



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

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

**Combined fourth to seventh periodic reports submitted by
Latvia under article 18 of the Convention, due in 2017***

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Introduction

1. The combined initial, second and third periodic report (the Initial Report) of the Republic of Latvia (Latvia) on implementation of the 1979 United Nations (the UN) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (the Convention) for the period until 1 January 2002, was examined on 14 July and 19 July 2004, during the 31st Session of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (the Committee).

2. The combined fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh report on implementation of the Convention in Latvia (the Report) covers the period from 1 January 2005 to 31 December 2017, and provides information on actions taken by Latvia in the implementation of the Committee's concluding comments.¹ The Report has been prepared in conformity with the combined guidelines on the preparation of national reports.²

Committee recommendation in paragraph 76 – participation in the preparation of the Report

3. The information contained in the Report was compiled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, and the Ministry of Health. The Ombudsperson has submitted his observations during the drafting of the Report.

4. The Report was examined and discussed in the 23rd meeting of the Gender Equality Committee, which was attended by both public authorities and representatives of non-governmental organisations (the NGOs).

5. The prepared Report was presented to the Human Rights and Public Affairs Committee of the *Saeima* [the Parliament].

I. Article 1, 2 and 3 of the Convention

I.1. Committee recommendation in paragraph 46 – definition of discrimination against woman

6. The prohibition of discrimination in Latvia is established at the constitutional level in Article 91 of the *Satversme [the Constitution] of the Republic of Latvia* (see para 5 of the Initial Report). A gender-based discrimination is prohibited in special sectoral regulatory enactments, for example, in the *Labour Law*, the *Law on the Rights of Patients*, the *Consumer Rights Protection Law*, and other laws including procedural laws, for example, the *Administrative Procedure Law* and the *Criminal Procedure Law*. The national legislation provides also for the legal remedies in case of infringement of the prohibition of discrimination. More information on these issues is provided in paras. 177–188 of the Common Core Document of the Republic of Latvia for 2002–2016 (the Core Document).

I.2. Committee recommendation in paragraph 48 – specialist training and public awareness-raising

7. The Latvian Judicial Training Centre (the Training Centre) provides continuing education and professional development of judges and the employees of the judiciary,

¹ A/59/38(SUPP) paras. 30–79.

² HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6.

including on human rights and gender equality issues. The Training Centre creates an annual training programme on the latest topics and organizes seminars according to the allocated funding. In recent years, the discrimination is not directly included in the training programme; instead, it is dealt through the recent judgements of the European Court of Human Rights or the Court of Justice of the European Union (the EU) or through discussions of the issue in the context of other topics, for example, discrimination in the labour law.

8. In 2014, six regional two-day interdisciplinary seminars “EU and society – our opportunities and rights” for judges, prosecutors and attorneys were organized. The seminar participants were educated about the link between public welfare and the equality and non-discrimination principles in the context of international and national law. At the same time the participants learned how to recognize the stereotypes that contribute to discrimination in society, in professional and personal life, to be aware of his or her identity and its benefits, as well as complement their personal competence in dealing with the foreign and diverse in society, to improve professional skills at work.

9. In 2015, the Training Centre ensured the participation of the judges in 3 international seminars organized by the Academy of European Law on the EU non-discrimination, but in 2016 – in 9 seminars. The seminars were attended by 1–3 judges from Latvia.

10. In the Training Centre training programmes for 2016–2017, the discrimination topic was included in the labour law seminars “*Discrimination in the Legal Labour Relationship. Discrimination on the Grounds of Gender*” and “*Discrimination in the Legal Labour Relationship. Discrimination of Persons with Disabilities*”.

11. Measures for raising the qualification of attorneys are organised each year, taking into account the funding allocated in the budget of the Latvian Collegium of Sworn Advocates. In addition, sworn attorneys study at their own expense. Within the measures for raising the qualification, the anti-discrimination issues are discussed within the lectures on certain legal areas, for example, civil law, family law, criminal law, criminal procedure, labour law, and human rights. The decision taken by the General Meeting of Sworn Advocates on 30 March 2012, determines a compulsory minimum of continuous education for sworn advocates; and the enforcement of the decision is carefully monitored. In providing the measures for raising the qualification, the Latvian Council of Sworn Advocates has for years cooperated with the Training Centre, the Faculty of Law of the University of Latvia and the Local Governments Training Centre of Latvia.

12. During the reporting period, extensive educational and informative measures were implemented in the public administration to strengthen the capacity of the gender equality policy officers and raise their professional qualification. Employees of the human resources departments of the public administration were involved in practical sessions on gender equality. In 2 years, more than 700 employees representing 19 public authorities were trained within the programme “*European Employment Policy, Labour Market and Gender Equality Issues*”. In cooperation with other State and local government institutions, the officials of the Ministry of Welfare have participated in various projects on the exchange of good practices and experience on gender equality issues, such as study visits to Nordic countries on gender mainstreaming in budget-making processes, impact of climate change on provision of equal opportunities for women and men, and the gender mainstreaming in preschool educational institutions.

13. In the EU structural funds, gender equality is established as one of the horizontal priorities. The Ministry of Welfare is the institution responsible for the coordination of horizontal policy of equal opportunities, which includes gender equality, disability

and ageing aspects. One of the requirements that was and is being put forward to the beneficiaries of the EU structural funding in the period 2007–2013 and the period 2014–2020, is the compliance with the equality principle. During 2007–2013, more than 50 seminars were organized to the applicants, appraisers and developers of the projects of the EU structural funds, employees of the institutions involved in the EU structural fund management, and employees of the regional information centres of the EU structural funds. The seminars provided information on age, disability and gender equality aspects while developing, organizing, implementing and appraising the project activities. In total, more than 2000 participants attended the training. In order to promote the equality between women and men, between 2014–2020 Latvia implements measures aimed at gender mainstreaming in sectoral policies (education, health, environment, employment, family support) including by providing high quality analysis of the situation in the specific sector from the gender perspective, ensuring methodological support to the institutions involved, as well as by ensuring training. More than 500 participants attended the training in 2014–2016.

14. Information about the educational measures for students and teachers in the field of gender equality is provided in paras. 130–139 of the Report, while the information about the public awareness measures is provided in paras. 31, 34, 68, 100, 121, 143, 144, 148, 177, and 179 of the Report.

I.3. Committee recommendation in paragraph 50 – gender equality mechanism

15. During the reporting period, a significant work has been carried out in the field of the gender equality in order to centralize, further develop and strengthen the mechanism of gender equality policy coordination as well as strengthen the mechanism of monitoring of the compliance with the non-discrimination and equality principle.

16. In 2004–2007 the Ministry of Welfare had a separate Gender Equality Unit. Since 2012, the gender equality issues are integrated into the Social Policy Planning and Development Department. Within the scope of its competence, the department: draws up development planning documents in the field of gender equality; informs the public about the current issues; assesses the compliance of draft legislation and development planning documents with the gender equality principles and provides proposals on the necessity to improve them; draws up the position of Latvia on issues to be presented to the EU institutions and represents Latvia before different organisations of the EU, the Council of Europe and other international bodies in relation to the gender equality issues. During the reporting period, the Ministry of Welfare has implemented a wide range of measures aimed at prevention of the discrimination against women and implementation of the gender equality principle at all levels. Information about all measures taken by the Ministry of Welfare is available on its website.³

17. Since 2005, all ministries have nominated a high-level official, who is responsible for the implementation of gender mainstreaming in sectoral policies, with the purpose to gain support and achieve a closer cooperation with public administration institutions in the policy-making process. In 2010, the Minister of Welfare issued an order establishing the Gender Equality Committee. The main task of this Committee is to provide proposals by setting priorities and action lines for implementation of the gender equality policy as well as to monitor the implementation of the gender equality principles in different sectoral policies (see para. 142 of the Core Document).

³ <http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/146>; <http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/726>.

18. The Ombudsperson plays an important role in the monitoring of the practical implementation of the gender equality principles (see paras. 56–59 of the Core Document). One of the functions of the Ombudsperson is to promote the respect for equal treatment and non-discrimination as well as to raise public awareness and understanding of human rights and mechanisms for the protection of these rights.

19. The gender equality policy is described in paras. 226–232 of the Core Document. In order to determine further measures for the implementation of the gender equality policy, Latvia is currently working on the policy-planning document “*The Plan for Safeguarding Equal Opportunities and Rights of Women and Men in 2018–2020*”.

I.4. Additional information

20. According to the annual studies carried out by the UN and other international bodies, in the global and European contest the overall situation of women in Latvia in relation to the gender equality issues is considered as favourable.

21. The World Economic Forum has established the Global Gender Gap Index, which measures the equality between women and men in economics, politics, education, and health care. In this index, Latvia has never ranked below the 19th place among more than 100 countries. In 2016, Latvia was ranked by this index 18th among 144 countries.⁴

22. In 2013, the European Gender Equality Index was presented for the first time. This index shows the differences between women and men in all EU Member States at individual level in different areas (employment, income, knowledge, time, power and health). The index supports the development of evidence-based policies and shows the political priorities which should be changed to promote shaping of a gender-equal Europe. According to the data, Latvia was ranked 14th among 27 EU Member States in 2012 and 17th in 2015.

23. The UN Gender Inequality Index measures the national reproductive health system as well as the decision-making and labour market from the point of view of gender equality. In 2015 this index ranked Latvia 44th among 188 countries.⁵

24. Since 2009, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development calculates the Social Institutions and Gender Index, which is based on qualitative and quantitative indicators (14 indicators) on discrimination in various fields in 160 countries. According to this index Latvia is among the countries with a low discrimination level.⁶ This means that Latvia has set equal rights of men and women with respect to family rights, access to resources and civil liberties, both genders have equal opportunities to be owners and to decide on their assets and resources. In addition, Latvia does not practice female genital mutilation, there is a reproductive autonomy, however the legal framework for elimination of violence against women is incomplete.

II. Article 4 of the Convention

II.1. Committee recommendation in paragraph 52 – temporary special measures to accelerate the achievement of equality

25. In gender policy-making Latvia applies the gender mainstreaming, which means that the impact of laws, policies and measures on the situation of both genders is

⁴ <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/economies/#economy=LVA>.

⁵ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>.

⁶ <http://www.genderindex.org/ranking/>.

assessed in all action lines and at all levels, and the responsible institutions of all sectors have to be involved in the implementation of the gender equality policy.

26. So far, the efforts to increase the number of women in economic and political decision-making levels are mainly related to the educational work (NGO initiatives, discussions). The special temporary measures, such as quotas, might not be the most appropriate solution in the Latvian situation due to the low public support; therefore, the main potential for increasing the participation of women lies in the change of stereotypes and prejudices about the role of women and men in the society and in educating of the public.

27. Specific support measures aimed at the improvement of the situation of women have been implemented in the field of entrepreneurship. In 2008, the micro-credit program was launched allowing women residing in rural areas and small towns to start their own business. The micro-credit can be used for small investments and liquid assets. The allocated Micro-credit Programme funding exceeded 60,000 euros.

II.2. Additional information

28. Information about the maternity benefit, parental benefit and child care benefit is provided in paras. 161–170 of the Report.

III. Article 5 of the Convention

III.1. Committee recommendation in paragraph 54 – the role of women in the family and in society

29. Measures aimed at the change of stereotypic roles and discriminatory attitudes as well as the role of gender in the family and society are described in paras. 229–232 of the Core Document. The information on such measures in the field of education is provided in paras. 130–139 of the Report.

30. The issue of the work and family life balance has been included in all gender equality policy planning documents between 2005 and 2014 as one of the action lines, including in the State Family Policy Guidelines 2011–2017 and their plans of implementation.

31. In order to reduce gender stereotypes about certain roles of women and men in the society, in 2004–2007 extensive public awareness-rising campaigns aimed at different groups of society including men were implemented to break the stereotypes of what “manhood” or “masculine behaviour” means, while promoting and encouraging men to engage in the care for children and household duties. Since 2007, Latvia has implemented various activities aimed at public understanding and awareness. In 2006, international project “*Men Equal / Men Different*” was implemented. The aim of the project was to establish the role of a man as a father and his opportunities in public and business environment. In 2014, the foundation “Centrs Dardedze” implemented a new initiative – fathers’ mutual support group programme “*Fathers are important*”. The programme was targeted at providing support to fathers in order to promote active involvement in the upbringing of children and in family life. The project initiative was followed by a social advertising campaign “*Fatherhood is an art*”.⁷

32. Participation of men in care of young children is shown by the data on the number of fathers who have used the leave, which has increased to 52.7 per cent in 2017 (in 2004, it was 22 per cent). In accordance with the results of public survey

⁷ More information available at: <http://www.centrsdardedze.lv/lv/jaunumi/tevakampana>.

conducted in 2014, more than 2/3 of Latvia's population considered the possibility to use the 10-day father's leave after the birth of child as important. Although mainly women considered this opportunity as an important (77.4 per cent), the interest was high among men as well (69.5 per cent). Compared to 2001, the survey results of 2014 showed that the interest about the opportunity to use the 10-day father's leave after the child's birth has increased considerably – the proportion of men, who assessed this opportunity as “very important”, has risen from 28.5 to 41.5 per cent in 13 years.

