

**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)**

**Contribution to the CSTD ten-year review of the implementation of WSIS  
outcomes**

Submitted by

**LATVIA**

DISCLAIMER: The views presented here are the contributors' and do not necessarily reflect the views and position of the United Nations or the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

## Questionnaire for the CSTD's ten year review of WSIS implementation

This questionnaire is open to all stakeholders.

Please share your experience, views and priorities in response to the following questions, addressing the issues that you consider most important for the CSTD's ten-year WSIS review. Issues that you might consider could include any or more of the following, but need not be confined to these:

- infrastructure, access and inclusiveness;
- content, applications and capacity-building;
- technical, financial and related issues;
- governance and wider public policy aspects of the Information Society;
- social, economic and other development activities and impacts;
- the implications of new trends in technology and services;
- measurement and monitoring of the Information Society; and
- the relationship between the Information Society, sustainable development and the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

### Information about the respondent

#### 1. Salutation:

☐ Salutation: Ms

☒ Mr.

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#### 2. First Name, Surname:

Peteris Podvinskis

First Name, Surname:

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#### 3. Organisation:

Permanent Mission of Latvia to UN in Geneva

Organisation:

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#### 4. Country:

Latvia

Country:

## **6. Which stakeholder category do you belong to?**

### Government

- ☐ Which stakeholder category do you belong to?
- ☐ Private Sector
- ☐ Civil Society
- ☐ Technical or Academic Community
- ☐ Intergovernmental Organization

## **10. What are the challenges to the implementation of WSIS outcomes? What are the challenges that have inhibited the emergence of a "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society"?**

The rapid development of the ICTs brings along transformational changes. The internet has a great capacity to empower people and allow them exercise their right to freedom of expression. But at the same time this relatively new communication medium poses challenges that require appropriate and timely responses.

There is a worrying trend that in many countries internet freedom is increasingly subject to a variety of limitations.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms have to be equally protected and promoted online. It is essential to ensure the right balance between protection of the right to privacy and freedom of expression. We think that existing instruments are appropriate to maintain this balance but stakeholders must build a common understanding on the applicability of the existing international rights norms to activities in cyberspace.

## **11. How are these challenges being addressed? What approaches have proved to be effective in your experience?**

Internet use has increased tremendously since the WSIS and so have security concerns. The growth of digital activity, both legitimate and illegal, calls for new solutions in cybersecurity.

We believe that there are several ways to address this issue:

Development - existing security threats in cyberspace must be met with continuous and systematic development of knowledge and skills in security in ICT sector;

Cooperation - addressing cybersecurity threats calls for wide cooperation at national and international levels as cyberspace knows no geographical borders;

Responsibility - to reduce security risks in cyberspace all stakeholders must be aware of the security consequences of their actions or inaction in given circumstances.

Openness - cyber policy in any given country should be implemented in a transparent and inclusive way with respect to individual rights and fundamental freedoms.

#### **14. What role should information and communications play in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda?**

We would like to see development of information and communication technologies as a driver for growth, employment and development to be well reflected in the Post-2015 framework in an appropriate way.

Although there are no doubts on the importance of ICT role in the Post-2015 Development agenda, its' crosscutting nature makes ICT diluted across different goals and targets, it is not highlighted as a sector that enables sustainable growth and driving economies.

As post-2015 agenda will be most important force shaping the future of international development it will also be most important force shaping the future of ICT for development.

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- **infrastructure, access and inclusiveness;**
- **content, applications and capacity-building;**
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- **the implications of new trends in technology and services;**
- **measurement and monitoring of the Information Society; and**
- **the relationship between the Information Society, sustainable development and the Post-2015 Development Agenda.**

### **Information about the respondent**

#### **1. Salutation:**

- ☒ Salutation: Ms
- ☐ Mr.

