

National Centre for Education

**Education of Learners with Special Needs in
Latvia**

September 13th, 2017

Riga

Law on Education

Section 1

24) **special education** – general and vocational education adapted for persons with special needs and health problems, or with special needs or health problems

Law on General Education

- **Special education is a specific type of general education**

Law on General Education

- **Special needs** are the need for **appropriate support** and rehabilitation that give learners the opportunity to acquire educational programmes according to their health condition, abilities and level of development

Inclusive Education

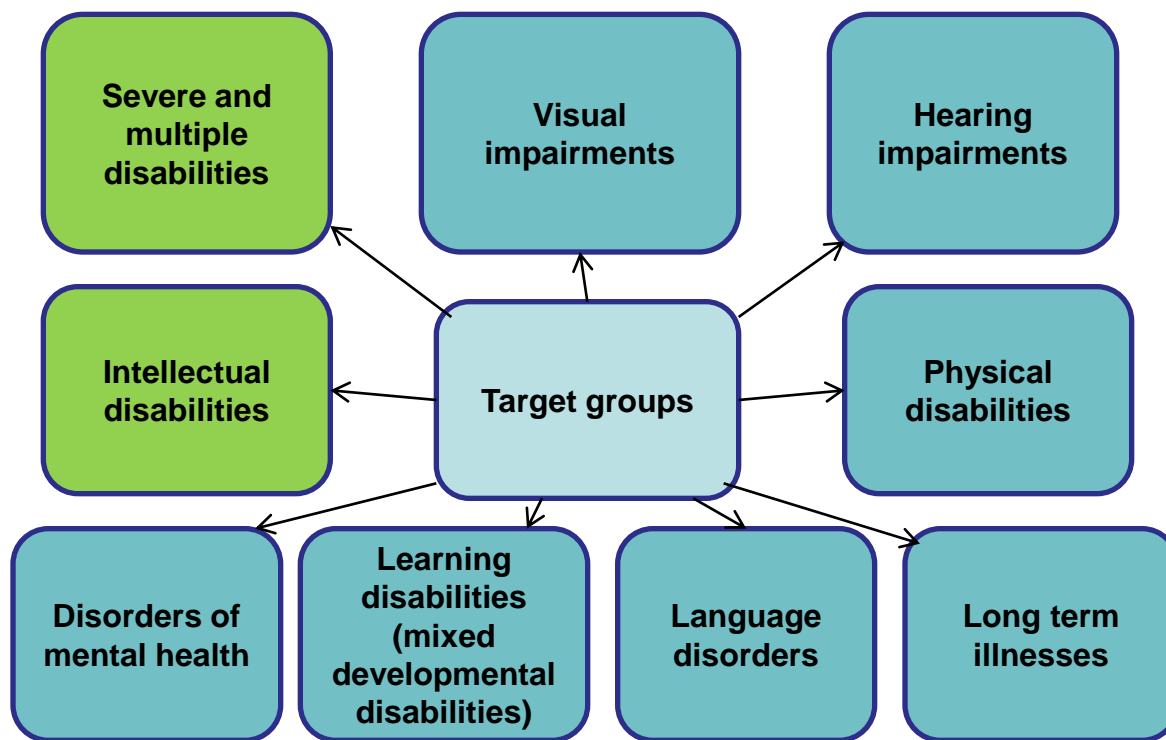
- Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020

a process in which the diverse needs of all learners are ensured increasing the participation opportunities of every learner in the learning process, culture, and various communities and reducing the possible exclusion from the education and educational process