33. Since 2008, Latvia celebrates the Father's Day on second Sunday of September. Since 2010, it is included in the calendar as an official celebration day. The aim of the Father's Day is to emphasize the father's role in child's upbringing and family life as well as to ask the children and other family members to appreciate the father's involvement and daily support. Since 2014, the State Inspectorate For Protection Of Children's Rights organizes the campaign “*Fathers' Hotline*”.

34. The contribution of NGOs and the measures taken in educating of different groups of society and rising awareness in gender equality issues has been significant. During the reporting period, the Resource Centre for Women “MARTA” implemented a campaign aimed at promoting the young people's critical attitudes towards the gender stereotypes produced by media. The campaign included a discussion with school directors and teachers with a view to finding the best ways to talk with young people, so that they can build a self-conscious behaviour without being subject to public perceptions about gender roles, dress codes, behaviour, and that young people would be free to choose and make decisions without fear of public condemnation. Also, in cooperation with youth media, teen awareness in gender equality and equal opportunities of boys and girls was promoted.

III.2. Committee recommendation in paragraph 56 – elimination of domestic violence

35. In cases of domestic violence the offenders are prosecuted under different articles of the *Criminal Law* depending on the form of the criminal offence, the consequences caused, and other elements.

36. On 1 January 2018, amendments to Article 125 (Intentional Serious Bodily Injury), 126 (Intentional Moderate Bodily Injury) and 130 (Intentional Slight Bodily Injury) of the *Criminal Law* entered into force in order to prevent domestic violence. These norms are supplemented with a qualifying element – actions committed against a person to whom the perpetrator is related in the first or second degree of kinship, against the spouse or former spouse, or against a person with whom the perpetrator is or has been in unregistered marital relationship, or against a person with whom the perpetrator has a joint (single) household.

37. Since 1 January 2018, the *Criminal Law* envisages liability for genital mutilation, personal harassment and psychological violence. The limitation period laid down regarding the cases of sexual violence is long enough to permit initiating of proceedings when the victim has reached the age of majority. If the criminal offence is directed against morality and sexual inviolability of a minor, the limitation period of the criminal liability is 20 years from the date when the victim has reached the age of 18.

38. The criminal liability for rape is laid down in Article 159 of the *Criminal Law* while Article 48 of the *Criminal Law* provides for aggravating circumstances: the criminal offence related to violence or threats of violence, or the criminal offence against morality and sexual inviolability was committed against a person to whom the perpetrator is related in the first or second degree of kinship, against the spouse or former spouse, or against a person with whom the perpetrator is or has been in unregistered marital relationship, or against a person with whom the perpetrator has a joint (single) household. Thus, a criminal offence against morals and sexual

inviolability committed against the spouse may constitute an aggravating circumstance.

39. Article 48, paragraph 1(6) of the *Criminal Law* has also been amended, and now envisages that crime against a person who has not attained the age of 18 can be considered as an aggravating circumstance, thus changing the former age threshold from 16 to 18 years. Article 48(1) of the *Criminal Law* is supplemented with paragraph 16 stipulating that crime involving violence or threats of violence, or an intentional criminal offence against morality and sexual inviolability of a person in presence of a minor, can be considered as an aggravating circumstance.

40. In 2016, amendments to Article 96 and Article 151 of the *Criminal Procedure Law* entered into force facilitating the involvement of the victim in the criminal proceedings, namely, providing that the victim's application can be taken both in writing and orally. Furthermore, the law also stipulates that if a person cannot express his or her will to be recognized as a victim due to any physical or psychiatric disorders, the person can be recognized as a victim without his or her consent.

41. The *Criminal Procedure Law* is supplemented with Article 96¹ that specifies categories of specially protected victims. Similarly, the law is supplemented with a new Article 97¹, which lists all fundamental rights of a victim in criminal proceedings, for example, to receive information regarding the conditions for applying for and receiving of a compensation, and to receive information regarding the support and medical assistance available, to receive contact information for communication regarding the particular criminal proceedings.

42. Article 99(2) of the *Criminal Procedure Law* provides that a specially protected victim may request that his or her participation and questioning in a court session takes place using technical means. The law is supplemented with Article 151¹ that states the specifics of the interrogation of a specially protected victim in pre-trial criminal proceedings. In accordance with Article 151¹(1) of the *Criminal Procedure Law*, interrogation of a specially protected victim is conducted in a separate room appropriate for such purposes or without the presence of persons not involved in the particular procedural action. In accordance with Article 151¹(2) of the *Criminal Procedure Law*, interrogation of person who has been recognised as a victim of violence committed by a person on whom the victim is dependent financially or otherwise, a victim of trafficking in human beings, or of a criminal offence directed against morality or sexual inviolability of the person, is conducted by an official of the same gender.

43. Article 74(1) of the *Civil Law* is expressed in a new wording providing for the following: if the spouses have lived separately for less than three years, the court may dissolve the marriage if the reason for breakdown of the marriage is physical, sexual, psychological or economical violence of a spouse against the other spouse who has requested the dissolution of the marriage, or against his or her child or joint child of the spouses. The previous wording of this article contained a term "intolerable cruelty against the spouse", which was not clearly interpreted in practice. Thus, the *Civil Law* was the first regulatory enactment, which expressly identified all four forms of violence against the spouse. Furthermore, the *Law on the Protection of the Children's Rights* was supplemented providing that abusing a relative of the child in the presence of the child is to be considered as the emotional violence against this child.

44. Since 2014, specific procedural and substantive legal provisions are in force governing the possibility to impose a temporary protection against violence, as well as determining the competence of different authorities regarding insuring the compliance with the temporary protection measures (see para. 102 of the Core Document).

45. In accordance with the existing legal framework, the endangered persons have three protection options. First, Article 12(10)¹ of the *Law on Police* provides for the right of police officers to adopt an immediately enforceable decision on the person's separation. Such decision is taken in cases where there is an immediate danger that the person who is in the home or in its vicinity, can cause harm to the other person who lives in that home. The decision on the person's separation obliges the adult causing the threat to leave the permanent place of residence of the protected person, not to return and not to stay in the residence and in its vicinity for the period of up to eight days from the date of the decision. The police decision may also impose a prohibition on the person causing the threat to communicate with the protected person. Thus, it is ensured that the State can react to these offences promptly and around the clock. In addition, the police can initiate administrative proceedings for the detected violations, for example, in accordance with Article 167²(2) of the *Administrative Violations Code* for intentional causing of minor injuries. If there are not sufficient grounds for the police officer to adopt a decision on separation, the police officer is entitled to apprehend the person until sobering up or until the determination of the circumstances, but not exceeding 12 hours, if the person is in the residence under the influence of alcohol, narcotic, psychotropic or toxic substances and may cause harm to themselves or persons nearby as well as in cases when people nearby are afraid to remain alone with such a person and if there is no other basis for the apprehension of such person.

46. Secondly, in order to protect the continuity of the protection of the protected person when the police has adopted the decision on separation, the protected person, with the assistance of the police, can submit an application to the court requesting to examine the issue of temporary protection against violence. Thirdly, the protected person may independently submit an application to the court and ask to adopt a decision on temporary protection against violence. The court can impose one or several temporary means of protection that oblige the violent person to conduct or refrain from certain acts, namely: the obligation to leave the dwelling where the protected person resides, and the prohibition to return and reside in it; the prohibition on the violent person to be near the dwelling, in which the protected person resides, in a distance that is less than the one specified in the court decision; the prohibition on the violent person to be in certain places; the prohibition on the violent person to meet the protected person and to maintain a physical or visual contact with the protected person; the prohibition on the violent person to communicate with the protected person in any way; the prohibition on the violent person to organize meeting or any communication with the protected person using help of other persons; the prohibition on the violent person to use the data of the protected person. Temporary protection against the violence is permitted at any stage of the proceedings, also prior to bringing of the claim before the court.

47. If the violent person infringes the court decision on temporary protection against violence, the State Police initiates criminal proceedings on the fact constituting *corpus delicti* envisaged in Article 168¹ "Failure to Comply with a Ruling on the Protection against Violence" of the *Criminal Law* and carries out investigation.

48. From 31 March 2014 to 31 December 2017, the State Police has adopted 1,042 decisions on separation, the Municipal Police – 36 decisions, while the courts have adopted 2,339 decisions on temporary protection against violence, by obliging the violent person to leave the dwelling where the protected person resides, and prohibiting the violent person from returning and residing in the respective dwelling.

49. Despite the attention devoted to the issue of violence prevention, the work on reduction of violence against women remains one of the greatest challenges of the gender equality policy. The situation in Latvia is characterized by rather high (above the EU average indicators) prevalence of violence against women and a high tolerance

against violence both in society and among specialists. In addition, the comparison of 2010 and 2016 shows that the high indicators of the tolerance against violence remain the same in a six-year period.

50. During the reporting period, women have suffered both from violence of spouse or cohabiting partner and other relatives. In 2016, at least 22 women were killed (5 women were killed by their spouse or cohabiting partner, 17 women – by other relatives). In 2016, at least 44 women have suffered from bodily injuries of different severity caused by spouses or cohabiting partners. In 2016, 36 parents or adoptive parents suffered from bodily injuries of different severity caused by their children, but 13 children that have reached maturity suffered from bodily injuries of different severity caused by their parents. In 2015, 3 men suffered from light injuries caused by spouse or cohabiting partner, but in 2016 – 19 men. Compared with the injured men, women suffered from more severe violence committed by spouse or cohabitant partner.

51. Similarly, violence against children in families constitutes a substantial part of all registered criminal offences. In 2016, at least 326 minors suffered from violent criminal offences, including 182 minors who were injured by relatives. In total, 107 children suffered from sexual violence in 2016, including 38 children who were sexually abused in their families.

52. The Ministry of Welfare, in cooperation with other state and local government institutions, every year draws up an informative report about the prevalence and dynamics of domestic violence and violence against women and submits it to the Cabinet of Ministers. The informative report contains a compilation of data from various institutions, analysis of the situation and identification of problems as well as proposals on possible solutions.

53. Measures to prevent and reduce domestic violence are included in the State Family Policy Guidelines 2011–2017 and the corresponding action plan. Prevention of gender-related violence is one of the action lines in Plan for Safeguarding Women's and Men's Equal Opportunities and Rights 2018–2020.

54. The objective to reduce gender-based violence and domestic violence is also included in the Latvia National Development Plan 2014–2020. The document sets out the tasks to reach this objective: to ensure that children live in a favourable family or family-like environment, and domestic violence reduces, to provide support to family and individuals in crisis situations and in situations related to gender-based violence, providing professional social work services and timely social and medical rehabilitation services.

55. Since 2015, the State-funded social rehabilitation services to adult victims of violence are available. These services are available both in the form of individual counselling (up to 20 consultations by psychologist, lawyer and/or social worker) and in the form of a stay at the crisis centre (the person can stay at the crisis centre for up to 60 days). The content, extent and duration of the service are determined in accordance with the assessment of the person's individual needs and resources conducted by the social worker. Social rehabilitation services are available by contacting the municipal social service, which attracts the necessary specialists or delegates the provision of the service to NGOs. Unlike other comparable services, the person can receive this service also in the social service of another municipality.

56. Compared to 2015, when the service was launched, in 2016 the number of persons who received the service has doubled. In 2015, this service was provided to 114 victims of violence, but in 2016 – to 294 victims.

57. In the framework of the action plan State Family Policy 2014–2020, financial aid for establishing of 26 family support and crises centres in various regions of

Latvia was provided. In 2017, 27 services providers ensuring social rehabilitation services to adult victims were registered. Currently Latvia fulfils the request of the Council of Europe to Latvia to provide one place at the crisis centre per 10,000 inhabitants (namely, 200 places in crisis centres) for women with children, who have suffered from violence.

58. According to the *Law on Social Services and Social Assistance*, social rehabilitation to children who have suffered from violence is mandatory. Currently, a child who has suffered from violence can receive a service in form of social rehabilitation course in an institution for up to 30 days or up to 60 days, or in a form of 10 consultations by psychologist at his or her place of residence. Before receiving a service, a psychologist or a social worker prepares an opinion stating whether the child displays symptoms of psychological trauma, and where the service is to be provided. The type, location and duration of the service receiving are always determined based on the assessment of the child's psychosocial situation conducted by the psychologist or the social worker.

