



RACCOMBAT Analytical Report: the case of Latvia

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List of abbreviations

AMIF	Asylum Migration and Integration Fund
CFREU	Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
NGO	Non-governmental organizations
LAA	Legal Aid Administration
EU	European Union
OCMA	The Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs

Types of social orientation courses

Social orientation and integration courses are currently available for third country nationals and asylum seekers as part of two separate project initiatives managed by the Ministry of Culture and financed by the AMIF. Both of these projects outsource the provision of the courses to local NGOs.

Asylum Seekers

Social orientation courses for asylum seekers are provided by NGO Society "Shelter 'Safe House'". A course of 20 academic hours is offered to all asylum seekers in small groups of up to 15 people. The contents of the course are developed and implemented by the organisation based on the topics listed in the relevant project specifications.¹

Third Country Nationals

Integration courses for third country nationals are provided as part of three separate project initiatives:

- Project "Esi sveicināta, simtgades Latvija" is managed by Daugavpils University Lifelong Learning, Culture, and Science Communication Society "Intelekta parks";
- Project "Mēs – Latvijā" is managed by NGO "Innovation Support Centre";
- Project "Integrācijas ABC" managed by NGO "The Platform of Cooperation".²

The specifications for service providers requested integration courses to be limited between 16 and 30 academic hours, in groups between 10-20 people, ensuring appropriate translation, regional partnerships and 1-3 intercultural social events. The topic areas that the courses had to cover included Latvian history and political system, social, education and healthcare services, employment and entrepreneurship, as well as culture and traditions. Each of the three providers offers a slightly different form and content of the integration courses.³

¹ [„\(..\) Atbalsta pasākumi starptautiskās aizsardzības personām \(..\) konkursa nolikums“](#) [Support activities for beneficiaries of international protection. Project specifications]. Accessed April 26, 2018.

² [„Noslēgto līgumu saraksts. Aktivāte Nr.8“](#) [List of projects. Activity No 8]. Accessed April 21, 2018.

³ [„Programmas, kas uzlabo imigrantu līdzdalību \(integrācijas kursi\) \(..\) konkursa nolikums.“](#) [Project Specifications for Activities that Foster Immigrant Participation in Host Society, Part 3]. Accessed 26 April, 2018.

I. National law and fundamental rights in social orientation

1. Main principles of the Constitution and values of society

Constitution

The Constitution of Latvia (*Satversme*) is the basic legal document of the country.⁴ It defines Latvia as strictly democratic and republican, with special emphasis on the principle of sovereign power held by citizens.⁵ The most significant changes to the Constitution were made in 2002, when a catalogue of human rights was added, as well as in 2003 and 2004, when it was amended to allow for EU membership.⁶

The Parliament (*Saeima*) is elected for four years by full citizens of Latvia in a secret ballot and is based on proportional representation. The Saeima holds the highest legislative power. Parliament checks on judicial power by approving all of the appointed judges, and elects a President who serves in a representative role with limited powers to initiate legislation, grant pardons, appoint diplomatic representatives and command the army.⁷

Highest executive power of Latvia lies with the Cabinet of Ministers. The Prime Minister candidate, invited by the President, forms the Cabinet of Ministers, which is approved by the Parliament. The Cabinet of Ministers has legislative rights and rights to appoint and approve civil servants. It has the power to issue legislative enactments (regulations) in cases delegated to them by certain law or if a particular matter has not been regulated by law.⁸

Human Rights Chapter

Chapter XIII of the Constitution spells out fundamental human rights, recognizing adherence to laws and international agreements. Rights to life, liberty and security, as well as rights to own a property, choice of employment, protection of dignity, protection of private life, freedom of movement for Latvian residents, freedom of thought, conscience, and religion are all emphasized.⁹

Rights for citizens to participate in the political process include participation in political parties, public organizations and peaceful meetings. EU citizens who are permanent residents in the country have rights to participate in local elections and work for local governments. Ethnic minorities in the country have a right to preserve and develop their language and ethnic and cultural identity.¹⁰

The prohibition of discrimination is emphasized in Article 91: "All human beings in Latvia shall be equal before the law and the courts. Human rights shall be realised without discrimination of any kind."¹¹ This article is interpreted as a guiding element for the principle of legal equality.¹²

⁴ [The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia](#). Accessed 24 April, 2018.

⁵ „[Satversme –Latvijas Republikas konstitucionālais pamats](#)“ [Satversme as the constitutional basis of Latvian Republic]. Accessed April 22, 2108.

⁶ „[Guide to Latvian Legal System and Legal Research](#)“. Accessed April 26, 2018.

⁷ „[Guide to Latvian Legal System and Legal Research](#)“. Accessed April 26, 2018.

⁸ „[Cabient of Ministers](#)“. Accessed 26 April, 2018.

⁹ [The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia](#). Accessed 24 April, 2018.

¹⁰ [The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia](#). Accessed 24 April, 2018.

¹¹ [The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia](#). Accessed 24 April, 2018.

¹² Levits, Egils. „[Latvijas Republikas Satversmes komentāri. VIII nodaļa. Cilvēka pamattiesības](#).“ [Commentary on the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia. Chapter XIII. Human Rights]. Rīga, 2011, pp. 74-75.

Course Coverage

Integration courses for both target groups cover the Constitution as the main legal document of Latvia. For asylum seekers, basic concepts of parliamentary structure in Latvia, as well as roles of the Prime Minister and the President were addressed. The explanation, however, did not cover fundamental rights of non-nationals or suggest ways in which the political system and its decisions can have an impact on the target group.

The courses for third country nationals require covering the political system of the country, which includes content similar to that of asylum seekers, again - without a particular emphasis of fundamental rights of third country nationals.

2. Prohibition of and protection against discrimination

International Legal Norms

Several **international human rights documents**, including UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976), UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976) and European Convention on Human Rights (1953) require Latvia to ensure specific rights without discrimination. Latvia has also ratified conventions dealing specifically with discrimination, including UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1969), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008).¹³

The **main legal documents of the EU**, including Article 21 of the CFREU¹⁴ and Article 10 of the TFEU¹⁵ prohibit discrimination. In addition, several secondary norms and directives also deal with the issue, prohibiting discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, age or sexual orientation.¹⁶ The principles of these directives are transposed in the national legislation, for example, Criminal Law and Consumer Rights Protection Law, described below.

National Legislation

Article 91 of the Constitution is the main national legal principle prohibiting discrimination. It outlaws all discrimination but does not state specific grounds on which discrimination is prohibited. As a result, it directly binds all public bodies, making discrimination illegal in the public sector, but requires prohibition of discrimination to be outlawed by specific laws in the private sector.¹⁷

Commonly referred to grounds of discrimination **explicitly stipulated in the national law** include “race, ethnicity, national origin (in certain cases understood as ethnic origin, in certain cases as citizenship), gender, language, party membership, religious or political ‘or other’ opinions – which encompasses belief – non-religious, property or social status, position occupied and origin, and sometimes also health condition, place of residence and occupation”.¹⁸

Employment and professional training is strictly protected by principles of equal opportunities. Job advertisements, interviews, contracts and legal employment relations are all protected with special emphasis on promotion, labour conditions, remuneration, professional trainings, as well as termination of employment. The Labour Law¹⁹ provides the most comprehensive list of prohibited grounds, which include discrimination based on race, colour, skin colour, age,

¹³ Dupate, Kristīne un Garokalna-Bihela, Guna. [“Es un sabiedrība – mūsu iespējas un tiesības. Diskriminācijas novēršanas rokasgrāmata juridiskām profesijām.”](#) [Me and society – opportunities and rights. A Legal Handbook for Preventing Discrimination]. Rīga, 2014.

¹⁴ 2000/C 364/01 (18.12.2000).

¹⁵ 2012/C 326/01 (26.10.2012).

¹⁶ 2000/43/EK (29.07.2000), 2000/78/EK (27.11.2000) and 2006/54/EK (05.07.2006).

¹⁷ Kamenska, Anhelita. [„Country Report. Non-discrimination. Latvia“](#), *European Commission* (2017), p.8

¹⁸ Kamenska, Anhelita. [„Country Report. Non-discrimination. Latvia“](#), *European Commission* (2017), p.33

¹⁹ Latvia / Darba likums [Labour Law], (20.06.2001).

disability, religious, political or other conviction, national and/or social origin, gender, property status, family status and other cases,²⁰ while the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination of Natural Persons-Economic Operators covers age, gender, religious, political or other conviction, sexual orientation, disability, race and ethnic origin.²¹

The Criminal Law contains several articles explicitly prohibiting discrimination, including aggravating circumstances due to racial, national, ethnic or religious motives,²² actions that aim to cultivate national, ethnic, race or religious conflict,²³ actions that aim to create conflict based on gender, age, disability or other individual characteristics,²⁴ discrimination due to race, nationality, ethnic origin or religion in cases it has caused a serious harm.²⁵ All of these violations can be penalised by fines, community service and jail sentences.

