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Development Cooperation in LATVIA

Country Study

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*Data included is from the end of December 2007

Glossary

CEI	Center for Education Initiatives
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CONCORD	European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DE/AR	Development education / Awareness raising
EC	European Commission
ECFS	The Educational Center for Families and Schools
EDC	The Education Development Centre
EML	European Movement Latvia
EU	European Union
GLEN	Global Education Network of Young Europeans
GNI	Gross National Income
ICT	Information and communication technologies
LAEA	Latvian Adult Education Association
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
LAPAS	Latvian NGDO Platform (<i>Latvijas Platforma attīstības sadarbībai</i>)
LCYU	Latvian Conservative Youth Union
LVL	Latvian currency
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals (UN)
MFA	Latvian Ministry for Foreign Affairs
NGDO	Non-Governmental Development Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSI	Open Society Institute
SFL	Soros Foundation – Latvia
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USD	Currency of the United States of America

Introduction

Latvia has taken large steps over the past few years to transform from an aid recipient to an aid donor country, but is still in the process of becoming a fully-fledged contributor. The government has made progress in establishing a legal basis and institutionalising the implementation of Latvian development cooperation; and Latvian non-governmental organisations' (NGOs) engagement with international development themes has increased. Since 2004, three NGDOs (NGOs that focus entirely on development processes in developing countries and/or on increasing public awareness about development issues) have been established in Latvia: LAPAS, GLEN Latvia and the MiTi Foundation. Furthermore, NGOs that in the past focused primarily on Latvian internal matters are increasingly interested in sharing their expertise with partners from developing countries and/or becoming engaged in development education/awareness raising (DE/AR). Many NGOs have changed their statutes to include international development as a field of activity. At the same time, there are challenges for many NGOs to transform their interests and intentions into practice: for the time being, the organisational capacity of Latvian NGOs is low in general and this is reflected in development-related activities. First, NGOs struggle with a lack of funding, as many donors who supported them in the past have pulled out due to Latvia's accession to the EU in May 2004. Second, the non-governmental sector battles with the private sector for human resources, where the country's strong economic growth is attracting employees away from non-governmental sectors. Additionally, the government is still in the process of increasing its own capacity to work in development cooperation and Latvian society's awareness of international development themes is slowly increasing from being virtually non-existent to being low.

1. Official Development Assistance

During the Soviet period, Latvia (like Estonia and Lithuania) had the status of a Republic of the Soviet Union and was not directly involved in providing foreign aid: Soviet cooperation programmes were managed at the federal level. After regaining independence in 1991, Latvia initially focused on its own transition processes and started providing development assistance and humanitarian aid on a case-by-case basis in 1999. For the next few years, Latvia granted both bilateral and trilateral assistance, and participated in multilateral programmes, but pursued its objectives without much domestic or international coordination. In order to facilitate both the strategic planning and coordination of development policy, the Latvian government adopted *The Basic Principles for the Development Cooperation Policy of the Republic of Latvia*¹ (the Basic Principles), in early 2003. According to the document, the fundamental principles of Latvia's development cooperation policy are in line with the objectives of both the UN Millennium Declaration and Latvia's foreign policy. The Basic Principles emphasise Latvia's duties stemming from its EU membership, and the country's transformation from an aid recipient to a donor country, which potentially entails becoming a fully-

¹ The official documents on Latvia's development cooperation mentioned in this study are available in English on the website of the Latvian MFA; please refer to p. 24 for exact addresses.

fledged donor after 2010 (according to the World Bank 'graduation policy' and forecasts).

Latvia's development cooperation activities are also guided by the Development Co-operation Policy Programme of the Republic of Latvia 2006-2010, a document that was adopted by the government in February 2006 and sets the overall aim of strengthening '*Latvia's international role as a new donor country, ensuring wide involvement by governmental institutions and the public in defining policy priorities and implementing set targets.*' The main part of the text focuses on detailing directions for action, results and performance indicators for the sub-objectives of (1) introducing an internationally recognised practice in the planning and administration of aid programmes, (2) fostering public support for Latvia's development cooperation targets and policy, and (3) fulfilling international commitments and increasing Latvia's role as a new donor country.

Since 2005, Latvia has been adopting annual development cooperation policy plans that outline objectives, activities, expected results, funding, the institutions responsible and reporting procedures for the given year. The policy plans adopted thus far (2005, 2006 and 2007) all prioritised, and consequently outlined activity areas and allocated funding for, implementing bilateral and trilateral projects, and executing public information activities (including relevant research projects) for increasing public support for development cooperation policy. Additionally, they all set the objective of developing the legal basis for Latvian development cooperation and strengthening the administrative capacity of the MFA. The three policy plans also highlight the EU New Neighbourhood Policy as an important element in drawing up the plans. Worth mentioning, however, is that the plans do not cover Latvia's priorities for EU policy and international organisations, and the plan for 2005 stipulated that '*until a bilateral policy is formulated and the specific interests of Latvia are developed, it is not possible to formulate and implement a specific policy on development cooperation issues involving international organisations and their programmes nor to fully participate in the development policy of the EU.*'

The MFA is responsible for formulating Latvia's development cooperation policy as well as for coordinating and evaluating development cooperation activities. The MFA's Development Co-operation Policy Department was established in 2005 and consists of two divisions: the Multilateral Co-operation Policy Division (at present 3 employees) and the Bilateral Assistance Co-operation Division (5 employees). Decisions regarding approval for financing development cooperation activities are taken by the Development Co-operation Board, which consists of high-level officials from the MFA, the Ministry of Finance, the State Chancellery and the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government. Additionally, there is the Consultative Council in Development Cooperation Policy Issues that includes line ministries, municipalities, NGOs and representatives of the academic sector and the business community. The Consultative Council meets once or twice a year, offering a forum for discussing development cooperation priorities and strategies, as well as for the exchange of relevant information among stakeholders. Current administrative structure and division of tasks may experience changes in the near future, as a law on development cooperation is currently under discussion.

Latvia's financial contribution to development cooperation rose sharply with Latvia's accession to the EU in May 2004, as part of EU membership fees are a direct contribution to EC development and humanitarian aid programmes. In 2003, Latvia disbursed 0,008% and in 2004 0,06% of its GNI for development cooperation. Since 2005, however, the increase has been less impressive: in 2005, Latvian ODA was around 10,65 million USD (0,07% of GNI) and in 2006 approximately 11,89 million USD (0,06% of GNI), according to the OECD DAC criteria; thus, in 2006, there was a slight increase in real terms but a drop in the ODA/GNI ratio, compared to the year before. Latvia is working on gradually increasing its spending on ODA: the government has adopted a plan to reach 0,1% of GNI by 2010 and 'strives' towards the target of 0,17% of GNI by 2010.² According to the agreement reached in the EU Council of Ministers on 24 May 2005, Latvia, as a member state that joined the EU after 2002, should endeavour to reach an ODA/GNI ratio of 0,17% by 2010 and 0,33% by 2015.

