



LETTLAND

Fläche	64 589 km ²
Einwohner	2 321 000
Hauptstadt	Riga
Amtssprache	Lettisch

LETTONIA

Area	64 589 km ²
Abitanti	2 321 000
Capitale	Riga
Lingua ufficiale	Lettone



Living and working conditions

Facts about Latvia

Geography

Latvia is one of the Baltic countries. on the world map you can find it located in North-East Europe, at the Eastern coast of Baltic Sea. Latvia is democratic parliamentary republic. The legislature - the parliament in Latvia is called "Saeima". It consists of 100 deputies elected by citizens. The executive power has cabinet, ruled by premier (president of ministers). Head of the state is president, elected by parliament. The State Independence Proclamation day is on 18th of November and it is a national holiday. National currency is "lats" (LVL), 1 lat is 100 santimes - "santīmi".

Landscape of Latvia is mostly lowland, partly plain and upland. There are thousands of lakes and rivers. The longest river in Latvia is the Gauja River, the river has grooved itself through landscape area sometimes called the Switzerland in miniature. The biggest river crossing Latvia is Daugava River. The widest waterfall in Europe is located in Latvia - it is situated on Venta River rapids. The total territory of Latvia is 64,589 sq. km. Latvia consists of historically developed 4 regions: Kurzeme (Western region), Zemgale (Southern region), Vidzeme (Midland and Norther part) and Latgale (Eastern Region). There are lots of lakes situated in Latgale Region, including the biggest lake in Latvia - the Lubans Lake, and also the deepest - Dridzis Lake, and also one of the most mystical - Velnezers - the Devils Lake. Latgale Region is called the land of blue mere, but other regions also have their significant features by culture and economical development particularities.

Latvija borders with Estonia, Russia, Byelorussia and Lithuania.

Latvija is positioned on the cross-point of important commerce routes. Since ancient times this area is functioning as a bridge from Western Europe to Russia. Described in old chronicles, the historical route from Vikings to Greeks has started in Scandinavia, followed over all Latvia territory by Daugava River and continued in old Russland till Empire of Byzantium.

Climate and nature

In Latvia weather are ruled by continental climate with influencing activity of cyclones and high level of fall-out. Summer period in Latvia starts in June and longs till August, but the coldest wintertime starts in December till February. The medium temperature in summertime day is around +20 / +22 ° C, medium temperature in winter day is around -5 / -15 ° C. The hottest month usually is July, the coldest - January.

Latvia is country with significant green landscapes. It is located in nature zone representing both Northern Europe and Central Europe vegetation. About 44 % of all territory consists of woodland – that is thought to be the treasure of Latvia. There is diversity and wide variety of flora and fauna in Latvia. Fauna here is typical for regions with mixed forests. There is the largest population of otters in Europe, large population of storks and here you can also watch the black stork – a great rarity for Europe.

Language

The official language is Latvian.

Sveiks! - *Hi, Hello!*

Uz redzēšanos - *Goodbay!*

Jā - *Yes!*
Nē - *No!*
Paldies - *Thank you!*
Lūdzu - *Please!*
Atvainojiet - *Sorry!*

Latvian language belongs to disappearing branch of Baltic languages - part of Indo-European language group. Latvian is one of the eldest languages in Europe. It is not like Slavic, Germanic or other languages. The closest most sound-like language in world is only Lithuanian - second Baltic language in world.

Russian language is often in use in Latvia, as well as English, German, French. Other European and Scandinavian languages are coming more popular in the last years, like Spanish, Italian, Finnish, Swedish and other.

Inhabitants

In 2002 there were 2.35 millions living in Latvia. Ethnical content: Latvian - 58,8 %, Russian - 29 %, Byelorussian - 3,9 %, Ukraine - 2,6 %, Pole - 2,5 %, Lithuanian - 1,4 %, other nationality - 2,1%.

Latvians are the indigenous inhabitants of Latvia. The ethnical disproportion was caused by massive migration from Soviet Union to Latvia after 2nd World War that caused decrease of number of ethnical Latvians from 77 % (as in 1935) to 52 % (in 1989).

Most of the Latvian inhabitants are living on towns. Riga – the capital and the biggest city of Latvia is home for 736,000 citizens, the second biggest is Daugavpils in Latgale Region, where live 113,000 people.

Production

Most perspective sectors of production in Latvia are IT, chemical and pharmacy industries, wood-working, food industry, textiles. There are several special economic zones in Latvia – Ventspils free port, Liepaja special economy zone, Rezekne special economy zone. The largest trade partner of Latvia is European Union. There are three main ports in Latvia - Ventspils, Riga and Liepaja. Ventspils is the most charged harbour of Baltic Sea Region, it is on the list of 15 leading European sea harbours.

