

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of youth



INFORMATION SHEET

ON

SOCIAL INCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

IN LATVIA



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Introduction

In general, *social exclusion* refers to processes that prevent individuals, groups or communities from accessing the rights, opportunities and resources that are normally available to members of society; responsible for social exclusion are often structural forces, such as: laws, public policies, institutional practices, organizational behaviours, and prevailing ideologies, values and beliefs¹. The list of young people at risk of social exclusion can be extended almost *ad infinitum*² and it includes young people with disabilities, ethnic, sexual and religious minorities, homeless youth or young offenders etc. It is important, however, to be receptive to: (i) the emergence of new groups of young people at risk of social exclusion; (ii) the local particularities of exclusion for some groups; (iii) the intersectional nature of discrimination.

The EU sees social inclusion as '*a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. Social inclusion also ensures that vulnerable groups and persons have greater participation in decision making which affects their lives and that they can access their fundamental rights*'³. Social inclusion is one of the eight policy areas underlining the cross-cutting approach of the EU Youth Strategy. It is also a key priority of the Youth in Action programme. In 2012, the Cyprus Presidency priority in the youth sector was the participation and social inclusion of young people with a migrant background.⁴ More recently, the trio Presidency (Ireland, Lithuania and Greece) reaffirmed EU's commitment by making Social Inclusion the overall thematic priority in the youth field for the period from January 2013 to end of June 2014. This theme includes accessibility to youth services and inclusiveness and emphasizes the importance of quality in the design and delivery of youth policy and provision.

In the context of rising youth unemployment, the Irish presidency proposed a 'Youth Guarantee', a policy measure aiming to give young people (< 25) a 'good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed'. In May 2013 the EU Youth Ministers will adopt Council Conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people (8575/13). A recent report by the Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Commission (Eurydice Unit) is presenting evidence from literature and surveys about the social exclusion of young people across the European Union, and how youth work can help⁵.

¹ The Institute of Social Exclusion, Adler School of Professional Psychology.

² EU-CoE youth Partnership, Research Seminar "Mobility of young people – Opportunities and obstacles for cross-border volunteering for young people, particularly with fewer opportunities" European Youth Centre, Strasbourg, 11-13 December 2011 [Online] Available at: http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYP/Youth_Policy/docs/Mobility/Research/Final_report_Volunteering_seminar_2011.pdf.

³ European Commission (2010) *The European Social Fund and social inclusion*. [Online] Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/BlobServlet?docId=166&langId=en>.

⁴ Council of the European Union (2012) *Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council on the participation and social inclusion of young people with emphasis on those with a migrant background*15652/1/12 REV 1 Brussels, 13.11.2012. [Online] Available at: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/12/st15/st15652-re01.en12.pdf>

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/20130506-eurydice-study-social-exclusion-youth-work_en.htm

For the Council of Europe, 'social cohesion' is the political concept considered essential for the fulfilment of its core values: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. In 2005, the Council of Europe produced a methodological guide for the development of social cohesion indicators⁶. It defines the social cohesion as '*society's ability to secure the long term well-being of all its members, including equitable access to available resources, respect for human dignity with due regard for diversity, personal and collective autonomy and responsible participation*' (CoE, 2005: 23). This is a comprehensive instrument that: (i) defines the strategic concepts and approaches; (ii) provides practical tools for developing questions and indicators; (iii) enables the link between measurement and policy action.

Since 1997, the CoE Youth Department is running extensive evaluations of national youth policies, based on international reviews. They include topics related to social cohesion. More recently, the Enter! Project of the Council of Europe, aims to develop policy responses to exclusion, discrimination and violence affecting young people in multicultural disadvantaged neighborhoods. Its first part (2009-2012) included a two-year training course on access to social rights, besides other activities related to gender equality in youth projects and multicultural youth work.

Social cohesion is one of the three core objectives of the Council of Europe's Youth Policy. Agenda 2020 emphasises the following priorities in the area of social inclusion of young people: (i) supporting the integration of excluded young people; (ii) ensuring young people's access to education, training and the working life, particularly through the promotion and recognition of non-formal education/ learning; (iii) supporting young people's transition from education to the labour market; (iv) supporting young people's autonomy and well-being as well as their access to decent living conditions; (v) ensuring young people's equal access to cultural, sporting and creative activities; (vi) encouraging intergenerational dialogue and solidarity⁷.