The majority of Latvia's aid is disbursed through multilateral agencies: 93% of ODA in 2006, 91% in 2005 and 97% in 2004. The largest channel for Latvia's multilateral aid is the EU: in 2006, 10 million USD or around 84% of all ODA was spent as a contribution to the EU budget, and in 2005 this sum was 8.09 million USD (approximately 76% of all ODA). Latvia has also been supporting other multilateral agencies, including bodies such as UNESCO, the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the UN (FAO), the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

Latvia's bilateral aid, which is very limited in comparison to multilateral aid in financial terms, focuses on transferring reform experiences with the aim of promoting economic growth, stability and democracy in neighbouring regions. The Basic Principles define the CIS and Balkans regions as priorities for Latvia's bilateral aid, and the annual policy plans set more specific yearly priorities: under the policy plan for 2005, bilateral assistance was given to Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and in limited areas to Belarus; in 2006, the Latvian government narrowed cooperation to Georgia and Moldova. The policy plan for 2007 defined Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine as main recipients and Belarus for cooperation in limited areas; additionally, activities in the other CIS countries would be supported subject to availability of funding, and development cooperation projects would be implemented in Kosovo and Afghanistan, where Latvia is participating in peacekeeping missions. Thematic priorities over the past three years have included providing support for European and transatlantic integration processes; reforming public administration and local government; the development of a democratic and civil society; education, culture, social development, health and environmental protection. A separate budget line for bilateral assistance was first established in 2005. Latvia does not offer direct financial development assistance but disburses its bilateral aid through funding Latvian experts sharing know-how at the invitation of recipient countries³ and

² See: *Conception for Increasing State Budget Financing for Implementation of the Development Cooperation Policy of the Republic of Latvia 2006-2010*, adopted by Cabinet of Ministers in 9.2.2006

³ The list of Latvian fields of expertise: <http://www.am.gov.lv/en/DevelopmentCooperation/Expertise/fields>

financing projects by the state, local government, private sector and NGOs.⁴ Furthermore, in 2007 some aid was decentralised, as an amount of LVL 45 000 (around €64 000) was allocated to the Latvian Embassies in Georgia, Belarus and Ukraine to finance initiatives from civil society and state institutions in these countries.

Latvia's humanitarian aid is provided on an *ad hoc* basis, with separate decisions taken by the Cabinet of Ministers. In 2006, the Latvian government supported communities affected by the earthquake in Indonesia through the IFRC, offered in-kind humanitarian assistance (medicine and blankets) in the Lebanon crisis and provided financial aid to the Georgian government to relieve their energy crisis. In 2005, Latvia allocated humanitarian aid to Pakistan (earthquake), Indonesia (tsunami) and Georgia (floods). As for numbers, in 2006, Latvia dispersed USD 202 700 as humanitarian aid, and in 2005, USD 305 000.

1.1 Cooperation with NGOs

Latvia's policy documents on development cooperation strongly emphasise the inclusion of the non-governmental sector in the process (NGOs, academia and the business community). The Basic Principles declare that '*one of the most significant bases for successful Development policy implementation is the involvement of civil society.*' Furthermore, the policy programme for 2006-2010 states that during the implementation of the programme, Latvia will foster the involvement of NGOs and other actors in defining Latvia's development cooperation policies and implementing associated activities; likewise, Latvia will enhance the ability of NGOs and other actors to fully participate in developing and implementing international development cooperation programmes and projects. The annual policy plans (2005, 2006 and 2007) outline financial support for projects by NGOs and other actors; and promote public information activities to facilitate NGOs' involvement in formulating Latvian development cooperation policy.

There is permanent policy dialogue between the MFA and NGOs. NGOs are informed about processes and are provided spaces to make their voices heard. Many NGOs have informal bilateral contacts with the MFA but the more systematic information sharing and consultations go through the Latvian NGO Platform for development cooperation (LAPAS). Apart from having permanent direct contact with the MFA, LAPAS is also a fully fledged member of the Consultative Committee in Development Cooperation Policy Issues, where they act as a watchdog and provide input into debates.

As for NGO funding, it is worth mentioning that the MFA covers LAPAS' CONCORD⁵ membership fees and costs for information dissemination (the information officer's part-time salary and website maintenance). Furthermore, in 2006 and 2007 the MFA issued open calls for project proposals that NGOs could participate in, competing with other Latvian legal entities (local governments, private and government institutions). In the 2006 call for development cooperation proposals,

⁴ Latvia's development cooperation projects: <http://www.am.gov.lv/en/DevelopmentCooperation/Projects/projects2007>

⁵ CONCORD is the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development. See more at <http://www.concordeurope.org>

the available funding was announced as LVL 90 000 (approximately €129 000) but projects eventually received higher support, as the Canadian International Development Agency⁶ (CIDA) offered co-financing for many of the projects. The amount of funding available in the call for DE/AR project proposals was LVL 15 120 (appr. €21 600) and most of it was allocated to LAPAS and GLEN Latvia. In the 2007 call for development cooperation project proposals, 19 projects were selected for financing, with the total amount equalling approximately LVL 381 900 (appr. €545 600), of which LVL 264 000 (appr. €378 000) was allocated by the Latvian government and the remainder by CIDA. Out of these 19 selected projects, five had been submitted by NGOs (four of them LAPAS members and LAPAS itself). The amount available in the call for DE/AR project proposals was announced as LVL 43 000 (appr. €61 600) and the sum was divided between LAPAS, the European Movement Latvia, GLEN Latvia, Vidzeme University College and a public relations company.

The existence of these calls for proposals is appreciated by NGOs but organisations have also highlighted some problematic aspects, including the cumbersome application and reporting procedures and a requirement to prepare the applications both in Latvian and English (as many of the projects receive co-financing from CIDA), as well as the 1-year budget cycle that offers space only for short-term projects. The main problem, however, was the fact that NGOs had to compete with state institutions and private companies for the limited amounts available. This is set to change in 2008; after the strong mobilisation of LAPAS members in reaction to initial plans to scrap all calls for proposals for 2008, a 100 000LVL (appr. €143 000) allocation has been made for calls for NGO project proposals only.

