

Country profile prepared for the  
*Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2007*  
*Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education*

# **Latvia**

## **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes**

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## LATVIA

### Early Childhood Education and Care (ECCE) programs

#### **A. GENERAL INFORMATION, STATISTICS AND INDICATORS**

##### **Starting age of compulsory education (if applicable):**

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) the compulsory education age range is 7-15 years. (Completion of basic education until the age of 18 shall be compulsory).

#### **1. ISCED 0 PROGRAMS (USUALLY, PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION)**

(ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education)

##### **1.1. National definition of ISCED 0 programs:**

Pre-primary education (kindergarten)

##### **1.2. Normative age group(s) covered by ISCED 0 programs:**

In principle, 3-6 years of age. According to the General Education Law, the pre-school education programme shall be completed by children up to 7 years of age. The programme may be prolonged or reduced by one year depending on the state of health and psychological preparedness of the student, in conformity with the wishes of the parents and the opinion of the family doctor.

##### **1.3. ISCED 0 programs: statistics and indicators** (*source: UIS*)

###### *1.3.1. Enrolment:*

	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Year</b>
Gross enrolment ratio (GER)	79.3	2003/04
Net enrolment ratio	72.0	2002/03
Percentage of children entering primary education with previous preschool experience	<i>Not available</i>	

*Note:* According to the Ministry of Education and Science, in 2005/06 the GER for the age group 2-7 years is 77% (98% in the case of the age group 5 and 6 years).

1.3.2. *Enrolment ratio by age group (percentage, also including the first years of primary education when applicable):*

Less than 3 years of age	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 6	Age 7
0.0	66.6	62.2	80.2	77.4 8.0(*)	7.0 78.2(**)

UIS estimation. (\*) Enrolled in primary education. (\*\*) Primary education enrolment ratio.

*Note:* For 2005, the figures are as follows: age 2 = 45.3%; age 3 = 68.3%; age 4 = 72.3 %; age 5 = 98.8%; age 6 = 98%; age 7(8) = 7.6%. (*Source:* Ministry of Education and Science).

1.3.3. *Teachers, 2003/04:*

Total number of teachers	Of whom female (%)	Percentage of trained teachers (all)	Percentage of trained teachers (males)	Percentage of trained teachers (females)
5,757	99.7	...	...	...

(...) Not available.

*Note:* According to the Ministry of Education and Science, in 2005 the total number of staff is 9,600.

1.3.4. *Funding: Not available*

	Percentage
Public current expenditure per pupil as percentage of the Gross National Product per capita	...

1.3.5. *Main source(s) of financing:*

In preschools founded by the municipality parents should pay a fee and the municipalities cover the remaining costs. Teachers of 5- and 5-year-olds receive a salary from the state budget.

## **2. OTHER ECCE PROGRAMS**

*(Generally preceding ISCED 0 programs)*

## **2.1. National definition of other ECCE programs:**

### ***Pre-school education programme***

The programme of pre-school education consists of two parts: the group of developmental tasks and the other group of up-bringing tasks. But the programme content is orientated to the child's acquirement of the skills and abilities of his activity through the game.

The programme reveals all the possible stages of the child's development and its directions:

- social habits and mental development (emotions and feelings, attention, sensation and perception, thinking, memory, imagination);
- rules of communication (formation of everyday habits);
- acquaintance with nature phenomena;
- speech development (rules of articulation, vocabulary stimulation and enrichment: nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, accuracy, ability to relate);
- training the hand for writing with handicraft etc.;
- elementary reading and literature;
- folklore and fiction;
- mathematical notions (number and calculation, quantity, orientation in time and space, geometrical figures and shapes, creation of visual image of surrounding world, speech);
- modeling;
- applique;
- drawing (colours);
- construction/design;
- handicraft (work with fabric, needle, thread and wooden yarn, natural materials, paraffin, wire, laying the table, cooking);
- physical training (generally developing exercises, walking, race, jumps, throwing, rolling and catching the ball, crawling, climbing, outdoor games);
- musical education (singing, listening to music, musical instruments of rhythm, musically rhythmic motions).