59. Since 2015, the State-funded social rehabilitation services are available to persons who have committed violence. These services are available both individually and in groups, depending on the person's needs. The services are voluntary. In 2015, these services were provided to 99 persons, in 2016 – to 304 persons. On average, service recipients attend 9 individual consultations or 15 group sessions.

60. The State-funded medical rehabilitation to victims who have suffered from violence is ensured in accordance with the general policy – with referrals from the family doctor or other specialist according to medical indications⁸. Latvia is funding from the State budget the psychotherapeutic and psychological assistance if a need for such an assistance is determined by the psychiatrist, in order to prevent criminal offences against the child's morality and sexual inviolability or if the psychotherapeutic and psychological assistance is needed when providing children with an outpatient psychiatric treatment or palliative care.

61. In accordance with Article 56¹ of the *Medical Treatment Law*, if a medical treatment institution provides assistance to a patient and there are grounds for considering that the patient has suffered from violence, the medical treatment institution must notify the State Police thereof without delay but not later than within 12 hours. If a medical treatment institution provides assistance to an underage patient and there are grounds for considering that the patient has suffered from the lack of sufficient care and supervision or other violation of the rights of the child, the medical treatment institution shall notify the State Police thereof without delay but not later than within 12 hours.

62. The domestic violence against women poses a significant burden on the health care system. 42 per cent of women, who have sought the in-patient treatment due to the injuries caused by violence, have been injured because of domestic violence. In 2015, 75 women needed an in-patient treatment due to the injuries caused by relatives, and 54 of such injuries were caused by cohabitant partner. Whereas in 2016, 65 women needed an in-patient treatment due to the injuries caused by relatives, and 48 of such injuries were caused by cohabitant partner.

63. Latvia ensures legal aid to persons in order to submit an application for temporary protection against violence in accordance with Article 30⁵ of the *Civil Procedure Law* by granting legal consultations as well as assistance in drawing up of procedural documents and representation before court. Cases when a person requires legal assistance and violence is established, are considered as a specific situation, and

⁸ Article 11.23 of Regulation No 1529 "Procedure regarding Organizing and Financing of Health Care" of 17 December 2013.

the person is not required to provide additional information about his or her financial status. In order to receive the State ensured legal aid regarding the question of temporary protection against violence and other resulting civil matters, the person must submit the application for receipt of the State ensured legal aid to the Legal Aid Administration. The Legal Aid Administration decides on the State ensured legal aid, and in case of a positive decision, appoints a provider of legal aid.

64. With the help from the association “Skalbes”, the Legal Aid Administration ensures the operation of toll-free phone 116006 for support of crime victims. Every day from 7:00 to 22:00, experts provide psycho-emotional and informative support to victims of crime, including victims of violence and their relatives.

65. In Latvia, there are four toll-free “hot lines” coordinated by NGOs and interactive website maintained by Resource Centre for Women “MARTA”. The “hot line” of the Resource Centre for Women “MARTA” receives 80 to over 100 calls per annum. Each year, Resource Centre for Women “MARTA” provides assistance to more than 300 women who are victims of domestic violence – psychological and legal assistance, support in drawing up documents and the representation of injured women before the Police, Orphan’s Courts and the courts.

66. Officials and employees of law enforcement authorities are educated about prevention of domestic violence and due investigation of such violence, both in formal and informal education programs (see Annex 4). Prosecutors are regularly educated on issues regarding the protection of the rights of the child, including the following topics: definition of violence, risk factors and consequences of violence, inter-institutional cooperation for combating violence against children, basic principles of communication depending on the child’s age, and other topics.

67. With co-financing of the EU social fund, the project “*Development of Professional Social Work in Local Governments*” is being implemented in 2015–2022. The project focuses on further development of the professional competence of the social work professionals, including in the work with cases of violence, and improvement of the social work practice with specific target groups. In addition, it provides also for drawing up of methodologies for the work of social workers of social services with different client target groups including victims and committers of violence.

68. In 2017, the Ministry of Welfare launched two projects on prevention and mitigation of violence against woman. One project is aimed at efficient and coherent improvement of the institution action pattern to be able to respond to cases of domestic violence adequately as well as to implement the public awareness-rising measures including involvement and training of regional media journalists. The other project is focused on promotion of public awareness and understanding of violence against women in order to reduce the public tolerance to the situation of violence with special attention to young people and promoting respectful relations between boys and girls.

IV. Article 6 of the Convention

IV.1. Committee recommendation in paragraph 58 – fight against trafficking in human beings

69. During the reporting period, Latvia has acceded to the main international documents governing the prevention of trafficking in human beings: 1) the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings; 2) Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography; 3) Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish

Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime of 13 December 2000; 4) the International Labour Organisation Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. For more information on Latvia's international human rights obligations see paras 79–88 of the Core Document.

70. Article 154¹ of the *Criminal Law* provides for criminal liability for trafficking in human beings that is determined in accordance with the UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others of 2 December 1949 and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime of 13 December 2000. The applicable punishment for this kind of criminal offence is deprivation of liberty for a period of up to eight years, with or without confiscation of property.

71. Article 154¹(2) of the *Criminal Law* provides for stricter liability for trafficking in human beings when the crime is committed against a minor, or if committed by a group of persons according to a prior agreement, while Article 154¹(3) provides for stricter liability for trafficking in human beings if it has endangered the life of a victim or has caused serious consequences, or it has been committed involving particular cruelty or against an underage person, or it has been committed by an organised group. The applicable punishment for this kind of criminal offence is deprivation of liberty for a period of up to fifteen years.

72. In 2014, amendments to Article 154² of the *Criminal Law* entered into force and supplemented it with one more type of trafficking in human beings: using the state of vulnerability. Within the meaning of this Article, the state of vulnerability means using the circumstances when a person does not have another actual or acceptable choice except submitting to exploitation.

73. Currently, the definition of the term “trafficking in human beings” provided for in Article 154² of the *Criminal Law* stipulates that the trafficking in human beings means the recruitment, transportation, transfer, concealment, accommodation or reception of persons for the purpose of exploitation, committed by using violence or threats or by means of deceit, or by taking advantage of the dependence of the person on the offender or of his or her state of vulnerability or helplessness, or by the giving or obtaining of material benefits or benefits of another nature in order to procure the consent of such person, upon which the victim is dependent.

74. Within the meaning of Article 154² of the *Criminal Law*, exploitation is the involvement of a person in prostitution or in other kinds of sexual exploitation, the coercion of a person to perform labour, to provide services or to commit criminal offences, the holding of a person in slavery or other similar forms thereof (debt slavery, serfdom or compulsory transfer of a person into dependence upon another person), and the holding a person in servitude or the illegal removal of a person's tissues or organs.

75. Latvia refers to the information provided in para. 40 of the Initial Report and notes that amendments made to Article 165¹ of the *Criminal Law* specify the definition of the term “Sending a Person for Sexual Exploitation with the Person's Consent” and determine that it is any act which facilitates legal or illegal movement, transit or residence of a person for such purpose within the territory of one country or several countries. The *Criminal Law* provides that the applicable punishment for sending a person for sexual exploitation is the deprivation of liberty for a period of up to five years or temporary deprivation of liberty, or community service, or a fine. The criminal offence provided for in Article 165¹ is separated from Article 154¹ “Trafficking in Human Beings” of the *Criminal Law* because the person is subjected

to sexual exploitation with the person's consent which is considered a less dangerous criminal offence, consequently, less serious punishments are applicable.

76. Latvia operates an efficient international cooperation mechanism to ensure the combating of trafficking in human beings. The State Police successfully cooperates with other countries when victims from Latvia are identified in other countries. In 2014, on 462 occasions the State Police exchanged information and intelligence on cases of trafficking in human beings and sexual exploitation where women were recruited by deceit, promising a job, or with their own consent, in 2015 – on 381 occasions, and in 2016 – on 677 occasions, mainly with German, Belgian, Cypriot, British, Irish, and Swiss law enforcement authorities.

77. In 2014 and 2015, the State Police officials participated in projects “*Improvement of Victim Support in Criminal Proceedings: Training in Combatting of Trafficking in Human Beings for the Personnel of Law Enforcement Institutions*” and “*Trafficking in Human Beings Focused on Forced Labour, Children and Sexual Exploitation*” of the prevention project “VISUP” initiated by the Estonian Ministry of Justice.

78. Between 2014 and 2016, the State Police officials participated also in the project “*Nordic, Baltic, Russian Cooperation on the Fight against Human Trafficking – Regional Cooperation Across Juridical, Law Enforcement, Social Authorities*” of the Nordic Council of Ministers. In the framework of the project, the State Police in cooperation with the Nordic Council of Ministers organised a conference “*Gender Violence – Nordic-Baltic Dialogue*”. In 2017, the State Police officials participated in the conference “*Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings – Expert Forums*” in Estonia.

79. In 2016, the State Police officials participated as experts in the international project of European Commission “*Preventing Human Trafficking and Sham Marriages: A Multidisciplinary Solution*” (HESTIA), by providing information on the best practices in Latvia regarding the fight against the sham marriages as a part of risk of trafficking in human beings. Within the project, information for the press on the use of the concept “forced marriage” in context of trafficking in human beings was prepared. In 2017, the representatives of the State Police continued to participate as experts in the activities organized within the project STROM II “*Strengthening the Role of Municipalities in the Work against Trafficking in Human Beings*” implemented by the Council of the Baltic Sea States and Ministry of Interior of Latvia.

80. In accordance with the EU Council conclusions on the EU priorities for the fight against organised crime 2014–2017, a series of measures in the framework of the European multi-disciplinary platform against criminal threats (*EMPACT*) were taken. One of the priorities was “*Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings*”, where the State Police officials actively participated.

81. Extensive measures on prevention of trafficking in human beings are implemented in the framework of the State Programme for the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings 2004–2008 and the Action Programme for the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings 2009–2013. In 2016, the work on the fight against trafficking in human beings continued with the implementation of the tasks envisaged in the Guidelines for the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings 2014–2020, with particular attention being paid to the fight against forced labour, sham marriage and living on the avails of prostitution.

82. Measures included in the Guidelines for the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings 2014–2020 are in line with the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012–2016 and conventions on eradication of

trafficking in human beings binding for Latvia. The Guidelines are based on four internationally acknowledged basic principles of the policy for action against trafficking in human beings: 1) preventive actions; 2) protection of victims; 3) criminal investigation, prosecution and trial; 4) co-operation of competent authorities and organisations at national and international level.

83. In the framework of the programmes, in particular, the cooperation with the local governments is particularly strengthened with the aim to develop the social work in the street and to better recognize victims of trafficking in human beings, which is the first step for the person to receive legal, social and psychological assistance. Furthermore, the cooperation with the Latvian diplomatic missions abroad is improved ensuring accessible information on safe return of victims of trafficking in human beings. For example, the Latvian Embassy in Ireland works actively to help Latvian women involved in “fake marriages”. Until September 2011, the Embassy has participated in identifying and termination of at least 89 suspicious marriages. The information about the funding allocated to the Ministry of Interior for eradication of all forms of trafficking in women is in Annex 5.

84. Between 2014 and 2017, no cases of transit of trafficking in human beings in Latvia were detected, and no cases of transferring of persons for trafficking in human beings to Latvia were detected, which leads to the conclusion that Latvia is not considered as a target country for trafficking in human beings, but still remains the country of origin of victims of trafficking in human beings.

85. In 2014, the State Police resolved in total 16 criminal offences related to trafficking in human beings, sending persons for sexual exploitation, abuse of an opportunity to obtain for the person the right to reside in the EU Member States, living on the avails of prostitution, and criminal offences related to the use or distribution of pornographic materials. In 2015, 23 criminal offences and in 2016 – 37 criminal offences of this type were detected, but in 2017 – 81 criminal offences.

86. In 2014, criminal proceedings for trafficking in human beings committed by an organised group with elements of sexual exploitation, forced service provision and forced labour according to Article 154¹ of the *Criminal Law* were initiated in Latvia. In the framework of these criminal proceedings and criminal proceedings initiated in previous years, 14 persons, including 10 men and 4 women, were found suspects, and 7 adult women were found victims of trafficking in human beings. In 2015, 3 criminal proceedings according to Article 154¹ of the *Criminal Law* were initiated in Latvia. In the framework of these criminal proceedings, 10 persons were found suspects, including 6 women (among them – 1 minor) and 4 men, and 4 persons were found victims of trafficking in human beings, including 1 adult with vulnerability and 3 minors. In 2016, 3 criminal proceedings related to trafficking in human beings to foreign countries committed by an organized group were initiated in Latvia, but in 2017, 6 criminal proceedings related to trafficking in human beings were initiated.