2. Latvian NGO Platform for Development Cooperation and its members

The Latvian NGDO Platform⁷ (*Latvijas Platforma attīstības sadarbībai* – LAPAS) is the umbrella organisation for Latvian NGOs active or interested in development cooperation. LAPAS was established in 2004, with initial support from the Soros Foundation - Latvia⁸ (SFL). At the end of 2003, the SFL conducted a survey among 200 of the largest Latvian NGOs to identify organisations that are willing to engage in development cooperation. The idea of establishing a national NGO platform for international development activities evolved quickly and by the next summer LAPAS was established as an umbrella organisation of 21 NGOs. SFL granted 3-year seed money, and the leader of the Valmiera NGO Support Centre (known also as NGO 'Strategy') who had recently completed an internship with the Eurostep⁹ secretariat, became the first director of LAPAS. Thus, unlike the other two Baltic States, where national platforms operated for several years as informal networks before being established as legal bodies, the Latvian platform's first activity was to found a formal organisation. This step was associated with initial scepticism, as the main impetus for creating LAPAS was not internal (members needs) but external: encouragement by the SFL (not least through granting

⁶ <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca>

⁷ <http://www.lapas.lv>

⁸ <http://www.sfl.lv>

⁹ Eurostep is a network of autonomous European NGOs working towards peace, justice and equality in a world free of poverty. See more at <http://www.eurostep.org>

financial support) which did not become a LAPAS member itself, and motivation from European examples that Latvia's NGOs had become familiar with through participating in TRIALOG¹⁰ seminars. However, since its establishment, LAPAS has significantly advanced international development themes in Latvia and has become a recognised NGO platform for development issues.

The overall aim of LAPAS is to foster a favourable environment and provide opportunities for Latvian NGOs for development cooperation at national and international levels. To fulfil this aim, LAPAS is active in various areas. First, it reaches out to developing countries both by contributing to their development processes, and facilitating cooperation between Latvian NGOs and related organisations from partner countries (see section 2.1). LAPAS also implements DE/AR activities, in which it endeavours to involve its members (see section 2.2). Additionally, LAPAS puts emphasis on enhancing the technical capacity of its members: the secretariat organises seminars and training (for example on EU funding and the MDGs), facilitates Latvian NGOs' participation in TRIALOG-funded European events and CONCORD activities, and circulates information on international activities, funding and networking opportunities. In 2007, LAPAS also set the goal of attracting new members, as several Latvian NGOs that engage in international development are not yet members of LAPAS. However, due to a high turnover in the secretariat and the resulting short-term decrease in organisational capacity, little has been done to achieve that goal over the past year and increasing its membership will be a priority for early 2008.

A crucial task for LAPAS is to represent Latvian NGOs' interests and conduct policy work regarding international development at the national and European levels. At the national level, LAPAS has actively participated in shaping government policy documents since its establishment through meetings with government officials and parliamentarians; providing comments upon request and sending lobby letters on its own initiative; as well as participating in the Consultative Council in Development Cooperation Policy Issues and organising round-table discussions bringing together various stakeholders. The majority of LAPAS' suggestions have received serious consideration by decision-makers; however achieving concrete results regarding increases in ODA budgets has proven hard. Nonetheless, since autumn 2007, constructive change has taken place, after LAPAS members successfully mobilised in reaction to the information that budget plans for 2008 did not foresee calls for project proposals. LAPAS members' collective targeting of multiple levels (the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Parliament's committees for EU affairs and foreign affairs) not only reached the initial goal of re-introducing calls for proposals for 2008 but also an increase in Latvian bilateral ODA by 100 000 LVL or about 20% compared to initial plans, with this extra sum dedicated exclusively to NGO projects. In 2007, LAPAS was also active in advocating against using the development cooperation budget for financing military activities, as the Latvian government was introducing plans for development cooperation activities in Afghanistan.

At the European level, LAPAS represents Latvian NGOs' interests mostly through CONCORD, which LAPAS formally joined in May 2005. LAPAS representatives participate in various CONCORD working groups, where they have the

¹⁰ TRIALOG is an EU-funded project to raise awareness of development issues in the enlarged EU. See more at <http://www.trialog.or.at>

opportunity to highlight Latvian perspectives. However, contributing actively to shaping EU policies in a strategic and carefully considered manner, as well as bringing the working groups' discussions back to the national level, has thus far proven difficult. There is not yet enough organisational capacity in the LAPAS secretariat and among its members to work on rather distant and technically-oriented policy themes, and for the time being their advocacy work focuses on issues that directly affect Latvian NGOs, such as co-financing with European partners.

As for other activities, between 2006 and 2007, LAPAS implemented the project '*Preparing for the Baltic Conference on Development Cooperation*' (with financial support from the Presidency Fund¹¹), with which they took the initiative to strengthen cooperation in the Baltic Sea region regarding international development. In early 2007, the LAPAS director visited Finland, Sweden, and Denmark, and attended the Nordic platforms' meeting in Norway, to exchange experiences and identify topics for Baltic-Nordic cooperation. This information was spread in Latvia as well as to Estonian and Lithuanian colleagues. Furthermore, in June 2007, LAPAS hosted the first ever meeting of the three Baltic States' platforms during which platforms exchanged information on issues of importance to each of them, identified areas where cooperation is valuable as well as areas in which it is not necessary. Cooperation opportunities in the Baltic Sea Region will be further discussed in the Baltic Sea NGO Forum 2008 in Latvia, where LAPAS plans to host a working group on development cooperation. In the framework of the Presidency Fund project, LAPAS also organised round table discussions on development issues in Latvia; commissioned a study¹² on the experiences and motivation of Latvian NGOs (both LAPAS members and others) to work in the sphere of development cooperation, which was used for refining LAPAS' activity plans and lobbying efforts to respond better to NGOs' needs; and prepared a booklet in Russian and English containing fact sheets about LAPAS members.

As of autumn 2007, the secretariat of LAPAS consists of a director, whose main focus in the last year has been reaching financial sustainability and who is also responsible for policy work; an administrative assistant who additionally performs the tasks of information officer and works with members; and the Latvian coordinator for the '*Market of Possibilities goes Global*' project (see section 2.2), who is also responsible for enhancing Latvian society's understanding of international development. Apart from that, LAPAS engages two people in the so-called 'opportunity agency', in other words to promote cooperation between LAPAS members and partners from developing countries. All staff is employed part-time. The board of LAPAS consists of seven people representing member organisations, and performs the tasks of developing LAPAS strategy, supporting the director in policy work, and approving annual activity plans, budgets, general assemblies' agendas and projects to be submitted for funding.

In 2007, LAPAS financial resources included funds from the Soros Foundation-Latvia (SFL) seed money (main administrative costs and the director's salary), financial

¹¹ The Presidency Fund was created in 2005 to promote the engagement of NGOs and other civil society actors from EU new member states in EU Development Policy debates. The fund was established originally with the support of Irish and Dutch governments, both of which held the EU Presidency in 2004 when ten new member states acceded to the EU. See more at <http://www.presidencyfund.org>

¹² An English synopsis is available at LAPAS secretariat.

support from the MFA (CONCORD membership fees, salary for the information officer, website maintenance and some administrative costs), membership fees (around 75EUR per member per year) and from various projects: e.g. EC and MFA funded DE/AR projects, SFL Wider Europe programme funded activities regarding Ukraine, MFA funded Moldova project, and the Presidency Fund project.