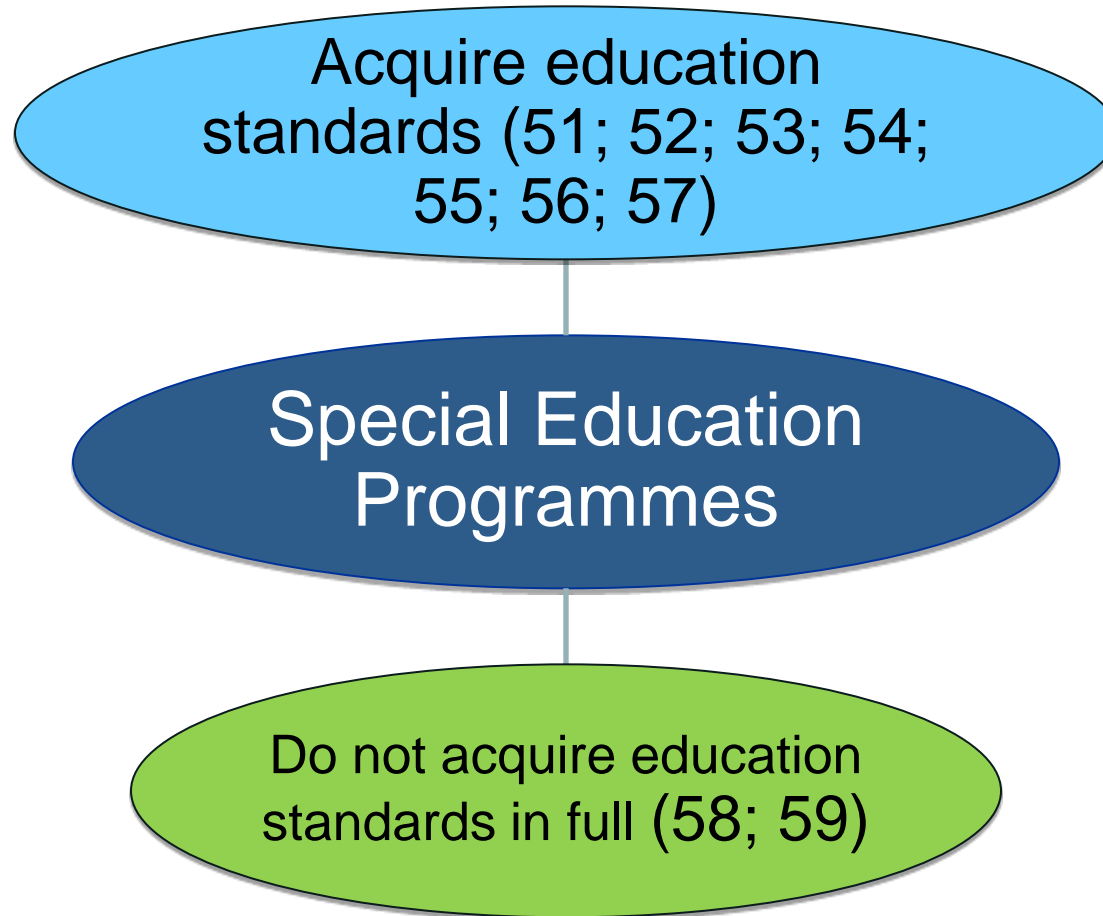
Law on General Education (2)

- Availability of **adequate support measures** for learners with special needs who are integrated/included into a general education institution shall be ensured by the educational institution. **Individual education plans** should be developed for every learner with special needs who is included in general education classroom.

Target groups of Special Education



Special Education Programmes (9 according to target groups)



Law on General Education

- Chapter 8 – Special Education
- Section 49
- (1) Special educational programmes ensure **the possibilities and circumstances** for learners with congenital or acquired functional disabilities to acquire general education according to their special needs.

