

## ***Inclusive education: from Policy Dialogue to Collaborative Action***

Riga, Latvia  
24 – 26 February 2008

### General Overview of the Conference

#### I. Framework of the conference

The regional preparatory conference for the European and North American region is organized in conformity with the decision of the Council of the UNESCO International Bureau of Education which invites the member states to organize regional preparatory meetings in order to involve different regional stakeholders in the preparation process for the 48<sup>th</sup> Session of the International Conference on Education (ICE).

*The International Conference on Education* is a major international forum for education policy dialogue among Ministers of Education and other stakeholders (researchers, practitioners, representatives of intergovernmental organizations and civil society). The theme of the 48<sup>th</sup> session of the ICE is “Inclusive Education: the Way of the Future” and it will be held in November 2008 in Geneva. It is expected that this conference will enrich the debates about the concept of inclusive education, look more carefully into the role of governments in the development and the implementation of policies on inclusive education, draw attention to education systems that offer opportunities for life-long learning and emphasize the role of teachers to meet the learners’ diverse expectations and needs. You are invited to find more information about the 48<sup>th</sup> session of ICE at the following website – [www.ibe.unesco.org](http://www.ibe.unesco.org)

#### II. Goals and expected outcomes

The Riga conference *Inclusive Education: from Policy Dialogue to Collaborative Action* will focus primarily on policy issues related to inclusive education.

##### Objectives of the Conference

- To provide a platform for discussions on inclusive education (IE): policy trends and implementation results.
- To analyze experiences of inclusive education in Europe and North America and to highlight achievements and challenges.
- To provide suggestions on policy lines of action/guidelines to feed into the ICE.

##### Expected outcomes of the Conference

- Shared understanding about a broad concept of inclusive education and specific priorities/foci in Europe and North America.
- Mapping out relevant policies, practices and challenges of IE within formal and non formal education.
- Proposals to promote and improve IE policy making and implementation through collaborative action and successful partnership.
- Foundations for effective networking.
- Proceedings published and widely disseminated.

### III. Documents of the conference

For the convenience of the conference participants an official website has been created at [www.unescoconference.lv](http://www.unescoconference.lv). Important information about the conference will be posted on this website; participants can also find on this website the electronic registration form. The website will provide participants with the latest news pertaining to organizational and content issues. For those participants who prefer to submit their registration form by fax or regular mail, please find enclosed in Annex 1 a registration form; contact information can be found at the end of this document.

The following are official conference documents:

- (Provisional) Conference Agenda;  
The draft Agenda of the conference is enclosed with this document in Annex 2. The up-to-date version of the Agenda will be posted on the official conference website at the beginning of the second week of each month.
- Letters of invitation addressed to the National Commissions for UNESCO and Ministries of Education of the European and North American region;
- General Overview of the Conference;
- Background documentation to assist the conference discussions.

### IV. Organizers and official supporters

The conference is jointly organized by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia, the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO and UNESCO's International Bureau of Education (IBE).

The conference is officially supported by the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the British Council, the UNEVOC centre and the Microsoft Latvia office.

### V. Date and venue of the conference

The Conference will be held from 24 to 26 February 2008 in Riga, the capital city of Latvia. For more information about Latvia see – [www.latvia.lv](http://www.latvia.lv) and about Riga - [www.riga.lv](http://www.riga.lv)

The conference venue:

University of Latvia  
Raina Boulevard 19  
Riga, LV 1586  
Latvia  
For more information about the University of Latvia see- [www.lu.lv](http://www.lu.lv)

### VI. Participants

The participants are researchers and policy makers:

- 1) Each Member State from Europe and the North American region is invited to nominate a representative from the Ministry of Education (preferably vice-minister, state secretary or deputy state secretary or head of the department responsible for the conference issues) to participate in the conference and, in particular, in the round-table discussion of the Ministries of Education. For more information about the round-table discussion see the background documentation to assist the conference discussions.

- 2) A call for the participation of researchers has been sent out by the organizers directly, and through different regional organizations and networks. Invitations to researchers invited to the conference will be sent out by the middle of January 2008 at the latest.

Although there is no limit to the number of participants from one country, the total number of conference participants will not exceed 200.

#### **VII. Working languages**

The working languages of the conference will be English, French and Russian with simultaneous translation being provided in plenary sessions and workshops. All relevant documents and information will be distributed in the official working languages of the conference.

#### **VIII. Travel and accommodation**

The travel and accommodation costs are to be covered by the participants. The organizers have negotiated for the participants, special prices in Riga hotels and have also made provisional reservations. Please let us know if you would like to benefit from this offer. If so, please indicate (tick) on the registration form, under the section - hotels - the type of hotel and room you would like to have. The travel company "Your Run" is responsible for conference travel and accommodation and will contact you in due course to provide you with more information about the reservations made. The same applies to travel arrangements– if you would like to use the services provided by the travel company "Your Run", please indicate this on the registration form and you will be contacted as soon as possible.

#### **IX. Solidarity fund**

Taking into account the need to ensure full regional representation, a solidarity fund is being established for participants coming from different transition and developing countries. In case you would like to take advantage of the solidarity fund you should indicate this on the conference registration form and the organizers will contact you personally.

#### **X. Passport and Visa Requirements, Insurance**

All participants should have a passport which is valid for at least three months after their arrival into Latvia. For more information about visas we invite you to visit the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia [www.mfa.gov.lv/en/service/visas](http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/service/visas). For any other questions concerning entry visas, please use the contact form on the official conference website [www.unescoconference.lv](http://www.unescoconference.lv) and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

All the participants should also obtain comprehensive travel insurance in their country prior to their departure.

#### **XI. Practical information**

A document including all the relevant practical information pertaining to the conference will be sent to participants together with the invitation letter.

## XII. Correspondence and Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to:

1) Conference issues and participation:

Latvian National Commission for UNESCO  
Pils Laukums 4 – 206  
Riga, LV 1050  
Latvia  
Phone: + 371 67325 109  
Fax: + 371 67222 762  
E-mail: [office@unesco.lv](mailto:office@unesco.lv)  
Website: [www.unesco.lv](http://www.unesco.lv)  
Conference website: [www.unescoconference.lv](http://www.unescoconference.lv)

2) Travel and Accommodation:

Travel company "Your Run"  
Torna iela 4, III B-102  
Riga, LV 1050  
Latvia  
Phone: + 371 67325 555  
Fax: + 371 67830 898  
E-mail: [info@yourrun.lv](mailto:info@yourrun.lv)  
Website: [www.yourrun.lv](http://www.yourrun.lv)  
Conference website: [www.unescoconference.lv](http://www.unescoconference.lv)