

REPORT 11:

PARTICIPATING IN SOCIETY – LATVIA

This report is based on the results of two focus groups and three individual interviews in Latvia on the theme of young peoples' participation in society. The discussions explored young peoples' perceptions of their own role in society, their goals and their aspirations. This report is a copy-edited version of material provided to the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre by Oxford Research International. The views expressed are the views of those who took part in these discussions. All those participating did so on a confidential basis. All names have been changed.

About the Focus Groups

The discussions took place in the offices of the Latvian youth organization Mes Latvija via Latvija in Riga on 28 November, 1999. **Focus Group One** (FG1) consisted of eight young people of both sexes aged 15-24. **Focus Group Two** (FG2) consisted of eight young people of both sexes aged 17-24. All were selected with the assistance of the youth organization on the basis of their voluntary activities.

Focus Group One (FG1)

Location:	Riga, MES Latvia conference room
Date of focus group:	28 November 1999
Details on selection of participants:	The coordinators of Latvian youth organizations helped recruit young people matching the selection criteria.
Participants (name, age, gender)	Kaspars, 24, Male Vilmis, 16, Male Mara, 21, Female Ansis, 15, Male Ilse, 21, Female Irina, 17, Female Eva, 19, Female Alexanders, 24, Male
Start time:	12:00
End time:	13:35
Comments from facilitator:	All the participants were involved in the discussion. It was not particularly difficult to make them speak. They were rather active and talkative.
Problems encountered:	No particular problems were encountered.

Focus Group Two (FG2)

Location:	Riga, MES Latvia conference room
Date of focus group:	28 November 1999
Details on selection of participants:	The coordinators of Latvian youth organizations helped recruit young people matching the selection criteria.
Participants (name, age, gender)	Astra, 17, Female Ina, 16, Female Kristine, 19, Female Andris, 20, Male Edmunds, 24, Male Gaatis, 18, Male Laila, 18, Female Majja, 21, Female
Start time:	16:00
End time:	17:55
Comments from facilitator:	All the participants were involved in the discussion. They were very talkative. Astra, Ina and Laila were switching from Latvian to Russian and back, as it was difficult for them to answer certain questions in Latvian.
Problems encountered:	No particular problems.

About the individual interviews

Individual interviews were also carried out with the following people:

- Albert, aged 15, male, an Internet user
- Katia, aged 16, female, an active voluntary worker
- Guntar, aged 22, male, an active voluntary worker

A summary of responses from the Focus Groups

This report reflects the order in which topics were discussed, following the *discussion guidelines* on this subject.

2.1 Aspirations and main goals in life

Participants appeared to share similar views on their goals in life. The main focus was on education.

- *'I would like to get into higher education and find a good job. This would allow me to live a meaningful life.'* (Kaspars, FG1, male, 24)
- *'The main goal is to get education, but what I mean by education is broader than its classical meaning. It is necessary to continue educating myself all my life and to help people - first of all those closest to you and then others also.'* (Maija, FG2 female, 21)
- *'Good education is important. It is also important not just to pile up knowledge but to share it with others. I do not want to fall into a daily routine - I want to keep on improving myself.'* (Andris, FG2, male, 20)

However, respondents differed in their views on the importance of having their own family.

- *'... family? This is not a main goal of mine.'* (Astra, FG2, female, 17)
- *'I agree with Astra, but should I meet a nice girl, I would not mind getting married.'* (Edmunds, FG2, male, 24)
- *'It is not my main goal - I would prefer to get a good education first.'* (Maija, FG2, female, 21)
- *'It could be the major goal in my life.'* (Andris, FG2, male, 20)

Participants found it important to make a contribution to society.

- *'I want to be needed by society and by the people of Latvia. I do not want to live in any other country and I want to dedicate my life to my country. I need to get appropriate education and experience for this.'* (Mara, FG1, female, 21)
- *'The main goal of my life is to maintain the values I already have. I would like to understand people and help them. Of course I find it necessary to get a good education and find a good job.'* (Kristine, FG2, female, 19)

Respondents were also keen to influence the political decisions affecting their lives.