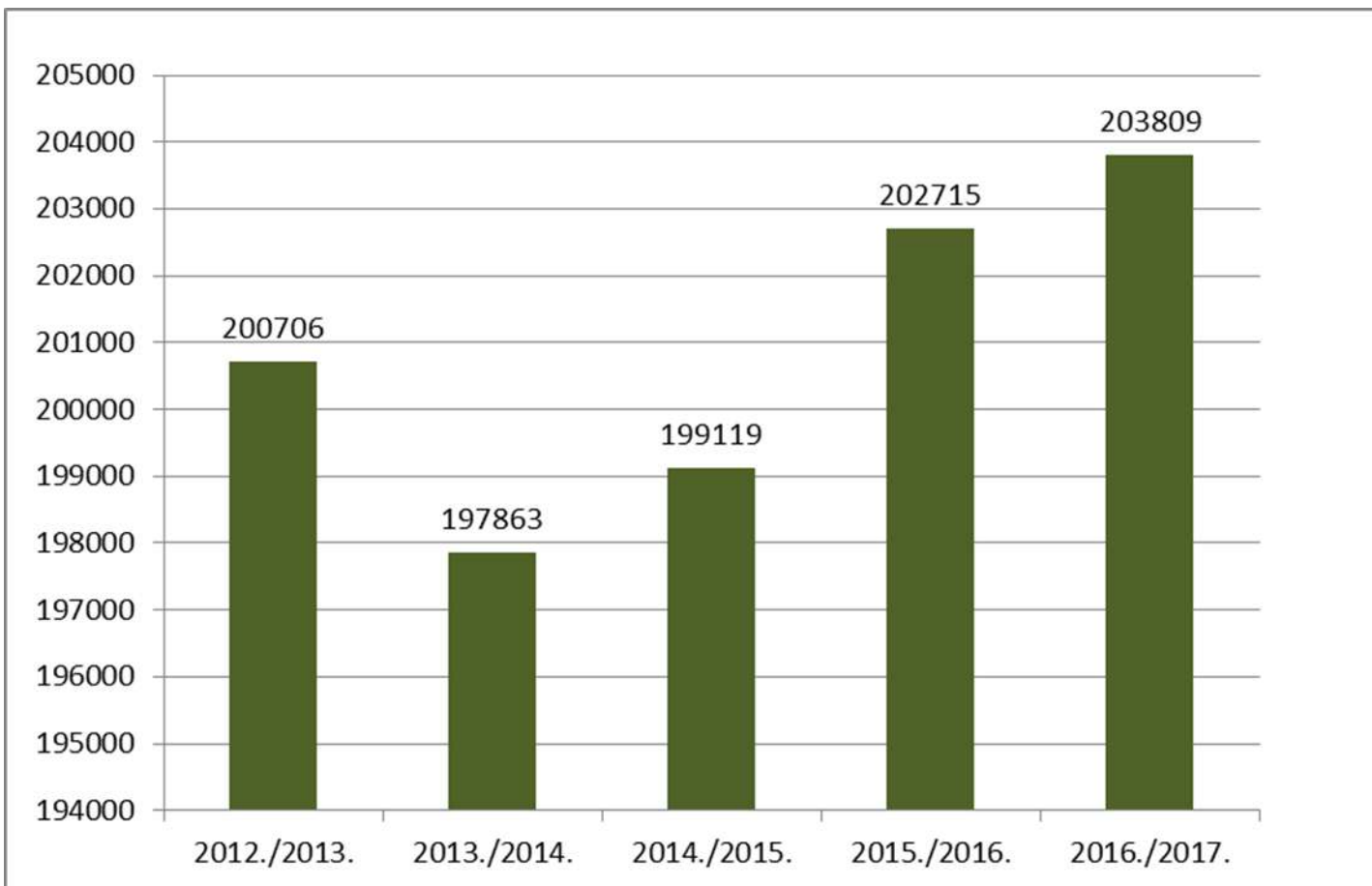
Areas of activity of special education (1)

- both types of special education provision are equal in Latvia
 - special education institutions
 - special support to children in general mainstream education institutions