The Civil Law allows individuals to seek damages in a civil court,²⁶ especially in cases when criminal proceedings did not result in a conviction or were not initiated. Latvian case law contains only a few such cases, which do, however, give legal basis to demand monetary compensation in case of moral damages regarding, for example, hate speech.²⁷

Access to **goods and services**, including housing, is covered by the Consumer Rights Protection Law,²⁸ which prohibits discrimination based on gender, race, ethnic origin or disability in terms of access to products or services.²⁹

The **social security** regime, including social insurance and healthcare systems, attempts to ensure equal access to services. Social Security Law³⁰ and Medical Treatment Law³¹ prohibit discrimination based on race, ethnicity, nationality, age, disability, health condition, religious, political or other conviction, social class, gender, property status, family status and other cases when providing social services and medical treatment.³²

Access to **education** is broadly protected – Law on Education³³ stipulates rights to education for Latvian citizens, non-citizens, EU, EEA/Swiss citizens, permanent residents, European Community permanent residents with valid Latvian residency permits, and beneficiaries of international protection. It also states that access to education should be provided regardless of property status, family status, race or ethnic origin, gender, religious or political beliefs, health condition, employment or residency.³⁴

Since 2013, the Electronic Mass Media Law also prohibits incitement of hatred and **discrimination in audio and audio-visual commercial messages**, if done on the grounds of gender, age, religious, political and other belief, sexual orientation, disability, race or ethnic origin, nationality.³⁵

Coverage of Prohibition Grounds

The **main problem with the legislation** is the patchy nature of the regulations. There is no single comprehensive law on discrimination, and while specific laws cover all of the fields required by the relevant EU directives, they fail to cover

²⁰ ["Jomas, uz kurām attiecas diskriminācijas aizliegums"](https://www.equalitylaw.eu/downloads/4451-latvia-country-report-non-discrimination-2017-pdf-1-96-mb) [Areas Where Discrimination is Prohibited]. Accessed on 22 April, 2018. <https://www.equalitylaw.eu/downloads/4451-latvia-country-report-non-discrimination-2017-pdf-1-96-mb>

²¹ Latvia / Fizisko personu – saimnieciskās darbības veicēju – diskriminācijas aizlieguma likums [Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination of Natural Persons-Economic Operators], (19.12.2012).

²² Latvia / Krimināllikuma 14. panta 14. daļa [Criminal Law, Article 48, Part 14] (17.06.1998).

²³ Latvia / Krimināllikuma 78. pants [Criminal Law, Article 78], (17.06.1998).

²⁴ Latvia / Krimināllikuma 150. pants [Criminal Law, Article 150], (17.06.1998).

²⁵ Latvia / Krimināllikuma 149¹. pants [Criminal Law, Article 149¹], (17.06.1998).

²⁶ Latvia / Civillikuma 1635. un 2352(1). pants [Civil Law, Article 1635 and 2352 (1)], (01.09.1992).

²⁷ Kučs, Artūrs and Juris Gromovs, Aija Lulle. ["Rasisma un neiecietības novēršana"](#) [Prevention of Racism and Intolerance]. International Migration Organization, Riga Office (2009). p.91

²⁸ Latvia / Patērētāju tiesību aizsardzības likuma 3.1 pants [Consumer Protection Law Article 3.1], (18.03.1999).

²⁹ ["Jomas, uz kurām attiecas diskriminācijas aizliegums"](#) [Areas Where Discrimination is Prohibited]. Accessed on 22 April, 2018.

³⁰ Latvia / Likums „Par sociālo drošību” [Social Security Law], (07.09.1995).

³¹ Latvia / Ārstniecības likums [Medical Treatment Law], (26.02.1998).

³² ["Jomas, uz kurām attiecas diskriminācijas aizliegums"](#) [Areas Where Discrimination is Prohibited]. Accessed on 22 April, 2018.

³³ Latvia / Izglītības likums [Law on Education], (29.10.1998).

³⁴ ["Jomas, uz kurām attiecas diskriminācijas aizliegums"](#) [Areas Where Discrimination is Prohibited]. Accessed on 22 April, 2018.

³⁵ Kamenska, Anhelita. ["Country Report. Non-discrimination. Latvia"](#), *European Commission* (2017), p.33

all of the required grounds. As such, discrimination based on sexual orientation is prohibited only in labour legislation, disability is only referred to in labour, social security and consumer rights legislation, and age is mentioned only in labour, social security and patient rights legislation.³⁶

Main Institutions and Other Stakeholders

Ministry of Justice is the state institution responsible for the legal system policy, judiciary system and court administration. Its functions include developing, organising and coordinating policy regarding legal system and national law. The institution is responsible for coordinating the implementation of norms preventing discrimination in the national legislation.³⁷

Ministry of Welfare is the state institution responsible for labour, social security, children and family rights, as well as equal rights for people with disability and gender equality. The Ministry is involved in implementation of activities and projects that aim to facilitate labour market inclusion of groups that are most at risk of discrimination, including people with physical and mental disabilities.³⁸

The Ombudsman's Office is an independent state institution governed by the Ombudsman Law. It acts to protect legal interests of persons in cases when state or municipal authorities have violated their human rights. The Office also works to “ensure equal treatment and prevent discrimination, promote adherence to the principles of good administration and government, reveal imperfections in regulations and their application connected with adherence to human rights, as well as enhance public awareness of human rights”.³⁹ Persons may apply to the Ombudsman with complaints or information requests regarding these issues, and, if deemed necessary, the Ombudsman may represent rights and interests of individuals in administrative proceedings.⁴⁰

State Labour Inspectorate is a direct management authority subordinated to the Ministry of Welfare. It functions to ensure that legislation on legal employment relations, as well as occupational safety and health are observed in Latvia. In cases when discrimination has occurred in labour relations regardless of employer type, a person submits a complaint to the State Labour Inspectorate, which can issue an administrative fine.⁴¹ In cases when persons believe that they might have been subject of discrimination during their employment, they have rights to file a complaint with the court and request appropriate compensation of damages.⁴²

Legal Aid Administration, subordinated to the Ministry of Justice, is the institution responsible for ensuring access to legal aid of low-income and needy individuals, as well as state compensation for victims of violent crimes. The institution examines applications for legal aid and compensation claims, pays out legal assistance and victim compensation funds, approves applications, conducts agreements and maintains a register with providers of legal aid.⁴³

Latvian Centre for Human Rights is an independent NGO that works with integration issues, elimination of discrimination, hate crimes/speech, asylum, migration and fundamental rights. It conducts monitoring, research and policy analysis, and provides legal aid to victims of human rights violations, including representation before domestic and international courts.⁴⁴

³⁶ Kamenska, Anhelita. „Country Report. Non-discrimination. Latvia“, *European Commission* (2017), p.7

³⁷ „Functions of the Ministry of Justice“. Accessed April 29, 2018.

³⁸ „About Ministry of Welfare“. Accessed April 29, 2018.

³⁹ Latvia / Tiesībsarga likums [Ombudsman Law], (06.04.2006).

⁴⁰ „Ombudsman“. Accessed on April 26, 2018.

⁴¹ „State Labour Inspectorate“. Accessed on April 26, 2018. <http://www.vdi.gov.lv/en/>

⁴² „Aizsardzības mehānismi diskriminācijas gadījumos“ [Defense Mechanisms when Faced with Discrimination], Latvian Centre for Human Rights. Accessed April 27, 2018.

⁴³ „Information on the Authority“, Legal Aid Administration. Accessed April 25, 2018.

⁴⁴ „The Latvian Centre for Human Rights“. Accessed April 26, 2018.

Legal and administrative procedures

A normal avenue for redress in a case of discrimination is a **court of general jurisdiction** by pursuing a civil case in accordance with Civil Procedures Law and Law on Judicial Power.⁴⁵ Furthermore, actions of public bodies and administrative acts can be appealed by submitting a complaint to the public institution responsible, a higher institution or to the district (city) court of first instance.⁴⁶ Most first instance civil cases in district courts are tried by one judge, while more complicated cases can be tried by a panel of three judges. The adopted decisions can be appealed to a second instance regional court, which consists of a panel of judges.⁴⁷

While most administrative procedures are currently tried by written procedure, civil cases are usually tried in oral proceedings. In 2016, the average length of first instance civil cases was around five months, while second instance cases lasted eight months.⁴⁸ Criminal cases related to labour disputes were reviewed faster - between three and four months. By comparison, administrative proceedings were significantly longer. Pre-trial periods could last up to five months, first instance cases were tried for an average of seven months, while second instance cases would take around twelve months.⁴⁹ The long judicial delays have been highlighted as one of the main concerns preventing access to justice for individuals,⁵⁰ which the Ministry of Justice has been attempting at prevention by hiring additional judges and redistributing cases, as well as piloting the use of mediation in civil trials.⁵¹

Persons can also file a **complaint to the Ombudsman's Office** for any type of discrimination. The process of examining the complaint is confidential and free of charge. According to regulations, the office always attempts to pursue mediation between both parties. If mutual agreement is not possible, the office conducts an assessment regarding the legal aspects of the case. The assessment is not legally binding, but it is viewed as a recommendation for further proceedings. After reviewing the complaint, the office can file a complaint to appropriate institutions or pursue court cases. While a complaint is being reviewed by the office, individuals are not prohibited from simultaneously pursuing court cases, administrative or other legal actions regarding the incident.⁵²

The procedure of **reporting a violation to the State Police** includes submitting a criminal complaint to any State Police district office. The complaint is then forwarded to the appropriate structure of the police, after which the police conducts a preliminary review and decides whether to initiate a criminal investigation or a case of administrative violation. Persons have a right to appeal an unfavourable decision on case initiation to a public prosecutor within a period of 10 days. If a person is recognised as victim, they have a right to request information on the progress of the investigation.⁵³ Additional complaints can be filed with State Labour Inspectorate in case of discrimination related to labour relationship. The institution can decide to investigate the complaint and impose an administrative fine on an organisation. Similar complaints can be made to the Consumer Rights Protection Centre for discrimination by specific advertisers, and the National Electronic Mass Media Council for discrimination on radio and television.⁵⁴

⁴⁵ Latvia / Civilprocesa likums [Civil Procedures Law], (14.10.1998).

