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Baltic region overview of progress towards EFA since Dakar

Tatjana Koke
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2006 EFA MONITORING REPORT – COMMISSIONED STUDY

Baltic region overview of progress towards EFA since Dakar

The start of education reform in all three Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania was assured just after regaining independence by the adoption of the Education Laws in very early nineties.

The Framework for changes in educational systems in the Baltic countries is based on goals, values and relationships particular to the building of a 21st century Learning society, and posits basic principles for education: Humanism, Democracy, Commitment to National Culture, Plurality, and Renewal. Changes in perception of the human meaning and value-oriented purposes of education were stated in legislation and regulatory documents demanding innovations in professional practices at school.

The Dakar World Forum on “Education for All” served as an encouragement for implementing initiatives to provide quality education for all in Baltic States.

The report discusses common and individual experience of Baltic countries in the implementation of the Dakar Framework of Action: Education for All. Our countries most probably to the wide world look very similar, yet they all three have different language, history, cultural traditions and experience of democratisation.

Yet, human desires are universal enough. Every child wants to be safe, to be cared for, to explore and discover. Adults all over the world and in every society want to be competent, have sense of belonging, job and hope for future of their children.

These are simple and proper desires, but need a lot of common efforts on governmental, society and individual level to satisfy.

It requires some imagination and an exercise of conceptual thinking to believe that any document, especially an overarching, global one, can have relevance to all the trials and hopes of our countries. Yet, the Dakar Framework of Action is, in fact, relevant to each of our countries, perhaps because it is based on combination of insights that are grounded in both human innermost emotions and upon the inevitable global changes.

1. Cite evidence within the Baltic region to demonstrate progress or lack of progress towards each of the EFA goals since 2000 in a quantitative and qualitative terms?

Analysing EFA Dakar goals there is a full ground to talk mostly about progress in Baltic countries. Namely, movement toward the goals of Education for All within 2000-2005 is characterised by the following evidences:

Goal 1. Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

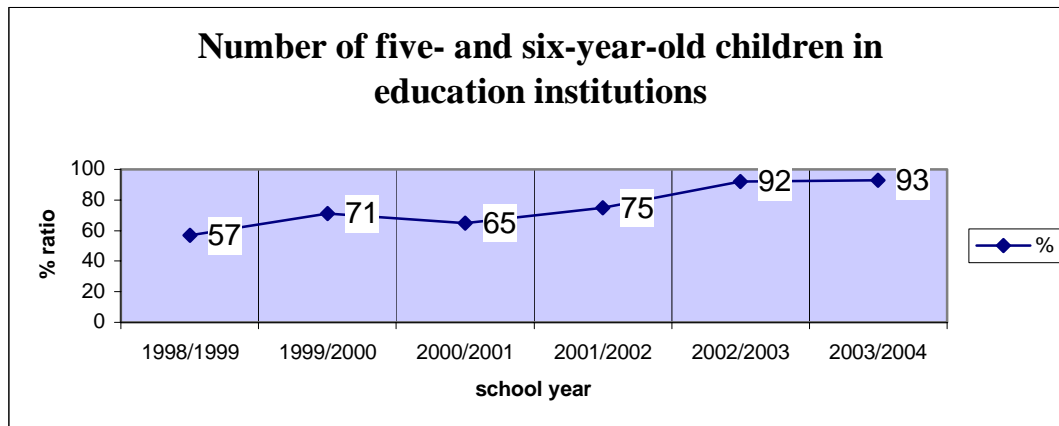
- Net enrolment rate in pre-primary education in all three Baltic States demonstrates positive increase.

Net enrollment rate in the age group of 3-6, %

(Sources 13;1)

	2000./2001	2001./2002	2002./2003	2003./2004
Lithuania	54,2	56,3	59,5	60,3
Latvia	54,6	59,9	61,5	79,5

In Estonia 74,6% of children at the age of 3 attend preschool child care institutions and the majority of children in preschool establishments are of the ages of 5 and 6 – 83%. There is a difference in responsibility for children school preparedness in Latvia and Estonia. In Estonia this responsibility lies on parents but it is reported that either because of parents workload or being a family at risk (the amount of which are growing due to economical and social reasons e.g. in 2001 34,7% of Estonian children lived in families the income of which was below the minimum means of subsistence per family member) they are not coping adequately with the task. Therefore there is a discussion on a decision to make compulsory education for one year before school. In Latvia in 2002 the implementation of compulsory preparation of five- and six-year-old children for the acquisition of basic education, provided by the Education Law, was started and number of 5 and 6 year old children increased considerably (see table below).



(Source 4)

It should be noted that in Baltic countries child care allowance is paid until child reaches age of 3 and one parent is paid parents' salary until child reaches age of 1, the amount of money is insufficient and parents prefer to place their children in preschool establishments and return to work.

After year 2000 an orientation to include children with special needs in preschool education has been focus in Baltic countries. In Estonia in 2003 special groups for children with special needs were formed in 60 kindergardens and 2 nursery primary schools. 47% of children with special needs in preschool age are included in child care institutions. This trend is similar to all three countries and it gradually helps to develop open and positive attitude for integrating children with special needs into society, thus providing equal opportunities.

- The number of students with special educational needs who have been included in regular schools has increased. In Estonia since year 2000 to 2004 the increase is from 2,5% to 3%. By way of illustration a table is included that shows that majority of pupils with special needs in Latvia are enrolled in basic education in grades 1st to 9th.

General special schools and classes, enrolment and number, 2002/2003 in Latvia

Enrolment	14434
Of which:	

Preschool	4379
Classes 1-4	3458
Classes 5-9	5666
Classes 10-12	931

(Source 13)

In order to achieve that all children irrespective of the degree of a development disorder and health condition could acquire education in any education institution, special education institutions are being reorganized, special education classes are opened in general education institutions, and children with medium serious and serious mental retardation or with several serious development disorders are integrated into special and general education institutions. A special basic education programme for pupils integrated into general basic education and general secondary education institutions is implemented for pupils with impaired vision, for hearing-impaired pupils, for pupils with mental development disorders (with slight mental retardation – A and B levels, dg. F 70), for pupils with scoliosis, somatic diseases, for pupils with language disorders, psychoneurotic diseases, mental development delay and difficulties to learn. The main objectives of the programme are to provide possibilities for the acquisition of special basic education according to pupils' health condition and development level in order to ensure the maximum possible correction and compensation of a development disorder or disease for widening possibilities of inclusion into society.

