



**Convention on the Elimination  
of All Forms of Discrimination  
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**

**Information received from Latvia on follow-up to the  
concluding observations on its combined fourth to seventh  
periodic reports\***

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



1. On 10 February 2020, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (the Committee) adopted the Concluding observations on the combined fourth to seventh periodic report (the Report) of the Republic of Latvia (Latvia) on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (the Convention) (the Concluding observations) ([CEDAW/C/LVA/CO/4-7](#)).

2. The present document contains the follow-up information in response to the Committee's questions as contained in paragraph 49 of the Concluding observations regarding recommendations in paragraphs 16 (a), 24 (b), 26 (b), and 42 (a) of the Concluding observations.

**I. As to the recommendation contained in paragraph 16 (a) of the Concluding observations ([CEDAW/C/LVA/CO/4-7](#))**

3. In paragraph 16 (a) of the Concluding observations, the Committee invites Latvia to: “[..] (a) [a]dopt a comprehensive gender equality strategy and involve women's organizations in the design, implementation and evaluation phases thereof; [..].”

4. Latvia informs that on 17 August 2021, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted the *Plan on the Promotion of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men 2021–2023*<sup>1</sup> (the Plan). The aim of the Plan is to ensure an integrated, targeted, and effective policy that promotes equal rights and opportunities for women and men. To achieve this goal, three lines of action were set:

(a) Equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the labour market and education;

(b) Prevention of domestic violence and gender-based violence;

(c) Strengthening gender mainstreaming in sectoral policies.

5. In the context of equal rights and opportunities in the labour market and education, the Plan focuses on several measures for raising awareness and promoting the discussion on gender pay gap, issues related to work-life balance between sexes, as well as fighting segregation in education and labour market by encouraging young people to choose careers beyond gender stereotypes. In this context, the Plan also foresees a requirement to review and assess the strategies and policies currently implemented to ensure equal rights and opportunities in labour market and education, and to improve them, if necessary.

6. As for the prevention of domestic violence and gender-based violence, the Plan foresees training activities for professionals who are involved in supporting victims and perpetrators of violence; prevention measures, including informative campaigns for young people focusing on issues related to violence, including domestic violence and gender-based violence; as well as an obligation for the authorities to conduct an assessment of further policies that ought to be implemented to prevent domestic and gender-based violence.

7. As for gender mainstreaming in sectoral policies, the Plan includes several measures for strengthening the rights of women and men with disabilities in gender equality policies, e.g. monitoring of gender equality policies; educational measures for State administration experts and officials of local governments on issues related to gender equality and its promotion in sectoral policies; promotion of gender equality in the artificial intelligence; and ensuring the development of legislation promoting equal rights and opportunities for women and men.

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<sup>1</sup> Available in Latvian at: <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/documents/7168>.

8. The Plan was developed by the Ministry of Welfare in consultation with other ministries, public administration organizations, social partners, and different non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as the Resource Centre for Women “MARTA”, the Latvian Association for the Cooperation of People with Special Needs “SUSTENTO”, the National Youth Council of Latvia, the Women’s Rights Institute, the Network of Cooperation of Non-governmental Organisation of Latvian Women, amongst others.

## II. As to the recommendation contained in paragraph 24 (b)

9. In paragraph 24 (b) of the Concluding observations, the Committee invites Latvia to: “[..] (b) [a]dopt a comprehensive law on gender-based violence against women; [..].”.

10. Latvia informs that the Latvian domestic legal framework foresees a comprehensive and flexible legislation for the protection against violence.<sup>2</sup> In this context, it should be noted that the Latvian domestic legal system is based on the monism doctrine, according to which obligations stemming from international law, including the Convention, are directly applicable in the Latvian domestic legal system. Moreover, the provisions of the *Constitution of the Republic of Latvia* ensure the right to respect for private and family life and the prohibition of inhumane and degrading treatment, torture, including physical and emotional violence. These provisions are directly applicable, and the rights deriving from those provisions must be implemented and taken into account in all decisions adopted with respect to potential and existing victims of domestic or gender-based violence at all levels of domestic authorities and courts in Latvia.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, as noted in the Report, the prohibition of violence, including violence against women, is also introduced in several sectoral laws.