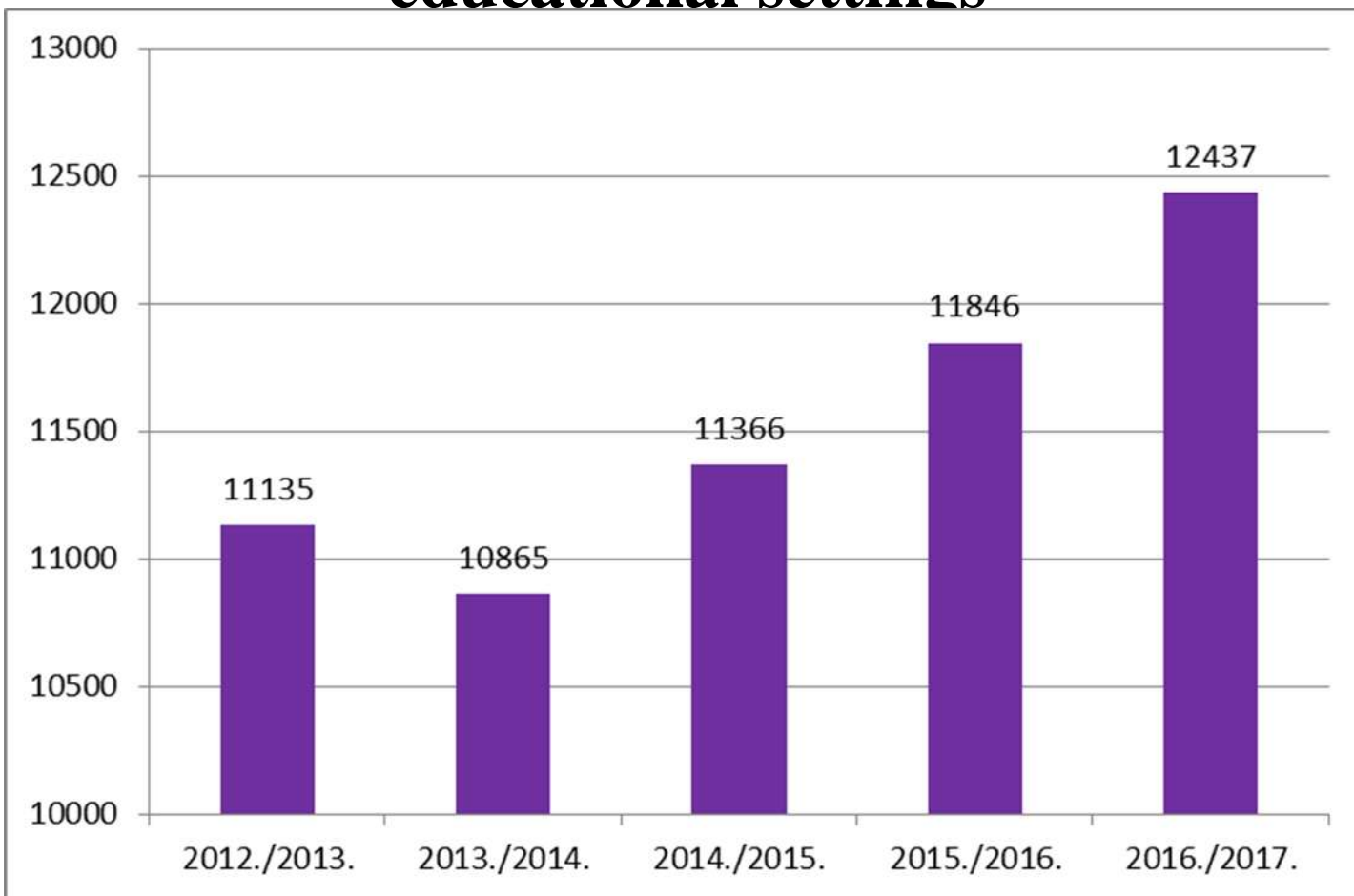
Areas of activity of special education (2)

- the possibility to receive education **in the most appropriate** education institution is provided for each learner with special needs by ensuring
 - the help of qualified specialists
 - acquisition of knowledge
 - development of social skills and practical skills
 - practical orientation in education
 - preparation for employment and integration into society
 - special correction and rehabilitation

Total number of learners in day schools



Number of learners with special needs in all educational settings



Number of learners with special needs in different settings (2016/2017)

- Special schools – 5855
- Special classes – 1492
- Included (sp.edu.pr.) – 4650
- Included (gen.edu.pr.) – 440
- **Total: 12 437 (53%)**

Network of special education institutions (1)

- programs of special education may be provided by state, municipal and private special education institutions or general education institutions
- in the school year of 2016/17 there were 58 special education institutions founded by the state and municipalities, out of them
 - in Riga – 12
 - in the regions and towns of Latvia – 46

Assessment of special educational needs (1)

On three levels

- School level – done by support team
- Municipal pedagogical medical commission
- State pedagogical medical commission

Assessment of special educational needs (2)

- **Assessment based on International Classification of Diseases (ICD) – 10th addition**

Pedagogical Medical Commissions

- Assess abilities of children, analyse health condition and level of development, as well as documents from educational institutions, doctors, exercise-books, achievement sheets etc...
- Recommend the most appropriate educational program
- Recommend education at home for pupils with long term illnesses
- Consult teachers, parents, learners and other stakeholders about issues concerning special education

- The assessment of intellectual abilities, academic knowledge and social skills should be done before the meetings of PMC
- All the expert assessment materials (originals) are given back to parents
- Special education program for learners with intellectual disabilities is recommended only after full assessment of intellectual abilities made by a psychologist and after a consultation with child psychiatrist.