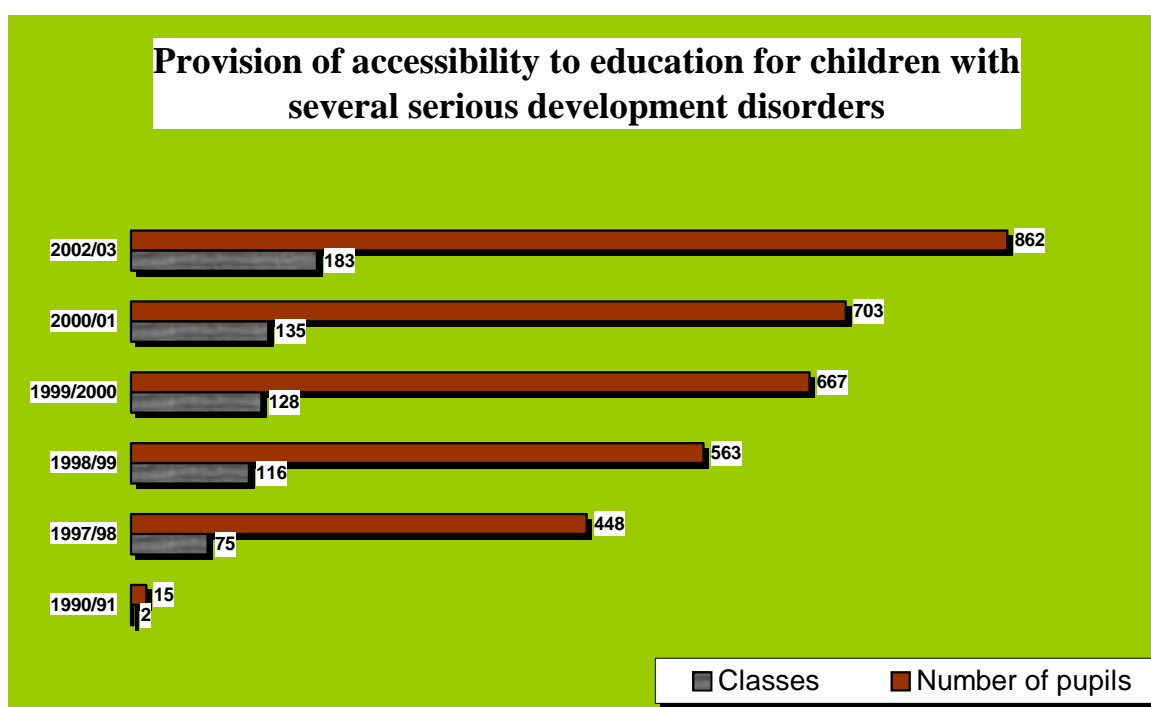
Thus, in Latvia in 29 general educational institutions students with different health impediments are integrated into study process. In 34 general educational institutions there are specialized classes for students with special needs. In vocational educational institutions there are 43 correction groups for those students, who were not able to accomplish basic education.

Number of special education institutions and educates in Latvia

School year	2003/04	2002/03	2001/02	2000/01
Number of education institutions	63	63	63	63
Total number of educatees in grades 1 - 12	9,822	10,055	10,169	10,250
Number of educatees with special needs % from the total number of pupils	3.14	3.09	3.01	2.97
Total number of educatees with mental development disorders	5,574	5,670	5,860	5,860

The number of educatees with physical and mental development disorders integrated in general education institutions	1,785	1,663	1,287	1,223
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(Source 4)



(Source 4)

Education of all children with special needs is financed from the state budget. The state guarantees all tax, transport and other allowances for persons with mental and physical development disorders in order to provide them with an opportunity to improve their health, acquire general and partly vocational education. Earmarked subsidies from the state budget are granted to local governments for maintaining children with mental and physical development disorders in sanatoriums-boarding schools and in special boarding schools, for remuneration of pedagogical staff, for payments of social tax and for compensation of transport costs to pupils of these schools.

Goal 2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

Accessibility of basic education in terms of distance and financing is rather adequately solved in all three countries. State and municipal expenditure on education is almost constant - around 6% of GDP.

Statistics on net enrollment rate in the level of compulsory education in two Baltic countries shows that Lithuania succeeds better than Latvia and there is no adequate information about those who do not comply with compulsory school attendance.

Net enrollment rate in primary education (level1), %

	2000./2001	2001./2002	2002./2003	2003./2004
Lithuania	96,8	96,1	95,4	95,3
Latvia	88,4	88,2	84,8	84,4

Net enrollment rate in lower secondary education (level 2), %

	2000./2001	2001./2002	2002./2003	2003./2004
Lithuania	93,4	94,4	94,9	95,7
Latvia	80,6	85,5	88,7	87,9

(Source 1;13)

Quite disturbing factor is the increasing number of students who have terminated basic school studies. E.g. in Estonia 0.69% of the total number of students drop out. The greatest number of them is recorded in the third stage of basic school, amounting to 3% of the total number of students. In Estonia due to the existence of help and support systems for pupils with special needs the result is a decrease in the number of them who need to retake a class in comparison with 2000. For children with a mild and moderate cognitive disability opportunities who cannot cope with their learning tasks in time an opportunity to prolong the study period in basic school level up to 1-3 years has been created in order to guarantee a smooth transition from basic education to the next educational level – vocational education.

The tendency in Latvia is that in general full-time schools amount of drop-outs is 3% , but the biggest amount of drop-outs is in primary education (grades 1-4). Due to considerable amount of decrease of pupils in this stage (2001./2002 – 11374; 2002./2003 – 9389) , the amount of drop-outs 2551 in 2002./2003 seem considerably high. From total amount of drop-outs in general full-time schools in 2002./2003 (grades1-12) 9282, the greatest share 4354 are in grades 5-9.

Lithuania does not analyse data from that perspective.

As to number of girls in educational institutions the following picture appears in Latvia and it is characteristic for all Baltic countries. Namely, from the total number of enrollment in general full time schools (312489 – 2003./2004), male prevail in preschool, elementary school and basic school. As to secondary education (level 3) in total male prevail, but within this level in general education female exceed male whereas in vocational education male prevail. Stable characteristic feature is observed on the level of tertiary education where the increase of female over male is approximately for 40%, esp. in university education. Within the gender context tendencies in drop-outs show that much more boys drop out from schools and all three countries have a problem with the quality education for boys. Taking into consideration the fact that pupils even in the same age range become more and more heterogeneous because of social and financial differences, questions of attendance are viewed more through socialization prism than didactical one. Namely, strengthening pupils' sense of belonging at school has become of utmost importance due to growing disparities and inequality. Teachers put more and more efforts to differentiate teaching approaches in order to meet each pupil's individual development. We can mention several good examples where change of attitude on behalf of teachers from a demand-oriented to need-oriented approach has been witnessed. As a

result in comparison with the middle of nineties the amount of “ street children” has decreased for more than thirty percent (data from Latvia: 1998/1999 – 3932; 2000./2001 – 2607). We regard it as a considerable educational success because school environment has become more friendly to pupils with different interests and levels of achievement.

- Decreasing the number of factors hindering studies due to social background has become more important: free study materials for students from risk families, free school meals from 1st to 4th grades in Estonia, in Latvia from 1st to 9th grades, providing places in state-supported student homes and developing a support network of counseling systems as well as transportation. Besides family allowances are awarded to all families with children. The amount of family allowances depends on the number of children and child's order in the family. Family allowances are paid till a child reaches 15 years of age or maximum 20 years of age, if one still studies in school providing general education and is not married.
- The situation with immigrants is different in Baltic countries but it is true for all of them to say that no sound model for involving immigrant children in the study process of comprehensive schools has been established.