Religion and culture

Biggest religion communions in Latvia are Evangelic-Lutherans, Rome-Catholics and Russian-Orthodox. Lutheran Church has leading role in development since Reformation in 16th century.

Riga is the thought to be also the cultural centre of Latvia, this city consists of great number of science, culture, history and entertainment objects. In your leisure time you can visit various culture events, museums, exhibitions, theatres, opera and ballet theatre. The centre of the Riga City is the Old Riga – the medieval town-part, which is on the list of UNESCO World culture treasures. There are theatres, culture centres, including integration centres, unions and organisations, per example, there is active Pole culture society in Daugavpils. There are popular music events all around Latvia - concerts, season festivals etc., literature and art symposiums and other culture activities. For popularisation of Latvian literature there is printing a journal "Latvian literature" in English, these

editions include translated publications of Latvian literature classics and new modern literature and poetry.

Sport is also popular in Latvia – hockey, basketball, biathlon, bobsled and other disciplines. There are sport halls and ice halls in biggest towns of Latvia (Rīga, Daugavpils, Liepāja, Venstpils), you can visit sport clubs all around Latvia.

Interesting and old tradition in Latvia is the annual summer solstice celebration – Jāņi – the John's Day on 23rd and 24th of June. This ancient pagan tradition has survived through Christianisation and Soviet regime and has significant traditions - Jāņi also is a national holiday.

There are wide possibilities to visit cafes, night clubs and discos in towns of Latvia all year round.

Useful links:

www.latinst.lv

www.lv

<http://latviansonline.com>

www.km.gov.lv

www.ambersea.lv

www.mantojums.lv

www.theatre.lv

Coming to Latvia

You can travel to Latvia via car, bus, ferry, airplane or train.

About Latvian railway - www.ldz.lv

Ferries to Riga (Capital of Latvia) - www.rigasealine.lv

Ferries to Ventspils (Town at the Western coastline of Latvia www.ventspils.lv) - www.home.lv/travel/pramis.html

Ferries to Liepaja (Town at the Western coastline of Latvia www.liepaja.lv) - www.terrabalt.lv

Airlines, Riga airport information - www.riga-airport.com

Riga central bus station information - www.autoosta.lv

Work and residence permits

Citizens of European Union can stay in Latvia longer than 3 months by official permission. If European Union citizen wants to live in Latvia more than 90 days per 6 month period (including arriving day), he/she must receive residence permit at the migration department. For EU citizens there is an easy procedure for receiving of documents within Latvia.

Residence permissions are not necessary for:

- seasonal workers;
- persons employed in Latvia, who return to other EU member country at least once per week;
- persons, who residence in Latvia up to 6 months per year for establishing legal working contract.

Family members of EU citizens can arrive to Latvia, too. They can get the residence permissions together with their family member who is EU citizen even if they are not EU citizens themselves. EU citizens receive residence permits for free, other state citizens must pay state tax for it. EU citizens Eiropas Savienības don't have to receive working permit to work in Latvia. Starting from the 1st of May working market will be open for other EU citizens. EU citizens will have the same

rules for job competition and legal regulations, as well as rights, as all Latvian citizens. Working permits will not be needed except for state administration vacancies. Third state citizens must have working permits. For more information about services and documents take a look at www.pmlp.gov.lv or service centre in Riga, J.Alunana Str. 1, phone +371 7219656, fax +371 7219655, e-mail - add@pmlp.gov.lv

Documents

Do remember to take following documents with you:

- *personal identification documents (passport, identification card),*
- *CV (curriculum vitae) translated in Latvian,*
- *education documents, recommendation letters,*
- *several copies of personal documents,*
- *certificates of marriage and children birth certificates if you have such,*
- *several photos of you (3x4 cm standard document size)*
- *your working contract or job invitation*
- *credit cards.*

How to find a job in Latvia

You can start looking for a new job already in your homeland, use internet resources and direct phone services for getting information, help and advice.

Sources:

Vacancies for all EU member countries - www.europa.eu.int/eures
State Employment Agency of Latvia - www.nva.lv

EURES consultants in Latvia:

- Riga Region - Zanna Ribakova (NVA Riga branch, phone +371 7210189, ZannaR@nva.lv)
- Kurzeme Region - Andris Seglins (NVA Liepaja branch, phone +371 34 29422, AndrisS@nva.lv)
- Latgale Region - Liga Ruluka (NVA Daugavpils branch, phone +371 54 35460, LigaR@nva.lv)
- Vidzeme Region - Rudite Martinsone (NVA Cesis branch, phone +371 41 20690, RuditeM@nva.lv)
- Zemgale Region - Sannija Ancane (NVA Riga branch, phone +371 7222993, SannijaA@nva.lv)

Using Internet you can get access to wide information sources on vacancies, search for job, attach your CV, use databases, advertise yourself.

