

WORKPLACE INTEGRATION

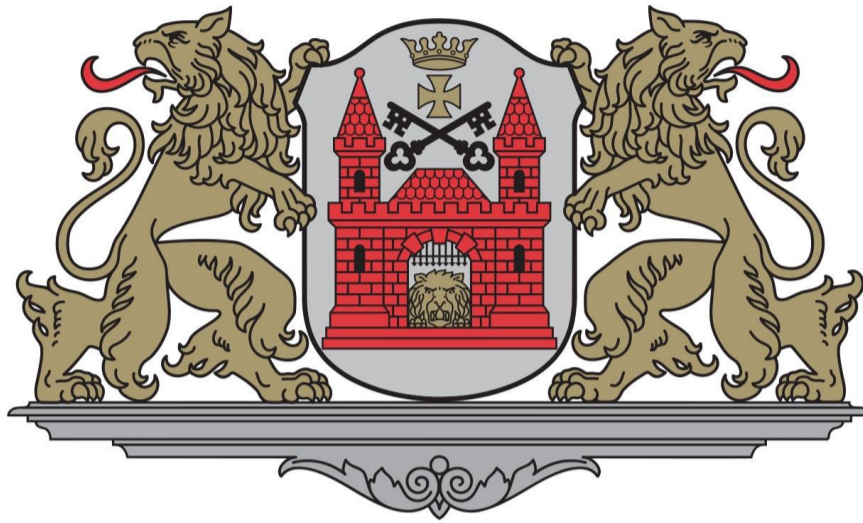
HANDBOOK



PROVIDUS

CENTRE FOR PUBLIC POLICY





RĪGAS DOME



RĪGAS DOMES
IZGLĪTĪBAS, KULTŪRAS
UN SPORTA DEPARTAMENTS

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Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS is responsible for the contents of this handbook.

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WORKPLACE INTEGRATION: IMPORTANT PART OF THE INTEGRATION PROCESS

As Latvia continues to integrate in the international community, the number of people who decide to move to Latvia both, from the European Union and other countries has been steadily increasing.

Similarly, companies operating in Latvia are starting to look for employees in other countries when they are faced with labour shortages. More and more Latvians study and work abroad, and returning emigrants often move back together with their partners and families from other countries.

To add to that, over the last decade Riga has experienced an increase in the number of foreign students.

As a result of all of these trends, there are already around 50,000 foreign nationals in Riga, and this number is expected to increase in the future.

Today, companies in Latvia attract employees from different countries to work in a variety of professions: there are people coming to Latvia to work less qualified jobs, as well as to work in management positions. There is a growing demand for employees who know certain languages, especially in shared service centres, which provide remote services to companies in other countries. Likewise, specialists from different fields for very specialized roles and tasks are also in high demand. And the number of foreign nationals in companies differ significantly - starting from very few to several dozens and even hundreds of employees.

While integration of these newcomers occurs in different ways, workplace integration is one of the primary integration medium. Often employers themselves create the main support system for newcomers as they not only help to deal with administrative formalities regarding immigration and commencement of work, but also provide support regarding practical issues that people face when starting their new life in a different country.

Furthermore, as the number of employees coming from different countries is increasing, many employers consider it essential to facilitate intercultural dialogue not only at their company, but also at a municipality level. In order to achieve this, alongside the support provided by employers, there is a need for targeted set of integration measures tailored to newcomers' needs that is created and implemented by the state and municipality.

This handbook was created to facilitate the development of a comprehensive integration support system. It includes the main challenges that employers currently face when recruiting foreign nationals, concerns for newcomers when moving to Riga, as well as recommendations on how policy makers and Riga municipality can help employers and newcomers. At the same time, it includes information about the current integration support measures available from the state and municipal agencies, as well as non-governmental organisations. Finally, it includes recommendations for employers on how to assist newcomers and promote their successful integration into company's environment.

DESCRIPTION OF METHODOLOGY

PROVIDUS analysed the current situation primarily through interviews with employers and newcomers in Latvia. First, interviews with company representatives who currently employ or plan on employing foreign workers were carried out. The interviews were conducted with broad spectrum of employers, including companies who attract highly skilled workforce with very specific skill requirements and businesses which employ workers who require significantly lower levels of qualification. The number of other country nationals working in these companies varied, as some companies had experience in employing only a few other country nationals, while others had employed hundreds over the course of several years. Overall, the employers shared their experience with obtaining residence permits, supporting newcomers during their relocation process, as well as creating an inclusive work environment and workplace integration programs. In total, representatives from 11 different companies were interviewed.

