7	64.2	0.2
2002	2.3	0.42	80.2	58.9	0.3
2003	2.1	0.38	76.2	63.0	0.3
2004	2.9	0.42	76.0	71.2	0.4
2005	2.4	0.56	77.9	75.4	0.4
2006	2.8	0.70	82.5	71.1	0.4
2007	2.8	0.59	87.3	72.6	0.5
2008	2.9	0.61	85.6	66.2	0.6

Employment

	Employed, % of total population ¹	Distribution of employed, % of total number of employed ¹			Income growth among employed inhabitants, %	Length of work week, hours ¹
		Agriculture	Industry	Services		
1995	...	...	...	...	25	...
1996	48.3	17	27	56	10	40.1
1997	50.6	21	26	53	22	41.2
1998	50.5	19	27	54	11	41.0
1999	49.6	17	26	57	6	41.2
2000	48.2	15	26	59	6	41.4
2001	49.2	15	26	59	7	41.3
2002	54.4	15	26	59	9	40.1
2003	55.4	14	27	59	11	40.0
2004	56.1	13	27	60	9	39.4
2005	57.1	12	26	62	16	40.0
2006	60.1	11	28	61	23	39.7
2007	62.0	10	28	62	32	39.2
2008	62.6	8	29	63	22	37.4

¹ Labour force survey data. Persons age 15 and older 1996-2001, and age 15-74 from 2002 onward.

Unemployment (end of year)

	Number of unemployed, thousands	Unemployment rate, %		Unemployed youth age 15-24, % of total unemployed persons	Payments of unemployment benefits, % of total State expenditures	Percentage of long-term unemployed (more than 12 months)
		Total	Women			
1995	83.2	6.6	7.0	20.2	1.7	25.5
1996	90.8	7.2	8.1	20.0	1.1	31.2
1997	84.9	7.0	8.5	18.1	1.1	38.1
1998	111.4	9.2	11.0	16.4	1.6	26.3
1999	109.5	9.1	10.7	14.8	1.6	31.1
2000	93.3	7.8	9.2	14.8	1.2	29.0
2001	91.6	7.7	9.0	14.6	1.0	26.6
2002	89.7	8.5	10.5	13.9	1.1	26.4
2003	90.6	8.6	10.5	13.2	1.1	26.1
2004	90.8	8.5	9.6	12.8	1.0	25.6
2005	78.5	7.4	8.8	14.0	1.2	26.2
2006	68.9	6.5	7.7	14.0	1.1	23.1
2007	52.3	4.9	5.8	12.9	1.1	18.0
2008	76.4	7.0	...	...	...	11.1

Defence Expenditures and Expenditure Disbalance

	State expenditures on defence, % of GDP	State expenditures on health, % of GDP	State expenditures on education, % of GDP
1995	1.0	4.0	6.9
1996	0.8	3.9	5.8
1997	0.7	3.8	5.7
1998	1.0	4.1	6.9
1999	1.0	4.1	6.8
2000	0.9	3.6	6.8
2001	1.0	3.6	6.9
2002	1.2	4.0	6.3
2003	1.1	4.1	6.0
2004	1.3	4.0	5.8
2005	1.2	3.7	6.1
2006	1.5	3.9	5.6
2007	1.4	3.6	5.8
2008	1.5 ¹	3.6 ¹	6.5 ¹

¹ 2008 overview of the Republic of Latvia on the implementation of the state and local government budgets.

Natural Resources

	Area, thousands of km ²	Population density, population per sq. km. (end of year)	Arable land, % of total area *	Forests, % of total area	Reclaimed land, % of arable land *	Internal renewable water resources per capita, in thousands of cubic metres	Annual water consumption per capita, in cubic metres
1995	64.6	38.2	39.3	44.6	...	8.0	183.3
1996	64.6	37.9	39.0	44.3	62.0	5.3	174.4
1997	64.6	37.5	39.0	44.9	62.0	8.1	166.1
1998	64.6	37.1	38.7	44.2	62.8	10.9	161.9
1999	64.6	36.9	38.5	44.2	62.9	9.6	143.2
2000	64.6	36.6	38.5	44.2	62.9	7.7	126.2
2001	64.6	36.3	38.5	44.4	62.9	8.6	126.3
2002	64.6	36.1	38.4	44.5	62.9	...	127.6
2003	64.6	35.9	38.3	44.5	63.0	...	121.9
2004	64.6	35.7	38.2	44.9	63.1	...	113.9
2005	64.6	36.0	38.3	45.2	63.1	...	118.8
2006	64.6	35.0	38.1	45.4	63.3	...	103.8
2007	64.6	35.2	38.0	45.4	63.1	...	109.3
2008	64.6	35.2	37.8	45.5	61.5*	...	132.8

* Data from the State Land Service.

