

***Latvian Dyslexia Association***  
***Latvijas Disleksijas biedrība***  
***[www.disleksija.lv](http://www.disleksija.lv)***

Empowering Parents for Support of Their  
Children with Dyslexia,  
Prague, 21.11.13.



# Latvian Dyslexia Association

- Founded on April 16, 2011.
- Generates its income through membership fees, donations, projects and social entrepreneurship.
- Predecessor - association *Pro Futuro*.
  - Started dyslexia awareness and advocacy in 2006.
  - Advocated for accommodation on national tests and exams in 2008, in 2010 – accommodation in centralized exams.
  - *Pro Futuro* is a Global Partner of International Dyslexia Association since 2008 ([www.interdys.org](http://www.interdys.org)).

# The aim and tasks

- To improve provision and quality of education for students with dyslexia in Latvia.
- To do advocacy to improve legal base in education.
- To spread information to the public to fight negative stereotypes about people with dyslexia.
- To support and inform parents of students with dyslexia.

# Activities I

- **Advocacy:**
  - comments and suggestions to laws and regulations;
  - comments to policy documents and EU Structural Fund planning documents.
- **Activities for students with dyslexia.**
- **International cooperation with other dyslexia organizations and specialists.**
- **Teacher and parent training:**
  - Seminars on dyslexia, reading instruction and ICT.

# Activities II

- **Awareness raising about dyslexia:**
  - Web page [www.disleksija.lv](http://www.disleksija.lv) – general and advocacy information.
  - Publications in national press.
  - Produced several short videos, a substantial one about the status of dyslexia in Latvia (2013) - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDnC4thOZds> .
  - Individual consultations of parents.
  - Facebook and Twitter accounts.

# Status of Dyslexia I

- No clear, precise, test based diagnosis of dyslexia. Every specialist diagnosis dyslexia based on his belief not normed tests.
- Assessment is done by a pedagogical medical commission, but the commission does not give diagnosis but a special education program code thus parents even do not know what precise special need is and what is the best educational service for their child.

# Status of Dyslexia II

- The Education Law does not stipulate that the decision of the commission is binding – the school, may choose to provide the needed service or not.
- Frequency - since there is no clear diagnosis of dyslexia, there is no clear consensus how many people have it:
  - Some specialists claim that it is 1% of the population or 2000 students currently at schools but this claim is not actual testing just speculation;
  - Even if theoretically there are 2000 students with dyslexia, they are not identified and/or do not get any service.

# Status of Dyslexia III

- No child based intervention and accommodation – prescribed special programs are used in Latvia:
  - There are 8 special needs programs used.
  - Children with dyslexia learn either in learning disability or language problem programs.
  - It is not clear how they are assigned to these 2 programs.

Children who get the special code for language problem program have to study one year extra in elementary school (10 years instead of 9).



# Status of Dyslexia IV

- No continuity or mobility of service – if a child changes school, the special needs service does not follow him.
- No use of information and communication technology (ICT), assistive technology and digital tests – all help with studies and reading long texts depends on child's persistence and parents' support.
- Children with dyslexia are often retained (even 3 and 4 years in the same class) or degraded from a higher grade (from 4th to 1st).

# Stigma officialized I

- All learning disabilities in Latvia are associated with “lowered intellect” (IQ 70-90) thus claiming that you have dyslexia means acknowledging that you are below average intelligence.
- Help sometimes is worse than life without it:
  - A student with dyslexia may get extra help only in a special class where students with lower general abilities and other problems (social, behaviour) are concentrated and the help often is worse than life without it.

# Stigma officialized II

- Capable students are underserved as help is available not based on students' needs but on school's decision to provide it in the predefined special programs or the given help is geared only to low ability students.
- No one in LV mainstream secondary education receives services for his/her dyslexia and/or dysgraphia.
- There are no digital tests provided for high stake exams.