

**Annual National Review (ANaR) on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VNF-IFL)
on the national context**

ANaR Report Year 1 - 2008

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I. The general situation regarding VNF-IFL

Points to consider	Your text
<p>1. National strategy:</p>	<p>In Latvia there is not yet a unified management and monitoring system of Lifelong learning and APEL created. Higher education establishments are active in LLL provision but each of them offers different forms and content of continuing education. Prior education and work experience so far has not been recognized, not to speak about evaluation, validation, accreditation and credit transfer. The pressure to increase the provision of continuing education has been growing. Partnership among the HE institutions in Latvia has not been strong enough. National Qualifications Framework is ready since 2005 but it is not yet approved by the Government. There is no legislation to back up these new tendencies in Latvian higher education area. National Government at the time being is trying to stop the Lifelong learning development processes due to the shortage of funding. Latvian non-formal adult education centres are very weak; they lack local governments' support because of the reform of Latvian administrative system of local governments which will be finished in the summer of 2009.</p> <p>The policy planning documents under the competence of the Ministry of Education and Science are developed but only one has been accepted the Government: "Basic Guidelines of Lifelong Learning Policy for 2007–2013". It was developed by the Ministry of Education and Science, the Latvian Adult Education Association, four regional development agencies and Riga, the Capital. However, this Policy</p>

	<p>document does not include APEL / VNF-IFL and sources of funding of LLL and APEL. National programme “Development of Lifelong Learning Strategy” is still under development. The process of its development is lead by the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Governments and connected to the National Development Plan. A Working group meets once a month and works on the Strategy. Vidzeme University College has a representative in the Working group. Lifelong learning management system and APEL are the 2 main issues.</p> <p>All planning documents are developed by the Ministry of Education and Science in cooperation with all the actors involved in adult education “Basic Guidelines of Lifelong Learning Policy for 2007–2013” were developed in cooperation with representatives from the Adult and Vocational Education Association, Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Workers, Latvian Employers’ Confederation, Latvian Association of Municipalities, Latvian Rectors’ Council, Council of Higher Education, Higher education institutions, Latvian Teachers’ Council. The process is very slow. It is more active at the local and institutional (Universities, adult education centres, local governments) level. There are regional and local LLL strategies developed (4 regions and Riga). However, during the development process, there was little coordination between the regions, so at the time being we have 5 quite different regional strategies.</p> <p>www.nap.lv National development plan www.muzizglitibavisiem.lv /lifelonglearningforall.lv/ All the policy documents concerning LLL.</p>
<p>2. main responsibility for VNF-IFL, regulations, monitoring and evaluation models:</p>	<p>The two main actors involved in the development of LLL and the adult education system so far were the Ministry of Education and Science and the Latvian Adult Education Association. The Association has established a network of non-formal adult education centres. Several other ministries are also involved, especially ministries dealing with the labour market and employment. Recently Latvian higher education institutions have created a formal network to have a legal representative in those processes. The network gets a lot of support from the Higher Education Council and the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Governments. The financing of adult education comes from various sources. According to the data collected from a number of universities, the largest sum of money for adult education so far came from the European Union and state budget (through the Ministry of education). LLL activities are also financed by either participants themselves or their employers. The contribution from local governments is very small. Other resources include donations, gifts, grants, sponsors (banks, big corporations, like Microsoft, etc).</p> <p>It is a fact that Latvia lacks official, institutional or governmental agreements that co-ordinate lifelong learning policy. A big step forward in improving the situation is the new document “National Policy on Lifelong Learning 2007 – 2013”. Key principles of the National Policy on Lifelong Learning are: Accessibility for all, Supply according to the needs, Sustainable management. The latter reflects the development of management system that operates on the principle of shared responsibilities and creates a management body that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is responsible for coordinating adult education (formal and non-formal) • provides help for education establishments • ensures that supply meets the demand • carries out quality control, and • works on recognition of the results of non-formal education. <p><u>This system has not yet been created.</u> This is where higher education institutions want to be seriously involved. The <u>higher education institutions should have main responsibility for APEL</u> in Latvia.</p>

Cooperation and networking were not part of Latvian educational landscape until recently. Higher education institutions' Lifelong learning/adult education centres/associations have established a **Network VALDEMARS**. Its main goal is to propose an innovative LLL and APEL model for Latvia "e-Portfolio". e-Portfolio will be the main system to control the learning process, to provide quality, validation and accreditation according to certain criteria, as well as the credit point accumulation and transfer from university to university and from non-formal to formal education. Later when the system is ready, non-formal adult education organizations and vocational schools will be invited to join. They will have to meet certain quality criteria strongly set by the e-Portfolio system. Assessment, quality, validation and accreditation will be set by certain criteria and therefore within the system will be accepted by all the higher education establishments.