Social exclusion is a multi-dimensional concept, not reducible to economic aspects. Besides poverty, social exclusion also involves relational issues, such as inadequate social participation, lack of social integration and lack of power (Room, 1995). For instance, in the current economic climate, there are particularly worrying trends in youth unemployment and discourses on the risk of losing an entire generation are being heard⁸. But the crisis is not only economic; it is also social and political in nature, with many young people becoming increasingly disengaged or facing impediments in their access to social rights. Being migrant or of immigrant background, Roma, with an ethnic minority background, homeless, LGTB or with a disability, adds other layers of vulnerability and increases the barriers of access to services and networks of support. Social exclusion may perpetuate across generations. Tackling social exclusion often requires localised and tailored approaches.

⁶ CoE (2005) *Concerted development of social cohesion indicators. Methodological guide*. Council of Europe Publishing. Strasbourg Cedex.

⁷ Resolution CM/Res(2008)23 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe. Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 25 November 2008 at the 1042nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.

⁸ Programme of the Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union. 1 January - 30 June 2013, URL: http://eu2013.ie/media/eupresidency/content/documents/EU-Pres_Prog_A4.pdf

1. The socio-economic situation of young people

1.1 Please inform which groups of the young people are perceived as being socially excluded. What are the main factors for being socially excluded as a young person in your country?

In the Youth Policy Guidelines 2009-2018⁹ as young people at risk of social exclusion are defined:

- young people with disabilities and young people with mental development, physical or functional disorders (including young people with chronic diseases: HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C, diabetes mellitus);
- young people from poor and disadvantaged families, as well as young people with low incomes;
- young people who have not obtained primary education or obtained primary education without diploma;
- young people from rural areas;
- young people orphaned or young people left without parental care;
- young parents, young families (especially single-parent families and large families);
- unemployed young people;
- young people got into sight of police and young people – criminals, young people – prisoners and young people released from prison;
- young people who are addicted to narcotic and psychotropic substances, as well as those who have process addictions (computer games, gambling);
- young people who are victims of violence;
- Roma young people;
- vagrant young people.

In addition to the mentioned groups, within EU structural funds support activities¹⁰ young people whose parents have gone abroad for the profit seeking are identified as a socially excluded group of youth, as well.

1.2 Please provide the percentage representing the share of young people (18-24) who are at *risk of poverty* (and/or severely materially deprived and/or living in a household with very low work intensity).

Please compare it to the general population risk of poverty rate. What is the trend in your country – is the rate growing etc.?

⁹ Youth Policy Guidelines 2009.-2018: <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/view.do?id=2994>

¹⁰ See for example: <http://esfondi.izm.gov.lv/1220.html>

According to the EUROSTAT data¹¹, in the year 2012 among young people of age 18-24 20,0% are at risk of poverty. Analysing this in the context of the Baltic States, the rate of Latvia is similar to the rate in Estonia and Lithuania (respectively – 20,9% and 20,2%). Since 2007 till 2011 the rate of young people at the risk of poverty in Latvia has been increasing (from 17% to 22%), but in year 2012 it showed a decreasing trend by dropping to 20% which is the lowest rate in the last three years.

In Latvia, the overall proportion of the population at the risk of poverty was 19,4% in 2012 and over the last four years it has declined every year. Consequently, the situation of youth target group is similar to the general Latvian population. At the same time, the rate of young people at risk of poverty in Latvia is higher than in Lithuania and Estonia.

1.3 Has an impact of the current financial crisis on young people been observed in your country?

In Latvia, there has not been carried out any specific study on the impact of the financial crisis on young people, but still the youth unemployment problem has been actively discussed in the political agenda. According to EUROSTAT data¹², during crisis years in Latvia the youth unemployment rate was one of the highest among EU countries. During the past two years unemployment among young people has decreased, but it is still higher (28,5%) than the EU average (23%).

Regarding the impact of the financial crisis, NEETs may be mentioned, as well. Based on the data available in the Ministry of Education and Science, at the beginning of 2012 proportion of those who have not completed their primary school (secondary education) and do not involve themselves in education (between age 18-24 years) were 10,5%, while 7,1% were young people (aged 15-24 years) who were looking for work, but were not involved in education. According to the data of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Welfare, approximately 30 thousand young people in Latvia can be regarded as young people who do not study, do not work or do not learn profession (NEET).