National Income Indicators

	Gross Domestic Product (GDP), millions of LVL	Agricultural production, % of GDP	Industrial production, % of GDP	Services, % of GDP	Private consumption, % of GDP	Development of domestic gross equity, % of GDP	Tax revenue, % of GDP	State expenditures, % of GDP	Exports, % of GDP	Imports, % of GDP
1995	2615.1	9	30	61	63.5	13.6	33.2	36.6	42.7	44.9
1996	3129.2	8	28	64	68.5	16.4	31.2	36.9	46.8	54.3
1997	3631.9	5	29	66	67.4	16.9	33.1	36.3	46.8	54.7
1998	3971.2	4	28	68	64.9	24.7	36.3	40.2	47.2	59.6
1999	4265.0	4	25	71	63.1	23.0	34.3	41.8	40.4	49.6
2000	4750.8	4	24	72	62.5	24.2	31.6	37.3	41.6	48.7
2001	5219.9	4	23	72	62.6	24.9	30.2	34.6	41.6	51.1
2002	5758.3	4	23	73	62.1	23.8	30.8	35.6	40.9	50.6
2003	6392.8	4	22	74	62.4	24.4	28.2	34.8	42.1	54.6
2004	7434.5	4	22	73	62.9	27.4	27.6	35.8	44.0	59.6
2005	9059.1	4	22	75	62.5	30.6	28.1	35.6	47.8	62.2
2006	11171.7	4	21	75	65.2	32.6	29.3	38.2	44.9	66.3
2007	14779.8	3	22	75	62.3	33.7	30.7	35.9	42.2	62.4
2008	16243.2	3	23	74	58.4	30.2	...	39.5 ¹	41.8	54.9

¹ Data may be adjusted.

Economic Development Trends

	Annual GDP growth rate (in comparative prices from the year 2000), %	Annual GDP growth rate per capita (in comparative prices from the year 2000), %	Annual inflation rate, % compared to rprevious year	Annual export growth rate, % of GDP (in actual prices)	Budget surplus or deficit, % of GDP (in actual prices)
1995	...	0.5	125.0	6.3	-1.6
1996	3.6	5.0	117.6	13.4	-1.4
1997	8.3	9.4	108.4	7.4	1.2
1998	4.8	5.7	104.7	4.8	0.1
1999	3.3	4.1	102.4	-3.3	-4.0
2000	6.9	7.7	102.6	6.0	-2.8
2001	8.0	8.9	102.5	4.0	-2.1
2002	6.5	7.2	101.9	3.5	-2.3
2003	7.2	7.8	102.9	5.8	-1.6
2004	8.7	9.3	106.2	9.1	-1.0
2005	10.6	11.2	106.7	14.3	-0.4
2006	12.2	12.8	106.5	7.1	-0.5
2007	10.0	10.6	110.1	11.0	-0.4
2008	-4.6	-4.2	115.4	...	-4.0

Violence and Crime*

	Prison inmates per 100,000 inhabitants	Juveniles, % of convicted criminals	Reported number of rapes per 100,000 inhabitants	Drug-related crimes per 100,000 inhabitants	Premeditated homicides or attempted homicides a year by men per 100,000 males	Reported number of rapes per 100,000 females
1995	255.2	10.8	6.4	10.9	18.2	11.8
1996	253.7	11.9	5.3	14.7	18.4	9.8
1997	256.4	13.1	4.9	17.6	15.6	9.1
1998	242.7	13.0	3.4	16.1	16.7	6.4
1999	216.4	14.0	4.2	21.4	14.5	7.8
2000	209.4	14.2	5.6	27.6	12.0	10.5
2001	201.7	13.8	5.1	35.2	15.6	9.5
2002	199.0	14.2	4.5	27.0	13.4	8.7
2003	213.6	13.5	5.3	43.0	18.7	9.8
2004	215.5	13.5	13.8 ¹	49.8	14.5	25.6 ¹
2005	206.5	12.5	11.0	45.6	5.3	20.4
2006	208.5	13.5	5.4	43.6	6.1	9.9
2007	211.2	11.9	4.1	63.0	11.2	7.6
2008	220.3	10.0	4.4	111.1	6.0	8.2

¹ In January-July 2005 in one criminal case of rape several additional criminal offence incidents were registered.

* On 1 October 2005 the Law on Criminal Procedure entered into force that introduced a new system of registering criminal offences. Thus, data are not comparable with previous years.

Prosperity, Poverty and Social Expenditures

	Real GDP per capita, in European currency units, PPP ¹	Industrial added value, % of GDP	Income ratio between the richest 20% and the poorest 20% of inhabitants ²	State expenditures for social security, % of GDP	State expenditures for education, % of GDP	State expenditures for health, % of GDP
1995	...	30	...	15.1	6.9	4.0
1996	...	28	...	14.8	5.8	3.9
1997	...	29	...	14.0	5.7	3.8
1998	...	28	...	15.0	6.9	4.1
1999	...	25	...	16.1	6.8	4.1
2000	7000	24	5.5	13.1	6.8	3.6
2001	7700	23	...	11.9	6.9	3.6
2002	8400	23	...	11.4	6.3	4.0
2003	9000	22	...	10.7	6.0	4.1
2004	9900	22	...	10.0	5.8	4.0
2005	10 900	22	6.7	9.8	6.1	3.7
2006	12 400	21	7.9	9.2	5.6	3.9
2007	14 400	22	6.3	8.1	5.8	3.6
2008	14 000	23	...	9.3 ³	6.5 ³	3.6 ³

¹ Data from the European Union's home page «Economy and finances», 2009.4.XI.