Goal 3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.

The developments on goal 3 are mostly characterized with the help of examples from Latvia.

- For youth and adults who do not have basic education opportunities have been created to continue their education. Every year the state commission to vocational schools for organising vocational pre-studies and acquiring basic education is increasing. The number of students in basic education evening courses and distance learning groups has increased considerably. Data in Latvia show that in comparison with 1999 in 2003 the number of students has increased for 10% (from 13 517 to 14 869). The amendment in Law on General Education made on October 31, 2002 envisages a situation, when finishing form 9, those students who don't have satisfactory marks in three or more subjects, instead of a basic school certificate get a school-report, which gives them a opportunity for acquisition of basic education by the age of 18.

In the beginning of 2003-2004 school year 9.5 % of 9 form with school reports were repeatedly included in the basic school programme, basic pedagogical correction educational programme or vocational education programme, however 3.2 %, students do not continue studies and most probably find difficulties to enter the labour market. The above mentioned figures show that level of students performance has not always been satisfactory and therefore the reform on content of education has been implemented (see more in goal 6, p.10). When planning accessibility of vocational education, students with unfinished basic education, finished basic education with insufficient assessment, graduates from special education institutions, the imprisoned in penal institutions have been included in priority target groups. Considerable attention has been paid to accessibility of vocational education to students with special needs. 295 children with disability group two or three acquire different types of professions in 34 vocational education institutions. The creation of separate learning groups for children with special needs has been started in vocational education institutions.

- Educational institutions get support for the activity “Pedagogical correction programme or rehabilitation programme and course development and implementation”. Using the model of pedagogical correction programme of basic education 31 general education institutions worked out their own educational programmes including there those students who, having passed the whole basic education course, finished form 9 with school report and are not 18 yet. Social correction education programmes refer to minors with socially deviant behaviour, they provide an opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for continuation of education and for independent life in society. The programmes are implemented in a social correction education institution or in a social correction class in a general education institution. Compared to the school year 2001/2002 the number of social correction classes in general education institutions has increased by nine, and the number of students in these classes has increased from 1,499 in the school year 2001/2002 to 1,537 in the school year 2002/2003.
- In Latvia General Education Law also provides that penal institutions ensure opportunities for students up to the age of 18 to acquire basic education programmes. The Ministry of Education and Science in cooperation with the Prison Administration, and utilizing foreign aid, organizes vocational education of students in penal institutions. After the acquisition of education programmes, prisoners have an opportunity to take qualification examinations and receive state recognized documents confirming a professional qualification. 304 prisoners in penal institutions were involved in the acquisition of general education in the school year 2002/2003, but in the school year 2003/2004 – 400 prisoners. As of 1 September 2003 all compulsory education age prisoners have been involved in general education activities.

Goal 4. Achieve a 50 % improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for woman, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for adults.

The question of adult literacy in Baltic countries should be considered in light that during soviet period secondary education was compulsory , adult education system functioned quite widely and successfully, illiteracy was eliminated and this achievement has still its positive impact. During the independence period since early nineties a new type of adult education system was established in Baltic countries which in addition to job related training also focused on popular education. Evening schools, vocational and higher education institutions and universities provide more and more learning opportunities for adults. Nevertheless, it should be admitted that people with education lower than basic school as well as people with low income much less get involved in adult education than more educated and well off inhabitants. The target group that has been lately much focused on is young women on maternity leave. They are working on regaining their qualification and competence. Most frequently they apply for computer courses, language studies and occupational retraining.

The development of information technologies, progress of science and technology, development of new professions, competition in labour market – all that determines that learning is a necessity presented by life itself, and it is an integral part of any person’s

life. The provision for further and continuing education, mastering of new professions, training of unemployed for their involvement in labour market on high enough level is extended from year to year. Due to efficient use of allocated financial resources coming from state budget, municipalities, different foreign foundations and projects Adult education centres in Latvia in 2004 have managed to provide education opportunities for 216521 offering 5081 educational programme and allocating Ls 11 576 486 .

According to the survey data made in Estonia in 2001, 13% of the people at the age of 15-74 (around 130 000 people) were involved in different type of educational activities. The percentage of adult learners for the last ten years remains practically the same.

The tendency of aging population is common to all three countries and it becomes increasingly more important for older generation to stay longer active in labour market and consequently, in education as well.

In Lithuania making use of Grundtvig activities there is an attempt to prepare older generations for active roles in the new intercultural landscape and also to help people update their completed education with new technological skills. At present, 35 Grundtvig projects are being carried out in Lithuania. These reflect the diversity of the adult education field. Priority is given, to education problems engendered by social exclusion. Five projects are directly related to employability issues. The long-term Strategic Guidelines state that “during 2003-2012 we must create access to varied formal and non-formal adult learning modules that meet labour market demands, cultural needs, and the challenges of civic life.”

Goal 5. Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieve gender equality by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

In addition to information given within the context of goal 2 (see p.5) table on enrolment of educational institutions by level of education in Latvia in 2003./2004 may serve as an illustration for gender issue.

Number of persons Of which	Total	Female	Male
Pre-primary educ.	60715	289338	31777
Basic educ.(level1)	92453	44428	48025
Basic educ.(level2)	169438	81988	87450
Of which			
General educ.	168159	81705	86454
Basic vocational	1279	283	996
Second.educ.(level3)	105544	52244	53300
Of which			
General educ.	66746	37229	29517
Vocational educ.	38798	15015	23783
Non-tertiary (level4)	6712	4587	2125
Of which			
General educ.	384	160	224

Vocational educ.	6328	4427	1901
Tertiary educ.(level5)	126231	78643	47588
Of which			
Higher non-univ.	37055	21670	15385
Higher univ.	89176	56973	32203
Tertiary educ.(level6)	1425	830	595
TOTAL	562518	291658	270860

(Source 13)

In Latvia a draft Programme for the Implementation of Gender Equality 2005-2006 has been submitted to the Government in 2004. One of the sub-goals of this Programme is to build, in compliance with the gender equality principle, notions of women's and men's roles at work and at home at all levels of the education system, and to raise public awareness on gender equality issues. The Programme notes that in the field of education, on the one hand, it is necessary to approach the public at large in order to promote the change of the inculcated stereotypes. On the other hand, attention should be paid to teaching aids and education of pedagogues whose understanding of the significance of gender mainstreaming into education work should be strengthened. It is important that pedagogues deliberately and/or indeliberately did not cultivate gender stereotypes and that they showed children behavioural models in a comprehensive way, and that they allowed children themselves to choose their own behavioural models. In order to implement all that, the following tasks have been foreseen for the time period of 2005 to 2006:

- revise the content of education programmes and methodological materials, and include topics about the analysis of gender roles and stereotypes in them;
- include gender equality issues in further education programmes of teacher training and additionally provide the development of methodological materials for teachers;
- mainstream gender equality issues into curricula of social sciences and pedagogy; prepare informative materials on gender mainstreaming for pedagogues.

