

## **Joint Statement on the VNR of Latvia 2022, delivered by a Representative of Education & Academia Stakeholder Group**

The spotlight report of the government's VNR developed by Latvian NGOs estimates low availability of comprehensive information and data on SDGs, especially in the context of different social groups and regions. An objective assessment of the implementation of the Global Goals should be ensured by transparent information from the government. The ongoing crises should not serve as an excuse.

Taking into consideration the aggressive invasion of Russia in Ukraine, and the related wide scale disinformation, we emphasize that the skills of the society to understand independent information must be enhanced. By positively evaluating the contribution of our government in the mitigation of disinformation in Latvia and on a global scale, we would encourage an increase in public funding for NGOs working for this cause, thus also strengthening the overall capacity of the sector and social innovations it implements.

As the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia indicated, organisations in Latvia, including libraries, are already providing a considerable contribution to the development of informational literacy, thus promoting the rise of responsible opinions, critical thinking and participation in the decision making.

We hereby emphasize that discussion of controversial subjects and the impact of the global development must involve different parties, including groups with limited abilities and resources, thus increasing the stability and co-responsibility of the public for sustainable development. We also recommend the government to use contemporary information channels that are suitable for youth.

It is noticeable that during the drafting of the independent report by Latvian NGOs, the youth proposed reducing digital inequality.

Latvia has contributed to the development of digital infrastructure, however, not all social groups have equal access to possibilities offered by technologies.

Therefore we, NGOs of Latvia, put forward the following question:

What are the priorities and planned actions of the government of Latvia to raise levels of digital accessibility for marginalised social groups, especially those who are affected by growing income inequality?