LAPAS members (see Annex on p.22) vary in terms of their focus on international development: only two LAPAS members (GLEN Latvia and the MiTi Foundation) have development issues as their primary field; other members engage in development activities occasionally depending on their capacity and available project funding. Furthermore, not all LAPAS members have development cooperation or DE/AR experience; not all who have implemented relevant activities in the past are doing so at the moment; and not all are interested in becoming engaged in the near future. Additionally, LAPAS members' main fields of activity which primarily focus on Latvian internal matters cover a range of topics: from rural development, corruption prevention, prisoners' rights, volunteer service, civil society development, gender equality and education policy to intercultural education and lifelong learning, EU integration and civil society participation in the process, children's rights, mushroom growing, HIV/AIDS prevention, reproductive health and family planning. LAPAS members also vary in terms of their overall capacity: in addition to strong organisations (like the Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS, Transparency International Latvia, Latvia's Family Planning and Sexual Health Association), there are NGOs that are struggling to survive and overcome their financial and human resource shortcomings (e.g. ECFS or Volunteer Support Centre 'Meridians Plus'). Thus, on one hand, LAPAS members have rich mixture of expertise to bring in to LAPAS' activities, share with developing countries and link to DE/AR activities. On the other hand, there are significant variations in the support they need from LAPAS and the extent to which they are willing and able to contribute to LAPAS initiatives.

2.1 Development cooperation

There are three development NGOs (NGDOs) in Latvia: LAPAS, GLEN Latvia and the MiTi Foundation. All of them focus primarily on DE/AR and/or influencing development policy, but they also implement development cooperation projects (especially GLEN Latvia). Furthermore, several NGOs engage occasionally in development cooperation, in addition to their core activities in Latvia. Those development cooperation activities focus primarily on sharing Latvian experiences (for example, in the fields of education, social services, civil society and democracy development) with partners from developing countries through organising training programmes, study visits and providing consulting services. Latvian experts are also invited on short-term missions in the framework of international organisations' and foreign NGOs projects. Furthermore, several NGOs that don't yet have development cooperation experience are keen to start transferring their experiences to developing countries in the future. Overall, there is considerable enthusiasm for development cooperation among Latvian NGOs. However, there are obstacles to transforming this enthusiasm into tangible activities. According to the study LAPAS commissioned within the framework of its Presidency Fund project, NGOs are mostly hindered by the lack of financial resources but also by factors such as lack of contacts in recipient countries, technical problems (visas), lack of understanding of development cooperation,

insufficient information about true needs of partner countries, intercultural barriers and lack of experience.

Latvian NGOs' development cooperation activities focus on the former Soviet Union countries. They are most active in Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus, and have occasional engagements with the other Southern Caucasus as well as some of the Central Asian CIS countries. The common Soviet past and Russian language skills grant Latvian NGOs a natural advantage to work in that region. Latvian NGOs' contacts with the least developed areas of the world are very limited, and opinions regarding whether or not to seek engagement in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa vary strongly among Latvian NGOs. Some emphasise that as the development cooperation resources are extremely limited, it is more meaningful to focus on the CIS countries, where Latvian NGOs can provide greater added value. Others consider it crucial to gain experiences in working with least developed countries for the future, when Latvia's current target countries will have graduated from aid programmes. LAPAS is planning to organise further discussions on the role of Latvia's development cooperation in Sub-Saharan Africa.

As for main sources of funding, Latvian NGOs execute development cooperation (and DE/AR) projects with financing from MFA grants. Additionally, NGOs make use of the Open Society Institute (OSI) East-East programme¹³ and various EC programmes. Several organisations are currently involved in DE/AR projects funded from the EU 21-02-03 budget line (co-financing with European development NGOs) but no Latvian NGO seems to have been able to obtain funding from this mechanism for projects in developing countries. Private Latvian funding for development cooperation is virtually non-existent.

To illustrate Latvian NGOs' development cooperation activities, it is worth starting with LAPAS itself, as unlike other national platforms in Europe, the secretariat of LAPAS implements development cooperation projects. LAPAS does this both to support the development processes in developing countries and to enhance cooperation between Latvian NGOs and organisations from partner countries. The NGO forums organised in Georgia and Moldova best represent this dual activity. In October 2005, the Latvian - Georgian NGO Forum 'Moving towards the EU' took place in Tbilisi, organised by LAPAS and the Open Society Georgia in partnership with the SFL, OSI East-East programme, the MFA, the UNDP office in Latvia and the Tbilisi City Council. The aim of the forum was to provide support for civil society development in Georgia through sharing Latvian experiences and expertise derived from its transition period and integration to the EU, and to facilitate cooperation between Latvian and Georgian NGOs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga who was the President of Latvia at the time delivered a speech, and Latvia's transition experience was shared through presentations and workshops focusing on EU integration, social issues, and education. The three workshops that included discussions of case studies and provided space for networking and identifying areas for further cooperation were led by representatives of the European Movement Latvia (EML), the Latvian Portage Association and the Education Development Centre. The forum participants included 13 Latvian NGOs, around 50 Georgian NGOs, Latvian and Georgian government officials, and representatives of Riga and Tbilisi City Councils.

¹³ <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/east>

In November 2006, LAPAS organised in Chisinau the *Moldovan - Latvian Forum on Public Participation* that gathered around 120 representatives of Latvian and Moldovan NGOs, central governments and municipalities to discuss the following questions: how to strengthen dialogue between the government and civil society in Moldova, how to facilitate public participation in promoting regional and national development, and to what extent active public involvement can facilitate Moldova's European integration processes. These questions were debated in three parallel workshops through analysing Latvian case studies. The contacts created during the forum and recommendations of the workshops served as background for further cooperation between Latvian and Moldovan NGOs, and the forum added value by providing an opportunity for Moldovan NGOs to discuss the issue of public participation with representatives of their government and municipalities. The Forum was a result of a 5-month project that was developed by LAPAS in cooperation with SFL and partners from Moldova, and the initiative was financially supported by the MFA, SFL, OSI East-East programme and the Eurasia Foundation in Moldova.