#### **2. First Name, Surname:**

Laura Gintere

First Name, Surname:

#### **3. Organisation:**

The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development

Organisation:

#### **4. Country:**

Latvia

Country:

#### **6. Which stakeholder category do you belong to?**

- ☒ Which stakeholder category do you belong to? Government

- ☐ Private Sector
- ☐ Civil Society
- ☐ Technical or Academic Community
- ☐ Intergovernmental Organization

Other (please specify)

**7. To what extent, in your experience, has the "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society", envisaged in the opening paragraph of the WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principles, developed in the ten years since WSIS?**

Latvia has been developing "people-centred", inclusive and development-oriented Information Society according to the WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principles. WSIS, as a platform has had an important role for fostering changes and promoting common goals for building inclusive and fundamental knowledge-based society worldwide as well as in Latvia at national level since 2003. The following operational performance indicators<sup>1</sup>, have been achieved: proportion of individuals (age of 16-74) regularly using Internet in 2005 was 36% in 2013 reached 71%; Proportion of households with a broadband Internet access in 2005 was 14%, but in 2013 reached 70%. Enterprises with fixed broadband access in 2005 it was 48%, but in 2013 reached 91%. Individuals using the Internet for finding information about goods and services (age of 16-74) in 2005 – 27% but in 2013 – 52%. Individuals using the Internet for looking for a job or sending a job application (age of 16-74) in 2005 it was 10%, but in 2013 it has reached the average of ES 28 – 17%.

Furthermore, Latvia has sixth fastest internet in world (the average Internet speed was 12 megabits per second (Mbps) in the first quarter, while the global average Internet speed was 3.9 Mbps), according to the latest 2014 report by the IT company Akamai Technologies.

People appreciate the e-government services, according to the latest data of study "Evaluation of public mind on use of eServices" of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia, which is the leading state administrative institution responsible for the implementation and coordination of the e-Governance in Latvia. the popularity of e-government services is increasing – on June, 2014 they are used by each third citizen of Latvia or 36,14% of respondents.

In Addition to that, according to the Informative Report of the Cabinet of Ministers on Action Plan to Improve the Business Environment 2013-2014 (20th of December, 2013) it is foreseen to introduce the 'only once' principle in the state governing institutions with an aim to avoid requesting enterprises the same information which has already been submitted to (other) authorities. The Informative report shall include decision part on necessary actions for 'only once' principle implementation in practice.

**8. How far do you consider the implementation of specific WSIS outcomes have been achieved?**

Latvia considers implementation of WSIS outcomes achieved to the great extent. It includes infrastructure, access and inclusiveness, content, applications and capacity-building as well as technical, financial and related issues. Lot of work has been made in the field of development of e-governance and wider public policy aspects of the Information Society.

Latvia recorded a significant growth in the field of e-Government during last ten years therefore exceeding the European average in providing of electronic public services: 90% of

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<sup>1</sup> Eurostat database

basic services to citizens and 100% of basic services to businesses set out by EC are already available as electronic<sup>2</sup>.

A lot of formalities can be done without leaving home or office. At present there are 2135 descriptions of public services and 65 e-services available the Government's portal for the public services [www.latvija.lv](http://www.latvija.lv) what is the Point of Single Contact about services offered by Latvian public administration for citizens and businesses. 300 of them are eServices.

Over the past two years, the number of visitors of the Government's portal for the public services [www.latvija.lv](http://www.latvija.lv) has increased threefold and in 2012 it was more than one million.

**Main information about Portal [www.latvija.lv](http://www.latvija.lv) usage\***

Year	Clicks	Hosts	Visits
2012	13217034	823441	1085874
2013 (11 months)	15434295	992832	1262503

In division by countries (according to IP address) – 91% users are from Latvia, 2,5% from Great Britain, 0,5% - Germany, 0,5% - Sweden, 0,5% - Russia, 0,5% - USA, 0,5% - Ireland. Another 5% - different countries.

The usage of e-services in 2012. was 980 177 times, but in 11 months in 2013. - it was 1 056 332 times.

Until now, most of people have used a possibility by eService to declare their address of residence (it is free of charge if a person prefers eService), verified if a person is declared at the address provided, founded out information about the expected pension as well as Government paid health care services. It is possible also to pay administrative penalties and to submit "E-application to authority" - an application to the national authority in this website.

To promote the faster communication with the national authorities and local authorities, citizens and businesses there is a possibility to use an electronic signature or e-signature instead of written signature to sign contracts, invoice and other documents. Furthermore, entrepreneurs for their eServices can create client authentication solutions with e-signature smart cards or identification cards (EID) in their websites. The State Revenue Service offers more than 90% of formalities supposed a business. An electronic procurement system is available for entrepreneurs to simplify the participation in the public procurement. The electronic registration of enterprises is introduced by the Commercial Register since November, 2012. It is possible also to carry out a variety of changes in the relevant documents, to amend the statutes and require different certificate by the new-developed eService of Commercial Register. By September, 2012 there is no need to submit a statement as a proof of the paid services, state fees and tax payments to public authority (except any judicial authority or court and sworn bailiff)<sup>3</sup>.