In addition, other country nationals who currently reside in Latvia were interviewed in two focus groups. The focus groups included people who have arrived and started working in Latvia just recently, as well as other country nationals who have been living in Latvia for extended period of time. There were also former and current foreign students, newcomers and their family members, family members of remigrants, as well as employees from the companies that were previously interviewed. They were divided into two groups: newcomers from the EU Member States and people who come from countries outside the EU. In the focus groups, newcomers shared their experience regarding relocation to Latvia and integration into Latvian society, including experience in obtaining residence permits, accessing educational institutions and workplace, as well as using available support measures and social services. Special emphasis was put on the support provided by the employers in all the aspects of the integration process.

Finally, information on available integration support measures was collected based on the challenges identified during the in-depth interviews and focus groups. By combining good practice of employers, available information resources about the implemented integration support measures, experience of other countries, and studies and recommendations about other country nationals and their situation in Latvia, recommendations on how to facilitate workplace integration have been compiled in this handbook.

POLICY MAKERS

HOW TO IMPROVE THE RECEPTION AND INTEGRATION OF NEWCOMERS?

In order to facilitate further improvements to the reception process of newcomers, several recommendations for policy makers were identified. These include ways to improve the existing reception system of other country nationals and the overall framework of integration support measures. The recommendations were created with assistance from various employers, organisations representing employers' interests and other country nationals working in Latvia.

RESIDENCE PERMITS RECOMMENDATIONS

1.

“Consult first” approach. Employers and newcomers should have an opportunity to supplement and clarify submitted documents before receiving a negative answer on a residence permit application. Likewise, it is necessary to ensure the availability of fast and accessible consultations electronically.

Strengthening consular resources at embassies in countries from which larger number of newcomers is expected. Several newcomers have pointed out that often embassies are not informed about non-standard situations and cannot provide support that is necessary to apply for a residence permit. Thus, the immigration process is often slowed down, thus requiring extra time and financial resources of the employer.

2.

3.

Offer a possibility to submit documents electronically. Currently, documents necessary for residence permit need to be submitted and supplemented on site, which creates a substantial burden for employers. Document submission electronically would considerably speed up this process.

One-stop agency principle and OCMA employee specialisation. Employers indicate that they often receive ambiguous answers and advice from different employees of the same institution. They also have had to explain the issue at hand repeatedly if they are met with a different employee. Additional employees were to improve their specialisation in this field, and OCMA should create an opportunity to arrange consultations with the same employee repeatedly. It is also important to strengthen OCMA’s capacity to provide consultations and support in English.

4.

RESIDENCE PERMITS RECOMMENDATIONS

5.

Waiving the obligation to publish job vacancies. Considering the complex immigration process, discussions with employers confirm that they seek employees from other countries only when there is no local workforce available. The publishing of job vacancies at SEA (State Employment Agency) website considerably slows down the process of attracting foreign workforce, which harms the ability of companies to conduct their business.

More accessible procedure for students to obtain work permits.

Foreign students who have graduated Latvian universities and colleges should be given an extended period of time for finding a job after they have finished their studies, i.e., 12 months as in other EU Member States. Furthermore, an easier procedure to obtain new residence permit should be implemented when they start working in Latvia after the graduation. Currently, students from some countries must submit all the necessary documents again, sometimes from their home countries.

6.

7.

Easier procedure for obtaining the residence permit repeatedly. Employees who have already obtained a temporary residence permit once should be able to renew with an easier procedure. This procedure should not require employers to submit all the necessary documents again; instead, it should be enough to supplement and edit only the information that has changed.

Classify companies which regularly attract workers from other countries. Companies that take part in foreign workforce attraction on regular basis could be classified as permanent collaboration partners who have preferential terms when it comes to document submission.

8.

RESIDENCE PERMITS RECOMMENDATIONS

9.

Visual aids for the residence procedures. It is necessary to create additional visual aids that not only explain the procedure for obtaining residence permits in an easy and simple manner, but also address challenges and non-standard situations and the procedures for solving them.

