



Education and
Career


Guidance in Latvia

The Republic of Latvia was founded on 18 November 1918, annexed by the Soviet Union on 17 June 1940, and regained its independence on 21 August 1991



Member of EU	since 2004
Form of government	Parliamentary Democracy
Location:	Latvia is situated in Northern Europe, on the coast of the Baltic Sea.
Capital	
Neighbouring countries	Riga (population 764,328)
Surface area	Estonia, Russia, Belarus and Lithuania
Population	64,589 sq. km or 24,937 sq. miles
Ethnic composition:	2 294 200 (January 2006)
Official language	Latvians - 57.7%, Russians - 29.6%, Belorussians - 4.1%, Ukrainians - 2.7%, Poles- 2.5%, Lithuanians - 1.4%, others - 2%

Hi – Sveiks	Latvian (The Latvian language is a Baltic language, which belongs to the Indo-European family of languages. The Latvian language is considered one of the oldest of the Indo-European (European) languages. It is a non-Slavic and a non- Germanic language, similar only to Lithuanian).
Good-bye – Uz redzēšanos	
Yes – Jā	
No – Nē	
Thank you – Paldies	
Please – Lūdzu	
Sorry – Atvainojiet	

Most common foreign languages	English, Russian, and German
Religion	Non-religious - 35%, Lutheran - 24%, Catholic - 18%, Orthodox - 15%, Others - 8%
Labour force in 2004	1 105 000 (69,7% activity rate) 1 017 000 employed (62,3% employment rate) 119 000 unemployed (10,2% unemployment rate, 4,3% long term unemployment rate)
Fastest growing production sectors	information technologies, electronics and mechanical engineering, chemical and pharmaceutical industries, timber and construction, food processing industry, textiles industry, fishery and agriculture
Main Trade Partners	other member states of the European Union
GDP growth in 2005	10,2%
GDP/per capita in 2004	42,8% of the EU average
Currency	Lats (LVL), 1lats = 100 santimes, 1 LVL = 1,42 EUR
Internet domain:	. lv
International telephone	+ 371