To highlight examples of other development cooperation activities implemented by the secretariat of LAPAS, in June 2007, LAPAS brought several Moldovan NGO representatives to visit five local communities in Latvia where the NGO sector plays a pivotal role, with the aim of showing their Moldovan guests first hand how society can tackle its problems bottom-up. After the visit, the Moldovan NGO representatives together with their Latvian counterparts developed a detailed programme for the '*Latvian - Moldovan NGO Summer Academy*', which was organised by LAPAS in August 2007, with financial support from the MFA. In the summer academy, the participating Moldovan and Latvian NGOs analysed issues including the role of community foundations, forming partnerships between NGOs and local public authorities, and NGO coalitions' participation in the development and implementation of legislation. In 2006, LAPAS participated in a project that was organised by the Georgian Health Promotion and Education Foundation, with financial support from the OSI East-East programme. The project facilitated an exchange between Latvian and Georgian NGOs on health care and used Latvian experiences to formulate approaches for increasing constructive dialogue between Georgian governmental and non-governmental health care actors. In 2005, LAPAS, together with the Danish Institute for Human Rights and the Ukrainian Center for Political and Legal Reforms executed an East-East project aimed at sharing information on the organisation of the civil service and its reform in Latvia and Denmark with experts engaged in administrative reform in Ukraine. In January 2005, LAPAS organised a charity event in cooperation with the Latvian Red Cross to collect funds for Tsunami-affected communities.

In its task of facilitating development cooperation opportunities for its members, the secretariat of LAPAS currently focuses on Ukraine and Moldova. LAPAS has contracted a person to conduct a feasibility study on development cooperation activities in Ukraine; she is also engaged in fundraising and preparing an expert visit and a summer academy in 2008. Another person is following up on previous projects with Moldova, including encouraging the participating NGOs to take their cooperation further. Additionally, in 2007 a few LAPAS member organisations with experience in Georgia took the initiative to form a working group for

exchanging experiences and jointly searching for further development cooperation opportunities in Georgia.

Among LAPAS members, the Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS¹⁴ is a leading think-tank in Latvia. Its mission is to facilitate comprehensive policy change in areas that are important to Latvia's development, through PROVIDUS fellows' policy analyses and consulting, as well as promoting public participation in policy processes. Additionally, PROVIDUS has experience in offering expertise to other countries undergoing democratic transformations: for several years, organisations such as the UNDP, OSI, OECD, Council of Europe, EU and the World Bank have invited PROVIDUS fellows to act as consultants or trainers in the framework of their development cooperation projects. As such, PROVIDUS fellows have shared expertise in different democratic development-related areas in Central and Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus and Central Asia. Among prominent examples, in 2004 PROVIDUS experts assessed the anti-corruption policies of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, under the auspices of the OECD, and shared Latvia's experiences in managing higher education with colleagues from Tajikistan on the invitation of OSI; in 2004-2005, within the framework of an UNDP initiative, they trained a regional network of environmental NGOs in Central Asia to use the internet to achieve their goals; in 2006, PROVIDUS gave training and consultations to OSI Mongolian NGOs on public benefit advocacy. PROVIDUS has to date, thus, engaged in development cooperation on an *ad hoc* basis in response to invitations. However, they intend to be more proactive and systematic in the future, and implement their own projects based on their local contacts' needs and ideas.

Transparency International Latvia 'Delna'¹⁵ focuses on corruption prevention and fostering civil society in Latvia, as well as implementing occasional development cooperation activities. In 2006, in cooperation with Transparency International Georgia and with the financial support from the MFA, they ran a project aimed at enhancing the ability of Georgian NGOs and the media to professionally assess whether the autumn 2006 local elections were run in accordance with the principles of democracy, and to identify cases involving the misuse of administrative resources in pre-election campaigns. In the framework of the project, colleagues from Georgia were brought to Latvia on a study visit and 'Delna' sent experts to Georgia to organise a seminar there and provide support for local experts in preparing a report on authorities misusing administrative resources in election campaigns. In 2007, 'Delna' won a grant from the MFA to educate Georgia's regional NGO representatives about various forms of cooperation between civil society and public administration, and encourage them to actively participate in decision-making processes at local and national levels. 'Delna' also plans to be active in development cooperation in the future. However, as they are aware of the considerable work still to be done in their field in Latvia, development cooperation activities will remain only part of 'Delna' activities.

The Latvian Conservative Youth Union¹⁶ (LCYU) focuses on promoting Latvia's young people's understanding of domestic and foreign policy processes, and on

¹⁴ <http://www.providus.lv>

¹⁵ <http://www.delna.lv>

¹⁶ <http://www.lkja.lv>

increasing their involvement in socio-political life. In addition to its core activities, LCYU is increasingly interested in development cooperation. Through their active involvement in organisations such as European Democrat Students (EDS) and the International Young Democrat Union, representatives of the LCYU have made contacts and shared experiences with representatives from Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Belarus. Their first specific project was implemented in 2007 with financial support from the MFA: the aim of the project was to provide information for the NGO sector and local authorities in Ukraine's Odessa region about the role of NGOs in implementing the principles of democratic governance in the regional and European dimension. Through five training modules including lectures, workshops and debates that LCYU organised in cooperation with the Ukrainian Student Association, insight was provided into EU basic values and integration, the development of NGOs in Latvia and the EU as players in policy making, as well as possibilities for successfully implementing NGO interests. As for the future, LCYU would like to expand its cooperation with Ukraine.

The Center for Education Initiatives¹⁷ (CEI) promotes public awareness about the role of education in creating a humane and democratic society and the importance of life-long learning for the people of Latvia. Linking education with social integration themes, CEI works actively with the Roma communities in Latvia. They also have development cooperation experience in the CIS region. For example, in 2001-2003, CEI supported the development of parents associations in Belarus through seminars, trainings and consulting services. In 2006-2007, they supported their Ukrainian partner in a project developing parents' support centres for parents of children with special needs, through training sessions and mentoring. This project finished in June 2007, but CEI is looking for finances to continue work with the Ukrainian parents' support centres. As development cooperation has been included in the strategic plan of CEI since 2007, CEI wants to share its expertise and experiences with developing countries more actively in the future.

The main objective of the Latvian Adult Education Association¹⁸ (LAEA) is to promote the development of non-formal adult education systems and to participate in life-long learning policy making in Latvia. In addition to their core activities, they have also worked with CIS countries. For example in 2004, a project targeted adult education teachers and trainers in Russia. In 2005, LAEA and the adult education associations of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Estonia and Lithuania signed a protocol to deepen cooperation between the Baltic States and the Southern Caucasus; and in 2006-2007, LAEA was involved in an East-East project that aimed to increase the professionalism of adult educators in the Southern Caucasus through an exchange with professionals from the Baltics. For the time being, LAEA is not implementing any specific development cooperation projects, but does have some experience-sharing ideas that need to be translated into new project proposals. LAEA is particularly open to sharing its knowledge and experience in the field of developing basic skills in society (for example, tackling illiteracy and supporting people lacking numerical skills).