Eliminate the need to leave the country in order to obtain a new residence permit. It is important to eliminate situations in which an employee is forced to return to their home country in order to obtain their first or repeated residence permit. These situations often occur due to the need to submit the necessary documents in person at the specific Representation of Latvia abroad.

10.

11.

Provide detailed information about immigration process in English. When informing foreign nationals or employers about the process of obtaining residence permits, it is crucial that this information is available also in English.

Develop regulatory framework for remote work. Many employers have indicated that they would gladly employ other country nationals or residents as remote employees, however, the current laws and regulations in Latvia does not allow for this type of employment.

12.

13.

Message conveying a positive image of Latvia. Many newcomers have pointed out that the people who issued their permits tend to communicate a negative message regarding their attitude towards newcomers and the available opportunities in Latvia. OCMA should instead have a an open and welcoming message focusing on the positive aspects of the work environment and opportunities in Latvia.

SOCIOECONOMIC INCLUSION

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.

Broader support for different groups of newcomers. Currently the support available for newcomers is fragmented and limited, and often focuses on only third country nationals. The overall support system should be improved by offering regular instead of project-based language and integration support measures for EU citizens and other groups of newcomers.

Language learning based on a coupon system. Often, employers and newcomers point out that the Latvian language courses that are offered today are fragmented and lack of continuity. Coupon system would enable newcomers to choose courses that are suitable for them from a variety of service providers and continue their language learning journey according to their skill level, in their own time and at their own pace.

2.

3.

Centralised application procedure for the available support services. The current situation makes it difficult to receive the support measures that are offered in the existing projects, such as language learning or integration courses. Participation in each of the courses is organised separately, thus the participants often struggle to find and take part in the opportunities that available to them. It is necessary facilitate a more effective use of social media and promote the recognition of www.integration.lv/en.

Support for receiving State services. Newcomers often need State provided services, for example, from CSDD (Road Traffic Safety Directorate), emergency medical services, consultations at the State Revenue Service and other services. The service providers must be prepared to work with foreign nationals: they need to know the basic principles of intercultural communication and English to ensure effortless provision of their services.

4.

SOCIOECONOMIC INCLUSION RECOMMENDATIONS

5.

Equal opportunities for newcomers and local job seekers to receive support. Employers indicate various state support mechanisms that, according to existing laws and regulations, are not available to workers from other countries, for example, additional day off for blood donation or support from the municipality.

Additional support for companies who invest in employees. Additional support may be provided to entrepreneurs who choose to invest in employee integration and social support. It includes, for example, tax relief for the support provided to acquire health insurance or cover kindergarten costs as it reduces the burden on the state or municipal budget.

6.

RESOURCES!



[Resources](#) for policy makers on workplace integration



[UNHCR Action Plan](#) on integration of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection



[FICIL recommendations](#) on improving the quality of labour force in Latvia



[Example from Estonia: Roadmap](#) for the procedure to move to the country

HOW TO SUPPORT THE INTEGRATION OF NEWCOMERS?

MUNICIPALITY

Municipality also plays an important role in integration process of foreign nationals. It not only provides additional support measures for integration facilitation, but also is responsible for the environment in the city which should be inclusive and helpful to the newcomers. Often, the city aspect is the most important factor in decision-making regarding labour migration, and in other countries municipalities are important players in facilitating integration process. Thus, employers and newcomers alike naturally will turn to municipality agencies to seek information about the available support. However, PROVIDUS study shows that despite the ongoing efforts currently employers and newcomers do not see the as municipality providing enough support. So it is necessary to continue to develop the role of municipality during the integration process by increasing the scope of activities municipality is required to engage in, as well as expand the initiatives that municipality engages in based on its own initiative. As such, the following recommendations were created with an aim to strengthen and improve the activities of Riga municipality in terms of integration.

MUNICIPAL SUPPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.

Extend the scope of support services. Riga City Council currently is helping newcomers through supporting integration and Latvian language projects and non-governmental organisations which represent immigrant interests. At the same time, the municipality can keep track of the support measures provided by the state to ensure that they are available in sufficient quantity according to the situation in the respective municipality. Furthermore, it is important to expand the services that are currently provided by focusing on specific groups of newcomers. For example, by also offering language courses for EU citizens, or offering integration course modules specifically for students or families of newcomers.

