

The Information, Guidance and Counselling System in Latvia

Status of the country (EU member/in PAC / EEA etc.)

EU acceding country

Brief description of how the information, guidance and counselling services are organised. Ministers in charge / Umbrella organisations. Networks for different target groups

The Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Education and Science share the responsibility of providing career information, guidance and counselling services in Latvia.

State non-profit organization *Professional Career Counselling Centre* (operates under a supervision of the Ministry of Welfare) provides guidance and counselling services for public (pupils, vocational and higher education students, unemployed and employed, persons with disabilities) through its 20 regional offices, compiles and disseminates educational and occupational information, develops guidance strategies and methodology, needs analyses and training for guidance counsellors.

State Employment Office provides guidance counselling services for the unemployed including such aspects as psychological consultations, vocational guidance, legal advice, facilitation of job application skills in all regions of Latvia.

The National Resource Centre for Vocational Guidance (operates under a supervision of the Ministry of Education and Science) provides a regular information exchange with vocational guidance institutions and other NRCVGs in Europe about educational system, vocational qualifications and labour market in Latvia; collects, produces and disseminates information about education and training opportunities in Latvia, EU, EEA member states and associated CEE countries at different levels and types of education including organisation of information meetings with students and their parents; produces and distributes printed materials; promotes cooperation between the various actors in the field of guidance and counselling at national and transnational level; contributes to the development of the Euroguidance network through the implementation of communication, information and support activities, disseminates innovative guidance projects developed under *Leonardo da Vinci* and any other Community programme or initiative.

The Ministry of Education and Science promotes and supports integration of vocational guidance activities within general school curricula. Local governments are expected to secure guidance activities, but the existing regulations do not articulate objectives, responsibilities or standards.

Career guidance and counselling services at VET and tertiary education sector have not been adequately developed on a national level. Students Counsellors' Centres within higher education institutions advise their students on selective subjects within study programmes, deliver the information about study programmes and entry requirements, organise "Open Doors" events, provide on-line information on the websites of the educational institutions. The development of Students Career Centres has been started in several higher education institutions based on experience acquired in European countries in the framework of EU Leonardo da Vinci mobility project.

The State Youth Initiative Centre in co-operation with NRCVG, secondary vocational education and higher education institutions organises Career Information Days (educational fairs, lectures, seminars etc) in regions in the framework of the annual Youth Information Days.

Professional associations in the field

Association of Guidance Counsellors.

Evolution of the information, guidance and counselling services

Concept of Vocational Guidance (approved on 15.11.1994.) defines the role and responsibilities of the main actors in the field (Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Education and Science).

A number of legal acts (the Social Security Law, the Law on Education, the Law of Vocational Education and Training, the Law on Unemployment) serve as general guidelines for policy making and initiatives within different sectors.

Based on the above-mentioned Concept and laws, the Professional Career Counselling Centre, State Employment Office Guidance Counselling Service for the Unemployed and the National Resource Centre for Vocational Guidance have been established.

Legal framework - Role and status of the guidance counsellors

Class teachers are the key players in the provision of guidance services at general school level. Guidance counsellors of the State Employment Office deal with guidance services for unemployed nationwide. Professional Career Counselling Centre specialises in guidance and counselling services for public both youth and adults.

Communication between the practitioners

Main communication channels between the guidance practitioners run through the Methodological Association of Class-Teachers and the Association of Guidance Counsellors accordingly.

Qualification of the school counsellors

Guidance activities at general secondary school level have been delegated mostly to schoolteachers who generally have pedagogic qualifications but rarely adequate guidance qualifications. The situation differs from school to school. At several schools vocational guidance services are included in the responsibilities of school psychologist.

As no adequate study programmes or special comprehensive training for vocational guidance are provided yet at the national level, *Professional Career Counselling Centre* provides a one-week training at an individual request of separate schools.

Extension of the counselling services in your country

New standards of teacher qualification are being developed where basic skills and knowledge of vocational guidance constitute an integral part of the qualification. Two Latvian universities with the support of NRCVG and international experts have only started designing of pre-service study programme for guidance counsellors this year in order to improve the quality of guidance and counselling in future.