



Ministry of Welfare
STATE EMPLOYMENT
AGENCY OF LATVIA

Life and work in Latvia



www.nva.gov.lv



Latvia

Capital – Riga

Member of European Union since 2004

Population – approximately 2,27 million

Territory – 64 589 km²

Regions – Kurzeme, Zemgale, Vidzeme, Latgale

Largest cities – Riga, Daugavpils, Liepaja, Jelgava,
Jurmala, Rezekne, Ventspils.

State language – Latvian

Currency – lat (LVL), 1 lat = 100 santims (1 LVL = about 1,42 EUR)

International country code +371

Introduction

Latvia is a rather small, but a very beautiful country. There are many interesting tourism objects (the Baltic seaside, which is partly sandy and partly rocky; Gauja National park often called «the little Switzerland», many interesting formations of nature, that are scattered all over the territory, ancient cultural monuments, castles, manor houses etc.) Craftsmanship and other forms of national art such as pottery, weaving, plashing are well developed and common in Latvia.

There is a very strong theatre tradition in this country, and Latvians are keen theatre-goers. Also the song and dance festivals that usually take place during summer gather great number of participants and spectators from all over the world. Sport is very popular in Latvia – especially hockey, basketball, biathlon, bobsleigh and others. There are many ice halls, sports clubs and various entertainment centres for the families to be visited in Latvia.

Riga is considered to be the cultural centre of Latvia, where enormous number of science, cultural and entertainment objects are found. The characteristic traits of Latvians are restraint, self-confidence, independence and persistence. Latvians may seem to be too unsociable – quiet, uncommunicative individualists, but the truth is – all they need is a little more time to establish friendship and show true devotion. People here like giving flowers to each other, and that is one of the most special signs of friendly affection.

Everyone absolutely must take part in Līgo Day and Jāņi Night celebration on the 23rd and 24th of June. All the night is spent awake and filled with fun while looking for a mysterious «blossom of fern».

Useful links:

www.latvia.lv, www.latviatourism.lv – for tourism, culture and geographical information about Latvia.





Moving to Latvia

Before going to Latvia

Consider before going to Latvia:

Do you have a valid travelling document?

Before you enter Latvia, make sure that your personal identification document will be valid throughout all your stay in Latvia.

Do you have the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) or other kind of health insurance?

You can receive the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) in the competent institution in your country. If you are about to start working in Latvia, you can receive EHIC free of charge at the Health Compulsory Insurance State Agency (HCISA) in Latvia.

For additional information please see www.voava.gov.lv.

Do you have the necessary E-forms?

If you want to continue receiving the unemployment benefit from your country (for as long as 3 months) while you will be looking for a job in Latvia, you will need the E 303 certificate issued by the competent institution in your home country. You must be registered with the State Employment Agency and submit documents to the State Social Insurance Agency within 7 days from the date of your departure.

The aggregation of the employment/insurance periods is guaranteed by the E 301 certificate which is issued by the competent institution of the corresponding state.

Is your education suitable for working in Latvia?

The suitability of your professional and academic education for doing a particular job is evaluated by the potential employer. However, if you want to work in a regulated profession in Latvia – for example, as a doctor, engineer, teacher etc. – you must complete the process of recognition of your education and professional qualification documents before you start. You can accomplish this at the Academic Information Centre – www.aic.lv. The list of the regulated professions in Latvia is available there too.

Arriving in Latvia

When entering Latvia you must:

- register at the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs and receive the residence permit if you wish to stay in Latvia for more than 3 months during the period of the next 6 months: www.pmlp.gov.lv.
- declare your place of stay at the local authority or at the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs if you plan to stay in Latvia for more than 3 months or you wish to register at the State Employment Agency.
- register at the local office of the State Employment Agency if you are looking for a job and wish to be assisted with your search for a job, as well as if you wish to continue receiving the unemployment benefit from your home country: www.nva.gov.lv.
- register yourself as a tax-payer at the local offices of the State Revenue Service if you have found a job: www.vid.gov.lv.

Finding a job

Most common ways of looking for a job in Latvia are via personal contacts, job adverts in newspapers and on the radio, at private employment agencies and human resources companies and via internet; these options provide many chances of finding the right job.

The citizens of the European Union / the European Economic Area and Switzerland don't need work permits in Latvia and thus have free access to the Latvian labour market.

You must take into account that in order to successfully find a job in Latvia, you have to have adequate knowledge of the Latvian language. Latvian is the official state language and it is used in all state institutions and mostly in all workplaces. The Russian language skills can be useful too, as well as English, German and other language skills for certain job positions.