- *'... it is very important to me. Even if these decisions do not affect the whole country, I would like to be able to express my opinion.'* (Maija, FG2, female, 21)
- *'I would not like others to make stupid decisions - I want to participate in decision-making myself.'* (Edmunds, FG2, male, 24)

- *'We used to have a society which stuck together; it was not possible to survive in any other way. Nowadays, it is possible to live independently. Thus, everyone should contribute something to decision-making.'* (Edmunds, FG2, male, 24)

There was a general consensus that participation in community life was important.

- *'People study, work and live within a community. That is why one is responsible not only for oneself, but also for the community.'* (Ilse, FG1, female, 21)
- *'Of course, if you live among people, you are an integral part of a community.'* (Kaspars, FG1, male, 24)

They mentioned that self-realization and communication were also important aspects of their lives.

- *'It is important to study, to feel good about yourself and others.'* (Mara, FG1, female, 21)
- *'It is important to see the meaning of life, to find love, to receive education and to be needed by the community.'* (Eva, FG1, female, 19)
- *'It is important that people are happy. I would like to see happy smiling faces in the streets. I would like people to live better today than they did yesterday.'* (Irina, FG1, female, 17)
- *'It is important to live with a person you understand, to get a good education and to find the job you really enjoy.'* (Edmunds, FG2, male, 24)

2.2 Attitudes towards a 'meaningful life'

2.2.1 A 'meaningful life'

In keeping with their aspirations and main goals in life, social consciousness, self-realization and participation within the community ranked high on the list of areas these young people considered to be meaningful.

- *'I see it this way. If watching TV is the only essence of your life, life is meaningless. On the contrary, if you dedicate your life to doing something useful for other people - your life has meaning.'* (Ansis, FG1, male, 15)
- *'If a human being is living without contact to others, without helping anyone, without loving anyone, he is living like a machine and his life does not make any sense. But if you're living a full life, if you have feelings and if you help others, your life has meaning. You should be active in your life.'* (Kaspars, FG1, male, 24)
- *'It is necessary to live a full life every single day, so that when you are old, toothless and bald, you could say that your life was meaningful and interesting.'* (Mara, FG1, female, 21)

Participants felt that leading a meaningful life was not easy. In fact, they mentioned various things that are needed to make life meaningful.

- *'What I really need is to have more time. I have enough resources, it is possible to find money, it is possible to overcome problems, but I cannot make minutes, hours and days last longer.'* (Irina, FG1, female, 21)
- *'You need to be sure of yourself, not to lose the meaning of life, and to have somebody share your life.'* (Astra, FG2, female, 17)
- *'It is necessary to be strong and to be sure that the things you do are really necessary.'* (Gaatis, FG2, male, 18)

Some felt that a good education could contribute to a meaningful life, but that there were other determining factors.

- *'It is possible to have a university degree and still fail to understand the true meaning of life. One could be a baker but still understand the sense of life very well. We learn through life and through nature.'* (Edmunds, FG2, male, 24)
- *'Having a good education is important for me.'* (Andris, FG2, male, 20)
- *'If you have a goal in life, you can study to develop your personality so that you can reach your goals.'* (Vilmis, FG1, male, 16)

Opinions differed on the importance of family and children in achieving a meaningful life. These differences could, perhaps, be due to age and maturity.

- *'The point of life is, of course, having children.'* (Alexanders, FG1, male, 24)
- *'I see the meaning of my life in helping society rather than in bringing up children. Maybe when I have a baby, I will change my mind.'* (Eva, FG1, female, 19)

2.2.2 Voluntary work

Participants enjoyed voluntary work as it offered the opportunity to meet people with similar attitudes and goals.