Latvia / Likums „Par tiesu varu“ [Judicial Powers Law], (15.12.1992).

⁴⁶ Latvia / Administrative Procedure Law, Article 92, (25.10.2001).

⁴⁷ „Civillietas.“ Latvijas tiesu portāls [„Civil Cases.“ Latvian Court Website].

Latvian Centre for Human Rights (2017), [Lifecycle of a Hate Crime. A Country Report for Latvia](#), p.9

⁴⁸ Latvijas Republikas Tieslietu Ministrija, 2016. Gada publiskais pārskats, p.18

⁴⁹ Latvijas Republikas Tieslietu Ministrija, 2016. Gada publiskais pārskats, p.18

⁵⁰ U.S. Department of State, Latvia 2016 Human Rights Report, p.5

⁵¹ Latvijas Republikas Tieslietu Ministrija, 2016. Gada publiskais pārskats, p.45

⁵² „Ombudsman“. Accessed on April 26, 2018.

⁵³ Valsts policija, „Jūs vērsāties Valsts policijā? Kas notiek tālāk? Īss ceļvedis Jūsu tiesībās“ [How to file a complaint in the State Police? What happens after that? A short guide on rights], 2013, p.3

⁵⁴ „Aizsardzības mehānismi pret diskrimināciju“ [Protection Mechanisms Against Discrimination], The Ombudsman's Office. Accessed April 28, 2018.⁵⁵ Latvia / Kriminālikuma 6. pants [Criminal Law, Article 6], (17.06.1998).

Course Coverage

Integration courses for asylum seekers cover discrimination and equal opportunities as a separate study module. The course contains legal definition of discrimination, lists various types of discrimination that can occur and gives some illustrations for cases when discrimination might have occurred. The course also mentions The Ombudsman's Office and the Latvian Centre for Human Rights as possible institutions where legal assistance on discrimination can be sought.

Courses for third country nationals do not contain separate modules on discrimination, but these can come up on an ad hoc basis during discussions, or their basic aspects can be included in the course content by the lecturer.

3. Justice and law enforcement

Main legal norms

Criminal acts and their respective punishments in Latvia are covered by the Criminal Law. Criminal acts are recognised as having caused "a harmful offence (act or failure to act) committed deliberately (intentionally) or through negligence, provided for in the Criminal Law, and for the commission of which criminal punishment is set out."⁵⁵ The Criminal Law (1) provides general protection against discrimination on the basis of ethnic, national, racial or religious origin, (2) punishes violations of prohibition that is covered in other legal acts, (3) protects against instigation of national, ethnic, racial or religious hatred, and (4) instigation of social hatred based on person's gender, age, disability or other features.⁵⁶

Administrative violations are reviewed in the Administrative Violations Code, which aims to "protect public order, property, socio-economic, political and personal rights and freedoms of citizens, as well as the rights and legal interests of merchants, institutions and organisations, the specified management procedures, State and public order". The law also defines administrative penalties and the institutions competent to inflict administrative penalties.⁵⁷ Prohibition of discrimination is covered by Article 214,¹⁷ which allows punishing violations of legislation on prohibiting discrimination with fines from EUR 140 to EUR 700. Furthermore, State Labour Inspectorate is designated as the institution responsible for labour discrimination, while district (city) judges are mandated to review all other discrimination cases.⁵⁸

Law enforcement

The police in Latvia consists of State Police and Security Police, both of which are funded by the state and operate in the entire country and are subordinated to the Minister of Interior. Additionally, local governments have a right to fund and run a separate Municipal Police.⁵⁹

State Police

The State Police has five regional police departments with smaller policing districts serving each of the administrative regions in the country. Each of the districts consist of the Criminal Police, Public Order Police and Administrative Division.⁶⁰ As of December of 2016, the State Police employed 7829 individuals.⁶¹

The State Police is expected to guarantee social and individual safety, prevent crimes and other violations of law, discover criminal acts and search for perpetrators, assist private organisations and individuals to protect their rights, as well as tackle administrative and criminal violations within the scope of the Law of the Police.⁶²

⁵⁵ Latvia / Kriminālikuma 6. pants [Criminal Law, Article 6], (17.06.1998).

⁵⁶ Latvia / Kriminālikuma 78., 150. un 149¹. pants, [Criminal Law, Article 78, 149¹, 150], (17.06.1998).

⁵⁷ Latvia / Administratīvo pārkāpumu kodekss [Administrative Violations Code], (07.12.1984).

⁵⁸ Latvia / Administratīvo pārkāpumu kodeksa 213. un 215³. pants [Administrative Violations Code, Article 213. and 215³], (07.12.1984).

⁵⁹ The Latvian Centre for Human Rights, „Combating Hate Crimes in Latvia: Legislation and Police“, 2009, p.20

⁶⁰ Regions include Kurzeme, Latgale, Rīga, Vidzeme and Zemgale.

⁶¹ Latvijas Valsts Policija, „Publiskais pārskats 2016“ [Latvian State Police, „Annual Report for 2016], 2016, p.20

⁶² The Latvian Centre for Human Rights (2009), „Combating Hate Crimes in Latvia: Legislation and Police“, p.21

Municipal Police

Municipal Police focuses on ensuring public order and crime prevention by supporting the State and the Security Police. They also have certain social functions, such as assistance to high-risk families, managing minor offenders and individuals previously incarcerated. They can be involved in transporting of prisoners and suspects, as well as enforcing municipal regulations. In some cases, the State Police delegates some of its functions to the Municipal Police.

The main rights of the Municipal Police include right to detain individuals, demand that individuals cease conducting crimes, check personal identity, issue administrative fines, detain individuals under the age of 16 or under the influence of alcohol or drugs.⁶³

Security Police

The Security Police is mostly involved in counter-intelligence activities and combating crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide, organised and economic crimes, terrorism, sabotage and other acts that threaten national security. The Security Police also protects state secrets and ensures security of national and foreign dignitaries. Recently, one of its most important activities of the organisation has been combating the hybrid threats by Russia.⁶⁴

The Security Police is authorised to conduct pre-trial investigations by looking at criminal offences related to the constitutional order or ones committed within the security of intelligence services, or when ordered by Prosecutor General.⁶⁵

Judicial System

Courts in Latvia

Latvia has a three-tier court system, which includes the Supreme Court, regional courts and district (city) courts. The system allows for an option to appeal court decisions of the first instance, as well as for repeated hearing of a case in cases of appeal and cassation.

District (city) courts are responsible for hearing civil and criminal cases, as well as cases, which arise from administrative legal relations in the first instance.

Regional courts hear appeals in criminal, civil and administrative cases after they have been heard by the first instance court. Additionally, they can serve as the first instance courts for civil and criminal cases which fall under their jurisdiction according to specific laws and regulations.

The Supreme Court is the highest-level court, which adjudicates cases at the cassation instance. It is composed of the Department of Civil Cases, the Department of Criminal Cases and the Department of Administrative Cases. Its responsibilities include administration of justice at cassation instance, reviewing cases in the Disciplinary Court, creating uniform legal case-law and approving special investigation activities and disclosing confidential information from credit institutions.⁶⁶

Constitutional Court is an independent judicial body that hears cases regarding the conformity of laws and regulations to the Constitution.⁶⁷

⁶³ „Kāda ir pašvaldības policijas kompetence“ [What are the Competencies of the Municipal Police?]. Accessed April 25, 2018.

⁶⁴ Drošības policija, „Security Police Annual Report for 2016“, p.5

⁶⁵ Drošības policija, „Security Police Annual Report for 2016“, p.5

⁶⁶ „Basis of authority and functions“, The Supreme Court. Accessed April 29, 2018.

⁶⁷ The Court Administration of Latvia, [Judicial System in Latvia](#), p.21

The Prosecution Office is a three-tier system that consists of Prosecutor General's Office, regional prosecution offices and district (or city) prosecution offices. Their role and tasks in the justice system are laid out in Law on the Office of the Public Prosecutor.⁶⁸

Criminal Procedure

In Latvia, the Criminal Procedure Law deals with stages of criminal prosecution, evidence, investigative actions, as well as rights and obligations of parties involved in criminal offences.⁶⁹

Pre-trial investigation In Latvia consists of two parts. Investigation is conducted by representatives of a state institution, in most cases the State Police, while criminal prosecution is conducted by the Office of the Public Prosecutor. The aim of the procedure is to identify individuals responsible for violations and collect evidence to initiate criminal prosecution.

The process is managed by an investigator who is supervised by a public prosecutor. Prosecutor directs the investigation, evaluates decisions, controls the chain of custody and initiates criminal proceedings when sufficient evidence is gathered.⁷⁰

After an arrest has been made, investigator has to either formally accuse the suspect or release them within 48 hours. The investigator or prosecutor can also decide not to release the suspect with the approval of an investigative judge. A suspect held in detention can apply for release every two months or when circumstances that could affect outcome of such an application change. Suspects have a right to know their allegations, have access to legal representation, as well as submit complaints to the prison administration or the courts in case they believe their rights are being violated during detention.⁷¹ Other country nationals can inform their embassy or consulate about their arrest, and they have a right to request an interpreter.⁷²

The process either continues once enough evidence is collected and criminal proceedings are initiated or concludes if the case is dismissed. The criminal proceedings are conducted by the public prosecutor responsible for the case, and their aim is to confirm that a criminal offence has been committed. The prosecutor's responsibility is to decide which people should be held criminally liable and to decide when the proceedings should be concluded and the case be submitted to the court.