The content of every direction is considered to be of three levels.

These stages or levels are compared both qualitatively and quantitatively. The child masters the ideas and skills gradually, using his experience in the purposefully independent activity. The task of pre-school education is training that means to practice oneself in social behavior, to find decisions in everyday situations which might appear and the special ones being created to solve certain problems. It is exactly in the activity where the child obtains the varied roles of being a player or a story-teller.

The activity's many-sidedness at the pre-school stage gives only the first ideas and promotes the interests' development and elementary skills mastering. The essential condition here is the child's energetic activity, the result of which is his ability to make a decision (reach the conclusion). The adults should learn to realize that there isn't only one correct answer. The answer is always connected with the personal experience, but the last one is individual. Pre-school educational programme can't foresee the definite content, the basis of its selection according to the conditions of the pre-school institution is the pre-school teacher's professional skills.

For illustration let us apply this statement to the part “Geometrical figures and shapes” – as one of the developmental tasks:

- I level – acquaintance with flat shapes – circle, quadrangle, triangle;
- II level – to practice classifying geometrical figures according to one of the offered elements, acquaintance with oval shape;
- III level – encourage children to arrange geometrical shapes according to two and more indications; to develop ability to divide geometrical figures, to name the newly formed ones, to perfect skill to make a whole out of several geometrical elements.

Another example proving levels to be the stages in the programme content might be found in the “Elementary Reading” section – as one of up-bringing tasks:

- I level – to develop the interest to the book, to acquire the rules of its usage (the proper place, turning the pages over), to draw attention to the books which should be repaired;
- II level – to encourage children to follow the rules of using the books, to notice independently the ones which need to be repaired and repair them either on their own or with adults’ assistance;
- III level – to encourage children to use the books properly, according to generally accepted rules, repair the books without assistance.

The other tasks is connecting with initiating with letters in three levels and so on.

The formation of the child’s personality corresponding to the modern social requirements can be carried out under the following essential circumstances: integration of the developmental and up-bringing forces which improves the child’s personality broadening and enriching his practical activity.

## **2.2. Normative age group(s) covered by other ECCE programs:**

*Not available*

## **2.3. Estimate number of children covered by other ECCE programs:**

*Not available*

## **B. BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONCERNING ECCE PROGRAMS (INCLUDING ISCED 0)**

### **3.1. Legislation concerning ECCE:**

Pre-school education for children less than 7 years of age is a part of general education. Pre-school education for 5-6-year-olds is compulsory since 2002.

### **3.2. Official body/bodies in charge of supervision or coordination:**

*Not available*

### **3.3. Other entities involved in the provision (e.g. municipalities, local governments) and main types of providers (e.g. public, private, mixed, community-based, etc.):**

The State administers material aids, provides support for families with three or more children, and provides opportunities to place children in kindergartens partially covering boarding costs.

Pre-school education programmes are implemented by various establishments (*pirmsskolas izglitibas iestade/pirmsskolas izglitibas konsultatvais centrs/pirmsskolas izglitibas grupas pie skolam*) as well as by families, receiving a methodical support from the municipality-established advisory centers for preschool education. Kindergartens are established and maintained by local governments, private organizations and private persons. Kindergartens, particularly in rural areas, also serve as consultative educational centre for residents in matters of childcare and education for pre-school age children. Parents who care for their children at home have the opportunity to take them to play groups for a couple of hours per day, where they are prepared for learning at school under the supervision of experienced pedagogues.

Public sector institutions require that parents make a financial contribution to cover the cost of meals and managing expenses, but access to educational activities is free of charge. The fee in the private sector institutions covers the full costs of the programme, except for the salaries of the pedagogues who are teaching five- and six-year-olds.