Goal 6. Improve all aspects of the quality of education and ensure their excellence so that recognized and measured outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

- As the level of attainment as well as amount of drop-outs and repeaters can hardly be regarded as satisfactory, there is a constant tendency for improving study environment in Baltic countries. In this concern changes in the national curriculum on the level of basic education have created flexible opportunities for schools to organise studies for the students based on abilities and interests.

Common trend is the reform of basic education content and unified examination system. The reform envisages the following:

- inclusion of up-to-date themes and practical ideas and skills (key competences),
- integration and harmonization of content , eliminating duplications,
- turn over from acquisition of information to implementation of it.

To ensure the acquisition of initial education and basic skills, which will enable young people to continue their education in the secondary school or in vocational education institutions, standards of basic education with corresponding goals and objectives have been elaborated. The models of compiling and implementing individual curricula have been improved so the students are guaranteed studies corresponding to their abilities and a smooth transition from one level of education to the next.

- The maximum size of class in basic school has been decreased to 24 students in a class which enables an individual approach to each student in school practice and active inclusion of all students in studies more than before
- To raise citizens' awareness and participation special efforts towards linguistic development and diversity several programmes to foster the learning of foreign languages on all levels of education are being successfully implemented.
- Teaching national language to non-native children has become more effective. In 2004 a political document was prepared about the organisation of studies for the children of new immigrants and migrant workers in Estonia. The educational model of the organisation of studies for new immigrants has been developed. In Lithuania the directive requires provision for the children of migrant workers' and Roma to receive free and compulsory education at the same level as children of citizens. In addition, children must be taught the language of the host country, Lithuania, and, in cooperation with the country of origin, and an attempt must be made to provide the child with opportunities to study his mother tongue. Luckily, the European Social Fund provides support for classes set up for the teaching of background culture and language for children of migrant workers. This support for children helps integrate the entire family into the community while remaining close to their roots. (see more on p.18)

In Latvia one of the priorities in 2002 was the development of an education policy for ethnic minorities. When implementing the requirements provided in the Education Law, the following transitional periods have been observed:

- a transitional period of three years has been foreseen for the implementation of education programmes for ethnic minorities in basic education. As of 1 September 2002 pupils of basic school (grades 1 – 9) learn in two languages;
- as of 1 September 2004, starting with grade 10, pupils acquire no less than five subjects in Latvian within education programmes for ethnic minorities. The acquisition of subjects in an ethnic minority language can be provided up to 2/5 of the total lesson load within a school year.

In the school year 2004/2005 in grades 11 and 12, and in the school year 2005/ 2006 in grade 12 no less than three subjects shall be acquired in Latvian, but as of 2007 the content of state examination papers will be in Latvian. Education in a different language can be acquired in private education institutions.

Specialists of the Ministry of Education and Science in cooperation with the Advisory Board on Ethnic Minority Education Issues have developed a *Support Plan* in order to help education institutions prepare for transition to studies in the Latvian language. In 2003 meetings with the management of each education institution, which will implement an education programme for ethnic minorities in grade 10 as of 1 September 2004, were organized; regional meetings with heads of these institutions also took place.

As of 1 September 2004 ethnic minorities in Latvia who attend state and local government budgetary education institutions, have a guaranteed opportunity to acquire part (up to 40% of the total curriculum) of subjects, included in general secondary education programmes for pupils of ethnic minorities of grades 10-12, in an ethnic minority language. Improvement of knowledge and skills of a native language, the acquisition of issues related to the relevant culture and ethnicity will be provided through education programmes and interest-related education activities.

Evaluating the development process of the education policy for ethnic minorities objectively, it should be concluded that the opportunities provided for pupils of ethnic minorities to learn in the state language and in a language of an ethnic minority in secondary schools established by the state and local governments in compliance with requirements of regulatory enactments, is a well considered step to promote integration of the society of Latvia and to ensure rights of ethnic minorities provided and guaranteed by international instruments. In accordance with requirements of regulatory enactments, founders of private education institutions choose a language of instruction for a respective institution and provide the acquisition of Latvian.

- Participation in international comparative studies (1999-2001) IEA civic studies and since 2003 IEA mathematics and natural sciences comparative studies TIMSS (2003) is another proof of raising Quality of education. In 2003 Estonian general education was very successful in TIMSS comparative studies – Estonian students (Source 9)

were in 8th place in mathematics according to countries (in 3rd place among European countries) and in 5th place in natural sciences (Estonia achieved the highest score among European countries).

The analysis of results of students international assessment programmes for OECD countries shows that the quality of education in Latvia substantially grew better in 2003 comparing with 2000 in all assessment domains (reading skills, computers, mathematics). The growth of the Latvian students' average attainment is mainly caused by the fact that the results of those very students regardless they come from urban or rural schools, who had shown low results before, became better.

E.g. in 2000 95 % of the Latvian students gained minimum 288 points and three quarters of them - minimum 393 points, in 2003, accordingly 95 % of the Latvian students attained minimum 339 points and 75 % of them - minimum 424 points. 5-10 % of better

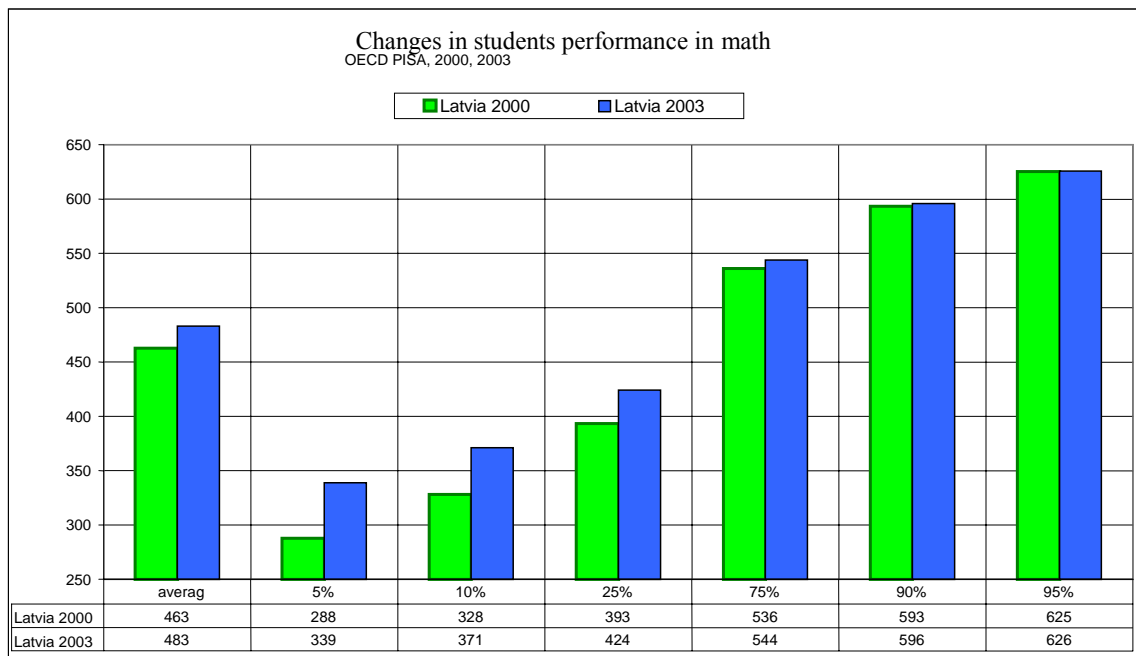
students' attainments didn't change substantially (correspondingly 625 and 626, 593 and 596 points).