The criminal proceedings and pre-trial investigation can last from 6 to 22 months depending on the offence that might have been committed. In cases where the process lasts longer, all legal restrictions imposed on the suspects should be removed.⁷³

During the court process, prosecution is carried out by the Office of the Public Prosecutor. The role of the defence is to provide offender with legal advice and to defend them during the pre-trial stages and at the court. Lawyers are prohibited from conducting investigations of their own, however they can order a special assessment from professional investigators.

Victims can be an active part of criminal proceedings by submitting applications and demanding compensation without a necessity to pursue a separate civil case. Victims are allowed to present their opinion about sentencing, and are, when

⁶⁸ Latvian Centre for Human Rights, Lifecycle of a Hate Crime. A Country Report for Latvia, 2017, p.9

⁶⁹ „Guide to Latvian Legal System and Legal Research“. Accessed April 26, 2018.

⁷⁰ Latvijas Republikas Valsts Kontrole (2017), Vai pirmstiesas izmeklēšana Valsts policijā ir efektīva? [State Audit Office. Report on the Effectiveness of Pre-Trial Investigations of State Police], p.28

⁷¹ Fair Trials International (2015), Criminal Proceedings and Defence Rights in Latvia, p.20

⁷² Fair Trials International (2015), Criminal Proceedings and Defence Rights in Latvia, p.9

⁷³ „Manas tiesības noziedzīgā nodarījuma izmeklēšanas laikā un pirms lietas nodošanas tiesai“ [Rights in case of criminal offenses during investigation and pre-trial process], European e-Justice. Accessed April 22, 2018.

possible, allowed to appeal judgements. Accusations are heard by judges who decide on their validity and declare persons innocent or guilty.⁷⁴

All criminal cases are examined by district (city) court in the first instance. Their decision can be appealed in a regional court, while decisions by regional court can be appealed to the Supreme Court.⁷⁵

Administrative Procedure

Procedure for tackling administrative offences is covered by the Administrative Procedure Law.⁷⁶ Administrative violations can be decided on by (1) institutions representing Republic of Latvia, (2) local governments or other public persons, (3) private individuals who have been delegated the task of taking decisions, (4) officials who are authorized to do so.⁷⁷

General administrative decisions can be appealed to higher administrative authorities. If no such authority exists, decisions can be appealed to a district (city) court.⁷⁸

After decisions are final, they can be appealed to administrative courts (special district (city) and regional courts) within 10 days by persons held liable, victims or third parties whose property has been damaged as a result of the violation. Courts review acts based on (1) compliance with procedural and formal preconditions, (2) compliance with norms of substantive law, and (3) justification of duties imposed or right conferred, and can declare administrative acts or parts of them invalid, change the act or acknowledge rights to compensation.⁷⁹ Appeal court adjudicates most cases by way of written procedure, while a court, upon its own initiative, may take a decision also regarding adjudication of the matter by way of oral procedure. Decisions by the district (city) court can be appealed to a regional court and regional court decisions can be appealed at a cassation instance to the Supreme Court.⁸⁰

In addition to covering discrimination violations related to employment, social security, education, access to goods and services, the administrative procedure also provides grounds for seeking compensation for financial loss or personal harm, including moral harm caused by an administrative act or actions of an institution.⁸¹

Course Coverage

For asylum seekers, only legal aspects of asylum procedure were explored, and the lectures did not explore either of the topics in this chapter. For third country nationals, some aspects from this chapter could appear in the courses on an ad hoc basis, however none of the topic areas require them specifically. When discussing prevention of or reporting on discrimination, some of the law enforcement or judicial institutions are mentioned, but their competencies are rarely addressed in detail.

4. Violations of one's rights

Procedure for filing complaints

⁷⁴ Valsts policija, „[Jūs vērsāties Valsts policijā? Kas notiek tālāk? Īss ceļvedis Jūsu tiesībās](#)“ [How to file a complaint in the State Police? What happens after that? A short guide on rights], 2013, p.3

⁷⁵ Please see section on courts in Chapter 3 of this report.

⁷⁶ Latvia / Administrative Procedure Law, (25.10.2001).

⁷⁷ „[Administrative Justice in Europe. Report on the Republic of Latvia](#)“, ACA-Europe . Accessed April 25, 2018.

⁷⁸ „[Administratīvo pārkāpumu lietas](#)“, Latvijas tiesu portāls [„Administrative Offenses“, Latvian Court Website]. Accessed on April 29, 2018.

⁷⁹ Latvia / Administrative Procedure Law, Section 250, (07.12.1984).

⁸⁰ „[Administratīvais process tiesā](#)“, Latvijas tiesu portāls [„Administrative Procedure in court“, Latvian Court Website]. Accessed on April 29, 2018.

⁸¹ Kamenska, Anhelita. „[Country Report. Non-discrimination. Latvia](#)“, *European Commission* (2017), p.10

In cases when individuals believe that their rights have been infringed upon, a **complaint** should be filed with the State Police. When racist assaults or other hate crimes occur, they are initially investigated by the State Police,⁸² and if the offense is classified under Section 78 of Criminal Procedure Law, it is transferred to the Security Police for further investigation.⁸³

A complaint is reviewed by the assigned officer who conducts an initial assessment of the case. The complaint can lead to an initiation of a criminal or an administrative violation case, a decision to forward the complaint to a different administrative body, initiation of a preliminary assessment of the case for up to 1 month, or a refusal to initiate a case, at which point the decision can be appealed to the responsible public prosecutor within 10 days.⁸⁴

If a criminal case is initiated, the investigation is carried out by the responsible police investigator and a supervising public prosecutor. Pre-trial investigation aims to collect evidence to initiate criminal proceedings. If public prosecutor determines that sufficient evidence is gathered, they can move on to initiate criminal proceedings to determine criminal liability. If an administrative violation case is initiated, the police prepares an administrative violation report and informs the victim, as well as the liable individuals about the decision.

Cases of hate speech or hate crime that are classified as criminal violations are tried in the district (city) court in the first instance, and its decisions can be appealed in regional and in the Supreme Court. More detailed description of court process is described in the previous section of this report on criminal and administrative procedures.⁸⁵

Course Coverage

The process was not explored in courses for the asylum seekers or third country nationals, besides a mention that the petition should be written to the State Police, inviting to seek assistance with NGOs or the Ombudsman's Office.

5. Rights of suspects and accused

Rights of the suspects and accused are specified in the Criminal Law⁸⁶ and Law on Criminal Procedure.⁸⁷ After an arrest, the investigator has to either formally accuse the suspect or release them within a 48-hour period. The investigator or prosecutor can also decide not to release the suspect with the approval of an investigative judge. Individuals accused have rights to be informed about the allegations against them immediately after an arrest, as well as rights to have their family or a relative close to them, an educational institution or employer be notified about the arrest. Other countries' nationals have a right to have their embassy or consulate informed.

Suspects have the right to remain silent, and the right to request an interpreter by submitting a request to the responsible investigator who, if appropriate, forwards it to the administration of facility where a person has been detained. The interpreter should translate all information to the suspect, including oral and written communication, as well as evidence relevant for the case.⁸⁸

Suspects have the right to legal representation and a lawyer without any delays. Lawyers have the right to be present during interrogations, and suspects can confer with a lawyer in private. In cases of detention, a lawyer has to be made available immediately. Lawyers can receive access to the case file and evidence at the end of pre-trial process after the

⁸² The Latvian Centre for Human Rights, „[Combating Hate Crimes in Latvia: Legislation and Police](#)“, 2009, p.6

⁸³ Latvia / Criminal Procedure Law, Chapter IX (21.04.2005).

⁸⁴ Valsts policija, „[Jūs vērsāties Valsts policijā? Kas notiek tālāk? Īss ceļvedis Jūsu tiesībās](#)“ [How to file a complaint in the State Police? What happens after that? A short guide on rights], 2013, p.3

⁸⁵ Please see Chapter I, Section 3 of this report.

⁸⁶ Latvia / Krimināllikums [Criminal Law] (17.06.1998).

⁸⁷ Latvia / Kriminālprocesa likums [Criminal Procedure Law] (21.04.2005).

⁸⁸ Latvia / Noteikumi Nr.1342 “Kārtība, kādā personai, kurai ir tiesības uz aizstāvību, tikšanās laikā ar aizstāvi tiek nodrošināta tulka palīdzība” [Regulation No 1342 ‘Procedures for providing translation services to a person who has the right of defence, during a meeting with legal counsel] (19.11.2013).

case is handed over to the court or when it is dismissed. During the process, suspects are allowed to make settlements with the responsible public prosecutor to end the criminal case. There are no legal limitations to the length of pre-trial process.

Depending on the allegations, suspects during pre-trial period can be detained for up to 20 days (if faced 15-90 days in prison), up to 4 or up to 7 months (if faced 3 months to 3 years in prison), up to 9 months (if faced between 3 and 8 years in prison), and up to 18 months (if faced more than 8 years in prison).⁸⁹

Course Coverage

Various rights of asylum seekers and beneficiaries were extensively emphasized during the lecture on asylum procedure, however cases of accusations were not explored. Courses for third country nationals do not require inclusion of this topic, but it could be covered on an ad hoc basis or in individual consultations with lawyers at the Information Center for Newcomers.