11. Furthermore, Latvia draws the Committee’s attention to the fact that, in 2021, amendments to Article 250<sup>59</sup> of the *Civil Procedure law* entered into force, thus expanding the list of provisional measures against violence that can be adopted by courts before and after the submission of a claim by the victim of domestic violence. With the amendments, an obligation for the perpetrator to complete a social rehabilitation course for reducing violent behaviour was introduced in the list of provisional measures. This measure is imposed by the court in order to prevent and mitigate further risks of violent behaviour. In addition, Article 250<sup>59</sup> of the *Civil Procedure Law* was also supplemented with a provision that allows the court in the decision regarding the imposition of a provisional measure against violence – an obligation for the perpetrator to leave the dwelling where the victim is permanently resident – to state that the perpetrator is prohibited from alienating or transferring the dwelling, hindering or disturbing the use of the dwelling, or worsening the condition of the dwelling regardless of whether the perpetrator is the owner, possessor, or user of the dwelling. Lastly, a new paragraph 5 was introduced in Article 250<sup>59</sup> stipulating that if within the proceedings on the application of provisional measures against violence the interests of a minor or a person with a restricted capacity to act are affected, the court is to send the decision on provisional measures against violence to the Orphan’s court and social services.

<sup>2</sup> The Report, paras. 35–68; The Common core document of the Republic of Latvia for 2002–2016 (the Core document), para. 102.

<sup>3</sup> The Core document, para. 178; The Replies of the Republic of Latvia to the list of issues in relation to its second periodic report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights scheduled for the 68th session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR/E/C.12/LVA/RQ/2), para. 2.

12. The statistics obtained from court cases where the perpetrator has already been convicted indicates that 56 women have suffered violence in 2020, 41 women in 2021, and 5 women in 2022.<sup>4</sup>

### III. As to the recommendation contained in paragraph 26 (b)

13. In paragraph 26 (b) of the Concluding observations, the Committee invites Latvia to: “[...] (b) [i]mprove procedures for the early identification, in particular at State borders, and referral to appropriate services of victims of trafficking, in particular girls, and enhance victim and witness protection and support services, including by extending the current maximum protection period of 180 days, regardless of a victim’s ability or willingness to cooperate with the prosecutorial authorities; [...]”.

14. Latvia informs that the Ministry of the Interior, other institutions and organizations have implemented several measures for the early identification of possible victims of trafficking in human beings at State borders. Overall, the measures have been implemented in three directions: improvement of both the regulatory framework and the methodologies for the early identification of possible victims of trafficking in human beings, and strengthening of the knowledge and expertise of State officials.

15. In addition, on 30 April 2020, the Ombudsperson requested the Prime Minister to ensure that appropriate actions are taken in order to improve regulatory framework in the field of prevention of trafficking in human beings. Consequently, the development of a new, comprehensive law that would also tackle issues regarding the early identification of victims of trafficking in human beings at State borders was discussed. The aforementioned law is currently being drafted by the Ministry of the Interior. Likewise, it must be noted that in March 2019, the Ombudsperson’s Office began a long-term project “*The implementation of effective surveillance and expulsion process (stage 1)*”.<sup>5</sup> The aim of the project is to ensure the conformity of the process of monitoring forcibly expelled persons with the *Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union (EU) of 16 December 2008*. Within the project, the Ombudsperson’s Office prepared methodical materials for the identification of the victims of trafficking in human beings, including during the process of expulsion. In addition, a training cycle on the recognition of trafficking in human beings within the process of expulsion was implemented for specialists, including the officials of the State Border Guard. Moreover, officials from the State Border Guard continue to participate in a training programme “*Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Human Beings. Instructor Training Program*”, which includes guidelines for officials on identifying victims of trafficking in human beings (see para. 93 of the Report).

16. In 2020, the Ministry of the Interior, the Riga International Airport, the Joint Stock Company “*airBaltic*”, the “Shelter “Safe House””, and the Resource Centre for Women “MARTA” signed a memorandum on the cooperation in the fight against trafficking in human beings. The memorandum aims to improve the efficiency of the mechanisms implemented to prevent trafficking in human beings, including by identifying potential victims of trafficking in human beings during flights, at the airport, or during State border crossings. In 2021, the memorandum was also joined by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and a workshop related to prevention of trafficking of human beings and early identification of its victims was organized.

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<sup>4</sup> Up until 15 February 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Available in Latvian at: <https://www.tiesibsargs.lv/lv/pages/petijumi-un-publikacijas/projekti/pmif>.