² Data from the European Union's Statistical bureau's home page «Inhabitants and living conditions», 2007.17.IX. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

³ 2008 overview of the Republic of Latvia on the implementation of the state and local government budgets.

Communications

	Cinema visits per capita	Museum visits per capita	Daily newspaper copies per 100 inhabitants	Book titles published per 100,000 inhabitants	Automobiles per 100,000 inhabitants
1995	0.4	0.5	12.4	79.2	13.4
1996	0.4	0.5	9.2	80.0	15.5
1997	0.5	0.6	13.2	95.4	17.8
1998	0.6	0.6	12.6	107.7	20.1
1999	0.6	0.6	12.4	110.9	22.1
2000	0.6	0.6	8.3	107.3	23.5
2001	0.5	0.7	9.0	107.4	25.0
2002	0.5	0.7	9.4	108.1	26.6
2003	0.5	0.7	10.8	112.0	28.0
2004	0.7	0.8	10.9	112.0	29.7
2005	0.7	0.9	11.3	103.1	32.4
2006	0.9	0.9	10.8	106.1	36.0
2007	1.0	1.1	11.4	121.6	39.8
2008	1.0	1.1	11.6	108.2	41.3

Urbanization

	Urban inhabitants, % of total population (end of year)	Annual urban population growth rate	Population in largest cities, % of all urban inhabitants (end of year)	Population in cities with more than 40,000 inhabitants, % of all urban inhabitants (end of year)
1995	68.6	-1.4	72.7	49.9
1996	68.6	-1.0	72.5	49.7
1997	68.6	-1.0	72.4	49.6
1998	68.5	-1.0	72.2	47.8
1999	68.1	-1.3	72.4	47.7
2000	68.0	-0.9	72.4	47.5
2001	67.9	-0.9	72.3	47.5
2002	67.8	-0.7	72.2	47.3
2003	67.8	-0.5	72.2	47.4
2004	68.0	-0.4	72.2	47.4
2005	68.0	-0.5	72.2	47.4
2006	67.9	-0.6	72.1	47.4
2007	67.9	-0.6	72.0	47.2
2008	67.9	-0.6	72.0	47.4

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All Chapters refer to data from the Survey on Accountability conducted in November 2008 specially for this Report by SKDS (SKDS 2008; see also the tables on pp. 183-202). Data from previous surveys conducted for earlier Human Development Reports were used for comparison.

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Box 2.4, Lawton and Rose 1991, Peters 1995, Thomas. 2003, Weber 1999; **Box 2.5**, Diena 2009, LR IZM 2009, LR KM 2001, LR MK 2009, LR VK 2009; **Box 2.7**, LR Centrālās statistikas pārvaldes un LR Finanšu ministrijas dati; **Box 2.8**, LR Centrālās statistikas pārvaldes dati; **Box 2.9**, LR Centrālās statistikas pārvaldes un Latvijas Bankas dati; **Box 2.10**, SKDS 2008, T48; 2.12. logs, Esping-Andersen 1999, Table 5.4; **Box 2.13**, SPP 1997, SPP 2005, EC 2003; **Box 2.14**, SKDS 2008 T9, TAP 2003, 25; **Box 2.15**, Huber, Maucher and Sak 2006, 190; **Box 2.16**, LR Centrālās statistikas pārvaldes dati; **Box 2.17**, LR Labklājības ministrijas dati; **Box 2.18**, LR Centrālās statistikas pārvaldes dati, LR MK 2003, autoru aprēķins; **Box 2.19**, LR Saeima. 2000 a; **Box 2.20**, VSAA 2005, VSAA 2009; **Box 2.22**, LR CSP 2008 a, VRAA 2009; **Box 2.23**, LR CSP 2008 b; **Box 2.24**, Voronovs et al. 2006, 120; **Box 2.25**, ES fondi; **Box 2.26**, SKDS 2008, T23; **Box 2.27**, SKDS 2008 T47; **Box 2.30**, Hazans, M., Philips, K. 2009. The post-enlargement migration experience in the Baltic labor markets. In: *EU Labor Markets after Post-Enlargement Migration*. Ed. by M. Kahanec and K.F. Zimmerman. Berlin: Springer, pp. 255–304, SKDS; **Box 2.31**, SKDS 2009.

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All texts of legislative acts can be found on the «Latvijas Vēstnesis» [Government Herald] legal act vortal www.likumi.lv

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