

Foreword

As Latvia continues its transformation to a full market-oriented democracy, it is clear that future prosperity and stability depend not only on sustainable growth of the economy but the development of a civil society where both the priority needs and aspirations of people can be met.

In order to begin to better assess the state of human development in Latvia, the first Human Development Report for Latvia has been produced. The Report is a first attempt to highlight some of the most important issues of human development in Latvia and to contribute to future policy development in social reform. By presenting analysis provided by policy-makers, academics, doctors, journalists and social commentators, this first Human Development Report is both an effort to broaden the base of Latvians contributing to the policy debate as well as a concrete manifestation that many of the issues highlighted in the Report need to be addressed not only through government but by society itself. The issues outlined correspond to several of the issues debated in the global arena today and as such the Report presents a comprehensive national analysis of subjects discussed in this year's three major global summits: the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit on Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women.

The objective of the first Human Development Report prepared in Latvia is to provide an analysis of social conditions in Latvia, highlight progress and challenges still ahead, suggest alternative policy options and draw attention to the social costs of Latvia's transformation. While the Report's scope is quite wide, it focuses on two main sets of issues concerning human development in Latvia: continued social integration and the social stress of transition.

With regard to social integration, the Human Development Report analyses the development of a multi-ethnic society, the condition of the most marginal and vulnerable groups in society, the status of women and the emergence of civil society. In terms of social stress, the Report investigates the human costs of rising poverty, growing unemployment, deteriorating public health and burgeoning crime.

Although preparation of the report was initiated as well as sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Latvia, it should be noted that the process of preparing this first Human Development Report has been an entirely *national* one. Each chapter has been prepared in Latvian by a prominent Latvian policy-maker, academic or journalist and then critiqued by a well-known commentator. Initial versions of individual chapters and commentaries were then discussed and debated by all the contributors together with the Steering Committee which is made up of Government representatives, the National Coordinator, Statistical Advisor and UNDP Latvia. Individual chapters were then edited based on comments received and discussions between each contributor and commentator. While the final Report is not an official policy document and does not reflect all the views of the whole team nor necessarily the views of UNDP, it does present an independent analysis for consideration.

Further, while a number of issues highlighted are the focus of various assistance and reform efforts, individual national and international programmes are not mentioned as the focus of the Report is on outlining the current situation in several key areas related to human development. In producing future reports, the scope will be expanded to bring in international perspectives, particularly those from the United Nations system.

On behalf of UNDP I would very much like to thank all the contributors and commentators for both the personal commitment and analytical skills each contributed to the preparation of the Report and to the members of the Steering Committee for their support and guidance throughout the last five months. In particular, I would like to thank Latvia's Minister of Welfare, H.E. Mr. Andris Bērziņš, for his personal support and strong professional commitment to the preparation of the Report which covers several issues for which his Ministry is currently spearheading a number of comprehensive reforms to address. Finally, a note of special thanks to the Report Coordinator, Mr. Nils Muižnieks, without whose tremendous personal and professional commitment the production of this Report would not have been possible.



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