

# Country Report Latvia

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June 2009

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## A. Key data sources and responsible institutions

Information on *migrants* in Latvia is available from administrative records. The major sources for aggregate data are the census and administrative databases. The population register and residence permit database are the two most important administrative databases. Other useful sources are the quarterly and annual labour market survey data. However, they typically have less detail of social and demographic relevance. Another source of data on migrant flows are the administrative records that deal with visas and work permits.

The most important national institutions involved in data collection in Latvia on international migration and foreign population stocks are the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB), the Ministry of the Interior, The Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (OCMA) within the Ministry of Interior, the Employment State Agency, the Citizenship and Migration Board, the Health Statistics and Medical Technologies State Agency, and others who are also involved in the production of official statistics (<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>). The Migration and the Border Police Departments within the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour are additionally relevant institutions.

The **Central Statistical Bureau (CSB)** is subordinated to the Ministry of Economics and acts as the principal executor and co-ordinator of the main statistical work. CSB receives monthly electronic data files including all registered arrivals and departures (excluding movements within municipality) from the Population Register. The CSB acquires primary statistical information from respondents such as enterprises, organizations, the population and households by means of regular surveys and one-off surveys. Information is increasingly drawn from the country's administrative registers, databases and information systems. Currently the CSB uses data from more than 95 administrative data sources such as the State Revenue Service, the Treasury, the Real Estate Cadastre Register of the State Land Service, the Population Register, the Bank of Latvia and the Financial and Market Commission as well as various ministries and institutions under their supervision (For more information see <http://www.csb.gov.lv/?lng=en>).

The **Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (OCMA)** ([www.pmlp.gov.lv](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv)) is a state institution under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior. For administrative purposes the OCMA maintains a database on all persons legally residing in Latvia. The main dataset is the Residents' Register which is a centralised population register. The maintenance of the Population Register includes entering persons' details into it and verifying the information submitted by those persons, as well as gathering the information required by the Population Register; maintaining and improving the automated account-keeping system of population; providing information to persons and administrative institutions in individual cases, and in legal procedures. The website is available in Latvian, Russian, and English <http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/en/>.

The main three datasets collecting information on migration issues that are managed by OCMA are:

1) *Residence Permit Registration Register* (since 1992) The OCMA maintains information on residence permit applications in the Residence Permit Application register that is not linked to Population Register. Aliens who intend to stay in Latvia for more than 90 days or want to be employed in Latvia must have a residence permit. The Latvian consulate abroad records the information onto a visa database. The date of entry or exit is recorded by the Border Guard in this database.

2) *Database on asylum seekers*. The Ministry of Interior maintains the administrative database on asylum applications and decisions for their internal purpose only. Information about asylum applications is recorded in the database of the Refugee Affairs Department (Asylum Law, [www.pmlp.gov.lv/en/documents/](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/en/documents/)).

3) *Database on acquisition of citizenship*. The information about citizens and acquisition of citizenship is recorded in the Population Register. Information on asylum seekers and refugees is provided to the CSB of Latvia by the Refugee Affairs Department of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs. The Refugee Affairs Department receives the information on refugees and asylum seekers from the State Border Guard. The CSB obtains data on the granting or withdrawal of citizenship of the Republic of Latvia from information provided by the Naturalisation Board of the Ministry of Justice. For its internal use the Ministry of Justice maintains an applications database. Latvian citizenship through naturalization can be granted to persons who have been registered in the Population Register.

## **B. Historical evolution of the national data collection system/ data collection practices and policies on data collection**

Population censuses were conducted in Latvia in 1920, 1925, 1930, 1935 1959, 1970, 1979 and in 1989 ([www.csb.gov.lv/csp/](http://www.csb.gov.lv/csp/)). The data from these population censuses were not available to residents, nor were available for general usage publications ([www.csb.lv/csp/content/?lng=en&cat=339](http://www.csb.lv/csp/content/?lng=en&cat=339)). The 2000 Population Census was the first population census since the renewal of the independence of Latvia. In this census part of the information was obtained by interviewers visiting residents at their homes, and part of it from administrative and statistical registers ([www.csb.lv/csp/content/?lng=en&cat=339](http://www.csb.lv/csp/content/?lng=en&cat=339)).

Regulation of migration processes in Latvia was started only after the renewal of its national independence. Apart from registering approximately 2.6 million people in the process of the registration Latvia's citizens had to be separated from persons who were not citizens of the country, as well as from persons to whom the law "On Residents Register" cannot be applied ([www.pmlp.gov.lv/en/par\\_pmlp/history/](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/en/par_pmlp/history/)).