- Considerable success has been achieved in providing schools with computers and permanent Internet connections. E.g. in Latvia in 2004 for 16 pupils a computer is provided where as in 2000 32.3 pupils got access to one computer. In 2002 97% of schools had dial-up connection to the Internet and 44% had a permanent connection while in 2004 permanent connection has increased to 60% of schools. All Estonian schools have computers and permanent internet connection. There is approximately 1 computer per 20 students and 1 computer per 6-8 teachers.

2. Analyse the regional patterns and progress towards the six EFA goals. Are there any sub-regional variations or specificities?

Along with citing evidences on EFA progress in Baltic countries regional patterns have been mentioned in majority of cases. Just few addition comments made by country representatives (T.Kivirand, V.Vebraite) may be relevant. Namely, Improving quality education in Lithuania the following competencies are encoded within the national curriculum:

1. Living well in a **democracy** requires a new moral compact between citizens, an understanding of and a willingness to take up personal civic responsibility. Living in a democracy requires us to reject the idea of ideological monopolies of any sort.
2. Living well in a **free market economy** requires a deeply ingrained sense of solidarity and ethics, as well as a willingness to build, take risks, trust one's partners, extend and demand honesty.
3. Living well with **globalization** with their trickle-down dangers of cultural and linguistic diffusion requires a natural enjoyment of learning about others and acceptance of human diversity as well as a joyous and unshakable sense of self, of religious and national identity entrenched in childhood and commitment to strengthening one's cultural traditions and one's homeland.
4. Living well in the **information explosion** requires access to and familiarity with all the uses of information technology as well as a subtle sense of its shortcomings, an ability to



‘turn off’ meaningless noise in one’s life, to choose from an endless stream of information that which is necessary for today.

5. Living well in a **time of rapid political, economic and social change** requires the self-confidence and the ability to think critically, to keep learning all of one’s life, shift workplaces and even careers without undue stress, to react swiftly to one’s changing circumstances while remaining confident in one’s innate values and convictions.

6. Living decently in our time with its frightening evils of **poverty and social isolation** requires compassion and a sense of justice, as primary in each of the actions we take.

Projects to innovate schools primarily on shaping participatory democracy have been actively started in Estonian schools. Discussing current educational issues has become public, involving all interest groups. In 2003 the Ministry of Education and Research initiated the Educational Program School of the 21st Century the purpose of which was to create opportunities for all students for acquiring quality education corresponding to their abilities independent of the student’s place of residence, nationality or social background. The program prescribes significant changes in all areas of general education. Among them:

- To have places in kindergartens for at least 90% of children aged 3-6 by 2008.
- In the 3rd level of basic school the school drop-out rate will not reach 1% and the number of children who have received an extension for fulfilling compulsory school attendance shall decrease from 2.5% to 1.5.
- 60% of children with special developmental needs shall be included in kindergartens. The percentage of students with special needs in regular schools shall increase – 14.4% of students with special needs shall study in a regular school.
- Opportunities shall be created in each county for acquiring basic and vocational education at the same time. Shaping a studying community, i.e. the orientation of all parties connected to school and lifelong learning.
- By 2009 95% of teachers shall have the required qualifications.
- The proportion of teachers aged 30 and younger shall increase.
- The average ratio of the salary of a young qualified teacher to the GDP is close to the average of the European Union countries – in 2008 0.85.

In Latvia in 2002 the implementation of compulsory preparation of five- and six-year-old children for the acquisition of basic education, provided by the Education Law, was started. The normative basis was established, requirements for education and qualification of pedagogues (higher pedagogical education with qualification of preschool teaching) were defined. In order to implement pre-school education programmes, the following activities have been carried out: a sample of pre-school education programme has been developed (It covers: Personality development, Socio-affective and physical development, Development of intellectual skills, Development of creativity, Adaptation of school life, Practice of the state language), a list of compulsory documentation and material basis has been provided in order to get a clear picture of capacity of preschool education system, an instruction for registration and enrolment of five- and six-year-old children in pre-school education programme has been developed to

nominate duties and responsibilities of parents and educationalists in charge of this age group.

In 2001 the Ministry of Education and Science approved a General Education Curricular Reform Plan to be implemented by 2004. The objective of the Plan is to introduce, in compliance with the Education Law and General Education Law, a state guaranteed and regionally administered quality and effective basic and secondary education system, which provides all school-age children, according to their special needs, with the acquisition of the knowledge and skills necessary for their social and personal life, provides a stable basis for the acquisition of further education and profession, formation of a responsible attitude, possibilities for the development of a creative, polymathic and physically developed personality.

In order to implement the curricular reform of general education, discussions with heads of all Latvian educational institutions were started at the beginning of 2002. In-service training courses were organized for pedagogues. They were attended by 938 deputy heads of schools in charge for studies.

The second task was to prepare state examination papers and provide the procedure for examinations. Statistical and qualitative analysis of state examination papers was carried out and the concept of the examination model was improved. The third task was licensing of educational programmes. 920 basic education programmes were licensed by 2002. In 2002 595 basic education programmes were licensed, but in 2003 – 135.

In order to improve general education curricula, standards for 15 basic education subjects and a draft standard for one subject were prepared for approval in 2003. The quality of teaching literature was also improved. The Centre for Curricula Development and Examination developed a new regulation for textbook approval. This regulation conforms with the State Basic Education Standard and the State General Education Standard.

The Education Laws in Baltic countries stipulate that basic education (grade 1 to grade 9) is compulsory to all young people till the age of 18. The recent trend is that Ministers of Education in Latvia and Lithuania support to proclaim secondary education as compulsory. This idea is only at its initial stage and should be carefully examined from economical, social and educational sides. The supporters of the initiative claim that by achieving this objective, the number of unemployed among young people will be reduced significantly, and simultaneously the necessary education will be provided that will help them to integrate into the society and labour market more successfully as well as raise education level of the population.

3. Provide a critical analysis of factors that explain these trends, including policies and strategies that have made significant contribution to progress in the region and have the real potential to sustain progress towards 2015.

As rather small countries with limited natural resources, Baltic countries see their human capital as an important asset, and therefore, since regaining independence in the last decade governmental institutions have elaborated and have been implementing several normative and strategic documents treating of human resource development, many aspects of which largely affect education.