CV and employment links for Latvia: www.cv.lv; www.workingday.lv; www.edarbs.lv; www.darbsinfo.lv; www.vakance.lv; www.profesija.lv; www.cvmarket.lv.

Personal training and selection companies: www.fontes.lv; www.mps.lv; www.ariko.lv; www.eiropersonāls.lv; www.adros.lv; www.prime.lv; www.professionalpeople.lv; www.mercuriurval.lv; www.fastpeople.lv; www.hr-eksperts.lv; www.eirokonsultants.lv.

You can get information on vacancies also from newspapers, such as „Diena” (www.diena.lv), „Latvijas Avīze” (www.latvijasavize.lv), „Neatkarīga rīta avīze”, „Latvijas Reklāma” etc. Most of this information will be Latvian, only for some international companies vacancies will be selected on English or German.

You have to know about your education and qualification documents - are they valid in Latvia - take a look in www.aic.lv; www.euroeducation.net.

More links on legal aspects of employment in Latvia: www.likumi.lv; www.fktk.lv; www.osha.lv; www.vdi.lv; www.lbas.lv; www.lddk.lv; www.ttc.lv.

Applying for a job

The procedure of applying for a job can differ depending on a kind of a job or vocation. The application letter becomes more and more popular in Latvia. It can be written in Latvian or English. Ordinary it must be short, concrete and printed. The information on motivation why you are applying for that vocation, are you looking definitely for this vocation and why are you the right candidate must be included in a application letter.

If a CV (curriculum vitae) is required, you must concentrate on how to rouse up the employer's interest for inviting you to a job interview. In Latvia CV is considered as a marketing tool and it must meet the demands of the branch you are seeking a job. Education and job experience mostly must be stated chronologically, starting from the first to the latest one. As the optimal amount of CV is not more than two A4 pages, it is advised to avoid unimportant information.

The information that should be included in CV

- Personal data;
- Education, courses;
- Job experience;
- Language skills;
- Driving licence;
- Interests.

The references from previous employers is often attached to CV. The copies of documents on education should not be forgotten. They can be required both when you are taken on and on job interview.

Many enterprises use a specific application forms to find the right employee. The application forms mainly contain the information close to that in CV together with specific information about potential employees in standard form. Application forms allow receiving all the necessary information about applicants.

The main part in selection of appropriate employee is a job interview, where it can be decided, is the applicant appropriate for the vocation. There are mainly several interviewers, but sometimes it can be a head of an enterprise or expert of the selection personnel that takes an interview. It must be kept in mind that the interviewer can ask about your positive and negative qualities, as well as the qualities that you have of those necessary for the vocation. At the end of the interview the employer

can give you a time for questions you are interested in. Before you are taken on a job seeker can be asked to pass a medical check-up, to make sure that the applicant is appropriate for the vocation.

Labour contract

An employer must ensure that the legal labour relations are juridical accurate accordingly to legislation. With a Labour contract an employee assumes to do a specific job, to submit the working order and orders of the employer. The employer assumes to provide the stated payment, safe, just and harmless working conditions. The Labour contract must be in writing and signed before the employee has started to work.

Information in Labour contract

- The name and the surname of the employee, the identity number, place of residence, the name and surname of employer (title), the identification number and the address.
- The date when legal labour relations has been started.;
- The length of the expected Legal labour relations (if determined);
- The place of work;
- The profession of the employee (vocation, occupation) and the characteristics of the vocation. The characteristics of the duties can be attached to the labour contract.
- The amount and data of payment;
- Stated working time per day or week;
- The length of the annual vacation;
- The terms of giving notice;
- The reference to the contract, the rules of work order that can be adapted to the legal labour relations.

Any changes in stated Labour contract that changes the rules in the legal labour relations, can be applied only after mutual agreement with employee.

Employer can't stop legal labour relations with employee on the base of necessity to make changes in the Labour contract.

Starting a job

Tax liability

If you work for pay, the employer automatically pays the payroll and social insurance of your payment.

The incomes, the payroll tax is paid of, are any payments or benefits on behalf of the employee he receives in money or in other things from his employer accordingly to labour relations.

The object of personal income tax is that income received accordingly to employment relations; pension; incomes from financial deeds and other incomes. The tax rate is 25%, and 10% of dividends paid to non-residents. Personal income tax concession is applied to the grants of the State budget, grants from foundations or international educational or cooperation programs; compensations and allowances paid from the State budget; compensation for losing operational capability and in other cases. There are some other tax concessions for residents like tax-deductible minimum, for breadwinners, etc. Those physical persons or legal bodies, from Latvia or other states, person groups, formed accordingly to contract or other agreements, or their representatives,

which are owners or has legal tenure of a real estate in Latvia, pays real estate tax. The tax rate is 1% for 01.01.2004.