The Ministry of Education and Science is the national authority that is responsible for the strategy of adult education (AE). Accordingly, it supervises the activities that are carried out in regions under the auspices of regional and local municipalities. In order to consolidate the AE system with the existing system of education in Latvia, the Ministry initiated amendments to the Education Law envisaging AE as a constituent part of life-long education system in Latvia. The Ministry also initiated amendments to the Higher Education Law. There is but one little chapter in the Law, stating that higher education institutions can be involved in LLL. The amendments are to be adopted in 2008.

Quality management is also supposed to be performed by the Ministry of Education and Science. Two procedures are envisaged for the quality management of adult in-service training and further education of adult learners. Courses that offer 160 hours of learning are accredited at the The Ministry and are accepted all over the country. Shorter educational programmes are accredited by the local governments. This system is supposed to monitor adult education on the local level and assure quality. In fact, it does not work because quite often local governments are not interested in programme contents, lecturers involved, and learning / teaching conditions. They have a tendency to accredit the programmes based on the inspection of formal documents.

Legislation regarding Adult Learning in Latvia

- **Education Law** from October 29, 1998 (section 49) regulates adult education programmes. The **amendments to the Law** of 1 June 2001, in particular Article 46, stipulate the procedure of implementation of non-formal adult education programmes. In the most recent draft amendments to the Education Law, adult education is seen as a constituent part of overall educational system in Latvia. The adoption of the amendments is expected in 2008.
- **General Education Law** from June 10, 1999 regulates general secondary education. There is no specific section for adults, but adults are allowed to acquire general secondary education and receive the same documents as full time students. The regulation No. 383 (2000) of the Cabinet of Ministers "On vocational qualifications which are acquired by passing centralised qualifying examinations" came into force in September 2001.
- **Professional Education Law** from June 10, 1999 determines types of vocational programmes. Amendment in the Law on Vocational Education aims to define the relationship between the content of initial vocational education programmes and of further / continuing vocational education programmes.
- **Law on Higher Education** from November 2, 1995 regulates formal education for adults. To ensure the process of lifelong learning higher education institutions are providing part time / distance education and continuing education courses.
- In February 2007 the Government accepted "**National Policy on Lifelong Learning 2007 – 2013**". The long-term goal of the

	<p>document is to ensure education throughout the whole of life according to the interests of citizens, as well as their abilities and the socio-economic development needs of the particular region.</p> <p>The Government did not adopt a proposed Law on adult education. It has been decided that Latvia integrates adult education within the “ordinary” Laws: the Law on Education, but more specific items within the Professional Education Law, General Education Law and Law on Higher Education Institutions. National programme “Development of Lifelong Learning Strategy” is still under development.</p> <p>http://www.aip.lv/kocept_doc_att-kocep.htm Education development strategy 2007. – 2013. gadam:</p> <p>http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=37967&mode=KDOC Law on Higher Education</p> <p>http://www.aic.lv/rp/Latv/PROT/20060829/20060714_ail_projekts_iesniegtais.doc Law on Higher Education with the amendments containing lifelong learning</p> <p>http://www.izm.gov.lv/default.aspx?tabID=18&lang=1&id=1356 Lifelong learning strategy</p> <p>http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=50759&mode=KDOC General Education Law</p> <p>http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=20244&mode=KDOC Professional education Law</p> <p>http://www.nap.lv/lat/ National Development Plan</p>
<p>3. Sectors:</p>	<p>According to the JAVAL Questionnaire 2006, there are validation processes present in Latvia. Validation is practiced in third sector, formal AE and in working-life. Formal AE institutions in Latvia are Crafts schools, Vocational education institutions, Evening schools, State and Private Universities. There is programme accreditation and certification that is carried out in formal education. Each school according to its status can choose the steps of validation that it will carry out. The Centre of Professional Education has also developed the criteria for non-formal validation process, but adult education providers do not have obligation to observe the criteria. As mentioned above, institutional / governmental agreements and co-operation is weak. General and social competencies gained in non-formal and informal learning are mainly validated. They are validated by formal AE institutions or employers. Validation is possible for formal students, adult learners registered as students. The validation of competences refers to the Standards of formal education. Traditional methods used to make the competences visible: Interview / Observation / Tests / Group work / Seminars / Written assignments, Self-evaluation, group feed-back and feed-back from teacher/leader.</p> <p>Recently employers start influencing the development of validation models declaring their needs. The third sector has its own requirements, so it is also influencing the process. Who pays for the development of validation work both in formal and non-formal education? EU-funding / Nordic funding / EEZ and Norwegian financial instruments. As for non-formal AE providers (Professional Associations, NGO’s, libraries, Private / municipal adult education centres), their programmes also should be accredited either by the Ministry of Education (>160hrs) or by the local governments. Certificates / diplomas issued by these organizations often are not accepted by other education institutions, especially Higher education institutions.</p> <p>Formal accredited academic or vocational programmes at the Latvian HE are recognized both nationally and internationally. Latvian higher education institutions practice credit transfer from one institution to another. The Latvian credit point system is also compatible</p>