The first major survey on Living Conditions in Latvia was the Norbalt survey. Norbalt 1 was carried out in 1994 and Norbalt 2 in 1999<sup>1</sup>. The project included concurrent surveys in the three Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. It focused on poverty and economic resources, housing and residential environment, education, labour market (unemployment, working conditions), social integration, health, crime and security. The main institution responsible for the implementation of the survey in Latvia was the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. The existence of comparable questions from both the 1994 and the 1999 surveys in all three countries facilitates comparative analyses across time and countries<sup>2</sup>.

### **C. Co-ordination and linking**

All state registers and databases containing personal data include also Personal Identification Numbers (PIN), which enable the linking of different administrative datasets. The use of an identity code allows for the recombination of information on a person existing in different registers. In practice, linking of data by Personal Identification Number is limited and authorities must have very strong arguments to claim this right. Generally, statistical datasets do not include personal identification information. The Population Register includes the main personal data (personal identification code, name, citizenship), address, person identification documents, children, marriage status etc. In November 2007, Latvia implemented national Visa Information System (VIS), which is used for co-ordination and linking of the data available.

The Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (CSB) acts as the principal executor and co-ordinator of the main statistical work. The CSB co-ordinates the flow of statistical information at the national level as well as monitoring the coherence of indicators to be included in state registers and other information systems, and the activities of ministries and other state institutions and local governments regarding matters of statistics (for more information visit <http://www.csb.gov.lv/?lng=en>). The primary statistical information from respondents (enterprises, organisations, inhabitants and their households) is obtained by way of regular (annual, quarterly, monthly) as well as one-off surveys. Information for the implementation of statistical surveys and data collection is increasingly drawn from the country's administrative registers, databases and information systems. The Integrated Statistical Data Management System (ISDMS) that was put into operation in 2002 (see [panda.hyperlink.cz/cestapdf/pdf05c1/zeila.pdf](http://panda.hyperlink.cz/cestapdf/pdf05c1/zeila.pdf)) is a centralized system where all data are stored. To date, 200 users are working with the system in CSB central office and more than 60 remote workstations in regional data collection and processing centres connected on-line.

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<sup>1</sup> The study was conducted by the Fafo Institute for Applied Social Science, the first Western research institution to carry out such survey in the former Easter Block. (<http://www.fafo.no/norbalt>).

<sup>2</sup> European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2003

## D. Concepts and definitions

The main concepts used in Latvia about international migration and migrant integration are the following:

*National identity and its type.* National identity is the connection of a person with a country which has issued, or is in the legal procedure of issuing, a passport or a document legally representing that person. The types of national identity recognised by the Latvia Residents Register Law are: 1) citizen; 2) recognized non-citizen; 3) stateless person; 4) refugee.

*Recognised non-citizen* – A person who is not a citizen of the reporting country, nor of any other country, but who has established links to that country which includes some but not all rights and obligations of full citizenship. ([http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-SF-08-108/EN/KS-SF-08-108-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-08-108/EN/KS-SF-08-108-EN.PDF)). Latvia can be distinguished from other European states with a large number of recognised non-citizens (almost 25 percent of residents are recognised non-citizens). Recognised non-citizens are citizens of the former USSR who reside in Latvia as well as those who are temporarily absent. According to the legislation of Latvia, former USSR citizens who did not have Latvian or any other citizenship, in 1995 received the status of Latvian non-citizens. Non-citizens have no voting rights, limited rights on pensions, etc. They are not allowed to work in government, police or the civil service.

*Immigrants* in Latvia are people that have arrived in Latvia for any reason after 1990. All people that have arrived in Latvia from other countries before 1990 are permanent residents and may be citizens or registered non-citizens.

*Citizenship.* According to the 1991 Decree on the Renewal of Latvian Citizenship, if citizenship was granted to those people who were citizens of Latvia before 1940, they and their descendants maintain citizenship.. The 1994 Citizenship law constitutes who are the citizens of Latvia and who are not, and determines the process of naturalization.

*Dual citizenship* - a case when a person is a citizen (or a subject) of more than one state. Citizens of Latvia and their descendants who either fled the country or were deported from Latvia in the period from June 17, 1940, to May 4, 1990, and have been naturalized abroad, could register as citizens of Latvia in the Population Register by July 1, 1995. The regulations thus allow for dual citizenship on the above terms. If, however, individuals register as citizens of Latvia after July 1, 1995, they have to renounce citizenship of their other country.

These concepts appear often in statistical datasets as well as in some administrative databases. Less often and mainly in statistical datasets, other concepts appear, such as: Mother tongue/ main language, gender, age, education level, country of birth of parents, country of residence 1 year before survey, year of arrival in Latvia, parents' place of birth, knowledge of other languages, religious affiliation, etc.