Social Insurance

Accordingly to the Regulations of the Council of Europe (EEK) Number 1408/71 (further Regulation Nr 1408/71) on social security programs appliance for employees, self employers and their family, migrating in the territory of Community, and the Regulation (EEK) of the Commission, Number 574/72 of 21.03.1972 (In Latvia in force from 01.05.2004) that states the order of the introduction of the regulations Number 1408/71 it will be stated depending on twitch State's normatives a person is ensured and pays the obligatory social security.

Generally the social insurance are paid in a state witch is a working place, excepting special cases, stated by the Regulation Number 1408/71, chapter II. In the questions on State obligatory social security tax, the Regulation will be adapted in cooperation of State Revenue Service, the Ministry of Welfare, and State Social Insurance Agency, as it is provided in the scheme of the Social insurance that the ministry of Welfare is the competent organ of government and State Social Insurance Agency – the competent institution in Latvia in the questions of adapting the Regulation Number 1408/71.

Look for more information on www.ttc.lv; www.vid.gov.lv

Variations of Social Insurance

As just as you start to work in Latvia, the duty of the employer is to pay for you social insurance. The social insurance is obligatory to all employees and is realized as social insurance form earned incomes. The cases of the social risk are: ageing, becoming unemployed, prenatal and maternity leave, sick-leave, invalidity, an accident at job, occupational disease, loss of supporter. The amount of the social insurance service is related to insurance premium. The social premium rate in Latvia (from January, 2003) is 33.09% of a payment, where 24.09% is paid by employer and 9% by employee.

1. Old Age Pension

There is a three level pension system introduced in Latvia that ensures old age pension depending on the amount of social insurance payments. The first level - compulsory pension scheme non-funded by the state, the second level - pension scheme funded by the state, the third level - private pension scheme.

- The first level: the social insurance payment of labours is paid as old-age pensions for present retirees.
- The second level: the part of social insurance payment in pension account is invested in financial market (shares, other securities), to ensure additional increase of pension fund for each participant of the second level.
- The third level provides for every person's free option to make additional savings in private pension funds.

2. Disability pension

People that has paid social insurance payments at least for three years (length of service) but has not reached the old-age pension ages, has rights to receive disability pension, if examination of ability to work by a commission of doctors have announced them as disabled and the reason of invalidity has not been an accident at a job or occupational disease.

3. Maternity benefit

The following persons are entitled to receive maternity benefit: an employee; a self-employed person, who has made social insurance contributions and has voluntarily joined social insurance scheme. The benefit is granted for all prenatal and maternity leave, if a woman is absent in her job this time and for that loses incomes of job payment. The granting of Maternity benefit is based on sick-leave certificate and an approval of the employer, that the woman has not been working during this time. If a woman is self- employed, she approves herself that she has not been working then. The maternity benefit can grant the father of a child or other person that takes care on the child at home in postnatal period.

4. Sickness benefit

Sickness benefit is granted in case of sickness (injury) related to loss of ability to work when a person loses his job payment as being absent at job. Regulatory documents provide that the employer pays the benefit for the first two weeks of sickness, after that the person has rights to receive sickness benefit. Sickness benefit is founded on Sickness certificate form B and an approval of the employer that the person has not been at his job.

5. Compensation Related to Accident at Work or Occupational Disease

The following persons are entitled to that compensation: a person who has suffered from a job accident or an occupational disease has been stated after 1 January 1997 when the law on the compulsory social insurance against job accident and occupational diseases came into force.

6. Unemployment benefit

In Latvia the person is entitled to receive the unemployment benefit, if State Social Insurance Agency has obtained the status of the unemployed person; the total social insurance length is not less than 1 year; this person has paid contributions in Latvia social insurance for the event of unemployment not less than for 9 months in latest 12 month before obtaining the status of unemployed.

Amount of the unemployment benefit is determined, taking into account the length of the insurance period and the average insurance contribution wage as well as the length of the period of unemployment.

Working retired persons, self-employed persons and disabled of the I and II group cannot be insured against the event of unemployment.

7. Pension in Case of Loss of Supporter

The family members incapable of work that had been supported by the deceased person are entitled to receive survivor's pension, if the deceased person has been a socially insured person. Children of the deceased person are entitled to receive pension irrespective of the fact whether he has supported them.

8. Funeral Allowance

Funeral allowance is a one-time grant that can be received, if the deceased person has been a socially insured person or a family member of a socially insured person, supported by a socially insured person as well as if the deceased person received State pension, was an unemployed or received unemployed benefit.