## **9. How has the implementation of WSIS outcomes contributed towards the development of a "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society"?**

Since 2003 *Latvia* has participated in the WSIS processes and has developed and implemented principles approved during the WSIS. It has made a significant impulse for solving challenges and promoting objectives in a range of the policy documents and programs of Information Society in Latvia, for example: The Government adopted the "*Latvian e-Government Development Program 2005-2009*" on 29 September 2005; In October 2005, the Government adopted "*The Concept of the Electronic Procurement System*", aimed at the completion of an e-Enabled public procurement system streamlining public purchases, reducing bureaucracy and the risk of corruption; In June 2005, the Government signed an agreement for the introduction of *qualified digital signatures*; In 2006, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted the "*Information Society Development Guidelines for 2006 – 2013*". They were aimed at complying with the EU Lisbon Strategy objectives and the European initiative i2010. This document targeted the achievement of a "vision", according to which all Latvian citizens and businesses are able to fully access and use ICT-based information resources, as well as

<sup>2</sup> „Commission report on Member States competitiveness performance and policies – Latvia”

<sup>3</sup> [www.webstatistics.lv](http://www.webstatistics.lv)

public services that are tailored to their needs. Furthermore, it is envisaged that the State administration will become increasingly efficient, while dramatically cutting its administrative costs; The “*e-Government Development Plan for 2010-2013*” was adopted as a short-term development planning document primarily based on the “*National Development Plan 2007-2013*”. It introduced 192 actions which aimed to boost e-government, to strengthen state policy and to complement regulatory actions in a wide range of domains (*e.g. e-Skills, broadband access, e-Identification, e-Procurement, e-Invoice, e-Justice, e-Health, mobility and social security*) by taking into account the priorities of the EU Ministerial Declaration on e-Government policy and the EU Digital Agenda for Europe.

The availability of information regarding regulatory documents and Government's decisions plays an important role in ensuring the freedom and access to information. There are some of the examples of implementation of WSIS:

- ✓ *The sittings of the Cabinet of Ministers* have been open since 2000, and NGOs have the opportunity to participate and express their opinions. Since 2013, the Government sittings have been broadcasted live on the Internet.
- ✓ All draft regulatory documents submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers, including accompanying documents (*e.g. impact assessments etc.*), as well as viewpoints (*opinions*) received on these documents are also available on the Internet.
- ✓ All public administration institutions accept electronically signed documents for more than 10 years now.
- ✓ All minutes and protocol decisions have to be published on the website of the Cabinet of Ministers.
- ✓ NGOs are also involved in public administration through participation in working groups, which develop draft legal acts and in various consultative councils in all ministries. For instance, in 2013, 135 consultative councils, involving 750 representatives of NGOs, were active, that is indicative of considerable transparency of the process of drafting the regulatory documents and development/implementation of national policies. This is also evidenced by the fact that 188 public consultations and 120 public discussions on draft legal acts were held in 2013. All minutes and protocol decisions of the consultative councils will have to be published on the website of the relevant institution.
- ✓ In July 2013 the State Chancellery established a Twitter account “*Participation*” to strengthen communication by the Memorandum Implementation Council, to inform the public about emerging possibilities of contributing to the government decision-making process and events related to public participation, as well as enabling a more active response to NGO discussion with respect to public participation.
- ✓ One of the priorities of the public administration in 2013 was reducing the administrative burden in close cooperation with the public, NGOs and entrepreneurs. In 2013, the State Chancellery implemented campaign “*Pass to have a Better Result!*” Within its framework, two new instruments were launched, which are intended to promote the cooperation with the society in order to reduce administrative burden and disproportionate bureaucracy – a special website [www.mazinamslogu.gov.lv](http://www.mazinamslogu.gov.lv) and a mobile application “*Football in Public Administration*”. On the website [www.mazinamslogu.gov.lv](http://www.mazinamslogu.gov.lv) the questions and proposals from entrepreneurs, NGOs and residents are received, which are considered, and as a result the decisions are made to reduce administrative burden.
- ✓ The upgraded customer-friendly version with brand new interface, user friendly layout of Latvian Official Public Services Portal [www.latvija.lv](http://www.latvija.lv) was implemented on 19<sup>th</sup> of December, 2013 and now contains more detailed description of the public services, including descriptions of the service request and receiving, customers are able to make payments for services where it is appropriate. It fulfills the functions of the Point of Single Contact on services offered by Latvian public administration for citizens and businesses.