6. Legal aid

Main legal forms

In Latvia, free-of-charge legal aid is provided by the Legal Aid Administration (hereinafter, LAA) according to the State Ensured Legal Aid Law. This applies to (1) all civil cases (except luxury items or services and economic activity), (2) cases during the appeals process of granting asylum, (3) appealing decisions regarding forced expulsion within the framework of the Immigration Law, (4) process of appealing Orphan's Courts' decisions and (5) complicated court processes. In criminal cases, the person directing the criminal proceedings decides whether to grant or refuse state ensured legal aid based on the Criminal Procedure law.⁹⁰

Right to legal aid includes the duty for the State to provide assistance of qualified legal counsel for preparation of the procedural documents and representation in proceedings and litigation.⁹¹ In criminal proceedings, one can also be entitled to this assistance in the process of pre-trial proceedings.⁹²

Only low-income or needy persons are entitled to state ensured legal aid. In special circumstances, such legal aid can also be granted when a person suddenly becomes unable to protect their rights (e.g. in cases of natural disaster, force majeure or other circumstances outside one's control).⁹³

Victims

In criminal or civil proceedings, legal aid is not ensured to the person affected by a crime before the person has been legally recognised as a victim. Victims have the right to receive state ensured legal aid after the proceedings are initiated by requesting compensation for financial losses that were incurred as a result of the proceedings. Special assistance is provided to minors, needy adults or persons testifying in criminal proceedings.

⁸⁹ Fair Trials International (2015), [Criminal Proceedings and Defence Rights in Latvia](#), p.20

⁹⁰ [„Legal Aid Provided by the State“](#), Legal Aid Administration. Accessed April 25, 2018.

⁹¹ [„Valsts nodrošinātā juridiskā palīdzība“](#), Juridiskās palīdzības administrācija, [„Legal Aid available“, Legal Aid Administration]. Accessed April 25, 2018.

⁹² Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS (2013), Victim's rights to legal aid in the criminal proceedings in Latvia, p.3

⁹³ [„Legal Aid Provided by the State“](#), Legal Aid Administration. Accessed April 25, 2018.

There are no special regulations for victims who are third country nationals or citizens of other EU member states. All of them have equal rights to be recognised as victims, and as such receive the same level of state ensured legal aid as citizens.⁹⁴

Asylum Seekers and Foreigners Subject to Return

According to the Asylum Law and State Ensured Legal Aid Law, asylum seekers can apply for legal aid if they want to appeal a decision taken by the State Border Guard on registration or detention to the district court, or a decision adopted by the OCMA – to the Administrative District Court on these decisions:

- a) decision to leave asylum application without examination or discontinuing examination;
- b) refusal to grant refugee or subsidiary protection status;
- c) transfer of asylum seeker to appropriate Member State;
- d) refusal to disburse subsistence and daily allowance.⁹⁵

Legal aid can also be requested regarding a disputed decision of voluntary return or against a decision regarding the initially disputed removal order. In this case, legal aid is available for individuals who either reside in the country or have been detained and reside in specially arranged premises or accommodation.⁹⁶

Relevant Procedures

The general procedure for requesting legal aid requires submitting a written request to the LAA, which includes information that confirms the person's right to request legal aid, such as a written confirmation regarding status of needy person or proof of refugee or subsidiary protection status. In addition, copies of documents regarding the relevant proceedings, status of a case or investigation and similar should also be included.⁹⁷

In cases when legal aid is requested by an asylum seeker in accordance with the Asylum Law or foreign resident regarding specific provisions on appeals against decisions of disputed voluntary return or against decision on disputed removal order,⁹⁸ either (1) the State Border Guard invites the provider of legal aid from the list prepared by the LAA, or (2) the OCMA or the State Border Guard send a private request for provision of legal aid to the LAA, which then assigns the provider of legal aid for the specific case.⁹⁹

Main Institutions and Other Stakeholders

Legal Aid Administration, subordinated by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Latvia, is the institution responsible to ensure access to legal aid to low-income and needy individuals, as well as state compensation for victims of violent crimes. The institution examines applications for legal aid and compensation claims, pays out legal assistance and victim compensation funds, approves applications, conducts agreements and maintains a register with providers of legal aid.¹⁰⁰

Latvian Council of Sworn Advocates is an independent organisation that unites all sworn advocates practising in Latvia. The organization provides access to a list of all legally practising attorneys in various districts.¹⁰¹

Society „Crisis and consultation centre “Skalbes”” is an independent NGO that works as a walk-in and telephone support in crisis situations. The centre supports individuals who are victims of spousal abuse, child abuse, death of relatives, sudden loss of work, loneliness or terminal illness, by providing free consultations on Family Law.¹⁰²

⁹⁴ Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS (2013), Victim's rights to legal aid in the criminal proceedings in Latvia, p.8-9

⁹⁵ „Legal Aid in the Asylum Area“, Legal Aid Administration. Accessed April 25, 2018.

⁹⁶ „Legal Aid to Foreigners Subject to Return“, Legal Aid Administration. Accessed April 25, 2018.

⁹⁷ „Legal Aid Provided by the State“, Legal Aid Administration. Accessed April 25, 2018.

⁹⁸ „Legal Aid in the Asylum Area“, Legal Aid Administration. Accessed April 25, 2018.

⁹⁹ „Legal Aid in the Asylum Area“, Legal Aid Administration. Accessed April 25, 2018.

¹⁰⁰ „Information on the Authority“, Legal Aid Administration. Accessed April 25, 2018.

¹⁰¹ „The Latvian Collegium of Sworn Advocates“. Accessed April 24, 2018.

¹⁰² „About us“, Society „Skalbes“. Accessed April 29, 2018.

Society “Shelter “Safe House”” is an NGO providing individual consultations to third country nationals at the Information for Immigrants / Information Center for Newcomers, a project-based service. This NGO offers consultations on, among other things, legal issues.¹⁰³

Coverage in Courses

Course for asylum seekers mentioned the possibility of receiving legal aid when the relevant steps of the asylum procedure were examined. No procedure for applying for the aid was examined, however possibility to receive consultations on legal aspects of individual asylum cases at the Information Center for Immigrants / Information Center for Newcomers was mentioned.

Courses for third country nationals do not require covering aspects of legal aid, however they could be explored on an ad hoc basis.

¹⁰³ „[Shelter 'Safe House'](#)“. Accessed April 29, 2018.

II. Methodology of teaching basics of national law and fundamental rights

While integration courses for asylum seekers and third country nationals follow similar structure and guidelines, their content is developed and implemented by four different organisations. As a result, the profile and qualifications of teachers, teaching methods, content, location of activities and other specifics differ among the providers, and these differences are highlighted in the subsequent and other parts of this report. A more detailed case-study of integration courses provided to asylum seekers by NGO “Shelter ‘Safe House’” was performed during the preparation of this analysis and will be explored more in detail below.

1. Profile and qualifications of teachers

Teaching staff for **asylum seekers** includes two separate lecturers, both of whom have legal background and experience in working with members of the target group. They are employed by the service provider as regular teaching staff.¹⁰⁴

As for **third country nationals**, profile and qualifications differ depending on the course provider:

Project “Integrācijas ABC” employs outside experts with educational qualifications, as well as practical background in the course topic (for example, history lecturer is a historian who also works for a museum).¹⁰⁵

Project “Mēs – Latvijā” also employs regularly employed academic lecturers for some parts, while providing outside experts for other parts of the course (e.g. expert on taxes from State Revenue Services).¹⁰⁶

Project “Esi sveicināta, simtgades Latvija” employs lecturers from Daugavpils University with academic and teaching background, as well as visiting guest lecturers in the university. Their lecturers hold various academic degrees, for example, culture and traditions are covered by a lecturer with PhD in Philology.¹⁰⁷

2. Teaching methods

Most of the course providers conduct general lectures, where lecturer uses a pre-prepared presentation as the main tool of instruction. In case of courses for asylum seekers, lecturers used a PowerPoint presentation combined with additional visualisation tools, including live browsing of websites, Google Maps, videos, and others.

One of the providers of courses for third country nationals, however, emphasized that their courses focus on classroom and group discussions as the main tool for more effective learning. As a result, each of the target groups at various locations might acquire information on slightly different topics based on their interest. According to the project manager, this kind of discussion allows for a focus on issues that are more important for the specific target group.¹⁰⁸

Previous research also suggests that integration courses often include questions and answers sessions, since the target group chooses to attend lecturers specifically to have their questions answered. Questions and answers play a significant

¹⁰⁴ Please see Section 4 of this Chapter.

¹⁰⁵ L. Celma, interview with author, April 24, 2018.

¹⁰⁶ I. Janiša, interview with author, April 23, 2018.

¹⁰⁷ M. Burīma, interview with author, April 23, 2018.

¹⁰⁸ L. Celma, interview with author, April 24, 2018

role for all integration courses, as they also often allow groups to explore topics that might be of interest but were not initially included in the course content.¹⁰⁹

3. Inclusion of host communities in the social orientation curriculum

Both types of courses – for asylum seekers and for third country nationals – include activities that aim to facilitate engagement with local communities.

Project specifications for third country nationals require between 1-3 social events during the course with the inclusion of local community.¹¹⁰ One of the projects currently offers a creative evening, a trip to the Latgale region, as well as educational event for families.¹¹¹ The second project has organised a tradition day at an open-air ethnographic museum, as well as a cultural day at the National Library of Latvia.¹¹² Third project includes a workshop aimed at introducing the culinary traditions of Latvia and the Latgale region in particular.¹¹³

Project “Esi sveicināta, simtgades Latvija” employs volunteer translators, the majority of whom are also students at the university.¹¹⁴

Courses for asylum seekers currently offer a non-mandatory option of visiting a chocolate museum after completion of the courses.¹¹⁵ In the previous project implementation period, professional study visits to education centres and companies, as well as other cultural and education visits, were also offered.