The questions on Social benefits and pensions, their amounts and order how to receive them can be answered in State Social Insurance Agency, Centra division in Riga, Lacplesa Str. 70 a, LV-1011, Telephone +371 7011818, +371 8001015 (free calls) or in the home page of the Ministry of Welfare: www.lm.gov.lv

Work regulations

Useful links

Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs: www.ocma.gov.lv

State Social Insurance Agency: www.vsaa.gov.lv

State Border Guard: www.rs.gov.lv

Ministry of Welfare: www.lm.gov.lv

European Affairs Bureau: www.latvija-eiropa.gov.lv

What should an EU citizen/ EEZ participant know when starting to work in Latvia?

Labour law envisages for everyone to have an equal right to work, to fair, safe and healthy working conditions, as well as to fair work remuneration.

Maximum work period (Labour Law, Part D, Division six and seven)

- Regular daily working time of an employee may not exceed eight hours, and regular weekly working time – 40 hours;
- If due to the nature of the work it is not possible to comply with the length of the regular daily or weekly working time prescribed for the relevant category of employees, the employer, after consultation with employee representatives, shall prescribe aggregated working time;
- Aggregated working time may not exceed 56 hours a week and 160 hours within a four-week period unless otherwise provided for by a collective agreement or an employment contract.

Part-time Work (Part D, Division six and seven)

- An employer and an employee may agree in an employment contract on part-time work that is shorter than the regular daily or weekly working time;
- An employer shall determine part-time work if requested by a pregnant woman, a woman for a period following childbirth up to one year, but if the woman is breastfeeding then for the whole

period of breastfeeding, as well as by an employee who has a child under 14 years of age or a disabled child under 16 years of age;

- The same provisions which apply to an employee who is employed for regular working time shall apply to an employee who is employed part-time.

Night Work (Part D, Division six and seven)

- Night work shall mean any work performed at night for more than two hours. Night time shall mean the period of time from 22 to 6 o'clock. Nighttime with respect to children within the meaning of this Law shall mean the period of time from 20 to 6 o'clock;
- Regular daily working time for a night employee shall be reduced by one hour. This provision shall not apply to employees who have been prescribed regular shortened working time. Regular daily working time for a night employee shall not be reduced if such is required by the particular characteristics of the undertaking;
- An employer shall transfer a night employee to an appropriate job to be performed during the day if there is a doctor's opinion that the night work negatively affects the health of the employee;
- It is prohibited to employ at night persons who are under 18 years of age, pregnant women and women for a period following childbirth up to one year, but if a woman is breastfeeding then during the whole period of breastfeeding if there is a doctor's opinion that the performance of the relevant work causes a threat to the safety and health of the woman or her child.

Length of Daily Working Time before Holidays (Part D, Division six and seven)

- Before holidays the length of the working day shall be reduced by one hour, unless a shorter working time has been specified by a collective agreement, working procedure regulations, or an employment contract.

Overtime Work (Part D, Division six and seven)

- Overtime work shall mean work performed by an employee in addition to regular working time;
- Overtime work is permitted if the employee and the employer have so agreed in writing;
- Overtime work may not exceed 144 hours within a four-month period;
- It is prohibited to employ in overtime work persons who are under 18 years of age, pregnant women and women for a period up to one year after giving birth, but if a woman is breastfeeding then during the whole period of breastfeeding.

Minimum rest period (Part D, Division seven)

- The length of a one-day rest within a period of 24 hours shall not be less than 12 consecutive hours. And the length of a weekly rest period within a seven-day period shall not be less than 42 consecutive hours. For children the length of a one-day rest within a period of 24 hours shall not be less than 14 consecutive hours.

Minimum paid annual holidays (Part D, Division seven)

- Every employee has the right to annual paid leave. Such leave may not be less than four calendar weeks, not counting holidays;
- An employee may request the granting of annual paid leave for the first year if he or she has worked for the employer for at least six months without interruption. The employer has a duty to grant such leave in full.

The minimum rates of pay, including overtime rates (Part C, Division three)

- A minimum wage shall not be less than the minimum level determined by the State, which is LVL 80.00 for the time being.

Work Remuneration (Part C, Division three)

- Work remuneration is the regular pay for work payable to an employee, and which includes a salary and supplements specified by regulatory enactments, the collective agreement or the an employment contract, as well as bonuses and other kinds of payments related to work;
- An employee who performs night work shall receive a supplement of not less than 50 per cent of the specified hourly or daily wage rate specified for him or her, but if a lump-sum payment has been agreed upon, a supplement of not less than 50 per cent of the piece-work rate for the amount of work done;
- An employee who performs overtime work or on a holiday shall receive a supplement of not less than 100 per cent of the hourly or daily wage rate specified for him or her, but if piece-work pay has been agreed upon, a supplement of not less than 100 per cent of the piece-work rate for the amount of work done.