17. As regards the period of 180 days for the social rehabilitation services ensured to the victims of trafficking in human beings, Latvia informs that this period has not been extended. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the social rehabilitation services can also be received by persons who have been recognized as victims of trafficking in human beings regardless of their ability or willingness to cooperate with the prosecutorial authorities. Namely, the status of the victim of trafficking in human beings can be assigned not only by the State police, but also by the commission of specialists established by the service providers, consisting of at least one social worker, psychologist, and lawyer, as well as other specialists. Thus, irrespective of whether the victim of trafficking in human beings cooperates with the prosecutorial authorities, the social rehabilitation services are still available to them.

18. According to the statistics provided by the State police and the commission of specialists mentioned above, in 2020, there were in total 48 victims of trafficking in human beings identified in Latvia, of which 34 were men and 12 were women; two of them were minors. In total, 38 of those victims were involved in forced labour, 10 in sexual exploitation, and one person – in forced sham marriage. In total, 17 out of the 48 victims were Latvian nationals, but the rest were Tajikistani, Indian, or Uzbek nationals. Altogether, 41 out of the 48 victims were exploited in Latvia. In 2021, there was in total 61 victim of trafficking in human beings identified in Latvia, of which 49 were men and 12 were women. In total, 53 out of the 61 victims were involved in forced labour, 7 in sexual exploitation, and one person in forced sham marriage. In total, 59 out of the 61 victims were Latvian nationals, but the rest were nationals of either Russia or China. Altogether, 56 out of the 61 victims were exploited in Latvia.

#### IV. As to the recommendation contained in paragraph 42 (a)

19. In paragraph 42 (a) of the Concluding observations, the Committee invites Latvia to: “[...] (a) [e]nsure that women and girls with disabilities are specifically included in all laws, policies and programmes related to gender equality and to disability and that affirmative action measures are incorporated, in consultation with the representative organizations of women and girls with disabilities, into all such laws, policies and programmes; [...]”.

20. Between 2021 and 2027, two short-term policy planning documents will establish the framework for the development of policies on equal rights and opportunities for people with disabilities: the *Plan for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities for 2021–2023*<sup>6</sup> (*Equal Opportunities Plan 2021–2023*) (approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on 10 August 2021) and a subsequent plan for the period between 2024 and 2027, which will replace the current *Equal Opportunities Plan*.

21. The aim of the *Equal Opportunities Plan 2021–2023* is to promote the development of an integrated support system that meets the needs of persons with disabilities. The *Equal Opportunities Plan 2021–2023* addresses cross-sectoral issues in five courses of actions:

- (a) Improvement of the disability assessment system;
- (b) Development of the support measures system aimed at the needs of persons with disabilities;
- (c) Strengthening of an inclusive work environment and labour market;
- (d) Ensuring access to the environment and services;
- (e) Reduction of stereotypes and prejudices.

<sup>6</sup> Available in Latvian at: <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/documents/7167>.

22. All five courses of action are aimed at strengthening the equal opportunities of persons with disabilities, both women and men. The *Equal Opportunities Plan 2021–2023* also envisages an intention to involve public in discussions on disability-related issues and to reduce stereotypes, including by organizing at least two thematic discussions on this topic per year. For the selection of topics and content of the discussions, the Ministry of Welfare closely cooperates with the representatives of different NGOs and other social partners. One of the topics planned relates to the rights, needs, and opportunities of women and girls with disabilities in today's society.

23. During the next seven years (2021–2027), with the financial assistance from the EU Structural Funds, support will be provided to various target groups at risk of discrimination, including women and girls with disabilities. Funding will be provided for projects organized by the NGOs that represent the interests of persons with disabilities, to implement measures that provide support and services in various spheres of life, such as employment, education, and training, and to help in receiving information regarding the available support.

24. Awareness raising on disability issues is an essential condition for reducing stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes. Therefore, the *Equal Opportunities Plan 2021–2023* foresees the development of different trainings, discussions, seminars, and provision of informative materials on various disability-related issues; for example, access to the public environment and buildings, the role of women and men with disabilities in modern society, and inclusive education and employment, which will be available to the wider society.

25. Analyzing the statistics on the number of women and men with disabilities in the last 5 years, it can be concluded that there are no significant differences in the number of persons with disabilities by gender. On average, 52% of the total number of persons with disabilities are women, and 48% are men. The number of children with disabilities does not tend to increase rapidly – 4% of the total number of persons with disabilities. There are slightly more boys with disabilities than girls.

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