Information in public places in English. Newcomers often face problems when they cannot obtain the necessary information in a foreign language, such as English. For example, while there is information regarding public transport available online, understandable information in English is hardly available in bus stops and public transportation.

2.

General information in English. Currently, general information about living in Latvia is available only in some support groups on social media. The municipality can provide practical everyday advice to newcomers who move to Riga in English, as well as promote this information in the existing forums and websites of other responsible institutions and NGOs, such as www.integration.lv/en or the OCMA.

3.

4.

Help coordinate the link between employers and other involved parties. The municipality can help employers by providing information about integration support offered by the state and the published support materials. Likewise, the municipality can assist in coordinating cooperation with various NGOs, such as the Riga Neighbourhood Alliance, to help newcomers acquire information about different accommodation options in Riga. Also, it can invite different NGOs and neighbourhood associations to prepare information that would be important specifically for newcomers.

Information to foreign representations regarding published and available support. The municipality can take a more active role in informing foreign representations and embassies, as well as business organizations of different countries about the published information and support materials, as well as the integration support measures in the city.

6.

Encourage entrepreneurs to create services and products more accessible to newcomers. It has been observed that many service providers do not provide information in English, thus making services, such as health care or even public transport less accessible to newcomers. The municipality can organise activities that encourage entrepreneurs to improve these services, which makes the city more open to newcomers.

5.

MUNICIPAL SUPPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS

7.

Taking more active part in international cooperation. Riga municipality should take more active part in various international projects and initiatives whose aim is to create urban environment inclusive to newcomers, for example, the Partnership for Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees. Very commendable is the participation in Arrival Cities project.

Including newcomers in political planning. One of the best ways to create effective integration support measures is to include members of the target group in policy planning activities. This would allow municipality to receive feedback on its current support activities continuously improve them.

8.

MUNICIPAL SUPPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS

RESOURCES!



[Riga City Development Program for years 2014.-2020](#)



[Riga City Council Integration program for years 2012.-2017.](#)

HOW TO ORGANISE WORKPLACE INTEGRATION OF NEWCOMERS?

EMPLOYERS

This guide contains short and concise recommendations on how employers can help workers from other countries to integrate in the work environment and the city. They were created based on the experience from various Latvian companies in employing foreign nationals and opinions of workers themselves on how to organise a more effective support. These recommendations are aimed at both, companies which already employ other country nationals and wish to improve their integration support measures and diversity management, as well as businesses which are only planning to attract workers from other countries.

PRACTICAL SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1.

Support regarding work permit application. Many companies provide full or partial support to potential employees regarding their application for residence permit. This support includes communication with the OCMA, drafting and submitting of documents necessary for obtaining the residence permit, payment of fees required for obtaining the permit, translation of documents and other types of support. Employers also help with renewing temporary residence permit.

RESOURCES!



#1 and #2 – Information on residence permits and the legal aspects of the residence acquiring procedures



#1 and #2 – Advice from legal consultants for employing other country nationals (Latvian)



Procedure for acquiring a residence permit for nationals from countries outside the EU (English)



Information on residence permits from the OCMA



Descriptions on the Latvian consular and embassy websites on procedures for acquiring residence permits

PRACTICAL SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

2.

Providing information on various aspects of everyday life in Riga. The employer should prepare aids including information on various aspects of everyday life in Riga and make it available to the new employee. The format and content of such aids can vary; however, it is important that they include information about the following topics:

- **Household necessities** (shopping, availability of shops, places for purchasing different household goods);
- **Transport services** (purchasing tickets, transport types, intercity transport);
- **Information on temporary housing** (available hostels);
- **Bank services** (bank types, availability of online banking);
- **Housing market** (how to find accommodation, price range, payment procedure for utilities, etc.); here, information about neighbourhoods in Riga should be included in cooperation with Riga municipality or the Riga Neighbourhood Alliance;
- **Education opportunities** (information about kindergartens and available support, continuing education opportunities);
- **Tax payments** (tax system, possibility to obtain discounts (for example, for attending language courses), SRS EDS);
- **Health care** (types of health care, available services, recommended clinics and doctors, service fees, insurance coverage);
- **Recreational possibilities in Latvia** (theatre, cinema, cultural events, national holidays and celebration traditions, etc.)
- **Leisure activities** (gyms, training, dancing, groups for expats of different countries and their profiles on social media);
- **Other state services** (car registration process, obtaining of driving licence, process for recognition of diplomas, etc.);
- **Available benefits** (for example, support during parental leave);
- **Framework of employment relations** (days of leave, work culture, pension accrual, etc.);
- **Information on law enforcement agencies** (including police, application submission, protection against discrimination, etc.);
- **Information on e-services** (Latvija.lv, e-health, etc.)