The impact of the financial crisis within the youth target group could be indirectly observed in number of surveys of young people carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science. In the last five years the proportion of young people who believe that they have a large or all the

¹¹ European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, "At-risk-of-poverty rate by age group":

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tessi012&plugin=1>

¹² Unemployment - LFS adjusted series, "Unemployment rate by age group":

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tsdec460&plugin=1>

possibilities in life to gain financial success has decreased (-10%). Similarly, the proportion of young people who think that they have every opportunity to engage themselves in political activities (-9%) and opportunities to participate in political decision-making (-6%) have decreased. Also the attitude of young people towards work has changed significantly – in the post-crisis years for young people job stability is the most valued aspect of the work (+ 11%) and not so much valued are interesting work (-7%), or career opportunities (-12%), or agreeable fellow colleagues (-7%).¹³ In Latvia on regular basis annual monitoring of youth policy is carried out and in the framework of a youth survey carried out therein, young people point out issues that are considered to be the main challenges for the government of Latvia – these data suggest that during the post-crisis years young people are most concerned about labor and employment issues (approximately 1/3 indicate that as the most significant), as well as the availability and quality of education (1/4).¹⁴

2. Policy measures for young people at risk of social exclusion

2.1 Social subsistence/ protection and health cover for young people living in poverty

In 2011 the Public Health Guidelines 2011-2017 were approved; therein great importance is given to the reduction of inequalities in health, as well as to determinant social and economic factors of human behavior. Public health policy is directed to all citizens of the Republic of Latvia, regardless their gender, age, race, language or other factors. To eliminate inequalities in the health sector and to ensure equal access to health care services, various measures/ activities are implemented and partnerships and intersectoral cooperation are developed, including cooperation with municipalities, social partners and non-governmental organizations in different regions of Latvia.

In several policy planning documents developed by the Ministry of Health, children and young people are one of the priority target groups, for example – Maternal and Child Health Improvement Plan 2012-2014¹⁵, Reduction of Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages and Alcoholism Containment Action Plan 2012-2014¹⁶, Immunization Plan 2012-2014, Cardiovascular Health Improvement Action Plan 2013-2015, etc.

In accordance with the Youth Advisory Council recommendations on developing a youth information system (networking) in Latvia, the Ministry of Health created a section ‘Young people’

¹³ ‘Study on Opportunities, Attitudes and Values of Young People.’ Ministry of Education and Science, Excolo Latvia Ltd, 2012. Study report available: <http://izm.izm.gov.lv/nozares-politika/jaunatne/7989.html>

¹⁴ ‘Survey within annual monitoring about life quality of young people, participation in voluntary work, in work of youth organisations and accessibility to information current to young people.’ Ministry of Education and Science, 2010-2013. Report of the study available: <http://izm.izm.gov.lv/nozares-politika/jaunatne/7989.html>

¹⁵ <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/view.do?id=4010>

¹⁶ <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/view.do?id=4188>

on their website¹⁷ where young people can find useful information on issues related to their health – nutrition, physical activity, mental health, sexual and reproductive health, and substances and activities that cause an unhealthy addictions, etc.

During the years 2011 – 2012 the Ministry of Health financed healthy lifestyle promotion activities for children and young people on a variety of healthy lifestyle issues, such as healthy nutrition and physical activity promotion measures for elementary school pupils, educational measures about addictions of substances (tobacco, nicotine, alcohol, drugs) for secondary school pupils and vocational training institutions students, as well as educational activities on sexual and reproductive health issues for secondary school pupils and vocational training institutions students.

In 2013 the Ministry of Health has developed an informative report on including the teaching subject 'Health education' into general secondary and vocational education and training programmes. It also envisages measures for the improvement of health education promoting integrated health education, sports education and succession of human security issues. The report also stipulates that starting from school year 2015/2016 professional educational institutions will introduce compulsory health education module.

For a more active involvement of local authorities and to provide them methodological support for organizing and planning health-enhancing measures, in 2012 Guidelines for local authorities on health promotion were developed by the Ministry of Health. Good practices of other countries and recommendations for various initiatives in the areas of health promotion (healthy diet, physical activity, addiction prevention, etc.) for different age groups, including children and young people are summarized in this material.

As one of the major support forms should be mentioned the fact that for indigent persons, whose income per person in the family does not exceed 90 lats (around 128 EUR) a month, patient fees and expenditures on eligible medicines are fully compensated.