	<p>with ECTS. The number of ECTS credits is calculated by multiplying the number of Latvian credit points by a factor of 1.5. According to Latvian legislation state recognized diplomas / degrees / certificates may only be awarded upon completion of an accredited programme in an accredited educational institution. To ensure the quality, the programmes have to go through quality assessment, which includes self-evaluation, peer evaluation and experts from Western Europe. A very positive aspect is that more and more countries are introducing the Diploma Supplement, thus helping the qualifications to be recognized throughout Europe. As another example, every year Vidzeme University College produces self-evaluation reports and there is also an external evaluation from the Ministry of Education and Science.</p> <p>As for the recognition of the diplomas and certificates of non-formal education, there is still a lot of work to do. There is still an opinion that formal education is much more valuable than non-formal. Actually what people value is not the contents of education but the diplomas and certificates they receive after completion of training at certain schools. Very valuable learning takes place both at universities and other AE institutions. The aim is to be able to measure this value, as well as to integrate competencies acquired in non-formal settings into the qualifications acquired in the formalised settings. However, the higher education institutions should and hopefully will have main responsibility for APEL in Latvia.</p>
4. Terminology:	<p>Lifelong learning – <i>mūžizglītība</i>; an educational process throughout all life which is based on acquiring new knowledge, skills and experience, in order to increase or change one's qualification in compliance with the requirements of the labour market, one's own interests and needs.</p> <p>Non-formal education – <i>neformālā izglītība</i>; education acquired outside formal education system;</p> <p>Informal education – <i>ikdienas mācīšanās</i>; gaining skills, experience, knowledge outside any school in one's everyday life (reading, TV, internet, etc.)</p> <p>Validation - <i>novērtēšana</i>; appraisal, appreciation, assessment, valuation, estimation, evaluation</p>
5. NQFramework:	National Qualifications Framework is ready since 2005 but it is not yet approved by the Latvian Government.

II. Impact of Validation

6. Impact on individuals	<p>Most impact VNF-IFL has on individuals. At the time being they are academic mainstream students or adults involved in non-formal education at HEI. They have started to accumulate CP's acquired and hope the process will not stop. At the moment, validation and accreditation of NF-IFL for admission to the HEI is impossible without formal educational qualification (diploma or certificate).</p> <p>Credits acquired during courses / modules taken at HEI are impossible to accumulate for whole programme/ degree. Only as :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fulfilment of part of the programme /degree • Modules and Single subjects for personal development
7. structural and institutional impact:	<p>1) Processes of development of VNF-IFL have had an impact on HEI. They have started to think about diversification of the educational institution, more flexible curricula, more student mobility, new assessment methods, Curriculum development and learning outcomes, module based programmes, staff development and training.</p>

	<p>2) They have had impact on legislation (point 2); governmental organisations (point 9); on the negotiations between social partners (point 9).</p> <p>3) They have probably the lowest impact on staff qualification and training strategies within companies since Credits acquired during courses / modules taken at HEI are impossible to accumulate for whole degree yet and the employers more require personnel with skills and experience rather than CP / certificates / diplomas.</p> <p>4) In the long run the processes will affect adult education sector dramatically (mobility, flexibility, individual learning paths, etc).</p> <p>5) Increasing need for:</p> <p>5.1. Latvian Qualifications Framework (except for Professional Qualifications) to be accepted.</p> <p>5.2. Assessment criteria for non-formal and experiential learning, for guidance and information materials.</p> <p>5.3. Working out common principles and system for LLL, APEL for HE, VET, Qualifications system</p> <p>5.4. Development of APEL / VNF-IFL system for HE, VET through e-Portfolio.</p>
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III. Your analysis of the national situation regarding Validation

