

Country Profile - Latvia

Job market

What are my chances of getting a job?

Latvia suffered during the recent economic downturn but there has been a slow improvement since 2010. Although there has been a decrease in unemployment, the labour market is still to recover fully. Low and medium-skilled workers appear to be more in demand than those highly skilled.

- **Typical problems encountered:** unemployment remains high meaning competition for jobs will be tough against qualified local professionals. The negative effect on the labour market is still greater than its recovery and it may be difficult to find vacancies at graduate level.
- **How to improve your chances:** employers are looking for workers with flexibility and multiple skill sets so they may move between roles if necessary. Competencies that are useful include finance and accountancy skills, sales and marketing, knowledge of foreign languages, IT skills, good communication and time management skills and knowledge of social networking. The majority of the jobs are based in the capital city of Riga so jobseekers should make that their base.
- **Language requirements:** a good command of Latvian is typically required by employers as this is the official language. Russian is also widely spoken while English is used for international communication.

Where can I work?

- **Major industries:** processed foods, wood products, textiles, processed metals, transit, synthetic fibres, electronics.
- **Recent growth areas:** there is a growing demand in the construction, sales and processing sectors and in medium-skilled occupations.
- **Industries in decline:** there has been a decline in employment in the public services sector and this is forecast to continue.
- **Shortage occupations:** jobs may be found in the following sectors: processing industry; wholesale and retail trade; transport and warehousing; professional, scientific, information and communication services; accommodation and catering. The highest number of vacancies is for qualified workers and craftsmen.
- **Major companies:** Grindex Pharmaceuticals, Phillip Morris International, KPMG, Latvenergo (utilities), Lattelecom (IT and telecommunications), Tele2 (telecommunications), AirBaltic (national airline).
- **Search for more companies:** the [Latvian Investment and Development Agency \(LIDA\)](#) can supply details on the economy and business opportunities. [British Chamber of Commerce in Latvia](#) has a list of British companies under 'corporate members'. [Europages](#) is a useful directory and [Kompass](#) is a worldwide business directory searchable by country and product/service.
- **Major cities:** Riga (capital and largest), Daugavpils, Liepaja. Other than teaching English it is unlikely that a non-Latvian graduate will find work anywhere but Riga.

What's it like working in Latvia?

- **Average working hours:** a working day cannot exceed eight hours while a normal working week is 40 hours. Overtime is permitted if agreed by both employer and employee.
 - **Holidays:** employees are entitled to a minimum of four weeks of paid leave and 13 public holidays a year.
 - **Tax rates:** income from paid work is subject to social insurance contributions at a rate of 11% by the employee. Private income tax is at a rate of 25%.
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Applying for jobs

As some jobs are advertised online it is possible to apply for work while still in the UK. Typical application methods include a CV and covering letter, with some larger companies using application forms. It is also possible to send speculative applications which state the type of work you are looking for and why you are interested in working for that particular company.

It is most likely that Latvian employers will expect your application to be Latvian as most jobs require some knowledge of the language. Russian, German and English may also be used in employment so check job advertisements carefully for language requirements.

CVs are typically similar to those used in the UK. You should include your personal details (name, address and other contact details), education and training, and employment history; which should all be in reverse chronological order. You can also include any other specific skills and interests you have that relate to the job. Try to include at least two references in the CV and state their relationship to you. Ensure that the CV is no longer than two sides of A4.

Your CV and covering letter should be tailored to each specific job that you apply for. Make sure your covering letter explains why you are applying for the role and how your experience and skills match up to the job requirements.

It is advisable to attach copies of educational certificates and qualifications to your application. Do not send originals, if these are requested, obtain certified copies.

Interviews are also similar to those carried out in the UK. Generally, employers interview either one-to-one or with a panel. International employers will use their normal selection procedures, which may include aptitude tests and assessment centres.

Latvian employers are extremely keen on knowing what you can bring to the company. Research a company before attending an interview, including the location of its European headquarters and its main product/work. Consider the challenges of an Eastern European economy.

Will my UK qualifications be recognised?

There are systems in place across the EU to help with the recognition of qualifications from the EU member states. Some professions have their own regulations in specific countries, but in general many qualifications should be easily comparable.

The [European Qualifications Framework \(EQF\)](#) helps to compare and explain national qualifications systems and the various levels in different countries.

You can also get help with comparing your professional, vocational or technical qualifications from [ENIC-NARIC](#). There are centres in all EU member states which help in the process of recognising qualifications.

[Europass](#) can also help with the comparison of your qualifications in Latvia. It provides five documents that enable international employers to understand your subjects of study, training and work experience. It also records non-formal learning and language skills.

Do I still need to pay UK tax and National Insurance?

If you are planning to live and work in Latvia, check your UK tax and National Insurance position with [HM Revenue & Customs \(HMRC\)](#) to ensure that you are not losing any UK pension rights.

Vacancy sources

Job websites

- [Academic Jobs EU](#)
- [EURES](#) - European job mobility portal maintained by the European Commission. It provides information about job vacancies, living and working conditions and labour markets in Latvia, as well as a CV-posting service for jobseekers.
- [Tiptopjob.com](#) - lists jobs by sector and location.