4. Case study

General description

This case study is an illustration based on observing two lectures out of a five-lecture course provided to a group of 15 asylum seekers, an integration course provided by NGO “Shelter ‘Safe House’” in the framework of a project funded by AMIF.¹¹⁶ Such a five-lecture course is held several times during the project implementation period, the frequency depending on the demand at the asylum seekers reception centre. It should be noted that the attendees of the course during the observation were individually arrived males which might have influenced the questions asked during the lectures.

The first lecture observed included general information about the country and legal aspects of residency, while the second lecture focused on banking services, social assistance, discrimination and equal opportunities. These two lectures were chosen as they directly addressed the aims of RACCOMBAT. Information on the content of other lectures were obtained during interviews with the project manager and lecturers of the courses.

¹⁰⁹ „Baltic Institute of Social Sciences” (2017), „Trešo valstu pilsoņu situācijas izpēte Latvijā 2017” [Portrait of Third Country Nationals in Latvia for 2017], p.91

¹¹⁰ „Programmas, kas uzlabo imigrantu līdzdalību (integrācijas kursi) (...) konkursa nolikums.” [Project Specifications for Activities that Foster Immigrant Participation in Host Society, Part 3]. Accessed 26 April, 2018.

¹¹¹ „Projects „MĒS-Latvijā”” [Project „Us – in Latvia“], Inovāciju atbalsta centrs. Accessed April 29, 2018.

¹¹² „Integrācijas ABC – 2017” [Integration ABC – 2017]. Accessed April 26, 2018.

¹¹³ „Uzsāktas projekta „Esi sveicināta, simtgades Latvija!” aktivitātes” [Project „Welcome, Latvia for 100th Anniversary” has begun]. Accessed April 28, 2018.

¹¹⁴ M. Burima, interview with author, April 23, 2018.

¹¹⁵ „(...) Atbalsta pasākumi starptautiskās aizsardzības personām (...) konkursa nolikums” [Support activities for beneficiaries of international protection. Project specifications]. Accessed April 26, 2018.

¹¹⁶ „Atbalsta pasākumi starptautiskās aizsardzības personām”, Society „Shelter ‘Safe House’”. Accessed April 25, 2018.

More detailed information about the course contents is available in Lāce, Agnese, un Rasmuss Filips Geks. „Mapping of social orientation: the case of Latvia”, *Centre for Public Policy Providus* (2018), p.9

Premises and structure

Lectures were conducted in the library room of the asylum seekers reception centre. Whiteboard and a PowerPoint presentation on projector were used interchangeably during both of the lectures. The asylum seekers were divided among two large tables based on the translation that was required. Bookshelves with Latvian language books, covered by A4 posters of common Latvian phrases were on two of the walls in the room. Each asylum seeker was given a folder with a roadmap, which illustrated a number of lectures in the course. The lecturer signed by the respective milestone at the end of the lecture. All five signatures are needed to be able to access the socialising activity, the field-trip after the course.

Each of the two lectures was three hours long with a 10-minute break in between, and each lecture was conducted by a different lecturer (however, both of them are the only lecturers of the whole course). Both lecturers had legal, as well as educational background. The language of instruction was Latvian, which was translated first to English and then further from English to Arabic, Urdu and Tigrinya. Sometimes one of the interpreters used Russian to ask questions to the lecturer, leaving out those interpreters who only speak English, so a separate explanation of the question asked was done by the lecturer, and the translation cycle was repeated.

First Lecture

Content and methods

First part of the lecture dealt with the legal and practical aspects of residency and asylum. Path through the asylum procedure in Latvia was illustrated with a flow chart, where different options (refugee status, subsidiary protection status or rejection) for the outcome of asylum application were considered and explained, while emphasizing the opportunity to appeal the decisions regarding asylum, voluntary return or removal order and access to legal aid from the LAA. Deportation to the country of origin or a transit country was explained as the last option.

Furthermore, differences between status of subsidiary protection and refugee status were explained, as well as different types of residence permits, emphasizing the possibility to acquire a permit to reside in Latvia with a different justification if subsidiary protection status was no longer available. The principle of individual approach to each case of asylum, the family reunification principle and its requirements, Schengen zone travel rules and necessity for visa, as well as personal documents and fees for beneficiaries of international protection were all discussed.

Second part of the lecture contained general information about the country – its geographical location and size, map of provinces, administrative territories and major towns, the basic ethnic makeup of the country (61% Latvian, 25% Russian), population size, national and spoken languages, as well as the country flag were all covered. Course participants were also introduced to basic information about the Latvian Constitution, including the parliamentary structure, the roles of Prime Minister and the President, current and previous currencies, and history of German and Russian occupation. All of these topics were explored with a presentation, as well as live demonstration of Wikipedia and various other Internet sites containing this information.

Several aspects of Latvian culture were shown, including information about the 100 Year Anniversary and song and dance festival coming up later this year. Popular sports were mentioned – ice hockey, football, volleyball, skeleton, BMX, as well as fondness of theatre was emphasized. Videos of previous song and dance festivals were shown. Different seasons and appropriate clothing for each was explained, and some aspects of Latvian nature, including common bugs, were shown.

Lastly, information about available Internet sites, where information for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection is published, was presented.

Observations

Overall, the quality of translation from Latvian to English was excellent, and the interpreter managed to explain some concepts even more understandably than they had been explained in Latvian. A lot of questions were asked, mostly about possibilities to become involved in the daily life of Latvia, especially regarding employment during various stages of asylum process, as well as education and the available scholarships. These, while valuable for some, often interrupted the flow of the lecture. Similarly, using English as medium language and the limited time for each lecture restricted the lecturer from spending more time for explaining the course contents in detail.

It was often not clear if all participants understood some of the specific legal concepts that were introduced. Reasons why different international protection status might be given were listed, however understandable and relatable examples were few. Important concepts such as legal aid were mentioned, but the procedure for accessing them was never explained. The value of some of the course elements, such as skeleton video or detailed explanation of travel document appearance and contents was also not clear. Given the limited time for the lecture, emphasis could have instead been placed on the question and answer session or the appeal procedure of decisions in the asylum process.

Second Lecture

Content and methods

Similarly to the first lecture, this lecture was also guided by a presentation that contained text only in Latvian. Videos illustrating the lecture topics were demonstrated, and some individual questions were discussed among the group.

Lecture started with a description of what asylum seekers should do after receiving a decision on their applications – either acquire the appropriate documents or file an appeal with the help of legal aid providers. They were informed that social workers and social mentors will help them with receiving the documents in case they have received a status of international protection. Visual depictions of the documents to be received were displayed. Participants of the course were also informed that they could ask for assistance at Information Centre for Newcomers in case they wanted to appeal the decision. No details on the appeal process were provided.

Afterwards, role of banks and the process of accessing banking services was explained – process of opening an account, importance of banking services in the country, length of time to open an account, principle of private ownership, costs of banking card, principles for using an ATM, action to be taken in case banking card was lost and principles of the PIN code. A short, animated video illustrating the process of acquiring a banking card was demonstrated.

Second part of the lecture focused on the available support after receiving international protection status. The services of State Employment Agency were described, namely, assistance in finding a job, vocational training and free-of-charge Latvian language courses. Explanation of the monthly subsistence allowance provided after receiving international protection status was given, modelling the income for an individual and a family with two children. Then the principle of monthly communication with and continuous attendance of State Employment Agency offices as condition for further financial support was explained, emphasizing that leaving the country will lead to receiving no further financial support. Then the difference between state social benefits and municipality-administered social benefits was explained, as only recognized refugees have access to both. State social benefits include parental allowances, allowances for caring for a child with disability, among others. Municipality-administered social assistance is mostly provided to needy persons, therefore, an explanation for how to calculate whether income per family member falls beyond the poverty line was provided, in addition to the importance of registering one's official place of residence in accessing services in the municipality.

The third part of the lecture was devoted to the topic of discrimination and equal opportunities. Latvian Constitution was described as the guarantee for human rights, including the principle of equality in courts of law and judicial independence.

Prohibition of discrimination was highlighted, listing possible legal reasons for discrimination. Statistics for discrimination trends and their changes in Latvian society over the last 5 years were shown and explained, highlighting the most common reasons for discrimination – age, gender and disability, along with the fact that people were rarely discriminated due to their religious beliefs or race. Institutions where assistance can be received in case of discrimination were mentioned – NGO “Shelter ‘Safe House’”, Office of the Ombudsman and Latvian Human Rights Centre.

In between, a video on different seasons, as well as various clothing for the appropriate seasons was demonstrated. At the end of the lecture, Information Centre for Newcomers was presented, including the possibility to receive individual consultations.

Observations

Overall, some parts of this lecture were broadly similar to the first lecture of the course, and it is not clear why those needed to be repeated. That may indicate lack of coordination between the two lecturers. In addition, comparing to the first lecture, lack of English knowledge prevented the lecturer from being able to check the quality of translation, which meant that sometimes incorrect details were communicated to the participants.

Some forms of communication and content choices in the presentation were ambiguous and might have caused misunderstandings. Since the presentation only contained text in Latvian, it seemed to have no practical value for the participants of the course. Similarly, references and translation of complicated names of legal acts did not provide meaningful understanding regarding the contents of the specific law. In one case, when discussing banking, an impression that the target group is viewed and treated as potential terrorists might have been created by talking about anti-money laundering measures, namely, describing a form that everybody needs to fill when opening a bank account as a special measure for immigrants.