In order to provide purposeful development of education, ensure its quality and accessibility for all age groups as follows from “Dakar Guidelines” several documents concerning educational strategies have been made in Baltic countries: e.g. *in Estonia* Development plan of vocational education for 2005-2008, Strategy for lifelong learning, Strategy for the field of youth, Development plan of teacher training, Development plan for implementing information and communication technology in general education for 2006-2010 ; *in Lithuania* now there are three documents - a Long-term Strategy for Educational change, an overarching Education Law in the spirit of Education for All and a National Action Plan outlining goals and measures for achieving the Dakar goals as interpreted for Lithuania; *in Latvia* an Education Development Concept Paper (EDCP) 2002-2005 adopted by the *Saeima* (Parliament) in 2002 provides that there should be a unified state education policy and strategy. The Concept Paper sets three goals:

- increase education quality in all stages of education and shape it according to public and economic development needs;
- provide accessibility of education to inhabitants of Latvia in the context of lifelong learning;
- increase cost-effectiveness of education in all stages and types of education.

The Concept Paper has been developed taking into account the objectives and courses of action set out in the Latvian Long-term Economic Strategy, National Development Plan, National Employment Plan, European Commission Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, and bearing in mind the education development guidelines provided in a UNESCO programme Education for All.

In Latvia when implementing changes in the education system according to the Education Development Concept Paper 2002-2005, the education accessibility principle has been observed in order to provide inhabitants’ access to education in the context of lifelong learning. The current EDCP recognises the importance of cooperation and partnership of education policy makers and all players involved in the implementation of the education policy - Ministry of Education and Science, municipal education boards, non government sector, professional organisations of teachers, providers of university and vocational teaching programs (curricula) and employers; that states concrete priority areas for the development of education in the next few years, such as, improving the quality of education, developing institutions capacity and improving access to education.

In order to provide a purposeful development of education, ensure its quality and accessibility for all age groups and all groups of population, Strategic Programme of Vocational Education Development for the time period 2003 – 2006 is accepted by the Cabinet of Ministers and Strategic Programme of Higher Education Development worked out. Education Development Concept and these programmes emphasise the activities and measures, which provide education quality and accessibility. The documents envisage different measures for fostering the elimination of regional differences in the access to education, developing optimal network of educational establishments, provision of multiple education and training programmes and modules, high quality vocational education and training both for young people and adults, meeting the demands of regional development. Big emphasis is put on the provision of equal opportunities in the access to information technologies. It is a very essential task to establish such models of regional education establishments’ network, which are available for different types and levels of education.

The general education system in Estonia is open and flexible, it can react to the changing requirements of society and the individual and it is open for international cooperation. Different needs and abilities of students are taken into consideration in the organisation of studies. In developing the content of studies the interests of students, flexible transitions from one school level to another, from secondary school to vocational education school and vice versa are taken into account. Secondary education acquired in Estonia is recognised by other countries as a basis for continuing studies.

In setting the general objectives for developing the system of general education the principles of availability of studies, the quality of studies and the efficient use of resources are followed and these principles have been specified in the strategic view (of 10 years) as follows:

1. the availability of studying opportunities is guaranteed by the existence of study places, support systems and individualisation of studies;
2. the quality of studies is high thanks to qualified teachers, the curricula based on abilities and interests, modern learning environment, management and system of relevant quality evaluation;
3. resources in the system of general education are used efficiently and transparently thanks to adequate data, research, study place planning and the funding system;

A conception for the organisation of studies for students with special educational needs has been developed and approved in the Ministry of Education and Research and this has been a basis for the Educational Program of the 21st Century as well as for compiling and carrying out the strategy of general education.

The following objectives are formed in the main directions of the conception:

1. To create prerequisites and implement the necessary measures for noticing early on and intervening in the developmental needs and differences of all children.
2. To update or create legal bases that would enable the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities in accessing quality education based on one's abilities and in moving from the level of basic education to the next level of education (need to extend/regulate the duration of the study period on the basic school level for children with special educational needs).
3. To make rearrangements in the allocation of the financial systems of education.

The funding system of children with special educational needs must be changed so the local governments and regular schools are motivated and obliged:

- To include students with special needs in regular schools;
- To compile and implement individual study curricula following each student's developmental needs;
- To implement a flexible grouping of students according to their level in order to guarantee experiences of success and intervention in case of special educational needs;
- To implement intra-school rehabilitation services in schools: special education teachers, speech therapists, supporting teachers, psychologists and social pedagogy teachers.

The factors of per capita funding for schools and children with special educational needs need to be rearranged depending on the type of school and the real needs. So-called 'per

capita funding' must also move along with the child in case the student is involved in the educating process in a regular class.

4. To increase even more the importance of the choices, cooperation and liabilities of different parties (STATE; LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, SCHOOL, PARENT) in solving special education problems that are of determinative importance in raising the quality of the educating process and guaranteeing equal opportunities.
 - The responsibility of the school owners and the state should be shared according to the frequency of the problems:
 - ▶ Responsibility is on the state in state educational institutions satisfying the unique or rarely occurring special education needs (all severe sensory, speech, physical, mental and combined disabilities rarely occur) in which case obliging as well as motivating measures are implemented.
 - ▶ Local responsibility from the county to the management of the school is deepened the more frequent the problems are.
 - In case of state-managed schools for children with special needs that have students from the county where the school is located or from a town located in the county the preparation for the municipal process must be started.
5. To direct and support the development of special schools into regional counseling centres.
 - In cooperation with the directors of the county government/area the accessibility of optimal and quality counseling service must be developed for children, parents as well as teachers.
6. To focus more on increasing the importance of individual study curricula and its practical implementation in school life.
7. To try to move from the psychological-medical paradigm to a paradigm more orientated toward education.
8. To increase the importance of information and communication technology in the study process of children with special educational needs, using the means of information and communications technology in teaching, learning, communicating, therapy and diagnostics more than earlier.
9. To develop a national subsidy system of study materials and technical aids for children with special educational needs.

All of these objectives are being successfully carried out.

In Lithuania each paragraph of the new Education Law (2003) that deals with rights of children of citizens in terms of access to education has been expanded. Children of migrants having “a permanent or provisional residence permit allowing them to live in the Republic of Lithuania shall have the right to study, acquire education and qualification.” This means not only providing primary, basic, secondary, and special education to children of migrants but also requiring it of them, just as Lithuanian minors in Lithuania are required to be in school. In areas with substantial national minorities, entire schools may be set up with instruction in the minority language, upon the request of the community. This makes it easy for Polish and Russian communities to have their children educated in their mother tongue, while the curriculum is based upon the nationally regulated curriculum and Lithuanian language study is included. The large cities are also the sites for Hebrew-language schools (two) and a German language school

for national minorities that do not live in rural enclaves. Instruction in the Lithuanian language and of the Lithuanian language itself is guaranteed to all citizens and residents in Article 30 of the new Law: “the children of persons who have the right to permanently or provisionally reside in the republic of Lithuania shall have the possibility to learn the Lithuanian state language, to study in the Lithuanian state language and to study their native language (when possible). All schools that provide general education must ensure mastery of the Lithuanian state language according to the standard established by the Ministry of Education and Science.”