87. In 2014, one convicting judgment for trafficking in human beings according to Article 154¹ of the *Criminal Law* entered into force (one person was convicted) and 12 judgments convicting for sending a person for sexual exploitation according to Article 165¹ of the *Criminal Law* entered into force (13 persons were convicted). In 2015, no judgments convicting for crimes according to Article 154¹ of the *Criminal Law* entered into force and 7 convicting judgments according to Article 165¹ of the *Criminal Law* entered into force (9 persons were convicted). In 2016, the convicting judgments for crimes according to Article 154¹ of the *Criminal Law* entered into force in 3 cases (4 persons were convicted) and 9 convicting judgments for crimes according to Article 165¹ of the *Criminal Law* entered into force (12 persons were convicted).

88. The social rehabilitation of victims of trafficking in human beings is envisaged in the *Law on Social Services and Social Assistance* and relevant Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers adopted on the basis of the Law. A person who is recognized as a victim of trafficking in human beings can receive a State-funded social rehabilitation course for up to 180 days, which includes ensuring shelter, food and basic necessities (until solving of issues related to permanent residence and employment), psychosocial assistance, including individual consultations of social worker, psychologist, lawyer (including support to the victim during the criminal proceedings and representation before court, if necessary), medical practitioners and other professionals according to the client's needs.

89. If a person has been recognised as a victim by a decision of the person directing the criminal proceedings on trafficking in human beings or he or she is assigned the status of a witness, he or she has the right to receive support in relation to the criminal proceedings initiated – psychosocial assistance (including individual consultations of a lawyer, social worker, psychologist), services of an interpreter, assistance in drafting of legal documents and, if necessary, representation in court, not exceeding 150 hours per year. In accordance with the *Law on State Compensation to Victims*, a victim of trafficking in human beings who, in accordance with the procedures laid down in the *Criminal Procedure Law*, has been recognised as a victim, has the right to receive a State compensation for moral injury, physical suffering or financial loss resulting from an intentional criminal offence.

90. To fight the “sham marriages”, in 2013, amendments to the *Criminal Law* entered into force supplementing the Law with Article 285² “Abuse of the Possibility to Acquire the Right to Stay in the Republic of Latvia Legally, other Member State of the European Union, Member State of the European Economic Area or Swiss Confederation”, which provides for the deprivation of liberty for a period of up to five years or temporary deprivation of liberty, or community service, or a fine with or without confiscation of property.

91. The State Border Guard has drafted methodological instructions for the officials of immigration control departments of the State Border Guard on the procedures for examining possible sham marriages. The purpose of the methodological instructions is to define a single verification mechanism planned and implemented by the officials of immigration control departments of the State Border Guard.

92. The State Police officials participate in international events and trainings on regular basis in order to educate themselves on issues related to combating trafficking in human beings, for example, they have taken part in courses organized by the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL). The State Police officials have participated in the international seminar “*Improved Coordination in Protection and Prevention of Trafficking in Children*” and knowledge forum “*Social Consequences of Trafficking in Human Beings*”.

93. The State Border Guard College has developed 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. In the framework of this program, the training takes place once a year, involving approximately 18 to 20 officers from the State Border Guard territorial boards, which then provide the education of the respective board personnel in the field of prevention and combating of trafficking in human beings. Thus, systematic education of the State Border Guard personnel on identification of victims of trafficking in human beings and further actions finding the signs indicating that the person may be a victim of trafficking in human beings is provided.

94. In the courses of the first level professional higher education program “*Police Work*” and adult informal education programs of the State Police College, the officials

are trained in due investigation of the crime of trafficking in human beings and other issues related to combating trafficking in human beings (see Annex 4).

95. The Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs provides its employees with the training on issues related to the fight against trafficking in human beings in order to ensure they are capable of recognizing victims of trafficking in human beings and responding appropriately if there is a reasonable suspicion that a person has suffered from trafficking in human beings, by informing and involving the responsible departments as well as ensuring that the victim receives the necessary support and protection. Educational material Guidelines for Identification of Trafficking in Human Beings for the Purpose of Exploitation is published in the website of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs for the information of, and use by employees.

96. During the reporting period, the Training Centre implemented several training activities for judges and the judicial system employees on issues related to combating trafficking in human beings. In 2014, within the framework of the training of candidates to the office of a judge, the Latvian Judicial Training Centre organized a 90-minute lecture “*Current Challenges in Combating Trafficking in Human Beings*”. In 2014, the Training Centre in cooperation with the U.S. Embassy in Latvia organised a conference “*Investigation, Prosecution and Court Proceedings of Trafficking in Human Beings: the US and the Latvian Case Study*”. In the framework of the project “*Professional training for judges and prosecutors: Fight against sexual violence against children*”, in 2017, the Training Centre implemented training about a child as a victim of trafficking in human beings that was intended for judges and prosecutors.

97. In 2015, an international seminar “*Combating of Trafficking in Human Beings – Towards a More Comprehensive Approach*” organized by the Academy of European Law (ERA) was held in Riga. The seminar was attended by participants and speakers from different EU countries including 5 prosecutors and 2 judges from Latvia. In 2015, a 90-minute long lecture cycle (6 lectures in a year) “*Case Law on Trafficking in Human Beings*” took place. Each lecture was attended by another group of participants – judges, judges’ assistants, sworn attorneys, prosecutors and the SRS employees. In total, 295 participants attended the lectures.

98. In 2016, the Training Centre offered to the judges participation in international seminars on issues related to trafficking in human beings in the Czech Republic “*Human Trafficking and Crimes related to Refugees*” and the Netherlands “*Trafficking in Human Beings*”. Each seminar was attended by 1 judge from Latvia.

99. With regard to the provision of social rehabilitation, in 2017, the Ombudsperson published a research paper “*The Role of Local Governments’ Social Services, Orphan’s and Custody Courts and Branch Offices of the State Employment Agency of Latvia in the Process of Identification of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings*” (for 2014–2016). The research identifies shortcomings in the implementation of the training of employees in the local government institutions and insufficient awareness of the staff about the process of granting of the social rehabilitation services as well as describes problems with the identification of NGOs providing social rehabilitation services and points to the need for development of formal national consulting mechanism.⁹

100. The State Police continues informing the public on the progress in crime detection and prevention by giving interviews, statements and informative materials to various media. Between 2014 and 2016, such cooperation took place with the magazine “Playboy” on prevention of trafficking in human beings and exploitation of

⁹ http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/uploads/content/publikacijas/trafficking_in_human_beings_in_latvia_1496389389.pdf.

prostitution by third parties, “Latvian Radio 4” on the risks of trafficking in human beings (prostitution), problems and latest trends related to sham marriage in Latvia, the student broadcasting KIWI TV on sham marriage, and the national information agency LETA on the problem of prostitution and living on the avails of prostitution in Latvia. In 2017, the officials of the State Police give an interview to LNT news service about the trafficking in human beings with intention of exploitation abroad, and to LTV – about the trafficking in human beings.

IV.2. Committee recommendation in paragraph 60 – reduction of prostitution

101. Latvia refers to the information provided in para. 38 of the Initial Report and draws the attention to the fact that during the reporting period several amendments were made to Article 164 “Involvement of a Person in Prostitution and Use of Prostitution” of the *Criminal Law*. Currently, Article 164 of the *Criminal Law* provides for the following aggravating elements regarding the involvement of a person in prostitution: abusing the trust or by deceit; by taking advantage of the dependence of the person on the offender or of his or her state of helplessness; intentional use of prostitution of a victim in trafficking in human beings; committed by a group of persons or organized group; committed against a minor or underage person; or involves providing premises to minors for the purpose of prostitution. Depending on the qualification of criminal offence provided for in Article 164 of the *Criminal Law*, such criminal activities can be punished with deprivation of liberty for a period of up to fifteen years. The punishment can be supplemented with additional penalties such as confiscation of property and probationary supervision.

102. The procedure of prostitution restriction is laid down in *Regulation No 32 “Regulations Regarding Restriction of Prostitution”* of the Cabinet of Ministers adopted on 22 January 2008. This Regulation allows to offer or provide sexual services for fee only in a living space which is the property of the person concerned or regarding which he or she has entered into a rental contract. Such living space must be located more than 100 meters from an educational institution or church, a minor may not be present there and the provision of sexual services in such living space is prohibited if other persons living in this space or house where the room is located, object against it. The managers of entertainment and recreational establishments must ensure that sexual services for fee are not offered, provided and received in these establishments. Article 174⁴ of *Administrative Violations Code* provides that a violation of the regulations regarding the restriction of prostitution by natural and legal persons are to be punished with a fine.

103. Latvia informs that draft law “*Law on Prostitution Restrictions*” has been drafted and supported in the Cabinet of Ministers, envisaging its entry into force on 1 January 2019. The aim of the draft law is to restrict and reduce the prostitution, reduce the risks of trafficking in human beings, prevent involvement of children and young people in prostitution, reduce risks of violence against persons engaged in prostitution, and promote the termination of engagement in the prostitution and use of prostitution. The draft law provides for social rehabilitation opportunities to persons who are engaged in prostitution, and behavioural adjustment programmes to persons who use prostitution.

104. Minor and underage victims of prostitutions are provided with social rehabilitation services in accordance with the programme of social rehabilitation for victims of trafficking in human beings (see paras. 88 and 89 of the Report).

105. Latvia refers to para. 39 of the Initial Report and points out that several amendments were made to Article 165 of the *Criminal Law* during the reporting period. First, the punishment for living on the avails of prostitution is specified: the deprivation of liberty for a period of up to five years or temporary deprivation of

liberty, or community service, or a fine, with or without the confiscation of property and probationary supervision for a period of up to three years. Second, the elements of criminal offence included in Article 165 of the *Criminal Law* is supplemented by reinforcing the liability for criminal offences committed by an organised group or if they have been committed on a person who has not attained the age of sixteen years.

106. In accordance with Article 6 of the UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, Latvia does not maintain an official register of persons engaging in prostitution.

107. 11 criminal cases in 2014 and 7 criminal cases in 2015 were forwarded to the prosecutor's office for prosecution for living on the avails of prostitution. It should be noted that in 2015, in the framework of 7 criminal proceedings, operation of 4 organized groups of persons living on the avails of prostitution was terminated and, in the investigation, movable and immovable properties as well as financial assets in amount of EUR 315,651 of suspects and their relatives were arrested. In 2016, 4 criminal cases were forwarded to the prosecutor's office for prosecution and 1 criminal proceedings were terminated in relation to living on the avails of prostitution. Both women and men were among persons apprehended in relation to organizing living on the avails of prostitution. Some of the apprehended women have been prostitutes in the past. In 2017, the State Police initiated 8 criminal proceedings in relation to the living on the avails of prostitution; 6 criminal cases were forward to the public prosecutor's offices for criminal prosecution; 6 criminal proceedings are considered disclosed. Statistics on adjudication of criminal offences related to prostitution are provided in Annex 6.

108. In recent years it has not been established that persons living on the avails of prostitution are violent against the persons involved in prostitution in order to coerce them into prostitution. The State Police actively fights against persons living on the avails of prostitution and prostitution promoters, in order to prevent involvement of minors in prostitution or coercion of adult persons into prostitution.

109. Regarding the Committee's request to provide information about "sex tourism", Latvia informs that amendments to the regulatory enactments are made in order to reduce the demand for prostitution services while also determining the client's responsibility: third party activities promoting prostitution are prohibited (see para. 101 of the Report) and a person engaged in prostitution are subject to special requirements concerning the conditions under which he or she may operate (see para. 102 of the Report).

110. With regard to issues of pornography restriction Latvia provides the following information. Article 4(1) of the *Law on Pornography Restrictions* provides for the following: child pornography is prohibited in the circulation of material of a pornographic nature, as well as the circulation of material of such pornographic nature, in which sexual activities of people with animals, necrophilia or the sexual acts of gratification in a violent way are described or depicted. Article 4(2) stipulates that it is prohibited to involve a child in the circulation of material of a pornographic nature, including the ensuring of access to material of a pornographic nature or child pornography to a child, as well as to allow the specified material to be accessible to a child, while Article 4(3) provides that the circulation of material of a pornographic nature acquired against the will of a person and demonstration of such pornographic performance, where the person is involved against his or her will, is prohibited.

111. Since 2013, the law extends the concept of child pornography stipulating that a child pornography is not only a pornographic material, but also a pornographic performance involving the child. The definition of the performance is laid down in Article 1(1¹) of the law.