The Latvian Portage Association¹⁹ focuses on integrating children with special needs and their families into Latvian society. Additionally, they have been

¹⁷ <http://www.iic.lv>

¹⁸ <http://www.laea.lv>

¹⁹ <http://www.portage.lv>

supporting Georgia in developing alternative systems to address learning and developmental disorders during early childhood. The Latvian Coalition for Gender Equality²⁰ is active in shaping Latvia's legislation regarding gender equality. Occasionally, they engage in development cooperation through organising study visits to Latvia for interested counterparts (e.g. for Turkmenistan or Belarusian colleagues). The Educational Center for Families and Schools (ECFS) implements programmes on drug prevention issues and stopping pupils dropping out of school, and they have gained development cooperation experience through participating as experts in other organisations' projects. For example, in 2006 they worked with the UNDP on a drug prevention project and conducted training for Russian, Ukrainian and Moldovan NGOs regarding creating relevant programmes for parents and working with the media. The Riga Street Children Centre²¹ has shared its experiences of working with street children with partners from Russia and regarding the issue of children's sexual exploitation with colleagues from several CIS countries. Both ECFS and the Riga Street Children Centre are currently passive regarding development cooperation due to a lack of capacity but intend to re-activate their experience-sharing activities in the future.

GLEN Latvia has implemented several projects in Georgia, with financial support from the MFA. For example in 2007, they worked on promoting sustainable development in the Kazbegi and Borzomi regions, focusing on raising environmental awareness as well as assessing and developing tourism opportunities. They also sent a volunteer to work in a child protection organisation in Tbilisi. European Movement Latvia (EML) does continuous lobbying for the benefit of the countries in the EU eastern neighbourhood at the international European Movement level, and has been active in monitoring elections in Ukraine and Belarus. In the near future, they plan to organise training sessions for Moldovan and Georgian journalists on EU information sources. In 2005, the Education Development Centre (EDC) carried out an East-East project to promote partnership and share best practices on issues of intercultural and bilingual education with educators from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. In 2006, as a continuation to the previous project, EDC experts visited Kyrgyzstan and relayed through meetings with various stakeholders (parliamentarians, regional decision makers, and the media) the importance of involving NGOs in the field of education. In the future, EDC plans to focus more on DE/AR rather than development cooperation. As GLEN Latvia, EML and EDC are active in DE/AR, the next section provides more information about these organisations.

2.2 Development education / Awareness raising (DE/AR)

LAPAS has been active in DE/AR since its establishment: over the past few years, the secretariat has been working to raise the awareness both of the members and the wider public. LAPAS provides information on international development themes through its website and regular newsletters that are sent both to members and other interested parties. Furthermore, they have organised several round table discussions, seminars and conferences focusing on global development topics, in cooperation with different partners. In the framework of its plan to develop a tradition of annual large-scale lectures, Inita Paulovica, the UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Turkmenistan, delivered a lecture in Riga in

²⁰ <http://www.apvieniba.lv>

²¹ <http://www.riskchild.org>

September 2007. It is also worth mentioning that the secretariat of LAPAS is increasingly trying to engage the platform members in planning and implementing DE/AR activities.

In 2006, the Finnish Service Centre for Development Cooperation (KEPA) and LAPAS started a 3-year DE/AR project co-financed by the EC under the 21-02-03 budget line. Within the framework of the project 'Market of Possibilities Goes Global', the Finnish tradition of fairs where NGOs publicise their activities (Markets of Possibilities) is being extended to Latvia in the form of organising World Days. The Latvian World Days provide opportunities for NGOs that work or plan to work with international development themes to meet each other and introduce their activities to the wider public, as well as possibilities for visitors to learn about development issues and ways to get involved in relevant NGOs. The first World Day was organised on 9 September 2006 in the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, with additional financial support from the MFA. The programme included a welcoming speech by the Latvian Minister for Foreign Affairs, presentations by NGOs, an MDG-themed photo exhibition '*Chasing the Dream*'²², and song and dance performances introducing other cultures. In the autumn of 2007, World Days were held as outdoor events in three different Latvian cities – Riga, Liepaja and Aluksne. The Aluksne World Day was organised in close cooperation with the Aluskne NGO Support Centre, and the Liepaja World Day with the Liepaja NGO Support Centre. In 2008, the focus of the World Day is likely to be on Africa and the format will probably change. Apart from the World Days, the project team organises training-seminars for NGOs that participate in the World Days. Between 2006 and 2007, these included a Latvian professional development officer sharing experiences on working with multilateral institutions and a representative of the Zambian organisation 'Civil Society for Poverty Reduction' providing training on poverty reduction and advocacy.

In 2006, four LAPAS member organisations working in the field of education (EDC, LAEA, CEI and ECFS) and GLEN Latvia established a development education working group within LAPAS for exchanging ideas, planning common activities and sharing information acquired from relevant European meetings like the DEEEP²³ Summer Schools or the Development Education Forum (one of the core working groups of CONCORD). Additionally, in 2006 the working group published a booklet (around 2000 copies) on the MDGs, with financial support from the SFL. To make the booklet more attractive for the Latvian audience, they highlighted examples of Latvian NGOs' development cooperation activities.

In 2007, the DE/AR working group of LAPAS and the MFA simultaneously proposed designing a development education strategy for Latvia. The initiatives were merged and LAPAS organised the first seminar to discuss the strategy in the MFA premises in August 2007. In the meeting, approximately 15 people, including members of the LAPAS DE/AR working group and other NGOs, university lecturers, representatives of the UNESCO Latvian National Committee, the MFA, and the Ministry of Education and Research, debated the vision for 2015 and identified the main target groups (including decision makers, educators in universities, students,

²² <http://www.chasingdream.org>

²³ DEEEP is a project initiated by the Development Education Forum of CONCORD that aims to strengthen capacities of NGOs to raise awareness, educate and mobilise the European public for world-wide poverty eradication and social inclusion. See more at <http://www.deeep.org>

the business community and the media) that need specific skills and knowledge to better participate in development cooperation. For the time being, working groups are identifying specific steps to be taken to reach these target groups and the strategy should be ready in March 2008. The strategy will not have a concrete addressee but will take the form of a policy document (with concrete plans of action and the like) that would guide Latvian stakeholders' (including LAPAS itself) DE/AR activities.

When highlighting DE/AR activities of individual LAPAS members, it is worth starting with GLEN Latvia²⁴ - an organisation set up by former GLEN²⁵ participants in 2005. The main purpose of GLEN Latvia is to raise awareness about global development issues in Latvia and as the name indicates, GLEN Latvia facilitates Latvian participation in the overall GLEN initiative. As in other European nations, GLEN provides opportunities for young citizens to learn about development themes through direct exposure to the developing world. Young people are sent for three months with their German tandem partners to projects in developing countries where they obtain first-hand experience of development cooperation and cultural exchange. Between 2004 and 2006, eight young Latvians worked through the GLEN programme in countries such as Sri Lanka, Georgia, Namibia and Ghana. In 2007, an additional five people went out to work on projects in India, Mali and Georgia. Latvian youths' participation in the Mali and India projects was financed by TRIALOG while the activities in Georgia were covered by the MFA. For two of the Georgian projects (the engagements with Kazbegi and Borzomi regions mentioned in section 2.1), GLEN Latvia won a grant through the MFA open call for proposals for development cooperation projects. As such, these were considered as development cooperation activities (as opposed to DE/AR) and required selecting more experienced volunteers than regular GLEN projects.

