



EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL

# Education in Latvia



# AVAIL

Amplifying the Voices of  
Asylum Seekers and Refugees  
for Integration and Life Skills

Co-ordinated by



In partnership with



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FEDERATION



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## Education in Latvia

Educational material for refugees, asylum  
seekers and third-country nationals

## Preface

The educational material is issued by Latvian Red Cross within the framework of the international project “AVAIL – Amplifying the voices of asylum seekers and refugees for integration and lifeskills” (No. SEP-210420953).

Within the AVAIL project, various integration and advocacy initiatives are implemented in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Italy and Latvia. This publication was funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

The educational material will be useful for refugees, asylum seekers and third-country nationals, who are currently residing in Latvia and require information on topics such as the education system, process, time frame, levels and other question.

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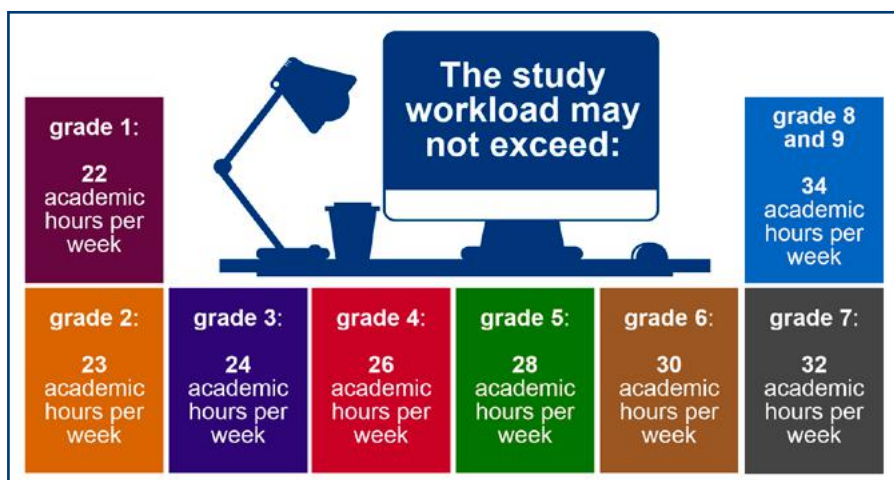
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## Education in Latvia

### General

The school year lasts for 34 weeks for grade 1, 35 weeks from 2 to 8 grade and 37 weeks 9 grade, from 1 September to the end of May, excluding examination periods for the ninth and twelfth grade. Pupils of evening schools and twelfth grade take the final examinations in May and June.

The length of the academic hour may differ in each educational establishment, as it is set by the Head of the educational establishment. On average, an academic hour lasts 40 minutes.



Pre-school education in Latvia is compulsory from the age of 5. In Latvia, the acquisition of education at state and municipal educational establishments (pre-school, primary school), up to grade 9, is free of charge. If a pupil attends a private pre-school or primary school, tuition fees are set by the respective educational establishment.

In Latvia, children start basic education in the year when they become 7 years old and it lasts for 9 years. After successful completion of basic education, pupils receive a document attesting the basic education.

After basic school, teenagers may decide to study at a secondary school and choose either a general secondary school or a vocational secondary school to obtain secondary education and a profession.

Children and youth with special needs (visually impaired and sightless, with functional or mental development disorders) have the possibility to

acquire education in specially adjusted educational establishments if they want.

The length of education at a secondary school is 3 years, while at a vocational school it is 3–4 years.

After successful completion of the secondary school/vocational school, all students are entitled to continue studies at higher educational institutions or colleges.

**The right to education in Latvia  
(Education Law, Section 3)  
is granted to:**

- Latvian citizens
- Latvian non-citizens
- citizens of the European Union, citizens of the European Economic Area or the Swiss Confederation
- permanent residents of the European Community who have a valid residence permit in the Republic of Latvia
- persons who have received temporary protection in the Republic of Latvia
- citizens of another state, other than citizens of the European Union, the European Economic Area or Swiss Confederation  
(hereinafter - a third-country national) or stateless persons who hold a valid residence permit in the Republic of Latvia
- refugees or persons who have acquired alternative status
- a minor child of an asylum seeker and a minor asylum seeker  
has the right to basic education and secondary education, as well as the right to continue the commenced education after reaching the age of majority
- stateless persons who hold a valid travel document of a stateless person issued in the Republic of Latvia
- a minor third-country national or stateless person who has no legal basis to reside in the Republic of Latvia  
has the right to acquire basic education during the time period specified for voluntary exit or during the time period for which the expulsion is suspended, as well as during his/ her detention

## Language of education

State and municipal educational institutions provide education in the official language – Latvian. Education can be obtained in another language in private educational institutions, as well as in state and municipal educational institutions that implement minority education programs. From year 2021 education in Latvia will be obtain only in Latvian.

In Latvia, there are two schools for international youth students. One of them accepts children from the age of two. At the end of this material, there is additional information about these schools.