112. Article 166 of the *Criminal Law* provides for liability for violating the requirements for the demonstration of a pornographic performance or other provisions regarding the restriction of entertainment of intimate nature, or provisions regarding the handling of a material of pornographic nature, if it has been committed on a significant scale or substantial harm has been caused by committing it; for visiting or demonstration of such pornographic performance or handling of such materials of pornographic nature that contain child pornography, sexual activities of people with animals, necrophilia or sexual gratification in a violent way; for encouraging, involvement, forced participation or utilisation of minors in a pornographic performance or the production of a material of pornographic nature; for encouraging, involvement, forced participation or utilisation of persons who have not attained the age of sixteen years in a pornographic performance or the production of a material of pornographic nature; for committing the acts provided for in Paragraph three or four of this Article, if they have been committed by an organised group or if they have been committed by means of violence.

113. In 2014, Latvia started the participation in the implementation of the EU Policy Cycle in line with the EU Council conclusions on setting the EU's priorities for the fight against serious and organised crime between 2014 and 2017. The EU Council conclusions set 9 priorities for the fight against serious and organised crime. Latvia regularly participates in drawing up of the Operational Action Plans and the planned activities. In 2015, Latvia participated in 4 of 23 events, but in 2016 in – 6 of 19 events. In 2017, Latvia participated in implementation of 9 of 13 priorities and implementation of 9 of 18 measures of Operational Action Plan.

114. Since 2015, the Central Criminal Police Board of the State Police implements an international operation “PERONS” [“PLATFORM”], which is based on an international project in combating internet paedophilia. Within this project, the international organisation “*Child rescue coalition*” provides information about IP addresses in the territory of Latvia, the users of which participate in circulation of prohibited materials in *peer-to-peer* networks. The information provided by the Child Rescue Coalition allows to identify the internet users, who participate in the circulation of child sexual abuse materials in Latvia, and select them. In addition, the State Police uses the Global Unique Identifier (GUID) for tracking the movement of a specific Latvian internet user and access by him or her from different geographic locations and IP addresses. Currently, the database contains information about the most active users in the territory of Latvia, who constantly commit offences that are criminally punishable, namely, deal with circulation of child sexual abuse materials.

V. Article 7 of the Convention

V.1 Committee recommendation in paragraph 62 – women at decision-making levels

115. During the reporting period, the last elections of Latvian parliament (the Saeima) took place on 4 October 2014, where 19 women (19 per cent) and 81 men (81 per cent) were elected for 100 seats. The assessment of the results of the previous elections of Latvian Saeima shows that the proportion of the elected women is not high, and since 2006 it remains at level of 19 per cent (see Annex 2).

116. The elections of Latvian local governments took place in 2013 in 9 cities of the republic (Riga, Jurmala, Valmiera, Liepaja, Ventspils, Rezekne, Daugavpils, Jekabpils and Jelgava) and 110 regional communities. 5,186 of the candidates were men (59.4 per cent) and 3,539 – women (40.6 per cent); from those elected 1,113 men (69 per cent) and 505 women (31 per cent). Compared to the previous elections of local governments that took place in 2009, the number of women elected in 2013 has fallen (see Annex 2).

117. In 2009, in the Cabinet of Ministers, 3 of 14 ministers were women, but in the beginning of the year 2012, the proportion of women in the Cabinet of Ministers increased – 4 of 14 ministers were women. At the end of the year 2017, the post of ministers in Latvia were taken by 3 women (21 per cent) and 11 men (79 per cent). The proportion of women and men in posts of ministers varies and the analysis of the situation in Latvia in previous years leads to conclusion that in 2014 and 2015, the proportion of women was slightly above the EU average, but in 2016, the proportion of women fell.

118. According to the data on the breakdown of civil servants employed in Latvia by groups of posts in institutions that was compiled by the Ministry of Finance, at the end of January 2016, the total number of employed persons was 11,272, including 76 per cent women and 24 per cent men. In 2016, the gender proportion, compared to 2013, has remained unchanged because also in 2013 the public administration employed 76 per cent women and 24 per cent men. On 31 January 2016, as in previous years, the proportion of women was higher in the lower groups of public administration posts (specialists, heads of departments and deputies) while the proportion of women in the groups of senior posts gradually fell (see Annex 2).

119. In 2015, Latvia was in the first place among the EU Member States with the highest proportion of women on the boards of listed companies. In 2015, it was 30.4 per cent (the EU average was 22.7 per cent). Whereas in October 2017, Latvia's indicators in comparison with other EU Member States have decreased, ranking Latvia only in the 9th place with 28.8 per cent of women on the boards of listed companies.

120. In 2013, the proportion of women-scientists in Latvia is still the highest in Europe – 52 per cent, which is also significantly higher than the EU average of 33 per cent. In 2016, the total number of the scientific staff in Latvia was 6,810, including 3,566 women (see Annex 2).

121. In order to promote a balanced representation of women and men in economic decision-making in Latvia, in 2014, the Society Integration Foundation in cooperation with the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Economy, the association “*Latvian confederation of employers*”, the Resource Centre for Women “MARTA” and the “Leader” implemented the project “*Gender Equality in Economic Decision-Making – a Tool of Economic Competitiveness and Equality Promotion*”.¹⁰ In the framework of the project different public awareness activities were organized, sociological survey on public awareness and attitudes to gender equality issues was conducted, the exchange of experience of the Latvian business school students and professors was organised to introduce to them the gender equality dimension in business management, as well as the Sustainable Development Index was updated by supplementing it with the gender equality criteria. Within the project, public awareness-rising campaign was implemented in order to reduce the public stereotypes of equal opportunities of men and women in labour market and professional development.

122. To draw attention to the issue of participation of women in politics, during the reporting period, a discussion was organized with the representatives of political parties represented in the Saeima on whether and what are the obstacles to women's more active operation in politics as well as how big is the media's role and impact on the provision of equivalent opportunities to men and women – politicians to take decision-making positions.

¹⁰ http://www.sif.gov.lv/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9175%3APar-projektu-Dzimumu-lidztiesiba-instruments-un-vertiba&catid=2%3Afonds&lang=lv.

V.2. Committee recommendation in paragraph 64 – involvement of NGOs

123. The cooperation of public administration with NGOs is described in paras. 65–75 of the Core Document, while the information about the civil society involvement in the national political processes is provided in paras. 143–146 of the Core Document.

124. The Ministry of Welfare has established cooperation with NGOs that can be considered to be the most active organisations on national level in this area: the Network of Cooperation of Non-governmental Organisation of Latvian Women, the Resource Centre for Women “MARTA”, and the Women Rights Institute. These organizations bring together about 70 different formal associations and informal interest groups, whose activity is directly aimed at implementation of gender equality, protection of women’s rights, eliminating of gender stereotypes, and educating the public.

125. All the documents developed in the field of gender equality, including in connection with the situation in the Beijing Action Platform areas and Latvia’s progress in implementation of gender equality policies in such areas, are available online, on the website of the Ministry of Welfare.

126. Since 2016, the State budget programme “NGO foundation” is available. This programme provides support to NGOs in order to promote sustainable development of the civil society by allowing the associations and foundations to guide and develop democratic processes at all levels of the public administration, to provide services intended for improvement of the public life quality, organize events informing and educating the public about the ongoing processes in the country thus letting the public to participate and get involved in addressing the topical issues in a timely manner. With the support of the programme “NGO foundation”, in 2016, the assistance was given to NGOs to promote the equality between women and men, allowing more effective representation of different groups of society and interests in the processes of drawing up and discussing sectoral policy documents, as well as implementing informative and educational activities.

VI. Article 9 of the Convention

127. During the reporting period, the information contained in the Initial Report on Article 9 of the Convention has not changed, namely, the acquisition, change or retention of citizenship as well as the granting of the citizenship to a child is provided without any discrimination. Latvia also informs that the information on retaining the citizenship when concluding marriage or in the case of change of the husband’s citizenship provided in para. 81 of the Initial Report has not changed.

128. During the naturalisation process, which is based on person’s free will, women are socially more active, namely, between 2011 and 2015, the Office of Citizenship and Migration received 10,861 submissions from applicants for the Latvian citizenship. 5,676 or 52 per cent of submissions were signed by women.

129. Latvia refers to the information provided in paras. 202–206 of the Core Documents and notes that the amendments to the *Citizenship Law* improved the naturalisation procedure and simplified the procedure for granting the citizenship, taking into account the history of Latvia, the current increasing mobility of individuals and the need to maintain a link with citizens throughout the world.

VII. Article 10 of the Convention

VII.1. Committee recommendation in paragraph 66 – gender stereotypes in education

130. Latvia refers to the information provided in the Initial Report and notes that there is no gender-based division for obtaining of education in Latvia. All persons have equal opportunities to obtain education and receive educational documents regardless of gender. Statistical data on those taking the centralized examinations and the comparison of their achievements in the State centralised examinations by gender is provided in Annex 1.

131. In order to promote the pre-school teachers' understanding of equal opportunities for boys and girls, to reduce stereotypes about one or the other gender, as well as to promote teachers' education in these issues, in 2011–2012, the training for pre-school education specialists was organised giving a general idea of the gender equality principles when working with children on daily basis. In addition, materials for pre-school educational institutions were produced and distributed.

132. In 2012, the Ministry of Welfare with financial support of the Nordic Council of Ministers implemented the project of translating of the Danish children books "*The Day when Carl was Carline*" and "*The Day when Ruth was Richard*" and the methodical aid "*Kindergartens with a place for Pippi-Princes and Pirate-Princesses*", which are aimed at educating pre-school teachers on promoting of equal opportunities to boys and girls. 280 pre-school education specialists in different cities of Latvia gained an insight into what equal opportunities to, and rights of women and men mean, why is it important to speak about the equality aspects already in the pre-school, and how to do it.

133. Between 2010 and 2013, with co-financing from the European Social Fund, the continuing education of general education teachers was provided. Issues related to the value education, health education and gender equality were included in the content of the professional development courses for social science and pre-school teachers, directors, methodologists and teachers of pre-school educational institutions. Nearly 4,000 of Latvia's pedagogues attended the training.

134. The compliance of the educational literature with the national education standard is assessed and approved by the National Centre for Education of the Republic of Latvia. When assessing the compliance of the educational literature with the standard, the National Centre for Education assesses also its compliance with the human rights principles, including gender equality principle, enshrined in the Constitution of Latvia and other regulatory enactments.

135. In 2010, the National Centre for Education in cooperation with teachers of the Pedagogy and Psychology Faculty of the University of Latvia drew up methodical recommendations,¹¹ which include also recommendations on elaboration and assessment of educational literature contents from gender perspective. The methodical material emphasizes the compliance with the principle of equal opportunities in textbook and exercises, illustrations and language expressions. In 2012 and 2013, the National Centre for Education implemented a 16-hour programme "*Textbook in the Context of Modern Educational Process (Assessment of the Educational Literature Compliance with the Standard)*" to improve the professional qualification of the reviewers involved in the assessment of the educational literature. Within the programme the educational literature was analysed from the perspective of health and human safety, and gender equality including analysis of the quality of visual information of the educational literature and its compliance with the objectives

¹¹ http://visc.gov.lv/vispizglitiba/saturs/dokumenti/metmat/mac_lit_izstrade_20100202.pdf.

of education. The programme participants learned the practical identification of various gender stereotypes and situations that constitute wrong perceptions about equal rights and opportunities of boys and girls.

136. To reduce the educational segregation, in 2013, a working group established by the Gender Equality Committee drew up the recommendation “*Balancing of the Number of Women and Men and Gender Mainstreaming in Educational Process and Content at Pre-school, General, Vocational and Higher education Levels in Latvia by 2020*” and sent the recommendation to the authorities involved in the educational policy making.

137. During the reporting period, in secondary schools of Latvia discussions for young people were organized in order to reduce gender stereotypes and promote equal opportunities for boys and girls. In addition, educational movies for three age groups were created (for grade 1–4, “Think for yourself” for grade 5–8, and “Being strong in the choice I have made” for grade 9–12). Each movie had enclosed a task collection corresponding to the movie content. Movies were reproduced and sent to the schools in Latvia together with the task brochures.

138. In the educational content, the gender equality issues are discussed in the context of human rights (equal rights and opportunities, freedom from prejudice and prohibition of discrimination). Gender equality issues are directly included in the school subject “Social science”. Indirectly, the issues of gender equality are discussed in the following subjects: geography, history, foreign language, Latvian literature, where the development of traditions or culture history or religious issues are reviewed or a folk song is used that reflects the differences between the genders.

139. In the primary education, starting with 5th grade, the learning of home economics and technology is organized by dividing the students in two groups in the class. In the subject “Home economics and technology”, every year the student chooses one of the technology learning programmes offered by the school – technologies of textile and other similar materials or technologies of wood, timber, metal and other similar materials. Consequently, students are disaggregated in groups not by gender but based on each student’s interest in the particular programme.