## **E. Availability of data**

### **E.1. Core demographic data on immigrants and migration control**

#### ***E.1.a. Population stocks and general demographic characteristics***

The Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (CSB) produces the largest part of the international migration statistics. It is possible to generate tables based on citizenship of persons (e.g. it gives numbers of foreigners from each country living in Latvia). The country of origin, either by country of birth or by country of citizenship, is available. The stock of residents with a foreign background can be examined by using statistics on naturalization. The statistics constitute data on the population's place of residence, age, native language, nationality and country of birth, as well as on the spouse, all the children and parents of an individual person, as well as on marriages or divorces. Sex, age, citizenship and country of previous/next residence are published in the demographic yearbook, as well as purpose of stay. No information about country of birth is available in the publication but as the data source (the Residents' Register) includes this information, the data on country of birth can be obtained.

#### **The residents Register**

The Residents' Register is the potential source for data on both population stocks and migration flows. The register records Latvian citizens, Latvian recognized non-citizens, as well as foreigners, stateless persons and refugees who have received permits for residing within the country. Population distribution by citizenship countries is based on information that is available from the Residents' Register. Immigration, emigration, citizenship, births, deaths, marriages, divorces etc. are registered with a date. The data on the international migration of the population is obtained by processing the data from arrival or departure records. These records also provide data on one's place of birth, sex, ethnicity, citizenship, education level, marital status, place of present and previous residence, reason for the migration and number of children who arrived or departed with their parents.

Most statistical surveys on persons include some questions concerning foreign background and could serve as good sources for research on migrants. Dedicated registers (Residence Permit Registration Register, Database on asylum applications and decisions) are generally not anticipated to be used for other purposes. Data on decisions about granting citizenship are based on the internal database of the Ministry of Interior. Asylum seekers who are granted asylum or are granted another status to remain in the country are recorded in the Residents' Register.

#### **Labour force surveys**

The Labour force surveys (LFS) provides data for statistics on migrants and migration. The organization responsible for planning and conducting the survey is CSB of Latvia. The first LFS took place in November 1995. The LFS provides information about the size of the population, including the economically active population broken down by various characteristics (sex, age, educational qualifications, place of residence, employment status, kind of work, kind of economic activity of the unit in which they work, its location and form of ownership, occupations



and professions, time worked, and so on), as well as on the economically inactive population and non-working jobseekers.

### **NORBALT Living Conditions Survey**

In 1994 and 1999 Norbalt I and II took place. Similar surveys are also being conducted in other countries (<http://www.fafo.no/norbalt/latvia.pdf>). The population register was used to draw a sample of addresses. Several indicators of socio-economic position were available in both survey years for all three countries: education, employment status, possession of a car and number of rooms in the dwelling.

### **Health behaviour among Latvian adult population Survey**

Health behaviour among the Latvian adult population survey is based on FINBALT Health Monitor methodology. The information was collected about health-related behaviours: demographic characteristics (sex, age, nationality, place of residence, marital status, education, occupation, income), health-related behaviors (smoking, nutrition, physical activity, alcohol consumption), behavioral change, participation in health promotional activities, issues related to health services and health policy, health status, self-assessment of health, and knowledge about various health aspects. Questions are available under:

[http://www.ktl.fi/attachments/suomi/julkaisut/julkaisusarja\\_b/2007/2007b27.pdf](http://www.ktl.fi/attachments/suomi/julkaisut/julkaisusarja_b/2007/2007b27.pdf).

### **Health Consumer trends survey, Latvian population**

The national population survey on the use of the Internet for health purposes collected data from a representative random sample, prestratified by age and gender. The survey was conducted in October-November 2005 and in April-May 2007. This study investigated patterns of health-related Internet use, its consequences, and citizens' expectations about their doctors' provision of e-health services. Information is provided for the whole population, including immigrants. However, no statistical data about migration issues was provided.

### **Census**

The last Population and Housing Census of Latvia was carried out on 31 March 2000. Information was obtained on the number, composition, occupation, sources of livelihood of the population, as well as their dwellings and other indicators. The census used the traditional method of enumeration combined with data from administrative and statistical registers. It was based on enumeration questionnaires. In addition, one third of the characteristics were gathered from the Population Register, building and tax register. The census covered persons registered in the Population Register and those persons who were inhabitants of Latvia. Children who had not yet been registered in the Population Register were also enumerated. People were not covered if they had no identity code, were without a registered residential address in Latvia, or were registered in the Population Register but had lived abroad for more than a year. Also, persons who had arrived in the country and intended to stay for less than a year, children born after the critical census moment and persons who had died before the critical moment, were not recorded during the 2000 Census. Part of the information was obtained from the Population Register and from the information system of State Revenue Service. Sex, age, country of birth, and country of citizenship were not asked in the census questionnaire. However, the information is collected through the PIN number in the Population register.