The conditions of hiring-out of workers, in particular the supply of workers by temporary employment undertakings (Part A, Division one)

- If an employee has been sent to perform work in Latvia, then, irrespective of the law applicable to the employment contract and employment legal relationships, such employee who has been sent shall be ensured the working conditions and employment provisions provided for by Latvian regulatory enactments, as well as by collective agreements;
- The legal status of a temporary employee is not yet defined in Latvia. Still general provisions of the Labour Law are applicable to them. Normative acts do not specify the specific legal status of a temporary employment agency.

Health, safety and hygiene at work (Part C, Chapter 9; Division one; Division three; Division four; Division five; Division six and Division seven)

- Everyone has an equal right to work, to fair, safe and healthy working conditions, as well as to fair work remuneration;
- With an employment contract the employee undertakes to perform specific work, subject to specified working procedures and orders of the employer, while the employer undertakes to pay the agreed work remuneration and to ensure fair and safe working conditions that are not harmful to health;
- A supplement may be specified for employees who perform work in special circumstances associated with an increased risk to their safety or health;
- An employer may request an applicant to undergo a health examination, which would allow verification that the applicant is suitable for performance of the intended work;
- Expenditures related to the health examination of an applicant shall be covered by the employer, except in cases where the applicant has knowingly provided the employer with false information during a job interview;
- Annual paid supplementary leave shall be granted to employees exposed to special risk – at least three working days.

Protective measures with regard to the terms and conditions of employment of pregnant women or women who have recently given birth, of children and of young people (Part C, Division one; Division three; Division four; Division seven)

- In order to prevent any risk which may negatively affect the safety and health of a pregnant woman, an employer, after receipt of a doctor's opinion, has a duty to ensure such working conditions and working time for the pregnant woman as would prevent her exposure to the risk referred to. If it is not possible to ensure such working conditions or working time for a pregnant woman, the employer has a duty to temporarily transfer the pregnant woman to a different, more appropriate job;

- It is prohibited to employ adolescents in jobs in special conditions which are associated with increased risk to their safety, health, morals and development;
- In exceptional cases children from the age of 13, if one of the parents (guardian) has given written consent, may be employed outside of school hours doing light work not harmful to the safety, health, morals and development of the child. Such employment shall not interfere with the education of the child. Work in which children may be employed from the age of 13 shall be determined by the Cabinet;
- It is prohibited to employ adolescents in jobs in special conditions which are associated with increased risk to their safety, health, morals and development. Within the meaning of this Law, an adolescent shall mean a person between the ages of 15 and 18 who is not to be considered a child within the meaning of Paragraph one of this Section. Work in which the employment of adolescents is prohibited and exceptions when employment in such jobs is permitted in connection with occupational training of the adolescent shall be determined by the Cabinet;
- Adolescents may not be employed for more than seven hours a day and more than 35 hours a week;
- Employers shall ensure an opportunity for a pregnant woman to leave the workplace in order to undergo health examination in the prenatal period if it is not possible to undergo such examination outside of working time;
- An employer, after receipt of a doctor's opinion, is prohibited from employing pregnant women and women for a period following childbirth not exceeding one year, but if the woman is breastfeeding – during the whole period of breastfeeding if it is considered that performance of the relevant work poses a threat to the safety and health of the woman or her child. In any case, it is prohibited to employ a pregnant woman two weeks prior to the expected birth and a woman two weeks after childbirth. The time of the expected birth and the fact of birth shall be certified by a doctor's opinion;
- If persons who are under 18 years of age continue to, in addition to work, acquire primary education, secondary education or an occupational education, the time spent on studies and work shall be summed and may not exceed seven hours a day and 35 hours a week;
- An employee who has a child under one and a half years of age shall be granted additional breaks for feeding the child. The employee shall in good time inform the employer of the necessity for such breaks;
- Breaks of not less than 30 minutes for feeding a child shall be granted not less than every three hours. If an employee has two or more children under one and a half years of age, a break of at least one hour shall be granted. The length of breaks shall be determined by the employer after consultation with employee representatives. When determining the procedure for granting a break, the wishes of the relevant employees shall be taken into consideration as far as possible.
- Breaks for feeding a child shall be included as working time, preserving work remuneration for such time. Employees for whom a piecework wage has been specified for such time shall be average earnings.