2.2 Measures to meeting the medical Care needs of Young people at risk of social exclusion

There is no specific measure directly meant for young people at risk of social exclusion, but there are varieties of medical care services available for both underage youth in general and for specific target groups of young people. For example, young people under age of 18 years are fully exempt

¹⁷ http://www.vm.gov.lv/lv/tava_veselibaj/iauniesiem/

from patient fees (as well as disadvantaged persons). 7-18 year olds have ensured state paid preventive examinations at the family doctor, dental hygienist, as well as vaccinations in accordance with the vaccination calendar.

Several policy documents developed by the Ministry of Health are applicable to specific social risk youth target group – the Tuberculosis Control Plan 2013-2015, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Infection Control Programme (2009-2013), the Guidelines on Derogation and Control of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Use and Prevalence of Addiction of These Substances 2011-2017, etc.

As one of the specific and essential medical care measures for young people at risk of social exclusion should be mentioned the teenagers' rehabilitation collective 'Saulriti' of the Straupe Addiction Treatment Hospital, which for 20 years now provides assistance for teenagers who have problems with alcohol, drugs, or other psychoactive substances. A multidisciplinary team of specialists are working in 'Saulriti' consisting of experienced and qualified professionals in the sphere, who provide opportunities for children and young people to undergo state financed high quality rehabilitation course.

2.3 Measures to re-engage the young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)

In Latvia there is no strategy or program, which is directed specifically to NEETs, but this youth target group is mentioned in several national level planning documents:

*National Development Plan of Latvia 2014-2020*¹⁸ – the document stresses the need to take measures to promote youth employment (career education, the first work experience, business start-up, non-formal education) of young people in general, although NEETs are not specifically addressed.

*EU funds programming period 2014-2020, the national level planning document 'Operational programme 'Growth and Employment' (draft)*¹⁹ – one of the priority directions of the programme is 'Employment, labour mobility and social inclusion'; and sustainable integration of young people who are not involved in employment, education or training into the labour market in the framework of the programme is put forward as one of the investment priorities. Therein active labour market policy measures are envisaged to be implemented, including vocational and non-formal education

¹⁸ National Development Plan of Latvia 2014.-2020: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=253919>

¹⁹ Operational Programme 'Growth and Employment', Ministry of Finance, 2013. Information available: http://www.fm.gov.lv/lv/sabiedribas_lidzdaliba/sabiedribas_lidzdaliba_par_es_jautajumiem/

programmes, workplaces for first-job experience, subsidized jobs for young people with disabilities; implementation of initial vocational training programmes, including vocational education programs for obtaining other professional qualification level in one school year, vocational secondary education programme for obtaining the third level of professional qualification level in one-and-a-half school year, and education programmes, which are implemented in imprisonment facilities for obtaining common learning skills, vocational training, professional development and for professional orientation measures to promote vocational training.

2.4 Measures to ensure access to decent housing for young people at risk of social exclusion

Latvia has not introduced specific support measures for housing directly for young people at risk of social exclusion, but with the state budget co-financing youth home care facilities for young people who will soon be leaving care institutions and will start to live independently have been established in more than 10 municipalities of Latvia.²⁰

2.5 Measures addressing the social integration of young people with disabilities

Professional and social rehabilitation services for people with disabilities are provided by the Social Integration State Agency²¹ caring for improvement or consolidation of health, promoting improvement of quality of life and providing meaningful leisure time opportunities. There young people with disabilities are provided with opportunities to determine professional suitability, as well as to master a specific profession or to retrain. The Agency also provides opportunities for young people to learn driving skills. Besides, several lifelong learning programmes have been implemented for socialization and vocational rehabilitation of young people with disabilities.

Within Latvian-Swiss cooperation programme in 2011 a programme for promotion of life quality and motivation of children and young people with disabilities was implemented²². One of the results of the program is created interactive social site www.sniedzroku.lv, which is a new concept in rehabilitation of children and young people with disabilities. It provides practical advices, promotes youth self-advocacy, independent living, and empowers the family as a whole.

Separate measures for social integration of young people – disabled people are regularly implemented also by municipalities and non-governmental organizations.

