

Appendix 1

Country Name: LATVIA

Country team (names, positions, email addresses, telephone numbers):

1. Brigita Mikelsonsone,
Mg Paed, vice chairperson of the Latvian Association of Guidance Practitioners
Euroguidance programme manager, State Education Development Agency (VIAA)
brigita.mikelsonsone@viaa.gov.lv; +371 29511310
2. Inta Jaunzeme
Dr Oec, deputy director of Student Services Department, University of Latvia
inta.jaunzeme@lu.lv; +371 26441800
3. Aivars Stankevics
Head of the State Service of Education Quality
aivars.stankevics@ikvd.gov.lv; +371 67222504

Section 1	A brief outline of your country – demographics, population and career service provision – target groups and providers (maximum 300 words)
	<p>Latvia has 2.22 million inhabitants, decreasing by 0.4 – 0.5% per year due to negative natural movement and emigration. Working age population is decreasing at an even higher rate.</p> <p>According to official statistics for 2010, of 1.55 million people aged 15-64: 1.15 million were economically active (74.1%), 94,000 employed (60.6%) and 21,000 searching for a job (13.5%), on average 35% having vocational and 28.4% higher education. The majority of employed were in the age group 25-34 (25.7%).</p> <p>Guidance services help individuals make career choices at different stages of life. The Ministry of Welfare (MW) and Ministry of Education and Science (MES) share responsibility for public guidance services. The White Paper on the Career Development Support System (2006) defines the role and responsibilities of stakeholders.</p> <p>Schools provide student careers education and guidance. Generally there are no school guidance counsellors. National education standards name preparing students for conscious career decisions as one of the main goals of education. Career management skills are integrated as learning outcomes. Universities, being autonomous, can determine their scope of student services.</p> <p>The State Education Development Agency's Career Guidance Department, with the support of Euroguidance, develops methodological and information tools for improving guidance in schools, including the database on learning opportunities that addresses information and some of the "guidance" needs.</p> <p>Public Employment Agency (PES) provides career services and implements employment policy measures for different target groups from the age of 15. The registered unemployed are entitled to receive various career services. PES provides also online information and career services.</p> <p>The national guidance forum (established 2007) includes key ministries, local authorities and social partners. Its main objective is to explore accessibility of quality guidance for different target groups, identify collaborative action and agree on recommendations.</p> <p>Funding for guidance services is scarce. There is no funding earmarked for guidance within the subsidies that MES pays to educational institutions. MW funds the activities of PES to serve mainly unemployed.</p>

<p>Section 2</p>	<p>Taking each of the four general symposium themes (see below), describe the two greatest strengths and two greatest weaknesses relating to each theme in your country (maximum 100 words for each strength and weakness; therefore maximum 400 words per theme and maximum 1,600 words in this section).</p>
<p>Theme 1: Political, economic and social changes <u>and the changing role of career guidance and career guidance policies</u></p>	
<p>Strength 1</p>	<p>Weakness 1</p>
<p>There is a growing recognition that guidance contributes to the personal, educational, economic and social development of individuals as well as plays an important role in fostering employability and economic growth.</p> <p>Provision of quality careers education at general and vocational education institutions is an important factor in establishing a positive value and behaviour system and acquisition of sustainable lifelong career management skills.</p> <p>National education standards determine that careers education is integrated in the school curriculum. Career management skills are integrated into subject standards as learning outcomes.</p> <p>Recent establishment of the staff position of a pedagogue-guidance counsellor in general education schools is a major step to increase quality of guidance at schools.</p>	<p>Although guidance issues are reflected in major policy documents, there are no clearly outlined action plans to fully implement national strategic goals. That leads to fragmentary not systemic and systematic actions. Career guidance is not a priority area for funding.</p> <p>Most career guidance measures and activities are implemented using project-based approaches drawing on combined national and external funding. The projects focus on both preventive and remedial measures. Long-term and sustainable funding is often missing to strengthen the systems of lifelong guidance and effective delivery of guidance services.</p>
<p>Strength 2</p>	<p>Weakness 2</p>
<p>Latvia has made progress in strengthening the role of guidance in the national lifelong learning and employment strategies and policies. Cooperation between policy makers, social partners and guidance professionals has improved and diversified.</p> <p>Employers are reconsidering their requirements for qualifications of their new employees. Career management skills are becoming crucial for employability. Employers tend to become more actively involved in information exchanges between education sector and labour market, especially in making curriculum responsive to the changes in society and economy. As a consequence that brings about changes in the nature of careers education and guidance.</p>	<p>Under the impact of the global financial crisis the economy of Latvia has undergone deep recession. That has lead to downturn in economic activity, decrease of economically active population, growing unemployment and emigration. Restructuring of economics and changing labour market requires new skills for the changing and limited labour market.</p> <p>Therefore it is of utmost importance to create a national shared vision for high quality careers work, to agree and adopt common understanding and language to make guidance policies/ practice react adequately.</p>