RESOURCES!



[Practical support advice](#) for expats in Latvia



[Riga City Handbook](#) for services provided by the municipality



[Latvian Integration Website](#), which includes a lot of the necessary information and offers a free translation services for third country nationals

PRACTICAL SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

3.

Additional support from outsourcing. In order to ensure more efficient integration support, often employers use outsourcing. It includes legal support for obtaining residence permit and service providers in Latvia, for example, retail agents who look for accommodation on behalf of an employee. These services are provided by different law firms and individual consultants, as well as companies in Latvia and abroad that provide relocation support.

RESOURCES!



European Dialogue on Skills and Migration is a platform where private and public sector stakeholders cooperate on the issues of labour migration and labour market integration of third-country nationals

WORKPLACE INTEGRATION

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.

Development of integration support system. In order to ensure successful integration of newcomers into the company's environment, especially in cases when the company does not employ many foreign nationals, the employer is encouraged to establish also an internal support system. Two most common types of these systems are: (1) mentoring system, and (2) support-building within the work team. For mentoring system, a mentor is assigned for each new employee, while team support means that the mentoring role is assumed either by the team leader or all team members. Often, the mentor's role is given to experienced employees who initially have been newcomers themselves.

Regardless of the support type, the main task of the support system is to help newcomers integrate into the workplace and Riga. In addition, it is important that not only formal support regarding the performing of work obligations, but also informal support, i.e., when the employee can turn to their mentors and ask for help regarding practical issues, and support to help them engage in various social activities outside work is provided.

NODERĪGI RESURSI!



[Mentorship system description for workplace \(English\)](#)



[Workplace Integration in Canada \(English\)](#)



[Material by German Employers' Association on workplace integration \(English\)](#)

WORKPLACE INTEGRATION

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.

Work organisation aspects in a multicultural environment. To ensure successful integration of newcomers, it is important to have different work organisation aspects adapted to newcomers as part of the general diversity management strategy or as separate initiatives. Specifically, employers should:

- Ensure that employees also receive all of the information that usually is distributed in Latvian;
- Adapt the procedures for workplace introduction and the description of main processes to be available in English;
- Carry out activities that promote cultural diversity, for example, joint celebration of holidays of other cultures, food diversity;
- Ensure flexibility in HR management regarding different additional needs, for example, special agreements about additional holidays due to religious reasons;
- Monitor the use of language use ensuring that not only newcomers, but also other employees can easily use other language in the work environment;
- Ensure that employees in the leading positions are good role models when working with newcomers by paying close attention to the relationship between both parties;
- Consider a possibility to join Diversity Charter or other measures promoting diversity.

RESOURCES!



[Trainings and consultations](#) for employers on diversity management



[Employers movement «Dažādībā ir spēks»](#) (Diversity has power)



[Research](#) on diversity management in Latvian companies



[Effective communication](#) with employees in a multilingual environment (English)



[UNHCR Action Plan](#) on integration of beneficiaries of international protection

WORKPLACE INTEGRATION

RECOMMENDATIONS

3.

Support for language learning. Latvian language learning in the workplace can be a valuable tool not only to strengthen the employees' interpersonal and communication efficiency, but also to promote successful integration of employees and ensure their long-term employment at the company and in Latvia. Language learning can be organised by covering the costs of the language courses, setting up special groups for language learning within the company, or promoting voluntary language learning courses that employees themselves are responsible for.

REOUSRRCES!



Resources that can be used when teaching Latvian

WHERE TO FIND SUPPORT DURING THE INTEGRATION PROCESS?

NEWCOMERS

In order to assist newcomers and other involved parties, we have collected different resources and materials that contain information about integration support measures.

1.

Information Centre for Newcomers.