Anyone who acquires primary or secondary education in another language also studies the official state language and takes the state language examination in accordance with the national procedure and scale. Universities and colleges provide several programs in the English language, as well additional opportunities for students to study abroad, via the Erasmus program.

## Tuition fees

Preschool, elementary and secondary education at state and municipal educational institutions is funded by the state or local government. A private educational institution may set tuition fees. Fees at international private schools can be quite high, depending on the school and its prestige.

The state covers tuition fees of higher education programs for a certain number of students, according to government orders in the respective school year. Students can also apply for a scholarship. Private educational institutions may set tuition fees for the rest of the students. Regarding university and college studies, there are state sponsored positions for students with higher grades and standard positions requiring private payments. Fees depend on the university or college, as well as the study program selected.

## Pre-school education

In Latvia, children are prepared for school at pre-school educational establishments or pre-school educational groups at other educational establishments (such as schools, interest-related educational establishments, etc.) which are registered in the Register of Educational

Establishments and which offer licensed pre-school education programs.

Children attend pre-school education programs until the age of seven. By attending a pre-school educational establishment, children are prepared for school in accordance with the pre-school guidelines. Pre-school programs are based on education guideline requirements.

Pre-school education for children with special needs is provided by special pre-school educational institutions.

The Education Law, Section 17 stipulates that “each local government has a duty to ensure that the children, the declared place of residence of which is in the administrative territory of the local government, have the opportunity to acquire pre-school education and basic education at the educational institution closest to the place of residence of the child or at the closest educational institution”. Therefore, to register a child at a pre-school educational institution, parents must submit an application to the local government.

## Basic Education

**Basic education** – the education level, which comprises preparation for the secondary education level or professional activity, acquisition of the basic knowledge and skills necessary in society and one’s personal life, development of value orientation, and involvement in public life.

The aim of basic education is to create possibilities to acquire the basic knowledge and skills needed in society and one’s personal life and to build value orientation.

### Right to education

A minor third-country national or stateless person who has no legal basis to reside in the Republic of Latvia, has the right to acquire basic education during the time period specified for voluntary exit or during the time period for which the expulsion is suspended, as well as during his or her detention. /Education Law, Section 3/

Children usually enrol in a basic education program during the year they reach the age of 7, and may continue their studies until 18 years old.

Basic education in Latvia is compulsory. The length of the program is 9 years, and its mandatory content is determined by the national standard for basic education, which also includes primary education.

## **Assessment of results of education and evidence of formal education**

In grade 1, children's knowledge and skills are not evaluated on a scale, but descriptively.

In grades 2–4, a gradual transition to the assessment on a 10-point scale takes place – in grade 2, grades are given in mathematics, Latvian language, minority language, and in grade 4, also in science.

From grade 5, knowledge and skills that children have acquired are assessed on a 10-point scale in all subjects.

Upon completion of basic education pupils take nationally set examination. The number of the examinations is determined by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia.

Students, who have obtained positive assessment in all subjects of the basic education program and state examinations, receive a diploma of basic education and a transcript of records.

In subjects where a centralized examination is held, pupil's positive assessment is certified by basic education certificate.

Based on these documents attesting primary education, one may continue education in any secondary-level education program.

If a student has not acquired assessment in any of the subjects or state examinations, he/she receives a school report. The school report entitles one to enrol in professional basic education programs or vocational training programs.

### **Basic education standard**

At the end of the year 2018, the government approve new basic education standard.

The new basic education standard and primary education guidelines, which the government approved already earlier, provide a framework for the improved curriculum and approach, defining the results that have to be attained in each study area. Based on this framework, schools can either use already prepared teaching programs or develop new ones.

According to the new approach, the teacher is the leader of the study process who not only gives knowledge but also guides the students until they find the right answers themselves. Cooperation among teachers and a joint planning of their work is also an important aspect of the new approach to teaching.

In the new education standard, the school curriculum is arranged in seven key areas: languages, social and civil sphere, culture and the art of self-expression, natural sciences, mathematics, technology, as well as health and physical activity. The schoolchildren are expected to learn the basics of each field so they get an overall understanding of the world and their place in it, as well as skills associated with each field. Special attention will be paid to preventing overlap and fragmentation in the teaching process.

While teachers will still be providing the students with fundamental knowledge and skills in various fields of human activity, the curriculum also includes teaching transversal skills and value-based habits in order to teach the youngsters to learn throughout their lives and follow their values in their day-to-day lives. The transversal skills include critical thinking, problem-solving, creative work and entrepreneurship, cooperation, civic involvement and digital skills.

Responsibility, diligence, courage, honesty, wisdom, kindness, compassion, moderation, composure, solidarity, fairness and tolerance are the main moral values to be taught at school according to the new education standard.

The new basic education standard will take effect on September 1, 2019, and the implementation of the standard in schools will begin as of September 1, 2020 for grades 1, 4 and 7, on September 1, 2021 for grades 2, 5 and 8, and September 1, 2022 for grades 3, 6 and 9.