One important element of the GLEN programme is that former *Glennies* are expected to use their personal developing country experiences in DE/AR activities in Latvia. As such, *Glennies* have provided material for the media and given lectures in schools, and many of them are involved with GLEN Latvia, which implements DE/AR projects as an organisation. For example in 2006, GLEN Latvia carried out the project '*And what about Latvia?*' in several Latvian universities that featured photographic exhibitions of development cooperation projects implemented by GLEN in Sri Lanka, Namibia, Ghana and India. At the exhibition openings, local politicians, teachers, students and development cooperation experts discussed global problems and Latvia's role in finding solutions. The project was financed by the MFA. In 2007, GLEN Latvia won an MFA grant for promoting the inclusion of development studies in the programmes of Latvian universities. This was done, among other things, through stimulating the interest of university lecturers and students towards the subject by discussing case studies in Latvian regional universities. In 2007, GLEN Latvia also prepared an opening event in Riga for the Eurizons²⁶ European hitch-hiking tour for global responsibility.

The MiTi Foundation²⁷ is a small NGDO that grew out of the Valmiera NGO Support Centre in 2005. MiTi Foundation's overall objective is, according to its website, 'to

²⁴ <http://www.glen.lv>

²⁵ <http://www.glen-europe.org>

²⁶ Eurizons is a project of the GLEN network, see more at <http://www.eurizons.net>

²⁷ <http://www.miti.lv>

promote the development and sustainability on the local and global level by prospering healthy, educated, socially responsible, democratic and economically independent civil society' and its main activities include DE/AR and networking at the international level. Since early 2007, the organisation has been involved in a 3-year DE/AR project that is being led by the Austrian NGO Welthaus Graz and co-financed by the EC under the 21-02-03 budget line. The aim of the project '*Schools act Globally: The development of an NGO network*'²⁸ is to encourage the incorporation of global development themes in school curricula in Austria, Hungary, Slovenia and Latvia. The project focuses on a specific development theme: it uses the example of trade in agricultural products to illustrate economic interdependencies between developed and developing countries. During the project, educational courses are being offered to Latvian teacher trainers so that they can in turn train teachers and pedagogy students; training sessions are being held for teachers in different regions of Latvia; educational materials focusing on global trade in agricultural products are being developed and adjusted into the Latvian context; and a partnership network is being established between Austrian, Hungarian, Slovenian and Latvian NGOs engaged in DE/AR.

The MiTi Foundation is also the Latvian national focal point for the Social Watch Network.²⁹ In autumn 2007, the foundation launched a Presidency Fund project that focuses on linking NGO coalitions from all EU new member states with Social Watch, by encouraging them to contribute to preparing Social Watch reports and debate issues emerging from the reports with decision makers. Among the MiTi Foundation's past activities is the project '*To See Beyond – to Hear the World, to Hear the Self*' that encouraged young people from Latvia to grasp the connection between global processes and their own lives, in 2005.

As for NGOs that engage in DE/AR on an occasional basis in addition to their core activities, it is worth highlighting Latvia's Association for Family Planning and Sexual Health 'Papardes Zieds',³⁰ which is currently implementing two larger-scale DE/AR projects co-financed from the EU's 21-02-03 budget line. In January 2006, in cooperation with Väestöliitto, the Family Federation of Finland (lead agency) they launched a 3-year project '*Raising Awareness on Global Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.*' In the framework of this project, which includes partners from Georgia and India, Latvia's decision-makers, teachers, journalists, NGOs, youth groups and the general public are being introduced to global SRHR as a development issue and to relevant EU policies. Thus far, the Latvian project team has organised training for teachers and young politicians; arranged for the secretary general of the Family Planning Association of India to deliver a lecture for Latvian parliamentarians; prepared postcards on global SRHR themes to be distributed in schools; arranged a study tour to Georgia for a group including six Latvian parliamentarians, on which a broadcast aired on Latvian TV. Members of the Youth Group of 'Papardes Zieds' received training in Helsinki, enabling them to subsequently deliver lectures in Latvian schools. The project team has also set up a website³¹ for sharing information on global SRHR themes. The very first activity of the project covered Estonia and Lithuania as well: in January 2006, a Finnish-Baltic roundtable on global SRHR was organised, bringing together parliamentarians,

²⁸ <http://schools.welthaus.at>

²⁹ <http://www.socialwatch.org>

³⁰ <http://www.papardeszieds.lv>

³¹ <http://www.6ls.org>

government officials and civil society representatives from the four countries. The roundtable resulted in the participating parliamentarians signing a joint statement of commitment to promote international development.

Additionally, since June 2007, 'Papardes Zieds' has been engaged in the project 'Zoom in!' that is led by the organisation 'Marie Stopes International' (United Kingdom) and will run until the end of 2008. The project focuses on linking youth in the North and South through raising the understanding of global development issues among young people in Latvia, United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The themes addressed in the framework of this project focus largely on the right of poor young people in least developed countries to make informed choices about SRHR, and how their inability to do so affects the international development agenda and the achievement of the MDGs. The project's activities include producing a publication comprising photo-stories highlighting specific SRHR themes prepared by participating youth groups and schools from both developed and developing countries; and organising European exhibitions featuring the photo-stories.

In October 2007, the Latvian Adult Education Association launched the 3-year project '*Development Education and MDGs: Issues, Methodologies and ICT*', in cooperation with Save the Children Italia and Save the Children España. The project is being co-financed by the EU's 21-02-03 budget line and focuses on developing an understanding of MDGs among secondary school students in Latvia, Italy and Spain, as well as encouraging their active participation in relevant research and study activities through the use of ICTs. In Latvia, around 200 students and 24 teachers from different schools are participating in the project activities, which include students carrying out analyses on specific topic related to the MDGs, with the help of teachers and trainers, and preparing materials to be presented at youth forums that will take place simultaneously in three countries twice during the 3-year programme. Furthermore, some other LAEA projects are attracting the attention of the Latvian public on global development issues such as illiteracy, migration and society integration.