Equality of treatment between men and women and other provisions on non-discrimination (Part A, Chapter 1; Part C, Division one. Division four)

- Equal rights shall be ensured without any direct or indirect discrimination – irrespective of a person's race, skin colour, gender, age, disability, religious, political or other conviction, ethnic or social origin, property or marital status or other circumstances;
- If in case of a dispute an employee indicates conditions which may serve as a basis for his or her direct or indirect discrimination based on gender, the employer has a duty to prove that the differential treatment is based on objective circumstances not related to the gender of the employee, or also that belonging to a particular gender is an objective and substantiated precondition for performance of the relevant work or the relevant employment;

- The father of a child is entitled to leave of 10 calendar days. Leave to the father of a child shall be granted immediately after the birth of the child, but not later than within a two-month period from the birth of the child;
- If a mother has died in childbirth or within a period up to the 42nd day of the postnatal period, or in accordance with the procedures prescribed by law up to the 42nd day of the postnatal period has refused to take care and bring up the child, the father of the child shall be granted leave for the period up to the 70th day of the child's life. The leave referred to shall be granted also to another person who actually takes care of the child;
- If a mother cannot take care of the child up to the 42nd day of the postnatal period due to illness, injury or other health-related reasons, the father or another person who actually takes care of the child shall be granted leave for those days on which the mother herself is not able to take care of the child;
- Differential treatment based on the gender of an employee is prohibited when establishing employment legal relationships, as well as during the period of existence of employment legal relationships, in particular when promoting an employee, determining working conditions, work remuneration or occupational training, as well as when giving notice of termination of an employment contract;
- Differential treatment based on the gender of employees is permitted only in cases where a particular gender is an objective and substantiated precondition, which is reasonable for the legal purpose reached as a result, for the performance of the relevant work or for the relevant employment;
- If when establishing employment legal relationships an employer has violated the prohibition of differential treatment, an applicant has the right to bring an action to a court within a period of one month from the date of receipt of refusal of the employer to establish employment legal relationships with the applicant;
- If employment legal relationships have not been established due to the violation of the prohibition of differential treatment, the applicant does not have the right to request the establishment of such relations on a compulsory basis.

Posting of workers from one EU member state to another in the framework of the provision of services

State Employment Agency of Latvia fulfils the functions of the liaison office, mentioned in the Directive 96/71/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 1996 concerning the posting of workers in the framework of the provision of services.

In Latvia legal labour relations are regulated by the Labour Law, where the requirements of the Directive 96/71/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 1996 concerning the posting of workers in the framework of the provision of services are incorporated.

Section 14 of the Labour Law:

- I. Within the meaning of this Law, posting of an employee shall mean those cases where, in connection with the provision of international services:
- 1) the employer, on the basis of a contract which he or she has entered into with a person for whose benefit the work will be performed, sends an employee to another state;
 - 2) the employer sends an employee to another state to a branch or to an undertaking that is part of the group of companies; or
 - 3) a placement agency as employer sends an employee to a person for whose benefit the work will be performed if the undertaking of such person is located in another state or it performs its operations in another state.

- II. Within the meaning of this Section, an employee sent shall mean an employee who for a specified period of time performs work in a state other than the state in which he or she customarily performs work.
- III. If an employee has been sent to perform work in Latvia, then, irrespective of the law applicable to the employment contract and employment legal relationships, such employee who has been sent shall be ensured the working conditions and employment provisions provided for by Latvian regulatory enactments, as well as by collective agreements which have been recognised as generally binding and which regulate:
- 1) maximum working time and minimum rest period;
 - 2) minimum annual paid leave;
 - 3) minimum wage rates, as well as supplementary payment for overtime work;
 - 4) provisions regarding securing a workforce, especially through a work placement agency;
 - 5) safety, health protection and hygiene at work;
 - 6) protection measures for persons under 18 years of age, for pregnant women and women during the period following childbirth, as well as the provisions of work and employment of such persons; and
 - 7) equal treatment of men and women, as well as prohibition of discrimination in any other form.
- IV. An employer who sends an employee to perform work in Latvia has a duty, prior to posting the employee, to inform in writing the State Border Guard and State Labour Inspection regarding such a sent employee, indicating:
- 1) given name and surname of the employee;
 - 2) date of commencing work;
 - 3) intended length of employment;
 - 4) location of performing the work; and
 - 5) representative of the employer in Latvia.
- V. The provisions of this Section shall not apply to the ship's crews of merchant fleet undertakings.

(Including the amendments to the April 22, 2004 Law)

Living in Latvia

Immigrating from abroad

It is not prohibited to bring indoor plants into the Republic of Latvia. It can be done without any specific formalities, however there are some limitations for a list of various plants.

To bring a domestic animal in Latvia, there must be documents from sanitary and veterinary surveys. The specific licenses are requested to import many animals. Besides it, it is prohibited to import a list of various animal species in Latvia.

Tax can be charged on vehicles, transported to the Republic of Latvia depending on how long the person, crossing a border owns it. If a person has a vehicle not less than 6 months from a day he/she left his previous residence abroad, it is not needed to declare the vehicle and pay customs duty. If a vehicle belongs to a person for less than 6 months, accordingly to customs regulations it is taxed as stated in appropriate tax rate (depends on year and amount of a vehicle etc.). All the documentation must be right and strictly formatted (registration documents, estimate deed of technical conditions, insurance polis). The person must show a driving license.