Recruitment agencies

- [Amrop](#) - recruitment agency that places executives, mid-level managers and specialists.
- [CV Online - Latvia](#) - has vacancies and CV-posting service, in Latvian and English.
- [Euro-CIETT](#) - the European Confederation of Private Employment Agencies. A regulatory body for employment agencies; has a directory of members.
- [Prime Recruitment](#) - vacancies and careers information, in English.
- [Recruitment and Employment Confederation \(REC\)](#) - has a directory of members which may be useful as some UK-based employment agencies deal with international vacancies or have branches abroad, including in Latvia.
- [Working Day - Latvia](#) - vacancies and CV-posting service, in Latvian.

Newspapers

- [Baltic Times](#) - an English language publication.
- [Dienas Bizness](#) - in Latvian.
- [Latvijas Avize](#) - in Latvian.
- [Kidon Media-Link](#) lists links to newspapers and news sources in Latvia.

Other sources

- The [State Employment Agency \(NVA\)](#) provides support to the unemployed and jobseekers. Vacancies are available on the NVA database (in Latvian). Also has a facility to upload your CV.

- There is a demand for English Language teachers, especially in the capital, Riga, but it is important to check pay and conditions carefully since they vary between schools. Generally, pay is fairly low. Three of the most well-known schools are: [International House Riga](#), [R&V Language Centre](#) and [The International School of Latvia](#).

Hidden vacancies

Finding work through personal contacts is common in Latvia. Details on where to find lists of companies for speculative applications can be found in the job market section.

Work experience

Work placements and internships

Course-related placements may be available for undergraduates of science, engineering, technology and applied arts courses with [IAESTE \(International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience\)](#). Placements tend to start in the summer and last from four weeks up to one year.

Professional internships in management, technology, education and development are available from 6 weeks to 18 months through [AIESEC \(Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales\)](#).

You can search for various placements in Latvia on [Europlacement](#). Many international companies may also offer internships and it is worth looking at their individual websites.

Exchange programmes

Vocational training exchanges and work placements with partner organisations in other countries are offered by the [Leonardo da Vinci Programme](#). Contact your institution's international office or careers service for more information.

Volunteering

Opportunities are limited and are likely to be in teaching English (see the vacancy sources section) and in voluntary projects.

There are several organisations that offer voluntary work programmes in Latvia, see [The European Voluntary Service](#) and [Anywork Anywhere - Latvia](#) for details. Also check out your university careers service as they may have sources of information, such as databases on volunteering opportunities.

Casual work and short-term opportunities

It may be difficult to find casual work in Latvia, but if available it is likely to be in bars, restaurants, shops, childcare and cleaning.

Gap year opportunities

It may be possible to spend a gap year in Latvia teaching English as a foreign language. See [iGapyear](#) for further opportunities.

Postgraduate study

How does the higher education system work?

The structure of the higher education system in Latvia is similar to that of the UK. Latvia has signed the Bologna Process Declaration and is part of the [European Higher Education Area \(EHEA\)](#) which works to standardise HE qualifications across the member countries. This means that Latvia has the three-cycle degree system of Bachelors, Masters and Doctorate.

The [Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia](#) sets educational standards in the country and contains further information on higher education in Latvia.

What courses are available?

Academic programmes and professional study programmes are available in Latvia at Masters level. While academic programmes focus on theoretical knowledge and skills, the professional programmes prepare students for vocational activities. Both tend to last for one to two years if you already hold a Bachelors degree.

It is also possible to complete a Doctoral degree in Latvia but you must first have obtained a Masters level qualification. As with doctoral degrees in the UK you must complete a thesis and publically defend it.

Courses are available in English but you will need to check with individual institutions to find out what is exactly available.

Where can I study?

There are 37 public institutions of higher education and 21 higher education institutions established by legal bodies. Of these, 6 are universities, 26 are state institutions and 26 are colleges. The universities are:

- [Daugavpils University](#)
- [Latvia University of Agriculture](#)
- [University of Latvia](#)
- [Liepaja University](#)
- [Riga Stradins University](#)
- [Riga Technical University](#)

For a full list of higher education institutions in Latvia, see the [Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre \(HEQEC\)](#).

Applying for postgraduate study

International students who wish to enter postgraduate courses in Latvia must have completed a Bachelors degree and will need to show evidence of this in their application.

Applications are made directly to the higher education institution and details can usually be found on the institution's website. Some may use online application forms and an

application fee may also have to be paid. Closing dates for applications can vary between universities so check directly with the institution. The academic year runs from September to June.

EU students do not require a visa in order to study in Latvia.

Fees and scholarships

Fees vary depending on the institution and the course taken. You should contact the university directly to find out how much you would have to pay.

Details on the cost of living for students in Latvia are available from [Study in Latvia](#).

Students from the European Union can apply for funding support through [Erasmus Mundus](#) which offers scholarships for joint Masters and Doctorates. The [Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia](#) and individual universities may also offer sponsorships or grants. Contact them individually to find out more.