### **3.4. Type of personnel involved:**

Teachers, methodologists, psychologists, teachers' assistants, medical personnel.

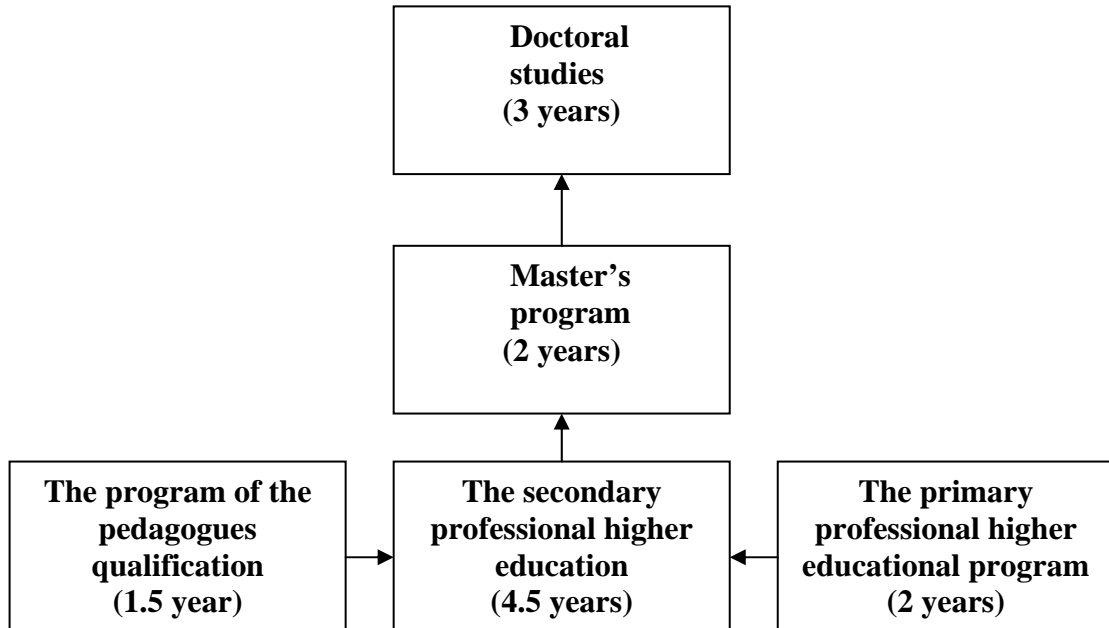
### **3.5. Type of staff training (requirements):**

Kindergarten instructors hold secondary and higher education diplomas.

On 3 October 2000, the Latvian Council of the Ministers decided that at the pre-school level are allowed to work only persons who have completed professional higher education. The required education can be achieved through the following educational programs:

- professional higher education, which gives the possibility for further academic studies at the post-graduate level;
- first-level professional higher education, leading to the award of the pre-school pedagogue's qualification.
- pre-school teacher's study program.

Schematically this can be represented as follows:



*The system of pre-school teachers training*

### **3.6. Recent national policies and reforms:**

In 2002 the implementation of compulsory preparation of five- and six-year-old children for the acquisition of basic education, provided by the Education Law, was started. The normative basis was established, requirements for education and qualification of pedagogues were defined.

In order to implement pre-school education programmes, the following activities have been carried out: a sample of pre-school education programmes has been developed, a list of compulsory documentation and material basis has been provided, an instruction for registration and enrolment of five- and six-year-old children in pre-school education programme has been developed. Children, whose native language is not Latvian, have an opportunity to start acquiring the Latvian language already in a pre-school institution. There are Latvian, Russian, Estonian, Jewish and Polish groups in pre-school institutions in Latvia, where the respective language is used as a language of instruction. Special education programmes are also implemented in pre-school education.