- *'I like doing voluntary work because it allows me to meet very interesting people; the ones who motivate me to do things.'* (Gaatis, FG2, male, 18)
- *'It is nice to feel that you are surrounded by people who are willing to share their time with others.'* (Maija, FG2, female, 21)
- *'This job gives me new insights, new friends and new possibilities.'* (Andris, FG2, male, 20)

2.3 Young people's participation in society

The young people taking part in the Focus Groups represented different organizations – although one individual worked independently – as follows:

- The Red Cross
- Anti-AIDS Society
- The Beauty of Life Group
- The Latvian School Sports Federation
- A Student committee

- MES LATVIJAI, VISA LATVIJA (the coordinating committee of the Latvian youth organization)
- The Robert Bosch Volunteers Organization
- The Ecological Organization
- The EU club
- The 'MAJA' club
- The Kit (Save the Whale) Society
- The 'Maris' Club

Most volunteers work with young people.

- *'I work for an organization called "The Beauty of Life". We try to teach people to make their lives more beautiful. We ran sports competitions for children last winter. They enjoyed it so much! I love this job.'* (Mara, FG1, female, 21)
- *'I hold seminars on issues such as healthy life-styles; I also take part in organizing various sports events.'* (Ilse, FG1, female, 21)
- *'I work with young people for the Robert Bosch Volunteers Organization. The main focus of our work is running seminars and meetings.'* (Astra, FG2, female, 17)
- *'I work for the Ecological Group. We organize various seminars and it is great to see when people start indentifying with you.'* (Kristine, FG2, female, 19)

They felt that their personal values and convictions had motivated them to take on this voluntary work.

- *'I enjoy helping people.'* (Ilse, FG1, female, 21)
- *'I am doing it because I can see the results of my work and it is extremely rewarding.'* (Eva, FG1, female, 19)
- *'This is my way of life. I cannot imagine myself sitting in front of the TV in the evening while I could help someone in the meantime.'* (Irina, FG1, female, 17)
- *'Yes, this corresponds with my moral principles. My parents have devoted their lives to sport, that is why I am particularly eager to assist people in living a healthy life.'* (Ilse, FG1, female, 21)

It was interesting that none of the participants had opted for volunteering because they had no other opportunities. In fact, none appeared to be motivated by the prospect of future paid employment. In general, they were pleased with their experience of voluntary work so far. Nevertheless, they mentioned that voluntary work, like any other activity, has some positive and negative aspects:

2.3.1 Positive aspects

Participants enjoyed seeing their ideas and decisions translated into reality and much of satisfaction was result-driven.

- *'Once the job is done and I can see the result, it is very pleasant.'* (Eva, FG1, female, 19)
- *'I like the results of this job. I can see them.'* (Irina, FG1, female, 17)
- *'If you do something and succeed, your motivation is increased.'* (Ina, FG2, female, 16)

2.3.2 Negative aspects and problems

However, volunteers mentioned some aspects of their work that they did not enjoy.

2.3.2.1 Lack of understanding

Some said that the main problem they encounter is the lack of understanding and appreciation that other people show for voluntary work.

- *'I am doing my best and try hard to help and some people do not understand this and laugh at me.'* (Irina, FG1, female, 17)
- *'It is very unpleasant when you are trying hard to help people and they ask what you are getting out of this and why you are doing this job for free [...] I sometimes feel disgusted with that.'* (Ilse, FG1, female, 21)
- *'It is very difficult to do this job if others do not appreciate it and start criticising me.'* (Maija, FG2, female, 21)

2.3.2.2 Lack of support

A number of young people mentioned a lack of support for their work. This point mainly concerned fellow volunteers.

- *'On the whole, all the volunteers are a team trying to reach the same goals. But there are some people who do not work properly, and start dropping out because of lack of time or because they are too busy with their main job.'* (Eva, FG1, female, 19)
- *'It is very difficult to do something alone - you need assistance and other people do not want to do a job for free. It is hard to convince them.'* (Astra, FG2, female, 17)
- *'It is very difficult to make volunteers take responsibility for their job. Many people promise to come and do not show up because they are busy or do not feel like doing it any more.'* (Vilmis, FG1, male, 16)

The participants pointed out that there is a lack of coordination and good decision-making within voluntary organizations.