State Employment Agency (NVA)

The NVA is an institution under the supervision of the Ministry of Welfare that implements state policy in the field of unemployment reduction and job seeker support.

You can find out about available vacancies at the NVA web site: www.nva.gov.lv – section CV/ Vakanču portāls (CV/Vacancy portal). The information about the vacancies here is available only in Latvian.

If you cannot find a job and wish to receive unemployment benefit, attend retraining courses or participate in other measures offered by the NVA, you must register with the NVA and receive the status of the unemployed. NVA staff will consult you about the available job openings as well as the rights and duties of the unemployed and job-seekers, give answers to the questions about professional suitability, about the choice of appropriate profession and possible retraining options.

More information on the available services can be found at the NVA web site: www.nva.gov.lv.



EURES – the European Employment Services

At the EURES Europe job mobility portal www.eures.europa.eu information about the available vacancies, the living and working conditions in Latvia and other European countries can be found.

Certified EURES consultants at the State Employment Agency (NVA) will provide advice and answer different questions about the working and studying possibilities in Latvia. The information about EURES in Latvia is available at the NVA web site: www.nva.gov.lv/eures (in English and Latvian).

Private Employment Agencies

Certain legal entities are allowed to provide job finding services for people in Latvia and in other countries – private employment agencies which have a licence issued by the State Employment Agency (NVA).

The list of the licensed agencies is available at the State Employment Agency (NVA) web site in section For Unemployed / Licensed Private Employment Agencies.

Useful links:

www.nva.gov.lv – the State Employment Agency

www.nva.gov.lv/eures – EURES consultants in Latvia

www.cv.lv, www.workingday.lv, www.e-darbs.lv,

www.vakance.lv, www.mps.lv, www.darbs.info,

www.personals.lv, www.eiropersonals.lv,

www.eirokonsultants.lv, www.fontes.lv – human

resources companies and vacancies' portals.

Working in Latvia

Starting the employment relationship and labour contract

A written labour contract should be signed between an employer and an employee when employment relationship is started.

Usually the labour contract has an undefined period in Latvia. In special occasions the contract can be of fixed duration, based on the specific character of the particular job – seasonal work, odd jobs, paid public activities etc.

When signing the contract a probation period can be defined in order to test the suitability of the employee for doing the particular job. If there is no probation period mentioned in the contract, it is understood that the contract has been made without it. The probation period cannot exceed three months.

Both parties can change the labour contract by reaching a mutual agreement. These additional agreements should be made in a written form.

Self-employment and establishing a company in Latvia

Self-employed person

If you plan to provide individual services (for example – hair-dresser, tailor, photographer) as a self-employed person, you must receive a permit for such individual work from the local authority. After receiving the permit you must address the local office of the State Revenue Service to be registered as a tax-payer and to receive the licence for performing individual work.

In order to receive social insurance benefits as a self-employed person you must fill in the registration form at the State Revenue Service proving your voluntary joining the state social insurance scheme and taking responsibility for making the social tax payments.

Individual entrepreneur, establishing a company

If you want to start up your own business as an individual entrepreneur or by establishing your company you should address the Register of Companies and register your business. It is very important to find out if the business you are about to develop requires a licence. If it does require a licence you should receive it before registering your business at the Register of Companies. Within 30 days from the start date of your entrepreneurship you must register yourself as an individual entrepreneur or your company as a tax-payer at the local office of the State Revenue Service.

In order to receive social insurance benefits as an individual entrepreneur, you must fill in the registration form at the State Revenue Service proving

your voluntary joining the state social insurance scheme and taking responsibility for making the social tax payments.

You are responsible for making social insurance payments for the people your company employs.

Additional information about self-employed person registration procedure can be found on the State Revenue Service web site: www.vid.gov.lv (also in English). Additional information about the registration procedure of individual entrepreneur or private company is available at the Register of Companies web site www.ur.gov.lv (also in English).

Remuneration and taxes

There is a defined minimal wage amount set by the Cabinet of Ministers.

The employer is obliged to pay the wage at least two times a month, except if the employer and employee agree on one payment per month.

The most part of the biggest companies transfer wages to the bank accounts of their employees. When paying the wage employer issues a written calculation of the wage. It is the employer's duty to explain the calculation upon the employee's request.

The employer makes the compulsory state social insurance payments for his/her employees.

The employee tax rates:

The compulsory social insurance payment – 9%

Income tax – 23%

The untaxed minimum – 90 LVL per month (add 63 LVL per month for each dependent person).