Are there any exchange programmes?

UK students on undergraduate degree programmes or postgraduate Masters and some PhD programmes may be interested in spending time studying in Latvia through [Erasmus](#). This programme is open to all subject areas, but check with your institution's Erasmus coordinator first (usually based in the international office) to see which countries they have links with and in what subject areas. [Erasmus Intensive Language Courses \(EILC\)](#) are available for students who have a placement in Latvia.

Will my qualification be recognised in the UK?

Latvia is a member of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and as such it has adopted the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), which means certain credits are given to subjects and courses to make them easily comparable across the EU. If you want further help with comparing international qualifications, contact [UK NARIC \(National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom\)](#), which gives information and advice on vocational, academic and professional qualifications from over 180 countries.

Visa and travel information

Visa requirements and applications

Citizens from EU countries do not need a visa to enter or work in Latvia. If you wish to stay in Latvia for a period of longer than 90 days within a six month period (counting from the day of entry) you need to apply for a residence permit. This is issued by the [Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs in Latvia \(OCMA\)](#) and can also be applied for through the [Embassy of Latvia in London](#).

If you are from a non-EU country, contact the Latvian embassy in the country where you are currently residing for information on whether you require a visa or work permit. If you are living in the UK, go to the Embassy of Latvia in London. You might also find it helpful to contact your ministry of foreign affairs (or your own embassy if you are not living in

your home country) to ask whether there are any issues to be taken into account when considering working in Latvia.

Permanent residency

Temporary residence permits are issued for a period of time from one to five years (depending on the reason of application) and can be prolonged after they expire. Only after five years of residency can you apply for a permanent residency permit.

Help in an emergency

UK citizens can get help in an emergency from the [British Embassy Latvia](#). It offers a range of services including issuing emergency travel documents, offering help if you've been the victim of a crime or if you get ill or injured and has details of local services. The European emergency number 112 can be used in Latvia for ambulances, fire brigade and police. The telephone number for the British Embassy in Latvia is +371 6777 4700.

Travel advice

You should always check whether there are any travel restrictions or warnings in place for the country you wish to visit. Find the latest travel advice and a traveller's checklist on the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office \(FCO\)](#) website.

Country overview

Geography

- **Full country name:** The Republic of Latvia.
- **Population:** 2.2 million.
- **Border countries:** Estonia to the north, Russia and Belarus to the east, Lithuania to the south and the Baltic Sea to the west.
- **Climate:** there is a tendency for summers to be wet towards the end. Winters are cold due to winds from Siberia.
- **Terrain:** the country is mostly flat with forests and a large number of lakes in the southeast.
- **Natural hazards:** there are no major natural hazards, but snow, ice and fog can pose risks to motorists and pedestrians during winter months.

Living in Latvia

- **Cost of living:** the average wage in Latvia is not competitive in comparison to the rest of Europe. The average monthly amount for goods and services for one person is €247. The average amount spent on rent and utilities is 30-40% of the monthly wage. Average consumer prices in Latvia do not differ significantly from other European countries.
- **Internet domain:** .lv
- **Health:** if you are visiting Latvia you should make sure you have a [European Health Insurance Card \(EHIC\)](#). This entitles you to state provided medical treatment. Any treatment provided is on the same terms as Latvian nationals, i.e. if a Latvian national has to pay a fee for treatment, you will also have to pay a fee. It

is important that you also have travel insurance as the EHIC does not cover ongoing medical treatment or non-urgent treatment.

- **Laws and customs:** drinking alcohol in public is forbidden. Possession of even small amounts of drugs can lead to lengthy pre-trial detention and possibly a custodial sentence. It is advisable that you carry some form of identification with you at all times, e.g. a photocopy of your passport.

Economy and finance

- **Currency:** the lat (LVL).
- **Type of economy:** Western, capitalist.
- **Health of economy:** Latvia struggled during the global financial crisis and this resulted in the Latvian government taking a €7.5billion loan from the IMF. Structural reforms were also taken to help stabilise the economy. Exports and industrial production picked up and GDP recorded its first growth for two years in 2010. The fiscal deficit has been reduced and the aim is to reduce it further to 3% of GDP in order to meet Latvia's goal of joining the Euro in 2014.
- **Unemployment rate:** 11.7% (EURES, 2012).
- **Main exports:** timber and wood products, food products, metals, machinery and equipment, textiles.

Culture

- **People:** Latvians, 59%; Russians, 27%; remainder is made up of other ethnic groups.
- **Major religion:** Lutheran, 20%; Orthodox, 15%; other Christian, 1%.
- **History:** see [BBC Timeline: Latvia](#).

Politics

- **Type of government:** parliamentary democracy.
- **Major political parties:** Unity, Zatlers Reform Party, National Alliance, Harmony Centre, Union of Greens and Farmers.

More information

- [Embassy of Latvia in London](#)
- [BBC Country Profile - Latvia](#)
- [The World Factbook](#)
- [XE Universal Currency Converter](#)

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