



EUROPEAN MEETINGS OF
PEOPLE
EXPERIENCING
POVERTY



LISTEN TO THE EXPERTS OF POVERTY, EXCLUSION AND INEQUALITIES

Strengthening the engagement of experts by experience in poverty in the social field and in the field of education

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION RESULTS

Topic: Education and access to education

The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) since 2001 organizes an annual conference in Brussels, which brings together people experiencing poverty and the European delegates, making it possible for people experiencing poverty and for their representatives to personally meet with the officials from the European Union institutions, and thus to participate in the decision-making process.

In order to prepare the Latvian delegates – experts by experience in poverty – for participation in 2018 PeP conference, which took place in Brussels on November 7th and 8th, as well as to clarify the problems faced by people in different regions of Latvia, the EAPN-Latvia network has held three discussion meetings: on August 2nd in Riga, August 16th in Dobele and September 12th in Sigulda.

The officials from public administration institutions, the University of Latvia, local governments, municipal social services and other municipal institutions, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations took part in these discussion meetings with local residents, carried out under the guidance of four experts from the EAPN-Latvia network: Elina Alere-Fogele, Iveta Valeine, Madara Porike and Janis Stjadja.

Summarizing the results of these three discussion meetings, the EAPN-Latvia puts forward the following theses:

Main conclusions regarding education and poverty

- The education should be free of charge at all levels; the investment of the state budget in education should be considered an investment in people instead of budget expenditures;
- At all levels and in all areas of education, the educational programs should be aligned with the labour market demand; the cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Science and the State Employment Agency should be promoted;
- It is necessary to politically solve the problem of ensuring an adequate income level for everyone (adequate wages and pensions, an organized system of social benefits, support for people with disabilities).

Preschool education

- The geographical accessibility of preschool educational institutions, especially in rural areas, should be ensured by maintaining the existing network of kindergartens, as well as by creating new educational institutions with the support of local governments;
- Preschool educators should be paid adequate wages that will motivate them to provide quality education to children;
- The transition of the entire Latvian education system to studying in Latvian only should be carried out from the basic level (preschool education); it is necessary to no longer provide the preschool education in Russian, so that children upon starting school education are able to fully master the educational material in Latvian.

General education

- It is necessary to create an education system where all the resources that are necessary for general education – study materials and supplies, activities (field trips) and meals – are provided to all the students free of charge;
- It is necessary to ensure an equal access to quality education for all Latvian population, mainly by motivating teachers with relatively high wages; the State should subsidize regular teacher development (training);
- The children should be able to get an education as close as possible to their place of residence (especially in rural areas); a sufficiently wide network of schools should be created for this purpose;
- An individual approach should be provided to each student, especially to children with learning difficulties and behavioural disorders; for this purpose, schools should create classes with fewer students;
- General education programs should be created for the development of children's real-life skills, cooperation skills and awareness of health issues, as well as for reducing the technology dependence;
- The participation of parents and students themselves in curriculum development should be supported;
- It is necessary to support the study of other cultures to increase the tolerance of society.

Early leaving from education and training (ELET)

- The motivation of children and young people to receive education should be encouraged by raising their awareness of the role of education in adult life; the compulsory secondary education must be determined by law;
- Attention should be paid to reducing the level of peer violence in schools, especially if the reasons for this are rooted in social problems; it is necessary to develop in students an understanding and sympathetic attitude towards socially vulnerable groups;

- At the state level, the attention should be paid to the inclusion of the Roma nation into the education system;
- Support should be given to the parents so that they can motivate their children to learn and provide them with education.

Professional (vocational) education

- At the state level, it is necessary to develop opportunities for vocational education, both by increasing the number of professional educational institutions, especially in the regions of Latvia, and the number of educational programs offered;
- At the state level, it is necessary to align the vocational education programs offered with the labour market demand for specialists of certain professions.

Higher education

- An access to free higher education for all Latvian residents should be set as a long-term goal;
- For graduates of higher educational institutions who received education at the expense of the state budget, a certain period of time should be established for which they are expected to work by the acquired profession in Latvia;
- It is necessary to solve the problem of access to state-guaranteed student loans, especially for young people from low-income families;
- It is necessary to introduce the system of adequate scholarships that allow students to cover the additional costs associated with education (accommodation, food);
- Factors distorting the higher education system should be prevented (for example: when young people choose study programs where they can study at the expense of the state budget or for the lowest possible tuition fee, however, after completing their education, they don't work by the acquired profession).

Interest education

- The state / local governments should provide the widest possible range of interest education training sessions;
- It is necessary to raise public awareness and motivation of children regarding the importance of interest education, thereby contributing to the progress of children and young people in general education and to their competitiveness;
- It is important to develop a network of educational institutions for interest education so that children can have access to classes as close as possible to their place of residence;
- During school summer holidays, it is necessary to additionally organize the educational camps on interests, by participating in which one could master the most important life skills.



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Adult education. Lifelong learning

- It is important to evaluate the effectiveness of the use of state budget funds on the educational programs for adults that are organized by the State Employment Agency and the compliance of these programs with the labour market demand;
- An access to adult education programs that are organized by the State Employment Agency should be provided to all interested parties (by reducing the waiting time – queues);
- It is necessary to promote the retraining of adults in accordance with the labour market requirements, including getting the “second chance” education; the range of the educational programs offered should be expanded;
- Senior citizens should be provided with programs that promote their social integration and the development of technological skills that meet the requirements of real life (foreign language courses and computer training); the existing best practices provided by the non-governmental organizations, local governments and enterprises should be promoted.

Access to education for people with disabilities

- It is necessary to develop more relevant educational programs for children and young people with disabilities;
- It is important to develop the educational opportunities for adults with disabilities and free training programs and consultations regarding the business area;
- It is necessary to ensure the accessibility of educational infrastructure for people with disabilities.

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