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**Development of social policy and social work in Latvia:
problems and challenges.**

Emergence and development of the social worker profession should be looked upon in close relation to historical changes in the 90-ties of the last century, which resulted in regained independence of the state of Latvia.

Radical modernisation policy, started in the country, manifested as ruthless, uncompromised destruction of the previous system. Simultaneously with economical reforms, one of the tasks and necessities of the agenda was elaboration of a new social policy.

In the development of social policy in post-soviet Latvia three stages can be observed:

First stage: (1991-1995) working out of the model of social security system. Regulations on social protection were stated and introduced, which was an immediate reaction of the government to urgent and rapidly growing needs of population. The time of reforms was encouraging for rising of the profession of social worker in Latvia, and in 1991 the Ministry of Education of LR approved opening of the Faculty of social workers. Soon first social workers having professional education started work in municipalities.

Second stage is: reform of welfare of Latvia (1997-2002), which included several branches of welfare with the aim to create more economical and effective social welfare system, which would ensure possibility to protect socially economic rights and health of every person.

Third stage is marked by the year of 2006, when „The plan of national development for 2007 - 2013” was adopted.

Social work profession has a significant role in promotion of social policy and welfare of the population of Latvia. At present social work specialists are working in municipalities all over the republic. As renders of services these specialists react to people’s vital needs, promote accessibility to the necessary resources, develop new projects and types of services to meet people’s needs and interests.

At the same time challenge of social worker profession in Latvia is to further such social changes which would ensure democracy in responsible decision making in social policy, reacting to social needs, and which would make social service institutions more elastic and enable efficacy of contributions and long-term results in improvement of people’s social welfare and life quality.