- *'I dislike many things. I work for the EU club and many people call us "European fans", but this is not true... I think that young people need to learn a lot to be able to become a member of the EU club. I dislike many leaders of the volunteers' organization. They all show off, pretend to be extremely intelligent and know a lot, but they are arrogant which makes decision-making difficult'* (Edmunds, FG2, male, 24)

2.3.2.3 Uncertainty

A few were frustrated about the uncertainty associated with their work.

- *'You can never be sure about the results of your work. You can only guess the outcome'* (Astra, FG2, female, 17)

2.3.2.4 Time pressures

Some felt that voluntary work demanded much of their personal time. Sometimes they felt that it was difficult to find enough time to carry out their duties well.

- *'I am a university student and voluntary work takes up a lot of time. This has a negative impact on my studies, and it is also taking away time from my girlfriend... It would be nice to have a girlfriend among the volunteers... Voluntary work makes it impossible to plan your day'* (Andris, FG2, male, 20)

2.4 Relationships between generations

There were two distinct views on relations between generations. Some described the common experiences of both groups, while others saw a deep schism between young and old. The fact that these young people had been socialized during the transition from state-socialism to an open society appeared to increase their scepticism towards older (middle-aged) cohorts and thus the old order.

- *'I do not think that I can learn anything from those who are 40 or 50. I find the experience of those who are in their 70s and 80s much more interesting. Their lives are longer and they have experienced much more.'* (Eva, FG1, female, 19)
- *'I think that the value of the older generations' experiences depends on the society they come from. Those who are 40 or 50 years old now come from the Soviet era. That is why I am rather sceptical about their experience. I have little in common with them.'* (Vilmis, FG1, male, 16)
- *'It is true that older people have more life experience than the young, but their experience dates back to the previous life... It is very difficult for them to find a place in this new life.'* (Irina, FG1, female, 17)

Others disagreed with such generalizations and had a more complex viewpoint:

- *'There are some people [in their 40s and 50s] worth listening to, those who are looking into the future and share this life with us. At the same time others have remained rigid in their personal development and are fixed in their point of view. The latter are not interesting at all.'* (Kaspars, FG1, male, 24)
- *'I respect the experience of my parents and my aunt. I used to value this experience less when I was younger, but as I grow up I begin to understand that their experiences can be really useful.'* (Ina, FG2, female, 16)
- *'In my opinion there is something to learn from older people. Their lives were much more difficult than ours; they have a lot of experiences to share. At the same time the problems they faced and solved are very different from the ones we come across today.'* (Ansis, FG1, male, 15)

Participants therefore agreed that older generations could be categorized into two groups; those who adapt to the changes and understand young people and those who are inflexible.

- *'Their attitude towards life is very different; it depends very much on their personalities. Some of the people in their 40s or 50s have stopped their personal development, others keep on studying, are flexible and ready to follow new ways of*

life. They learn foreign languages and use computers ... These people can understand young people much better.' (Mara, FG1, female, 21)

- *'There are some people from older generations who respect young people and think that they could learn something from us, but they are the minority. Most keep saying that young people today are terrible and that they have nothing in common with us.'* (Vilmis, FG1, male, 16)

Opinions were divided as to whether older and younger generations were getting closer.

- *'In my opinion old and young people are moving in different directions.'* (Ilse, FG1, female, 21)
- *'We all share a country. That is why we should move in the same direction and live together. I think this process is easier in small towns and villages. In cities it is much more difficult. In any case, I think it would be better to get closer.'* (Kaspars, FG1, male, 24)
- *'On the whole, both old and young people are moving in the same direction, but those who are younger change faster.'* (Maija, FG2, female, 21)

2.5 A supportive environment

2.5.1 Family

Most volunteers came from well-to-do backgrounds with few problems and mentioned that their parents were well educated and had adapted easily to recent changes. Most participants felt comfortable about living at home.

- *'I am happy at home because I like the atmosphere there ... I get on quite well with my family.'* (Katia, active young person, female 16, individual interview)
- *'Family means people who are dear, close to me ... I am happy at home because I usually feel good there.'* (Albert, internet user, male, 15, individual interview)

Although younger respondents said that they were content with their position at home, there were some who felt that their parents were not always listening to their ideas.