VII.2. Additional information

140. With regard to equal opportunities to receive scholarships and study loans, Latvia informs that the legislation that establishes the procedure for receiving scholarships and study loans, does not provide for different rules for receiving the aid on the basis of gender. A scholarship is granted to students who acquire the programmes of vocational primary education, vocational secondary education and higher education. The amount of the scholarship depends on the student’s educational achievements, attendance, and social activities. This scholarship is awarded regardless of gender – if several students apply for it, then, in the case of an equivalent level of educational achievements, the preference is given to persons with disabilities, orphans or children without parental care as well as students from needy or large families.

141. Latvia refers to the Initial Report about equal opportunities to actively participate in sports and activities of physical training, regardless of gender. In addition Latvia informs that the purpose of the *Education Law* is to ensure every inhabitant of Latvia with an opportunity to develop his or her mental and physical potential to become an independent and intelligent personality, a member of a democratic state and society of Latvia. In accordance with Article 3 of the *Sports Law*, the principle of equality must be observed in the field of sports, which provides that every person has the right to engage in sport.

142. In accordance with the statistics compiled by the Latvian Sports Federations Council, on 31 December 2016, there were 3,758 officially registered sports coaches (sports specialists) in Latvia; among them, 1,669 (44 per cent) were women and 2,089 (56 per cent) – men.

143. With regard to the possibilities to obtain information about family health issues, Latvia informs that during the reporting period, a number of informational educational activities to promote the population awareness of family health issues were implemented. Since 2012, different informative materials for mothers are issued such as “*Breastfeeding ABC*” and “*How to Safeguard Your Child’s Life*”, a footage on a variety of topics related to child safety has been prepared. In 2017, the Ministry of Health and the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control implemented the campaign “*Child-Safe*” and prepared a booklet “*Recommendations to the Parents for Prevention of the Child Injuries*”. Informative materials are available also on the website of the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

144. Expectant mothers can obtain the information on pregnancy monitoring from their care providers (midwife, gynaecologist, or family doctor) as well as on the website of the National Health Service. In 2014, an informative portal for expectant mothers and young parents was opened.¹² The portal was created in cooperation with the Association of Latvian Gynaecologists and Maternity Specialists, the Association of Latvian Rural Family Doctors, the National Health Service, and the State Emergency Medical Service. Its purpose is to provide an easy-to-use website for the prospective and young parents, where a non-commercial, extensive, professional and high-quality information and recommendations for a healthy pregnancy planning and course approved by national and medical professionals is available in one place along with the information on new-born and infant care, as well as other information useful for the young parents.

145. The Centre for Disease Prevention and Control in cooperation with the NGOs and the private sector implements health promotion activities on various health issues, for example, in collaboration with Roche Academy, the “Pregnancy calendar” was developed allowing to keep the track of the necessary examinations during pregnancy and baby’s development.

146. The Ministry of Health has developed the healthy eating recommendations for infant feeding. The recommendations emphasize the role of the exclusive breast-feeding as well as provides dietary recommendations for healthy food preparation for children aged 2 to 18 years and indicative daily product consumption norms.¹³ In 2017, the Ministry of Health revised its healthy food recommendations “*Recommended Energy and Nutrient Doses for the Latvia’s Population*”,¹⁴ which include energy and nutrient doses for women including during pregnancy and lactation. Furthermore, in 2017, the Ministry of Health developed the healthy eating recommendations for women during pregnancy.¹⁵

147. One of the basic tasks of a nurse and a medical assistant working in a family doctor’s practice or basic territory of family doctor operation, and while exercising the family doctor’s tasks in disease diagnostics, treatment and prevention, is to educate patients and their relatives in health promotion and health care including provision of reproductive and family planning consultations, advising the parents of

¹² www.grutnieciba.lv.

¹³ Healthy nutrition recommendations are available at:
http://www.vm.gov.lv/lv/tava_veseliba/veseligs_uzturs/.

¹⁴ http://www.vm.gov.lv/images/userfiles/Tava%20veseliba/VM_ietecamas_energijas_un_uzturvielu_devas_g.pdf.

¹⁵ http://www.vm.gov.lv/images/userfiles/Tava%20veseliba/VM_ves_uztura_ietekumi_grutn.pdf.

the development of new-borns, infants and children and breast feeding issues.¹⁶ From 2012, the prospective parents are provided with training on child care and safety. The training is provided by expectant mother care professional.

148. Latvia's Family Planning and Sexual Health association "Papardes zieds" works to ensure that every individual can exercise the sexual and reproductive rights so that everybody could have the access to quality services and the choice would be made on the basis of qualitative information. The association provides information on issues related to sexual and reproductive health and gives to people information on services in family planning.

149. Additional information about the public awareness-rising measures in relation to the health issues is provided in paras. 171–185 of the Report.

VIII. Article 11 of the Convention

VIII.1. Committee recommendation in paragraph 68 – equal opportunities in the labour market

150. With reference to para. 179 of the Core Document and paras. 124–126 of the Initial Report regarding the provisions of the *Labour Law*, Latvia additionally informs that during the reporting period, amendments to the *Labour Law* were made strengthening the equal treatment in employment. The direct discrimination definition in the *Labour Law* is supplemented with a sentence that provides that less favourable treatment due to granting of a prenatal and maternity leave, or a leave to the father of a child is to be considered as direct discrimination based on the gender of a person. In addition, during the reporting period, the indirect discrimination definition was clarified stipulating that indirect discrimination exists if apparently neutral provisions, criterion or practice cause or may cause adverse consequences for persons belonging to one gender, except in cases where such provisions, criterion or practice is objectively substantiated with a legal purpose and the selected means to achieve the purpose are proportional.

151. Harassment of a person within the meaning of the *Labour Law* is subjecting a person to such actions which are unwanted from the point of view of this person, which are associated with his or her belonging to a specific gender, including actions of a sexual nature, if the purpose or result of such actions is the violation of the person's dignity and the creation of an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, degrading or offensive environment.

152. In 2015, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the Inclusive Employment Guidelines 2015–2020, which provide for the promotion of equal opportunities in the labour market for all persons regardless of age, gender or disability, and improving employment opportunities to underrepresented groups, such as the law-qualified persons, young people, women, and elderly citizens. The most significant problems in providing equal opportunities of men and women are following: the horizontal and vertical gender segregation in different sectors and occupations, the gender pay gap, which affects the person's financial security after the retirement age, the opportunity to find the balance in the family and working life, and the distribution of responsibilities in the family. One of the policy objectives is to reduce the identified pay gap between women and men.

¹⁶ Annex 12 to Regulation No.1529 "Procedure regarding Organizing and Financing of Health Care" of the Cabinet of Ministers adopted on 17 December 2013.

153. Information about the balancing of the family and working life is provided in paras. 29–34 of the Report, and the information about women in senior decision-making posts is provided in paras. 115–122 of the Report.

154. Between 2010 and 2017, the employment level of men and women has increased while the unemployment rate has fallen (see Annex 7). The employment rates of women and men are positive compared to the averages of the EU Member States – the female employment rate in Latvia exceeds the EU-28 indicator by 2 percentage points on average and the employment rate of men is only for 0.1 percentage point lower than in the EU-28 average. Additional information about the employment rate is available in Annex 3 of the Core Document.

155. Although the overall employment rate of women tends to grow each year, becoming a parent still has a more adverse effect on the employment of women as compared to men.

156. The employment indicators of women and men analysed from the point of view of the higher education obtained shows a positive aspect in Latvia: the employment rate of the persons of both genders increases corresponding to the rise of the education level. In 2017, the employment level of men with the highest education in age group 20–64 increased to 89.1 per cent, and of women – to 85.9 per cent (in 2012, it was 86.6 per cent for men and 84.7 per cent for women). The positive impact of the education is particularly evident with respect to women, thus pointing to the fact that the education is one of the most effective strategies to the prosperity and economic independence.

157. Since the economic crisis, when the registered unemployment rate reached 19.8 per cent in 2010, the situation in employment is gradually improving, and in 2016, the registered unemployment rate in the country fell to 6.5 per cent. The economic crisis affected the construction industry significantly, and jobs were lost mostly by men. The economic crisis resulted in the increase of unemployment rate among men from 8.4 per cent in 2008 to 22.7 per cent in 2010, but among women – from 7.1 per cent in 2008 to 16.6 per cent in 2010. In the post-crisis period, the unemployment rates of the persons of both genders have decreased but the changes are more significant in respect to men than to women.

158. The unemployed persons registered in the State Employment Agency receive support in job search with the objective to start the employment sooner and more efficiently. Employment support measures are offered according to the individual profile of the unemployed (taking into account education, age, work experience, other factors), the profile changes and the person's individual desires, considering the duration of unemployment as well.

159. The State Employment Agency offers to the unemployed a chance to obtain new professional qualifications, professional development and re-qualification, involvement in informal education programmes and short-term training. During the social and economic crisis, the employed citizens exposed to the unemployment risk also were offered participation in lifelong learning to maintain and not lose the competitiveness in the labour market. Women participate in the activities organized by the State Employment Agency more actively than men – in the period from 2009 to 2016, the proportion of women in the total number of participants exceeded 50 per cent.

160. The State Employment Agency implements the program “*Support for Self-employment and Business Start-ups*”, which provides financial support for development and implementation of business plans. In 2013, business plans were developed by 173 unemployed, of which 79.8 per cent were women and 20.2 per cent were men. Whereas the financial support for implementation of business idea was

provided to 79.2 per cent women and 20.8 per cent men of the total number of participants involved in the programme.

VIII.2. Additional information

161. The *Law on Maternity and Sickness Insurance* provides for the granting and disbursement of benefits for the entire period of maternity leave if the woman is absent from work and thereby loses income to be earned from paid work or if a self-employed woman loses income. The purpose of this Law is to provide income compensation for temporary loss of the ability to work related to disease, prenatal and postnatal period. The benefit is paid in two parts – for 56 or 70 calendar days of prenatal leave, and 56 or 70 calendar days of postnatal leave. The 56 calendar days of prenatal leave and the 56 calendar days of maternity leave are aggregated, and a maternity benefit is granted for 112 calendar days.

162. A woman whose pregnancy-related medical care was commenced at a medical prophylactic institution up to the 12th week of pregnancy and was continued during the entire period of pregnancy is granted a benefit for a 14-day-long additional leave. It is added to the maternity leave, and thus the benefit is granted for the total of 70 calendar days. A woman is granted a benefit for a 14-day-long additional leave also due to pregnancy or childbirth complications, or complications during the period following childbirth, as well as in cases where two or more children were born. In the latter case such leave is added to maternity leave, and the benefit is granted for the total of 70 calendar days. A maternity benefit is granted in the amount of 80 per cent of the average insurance contribution wage of the benefit recipient. The calculation is based on the income of the last 12 months, from which the state social insurance contributions are made.

163. In order to ensure income replacement to a person at the time when he or she takes care of a child, payment of the child care benefit and/or parental benefit in accordance with the *Law on State Social Allowances* and the *Law on State Social Insurance* is ensured.

164. The parental benefit is granted and disbursed to a socially insured person – the father or the mother, who takes care of a child or several children born in a single birth. The parental benefit is not granted for a child, for the birth or care of which a maternity benefit is granted. The person has the right to choose the period during which he or she will receive the benefit for the child – until the child reaches the age of 12 months or until the child reaches the age of 18 months. When the decision is adopted, this period cannot be changed.

165. Parental benefit is granted from the average insurance contribution wage of the person requesting the benefit taking into account his or her choice of the length of the period – in amount of 60 per cent to the benefit claimant who chose to receive it until the child reaches the age of 12 months, and in the amount of 43.75 per cent to the benefit claimant who chose to receive it until the child reaches the age of 18 months. If the parental benefit recipient is employed during the child care period but is not on child care leave or receives income during the child care as a self-employed, the parental benefit recipient is entitled to receive a benefit in amount of 30 per cent of the granted benefit. To the parents with twins or more children born during one birth, in addition to the benefit, the State grants a bonus in amount of 171 euros for each subsequent child.

166. In 2014, the parental benefit was disbursed to 12,541 persons monthly in average (93 per cent women); in 2015 – 16,188 persons (81 per cent women); in first 6 month of 2016 – 22,489 persons (80 per cent women).

167. Since 2014, the State disburses child care benefit. Citizens of Latvia permanently residing in Latvia, non-citizens, foreigners and stateless persons, to whom a personal identification code is granted, are entitled to receive this benefit. One of the child's parents may receive the child care benefit. The benefit is not granted for the birth or care of a child, for which a maternity benefit is granted. The benefit amount is determined by the child's age: for the care of one child until the age of 18 months – 171 euros; for the care of one child in the age of 18 to 24 months – 42.69 euros; for care of children until the age of 18 months if twins or several children were born in one birth, in addition to the benefit there is a bonus in amount of 171 euros per month for the second and each subsequent child; for care of children until the age of 18 to 24 months if twins or several children were born in one birth, in addition to the benefit there is a bonus in amount of 42.49 euros per month for the second and each subsequent child. This benefit is granted and disbursed simultaneously with the parental benefit.

