PRESS RELEASE

International Conference on ICT for Information Accessibility in Learning

2 June, 2015

On 27–28 May Riga hosted the International Conference for the ICT for Information Accessibility in Learning (ICT4IAL) project. This project is a multi-disciplinary network formed by the [European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education](#), in partnership with [European Schoolnet](#) (EUN), the [International Association of Universities](#) (IAU), [UNESCO](#), the [DAISY Consortium](#) and the [Global Initiative of Inclusive ICTs](#) (G3ICT).

At the conference, the partners presented the Guidelines for Accessible Information, a tool to support practitioners and organisations that provide information for learning in creating accessible materials. The document contains instructions and resources on how to create accessible materials in text, audio and video, which can be applied to all types of information produced, but will be especially beneficial to learners with disabilities and/or special needs.

The event took place as an official event of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU, supported by the Latvian Ministry of Education and the National Centre of Education.

The two-day conference brought together experts and practitioners from the field of education, who discussed the importance of equal access to information, which has an impact on learning and participation in society. Participants agreed that the Guidelines are a useful tool for a wide range of professionals, such as school and university staff, librarians, communication officers, authors of teaching and learning materials and publishers as well as information providers for education.

Liesma Ose, Advisor to the Minister on Public Integration Issues, agreed that 'the guidelines will equip support groups and non-governmental organisations working to advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities …' and '… help decision makers in schools and universities who support accessible approaches and have agreed policies on accessibility.'

Edvards Smiltēns, Parliamentary Secretary at the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science pointed out that there are a number of critical levers that can be

used to ensure greater accessibility of information. One of these is accessibility, being one criteria in all public and private procurement. Latvia is one of the countries which ratified the optional protocol of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and this has implications for implementing policies and fostering solutions that promote access to ICT and information for all. The provision of a tool such as the Guidelines can support accessible information provision, thereby fostering equal access to information and equity in learning.

In a final round of feedback, participants agreed that as a next step everyone should take the Guidelines back and use them in their organisation or work environment – but more importantly to continue to develop them. The Guidelines are available on the www.ict4ial.eu website as open source educational resource, where registered users can comment and contribute to their further development.