Theme 2: Lifelong guidance policy as a part of integrated human resource development policies – challenges and opportunities

Strength 1	Weakness 1
<p>The lifelong learning policy agenda in Latvia states that lifelong guidance must enable citizens of any age and at any point in their lives to identify their competencies and interests and to make meaningful educational, training and occupational decisions. Lifelong guidance is included in policy planning documents dealing with promotion of employability and competitiveness of inhabitants in the labour market to ensure sustainable development. National policy of career development is based on the policy guidelines „Europe 2020” emphasizing improvement of guidance system and services provided, widening accessibility for various target groups. Lifelong acquisition of career management skills is considered the key element.</p>	<p>Restructuring of economics and changing labour market requires new approach to lifelong guidance. Implementation of national policies and strategies require new competences of guidance practitioners. At the same time there is no systemic support or mechanisms for development of capacity of guidance providers.</p>
Strength 2	Weakness 2
<p>Latvia has made a major step towards recognition and accreditation of prior education and learning (APEL). By converting informal learning into accredited or certificated learning, APEL provides cost-effective routes to qualifications</p> <p>Recently developed APEL system covers assessment in order to acquire basic education or general secondary education certificates, professional qualifications (identical to those which can be obtained by studying in a vocational education programmes) and assessment of prior learning within higher education in order to make the study process more flexible and accessible.</p> <p>The assessment methodology has been developed, amendments made to the appropriate laws/regulations and the first 8 competency centres have been set up within vocational educational institutions in Latvia.</p>	<p>There are certain weaknesses in the implementation of the newly developed APEL system. Lack of expertise in implementation of accreditation of prior education and learning is seen as a great challenge.</p> <p>The regulations applied are quite rigid allowing little flexibility in choosing methods of implementation. The same assessment criteria as in formal education and training are applied. Services of guidance counsellors are not envisaged through the assessment processes.</p>

Theme 3: The changing world and the changing role of career guidance – skills and competencies for lifelong guidance practitioners

Strength 1	Weakness 1
<p>In 2007 the occupational standard for career counsellors was developed and approved. It formed the basis for establishing the master's degree study programme for training guidance practitioners in Latvia. Persons with a bachelor's degree in education or psychology or in a different field, but having at least two years of relevant work experience are eligible to enrol in the programme offered in 5 higher education institutions in different parts of Latvia. Full-time studies take two years; part-time studies take two and a half years. The entire programme requires completion of 120 ECTS points.</p>	<p>Guidance practitioners have a key role to play in implementing high quality services. Client groups of guidance practitioners are becoming more diverse and require new approaches, methods and skills. But supporting mechanisms for professional development of guidance staff in achieving the lifelong guidance paradigm shift is lacking. There are few incentives to motivate guidance practitioners for professional growth. Universities offer a degree programme for guidance counsellors, but graduates cannot see the demand for new specialists. Guidance counsellors working for PES feel especially insecure, because the guidance services are mainly outsourced on bi-annual basis. That does not promote motivation for active self development.</p>
Strength 2	Weakness 2
<p>The Association of Guidance practitioners was established in Latvia in 2009. The main objectives of the Association are to foster development of national policy and practice in career guidance and counselling and support guidance practitioners and other stakeholders. Although new and small in number the Association positions itself as a platform for exchange of ideas and peer learning. It cooperates closely with Euroguidance Latvia to support professional development of guidance practitioners. Euroguidance Latvia regularly provides training seminars and information for guidance practitioners on current guidance practices and methods in Europe. Guidance practitioners can also use various on-line resources that are available for self directed learning.</p>	<p>The role or contribution of guidance practitioner in the education sector is not highly valued or recognized. Because there is no tradition of vocational guidance services at schools, a coherent system for constant upgrading of qualifications does not exist targeted specifically to the needs of school guidance practitioners.</p>

Theme 4: Evidence-based practice; evidence-based policies

Strength 1

Careers education is considered more effective when it is an integral part of school's curriculum and is planned and implemented over time.

The State Service of Education Quality assesses the performance and quality of primary, general secondary and vocational education on regular basis. While developing new assessment methodology and guidelines in 2010-2011, monitoring of implementation of careers education and guidance has been included for the first time. Guidance community in Latvia considers it a very important element in supporting student retention, performance and adequate career choices. The analyses of the results could serve in further development of career work at schools as well as raising quality of careers education at schools.