Some contents of the lecture were unnecessarily specific and without a clear purpose, for example, specific and lengthy explanations for structure of small banking fees at one particular bank or a detailed review of maternity benefits for an all-male audience. On the other hand, other types of information could be described more in detail, for example, the calculation of each type of allowance could have been communicated more effectively using a summary table. Moreover, examples for some important concepts were lacking. Discrimination was exemplified only with disability or vegetarianism, which did not seem relevant for this particular target group.

III. Assessing the impact of teaching law and fundamental rights as part of social orientation

1. Existing periodic and ad hoc assessments of social orientation system

The social orientation system is assessed in regular planning periods and during discussions on society integration policy guidelines which are defined for a period of six years.¹¹⁷ Additionally, medium term planning documents with shorter, two-year implementation plans are also issued.¹¹⁸ The social orientation system and its activities are evaluated when assessment of the implementation plan of the previous period is conducted, thus, every two years.

Assessment of specific course providers is conducted during and after a specific project has concluded. The course providers are required to produce narrative and financial reports on the project activities according to the templates provided by the Ministry of Culture, the coordinating institution of society integration policy.¹¹⁹

2. Indicators used to assess social orientation system

Generally individual course providers are evaluated based on the narrative and financial reports they produce, while assessing whether all of the criteria required in the specific project have been met. Primary indicator for both types of courses specified in the respective project specifications is the number of individuals from the target group that have participated in the courses. For asylum seekers, the target number was set at 500 asylum seekers over the course of the project period from January 2018 until June 2020,¹²⁰ while for third country nationals the overall goal among all projects is 1000 individuals from May 2017 until December 2018.¹²¹

Although not required by the coordinating institution, the provider of courses for asylum seekers also outsourced an external review during the previous project period. Its evaluation reports assessed the courses based on the planned project activities, course reviews from participants, analysis of main challenges and suggestions for each project activity, statistics of course participants, as well as general conclusions from the implementation. The current project period will not include such a review.¹²²

Furthermore, the overall social orientation system has been reviewed and evaluated in research reports commissioned by state institutions. The 2017 report by the “Baltic Institute of Social Sciences” on third country nationals in Latvia reviewed all of the AMIF project activities, which included survey of third country nationals on the quality and necessity

¹¹⁷ Currently: [“Ministru kabineta 2011.gada 20.oktobra rīkojums Nr.542 “Par Nacionālās identitātes, pilsoniskās sabiedrības un integrācijas politikas pamatnostādņem 2012.-2018.gadam”](#) [Cabinet Regulation No 542 of October 20, 2011]. Accessed January 15, 2018.

¹¹⁸ See, for example, [“Ministru kabineta 2014.gada 18.februāra rīkojums Nr. 268 “Par Nacionālās identitātes, pilsoniskās sabiedrības un integrācijas politikas pamatnostādņu 2012.-2018. gadam īstenošanas plānu 2017.-2018. gadam”](#) [Cabinet Regulation No 268 of 18.02.2014]. Accessed January 15, 2018.

¹¹⁹ M. Burima, L. Celma, I. Janiša interviews with author, April 23 and 25, 2018.

¹²⁰ [„\(..\) Atbalsta pasākumi starptautiskās aizsardzības personām \(..\) konkursa nolikums”](#) [Support activities for beneficiaries of international protection. Project specifications]. Accessed April 26, 2018.

¹²¹ [„Programmas, kas uzlabo imigrantu līdzdalību \(integrācijas kursi\) \(..\) konkursa nolikums.”](#) [Project Specifications for Activities that Foster Immigrant Participation in Host Society, Part 3]. Accessed 26 April, 2018.

¹²² SIA Weitner (2017), „Atbalsta pasākumi starptautiskās aizsardzības personām. Projekta otrais starpposma izvērtējums” [Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection. Second Evaluation of the Project].

of integration courses, as well as interviews with organisations responsible for project implementation.¹²³ Similarly a 2015 research report by Society Integration Foundation assessed accessibility and quality of integration courses.¹²⁴

3. Feedback by beneficiaries

All of the course providers are required to collect feedback from beneficiaries at least twice during the duration of the project, which is then reviewed by the Ministry of Culture.

Generally, the feedback seems to be satisfactory, and publicly available feedback for one course reported satisfaction rates of over 90%.¹²⁵ The questions in the form, however, are very general and do not allow for nuanced assessment of the quality of the course. Survey of third country nationals also indicates positive reviews with 90% saying they were generally satisfied. They indicated that availability of interpretation in understandable language, as well as quality of interpreters was excellent.¹²⁶

On the other hand, it was pointed out that information in lectures is hard to comprehend, so more lectures and slower pace might be beneficial.¹²⁷ Several respondents pointed out that some of the information received from courses was different from their experience afterwards.¹²⁸ Our observations during the case study confirm this conclusion.

Some of the social events and excursions (for example, visit to the chocolate museum) were also reviewed as generally positive and entertaining, while others (such as trips to explore culture or history) were viewed as less interesting and relevant.¹²⁹

Ability to use Feedback

Feedback can be taken into account by course lecturers on an ad hoc basis. They have the option to adjust and change the content of their courses during the implementation of the project. Similarly, institutions that offer this service in several consecutive projects can change and improve the contents of the course according to changes in project specifications or their own experience.

On a broader scale, the Ministry of Culture and practitioners involved in developing national integration guidelines and the two-year implementation plans have the opportunity to review feedback from beneficiaries of the specific projects and change the form, contents or coverage of the courses that is afterwards reflected in project calls.

¹²³ „Baltic Institute of Social Sciences” (2017), „Trešo valstu pilsoņu situācijas izpēte Latvijā 2017” [Portrait of Third Country Nationals in Latvia for 2017], p. 79-97

¹²⁴ Society Integration Foundation (2015), „Trešo valstu pilsoņu porters Latvijā” [Portrait of Third Country Nationals in Latvia], p.59-73

¹²⁵ „Projekta kvalitātes novērtējuma anketu rezultātu izvērtējums (2017. gads)” [Project Quality Evaluation Assessment for 2017], Innovation Support Centre. Accessed April 23, 2018.

¹²⁶ „Baltic Institute of Social Sciences” (2017), „Trešo valstu pilsoņu situācijas izpēte Latvijā 2017” [Portrait of Third Country Nationals in Latvia for 2017], p. 40

¹²⁷ „Baltic Institute of Social Sciences” (2017), „Trešo valstu pilsoņu situācijas izpēte Latvijā 2017” [Portrait of Third Country Nationals in Latvia for 2017], p. 93-94

¹²⁸ „Baltic Institute of Social Sciences” (2017), „Trešo valstu pilsoņu situācijas izpēte Latvijā 2017” [Portrait of Third Country Nationals in Latvia for 2017], p. 93

¹²⁹ „Baltic Institute of Social Sciences” (2017), „Trešo valstu pilsoņu situācijas izpēte Latvijā 2017” [Portrait of Third Country Nationals in Latvia for 2017], p. 94

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

1. Ability and capacity of social orientation system to raise beneficiaries' awareness and equip them against acts of racism and xenophobia

The overall capacity of social integration courses to raise awareness on discrimination issues is severely limited. While the integration courses for asylum seekers include the topic module for the duration of the current project, lecture on the topic was very basic. The courses failed to explain various types of discrimination using understandable examples, nor were there any explanations for the procedures of filing complaints or reporting offences.

Integration courses for third country nationals might only cover these topics on ad hoc basis upon request from the participants as they are not included in the topic requirements. That means that only in cases when participants have already encountered discrimination this topic will be addressed and might still deal with only very specific cases instead of providing a comprehensive overview.

Assessment of Complaints

The number of complaints received by The Ombudsman's Office or cases initiated by the police is small. Most of the cases that were initiated dealt with hate speech online. In 2016 there was an investigation regarding denial of entry to foreigners into specific bars and nightclubs¹³⁰ and in 2015 a case on foreign students being bullied and experiencing fraud in renting apartments was highlighted by the media.¹³¹ Additionally, The Ombudsman's Office and the Latvian Centre for Human Rights report having received several complaints from international students regarding discrimination (see Table 1).

	The Ombudsman's Office*	Hate crimes recorded by the police**	Cases initiated by the police**
2014	5	13	7
2015	2	11	1
2016	2	11	7

Table 1. Data from OSCE Hate Crime Reporting** and U.S. Department of State*.¹³²

Similarly, Fundamental Rights Agency, which surveys Russian minority in Latvia on discrimination and harassment due to ethnic or immigrant background, in 2017 reported that 11% had experienced discrimination and 6% had experienced harassment in the last 5 years, while 6% had experienced discrimination and 4% had experienced harassment in the last 12 months.¹³³

Given the small number of complaints and lack of survey data for asylum seekers or third country nationals, the effectiveness of the integration courses can only be assessed on an individual basis where specific knowledge about a member of the target group who has reported a violation as a result of the course content can allow for that conclusion.

¹³⁰ U.S. Department of State, Latvia 2016 Human Rights Report, p.21

¹³¹ U.S. Department of State, Latvia 2015 Human Rights Report, p.21

¹³² „Human Rights Reports“. U.S. Department of State. Accessed April 28, 2018.

„Latvia“, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Accessed April 27, 2018. <http://hatecrime.osce.org/latvia>

¹³³ „Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey“, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. Accessed April 30, 2018.

