



## “What means Lifelong learning in Latvia”.

On August 21, 1991 Latvia declared the restoration of its *de facto* independence. Since 2004 Latvia is a member state of the European Union. The population in 2007 was 2,270,700. Ethnic composition was: 59.03% Latvian, 28.29% Russian, 3.74% Byelorussian, 2.53% Ukrainian, 2.4% Polish, 1.36% Lithuanian, 0.45% Jewish, 0.01% Livs, 2.19% other nationalities.

According to the established educational system in Latvia, the supervising authority for ALE is Ministry of Education and Science (MES). The system of LLL nonetheless extends over to other sectors and ministries, municipalities, higher education institutions etc. The specific needs and requirements of individuals are taken care of by a network of private and non-governmental educational institutions and undertakings that are run on private funding, and some of them are profit oriented.

The LLL system in Latvia includes: pre-school education, basic school, vocational and secondary education, higher education and adult education (AE). Adult education includes all types of formal, non-formal and informal education including further and interest education, professional upgrading and in-service training. It is provided to satisfy the needs for lifelong education, to support personal development and competitiveness in the labour market regardless of person's age and previous education.

LLL is based on a person's inner need or external factor raised necessity to acquire and improve one's knowledge, skills and competencies. Nowadays to be more adaptive to rapid economic and social changes, not to lose one's job, to remain socially and economically active, it is necessary to improve constantly one's knowledge, skills and competencies.

After the restoration of independence Latvian Adult Education Association was founded in 1993 and afterwards the AE network has been established. The concept of LLL appeared in 1996, when European Commission designated this year as the "European Year of Lifelong Learning". People in Latvia as well as everywhere in the world have used the expression - you learn as long as you live, it has mainly meant learning from experiences, the values that have been passed from generation to generation. Deep changes started with the discussions about the ideas included in “**Memorandum on Lifelong Learning**” worked out by the European Council (2000).

Since then the basic principles of LLL have been formulated in line with relevant European documents concerning the primary role of LLL for general progress and welfare. The basic guidelines of LLL in Latvia have been developed on the basis of strategic, political and other kinds of planning documents. The concept of adult learning and education has been included in the general concept of education, as one of the stages of a LLL process. Thus adult learning is a part of an all-age-groups-inclusive approach from early childhood to late years of adulthood.

In 2007 “**Basic Guidelines of Lifelong Learning Policy for 2007–2013**” have been elaborated defining main target groups and their needs: people without the elementary education and with low level of basic skills, people with special needs, and people with economically little activity who are bounded to the household, people who have already retired and pre-pension aged people. In this document three key strategic issues for development of LLL policy in Latvia have been formulated: to improve availability and accessibility to AE, to promote the quality of AE, to set up financing and responsibilities.

To solve these problems Action plan has been elaborated in 2008.

Ingrida Mikisko, Director of LAEA