²⁰ Information source: <http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/1882>

²¹ <http://www.siva.gov.lv/>

²² http://www.sif.lv/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=179&Itemid=122&lang=lv

2.6 The contribution of youth work (and youth centres) to social inclusion of young people

The Ministry of Education and Science annually finances activities of youth centres and youth work in municipalities. In Latvia, with the state budget support up to 39 youth centres were established, and another 42 youth centres were established by municipalities and associations using their own resources. In 2013 it is envisaged to support at least 20 projects for ensuring work of youth centres creating or developing youth information points, and for free time activities in recreation places in centres and their adjacent areas. Besides, in 2013 the Ministry particularly supported activities of youth organizations and associations or foundations for organizing camps for children and young people for the development of their social skills, and for support of active and healthy lifestyle.²³ In 2011 as one of the support priorities was raised a support for events of youth organizations meant for young people at risk of social exclusion, where volunteer work was used as one of the ways of social inclusion.²⁴

Within new policy initiatives in 2013 the Ministry allocated additional funding for support measures for the promotion of young people's social inclusion, the aim of which is to improve quality of life of young people at the risk of social exclusion, to promote their participation in public processes and to provide opportunities to enter the labour market by developing their social skills, as well as by strengthening their healthy and active lifestyle habits (Working Group for Poverty, Social Exclusion and Inequality Reduction Proposals evaluated that this policy initiative has a direct impact on the reduction of inequality that is one of priorities of the National Development Plan 2014-2020).²⁵

Besides, in a meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia in 20 August, 2013 it is stipulated to the Ministry of Education and Science in cooperation with the Ministry of Welfare to consider the possibility to plan inter-institutional financing for the implementation of support programmes for young people at risk of social exclusion for the years 2014-2020.²⁶

²³ National programme of youth policy for 2013: http://izm.izm.gov.lv/upload_file/jepirkumi/2012/JPVP2013.pdf

²⁴ National programme of youth policy for 2011: http://izm.izm.gov.lv/upload_file/jaunatne/jaunatnes-valsts-programma-2011.pdf

²⁵ Informative report on new political initiatives for years 2014, 2015 and 2016 submitted by ministries: http://www.mk.gov.lv/doc/2005/FMZino_010813_JPI.2008.docx

²⁶ Agenda of 20 August, 2013 meeting of the Cabinet of the Ministers, protocol No. 45: <http://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/mk/mksedes/saraksts/protokols/?protokols=2013-08-20>

3 Research on social inclusion

3.1 Is there any national report/ national survey investigating the social exclusion of young people in your country, including issues of discrimination?

There have not been carried out specific studies directly on youth social exclusion in Latvia over the last five years²⁷, however, there are several studies which have direct or indirect information and data on the social exclusion of young people and/ or social exclusion risk factors and groups.

'Study on Learning Needs of Young People and Their Interests in Remote or Underdeveloped Regions.' Based on the order of the Ministry of Education and Science, Sociological Research Institute Ltd, Riga, 2010.

Available: http://izm.izm.gov.lv/upload_file/jaunatne/petijums_jauniesu_centri_apmacibas-v5.pdf

The study assessed training needs of young people; and therein young people at risk of social exclusion are identified as one of the most important target groups, for which adjusted informal learning offers should be developed.

'The Youth Policy Implementation Index.' Based on order of the Ministry of Education and Science, TNS Latvia Ltd, Riga, 2012.

Available:

http://izm.izm.gov.lv/upload_file/jaunatne/2012/TNS_IZM_Jaunatnes%20monitorings_Politikas%20indekss_2012.pdf

Within the study youth policy implementation index was elaborated, where one of the evaluation dimensions is social inclusion. Here the social inclusion is seen rather narrowly, gaining data in a survey of young people only on two aspects – self-assessment of young people on possibilities to influence decision making in their families, friends' company, the educational institution, local government and in the country in general, as well as the measurement of social capital (the extent to which young people trust people in general).

'Socio-psychological Portrait of Young People at the Risk of Social Exclusion in Latvia.' and 'Description about situation on Reducing Social Exclusion in Municipalities. Opinion of Young People, Educators, Support Staff, Administration of Educational Institutions, Responsible Representatives of Municipalities, and Parents.' Researchers at the University of Latvia in cooperation with the group of experts from other higher educational institutions of Latvia, the European Social Fund project 'Development and Implementation of Support Programmes for Elaboration a Support System for Young People at Risk of Social Exclusion', Riga, 2011.

The report on the study is available at: <http://www.atbalsts.lu.lv/uploads/f/20131004164347344.pdf>

²⁷ Several earlier studies about social inclusion are available on the web site of the Ministry of Education and Science: <http://izm.izm.gov.lv/nozares-politika/jaunatne/7576.html>, <http://izm.izm.gov.lv/nozares-politika/jaunatne/7577.html>

The aim of the study was to analyse the existing support system for ensuring educational opportunities in educational institutions for young people who are at risk of social exclusion. Issues of learning difficulties were analysed in depth within the study.