The taxes cannot be released of Alcoholic drinks, goods of tobacco industry. There are various limitations: 200 cigarettes, 100 cigarillos (a cigar less than 3 grams), 50 cigars, 250 tobacco, wine and sparkling wine – 2 litres, other alcoholic drinks – (alcohol more than 22%) – 1 litre, beer – 5 litres,

coffee – 1kg, non-alcoholic drinks – 12 litres, perfume – 50 g, toilet water – 0,25 litres, medicine – amount necessary for personal usage.

To become a customer of a bank in Latvia, a passport is required. Upon opening of the account with the bank, you can immediately receive international payment cards VISA Electron and Maestro. These payment cards are linked to your account and grant you a possibility to pay for goods and services and also withdraw cash from ATMs in Latvia and in the world. For settlement of your financial transactions you can use different banking services of a bank also without going to the bank. Remote banking services provide you with possibilities to effect transactions with your funds available on the account from any spot in the world at any time by using computer and telephone.

The most popular banks in Latvia are – Hansabanka, Pareks banka, Unibanka and others. You can receive more information in those banks or branches of them.

Level of incomes and life standard

Living standard in Latvia is comparatively lower then in other European countries. Average wage is not competitive enough. Average gross income at principal work from October – December 2003 was LVL 206, average wage after paid taxes – LVL 147. Average gross income for labours in Social sector (except Social organisations) in this period – LVL 224, but after paid taxes – LVL 174. The minimal gross income in Latvia is stated no to be lower then LVL 80.

Find for actual information on www.csb.lv,
on living standard – www.consumer-guide.lv

Shopping

Groceries are open mainly from 8.00 – 19.00; supermarkets are often opened from 7.00 up to 22.00-24.00. Groceries are not closed on Sundays and Saturdays too. Alcoholic drinks are sold till 22.00. Industrial goods stores are open mainly from 10.00 till 18.00-19.00; shops of industrial goods in supermarkets – till 22.00 in working days, Sundays and Saturdays. Supermarkets are located mostly in Riga and other biggest cities. Many industrial goods stores are open only from 14.00 till 15.00 on Saturdays and are closed on Sundays.

Accommodation

The majority of Latvia's urban population live in apartment buildings, but the rural population in private houses. The cost of living in Riga is comparatively higher than in regional areas. In Riga, for instance, the average rent for a two-roomed apartment with amenities is at least LVL 100 to 200. Very often this amount does not include the cost of gas and electricity. Rental costs also depend on location (centre or the outskirts of the city). Three months' rent in advance may also be required to be paid. It is advised to sign a tenancy agreement to avoid any misunderstandings or complications. According to data compiled by the Central Office of Statistics, the average cost of an apartment in Latvia for the first half of 2003 was LVL 6 597, or LVL 126 per square metre, in Riga - LVL 11 856 or LVL 221 per square metre, in Jurmala - LVL 11 321 or LVL 198 per square metre and in Jelgava – LVL 6 002 or LVL 110 per square metre. The cost of apartments in other towns and rural areas are dependant on proximity to Riga and good transport connections. The cost rarely exceeds LVL 3 000 or LVL 50 per square metre, with the exception of the Riga and Ogre districts, and following cities - Daugavpils, Ventspils, Cesis, Bauska, Talsi and Tukums.

Information on renting or buying an apartment or house is available in local newspapers, from real-estate agencies and on the Internet: www.nekustamaisipasums.lv

Health

There is the primary health care system in Latvia. Health care service is available at primary care doctor, physician, or pediatrician.

The State obligatory health insurance and minimum health care service, provided by the State was established in Latvia in 1997. It means that State subsidizes specific health care services but a patient must pay a patients fee. Many people use private health insurance possibilities, services at private doctors and medical institutions.

The Educational System

Latvia is not rich in various nature resources; therefore the future of it depends on intellectual resources. The aim of Latvia is wise, erudite and intellectual population. There is united educational system in Latvia that consists of primary and secondary, specialized secondary, professional and higher education. Primary and secondary education at state or local authority educational institutions is provided free of charge. The professional education and it's financing is provided by local authorities or State. State finances all of higher education institutions witch are charged by State. Those students, whose knowledge is not high enough, and therefore State does not cover their tuition fees, must pay tuition fees themselves. Tuition fees are required in all private higher educational institutions. Primary education is obligatory in Latvia. Children begin their primary education in the year of their seventh birthday. The length of the primary education curriculum is nine years. After finishing primary education, person can choose further education himself.

Further information on education in Latvia is provided in home page of the Ministry of Education and Science: www.izm.gov.lv; Latvian Academic Information center's server www.aic.lv, www.euroeducation.net.

Information on language courses: www.language-learning.net.