More information is available on the Internet at
 <http://www.latvia.lv>

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-  Choose---> Publications

INTRODUCTION

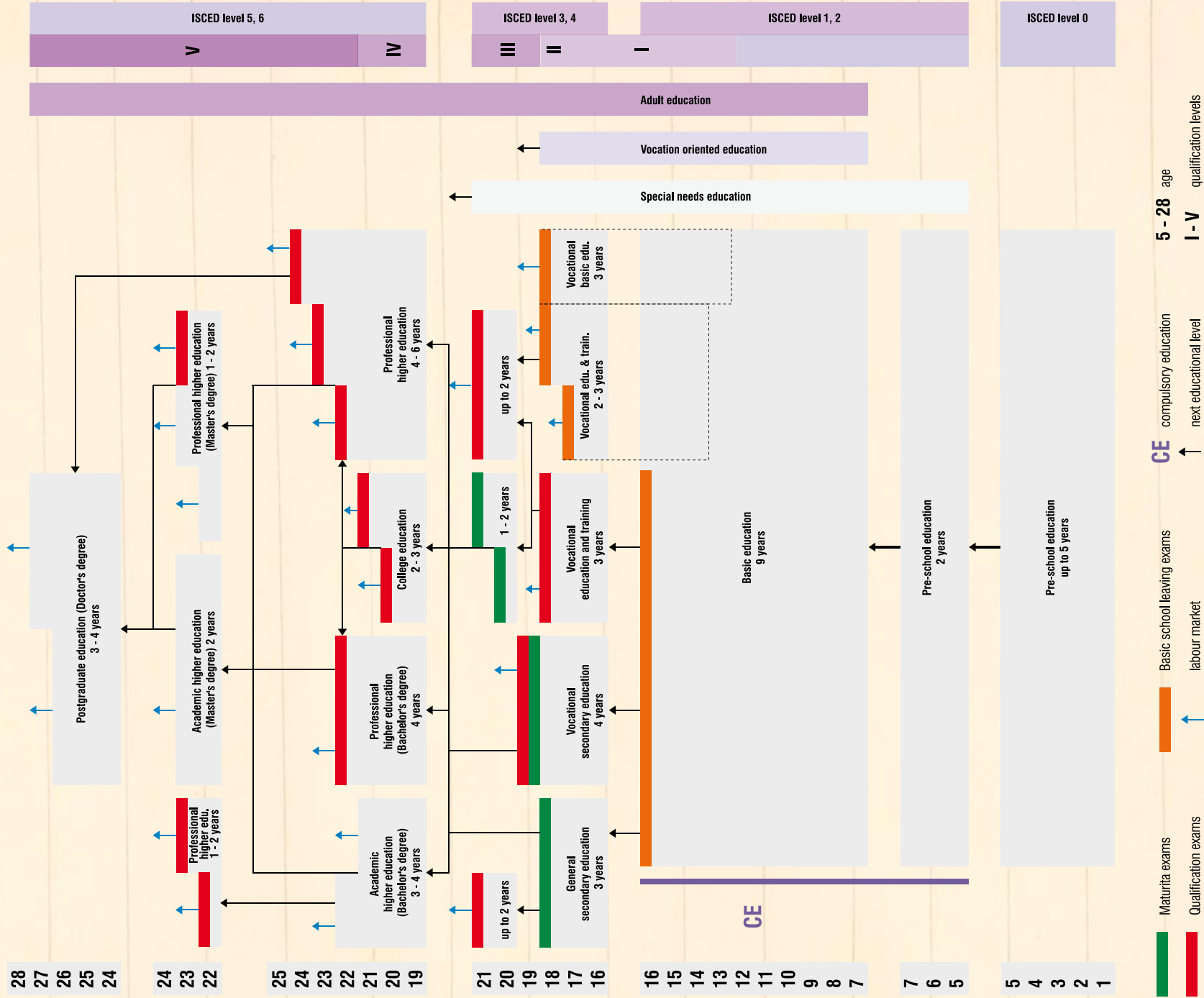
This brochure introduces the guidance and counselling services available in Latvia. It gives an overview of the organization and goals of guidance services provided by public education and labour authorities. It presents the main key players in the field and describes the Latvian Education System. This brochure introduces the guidance and counselling services available in Latvia. It gives an overview of the organization and goals of guidance services provided by public education and labour authorities. It presents the main key players in the field and describes the Latvian Education System. Lifelong learning is essential for all of us, because the demands for knowledge and skills and their continuous improvement are growing as a result of the introduction of new technologies. New occupations emerge, obsolete ones cease to exist and many existing ones are undergoing major changes. Gone are the times when initial education pre-determined the life long career of the individual. Career planning is becoming more complex and, in this context, guidance and counselling services are growing in importance in Latvia. Guidance and counselling refers to a range of activities that enables individuals of any age and at any point in their lives (lifelong) to identify their capacities, competences and interests, skills and abilities and experience. This helps people to make a meaningful decision on choosing education and/or employment and to organize and manage their individual life cycles in education, employment and other fields, where these skills and experiences can be introduced and used.

The Latvian Education and Training System

MAIN GOALS

The main goals of the Latvian education and training system are to support the building of a knowledge-based, democratic and socially integrated society, in order to increase competitiveness of the Latvian population and economy, and simultaneously preserve and develop cultural values typical for Latvia.

The state guarantees free of charge 9 years of basic comprehensive education (primary and lower secondary according to ISCED). Basic comprehensive education is compulsory. More than 90% of children attend state schools. The secondary education system (upper secondary according to ISCED) has sufficient capacity to enrol all those young people who complete compulsory school. The higher education system also has ample enrolment capacity. The majority of students attend state universities. Apart from state-financed educational institutions, there are also private schools and private higher education institutions in Latvia. Instruction is given overall in Latvian. Latvia also has state-financed ethnic minority schools or classes where courses are presented in Belorussian, Estonian, Hebrew, Lithuanian, Polish, Roma, Russian, and Ukrainian.



PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

While pre-primary education was optional until the 2001/2002 school year, it became mandatory on 1st of September in 2002 for five- and six-year-old children. The objective of pre-school education is to foster the general development of children and to prepare them to enter the primary stage of basic comprehensive education. It is provided by various pre-primary education institutions, kindergartens (nurseries) or at special pre-primary classes at general education institutions. Pre-school education is considered a comprehensive first stage of general education and all children should complete it by the age of 7. In certain cases where the child suffers from certain health or psychological problems, at either the parents' request or doctors' recommendations, pre-school education can be continued until the age of 8.

Pre-school education does not necessarily mean that children have to take classes and sit in classrooms having several lessons a day. At this period games are used as the main teaching method. All personnel involved in pre-school education must be highly qualified holders of a relevant higher education diploma and pre-school teacher's qualification. The entire teaching process is organised through playing various targeted games.

Local municipalities provide funding for pre-school education and ensure that parental demand for places in pre-school education programmes is met. Teaching aids and technical equipment for developmental games are

BASIC EDUCATION

9-year single-structured basic comprehensive education (pamatizglitība) in Latvia begins in the autumn of the year a child turns seven, and it lasts till the age of 16. In some special cases the acquisition of basic education may last till the age of 18. The compulsory content / curriculum of the basic education is determined by the national Basic Comprehensive Education Standard.

The number of comprehensive school-age children remains fairly constant at about 226,000 annually. The vast majority of young people continue in secondary education after completing comprehensive school: more than 70% of the comprehensive school leavers go to general secondary schools and about one fourth opts for vocational education and training.

The aim of basic comprehensive education is to provide opportunities for acquiring the basic knowledge and skills required for becoming an active member of society and to achieve personal fulfilment, as well as to develop value orientation.

SECONDARY EDUCATION

There are two types of upper secondary education programmes: general secondary education (vispārēja vidējā izglītība) and vocational secondary education (profesionālā vidējā izglītība) programmes. When admitting students to the upper secondary level of education, schools are free to hold entrance examinations according to the Basic Comprehensive Education Standard, except in those subjects for which students have already received a Central Examination Certificate.

GENERAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS

General secondary schools (vidusskola, ìimnâzija) provide general education and continue the socialization function of the comprehensive schools.

The compulsory curriculum of 3-year general secondary schools is determined by the National Standard in the following profiles: (1) general comprehensive, (2) humanities / social sciences, (3) mathematics / natural science / technical competences, (4) vocational / professional (arts, music, business, sports). General secondary education is aimed at students wishing to pursue their studies at tertiary level, and comprises 8 compulsory and 3-6 elective subjects according to the profile.

Schools can offer some optional subjects that take up no more than 10-15% of the total curriculum. Students may also choose honours courses in a compulsory subject area. General secondary education programmes, irrespective of the profile, may be combined with a national minority educational programme by including lessons in the minority languages and subjects related to ethnic heritage and social integration. In order to graduate, students have to take at least 5 centralized national examinations. A Certificate of General Secondary Education (atestâts par vispârçjo vidçjo izglitibu) and a Certificate of the centralized exams taken with scores are awarded to all students who have received a positive assessment in all the subjects studied according to the chosen profile, and the national examinations. In case a student has not received an evaluation (equivalent to a mark of "incomplete") in one or more subjects or national examination, he/she receives a school report (liciba).

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The goal of vocational education and training for young people is to continue the teaching function of comprehensive schools. The National Standard of Vocational Education and the Occupational Standards determine the curriculum content of vocational education programmes.