- *'My parents consult me if there is an important decision to be made but it does not always happen. I think that my opinion has some weight, but it is not really significant. My parents ask for my opinion if they are going to buy me something.'* (Katia, active young person, female, 16, individual interview)

All participants agreed that being on good terms with their parents was important to them.

- *'Loving parents can really give a lot.'* (Mara, FG1, female, 21)
- *'Parents' love contributes a lot to meaningful life.'* (Ilse, FG1, female, 21)

2.5.2 Partners

Many participants felt that it is important to have an understanding partner who can offer support in life.

- *'Of course, one needs a partner who thinks the same way.'* (Vilmis, FG1, male, 16)
- *'One person will never achieve what can be done by two people.'* (Mara, FG1, female, 21)
- *'It is very important to me to have someone close, who thinks in the same way as I do, a person who listens to me... If you are alone you can make a lot of mistakes.'* (Eva, FG1, female 19)

2.5.3 School

Some participants felt that their opinion was not always valued at school. In fact some were frustrated by the lack of opportunity to participate in decision-making at their school.

- *'I would like others to respect my opinion and to be interested in it.'* (Albert, internet user, male, 15, individual interview)
- *'It does not often happen that teachers consult with their students. This might only be the case for some minor decisions such as classroom cleaning or a party for our class.'* (Katia, active young person, female, 16, individual interview)

Older respondents were more successful in making themselves heard.

- *'I am involved in the students committee. We organize debates and other events. When I was at school, I was the founder of the school parliament.'* (Andris, FG2, male, 20)
- *'I am involved in a students committee in my spare time. Students are the future generation and it is important and rewarding to assist them and to protect their interests.'* (Eva, FG1, female, 19)

2.5.4 Work

All participants understood the importance of securing a good job. Some felt that employers do not always respect the opinions of younger employees, and that there was some discrimination shown in favour of older people.

- *'From my experience I have seen that employers do not display a fair attitude towards young people. Their attitude towards the young and old is different. They trust the older ones more.... They believe that their opinion is correct because they are older, wiser and more important. I think young people are treated worse when employers hire or fire people. Usually they treat older people better and with more concern.'* (Guntar, voluntary worker, male, 22, individual interview)
- *'This is true. We have two types of older colleagues at work. Some treat young people well and understand us. Others, however, think that young people are not worth speaking to.'* (Irina, FG1, female, 17)

2.5.5 Friends

While some preferred to have friends with the same views, others seemed happy to maintain friendships with people who were of different opinions.

- *'I have a good friend. He is my ex-classmate. I like him because our opinions on many subjects are similar or simply the same. He listens to me in most cases.'* (Albert, internet user, male, 15, individual interview)
- *'I have a friend, Mara (female). We study in the same class. I like her because we have similar interests.'* (Katia, active young person, female, 16, individual interview)
- *'I have two or three good friends. We are very different people but our friendship is based on mutual respect. We share some common interests and points of view, but we respect the opinions which differ [...] my friends smoke. They find it normal to smoke and do not consider it a bad habit. I oppose smoking. My friends know that I do not support their smoking, but I do not try to put any pressure on them to give up. I believe that it is the personal decision of every human being and that I do not have the right to impose my opinion.'* (Guntar, voluntary worker, male, 22, individual interview)

2.6 Access to information

Sources of information and advice varied from person to person. Some use the Internet, others relied on more traditional sources.

- *'I mostly get important information from books. My favourite activity is reading. Reading gives me the chance to relax and to think at the same time.'* (Albert, internet user, male, 15, individual interview)

A few respondents ask parents or friends for help.

- *'If I am to form an opinion about something important, I listen to the position of my best friend and, sometimes, to my parents ... Usually I get information from discussions with friends and from television.'* (Katia, active young person, female, 16, individual interview)

At least half of the respondents claimed that they do not seek advice from others but rely on their own intuition. Others turn to friends or family. In some cases, respondents said that it was better to rely on their own instincts.