Weakness 1

Lifelong guidance evidence-based policies and practice have been much debated internationally and nationally. It is a multifaceted and complex process due to a high number of factors potentially influencing career decisions and choices. Guidance system in Latvia is relatively new and there are few researchers specialising in in guidance studies.

In Latvia lifelong guidance policy and strategy developments are not based on extensive studies carried out to generate evidence on 'impact' to show what works best with different people in different settings. The evidence base on guidance provision is very fragmented. Decisions are mostly based on the data available on education and employment issues.

Strength 2

What students do after they leave school is an important indicator of the effectiveness of education, training and guidance. Introduction of national monitoring system of graduates has been initiated lately. There are proposals to develop monitoring of youth career pathways in the periods of 1 year after secondary school, 3 years after vocational school and 3 years after graduation from higher education.

The data base of graduates would be created with MES as its administrator. In that way accurate information about continuation of education or employment of individuals after graduation taking into consideration obtained qualification and other factors would be available. For more detailed data and analysis additional surveys on graduates could be carried out. In future the monitoring system would serve for policy making and strategic planning in education, guidance and employment.

Weakness 2

There are no indicators developed to implement assessment of career guidance system in mid-term and long-term. Such indicators could be used in evaluating the impact of guidance provisions on individuals, municipalities, institutions (higher education institutions) and social partners (including employers) as well as contribution at individual, economic and societal levels. The evaluation of the functioning of the guidance system would provide the necessary data for further development guidance provisions based on concrete evidence.

Section 3	Looking at the themes, prioritise them according to the most important ones for your country team to explore further and learn about at the symposium. (1 = most important – 4 = least important)
Political, economic and social changes and the changing role of career guidance and career guidance policies	<p style="text-align: center;">Priority</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4</p>
Lifelong guidance policy as a part of integrated human resource development policies – challenges and opportunities	<p style="text-align: center;">Priority</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4</p>
The changing world and the changing role of career guidance – skills and competencies for lifelong guidance practitioners	<p style="text-align: center;">Priority</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4</p>
Evidence-based practice; evidence-based policies	<p style="text-align: center;">Priority</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4</p>

Section 4	Thinking about the themes, describe up to three high-level key public policy and/or practice initiatives currently being advanced or considered in your country (write no more than 100 words on each). If it is possible, please say to which of the themes each initiative is most closely linked.
<p>High-level key public policy/practice initiative 1</p> <p>Referencing of the Latvian Education System to the EQF is in progress. This has led to the reworking of the Latvian National Qualification Structure to reflect an 8-level system. The new structure, composition and functions are being developed according to EQF. This process is being discussed and agreed on by the national social partners, taking into account the national education traditions and context, as well as interests of the involved parties.</p> <p>The referencing procedure covers all education stages and forms, qualification levels, including qualifications acquired through APEL or craftsman qualifications.</p> <p>The completion of the referencing and elaboration of NQF is expected in 2015.</p>	
<p>Linked most closely to Theme 3</p>	
<p>High-level key public policy/practice initiative 2</p> <p>Widening scope of services is crucial for labour force activation. PES constantly expands more customer-friendly service provision in close co-operation with local governments and social partners. Besides traditional guidance counselling services PES provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ vocational training, requalification and upgrading of qualifications ○ paid temporary work; ○ activities for enhancing competitiveness; ○ activities and psychological support for improving social and functional skills; ○ employment opportunities during summer vacations for the students of general, special or vocational schools; ○ facilitation of business start-ups or self-employment; ○ work practice providing opportunities to assess vocational aptitude; ○ short-term training with employer. 	
<p>Linked most closely to Theme 1</p>	
<p>High-level key public policy/practice initiative 3</p> <p>“Job for Youth” (JFY) is one of the latest PES initiatives. The aim is labour market integration of unemployed youth (ages 18-24). JFY does not include unqualified and low-qualified jobs. The employment period for participants is up to 9 months. Participants cannot be paid below the national minimum monthly wage.</p> <p>Participating employers creating jobs for youth receive a salary subsidy for unemployed youth. Employers must provide additional financing to bring the salary to at least the minimum wage and pay taxes. Every employer ensuring five work places receives a grant of half the minimum salary for supervisor’s salary. Financing is also allocated for adjusting workplaces for disabled youth if necessary.</p>	
<p>Linked most closely to Theme 1</p>	

Section 5	Future Focus – what are the key elements of your team’s overall vision for career policy, practice and research in your country? (write no more than 30 words).
<ul style="list-style-type: none">+ achievement of common understanding/terminology of lifelong guidance across sectors+ strategic planning/priority setting through cooperation across the whole guidance policy spectrum to increase quality and accessibility+ raising number and qualification of guidance practitioners	