## Secondary education

**Secondary education** – the education level that provides multi-dimensional personal development opportunities; purposeful and profound development in the direction of intentionally chosen general and professional education, preparation for studies at a higher educational level or professional activity, and involvement in society.

There are two types of secondary-level programs: general secondary and vocational secondary education programs.

General secondary education programs are academically oriented, and their key purpose is to prepare students for further studies, while vocational secondary education programs are oriented more towards the professional qualifications, i.e., entry to the labour market and/or further education.

## Higher education

**Higher education** – may be acquired at both state and private higher education institutions. In order to enrol in a higher education institution, one must possess a certificate of general secondary education or a diploma of professional secondary education. If the secondary education certificate/diploma has been issued abroad, certain study programs require that this document must be submitted for examination to the Academic Information Centre. It is possible that entry examinations have to be taken in order to enrol in a higher education institution.



### Higher education is available through academic higher education programs or professional higher education programs

The aim of **academic education** is to ensure mastering of theoretical knowledge, research and practical skills in order to prepare for independent activity in the preferred area of science or a related practical activity area. After successful acquisition of the academic study program either Bachelor's, Master's or Doctoral degree is conferred upon the student

The aim of **professional higher education** is to ensure mastering of theoretical knowledge and practical work skills in order to prepare for independent activity in the preferred practical activity area, in the occupation compliant with the occupation standard. After successful acquisition of the professional higher education program, either Bachelor's or Master's degree and/or professional qualification is conferred upon the student.

Academic programs are available only at higher education institutions and universities, while colleges also offer first-level higher education programs.

### Most popular study programs

Law



Medicine



Psychology



Computer science

Communication



## Several universities in Latvia offer studies in the English language



[www.lu.lv](http://www.lu.lv)



RĪGA STRADIŅŠ  
UNIVERSITY



[www.rsu.lv](http://www.rsu.lv)



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SSE RIGA

[www.sseriga.edu](http://www.sseriga.edu)

More information on the study programs, duration, fees and study languages is available on universities home pages.



In academic year 2018/2019 the most popular selection for youngsters was to study in Latvian University, Riga Technical university and Riga Stradins University.

At state higher education institutions, a certain number of students may study free of charge, based on the entry results.

Academic higher education programs provide the opportunity to obtain bachelor's degree in a certain field of science (there are 8 scientific discipline groups – education sciences, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, engineering sciences, agricultural sciences, health

sciences, environmental sciences). Each of the groups includes several branches of science.

Bachelor's degree program lasts 3–4 years. After completing the bachelor's degree, students may continue their studies in a master's or other higher education program.

The Master's program lasts 1–2 years; the acquisition of a degree generally takes 5–6 years. The duration of the vocational education program after obtaining a bachelor's degree is 1–2 years.

Master's degree enables one to apply for a doctoral program lasting 3–4 years.

The Employers' Confederation of Latvia has named the most demanded occupations in the labor market in the year of 2018. The information and communication technology sector was mentioned as the most demanded. The most needed profession in the year of 2018 – programmer.

For the seventh year, employers have given the highest honors for the Riga Technical University, while computer science program in the University of Latvia has become the most preferred study program for the second year in a row.

## Interest-related education

Interest-related education provides opportunities for individual educational needs and desires irrespective of age and previous education level. Interest-related education is voluntary, and there are no requirements for a particular level of previous education to commence this type of education.

Interest-related education is an integral part of non-formal education, which is available in Latvia to children and young people aged 3 to 25 years. Cultural education and sports interest programs are the most popular. They provide the possibility for children and the youth to discover their creativity, express their talents, as well as make use of one's leisure time after school.

The following interest-related education programs are organised by various educational establishments:

- ✓ General
- ✓ Interest-related
- ✓ Vocational

- ✓ Special focus (arts, pre-school, private and private practice of teachers)

These programs are carried out by teachers with appropriate education and qualifications.

Interest-related education offers various forms of activities. For instance, individual classes, activities in groups, creative workshops, interest clubs, camps, etc. The following interest-related educational programs are offered in Latvia:

## Interest-related educational programs are offered in Latvia

### Programs of cultural education



dance, music, visual arts, theatre, folklore, etc.

### Programs of technical innovation and creative industries



car modelling, aircraft modelling, ship modelling, electronics, robots, video, photography, etc.

### Programs of environmental studies



scouts, guides, ecology, floral design, exploration of the region's environment and history, etc.

### Programs of youth initiatives



student leadership programs, youth clubs, boy and girl scouts, guards, etc.

### Programs of sports activities



dance sport, sports and table games, track and field, gymnastics, orienteering, etc.

### Other programs



journalism, aesthetics school, foreign languages, creative literary work, first medical aid, traffic rules, etc.

In some towns, interest-related education is free of charge, but in most cases, parents provide co-financing for such activities. Parents' co-financing is mainly used to purchase materials necessary for the education process, depending on the type and characteristics of the interest-related education program. Many municipalities offer financial assistance for large families, children and young people with special needs, as well as those coming from social risk families.

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