3.2 Is there any longitudinal research focused on the cumulative nature of disadvantage (taking place across generations of the same family).

Such research studies have not been carried out in Latvia. However, it should be mentioned that in 2006-2009 Latvia as one of the member states participated in the international project co-financed by the European Union 'Risk of Social Exclusion for Out-of Family Children and Young People in Public Childcare' (project coordinator – Associazione Amici dei Bambini (Italy)), the aim of which was to study social inclusion of young people, who are left without parental care, after their childcare leave. Within the study repeated interviews were carried out with mothers who lost rights for children care. Project partner from the Latvian side was the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the University of Latvia. Information about the project and the studies carried out are available at: <http://childout.org/web/the-project/>

3.3 Apart from national reports and surveys, are you aware of other research that is valuable for understanding the situation of young people (esp. those with fewer opportunities) in the current crisis?

Up to now no such study has been carried out in Latvia.

4 Examples of policy responses and practices

4.1 What are the relevant initiatives/projects at regional/ national level promoting the social inclusion of young people?

Information about the national policy documents in which issues of social inclusion of young people are activated please see in paragraph 1.3. At regional level, a number of municipalities in their planning documents defined the social inclusion of young people as one of the policy priorities (e.g., cities Tukums, Jurmala, Daugavpils, Dobele, Ogre and other).

As major national level initiatives/ projects should be mentioned the Ministry of Welfare implemented 'Youth Guarantees' and 'Workshops for Young People'. 'Youth guarantees' means that all young people aged between 15 and 25 years who have registered in the State Employment Agency during four months receive support to remedy the situation of unemployment – a job,

training or practice.²⁸ Support is implemented in two consecutive steps: 1) identification, motivating and engaging activities of NEET; 2) direct support measures for education or employment. Important partners for the first part implementation of 'Youth Guarantees' are municipalities that will provide measures of activation of potential 'Youth Guarantees' customers. Municipalities attract active institutions/ organizations from the sectors of education, employment, social protection and the youth sector, as well as social partners, thus creating strategic partnerships in order to reach NEET effectively and to facilitate their involvement in 'Youth Guarantees'. Whereas the collaboration partners of municipalities ensure the involvement of the identified NEET in short motivational programs or trainings so that NEET would want to change something in their life, including joining in the 'Youth Guarantees' activities. Collaboration partners provide support of youth mentor/ coach, psychologists, peer educators, social workers and ensure "monitoring" measures of NEET after young people become 'Youth Guarantees' client. If the young person has not completed primary education, the emphasis will be on his/ her return to the general education system financed from the state budget, as the goal is primarily to keep or attract young people to the education system who have left school prematurely or as soon as it could be done.²⁹

While the 'Workshops for Young People' envisages opportunities for 15-24 years old unemployed young people to get to know three professional areas in education institutions and in each area to work for three weeks to become familiar with their specificities and to gain the first experience that would allow unemployed young persons to choose their educational and professional sphere. Within this measure a scholarship will be provided to young people, as well as their training expenses will be covered.³⁰

From 2011 to 2013, the University of Latvia implemented a project funded by the European Social Fund 'Development and Implementation of Support Programmes for Elaboration a Support System for Young People at Risk of Social Exclusion', which aims to explore, to model, to approbate, and to evaluate a system of reducing and preventing social exclusion risks for 13-25 year olds in 15 municipalities, in order to reduce the risks of social exclusion and to reduce the number of young people who leave school early and do not continue education, as well as to promote their professional education and employment. Within the project several studies have been carried out, projects for the reduction of social exclusion in municipalities were developed, as well as the Program for Reducing Social Exclusion was developed.³¹

²⁸ Information source: http://www.lm.gov.lv/upload/aktualitates2/konf_25072013lm.pdf

²⁹ Information provided by the Ministry of Education and Science.