168. In 2014, the child care benefit was disbursed to 27,038 persons monthly in average (95 per cent women); in 2015 – 36,575 persons (89 per cent women); in first six month of 2016 – 39,217 persons (85 per cent women).

169. Between 2005 and 2014, the financial aid to parents at the child's birth has been variable. Especially during the economic crisis in 2009–2013, there were limitations on the procedure of granting, calculation and disbursement of social security benefits. On 1 October 2014, more favourable conditions for receiving of parental benefit entered into force (see paras. 165 of the Report) providing the opportunity to receive the benefit also to those parents who continue to work, thus striving to balance an equivalent involvement of both parents in the child's upbringing. In addition, since 2015, the employed parents caring for one child of up to 14 years of age or for 3 and more children of up to 16 years of age are entitled to additional leave, which is no less than 1 day for each child. Moreover, parents who have a child with disabilities up to 18 years of age are entitled to an additional leave of 3 working days.

170. Information regarding the number of beneficiaries of child birth allowance, maternity, and parental benefits is provided in Annex 7 of the Report.

IX. Article 12 of the Convention

IX.1. Committee recommendation in paragraph 70 – effective access to health-care information and services

171. The *Sexual and Reproductive Health Law* establishes the basic framework regarding the issue of reproductive and sexual health. The purpose of the Law is to define legal relations within the field of sexual and reproductive health with the aim to protect unborn life and the sexual and reproductive health of every person.

172. This law provides that the artificial termination of pregnancy is permitted prior to the 12th week of the pregnancy or the 24th week of the pregnancy in the case of medical complications. The doctor has the duty to inform about the nature of the pregnancy termination, the potential medical complications, as well as about the opportunity to save the life of the foetus. An abortion to a woman under 16 years of age may be carried out only with consent from her parents or guardians.

173. In order to reduce the risk of oncological diseases, extend the lifespan of the oncological patients and improve the quality of their life, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the "*Cancer diseases control programme 2009–2015*". To improve the situation in the primary diagnosis and treatment for the most frequent localisations of malignant tumours, to improve the range and quality of the existing screening, and to expand the palliative care availability, the Cabinet of Ministers has approved the

medium-term policy planning document “*Plan for the improvement of health care services in the oncology 2017–2020*”.

174. In 2009, Latvia launched a new State-funded programme for preventive examinations – the programme of early detection of breast, cervical and intestinal malignant tumours organized and funded by the State. One of the main purposes of the programme is to reduce the mortality caused by cancer. According to the current indicators, the breast cancer is one of the most widespread forms of cancer in Latvia, which can be completely treated when early diagnosed. Where the illness is properly diagnosed, the treatment can improve the life quality.

175. Every year, by sampling based on the data of the register of population, the National Health Service invites for cervix uteri test selected women who turn 25, 28, 31, 34, 37, 40, 43, 46, 49, 52, 55, 58, 61, 64, 67 years old in the respective year, and for mammography – women who turn 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66, 68 years old, and sends invitation letters to carry out tests for the State budget means. These age groups are determined based on the recommendations of professional doctoral associations and recommendations of the European Commission.

176. In order to protect the girls against cervical cancer, in September 2010, Latvia commenced vaccination of 12 years old girls against the human papilloma virus.

177. To promote the public interest in the health and disseminate information about the availability of health care services, during the reporting period the Ministry of Health in cooperation with the NGOs has implemented extensive public awareness-rising measures. For example, the campaign “*Afford to Be Healthy*” is aimed at calling the women to pay more attention to their health and to emphasize and remind that each woman in Latvia can receive a State-funded preventive care once a year, which she can receive at the family doctor or gynaecologist of her choosing. Women were educated in and informed about the significance, course and accessibility of gynaecological and preventive examinations as well as promotion of reproductive health. In total, approximately 500 participants attended this event.

178. Two sub-objectives defined in the Public Health Guidelines 2014–2020 aim to reduce the population morbidity with infectious diseases. It strives to improve the health of the mother, father and child as well as to reduce the infant mortality. The sub-objective “To reduce the population morbidity with infectious diseases” is planned to be achieved: by improving public awareness of the importance of vaccination in the prevention of infectious diseases; by developing policy for infectious disease prevention, thus paying greater attention to HIV, VHB, VHC, and STI¹⁷ infection risk groups, including facilitating early infectious disease diagnosis and treatment in specific risk groups; by promoting inter-institutional cooperation and providing a greater involvement of NGOs in infectious disease prevention. Whereas the sub-objective “To improve the mother’s, father’s and child’s health, to reduce the infant mortality” is planned to be achieved: by educating the public (especially teenagers and young people) on sexual and reproductive health and STI prevention, including the use of contraceptives, by reducing unwanted pregnancies and the number of STI cases; the implementation of targeted measures to improve accessibility to the health care and health promotion services with the aim of reducing morbidity and mortality due to health disorders, which occur in the perinatal and neonatal period, especially in relation to HIV, STI, VHB, and VHC.

179. Together with the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, the Ministry of Health constantly provides information to the society about topical public health issues, including sexual and reproductive health. In 2014, several educational

¹⁷ VHB – viral hepatitis B; VHC – viral hepatitis C; STI – sexual transmission infection; HIV – human immunodeficiency virus.

activities for young people in vocational education institutions on sexual and reproductive health issues, including topics about sexuality and responsible, safe sexual relations were carried out. In total, 113 educational measures were implemented in 2014, and 2,408 young people from all over Latvia were trained. Educational films about sexual and reproductive health issues for adolescents were produced: the film “Girls, Boys and Puberty” and the film “Relationships and Health: It’s My Responsibility!”. In 2015, educational measures about sexual and reproductive health were implemented for students of grades 8–10 in general educational institutions and vocational education students, and 246 educational activities attended by 4,558 target group representatives were implemented. Within the educational measures, two video conferences for students of grades 8–9 and students of grade 10 of general education schools and students of vocational education institutions were implemented. In the video conferences, a urologist, gynaecologist and public health specialist talked about important sexual and reproductive health issues and provided answers to the questions sent by the audience.

180. In primary education, the issues related to the health education, including sexual and reproductive health, are integrated in the general content of education. In the general secondary education, the students are provided with optional school subject “Health Education”. Furthermore, the Ministry of Health cooperated with the National Centre for Education and the Ministry of Education and Science contributing to the development of methodical material “*Health Education in the General Secondary and Vocational Education*”. They also developed a single study course “*Public and Human Safety*” by determining the content and amount of the health education in lessons that is obligatory in the educational content in all vocational education programmes (in vocational secondary education programmes – 24 lessons, in vocational programmes – 20 lessons), beginning with the school year 2016/2017.

181. “*The Mother and Child Health Improvement Plan 2012–2014*” was implemented focusing on 3 action lines: measures for the improvement of the mother and child health care; inclusion of the infertility treatment and medical insemination in the State-funded services; inter-sectoral cooperation for complex addressing of the issue at national level. In the framework of the plan, in 2012 and 2013, several amendments to *Regulation No 611 “Procedure Regarding Provision of Maternity Aid”* adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers on 25 July 2006, were made introducing additional State-funded examinations for expectant mothers, specifying the procedure regarding examining of expectant mothers in the risk group, by determining the principle “the money follows the expectant mother”, and by involving gynaecologists and other professionals from private practices in the expectant mother care funded by the State. Currently, compensation of costs related to the acquisition of prescribed medicines is provided: expectant mothers and women in postnatal period of up to 42 days – in amount of 25 per cent; and all expectant mothers are provided with voluntary vaccination against flue (with a 50 per cent compensation).

182. During the reporting period, the average number of artificial abortions per 1,000 women (15–49 years of age) has fallen, namely, in 2008 – 19.1, in 2011 – 14.4, in 2017 – 9.3. During the reporting period, the number of minor mothers has also fallen, namely, in 2004 – 448, in 2009 – 381, in 2017 – 175.

183. Since 2008, a gynaecologist and dermatologist-venereologist are direct assess professionals. Patients can visit these professionals to receive a State-funded consultation without the referral from family doctor; thus, significant public interests in elimination of infectious diseases are protected and the period for receiving of the health care service has been reduced. Expectant mothers and women in the postnatal period may also visit their family doctors, who are competent in family planning (see para. 147 of the Report).

184. The Ministry of Health has implemented the training of nurses and medical assistants working in a family doctor's practice on issues related to the health promotion and public health, including sexual and reproductive health issues, the health of women during pregnancy and lactation. In light of the framework for the training, training material "*Training of Nurses and Medical Assistants Working in a Family Doctor's Practice on Issues Related to the Health Promotion and Public Health*" was developed, which is still publicly available.

185. Additional information on fertility and mortality indicators is provided in Annex 2 of the Core Document.

IX.2. Committee recommendation in paragraph 72 – HIV/AIDS

186. The national policy on HIV/AIDS is formulated and implemented by the Ministry of Health and its subordinate authorities, in collaboration with other institutions and NGOs. The Centre for Disease Prevention and Control is responsible for the epidemiological monitoring of HIV, infection limitation and prevention measures. The medical care of the infected individuals is provided by the Riga East University Hospital. The Riga East University Hospital methodically manages the medical care of HIV infected persons and AIDS patients, as well as provides post-treatment prevention and consultative medical assistance.

187. Sexual and reproductive health issues including HIV/AIDS are addressed in several programmes developed by the Ministry of Health: Public Health Guidelines 2014–2020, Programme for Restriction of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and AIDS Spread 2003–2007, Programme for Restriction of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Infection 2009–2013, Action Plan for Restriction of HIV Infection, Sexual Transmission Infections, Hepatitis B and C Spread in 2018–2020.

188. *Regulation No 628 "Organisational Procedures for Limiting the Spread of Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection (HIV) and AIDS and the Treatment of HIV-Infected Persons and AIDS Patients"* adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers in 4 November 2003, provides for the procedure for the measures to limit the spread of HIV: epidemiological monitoring, the treatment of infected persons and AIDS patients, medical and social rehabilitation, the information and education of inhabitants in the field of HIV infection and AIDS prevention.

189. The Action Plan for Limiting the Spread of HIV Infection, Sexual Transmission Infections, Hepatitis B and C for 2018–2020 includes tasks and measures for limiting the spread of the HIV, STI, VHB, and VHC along 7 action lines: public education on HIV, STI, VHB, and VHC infection risks and early diagnosis; work with the identified risk groups; improvement of HIV, VHB, VHC, and STI prevention and treatment in prisons and institutions of the State Probation Service and the Ministry of Interior; improvement of diagnostics, treatment, and epidemiological surveillance; improving the qualification and capacity of health professionals; improvement and monitoring of the provision of health-safe services; planning of HIV, STI, VHB, and VHC spread restriction policy.

190. During the reporting period, a committee for the coordination of measures to limit the spread of HIV infection, tuberculosis and sexual transmission infection was established. The composition and statute of the committee are regularly updated. The committee is composed of representatives of sectoral ministries, local governments, professional associations, medical institutions, and NGOs. Its function is to participate in formulation and implementation of health policy targets, to promote circulation of information between the involved organisations and civil society participation in decision-making.

191. Compared to other EU Member States, the spread of HIV in Latvia is among the highest. In 2015, Latvia had the second highest number of newly identified HIV infection cases in the EU, and this indicator was 3.5 times higher than the European average. In 2015, 19.8 HIV cases per 100,000 inhabitants were registered in Latvia. In 2015, 6.7 AIDS cases per 100,000 inhabitants were registered in Latvia. Latvia has the highest number of the incidence of new cases of AIDS in the EU, namely, 28 per cent of newly diagnosed HIV infection cases are in the AIDS stage, which is eight times more than the EU average. Between 1987 and 31 December 2016, there were in total 6,972 HIV infection cases registered in the Latvian National Register of HIV/AIDS cases, including 1,786 AIDS cases and 1,676 deaths.

192. In 1990s, the most common form of HIV infection transmission was intravenous drug use, but since the middle of 2000s, the number of cases of transferring the infection in such a way has fallen. In Latvia, the main cause of HIV infection spreading is heterosexual contacts (37 per cent of the total number of incidence of new HIV infections). This indicator tends to increase, which means that women are more exposed to the infection risk. This fact is also confirmed by the rising proportion of women in the incidence of new HIV cases in recent years.