- *'If I need advice, I turn to my father. He has achieved a lot in his life; that is why his opinion is particularly important to me. I never follow advice without having judged it from my point of view first. My friends often turn to me for advice and claim to follow exactly what I tell them. I cannot understand this. You should listen to advice, but you have to make your own decisions. You are responsible for what you do, you should not start blaming the people who gave you advice.'* (Ilse, FG1, female, 21)
- *'I turn to different people for help. I turn to my mother for assistance in most cases. I think my mother is my role model. She is a doctor and is able to give an answer to any question. She knows a lot and continues studying.'* (Gaatis, FG2, male, 18)
- *'I do my best to solve all my problems on my own. If I need advice, I would turn to my parents or friends for it.'* (Vilmis, FG1, male, 16)

Responses to individual interviews

1. Albert, aged 15, male, an Internet user

Location:	Riga, private flat
Date of interview:	26 November 1999
Interviewee (name, age, gender)	Albert, 15, M
Start time:	17:05
End time:	17:35
Comments from facilitator:	There are very few young people in Latvia with access to internet, as it is very expensive. Only six of the respondent's classmates have access to internet and he attends a prestigious private school. No particular problems encountered.

Q1. Please tell us briefly about your school: what kind of school is this and how many classmates (male and female) do you have?

I am attending secondary school with in-depth studies of foreign languages. It would be easier for me to answer these questions in English, not in Latvian. I have about 30 classmates.

Q2. Please tell us briefly about the place (city/district) where you live.

I live in Riga which is the capital of Latvia.

Q3. What does the word "family" mean to you?

Family means people who are dear, close, intimate to me.

Q4. How do you get on with your father? Do you like to be with him?

We do not have particularly close relations.

Q5. Please, tell us what your father is doing now.

He is heading a firm specializing in security.

Q6. Do you see him often enough?

Yes, I do. I think so.

Q7. When you are together what do you like to do with him most?

If we spend time together, I prefer to talk to my father. It is interesting.

Q8. And how is your relationship with your mother? Do you get on well?

I have a very good relationship with my mother. I get on really well with her.

Q9. Does your mother have a job? Are you frequently with her?

My mother does not have a job, she stays at home. This is why we spend a lot of time together.

Q10. Do you have sisters or brothers?

No.

Q11. How often does your family do something together?

It happens from time to time, but it is not very frequent.

Q12. What do you generally do when you are together?

When we are all together we like going for a walk and talking.

Q13. Do you like to do things with your family?

Yes, I do. I enjoy doing things together.

Q14. Why/Why not?

It is more interesting to do things together.

Q15. When an important decision is made in the family do your parents consult with you?

Yes.

Q16. Do you feel that your opinion “counts” at home?

Yes	✓	
No		→ go to Q18

Q17. In what sense?

It is considered by my parents if the decision to make concerns me as well.

Q18. Are you happy at home?

Yes, I am happy at home.

Q19. Why/Why not?

I am happy at home because at home I usually feel good there.

Q20. Tell me who are your best friends in class and why do you like them?

I have a good friend. He is my ex-classmate. I like him because our opinions on many subjects are similar or simply the same.

Q21. Do they always listen to you?

He listens to me in most cases.

Q22. Does it frequently happen in the school that teachers consult with students on matters important for everybody?

No. They usually take the decisions on their own.

Q23. Do you think that the teachers generally respect the opinion of students in your school?

There are some teachers who respect the opinion of students, other do not at all.

Q24. Is this issue important?

Yes	✓
No	

Q25. Why/not?

I would like others to respect my opinion and to be interested in it.

Q26. Is there a teacher in the school with whom you share mutual respect and trust?

Yes.

Q27. How do you feel about this?

I like it.

Q28. Let's talk a bit about how do you form an opinion about something. What do you do?

To form an opinion about something I think on this matter on my own and sometimes ask others for advice.

Q29. Where do you get access to information about the things that are important for you?

In most of the cases I get information about the things which are important for me from books.

Q30. What is your favourite activity?

My favourite activity is reading.

Q31. What is the thing you like most in this?

Reading gives me a chance to relax and to think at the same time.

Q32. Why?