4. If possible, briefly analyse the status of EFA plans in the region? Have they been finalised in all the countries in the region as requested by the Dakar Framework for Action deadline of end 2002? Are they a stand-alone document or are they part of the overall education strategies? To what extent do they reflect each of the EFA goals?

As mentioned throughout of paper all governments of three Baltic states have made definite commitments to improve quality education for all through different strategic documents.

In Lithuania a National Education Forum was established as a governmental – civil society partnership in June of 2001. The fall of 2001, the steering committee sent letters to all 60 municipalities inviting them to initiate meetings of regional fora of local stakeholders who might wish to hear and to be heard, as decisions are taken regarding the transformation of education in Lithuania.

In January of 2002, a meeting of the Forum was called. It was decided to register the organisation as an independent NGO and to confirm the proposed by-laws that reiterate the Forum’s obligation to work as a civic organisation towards a well-targeted Education for All National Action Plan and the assurance of its implementation. The activities of the Forum have come been commended by His Excellency the President of Lithuania, who has committed to a continuing engagement with the organization and has emphasized that the most important priority of education policy must be to guarantee the accessibility and quality of basic education.

Working groups in which new colleagues from regional municipalities took part split up along the lines of the six Dakar goals. The task of each group was to consider draft law on education in the light of Education for All and to tender to the law drafting committee suggestions on adherence to the global vision and to the particular vision of Lithuania in this respect. The make-up of the Forum led to much broader discussions than those common in governmental offices. Issues voiced in focus groups were sometimes framed up a bit differently than the Dakar six, to match them better to local circumstances.

It was a remarkable moment to see an instrument created for one purpose – a formation of the Education for All National Action Plan which was indeed, written and submitted to the government, outgrow its original purpose, outgrow its original model and become a powerful unifying force.

Thus, Lithuania has produced 3 complementary documents, complementary in scope. One is a Long-term Strategy for an Educational Change, a sort of a white paper. The

strategy is intended for a ten-year period, until 2012, it is written by the working group of the president. It is quite a political strategy, supposed to be a political consensus on the policy of change and it is meant to grant certain stability to the trajectory of the necessary change in our educational policy. The second document is the new Education Law and it is quite a comprehensive law embracing all aspects of education, systemically including formal, non-formal, informal aspects of education. Including, for the first time, those services that are needed for the system to function effectively. For example, psychological, social service workers at school that was not in the previous law. It also includes special aspects of EFA, like pre-school education, the one-year kindergarten education that was not conceptualised in the previous law. The third document is the National Plan of Action that should turn into a specific governmental program for implementation of the Dakar guidelines up to 2015. These documents are different in their approach to education – one is the strategy, the other - the law and the plan, but they all deal with the same issues and they have had a start at the beginning of 2002. Everyday permanent attention and efforts determine to what extent conceptual framework matches the ability to reach the goals.

In Estonia the experience of the Estonian Education Forum since 1995 constitutes a basis for the formation of the EFA Estonian network. The Education Forum has the role of mediating, directing and organizing public competent and democratic communication and for fixing, analyzing, disseminating agreements between all key subjects of education. The Education Forum is positioned in the middle of the from-top-to-bottom and from-bottom-to-top communication. The EFA network functions all the year round because the fulfillment of the resolutions of previous forums are analysed and subsequent pre-forums and the Education Forum is prepared. In 2003 The Education Forum was held based on the county principle: first, best practices were introduced and discussed by regions and their summary was presented to the national forum.

The activities plan of Education for All in Estonia was prepared as an independent document in 2004 in cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Research and Educational Forum. The document has been prepared as a result of the cooperation between different interest groups. The activities plan has been a serious base document in compiling the strategy of general education and the activities plan of the Educational Program of the 21st Century.

As the participation programme “Implementation of Dakar action plan 2000-20015: Latvian national EFA Forum and regional initiatives” was prepared almost after two years since the World Education Forum had taken place in Dakar . In 2002 identification and mobilization of the EFA partners at national level took place, National EFA working group was set up, Regulations on the Advisory Council “Education for All” were elaborated and confirmed by all ministries for the final approving. During 2002-2003 the EFA goals and strategies were integrated into the national education policy documents. “Education for All” National plan in Latvia being a part of above mentioned programmatic documents envisages different measures for fostering the elimination of regional differences in the access to education, development of optimal network of educational establishments, provision of multiple education and training programs, high quality vocational education and training both for young people and adults.

On the EFA implementation Latvia mostly focus on three general fields 1) Partnership building and networking at the national level 2) Advocacy and communication in the national EFA policy building 3) Participation in regional and sub regional networks

The concrete priority areas for the Latvia National Forum activities are as follows:

a) to promote the integration into society of vulnerable and socially excluded groups by fostering the offer of diverse learning possibilities;

b) to expand the interaction between life-long formal, non-formal and informal education with a view to promote the population's participation in civil society and raising their competitiveness in the labour market;

c) to promote the development of basic life skills and the ability of using them in accordance with the needs of the individual and society.

Along with the efforts of Ministry of Education to work in partnership with local authorities, community involvement in school governance promotes the improvement of accessibility and education quality.

We may conclude that EFA planning process in Baltic countries is used not only as a tool of structuring national education problems but also for successful networking in finding solutions.

It should be mentioned that there are three levels of actions in the planning and implementation of EFA Action Plans. The first level includes action within each country's formal and non-formal education systems; the second level includes cooperation between the state level and the civil society on policy building; the third level includes the linkages with and among the sub-regional Baltic Sea Countries and global networks, like HIV/Aids, Fresh, UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network, etc. To have adequate coordination among sub-regional countries and other stakeholders at the beginning of 2002 Latvia took the initiative to organize a sub-regional EFA conference for the Baltic Sea Countries in order to promote the exchange of experience and knowledge and to identify further perspectives for cooperation in the Dakar framework for Action. An informal EFA coordination Working group (Sweden, Lithuania, Latvia) was set up at the Riga Conference in 2002 and is functioning efficiently. Since October of 2003 Lithuania has been lead country in this working group.

As the result of it in January 2005 in St.Petersburg the Group presented project outlines involving adult non-formal education, vocational education, school culture, teacher education, also internet space for exchange of EFA implementation information.

5.What are the remaining obstacles in achieving EFA in the region? What are the key challenges still associated with achievement of the EFA goals in this region?

Parallel to progress in EFA goals several common for all Baltic states obstacles which affect them should be revealed.

Political and educational policy aspects:

- The educational policy is not unanimously supported and understood because it is not always transparent. One of the causes for inefficiency is the fact that the educational policy changes alongside with changes

in the governments and obviously has a negative impact on comprehensive education policy.