While Latvian Centre for Human Rights receives reports and complaints on cases of discrimination, there is no information on integration courses specifically leading to these reports.¹³⁴

Coverage of Integration Courses

		Asylum Seekers*	Third Country Nationals**		
			"Integrācijas ABC"	"Esi sveicināta, simtgades Latvija"	"Mēs – Latvijā"
2016	Rīga	157	-	-	-
	Other regions	0	-	-	-
2017	Rīga	298	72	0	88
	Other regions	0	81	80	0

Table 2. Data by Society "Shelter 'Safe House'"* and project course providers**. ¹³⁵

Given the small number of asylum seekers as part of third country nationals in the country, their access to integration courses has been almost universal. According to statistics by the Ministry of Culture, in 2017 77% of all asylum seekers attended the integration courses,¹³⁶ and the Ministry plans to increase the share to 85% over the next two years.

The share of third country nationals who have participated in social orientation courses is very small in comparison with the total number of third country nationals in the country. The total number of participants in 2017 was only 321, which the Ministry of Culture plans to increase to 2000 in 2020. Similarly, an overall survey of third country nationals indicates that only around 20% have taken part in integration courses, and majority of participants have permanent residence permits. Furthermore, courses are more often attended by individuals who live outside of capital city (28% in regional cities and 23% in regions in comparison with 18-19% in Riga).¹³⁷ Both the opportunities to attend the courses and the motivation to participate contribute to such an outcome.

According to interviews with programme managers, language courses generally generate significantly more interest than social integration courses since they are perceived as more beneficial and useful.¹³⁸ Similarly, previous research suggests that these courses are of interest to third country nationals who have arrived in Latvia less than two months ago, as others have already created sufficient professional and social networks to acquire information that is of interest to them.¹³⁹

Regularity

Regarding course regularity, asylum seekers have greater access to courses since they are offered while the target group still resides at the temporary reception centre. All asylum seekers are assigned to a group for which specific course schedule is designed, and new groups are formed as additional asylum seekers arrive at the centre. As for third country nationals, the courses are only available during the specific project implementation period and their availability depends on the course provider, which offers courses on a rolling basis after a sign-up period.

As for law and fundamental rights components, information about legal aspects of residency, as well as discrimination and equal opportunities are a regular part of the curriculum for asylum seekers. Courses for third country nationals

¹³⁴ E.Oiļevskis, interview with the author, April 23, 2018.

¹³⁵ „Atbalsta pasākumi starptautiskās aizsardzības personām”, Society „Shelter 'Safe House'”. Accessed April 25, 2018.

M. Burima, L. Celma, I. Janiša. Seperate interviews with author, April 23 and 25, 2018.

¹³⁶ „Baltic Institute of Social Sciences” (2017), „Trešo valstu pilsoņu situācijas izpēte Latvijā 2017” [Portrait of Third Country Nationals in Latvia for 2017].

¹³⁷ „Baltic Institute of Social Sciences” (2017), „Trešo valstu pilsoņu situācijas izpēte Latvijā 2017” [Portrait of Third Country Nationals in Latvia for 2017], p.90

¹³⁸ L. Celma, interview with author, April 24, 2018.

¹³⁹ „Baltic Institute of Social Sciences” (2017), „Trešo valstu pilsoņu situācijas izpēte Latvijā 2017” [Portrait of Third Country Nationals in Latvia for 2017], p.90

require only explanation of the Latvian political system, while law and fundamental rights can be explored on an ad hoc basis depending on the specific group, course provided and lecturer.

Areas Covered

For third country nationals the only content related to law and fundamental rights includes some aspects of the political and legal system in the country, such as the parliamentary structure and the Constitution. Other aspects related to these topics can be covered on an ad hoc basis depending on the course provider, lecturer and the format.

For asylum seekers the coverage is broader. Together with legal aspects of asylum and residency, the course covers the political system, parliamentary structure and the Constitution of the country. Furthermore, the course includes a separate module on discrimination and equal opportunities, which explores types and examples of discrimination and suggests institutions where discrimination can be reported, and legal assistance sought. Similarly, courses mention access to legal aid, as well as some law enforcement or judicial institutions, however these are rarely addressed in detail.

Depth of the contents

Given the length of the courses is between 16 and 30 academic hours for both target groups, depth of the course content is quite limited. The topic of asylum procedure for asylum seekers is explored in depth, but for general topic areas, including political system, discrimination, equal opportunities they only manage to cover basic concepts and principles, and review only some examples and materials related to those either upon a request from a participant or based on their previous experience.

Courses that are provided to third country nationals will differ depending on the course provided and choice of content by the lecturers. In case of the discussion approach, some groups might learn about select topics in a more detailed manner than others.

Appropriateness of teaching staff and approach

The teaching staff qualifications differ among course providers, but generally they have the necessary educational or academic background, as per requirements in project technical specifications.

Some of the feedback from course providers stated that using legal practitioners to lead lectures on topics they are knowledgeable in (for example, an expert from State Revenue Service as instructor for tax system) fails to achieve the purpose of the courses, which is to give advice that is more useful in practice, rather than theoretical knowledge about the topic.

The teaching staff for courses for asylum seekers, while experts on legal matters, seemed to lack in-depth knowledge about some of the topics, especially discrimination and equal opportunities. These topics require an ability to clearly communicate relatable examples of various types of discrimination that could equip members of the target group with the tools necessary to recognise them in practice. Instead, the course only covered legal and theoretical basis of discrimination and some statistics on the topic without providing the course participants with practical knowledge on how to recognize discrimination and how to react in case they have been victims of discriminatory acts or attitudes.

Despite the fact that interpretation is provided during the lectures, language knowledge of lecturers at least for the intermediary language (English) was occasionally not sufficient to make sure that correct information is being forwarded to course participants.

2. Recommendations

Structural issues

According to research on third country nationals in Latvia, integration courses organised with AMIF funding currently face important structural issues, including (1) motivation for the target group to attend the courses, (2) capacity to organize courses for specific target groups, (3) separation of language and integration course activities, which limits attendance, (4) limitation of social event length to 8 hours, thus limiting capacity for more inclusion. Similarly, only one institution has the required institutional capacity and experience to organize integration courses for asylum seekers, which means other possible actors have limited access to state and project funding.¹⁴⁰ These concerns should be noted when structure and contents of integration courses, as well technical specifications required for implementation are evaluated in the future policy planning periods.

Lack of Continuity

Similarly to research on language and integration course quality in 2015, we conclude that lack of course continuity is one of the main issues Latvian social orientation system currently faces.¹⁴¹ All of the integration courses currently available are based on funding from the AMIF, and similar activities before that were funded by the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals (2007-2013). This means that support for social orientation is not regular and continuous, which prevents a creation of more accessible and comprehensive social orientation system in Latvia. If a comprehensive, continuous and coherent social orientation system is to be implemented, the funding and organisation scheme of integration courses must be altered.

Focus on Practical Aspects

The contents of courses, especially for asylum seekers, currently have a strong focus on practical aspects of life in Latvia. While feedback indicates that this approach is valuable and necessary,¹⁴² this sometimes prevents courses from covering important aspects of the Latvian culture and society. For example, the courses for asylum seekers explain the process for accessing banking in significant detail, while they fail to explain differences in cultural and societal norms with the countries of origin, such as tendency for both parents to be employed or women being more represented in managerial positions. This is a challenge for both the course providers when developing their content, as well as Ministry of Culture and policy planners responsible for developing contents of the courses in the future. One of the ways to address this is intertwine practical aspects with additional legal or cultural explanations, for example, to address issues of discrimination at the work place or available support to parents when employed during the lecture on employment in Latvia.

Length of the Courses

All providers of courses for third country nationals indicated that the number of academic hours allowed for the courses are insufficient. Given the defined topic areas, lecturers find it very difficult to cover all of the aspects of certain topics that beneficiaries might be interested in. The necessity for consecutive interpretation can also slow down the pace of the course, which makes covering topics that might also be of interest for beneficiaries, such as access to education or healthcare, even more difficult. Offering lengthier social orientation courses or different levels of such courses will provide more space to address important aspects of life in Latvia more in detail.

Integration Courses and Language Training

General interest for integration courses, especially for third country nationals, is significantly lower than interest for language courses. When integration courses are conducted as separate activities, they attract less members of the target group and as such are less effective. By contrast, language and integration courses that are a part of the same programme allow members of the target group with initial interest in language courses to also attend integration courses.

¹⁴⁰ „Baltic Institute of Social Sciences” (2017), „Trešo valstu pilsoņu situācijas izpēte Latvijā 2017” [Reviewing Conditions of Third Country Nationals in Latvia 2017], p.91-92

¹⁴¹ Society Integration Foundation (2015), „Trešo valstu pilsoņu portrets Latvijā” [Portrait of Third Country Nationals in Latvia], p.3

¹⁴² „Baltic Institute of Social Sciences” (2017), „Trešo valstu pilsoņu situācijas izpēte Latvijā 2017” [Reviewing Conditions of Third Country Nationals in Latvia 2017], p.94

This indicates that the combined approach might be preferable to separate courses, and it might also prove to be more resource efficient from an organisational perspective.

General Asylum System

For asylum seekers, several practitioners concluded that inadequate access to other aspects of the integration process, such as housing or employment, prevents people from being able to focus on issues of discrimination or exercising their legal rights to seek criminal charges or civil damages. As such, in order for asylum seekers to be better equipped with tools and ability to prevent racism and discrimination, a robust asylum system that primarily provides adequate access to housing and employment has to be available. Currently, lecturers face situations where they have to explain why such basic assistance is not available, even though it is not their responsibility and it is difficult to provide strategies for action in such circumstances.

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