- The meetings are held not only according to the plan but also when there is a demand
- The organization of education at home is only recommended in cases when it is impossible to join medical treatment with education process
- PMC have the right to demand information from educational institutions about children with special needs, provided support measures, accommodations
- PMC have the right to follow the progress of the child with special needs in any of the educational institutions

The Placement

- After receiving recommendations from PMC about educational program **parents have the right to choose a school** where their child receives the education
- Schools have to either license the special education program or provide all support measures needed

Network of special education institutions (2)

- it is encouraged
 - to open **special education classes** in general education institutions that are close to the place of residence of children
 - to include learners with special needs in mainstream education institutions (if they have the required equipment and provision)
 - to make educational institutions accessible for children with severe physical disabilities
 - to promote total design in educational institutions

To promote inclusion of learners with special needs

- Support measures and accommodations are allowed in state tests and examinations (Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers)
- Financing that follows learners with special needs is higher (2,0)

Use of ICT in Education

- No universal access provided but:
 - digital books available;
 - possibility to use text-to-speech (still problems);
 - approach «Use your Own Device» supported;

State guarantees for special education (1)

The state guarantees and ensures

- the acquisition of general education appropriate to the health condition and type of disability of the student with special needs
- the possibility that children with special needs can be involved in the programs of special education following a statement from Pedagogical Medical Commission

State guarantees for special education (2)

The state guarantees and ensures

- the financing from national budget for the education of all children with special needs,
- the financing of teacher salaries and maintenance costs of special education institutions from national budget
- gradual inclusion of students with special needs into mainstream education institutions

Development tendencies of special education (1)

In order to facilitate that all students with special needs can access education at the place of their residence or close to it, the main future tasks are the following:

- establishment of national and regional support system for special education
- extended functions of municipal Pedagogical Medical Commissions, providing methodological and practical support to teachers and parents of children with special needs, as well as other stakeholders

Development tendencies of special education (2)

- facilitating the establishment of special education classes in general mainstream education institutions
- activities promoting the establishment of psychologically, socially (transport network) and technically suitable environment

Issues to be solved for including the children with special needs in mainstream education institutions (1)

- psychological readiness of the teaching staff, students and their parents in mainstream education institutions to welcome children with special needs
- technical suitability of mainstream education institutions for children with special needs
- provision of accessible ICT for children with special needs
- improving teacher competences in using ICT in education
- professional readiness of teachers to work with children with special needs

Issues to be solved for including the children with special needs in general mainstream education institutions (2)

- financial provision for the implementation of support measures required for children with special needs
- provision of transport services for children with special needs
- acquiring a vocation or profession within the system of vocational education and training

Methods and strategies recommended

- Reading:
 - Functional training (every day 15 -20 minutes of reading);
 - Additional time;
 - Reading the instructions of the task for the learner;
 - Materials that help to understand the text
 - Use of ICT (text-to-speech, Widgit symbols)

Methods and strategies recommended

- Don't ask to read aloud in the classroom
- Use appropriate font and height of the letters in the text
- You have to think about the light in the classroom (at the desk)

This is a story about reading

This is a story about reading

This is a story about reading

this is a story about reading

This is a story about reading

snowman

snowman

snowman

Cues using Widgit Symbols



Suns



Kucēns



Kaķis



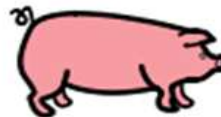
Kaķēns



Govs



Teļš



Cūka



Sivēns



Compensation Strategies

- To get information in alternative ways (TV, radio, museums, exhibitions, excursions etc)
- To find key words in the text
- To underline the main idea in the text

Methods and strategies recommended

- Writing;
 - Functional training (15 – 20 minutes every day)
 - Additional time to fulfil the task
 - Use computer
 - To form the system of abbreviations
 - Allow to answer orally

Methods and strategies recommended

- Mathematics
 - Functional training (every day about 15 minutes)
 - **Motivation !!!**
 - Use of cues and prompts

VISC

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