The majority of vocational schools in Latvia provide 3- and 4-year vocational education and training programmes at upper secondary level, and only some programmes are designed for basic vocational and training purposes. Vocational education provides young people with a vocational qualification and self-learning skills needed to continually upgrade this qualification. Under certain conditions them it qualifies for further studies at tertiary level. The education and training provided in vocational schools covers practically all branches of trade and industry. Vocational education consists of theory and practical training (at least 20-25% of studies is devoted to on-the-job training).

The theoretical part of educational programmes provides the knowledge needed in modern society: a command of languages, mathematics, natural sciences and social studies, and good communication skills. In addition, vocational training also underlines the following skills: entrepreneurship, global environmental awareness, and internationalisation. The goal of vocational education and training is also to promote self-development of young people and help them grow into well-adjusted adults and citizens.

VOCATIONAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

Vocational secondary schools (of the type: arodividusskola, amatniecības vidusskola, arodi imnāzija or tehnikums) offer 4-year vocational secondary education programmes to those students who have successfully completed basic comprehensive education. 4-year programmes offer an opportunity to combine acquisition of a vocational qualification and general secondary education. The amount of general education subjects integrated into the 4-year vocational educational curricula qualifies graduates to enter tertiary education programmes.

In order to complete the secondary vocational education programme 5 centralized examinations must be passed. One of them is a national qualification examination. The remaining 4 centralized national examinations are held in compliance with the terms and conditions of general secondary education acquisition.

The Certificate of vocational secondary education (Diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību) is awarded to all students who have received a positive assessment in all the subjects studied and the national examinations.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

There are two types of vocational training programmes for young people: basic vocational education and training (profesionālā pamatizglītība) and vocational education and training (arodizglītība).

2-3 year basic vocational education and training programmes are provided at vocational schools for students without a certificate of basic comprehensive education (after completion of at least 7 years of basic education, but not before the calendar year when they turn 15 years old). Besides acquiring a vocational qualification students also have the opportunity to complete their basic comprehensive education.

Vocational schools (arodskolas) offer 2-3 year vocational education training programmes to students who have completed 9 years of basic comprehensive education. The programmes provide the opportunity to acquire a vocational qualification. Education can be continued in 2-year programmes leading to a higher qualification level; or 1-2 year programmes leading to a Certificate of General Secondary Education.

Depending on the type of vocational training programme, all students who have passed the final subject and qualification exams are awarded a certificate: a certificate of basic vocational education and training (apliecība par profesionālo pamatizglītību), or a certificate of vocational initial education and training (atestāts par arodizglītību).

SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION

Special schools or special education classes within general education schools provide education for children with special needs that correspond to each individual's physical and mental condition. The structure of special education is very similar to that of the mainstream education, providing opportunities for persons with special needs to attain general knowledge and skills with a strong emphasis on their applicability, thus facilitating social inclusion.

VOCATION-ORIENTED EDUCATION

Vocation-oriented education in arts and music is voluntary and provides for a person's individual educational needs and wishes. This is education that does not lead to a professional qualification. However, students who have undergone orientation-level arts or music training are better equipped to pursue vocational secondary or college-level studies in this area.

TERTIARY EDUCATION

The system of higher education is binary at tertiary level. Academic higher education programmes are based upon fundamental and/or applied science; they usually comprise a thesis at the end of each stage and lead to degrees: Bakalauri (Bachelor) and Magistri (Master). A Bachelor degree is awarded after completion of the first stage of studies. Since December 2000 professional Bakalauri and Magistri degrees can also be awarded. The degree of Magistri (or the equivalent) is required for admission to doctoral studies.

According to the Law on Professional Education and Law on Higher Education Establishments there are several types of higher professional education programmes in Latvia - first-level professional higher education programmes (also called college programmes) lead to Diploma of first level professional higher education (Diploms par pirmā līmeņa profesionālo augstāko izglītību) and second-level professional higher education programmes, which are considered a "completed" professional higher education and lead to a Diploma of second-level professional higher education (Diploms par otrā līmeņa profesionālo augstāko izglītību).

