
VET STUDY VISIT RIGA, LATVIA

7 - 9 March 2012

Visit details

Study visit participants:

Kostas Pistos (expert from Cyprus)
Maria Evripidou (expert from Cyprus)
Chrysoula Stergiou (expert from Greece)
Tatjana Danilova (expert from Latvia and host)
Guntis Vasilevskis (Representative Board Member from Latvia)
Mudite Reigase (National Coordinator from Latvia)
Mary Kyriazopoulou (European Agency staff member)

1st day

Meeting in the National Centre for Education:

Welcome, introduction to the education policy in Latvia, information about Special Needs Education and inclusive policy, overview of the vocational education and transition from special vocational education to working life



The meeting began with a welcome and introduction from Mr. Guntis Vasilevskis, Head of the National Centre for Education and representative board member of Latvia to the Agency. Emphasis was placed on the positive impact of the Agency work to the development of inclusive education policy in Latvia, as well as on the importance of the



meeting in terms of exchanging and sharing experiences with colleagues from other countries and learning from each other.

An introduction was then given to the education development policy in Latvia, by Ms Ilze Buligina, senior expert of Vocational and General Education Department, Ministry of Education and Science.

Pre-school education can start at the age of 2 up to the age of 7 and it becomes compulsory for the last two years, with the aim to promote the development of human and responsible individual personality and prepare young children for the basic education. Compulsory basic education, is for 9 years, in grades 1-9. Partial acquisition of basic education is implemented in primary schools.

General secondary education programs are implemented in secondary schools, gymnasiums, evening (shift) and extramural secondary schools. There are four profiles of the general secondary education programs for grades 10-12 : general education, mathematics and natural sciences, the humanities and professionally –oriented profile. Upon completion of general secondary education students receive a certificate on general secondary education, entitling the graduate to continue studies in any higher educational institution or college.

There are different types of general secondary education programs – general Secondary education programs for minorities, special education programs and social correction education programs. State financed basic education in Latvia is provided in 8 national minority languages and secondary education is provided in 7 national minority languages.

The higher pedagogical education and corresponding professional qualifications is mandatory for teachers working in any general secondary education institution.

The new National Standard of Basic Education was adopted in December 2006 and it defines the key aims and objectives for the basic education programmes, the content, the basic principles and procedures to evaluate students' achievements as well as the new Subject Standards of basic education. The National Standard of General Secondary education came into effect in September 2008. The content of general secondary education program covers six educational spheres: languages, mathematics and IT, sports and health, science, social sciences, the arts. The focus is on the development of basic skills and their application in real life situations.

In the school year 2009 – 2010, the number of students with SEN, integrated in general education institutions was: 113 students in general education programs, 462 students in



special education programs and 64 students in social correction programs. (see [presentation education-policy -in-LV.pdf](#))



Information about Special needs education and inclusive policy in Latvia, was presented by Mudite Reigase, ESF project manager “Development of support system for learners with disabilities” and national coordinator of Latvia to the Agency.

Special education, in Latvia, is a specific type of general education: special education – general and vocational education adapted for persons with special needs and health problems, or with special needs or health problems.

Special educational program ensure the possibilities and circumstances for learners with congenital or acquired functional disabilities to acquire general education according to their special needs.

Special needs are the need for appropriate support and rehabilitation that give learners the opportunity to acquire educational programmes according to their health condition, abilities and level of development.

Availability of adequate support measures for learners with special needs who are integrated/included into a general education institution shall be ensured by the educational institution. Individual education plans should be developed for every learner with special needs who are included in general education classroom.

Both types of special education provision have always been equal in Latvia: special education institutions, special support to children in general mainstream education institutions,

The possibility to receive education in the most appropriate education institution is provided for each child with special needs by ensuring: the help of qualified specialists,



acquisition of knowledge, development of social skills and practical skills, practical orientation in education, preparation for employment and integration into society, special correction and rehabilitation. The last years there is a decrease of the school population in Latvia.

4,90% of students with SEN are in compulsory education. From the school year 2005/2006 the number of pupils has decreased:

- in mainstream schools by **24%**
- in special schools and classes by **13%**

Programmes of special education may be provided by state, municipal and private special education institutions or general education institutions.

In the school year of 2010/11 there were 62 special education institutions founded by the state and municipalities, out of them: in Riga – 12, in the regions and towns of Latvia – 50.

The policy on inclusive education promotes:

- to open special education classes in general education institutions that are close to the place of residence of children
- to integrate/include learners with special needs in mainstream education institutions (if they have the required equipment and provision)
- technical adaptation of education institutions to the needs of children with serious physical disabilities

To promote integration/inclusion of learners with special needs:

- Support measures and accommodations are allowed in state tests and examinations (Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers)
- Financing that follows learners with special needs is higher (1,6)

(see presentation on [Special-education-in-LV.pdf](#))





Ms Tatjana Danilova, VET national expert, gave an overview of the Vocational education in Latvia.