<p>8. Stakeholders' engagement:</p>	<p>1 to 5: Very Low to High?</p> <p>I would you rate the average stakeholders' level of interest in my country regarding the VNF-IFL as low. Apart from the reasons mentioned in point 11., there are some others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is still an opinion that formal education is much more valuable than non-formal; • What people value is not the contents of education but the diplomas and certificates they receive after completion of training at certain schools; • Big employers have an opinion that LLL is not important; • This is also the Governments attitude – there are a lot more important things that adult education; <p><u>Which stakeholders in particular are very interested?</u></p> <p>Latvian Adult Education Association, Latvian Higher Education Institutions network, Ministry of Regional Development and Local Governments National Development Plan working group, Regional Development Agencies;</p> <p><u>Which ones are not so/ not at all interested?</u></p> <p>Ministry of Education and Science could be more supportive and more coordinating;</p> <p>Most of the employers, most of the local governments (because of the local government reform in 2009);</p> <p>Lifelong learning and APEL processes are developing because <u>of some enthusiastic people</u> from Latvian Adult Education Association, Latvian Higher Education Institutions network, Ministry of Regional Development and Local Governments, Ministry of Education and Science.</p>
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9. Debates-discussions:	<p>There have been a lot of discussions between and all the institutions involved in adult education, in particular the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Governments, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Welfare, Latvian Adult Education Association, Latvian Higher Education Institutions network, Regional Development Agencies, other adult education providers, local governments and individual stakeholders. These discussions have been and are still continuing concerning LLL management model, APEL and VNF-IFL system model.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meetings of the above mentioned actors once a month at the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Governments through 2008; www.nap.lv • Regular work of various working groups and presentations of different models from the beginning of 2008 through the spring led by Latvian Adult Education Association; Final conference of the possible models in June 2008; www.laea.lv • Meetings of Latvian Higher Education Institutions network, possible models design; • Recognition of prior learning in higher education, International seminar and workshops, 16 – 17 November 2007, Vidzeme University college. All Latvian regional universities participated.
10. Research and VNF-IFL:	<p>www.muzizglitibavisiem.lv /lifelonglearningforall.lv/ This is the main database of LLL research projects; www.laea.lv Latvian Adult Education Association homepage. Also contains links to LLL research projects.</p> <p>In recent years several relevant research projects have been carried out. Here are some examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Possible models of the development of Latvia until 2030. Carried out by the work group led by prof. R.Kilis, 2007 http://www.latvija2030.lv/upload/lias_pamatzinojums.pdf 2) LAEA initiated study Accessibility of Lifelong Learning and Educational Opportunities in Latvia, 2007 3) Towards Lifelong Learning: Policy development of Lifelong Learning in Latvia, LAEA, 2007 4) Survey of the EU impact on employment and social security in Latvia: Ministry of Welfare, 2003. 5) Possibility of social exclusion and its causes in groups of high-risk unemployment, Ministry of Welfare, 2003 6) Influence of the Staff Professional Development Course in a Higher Education: Institution as a Learning Organization by prof. Dainuvīte Blūma, University of Latvia. Published in: Humanities and Social Sciences, 2007 7) The paradigm shift in higher education in Latvia in the context of the Bologna process, by prof. Dainuvīte Blūma, University of Latvia, 2007 8) Accessibility of Lifelong Learning and Educational Opportunities in Latvia , BISS, 2006 http://www.laea.lv/UserFiles/File/petijums.doc 9) JAVAL Questionnaire2006: developing models of validation, policy and practice in different countries throughout the EU. 10) Comparative analysis of lifelong learning in Scandinavian countries, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. <i>Jonas Sprogoe. The Danish University of Education. Copenhagen, March 2003</i> <p>The above mentioned papers are used as sources of reference for policy development in adult education, social inclusion, social integration and social security related sectors.</p>
11. Problems/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic crisis in Europe and the world affects the processes dramatically. The Government is cutting funds for lifelong

difficulties, and resistance:	<p>learning and APEL at very level;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organizations / institutions at the grassroots understand the importance of the processes and are initiating new systems and models. These activities are mainly financed by the EU programmes;• Building new systems only with the EU or other sponsors' money without the Government help may affect sustainability;• There is still very weak institutional cooperation and coordination. There should be more cooperation between Latvian Higher Education Institutions network and Latvian Adult Education Association. The latter sees a threat in Latvian Higher Education Institutions network development;• Danger of lowering academic standard;• Rigidity /resistance of academic staff.
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