See Q31

Q33. Can you do this activity as often as or the way you want?

No.

Q33. Why/Why not?

I do not have enough time.

Q34. What is really important for you in life?

Friendship.

Q35. Why?

Friends make me happy.

Thank you.

2. Katia, aged 16, female, an active voluntary worker

Location:	Riga, private flat
Date of interview:	25 November 1999
Interviewee (name, age, gender)	Katia, 16, female
Start time:	19:30
End time:	20:10
Comments from facilitator:	No particular problems other than 'why' questions were more difficult to answer.

Q1. Please tell us briefly about the place where you live.

I live in Tukums. It is the central town of Tukums region. The distance from Tukums to Riga is about 70 km, Tukums has about 50-60 thousand inhabitants.

Q2. How do you get on with your family?

I get on with my family fairly well.

Q3. Do you have sisters or brothers?

Yes, I do. I have a younger sister and a younger brother.

Q4. Does your family often do things together?

Yes. I can say that my family frequently does something together.

Q5. When an important decision is made in the family do your parents consult with you?

My parents consult with me if there is an important decision to make but it does not happen always.

Q6. Do you feel that your opinion "counts" at home?

I think that my opinion has some "weight", but this is not really substantial.

Q7. In what sense?

My parents ask for my opinion if they are going to purchase something for me.

Q8. Are you happy at home?

Yes.

Q9. Why/Why not?

I am happy at home because I like the atmosphere there.

Q10. Please tell us something about the youth group/organization of which you are a member. What kind of an organization is it?

I am a member of the youth department of the "Red Cross".

Q11. What do you normally do?

I execute some special tasks from time to time. We deal with humanitarian help - we unpack it, we sort it, we phone the potential recipients of the stuff to distribute, find out whether they are in need, invite them to come and get some help.

Q12. Why do you like to do this?

I like doing this because it is connected with people. I talk to them a lot and I enjoy it. (There is an impression that she is hoping to get in contact with "someone useful")

Q13. Do you feel that your opinion counts? That others in the group are interested in your views?

In most of the cases I do not feel that my opinion counts or that others are interested in my views.

Q14. Tell me who are your best friends and why do you like them?

I have a friend, Ligita (female). We study in the same class. I like her because we have similar interests.

Q15. Do you or your friends have any bad habits regarding health?

No.

INTERVIEWER PROBES IF NO BAD HABITS ARE MENTIONED:

- Smoking: *No.*
- Drug or other substance abuse: *No.*
- Unprotected sex: *No.*
- Lack of physical exercise: *No.*

INTERVIEWER SKIPS TO Q21 IF NO BAD HABITS ARE MENTIONED

Q16. What is the opinion of the others about it?

Q17. And, what is your opinion about it?

Q18. Do you (in person and as a group) try to do actively something against it?

Q19. Does it help?

Q20. Why/Why not?

Q21. Do teachers at your school frequently consult students on matters that affect everybody?

No. It does not happen frequently that the teachers would consult with students. This might be the case for some minor decisions as classroom cleaning or a party for our class.

Q22. Do you think that the teachers generally respect the opinion of students in your school?

No, I do not think that teachers respect the opinion of students.

Q23. Is there a teacher in the school with whom you share a mutual respect and trust?

No, there is not.

Q24. How do you feel about this?

I think that they could have at least listen to my opinion.

Q25. Let's talk a bit about how do you form an opinion about an important issue, like where to continue your education. What factors count?

If I am to form an opinion about something important I listen to the position of my best friend and, sometimes, to the opinion of my parents. Factors that count vary. (There is no specific answer on education and it seems she has not made up her mind).

Q26. Where do you get access to information?

Usually I get information from the discussion with my friends and from the TV.

Q27. What is your favourite activity?

My favourite activity is to visit my friends and other people I know.

Q28. What is the thing you like most about this?

I like it because I enjoy talking to people, getting in touch with them, meeting new people and getting to know them.

Q29. Why?

I like to contact people. It is the most interesting think to do - to talk to others.

Q30. Can you do this activity as often as you want or in the way you want?

No.