The Law on Education (1998, 2001) regulates the whole system of education including initial and continuous education

- The Law on Vocational Education (1999, 2001) sets out the principles for organising, implementing and awarding qualifications both for initial and continuous vocational education; states the division of tasks and competences and the relationship between employers, teachers and students, the structure programmes and the funding principles

Regulations issued by the Cabinet of Ministers:

- The National standard for vocational education and vocational secondary education (2000)
- Procedure of professional qualification examinations in accredited vocational education programmes (August 2011)

The main tasks of VET:

- to provide opportunities for continuing education after graduation from basic or secondary school
- to acquire initial qualifications
- to develop skills for vocational in-service training
- To get rights to continue education at higher education level

Vocational education institutions offer programs in all sectors of national economy

VET is free for full-time students at institutions and they receive a grant by the Cabinet of Ministers.

VET opportunities for learners with special education needs:

- To attend vocational classes in special school to acquire the program of basic vocational education which leads to Level 1 (EQF level 3) Professional qualification (mild intellectual disabilities)
- To attend vocational schools
- Qualifications: baker assistant, cook assistant, carpenter assistant, dressmaker assistant, book repairer, hotel chambermaid, domestic servant, shoemaker assistant, shopping hall worker

(see presentation on VET-in-LV.pdf)

2nd day

Visits to: Riga Special Primary/Compulsary Boarding School and to the Social Integration State Agency: Jurmala Secondary Vocational School



Riga Special Compulsory Boarding School: Established in 1923, caters for 167 students with intellectual disabilities between the ages of 7 to 21. The school is part of the municipal school system of Riga and also part of the Latvian general school system. Pupils are referred to the school through special state and local commissions. There are 3 types of educational program: 81 students attend program addressed to students with mild mental disabilities, 55 students attend program addressed to students with moderate and severe mental disabilities and 32 students attend vocational classes.

The goal is to adapt physical and mental health of the student with the chosen profession.

Pupils at the school receive psychosocial support, develop skills and abilities for independent living, training on how to find a job.

There are two professional vocational program in the school: Housekeeping program (15 students) and Book binding program (12 students).

After graduating professional vocational classes students with mild intellectual disabilities can receive Qualification Certificates.

Vocational subjects offered: Computer, Labour safety, Languages, Bookbinders technology, Composition, Household technology, Textile, Catering, Leather work, Life skills, Crafts/sewing, Home economics.

Student employment counselor at work: helps students to succeed socially and professionally through individual and group counseling, help students expand options or confirm choices they are considering, supports students when they are going to practice in real working environments, helps students with career plans and supports them in the employment process at the end of studies.

Cooperation with municipal institutions and employers: they visit job places, the day centers, the other schools, employers.

State Employment Agency/NVA: SEA (NVA) is a State administration institution under the supervision of the Ministry of Welfare that implements State policy to decrease unemployment and number of unemployed, support program for job-seekers and persons under risk of unemployment. The registered unemployment rate in the country in 2012 is 11.5%, in Riga is 8.1%.

Employment measures organized by the SEA/NVA: Legal consultations, Practical training (at the employer), Career consultation, Summer work for pupils, Paid temporary works, Measure for particular person groups (subsidized employment), Complex support measures, Professional training with the system of coupons for employers, Work practicing in local governments, Measures for business or self-employment start-ups.

In the last 10 years 337 students have graduated from the school. Most of these students have continued their studies in: Social integration center, Professional vocational schools, Vocational schools, Riga evening secondary schools, State Technical College, Culinary School.



Most of them have found a job in: Kindergardens, Supermarkets, Restaurants, Fast food restaurants, Food and catering, Health and social care, Building, Carpentry, Car services, Typography, Marketing, Road repair companies, Cleaning services (see [presentation Riga-Special-Primary-Boarding-School.pdf](#))

Social Integration State Agency: Jurmala Secondary Vocational School

Social Integration State Agency (SISA) is a State institution subordinated to the Ministry of Welfare. It was established in 2004 and offers vocational rehabilitation services so that persons with disability could master new profession or improve their professional knowledge and skills. Professional rehabilitation consists of: professional adequacy and job simulation tests, training programmes, psycho-social assistance, providing assistance in placement and job finding. SISA consists of Secondary Vocational School (offers vocational education programmes from the First to the Third National Qualification level) and College (offers vocation education programmes of the Fourth National Qualification level). Jurmala Secondary Vocational School offers 16 Vocational, Secondary Vocational and Further education programmes which give the opportunity to acquire following professional qualifications: cook assistant, cook, domestic servant, chambermaid, accountant, bookkeeper, retail specialist, wholesale specialist, hospitality specialist, electronic assembler, computer system technician.

In 2011/2012 School year 153 learners in total acquire the chosen professions in Jurmala Secondary Vocation School. There are 127 learners with the functional disabilities among them. Totally they acquire 16 initial Vocational education programmes: Basic Vocational education programmes which lead to Level 1 of Vocational qualification, Vocational education programmes (Level 2 of Vocational qualification) and Secondary Vocational education programmes which lead to Level 3 of Vocational qualification (National Qualification Framework consists of 5 Qualifications Levels)

In 2010/2011 school year 60 learners in total and 45 with functional disabilities (physically disabled, sensorially disabled, students with psychiatric problems) among them had passed the professional qualification exam. 42 school leavers successfully entered the labour market. (see [presentation Social-integration-state-agency.pdf](#))