The European Movement Latvia³² focuses on informing Latvian society about EU issues as well as promoting the participation of informed civil society in the EU integration processes. In addition to that, EML is active in raising awareness in Latvia about the EU eastern neighbourhood. They regularly publicise information on the neighbouring CIS countries on their website, and have organised several public events to highlight human rights concerns in Belarus. In the autumn of 2007, EML implemented the MFA-funded project '*Intermarium 2007*' to inform Latvian journalists, NGO leaders, scientists, lecturers and politicians about Latvia's development cooperation activities between the Baltic and Black Seas (in Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and part of Russia) and spread general information about these countries. Within the project, the EML distributed weekly newsletters, organised a seminar on Ukraine's EU prospects, and prepared radio broadcasts. Occasionally, EML engages with more global DE/AR themes as well. For example, in the framework of the respective UNDP initiative³³, they organised a public debate on the MDGs in the Latvian parliament, on October 22 2007. The participants, including NGOs, parliamentarians, researchers, MFA officials and

³² <http://www.eiropaskustiba.lv>

³³ <http://europeandcis.undp.org/mdgdebates>

ambassadors of recipient countries, discussed priorities for Latvia's development cooperation policy, the need to increase knowledge in Latvian society about the needs of poorer countries, and the viewpoint of developing countries on development cooperation and the MDGs.

As for other LAPAS members, the main activities of the Education Development Centre³⁴ include offering professional development programmes to educators, elaborating curricula and teaching materials for key audiences, and implementing projects in areas such as civil education, bilingual education, intercultural teaching methodology and critical thinking. As for DE/AR activities, EDC represents Latvia in the Development Education Forum of CONCORD, and several EDC core activities interlink with DE/AR themes: for example, in 2007 they implemented two projects to promote inter-cultural dialogue in Latvia, with financial support from the EU Structural Funds. The Public Policy Centre PROVIDUS operates a public policy portal³⁵ that offers in cooperation with academics, experts and journalists, policy studies, in-depth opinion articles, interviews and discussions on issues important for Latvia's democratic development. The portal also regularly features international development themes, in close cooperation with LAPAS. The Centre for Education Initiatives has not yet implemented any specific DE/AR projects but is searching for ways to promote the inclusion of international development themes in school curricula.

2.3 Platform sustainability and challenges

LAPAS is implementing a strong range of activities and is well-recognised but faces challenges in consolidating itself as an umbrella organisation of NGOs. The main difficulty is reaching financial sustainability. LAPAS has been fortunate in terms of funding, as it received seed money from the SFL and obtained core funding from the MFA. However, the SFL seed money is phasing out (some reserves are left for 2008) and the MFA core support cannot (and should not) cover all activities. Thus, LAPAS needs to constantly search for ways to diversify its financial base, which is a serious challenge: increasing membership fees is not an option for the time being, as most NGOs are not yet able to allocate significant sums for the umbrella organisation, and national private fundraising for development issues is still in its infancy. LAPAS has actively participated in various calls for project proposals to finance its activities but this is problematic as well: project funding rarely allows planning for longer term activities and often requires significant co-financing; and perhaps most importantly, participating in calls for project proposals means competing with members.

Other challenges include tackling the frequent change of staff and finding an adequate balance as a membership organisation. LAPAS has struggled with a high turnover in human resources (both at director and other staff levels) since its establishment, which presents a hurdle to sustainability and effective functioning. In this regard, LAPAS reflects the current overall situation of Latvian NGOs: due to economic growth there are plenty of good employment opportunities in the private and public sectors, which tempt overburdened NGO staff (who have to cope with the constant need to find funding among other things) to seek employment elsewhere. As for the membership issue, the LAPAS secretariat faces

³⁴ <http://www.iac.edu.lv>

³⁵ <http://www.politika.lv> for the Latvian version; <http://www.policy.lv> for the English version

difficulties in finding a good balance between implementing DE/AR and development cooperation activities and providing services to its members. Whilst many of the members are happy with LAPAS, there are some critical voices highlighting that thus far the LAPAS secretariat has focused on developing its own capacity and trying to survive, rather than working for the benefit of members. Engaging members, however, is a complicated task for the secretariat, not only due to its focus on financial sustainability: as most of the LAPAS members work predominantly on national issues, international development themes are only a secondary concern on their overall agenda. Consequently, the time allocated to engage with LAPAS remains very limited, placing constraints on how often they can take part in developmental initiatives such as training. The secretariat is fully aware of the need to more closely engage members and is constantly looking for ways to facilitate stronger involvement.

Annex: LAPAS members

1. Aluksne NGO Support Centre
2. Association of Latvian Mushroom Growers and Processors
3. Center for Education Initiatives, www.iic.lv
4. Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS, www.providus.lv
5. Coalition for Gender Equality in Latvia, www.apvieniba.lv
6. DIA+LOGS - support centre for those affected by HIV/AIDS, www.diacentrs.lv
7. EMDA Latvia
8. European Movement Latvia, www.eiropaskustiba.lv
9. GLEN Latvia, www.glen.lv
10. Latvia's Association for Family Planning and Sexual Health 'Papardes Zieds', www.papardeszieds.lv
11. Latvian Adult Education Association, www.laea.lv
12. Latvian Conservative Youth Union, www.lkja.lv
13. Latvian Farmers Federation
14. Latvian Portage Association, www.portage.lv
15. Liepaja NGO Support Centre
16. MiTi Foundation, www.miti.lv
17. Riga Christian Street Children Centre, www.riskchild.org
18. The Education Development Centre, www.iac.edu.lv
19. The Educational Center for Families and Schools
20. Transparency International Latvia 'Delna', www.delna.lv
21. Ventspils Region's Farmers Association
22. Victim Support Centre / Integration for Society, www.cac.lv
23. Volunteer Support Centre 'Meridians Plus'

Members' list in Latvian can be found at: <http://www.lapas.lv/?lang=LV&id=16>

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* All website addresses are operational as of 18 December 2007

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- Phone interview with Janis Kirpitis (GLEN Latvia), 21.09.2007
- Phone interview with Lasma Vaice (Liepaja NGO Support Centre), 20.09.2007
- Phone interview with Solvita Lazdina (ECFS), 20.09.2007
- Phone interview with Solvita Melne ('Papardes Zieds'), 13.09.2007
- Phone interview with Zenija Berzina (Center for Education Initiatives), 11.09.2007
- Email exchange with Anda Grinberga (MFA), Nov.2007
- Email exchange with Ildze Kanepaja (Latvian Conservative Youth Union), Oct.2007
- Email exchange with Vita Kerpe (Riga Christian Street Children Centre), Sept.2007
- Email exchange with Ingrida Mikisko (LAEA), Sept.2007

Websites

LAPAS, www.lapas.lv

MFA, Development Cooperation, www.am.gov.lv/en/DevelopmentCo-operation

Portal of national NGO platforms (search Latvia), www.ong-ngo.org

Open Society Institute, East-East program, www.soros.org/initiatives/east

TRIALOG, www.trialog.or.at

**We welcome comments, corrections or amendments to our
Country Study on Development Cooperation in LATVIA.
Please write to office@trialog.or.at.**

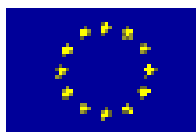


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