



BUDGET CUTS GEARED TOWARD QUALITY-ORIENTED REORGANIZATION OF THE LATVIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

On Wednesday, March 11, the Latvian Parliament's (Saeima) Public Expenditure and Audit Committee met with the Minister for Education and Science, Tatjana Koķe, to discuss the ongoing reorganization of Latvia's educational system.

Both Committee Chairman Andris Bērziņš (UGF) and Auditor General Inguna Sudraba agreed that the educational system must be viewed as a unified system and that budget cuts should be designed to provide a quality education in a more cost effective manner. The Auditor General urged the Ministry of Education to:

- better define the results to be achieved by policies and activities;
- set qualitative and quantitative indicators of the results;
- create mechanisms for achieving and monitoring the results;

Minister Koķe explained that the reorganization process will continue with a goal toward optimizing the structure of the educational system. She explained that the Ministry follows the principle "money follows the student," in which funds will be allocated to schools on the basis of the number of students. It will be the sole competence of each local government to decide on the development of the school network located in its territory. Experts at the March 11 Committee meeting noted that this principle would stimulate development of a cheaper and more efficient network of schools.

Dagnija Staķe (UGF), Committee member, stated that the "money follows the student" model would definitely stimulate development of a high-quality education system, and she urged that these projects be implemented more courageously.

The total education and science budget of LVL 353 million in 2008 has been cut to LVL 221 million. The especially far-reaching reforms will affect the system of vocational education, which has already experienced a dramatic reduction of financing. Both experts and Committee members emphasized the importance of vocational education in light of growing unemployment.

The Committee called on the Cabinet of Ministers to inform the Committee by 24 April on the work that has to be done in order to improve vocational education, as well as to submit the draft plan for reorganising vocational education institutions.

This information was prepared based on information from the Saeima Press Service

THE LATVIAN INSTITUTE

The Latvian Institute (Latvijas institūts) was established by the Latvian state to provide a wide range of information about Latvia, its society, culture and history.

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