**10. What are the challenges to the implementation of WSIS outcomes? What are the challenges that have inhibited the emergence of a "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society"?**



One of the biggest challenges to have inhibited the emergence of a "people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society is to receive and maintain political support which is necessary to implement the WSIS outcomes.

Other challenge is availability and access to Government services to make information both for citizens and business people, easy understandable as well as trustable.

Lessening of administrative burden is essential, requesting citizens and businesses the same information that has already been given to (other) authorities. In the case of Latvia we intend to continue the implementation of the "only once" principle in practice to ensure that a beneficiary provides information/data/documents to a relevant body, this should be recorded in the monitoring system and reused among all the bodies involved in the monitoring, control, audit, implementation or evaluation of programme(s) co-financed by EU-Funds. Asking the citizens and businesses the same information more than once should be avoided (unless it is obvious that it is outdated).

Another problem is the shortage of ICT professionals which is a hindering factor of the ICT sector growth, improving international competitiveness, increasing of export and attracting foreign investors. Taking into account the wage gap and the lack of ICT professionals in different countries, for local ICT companies it can be a risk to invest in their employees', training and certification, because the trained employee can move to another country where remuneration is higher. On the other hand, the reduction of these investments is the risk of losing competitiveness. It is important to continue professional development in ICT to promote industry growth and competitiveness improvement. Support of ICT sector employment trainings and public sector co-financing allows a reduction in labor market challenges and gain a competitive business environment.

## **11. How are these challenges being addressed? What approaches have proved to be effective in your experience?**

An efficient public administration should focus on cooperation and work as a single integrated facility, each individual institution fulfilling their responsibility, functions and tasks of the state to achieve common goals. Similarly, government effectiveness should be evaluated and used in the private sector potential and opportunities, without attempting to ensure that sufficient competition offers private services and technologies. Separately worth to highlight and make good use of the public administration and private sector partnerships where public administration interests coincide with the interests of the private sector, they complement each other and ensure synergy.

Under the current situation and challenges, the way forward for the modernization of public administration need to focus on and plan for the following areas:

- public administration modernization of its business processes;
- society e-participation and e-democracy;
- a single public administration data space;
- ICT infrastructure optimization.

The education sector should be built and developed systematically student information, career counseling and career choice motivation ICT activities: ICT career days, Informatics Olympiad, summer camps, interest groups on social networking sites. Steps must be taken in order to promote the trainings of young people entering the work first job, providing practical skills in the latest technologies.

University's ICT professional programs must be developed increasing the number of students and learning according to the requirements of labour market (including providing trainings for ICT security specialists) in order to reduce the burden for employers to train the new employees. The use of new ICT-related development of occupational standards and provide for special measures for young people training to potential employers (practice, summer schools, etc.).

Support must continue for programs of training in ICT to improve the competitiveness of enterprises. Special support should be training's on the latest technologies, core ICT

infrastructure and project management processes and good practice frameworks (frameworks).

It is important to introduce new forms of training for ICT professionals, based on the approach of learning through practical activities. Encourage and facilitate the lecturer and students (group of up to five students) jointly developed projects for which final results are introduced or made publicly available.

ICT industry to promote and provide opportunities for young ICT professionals into the labor market, create opportunities and offer internships.

**12. What do you consider the most important emerging trends in technology and other aspects of ICTs which have affected implementation of WSIS outcomes since the Summit? What has been their impact?**

**13. What should be the priorities for stakeholders seeking to achieve WSIS outcomes and progress towards the Information Society, taking into account emerging trends?**

**14. What role should information and communications play in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda?**

**15. Please add any other comments that you wish to make on the subject of the review that you believe would be helpful.**

**16. We would also welcome any documents, reports, etc. that you can forward which you think will provide useful evidence for the review. Please send these to [cstd-wsis10@unctad.org](mailto:cstd-wsis10@unctad.org). It would be helpful if you could list these in this box, together with any URL which enables access to them on the World Wide Web.**

[http://www.varam.gov.lv/lat/darbibas\\_veidi/e\\_parv/](http://www.varam.gov.lv/lat/darbibas_veidi/e_parv/)

**17. Contributions to this consultation will be published on the CSTD website unless contributors specifically request that their contributions should not be published. If you do not wish your contribution to be published, please check the box below.**