### **3.7. Efforts targeted at vulnerable or disadvantaged children:**

Children with posture, speech, sight or hearing defects, impaired mental development, or tuberculosis infection have the opportunity to attend special groups where they receive the attention of highly qualified specialists, pedagogues, and doctors.

### **3.8. Special projects/programmes aiming at expanding or improving ECCE:**

*Not available*

### **3.9. Information concerning the curriculum (if applicable) or the contents of ECCE programs**

The Ministry of Education and Science sets up curricula for pre-school education as guidelines of contents for pre-school education.

#### *3.9.1. Objectives and aims:*

The main aim of pre-school education is to prepare children for basic education. Main goals of the pre-school education curriculum are:

- to advance the development of mental, physical and social abilities and to firm the understanding of general processes of nature and society, to build up moral and ethical values;
- to ensure development of initiative, inquisitive, independent and creative activities;
- to develop communication and cooperation skills;
- to favour formation of the harmonic personality of the child;
- to form an understanding of belonging to the State of Latvia and ensure possibility to learn about Latvia and values of democracy.

#### *3.9.2. Learning areas and teaching-learning methods:*

The educational programme of pre-school schooling covers:

- Personality development
- Socio-affective and physical development
- Development of intellectual skills
- Development of creativity
- Adaptation of school life
- Practice of the state language.

The language of instruction in kindergartens may be Latvian, Russian, Polish, etc., according to parents' wishes. All kindergartens also provide instruction in the State language (Latvian). The programme of pre-school education includes getting acquainted with environment and social life, learning of the native and the state language and literature, formation of mathematical notions. The programme plan of subjects also includes drawing, needlework, construction, sport and music. Besides learning, children also spend time outside taking walks and playing. Children in full time pre-school are provided with meals during a day and a possibility to take a nap.

Every pre-school teacher is responsible for drawing a programme of activities for their own group of children according to the programmes defined and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science.

#### *3.9.3. Average number of hours per week and average amount of weeks per year:*

The total duration of lessons per day for preschool children should not exceed:

- 15 minutes for children up to 2 years;
- 25 minutes for children from 3 to 4 years of age;
- 30 minutes for children from 4 to 5 years of age;
- 45 minutes for children from 5 to 6 years of age;
- 120 minutes for children from 5 to 7 years of age.

Working schedules of preschool groups vary depending on the municipality (usually 12 hours per day; other schemes are available, ranging from 6 to 10 hours or 24 hours in the case boarding schools).

### **3.10. Any other relevant and pertinent information**

*Not available*

[*Main sources: National Report on the Development of Education, 2004. EURYDICE Website, Last updated: 2005. EURYBASE 2002/03.*]

**C. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION REGARDING ECCE (TO BE COMPILED IN COLLABORATION WITH UNICEF OFFICES WHERE POSSIBLE)**

**4.1. Parenting programmes are usually addressed to parents and families of children less than 6 years of age. Please provide information about any parenting programmes in your country according to the table below:**

Type of programme	Yes or No (note for each programme)	Please estimate the number of beneficiaries (if possible)
Parenting education through early learning centres and child care centres		
As component of health and nutrition programmes, such as information about child development included in health and nutrition visits		
Parent groups that meet to discuss issues of their young children, including health, nutritional status, and development		
As component of adolescent, livelihood or literacy programmes		
Media broadcast, such as <i>Sesame Street</i> , with media for and with children		
Other (please specify)	Yes	7 preschool educational advisory centers at the level of local governments (municipalities)

**Are any of these programmes targeted specifically toward the vulnerable, poor, disadvantaged or excluded? If so, which ones? (Please provide/attach any additional and relevant information if available).**

Not available

**4.2. Is there a national-level system for monitoring children's development or school readiness prior to entering primary school?**

*Not available*

**4.3. Is there a policy on early childhood (ECCE, ECD, etc.) that has been accepted? If not, is there one under development?**

In principle, this aspect is covered by the General Education Law.

*[Information revised by the Ministry of Education and Science, December 2005.]*