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

There are two types of education institutions at tertiary level in Latvia: colleges (koledža) and higher education institutions (augstskola). Higher education institutions are university type (universitāte) and non-university type (named: augstskola, akadēmija, institūts). Non-university type institutions do not have the academic capacity to provide doctoral level studies.

ADMISSION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

In order to be enrolled in a college or higher education institution, a document certifying the acquisition of secondary education is necessary. A Certificate of general secondary education (Atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību) or certificate of vocational secondary education (Diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību) confers the right of admission to higher education.

Admission procedures may vary depending upon the competition level to a particular programme. The admission procedure range from 1 to 4 competitive entrance examinations to a ranking of applicants according to results of centralised national school-leaving examinations or secondary school final marks in subjects relevant to the programme in question, procedure may involve an interview by the admissions board. The information on what secondary education programmes correspond to the profile of the particular study programme, what centralised exams for the secondary education need to be taken, as well as what are the complementary demands to be met in order to be enrolled in a particular study programme is provided by the higher education institutions three years prior to the start of enrolment. Concerning the study programmes where the admission is taking place for the first time - this information must be provided five months prior to the start of the admission.

ADULT EDUCATION

The Latvian adult education system can be divided into two main sectors: liberal and general education and vocational education and training.

ADULT LIBERAL AND GENERAL EDUCATION

The history of so-called liberal education for adults in Latvia is not long. A few folk schools, study centres and summer universities have been opened in the early nineties after Latvia regained independence. The value of non-formal education for adults is slowly growing.

Adults can complete a whole comprehensive school or upper secondary school course at so-called evening schools (vakara-maiou vidusskolas). Latvians can also have their language skills tested in a special examination irrespective of how and where they have acquired their skills.

ADULT VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Vocational education and training for adults is provided by vocational schools and adult education centres. It comprises self-motivated training, labour market training, in-service training and apprenticeship training.

In-service training serves the needs and requirements of industry. Employers finance this usually short-term training of employees.

Labour market training for the unemployed accounts for the largest number of participants in the adult education sector. Employment authorities provide a wide range of labour market training mainly targeted at unemployed adults. The courses are free of charge. Starting from 2006 participants can receive a small grant (25 LVL) during the training.

Self-motivated training gives adults an opportunity to develop their professional skills independently of their employer. The goals of self-motivated training, which leads into a qualification, are usually the same as in vocational training institutions for young people. The training fees mostly are paid by adults themselves.

Competence-based vocational qualifications. There is an intention to develop opportunities for adults to obtain a formal qualification through special skills tests irrespective of how they acquired their skills.

Goals and Principles of Guidance and Counselling

GOALS AND PRINCIPLES OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

The goal of the guidance and counselling services is to help individuals make choices concerning their education, training and career planning at different stages of their lives, not only when they are young.

The Ministry of Welfare (MW) and the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) share the responsibility for the organisation of guidance services in the public sector in Latvia. The White Paper on the Career Development Support System (approved on 26.03.2006.) defines the role and the responsibilities of governmental authorities. The bodies maintaining educational institutions, usually municipalities, also share this responsibility to provide guidance and counselling to youth.

The division of tasks between these two systems is clear. Schools have the main responsibility for student vocational guidance, and the guidance and counselling services of employment offices and the Professional Career Counselling State Agency (operating under the supervision of MW), which are available for everybody, complement these.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

The Ministry of Education and Science promotes and supports integration of vocational guidance activities within general and vocational school curricula. According to legislation, local governments are responsible for providing guidance activities in schools within their territory, but the existing regulations do not articulate objectives, responsibilities or standards.

Careers education is considered an important part of the process that helps pupils make a smooth transition from one level of education to another and it is being integrated throughout compulsory and secondary schooling to help pupils make their first career decisions, especially to help them draw up their further education, career and life plans.