- Diversity of activities within different networks and initiatives do not form the synergy in order to achieve common targets. Being responsible for ensuring the equal rights of all citizens to quality education, MoES in line with local authorities should take the lead in bridging the efforts of all parties to increase their collaboration and maximize their contribution to quality education.
- A modest share in GDP of allocations to education does not make it possible to support person's lifelong education development and to realize all expectations of society with regard to education policy.
- An economic analysis of the educational systems and the efficient mechanisms of investments is missing.

Social aspects:

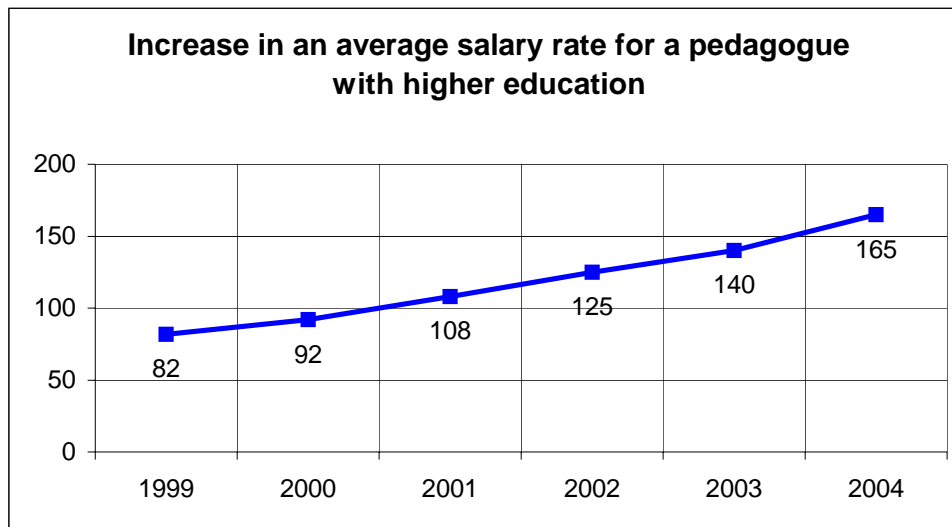
- Deepened social and economic stratification forces to plan and fund in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs support networks and counseling systems more than earlier for the development of all children and guaranteeing a normal environment for growing up. The major social problem is the poverty of children who come from big families and the unemployment of parents in rural areas.

- The social status of teachers is not sufficiently high and it has negative influence of motivation for the profession. At the same time the quality of education is influenced the most by how qualified and motivated the teachers are. Several other factors have to be considered with regard to motivation, like, unattractive wages (in Latvia wages are lowest among all EU countries), stressful working environment, vaguely defined duties, growing heterogeneousness within classroom environment, etc.

The teachers are getting older, youth do not have enough motivation to study to become teachers and work as teachers. The percentage of teachers above the age of 50 has increased by 63% in comparison with 1993, and their percentage in the total number of teachers has increased from 23% to 35%. 11% of teachers are under the age of 30 in general education schools and 8% in vocational education schools. Similar tendencies are noticed in Latvia where the majority of teachers (31%) is comprised within the age range 40-49, the decreasing tendency is noticed among younger generation e.g. 1998 there were 19,5% but in 2004 14,5% of teachers are under the age of 30.

Teachers' salary. Although in Estonia the level of salaries has gradually increased in recent years, teachers are not content with their salaries or work conditions: the salary of a junior teacher has not even reached the average of the country. The state has taken on the obligation of raising the average salary of a junior teacher to the level of 1 GDP per inhabitant by 2014 to raise the qualification of a teacher and motivate him/her to work in school. In Latvia the reform of increase in Pedagogues' Remuneration from 1999 to 2004 has been implemented. The objective is to decrease the number of remunerable pedagogical work rates and to simultaneously increase the remuneration fund thus

achieving a considerable increase in payment for one pedagogical work rate. Over the past six years the average salary rate for a pedagogue with higher education has increased twice, nevertheless it is still the lowest among EU countries.



Source 6

Information aspects:

- Lack of compatible statistical data, monitoring reports or surveys due to which the basis for the strategy and action plan is not very consistent.
- In the majority of cases efforts have been focused on current problems while successful attainments and best practices that deserve attention and generalization have not been analysed to the necessary extent.

Educational aspects:

Access to basic education and pre-studies. Several problems would be solved or prevented if greater attention could be paid to children's individuality in basic education

- Disparities between urban and rural schools exist due to different financial capacity of local municipalities. Schools in remote areas where population is scarce and scattered and organizational capacity is quite limited should be encouraged to improve their achievement with additional resources and needed support. It means that it is necessary to overcome a disturbingly large variance in resource allocation among "similar" schools.
- The problem is noticing in time and early enough the special developmental needs of a child (0-3) and the pedagogical counseling of the parents for creating an environment for the child favourable to the child's development (mostly children staying at home).
- Evaluation of the development of children. The preschool children's institutions do not have methodology to analyse the development of a child in preschool age or methodology based on all aspects of readiness for school to evaluate the child's readiness for school. The reasons for difficulties in studying and behaviour that become apparent in basic school often lie in preschool years. The special need of a child is often left unnoticed and the support service not provided. The problems

deepen in basic school as a result of which the development of a student slows down.

Counseling. In general the key role of counseling, including career counseling, as a supporter of lifelong learning is acknowledged in society. But we cannot talk about a unified cross-national system of counseling yet. Career counseling is dealt with in several ministries, it does not enable many development activities to be carried out in a unified way and requires more resources. Counseling is not regulated enough in documents concerning educational policies.

Evaluation of the quality of schools and studying are still focused and measured within each level of education separately not taking into consideration lifelong learning framework and development of personality.

Teacher education. A changing and open society needs a teacher with new capabilities and an image that has changed considerably. Teacher training must create opportunities for the emergence of teacher capabilities and the professional development of a teacher throughout his/her career. So far a set of problems has been a hindrance that has slowed down the development of the area: the theoretical principles of teacher education are not harmonized with current society needs, the pre-service and in-service system cannot react flexibly to the changes in the environment, there is no active monitoring of the quality of education, the cooperation between educational establishments is poor, there is no systemic research. More so with the decrease of child birth, higher education programs of teacher education do not receive adequate state financing.

Conclusion.

Baltic countries have done a lot to achieve improvements in Quality education for all, but life changes so quickly that each solution brings new challenges and opportunities. Anyway part of success we have achieved in EFA goals is because we first and foremost evaluated the existing mechanisms and networks like ASP (Associated Schools Programme), Universities with UNESCO Chairs, the UNEVOC as well as UNESCO IITE, than tried to find most efficient ways of using them instead of spending financial and human resources to create new things and then implement those findings within our joint Baltic sea region cooperation for sharing and enriching good practice.

By 2005 it has become obvious that Dakar framework for action offered by UNESCO as an international, multilateral organisation gives us all a chance to involve both the government and civil society in assessing the problem, pointing to gaps and being partners in suggesting solutions for Quality Education for All.

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