## **Tax Register**

Persons are registered in the Register of VAT taxable persons upon the following conditions: naturalised persons according to the declared place of residence and legal persons according to the legal address. Persons from an EU member state or persons not registered in the territory of the EU submitting the registration application should present a document confirming the identity of the person, such as a driver's license. If the registration application is signed and submitted by an authorized person, this person should also submit the corresponding authorization. However, this data is not accessible for public use.

Sex, age, citizenship and country of previous/next residence are published in the demographic yearbook, as well as the purpose of the stay. No information about country of birth is available in the publication but as the data source (the Residents Register) includes this information, the data on country of birth are available.

### ***E.1.b Migration flows***

Compared to other Eastern European countries, Latvia has not yet become a target country for immigrants, though there was a flow of immigrants after the restoration of Latvia's independence. This flow predominantly consisted of a high percentage of repatriate citizens (returnees) who returned to Latvia when independence was restored. Most of those who arrived in Latvia during the Soviet period have now been naturalised. The migration trends in the Republic of Latvia four years after its accession to the European Union have not changed significantly, and the number of immigrants has not increased considerably (<http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/ece/ces/2008/36.e.pdf>).

In migration statistics the age, gender, marital status, native language, country of birth, region of arrival and departure of migrants are included. The data describe the situation on the day of the move. Data are available on the country of departure and arrival for immigration and emigration. International migration indicators are produced by CSB of Latvia. The Residents' Register is the main data source for producing international migration statistics, as the Residents' Register accumulates data on the people who have emigrated/immigrated by the place of residents, i.e. people who have declared their emigration/immigration. The data that are used from this database include personal ID number (for identification), sex, citizenship, family status, future/former place of residence, date of departure/arrival. Data on emigrants and immigrants are accumulating continually and are managed in the demographic statistics database.

### ***E.1.c Legal Status of immigrants***

The legal status of foreigners, the procedure of their arrival and departure, residing and dwelling, granting of asylum, integration and naturalization as well as other important issues are regulated by the Law "On Seekers for Asylum and Refugees in the Republic of Latvia" and Law "On the Status of Former USSR Citizens Who are not Citizens of Latvia or Any Other State" (2004). The Aliens Register may be used

as a data source for the legal status of immigrants. The Register allows for the possibility of compiling statistics on applications and decisions on asylum and statistics on residence permits, grouped according to the grounds for the application. The Aliens Register includes the following personal data: citizenship, place of birth, place of residence, civil status (family circumstances and the date of their changing); ethnic nationality and personal document data. The Residents' Register contains information on residence permits.

## **E.2. Measuring integration, discrimination and diversity**

Two broad types of data source relevant for analyzing integration are available in Latvia: administrative datasets (notably official employment statistics & statistics of the registered unemployed), official statistical datasets (notably the census). These data will only include immigrants who are registered as residents in Latvia and therefore have entered Latvia legally. Immigrants are covered in the areas of employment, housing and residential patterns, family and household, and crime, in the same way as people of Latvian origin. However the relevant registers are all based on administrative data and therefore areas such as jobs in the black economy and untaxed income are not covered.

Data that may be used for analysing integration, discrimination and diversity are collected by many interview surveys, including censuses. Questions about socio-economic characteristics of persons and households are included in the census and all social surveys. Regular statistical surveys (Labour Force Survey) collect detailed data on the socio-economic situation of the population and, in particular, the most detailed data on employment. Detailed data on education, household composition and housing patterns are also available. In parallel, migration-related variables have been included in the health interview survey. Thus, data could be found for measuring and analysing integration, discrimination and diversity.

### ***E.2.a Employment***

The CBS of Latvia provides annual data on employment statistics by region on the population's economic activity and employment. The data on employment statistics is mainly combined from administrative registers and statistical data files. The employment data describe the main type of activity of the population, industrial distribution, occupational status, number of workplaces, location of workplaces, educational level and income of the population. The CBS of Latvia is conducting employment and unemployment sample surveys. The Labour force surveys (LFS) is the primary source for employment statistics. Topics covered are: employment, unemployment, underemployment, hours of work, wages, income, informal sector employment, duration of employment and unemployment, discouraged and occasional workers, industry, occupation, status in employment, education/qualification skills, second jobs. Overall, the LFS is not a good source for statistics on migrants and migration. The survey results are focused on labour force, employment and unemployment.