At present there are no guidance counsellors at schools in Latvia. Therefore careers education and guidance is considered the joint responsibility of all members of the teaching staff and school psychologists. A deputy headmaster (principal) responsible for extra-curricular activities has the overall responsibility for implementation and monitoring of the school's careers education programme. But form room tutors (or homeroom teachers) are the key players in the provision of careers education activities during special lessons or project weeks and other out of class activities. Their work also involves co-operation with parents and other teachers.

Every school develops its own careers education and guidance programme as an integral part of the school's overall programme that comprises a full range of activities through which the school addresses the needs of their pupils by helping them in their personal and social, educational and career development.

During basic or compulsory schooling the foundations of self-management skills (self-awareness, self-confidence, decision making) are laid and provision is made to investigate the world of work in close connection with further education and training options. Teachers are free to choose methods.

A proposal for number of lessons, content and methods has been developed for special careers education lessons: 34 hours of lessons delivered by form tutors (homeroom teachers) and about 25 hours integrated in the lessons given by different subject teachers for grades 7 – 9, 36 hours for grades 10 – 12 and 68 hours for vocational secondary school students. During the lessons three main areas are covered: self-assessment and self-development, investigating career choices and making career decisions.

In addition, work shadowing organized by Junior Achievement helps general secondary school students gain first-hand knowledge of the world of work.

National Resource Centre for Vocational Guidance (NRCVG) operating under the supervision of MES (for more information see <http://www.piaa.gov.lv/Euroguidance>) provides schools with printed and web based information on learning opportunities in Latvia and Europe, organizes training of form tutors (homeroom teachers) on new guidance tools and methods. In addition, students can participate in individual or group guidance and counselling sessions in the Professional Career Counselling State Agency operating under the supervision of the Ministry of Welfare.

In 2005 the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia has launched a National programme and subsequent project: "Fostering the implementation of vocational guidance provision and careers education in the educational sector" funded by the ESF. The objective is to improve accessibility and quality of vocational guidance provisions and careers education at educational institutions of all types and levels in the perspective of lifelong learning by fostering the implementation of initial and continuing training of guidance practitioners, developing training materials and information resources. The project is being implemented by the Project Implementation Unit within the Vocational Education Development Agency.

Education and career related information is disseminated through the monthly journal "Mērķis" (Target), the newspapers Education and Career (in Russian), and "Karjeras Diena" (Career Day), a supplement of the daily newspaper "Diena".

CAREER SERVICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Colleges and higher education institutions provide general student counselling for their students and those seeking enrolment. The organisation of these services varies in different institutions. Usually there is a special office for student guidance, where they can get information about studies and welfare services. The value of career counselling services for students is slowly growing in higher education. Several universities offer a wide range of services to students: career counselling, training in how to apply for a job: information, vacancies, and supplementary training.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Information, guidance and counselling services for adults - whether employed or unemployed - are offered by the Professional Career Counselling State Agency (PCCSA). Professional Career Counselling State Agency operates under a supervision of the Ministry of Welfare (MW). Current legislation mandates the PCCSA to provide guidance and counselling for people irrespective of their age and social status (employed, unemployed, groups at risk of social exclusion, students etc.).

Several new regional offices (in total 23) have been established during the last years.

They provide guidance and counselling services, compile and disseminate educational and occupational information, develop guidance strategies and methodology, provide needs analyses and training for guidance counsellors.

(For more information see <http://www.karjerascentrs.lv>)

As of September 2007 career education will be fully introduced into the education system, leading to a predicted decrease in the number of PCCSA clients and providing the opportunity to elaborate a more individual approach for groups at risk of social exclusion. To optimise the system of guidance and counselling within the labour sector, as of January 2008, the PCCSA will be merged with the State Employment Agency (SEA). Labour market forecasts will be further developed under the supervision of the Ministry of Economics.