For example, if your monthly gross wage is 500 LVL and you have one dependent person, then your monthly net wage would be 385.54 LVL.

The average monthly gross wage in 2008 was about 480 LVL.

Working hours

A standard working-day cannot last longer than 8 hours, and a standard working-week cannot exceed 40 hours.

Vacation

Yearly paid vacation

Each employee has a right to a yearly paid vacation. Such vacation cannot be shorter than four calendar weeks, apart from public holidays.



Termination of employment

The employment relationship can be terminated only in cases stated in the Labour code.

Mutual agreement of the parties

The employer and employee can terminate employment relationship by a mutual agreement. Such an agreement should be made in a written form.

The termination of the labour contract with a fixed duration.

The employment relationship ends with the day when the duration of the labour contract ends. If the labour contract duration is not fixed, the employer must inform the employee about the expected termination of the employment relationship in a written form at least 2 weeks before the termination.

Notice of termination by employee or employer

The employee has a right to give the employer a written notice of termination one month in advance, except the cases when a shorter period of time is stated in the collective agreement or in the labour contract.

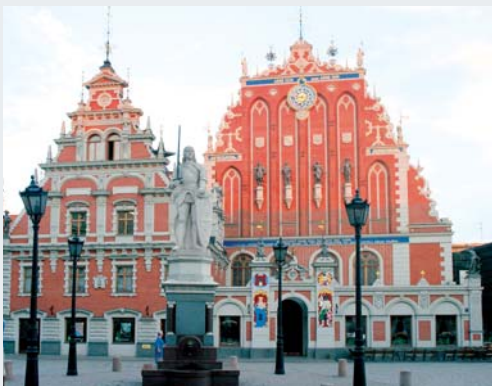
Through an agreement between the employer and the employee the labour contract can be terminated sooner than the term of the notice is.

Both employer and employee can terminate the labour relationship in a written form three days in advance during the probation period.

Employer has a right to give a notice of termination in a written form on the ground of circumstances that are connected with the behaviour of the employee, his/her abilities or managerial, organizational, technological or alike activities at the company. For example – the employee has severely violated the labour contract or the working regulations without any justification; or the employee is not able to do the agreed work due to health conditions etc. Depending on the reason for termination of the employment relationship the possible term can be – immediately, 10 days or one month.

Useful links:

www.vdi.gov.lv – State Labour Inspectorate (information about employment rights).



Living in Latvia

Accommodation

The inhabitants of Latvian cities live mainly in apartment houses. The people in the countryside live mostly in private houses.

When renting an apartment it is recommended to make a rental agreement. It is common to ask for an advance payment of 1 to 3 months' rent.

When buying an apartment one must make sure it is privatized, and a purchase contract must be made, as well as the ownership rights should be reregistered.

It is possible to sign up in the queue for a municipal apartment at the local authority, but usually the number of such apartments is very limited, and a very long time can pass till one receives such apartment, especially in larger cities.

Information about apartments and houses for sale can be found at the real estate companies, in the press or internet.

Useful links:

www.dzivoklis.lv, www.flat.lv,

www.ss.lv, www.reklama.lv,

www.nekustamie.lv,

www.rentinriga.lv, www.city24.lv,

www.ipasums.lv, www.adrese.lv –

rent and sale of apartments and houses.

www.nekustamaisipasums.lv,

www.latio.lv, www.oberhaus.lv –

real estate companies.



Education

The process of education is provided in Latvian at the state and local authorities' educational institutions. One can receive education in other languages within the special national minority group programs or at private schools. Everyone getting primary or secondary education in other language



simultaneously acquires the state language and is obliged to take the state language exam according to the certain order set by the state.

If the education is received abroad then the education certificate must be submitted for expertise at the Academic Information Centre www.aic.lv according to the University law.

Kindergartens

Local authorities provide places for children at local kindergartens. Information about the kindergartens and the vacant places in them can be found at the education board or at the local authority.

Primary and secondary education institutions

Local authorities provide all the children who have reached the school starting age and live within the authority's administrative territory with a place in an educational institution with the view of receiving preschool, general primary and secondary education.

Institutions of professional education

Institutions of professional education depending on the particular program admit persons who have received primary education, vocational education or secondary education, as well as with no requirements towards prior educational level.

The students are admitted to the educational institution on competitive basis, being evaluated by the grades in their education documents.

Universities

The admission of students into study programs is competitive. University can determine additional requirements of special previous education, special suitability and training (for example – in fine arts, music, sports).