Q31. Why/Why not?

I do not have enough time for it.

Q32. What is really important for you in life?

Friendship and love.

Q33. Why?

These relations between people are the most important in this life.

Thank you.

3. Guntar, aged 22, male, an active voluntary worker

Location:	Riga, private house
Date of interview:	25 November 1999
Interviewee (name, age, gender)	Guntar, 22, male
Start time:	10:10
End time:	10:50
Comments from facilitator:	No particular remark

Q1. Please tell us briefly about the place where you live.

I live in Riga.

Q2. Please tell us briefly what kind of voluntary work you carry out.

I do some computer work in a children's hospital. Sometimes I take care of the kids.

Q3. Why do you carry out this activity?

I do it because I think it is important.

Q4. Do you do this frequently?

Usually I work there twice a week.

Q5. Why?

This is the way it happens. I do not have more time to dedicate to it (he attends University and has a job).

Q6. Do you feel that your opinion "counts"?

I think that my opinion "counts"

Q7. In what sense?

People respect my opinion with regard to the work I do.

Q8. Are you happy doing this volunteer work?

Yes.

Q9. Why/Why not?

It makes me satisfied.

Q10. Please tell us something about the relationship between paid jobs and unpaid voluntary work. Apart from the money is there any difference?

The paid job I do does not give the satisfaction I receive from the voluntary activity.

Q11. Why/Why not?

Because when I am doing my paid job I am doing it only for money.

Q12. So would you carry out such voluntary work in the longer term?

Yes.

Q13. Tell me what do you think about the relationship between young people like you and the older generations. Do these people have the same attitudes and values?

*I think that the relations between young people and older generation are fair.
I do not think that elder people have the same altitudes and values.*

Q14. In what sense?

The positions and the points of view of elder people are often different from those of young people.

Q15. According to your experience do employers have a fair attitude towards young people?

*According to my experience employers do not have a fair attitude towards young people.
Their attitude towards young and older ones is different. They trust the elder ones more.*

Q16. Do employers respect the opinion of their young staff?

Sometimes employers do respect the opinion of their young staff. Often they do not.

Q17. Why/Why not?

They believe that their opinion is correct because they are older, wiser and more important.

Q18. Do you think young people are treated differently when employers hire or fire people?

I think young people are treated worse when employers hire or lay off people. Usually they treat elder people better and with more concern.

Q19. In what sense?

Employers in most of the cases trust the elder people more and they respect them much more then their younger staff.

Q20. Let's talk about your friends and your relationship with them. Please tell me who are your best friends and why do you like them?

I have 2-3 good friends. We are very different people but our friendship is based on mutual respect. We have some common interests and points of view, some others are different, but we respect the opinions which differ.

Q21. Do you or your friends have any bad habits relating to health?

I do not have any habits bad for health. My friends smoke.

INTERVIEWER PROBES IF NO BAD HABITS ARE MENTIONED:

- Smoking: *No*
- Drug or other substance abuse: *No*
- Unprotected sex: *No*
- Lack of physical exercise: *No*

INTERVIEWER SKIPS TO Q25 IF NO BAD HABITS ARE IDENTIFIED

Q22-Q24 were asked in relation to the respondent's friends

Q22. What is the opinion of the others about it?

They find it normal to smoke and do not consider it a bad habit.

Q23. And, what is your opinion about it?

I oppose smoking

Q24. Do you (in person and as a group) try to do actively something against it?

My friends know they I do not support their smoking, but I do not try to put any pressure on them to give up. I believe that it is a personal decision of every human being and that I do not have the right to impose my opinion on them.

Q25. Does it help?

Q26. Why/Why not?

Q27. What is really important for you in life?

It is really important for me to have an opportunity to do the job that I really enjoy, the job that gives me a chance to express myself.

Q28. Why?

It gives me freedom.

Q29. Are you generally happy about the way things are going in Latvia?

I am not happy at all about the way things go in Latvia. The relations between people have become terrible - nobody cares for the rest for the world.

Q30. Why/Why not?

I think that relations between people today are very far from being the proper ones.

Thank you.