The State Employment Agency provides guidance counselling services for the unemployed including such aspects as psychological help, vocational guidance, legal advice and promotion of job application skills in all regions of Latvia. (For more information see www.nva.lv/index.php?new_lang=en)

In addition, the SEA organizes the following active labour market measures: Occupational training, retraining and up-grading qualifications; Paid temporary public works; Measures to increase competitiveness; Measures for specified groups of persons, in particular for persons of age from 15 to 25 years; persons with a disability; persons after maternity leave; persons within 5 years of retirement age; persons who have been in the records of the SEA for more than one year (here in after – long-term unemployed);

persons after serving a sentence in correctional institutions and other target groups in accordance with the national employment plan.

The SEA also provides services for employers: Registration of job vacancies and assistance in finding the necessary employees, including selection of potential candidates; Preparation of employment invitations and coordination of enterprise agreements for employment of foreign nationals; Assistance in establishing jobs for unemployed people from various disadvantaged groups, offering subsidies for this purpose; Assistance in organising summer jobs for students.

Over and above state provision, there are 40 private employment services, but these are mainly concerned with job placement.

EURES

EURES stands for EUROpean Employment Services, which bring together the European Commission and the public employment services of the countries belonging to the European Union (and its Economic Area, including Iceland, Norway and Switzerland) since 1993.

The mission of EURES is to support free movement of the labour force in European countries.

EURES tasks:

- to give information and advice to job seekers about employment possibilities, working and living conditions in European countries;
- to help employers to find most suitable workers;
- to support cross-border region job seekers and employers with information and advisory services.

Latvia became partner of EURES after joining the European Union (for more information see http://www.nva.lv/eures/index.php?&new_lang=en). Both the job seekers and employers benefit from this partnership. Within this information network everybody can find information about vacancies, working and life conditions in Latvia and other European countries on Internet. Those job seekers who have no access to Internet, or need a consultation, are welcome to meet with EURES advisors. Advisors consult and help to find all necessary information. Employers have the opportunity to place information about vacancies and search for employees from any European country in the EURES database for free. Employers quickly get all the required information, including CVs of perspective employees, saving time and money necessary for the old-fashioned method of newspaper publication of vacancies.

COOPERATION IN THE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

Different innovative activities to modernise the guidance and counselling system have been launched during the last years in Latvia at national level. The new White Paper on guidance and counselling, developed by the Ministry of Welfare in cooperation with representatives from 3 ministries (the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Economics, Ministry of Regional Development), Association of Local Governments, social partner organisations and guidance practitioners, was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in March 2006. The new white paper covers all aspects of lifelong guidance including the mechanism how to ensure better co-operation and coordination between key players in guidance and counselling at different levels. It is foreseen to establish a Forum on guidance and counselling at national level. The policy makers from relevant ministries, guidance providers, social partners and NGOs representing client groups will be represented at the Forum. The functions of the Forum's secretariat are entrusted to the Vocational Education Development Agency. The National Forum on guidance and counselling by involving the appropriate key players (policy makers from relevant ministries, representatives of employment services, guidance practitioners, education and training institutions, social partners and parents), fosters the strengthening of guidance and counselling policy and the system itself. The Forum aims at being an advisor on improvements necessary in the guidance and counselling system and policy at national and local level.

WHERE CAN YOU LEARN THE LATVIAN LANGUAGE?

The University of Latvia provides some courses in English, as well as academic courses in the Latvian language for foreigners.

- www.lu.lv/eng/studies/courses/index.html
Vidzeme University College (in Valmiera) offers the Baltic International Summer School.
- www.va.lv; www.biss.va.lv
International Language Services offers courses in the Latvian language.
- www.ilsriga.lv/courses/latvian-and-russian/
Lingua Franca offers courses in the Latvian language.
- www.linguafranca.lv/english/latrus.php
Additional information about the Latvian language.
- www.ailab.lv/valoda/contents.htm



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