193. Although expectant mothers have access to the State-funded preventive treatment, some infected expectant mothers do not cooperate with the professionals of the Riga East University Hospital. Consequently, they do not receive the specific therapy or receive an incomplete therapy, and several new-borns become HIV infected every year. In 2012, 7 neonatal HIV infection cases were diagnosed; in 2013 – 10 new-borns; in 2014 – 4 new-borns; in 2015 – 3 new-borns; and in 2016 – 6 new-borns. In 2013, 74 children were born to HIV-infected women but only 30 mothers received full specific therapy during pregnancy, while 15 women did not receive this therapy at all.

194. If the mother is HIV-infected, the child may be infected through the mother's milk; therefore, it is necessary to replace the mother's milk with artificial milk mixtures. Taking into account the fact that some of HIV infected young mothers are exposed to social risk, from 2017 children born to HIV-infected pregnant women receive State-funded artificial milk mixtures.

195. During the reporting period, Latvia continues to develop HIV prevention station network. In 2015, 19 HIV prevention stations operated in 16 cities. HIV prevention station network implements the prevention measures for restricting of the prevalence of HIV, VHB, VHC, and syphilis as well as other blood and sexual intercourse-born infectious diseases and tuberculosis in groups of persons with a high risk of infection with these infectious diseases.

196. Infected persons and AIDS patients are treated by extending to them all the rights and obligations of patients in the health care, as well as by ensuring that these persons receive the treatment services in accordance with the procedures stipulated in regulatory enactments. The infected persons are provided with treatment and social assistance; in addition, respecting the principle of confidentiality, a disability pension is granted to AIDS patients. Currently, approximately 35 per cent of HIV infected persons receive the HIV infection antiretroviral therapy (ARV) in Latvia. At the end of the year 2016, there were 5,296 alive HIV infected persons in Latvia, and 1,883 of them still receive the ARV.

197. Detailed information on the measures to inform the public about the sexually transmitted infection diseases see paras. 177–180 of the Report.

IX.3. Additional information

198. Emergency medical aid is provided to any person who is in a life- or health-threatening condition. In Latvia, the State-funded health care service is provided to the persons indicated in the *Health Care Funding Law*: citizens of Latvia, non-citizens of Latvia, foreigners who have a permanent residence permit in Latvia, stateless persons having stateless person status granted in Latvia, refugees or persons with the alternative status, detained persons as well as asylum seekers regardless of gender and age.

199. In order to promote the availability of health care services, financial aid mechanisms are intended for certain social groups such as children, persons with group I disability, and indigent persons, which have been recognised as such in accordance with the regulatory enactments. These groups are exempted from a patient contribution payment for the received health care services funded by the State.

200. Among the State-funded health care services there are services related to the course of pregnancy and postpartum monitoring, including prenatal and postnatal care as well as maternity assistance. The expectant mothers' care and maternity assistance funded from the State budget and from funds of the service recipient are available for free to the spouses of citizens of Latvia and non-citizens of Latvia with temporary residence permit in Latvia as well.

201. In 2010, the *Law on the Rights of Patients* entered into force establishing the patients' right to information, confidentiality, the right to choose a doctor and medical institution, to accept medical treatment or refuse it. A patient has the right to friendly attitude, good quality and qualified treatment irrespective of the nature and severity of his or her disease.

202. Any resident of Latvia can receive information on the principles of health care organisation, including on the ways to register to the family doctor, to receive State-funded health care services and information about the patient's contributions by calling to the National Health Service free hotline 80001234, as well as visiting the website www.vmnvd.gov.lv. On the website www.rindapiearsta.lv anyone can find out, which medical facilities provide the State-funded health care services and where these services can be received sooner. During the reporting period several informative materials were prepared and published.

203. In Latvia, the team of the family doctors is one of the primary health care providers. This team includes the family doctor and a nurse and/or medical assistant employed in the family doctor's practice. The family doctor provides the patient with information about the procedure for obtaining the primary health care services provided by the family doctor during the family doctor working hours, outside the working hours and in the case of the doctor's replacement, as well as information on other options to receive health care services. The family doctor both provides the primary health care services and also coordinates the patient in the health care system.

204. Since 2010, family doctors have the possibility to employ a second nurse in the practice, while since 2014 such a requirement is obligatory to practices, in which more than 1,800 adult patients or 800 children are registered. Taking into account the fact that the second nurse provides a significant support in providing health care to the population, the presence of the second nurse, especially in rural areas, promotes the availability of the primary health care services.

X. Article 14 of the Convention

205. Latvia informs that women in rural areas are provided with the same rights described in chapters II.–IV., VI.–IX., and XI. of the Report as any other person.

206. The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, which supervises the work of local governments, has not received complaints that in any of Latvia's local governments women would have been discriminated in the right to participate in rural development or in relation to adequate living conditions, including women's access to adequate health care, education, and social guarantees in rural areas.

207. According to the procedure laid down in Article 45 of the *Law on Local Governments*, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development assesses the lawfulness of the binding regulations issued by local governments. When assessing the binding regulations of local governments and giving opinions on them, the Ministry pays additional attention to ensure that the binding regulations of local governments do not contain any kind of discrimination against women.

208. The Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments participates in the Standing Committee for Equality of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), which emphasises that the gender equality is a basic value of democracy. To promote the compliance with the gender equality principles, every local government is invited to sign the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life. Skrunda region municipality has joined the Charter committing to respect the principles of gender equality and implement equal involvement of women and men in decision-making processes. In order to support the signatories in the implementation of the Charter, the CEMR has developed indicators, which can be used for measuring the implementation of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life. These measures help to adopt or develop a gender equality policy at the level of each local government, which has signed the Charter and has committed to implement it.

209. The Association of Latvian Rural Women is represented also in the Gender Equality Committee. The Association covers a variety of territories in Latvia. Similarly, local communities or municipalities have established women's interest groups, which join in regional associations. In cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, in 2004–2007, the project “*Development of Women's Entrepreneurship in the Baltic Sea Region*” was implemented. In the framework of the project, resource centres, cooperation networks, micro-credit movement, a mentoring program and e-commerce was established. In 2007, the Association of Latvian Rural Women set up the Rural Women Entrepreneurship Support Fund, which is intended for women who reside in rural areas and small towns, who intend to become entrepreneurs, who have the ability, the idea about a business and who wish to engage in the business.

210. Furthermore, the Association has implemented measures aimed at encouraging the rural population subject to social exclusion by promoting the launch of commercial activities and contributing to more active involvement of women in politics.

211. Since 2016, the Cooperation Network of the Non-governmental Organisations of Latvian Women organizes a competition for politicians on the gender equality policy implementation in Latvia. The prize is awarded in the years when the elections to local government or the Saeima take place. The aim of the gender equality prize is to promote the public awareness of gender equality issues and assess the politicians' contribution to the gender equality ensuring with particular emphasis on the EU

values. The prize for the promotion of gender equality in local governments was first presented in 2008.

XI. Article 16 of the Convention

212. Latvia refers to the information provided in the Initial Report and notes that Latvia provides equal rights to women in issues related to the marriage and family relations.

213. During the reporting period, amendments to the *Civil Law* are made in order to improve the normative framework on issues related to the divorce (Article 69–77 of the *Civil Law*). Since 2011, if there are no disputes between the spouses, the marriage can be dissolved also by a sworn notary. When a joint submission of both spouses regarding divorce is received (both spouses agree on the dissolution of the marriage), the marriage may be dissolved by a sworn notary under the procedure laid down in the *Notariate Law*, and, if there is a dispute between the parties, by the court only in cases laid down in the *Civil Law*, based on the submission of one of the spouses. Likewise the provision of the *Civil Law* on the dissolution of a marriage in the case of spouse's violence against the other spouse was clarified during the reporting period (see para. 43 of the Report).

214. Latvia has developed and introduced a mechanism (the body of laws, including the *Civil Procedure Law*, the *Law on Police*, the *Law on the Protection of the Children's Rights*, the *Criminal Law* and the *Law On Orphan's and Custody Courts*) regarding temporary protection of individuals against violence. For more information see para. 44–48 of the Report.

XII. Other issues

XII.1. Committee recommendation in paragraph 72 – situation of minority women and older women

215. Information about issues related to the rights of women (including older women and minority women) in the context of health, education and employment is provided in Chapter VII., VIII. and IX. of the Report.

216. Information about integration of society is provided in paras. 189–199 of the Core Document and about citizenship issues – in paras. 200–206 of the Core Document. Statistical data on the number of minority women, who are citizens of Latvia, are provided in Annex 3 of the Report.

217. In 2017, a research "*Participation of Minorities in Democratic Processes in Latvia*" was developed. The purpose of the research was to compile the information on minority NGOs and the participation of communities of Latvia's minorities in the democratic processes in Latvia. The research data show that the desire or willingness of minorities to leave Latvia has decreased in recent years. If 29 per cent were planning to leave or admitted the possibility to leave in 2015, this proportion was only 14 per cent in 2017. The research also provided the following information: representatives of minorities who have the citizenship, participate in elections actively. 73 per cent indicate that they have participated in the last parliamentary elections, 66 per cent – in the elections of the European Parliament, but 76 per cent have voted in the elections of local governments. Women participate in the elections more actively, for example, in the last parliamentary elections, 79 per cent of minority women with the citizenship of Latvia voted, whereas only 64 per cent of men participated.

218. With regard to older women, Latvia provides the following information. Between March 2014 and February 2015, with the support of the EU, a project regarding active ageing “*Drawing up Comprehensive Active Ageing Strategy of Latvia to Prolong and Improve the Population Labour Life*” was implemented. In the framework of the project, based on the results of the research conducted by the World Bank, recommendations for the improvement of the active ageing situation and the development of comprehensive ageing strategy were prepared. On the basis of the strategy, implementation of a project aimed at promoting the retention of the employment and workability of older employees was launched in 2016.

219. One of the most important medium-term policy planning documents in the field of the public health policy in Latvia is the Public Health Guidelines 2014–2020. The key objective of the Guidelines is to increase the number of years lived healthy by the population of Latvia and to prevent premature death by maintaining, improving and restoring health, with a special focus on the population exposed to social exclusion and poverty risk.

220. In accordance with the Guidelines the work on planning and implementation of measures is carried out with the aim of improving the availability of health promotion and disease prevention services for all inhabitants of Latvia, in particular, for the population subject to the territorial, poverty and social exclusion risk. Latvia has envisaged public awareness-rising campaigns, educational short films and informative materials, as well as implementation of public health research and other measures promoting healthy nutrition, physical activities, sexual and reproductive health, and mental health, as well as the prevention of the use of addiction-causing substances and the spread of the processes. Local governments play a significant role in the implementation of these measures.

XII.2 Committee recommendation in paragraph 75 and paragraph 78 – acceding to international treaties

221. Latvia continues to evaluate the need to accede to the Optional protocol of the Convention and to approve the amendments to Article 20, paragraph 1 of the Convention. Latvia also continues to evaluate the need to accede to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families adopted by the UN on 18 December 1990.

XII.3. Committee recommendation in paragraph 77 – implementation of the UN non-binding documents

222. Latvia wishes to inform that the principles laid down in the declaration “A World Fit for Children” adopted at the 27th Special Session of the UN General Assembly are enshrined in the Latvian legal system in a number of legal acts, for example, the *Law on the Protection of the Children’s Rights*, the *Civil Law*, the *Criminal Law*, the *Labour Law*, the *Criminal Procedure Law*, and the *Civil Procedure Law*.

223. Latvia has taken into account both the agreed conclusion on elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls adopted on 15 March 2013, at the 57th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women and the political declaration adopted on 9 March 2015, at the 59th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, according to which the UN Member States commit to achieve the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action until 2030 and call to provide that women and girls can fully and equally exercise all human rights and fundamental freedoms and to provide equal opportunities to women and girls throughout their life cycle.

224. In 2017, Latvia actively participated in discussions on women’s rights on international platforms. In autumn of 2017, in the 1st Committee of the UN General

Assembly, Latvia joined the Swedish and the Canadian statement on gender and the disarmament machinery. During the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly, Latvia's Ambassador to Spain took part in the interregional forum "*Women, Peace and Security*".

XII.4. Committee recommendation in paragraph 79 – dissemination of the Committee recommendations and the Convention

225. The recommendations of the Committee are widely disseminated to all ministries and authorities under their subordination. Both the Convention and the Committee's concluding comments in Latvian are published on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the website www.likumi.lv.¹⁸ With regard to the informing of the public and public administration on the Convention requirements, see paras. 12–14 of the Report.

¹⁸ Information is available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/ministrija/latvijas-parstavis-starptautiskajas-cilvektiesibu-institucijas/latvijas-republikas-nacionalie-zinojumi-par-starptautisko-konvenciju-izpildi/1979-gada-konvencija-par-jebkuras-sieviesu-diskriminacijas-izskausanu>; <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=102185>.