### ***E.2.b Housing and residential patterns***

The CBS of Latvia produces housing statistics through linking building and dwelling stock statistics with data on permanent residents. The statistics on household-dwelling units and housing conditions are produced annually. Housing conditions are described by type of building, number of rooms and equipment of dwelling, as well as by structure and stage in life of the household-dwelling unit and age of its members. There are also statistics concerning the living conditions of different population groups. Data from surveys can be used for analysis related to housing conditions of different groups of the population.

### ***E.2.c Social and living conditions***

The CBS of Latvia produces statistical information characterising the demographic development of the country as well as comprehensive data on births, deaths and causes of deaths, marriages, divorces and migration. Data on social and living conditions include statistics concerning different population groups. Demographic indicators are presented each year in the Demographic Yearbook. Data are presented on the national level, by urban and rural areas, and are the main indicators.

### ***E.2.d Political participation***

The CBS of Latvia produces political participation related data on the results of general elections, persons entitled to vote, voting, candidates and the elected. These statistics themselves do not include any migration related variables. The Residents' Register establishes a register of eligible voters based on the Residents' Register. In this context, it is possible to compile migration related statistics on political participation.

This situation, which was only clarified after an initial period of complete legal uncertainty, implies that Latvia has to deal with a large number of stateless persons, called 'non-citizens' or 'aliens'. The legal status of non-citizens (they could be identified in the registers) is based on the 'Law on the Status of Former USSR Citizens' (<http://www.humanrights.lv>). Without voting rights, the majority of Russian-speakers in Latvia had little opportunity to influence the formulation of a restrictive linguistic legislation, including language requirements for employment and the mandatory use of the state language in various areas.

## **F. Accessibility of data**

General aggregate statistics are available at the website of the CBS of Latvia. The Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia is a central independent government statistical agency. The website provides a history of statistical development in Latvia with administrative and legal details of the current structure. There are basic socio-economic data for a range of aspects of the national economy with methodological

information. There are also details of their customised information compilation services and charges. The Service provides the possibility to choose variables and to process the data in different forms. Preliminary statistics are used for producing monthly and annual statistical information, and they are provided to users at their own request. Statistical information about international migration (including data on sex, age, citizenship and country of previous or next residence) is published in statistical publications. Most registers maintained by different Latvian government departments, as well as the statistics produced by the police, are not directly available.

## **G. Quality and scope of data collection.**

The most significant share of statistics is included in Official Statistics, e.g., produced by CBS of Latvia. Statistics on migration flows on citizens and aliens are based on registration of place of residence (arrivals from and departures abroad) in the Residents' Register. Official statistics in Latvia cover only one type of international migration, namely immigration for permanent settlement. However, there has been a steady decline in the numbers of immigrants.

The coverage and reliability of data on migration events as well as population stock data by characteristics relevant to migration in the Residents Register are considered to be generally low. Information about emigration is recorded in a register only when a person decides to inform the authorities about his/her new place of residence. Even if the registration of place of residence is obligatory, the rules are not clear concerning the period of residence that has to be submitted. It is obvious that many emigrations of nationals are not recorded, nor is their return from abroad.

This is valid also in cases of immigration and emigration of citizens of other EU Member States. Data on migrations of foreigners for non-EU countries are presumably better recorded, as this information is linked to residence permits. Data on previous place of residence may be largely missing from the Population Register and it needs careful analysis of several consequent records to identify the latest international immigrations.

Analysis of the available data shows that a sufficient level of international comparability of migration statistics has not yet been reached. According to the CSB of Latvia, one of the essential reasons for this is deviation from main definitions, particularly in the length of stay/residence included in the United Nations Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration (<http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/ece/ces/2008/36.e.pdf>).

## **H. Conclusions – Recommendations**

Overall, statistical data on migrants and migration is rather limited. The latter may be related to at least two reasons: a) an absence of large numbers of new immigrants into Latvia and b) the naturalisation of immigrants who arrived in the country during

the Soviet period. The present analysis shows that there is no comprehensive immigration database as such in Latvia. Information and statistics on migration have to be drawn from different types of databases. At the same time, there are discrepancies in data supply as different institutions use different definitions and/or cover different target groups. For research purposes, the most reliable data on migrants and migration is to be taken from administrative datasets. Survey data (such as the LFS) has limited coverage of immigrants.

It is important for policy makers who use statistical data to make sure that they understand the meaning of the term 'non-nationals'. An improvement of migration statistics is recommended, including an increase in both quality and international comparability of data.

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