There is a certain number of places in universities quoted by the state and financed from the state budget. The tuition fee for the places that are not financed by the state is covered by students according to the agreement made between the university and a student.

Useful links:

www.izm.gov.lv – Ministry of Education and Science (information about schools, professional education institutions and universities in Latvia).

www.aiknc.lv – study programs in universities

www.aic.lv – the Academic Information Centre.

Health care

Health care services are provided by the state, local authorities as well as private medical institutions.

The state guaranteed medical help can be received by the Latvian citizens and non-citizens (aliens), by citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland who reside in Latvia due to employment or self-employment and their family members as well as other foreigners who have permanent residence permit.

To call for the emergency medical help dial phone number 03 or 112.

Information about the possibilities of receiving health care services and patient payments can be found at a medical institution as well as at the Health Compulsory Insurance State Agency (www.voava.gov.lv) and at the regional sickness insurance institutions.

Transport

Roads and bus traffic

The motor-road system is well developed in Latvia, and connections to the neighbouring countries make the road transport possible in any direction.

Regular bus traffic that connects the largest cities of Latvia is provided.

Railroad traffic

Regular passenger train traffic is provided in Riga region and connects the largest cities of Latvia. Information about passenger train traffic is available at the web site of «Latvijas Dzelzceļš» company: www.ldz.lv

Air traffic

There are several airports in Latvia, the biggest of which is «Riga» airport situated in a 10 km distance from the centre of Riga – the capital of Latvia.

The Latvian national airline company «AirBaltic» provides flights to the biggest cities in Europe, in the Far East and in the USA. «Information about the «AirBaltic» flights is available at www.airbaltic.lv

Ferry traffic

Regular ferry traffic is available at Riga, Liepaja and Ventspils sea ports connecting Latvia to the cities in Sweden and Germany.

Information about the ferry traffic to Riga can be found at www.tallink.lv.



Public transport in the cities

There is regular public transport traffic provided in the largest cities of Latvia. The city public transport tickets can be purchased at press sales places or at the driver or conductor in the vehicle.

Useful links:

www.1188.lv – reference and information service (information about bus, train, ferry and air traffic)

www.autoosta.lv – Riga International Bus Station

www.csdd.lv – Road Traffic Safety Directorate (information about traffic regulations and vehicle registration in Latvia).

Social security and insurance

When starting up employment relationship the employee becomes a socially insured person and makes social insurance payments. These payments cover for insurance in case of illness and maternity as well as industrial accidents and professional diseases.

Unemployment benefit

Unemployment benefit is granted to a person who has been insured for the case of unemployment and who has gained the status of the unemployed. The status of the unemployed person is gained when registering with the State Employment Agency (NVA). The unemployment benefit is assigned and paid by the State Social Insurance Agency (SSIA).

The unemployment benefit can be received by those persons whose insurance term is not less than one year, and for whom the social insurance payments for the case of unemployment have been made at least for 12 months within the period of last 18 months before the day of acquiring the status of the unemployed.

If the insurance term in Latvia is not sufficient to be eligible for receiving the unemployment benefit then the employment/insurance term in other EU/EEA country can be taken into account. In order to aggregate the employment/insurance period in Latvia with the employment/insurance periods in other EU/EEA countries one must submit certificate E301 to the SSIA, where the employment/insurance periods in another member state and the reasons for terminating the employment relationship are stated.

Such certificate is issued by the competent authority of that country.

The amount of the unemployment benefit and the period of subsequent payments depend on the insurance term of the unemployed person.

Export of the unemployment benefit

If you are unemployed in any EU/EEA country and you are granted the unemployment benefit, you can look for a job in Latvia and continue receiving (exporting) the benefit from your country for up to 3 months. In order to be able to export your benefit to Latvia you must request the E303 certificate at the competent authority in your country. When you have received the E303 certificate and left the state, you must register at the State Employment Agency (NVA) and submit the E303 certificate to the State Social Insurance Agency (SSIA) in Latvia within 7 days after your arrival.

Sickness benefit

In case of sickness of an employee or his/her child it is possible to receive sickness benefit.

For the first 10 days of sickness the benefit is paid by the employer. Starting from the 11th day of work disability the benefit is paid by the State Social Insurance Agency (SSIA) and it reaches 80% of the person's average wage amount.

Useful links:

www.nva.gov.lv –State Employment Agency

www.vsa.lv – State Social Insurance Agency



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K. Valdemara street 38 k-1,
Riga, LV-1010, Latvia
Phone: +371 67021706
Fax: +371 67021806
e-mail: nva@nva.gov.lv
www.nva.gov.lv