³⁰ Report on the implementation of political priorities of the Ministry of Welfare in 2012-2013: http://www.lm.gov.lv/upload/ministrija/prioritates/lmpriorit_2012_2013_atask.pdf Additional information about 'Workshops for Young People': <http://www.nva.gov.lv/index.php?cid=2&mid=29&txt=3182>

³¹ Project web site: <http://www.atbalsts.lu.lv/>

Many projects addressing social inclusion were implemented within the programme 'Youth in Action', for example, in the city Liepaja, such as the following projects 'The Development of Creative Skills as a Tool for Social Inclusion among Young Inmates of Liepaja Prison' and 'Include Your Will Power', in the city Daugavpils – project 'Say NO to Youth Unemployment', in city Lielvarde – project 'Training with Games for Young Prisoners' and other.³²

Since 2012, in cooperation with the Latvian local authorities, support for socially important projects and measures is provided by Latvian Mobile Telephone JSC organizing a project tender 'LMT for Latvia'. Within this support measure, for example, the creative youth home 'Ceplis' (*Limeklin*) was established, which aims to promote the social inclusion of vulnerable young people in social life of the city Valmiera, in the city Ventspils support has been granted for children and youth thematic events, etc.³³

4.2 Have young people and civil society organizations been given political and financial support to be involved in the policy making process on social inclusion?

At national and international level, opportunities of young people to engage themselves in the policy-making process are provided within a structured dialogue process (the national working group for the implementation of the structured dialogue is chaired by the representative of the society 'Latvian Youth Council').³⁴

In Latvia the society 'NEXT' in cooperation with the Ogre Youth Club 'Project workshop' and with the youth club 'Dems' adapted and introduced a method 'Coffee with Politicians', the main objective of which is to promote mutual dialog between youth and decision makers (parliamentarians, local government officials, heads of institutions), consequently ensuring young people's participation in the decision-making process at local level.³⁵ Besides, certain local authorities support local youth organizations that ensure young people's participation in discussions and decision-making by implementing projects for young people at local level (for example, city Daugavpils implemented a project in 2011 'I Want to Know and to Participate', aim of which was to promote the involvement of young people in decision making process on issues important for young people and to promote their involvement in solving problems of young people by informing municipal youth policy makers about current youth problems and offering solutions for

³² Information about programme: <http://www.jaunatne.gov.lv/jaunatne-darbibas-programma-jaunatne-darbibas>

³³ Information source: <http://www.lmt.lv/lv/preses-relizes?pid=566>

³⁴ Information about structured dialogue in Latvia: <http://izm.izm.gov.lv/nozares-politika/jaunatne/lidzdaliba/7681.html>

³⁵ Information about activity: <http://izm.izm.gov.lv/nozares-politika/jaunatne/lidzdaliba/7699.html>, <http://www.nextyouth.org/coffee-with-politicians/>

solving these problems³⁶; and municipality Stopini has elaborated the Development Programme for Working with Young People 2013-2015³⁷, etc.).

Informing young people and their networking is ensured by the Internet portal jaunatneslietas.lv managed by the Ministry of Education and Science, where young people are provided with information on opportunities to participate in decision making, as well as it provides discussion, communication and networking possibilities.

In 2007, the Social Inclusion Policy Steering Committee was established in the Ministry of Welfare. Its aim is to promote coordination of the social inclusion policy implementation, monitoring, and improvement. This Committee deals with issues related to poverty, income inequality and social exclusion in the country, provides proposals for elaboration and improvement of policy planning documents in the field of social inclusion policy, ensures the exchange of information on the unfolding social inclusion issues, for example, the new legislative initiatives in different sectors, good practice examples, etc. The Social Inclusion Policy Coordination Committee consists of representatives from line ministries, regional development agencies and non-governmental organizations, the Latvian Central Statistical Bureau, the Social and Employment Matters Committee of the Saeima, the Chief Order Police Administration of the State Police, as well as social partners.³⁸

4.3 Have youth organisations and other civil society organisations been involved in the development of the policies related to social inclusion of young people

In Latvia there has not been developed a separate social inclusion policy directly for young people; young people are one of the target groups for social inclusion policy in general. At the same time, it should be mentioned that during Irish, Lithuanian and Greek Presidency broad consultations and discussions with young people and policy makers on the social inclusion of young people were organised in Latvia. Based on findings and information of these consultations, a national report of conclusions and recommendations was elaborated for the European Union. For information about youth organizations and civil society involvement please see paragraph 3.2.

³⁶ Information source: <http://www.dnd.lv/News.aspx?qid=m8625>

³⁷ Information source: http://www.stopini.lv/upload_file/JAUNIESI/JP_dokuments_2013-2015.pdf

³⁸ Information source: <http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/706>