A concise and comprehensive resource with useful information for newcomers. The website offers information about free Latvian language and integration courses in different Latvian regions, as well as information about various legal and practical issues of the integration process, including:

- employment (labour law);
- migration (residence permits, visas);
- rights to rent (issues regarding accommodation);
- family law (family reunification, divorce, inheritance issues, etc.);
- legalisation and recognition of education documents;
- starting of a business (issues related to business activity);
- health care (issues related to receiving health care services);
- practical aspects of residing in Latvia (education, finances, cultural environment, transport, etc.).

Information centre also offers face-to-face consultations in the language the person understands, as well as translation services for third country nationals. However, it must be noted that not all of the information found on the website is available in English, Russian or other foreign languages.



INFORMATION CENTRE FOR NEWCOMERS

SUPPORT FOR NEWCOMERS RECOMMENDATIONS

2. **The Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.** The website of the OCMA is available in Latvian, Russian and English, and it contains the most important information about the process of obtaining a residence permit. The website also allows to schedule face-to-face appointments.



OCMA WEBSITE

Website of Embassies of Latvia. Depending on the specific country, the websites of Latvian embassies often contain information about the procedure for obtaining work permit in the respective countries.



EMBASSY WEBSITES

4. **Riga City Handbook.** This handbook includes a description of services available by Riga municipality, including information in education, health care, public transportation, etc.



RIGA CITY SERVICES HANDBOOK

3.

SUPPORT FOR NEWCOMERS

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. ■ Expats in Latvia Facebook group. The most active forum for expats in Latvia, which provides information on various integration support measures, as well as events and opportunities in Latvia. It is also the best forum to ask questions to other expats currently living in Latvia.



FB GROUP FOR EXPATS

Information about events in Latvia. This website posts information about various cultural and social events in Latvia on a regular basis.



«KURPES» EVENTS

7. ■ Information about the neighbourhoods of Riga. This website posts information about different neighbourhoods of Riga, including events that take place in these neighbourhoods (only in Latvian).



INFORMATION ABOUT RIGA NEIGHBORHOODS

6. ■

SUPPORT FOR NEWCOMERS

RECOMMENDATIONS

8.

Guidelines for Asylum Seekers in Latvia . Contains information for asylum seekers about asylum procedure and its legal and practical aspects. In addition, State Employment Agency website contains information about employment opportunities, as well as useful information about everyday life in Latvia.



#1 AND #2 – GUIDELINES FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

Riga City Council website . Even though it is available only in Latvian and Russian, it contains large amount of information about practical aspects of everyday life in Riga. The municipality's website offers consultations about declaring one's place of residence, child birth, marriage, name and surname change.



#1 AND #2 – RIGA MUNICIPALITY WEBSITES

10.

«Rīgas satiksme» website. This website available in English and Russian provides information about public transportation in Riga: types of e-tickets, how to purchase and receive discounts.



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION WEBSITE

9.

SUPPORT FOR NEWCOMERS

RECOMMENDATIONS

11. EURES advice for starting career in the EU. Contains information about career opportunities in different EU Member States.



EURES

Skills Profile Tool. Support portal created by the European Commission that allows foreign nationals to assess their skills and thus find out the next support steps.



SKILLS PROFILE TOOL

13. Support resources for starting a business. Various state institutions that provide support for starting a business in Latvia.



CONSULTATIONS ABOUT STARTING A BUSINESS, ETC.



INFORMATION ABOUT SUPPORT PROVIDED BY STATE EMPLOYMENT AGENCY



FINANCIAL SUPPORT



DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT COMPANY REGISTRATION

12.

SUPPORT FOR NEWCOMERS

RECOMMENDATIONS

14.

Protection of labour rights. State Labour Inspectorate offers assistance for employees during disputes with employers.



STATE LABOUR INSPECTORATE

Anti-discrimination measures. Advice on available recourse in case you have been a victim of discrimination from employer of a service provider



CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



RESEARCH ON DISCRIMINATION AND SOCIAL ORIENTATION

16.

Your Move. This website aims to help people who live abroad return back or move to Latvia, posts job ads and offers practical information about issues related to employment and everyday life.



«YOUR MOVE» WEBSITE

15.

SUPPORT FOR NEWCOMERS

RECOMMENDATIONS