

# Background Information: Higher Education System in Latvia



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# Higher Education System in Latvia

## 1. General Characteristics

<b>Population</b>	
Total population (1.1.2013) (million) <sup>1</sup>	2.02
Population density (2013) (persons per square kilometre) <sup>2</sup>	32.4
<b>Population Structure (2013) (share of total population %)<sup>3</sup></b>	
0-14 years	14.4
15-24 years	12.0
25-49 years	34.4
50-64 years	20.4
65 years and older	18.8
<b>GDP</b>	
GDP per capita in PPS (2013), EU 28 = 100 <sup>4</sup>	64
GDP year-on-year growth rate (2013) <sup>5</sup>	4.2
<b>Education (2009/2010) (All levels)<sup>6</sup></b>	
Enrolment	
Total (ISCED 0-6)	460,129
Tertiary Level of Education (ISCED 5-6) (%)	24.5
<b>Tertiary Education<sup>6</sup></b>	
Population with tertiary education (2011) (%)	
25 – 54 years	29.7
55 – 74 years	18.4
Population aged 30 – 34 years with tertiary education (2011) (%)	35.7
Public expenditure on tertiary education (percentage of GDP) (2009)	0.8

## 2. Types of Higher Education Institutions

There are three types of higher education institutions in Latvia – universities, non-universities, and colleges (*koledža*). The Law on Institutions of Higher Education distinguishes between the various types of institutions. Universities and non-universities offer both academic and professional higher education programmes and offer degrees in first (Bachelor), second (Master), and third (Doctoral) cycle qualifications. Academic higher education programmes focus on independent scientific research activities and provide

<sup>1</sup> European Commission. (2013). *Eurostat Compact Guides: Basic Figures on the EU, Winter 2013/2014 Edition*. Luxembourg: Publications office of the European Union.

<sup>2</sup> Eurostat. (2013). *Population density*. Retrieved from <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00003&plugin=0>

<sup>3</sup> Eurostat (2013). *People by age group*. Retrieved from <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=tps00010&language=en>

<sup>4</sup> Eurostat. (2013). *GDP per capita in PPS*. Retrieved from <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tec00114>

<sup>5</sup> Eurostat (2013). *Real GDP growth rate* Retrieved from <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tec00115>

<sup>6</sup> European Union (2013). *European Social Statistics*. Luxembourg: Publications office of the European Union.

theoretical foundation for professional work. Professional higher education programmes, on the other hand, are oriented towards labour market.

Colleges may function as higher education institutions or as independent institutions. Colleges offer first level professional higher education study programmes geared towards skill acquisition for specific professions.

### **3. Study Structure<sup>7</sup>**

The higher education system in Latvia comprises academic and professional higher education programmes with Bachelor and Master degrees in both professional and academic higher education programmes.

#### *Academic higher education*

##### First cycle qualification (Bachelor)

- The credit requirement for academic Bachelor programmes varies between 180 and 240 ECTS credits (120 to 160 Latvian credit points).
- The study duration for an academic Bachelor programme in Latvia is six to eight semesters.

##### Second cycle qualification (Master)

- The credit requirement for academic Master programmes is 120 ECTS credit points (80 Latvian credit points).

##### Third cycle qualification (Doctoral)

- A Doctoral degree is awarded to a researcher who has successfully passed an examination in the chosen area of research and who has successfully conducted an independent research followed by a successful dissertation defence.

#### *Professional higher education*

##### First cycle qualification (Bachelor)

- The credit requirement for academic Bachelor programmes is 240 ECTS credits (160 Latvian credit points).

##### Second cycle qualification (Master)

- The credit requirement for academic Master programmes is 60 ECTS credit points (40 Latvian credit points).

Additionally, there are other types of programmes in professional higher education. The Latvian higher education system also offers first (college) and second level professional higher education programmes. Completion of first level professional higher education

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<sup>7</sup> Ramiņa, B., Kuļšs, D., Kinta, G., Strūberga, K., & Šenberga, A. (2012). *Referencing of the Latvian education system to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for European Higher Education Area: Self- Assessment Report*, p.25-27. Riga: Academic Information Centre

programme requires 120-180 ECTS credit points. The purpose of these professional programmes is to provide students with necessary skills for certain kinds of profession. After the completion of first level professional higher education programmes, students may go on to second level professional higher education programmes. Completion of second level higher education programmes require 60 ECTS credit points after a Bachelor degree and 240 ECTS credit points after secondary education.

#### **4. Admission Requirements<sup>8 9 10</sup>**

Students are enrolled in higher education on the basis of the results of centralised examinations. Students appear for the centralised examinations at the end of the upper-secondary education. These requirements do not refer to persons who have obtained secondary education before 2004, persons who have obtained secondary education abroad, or persons with special needs. For admission to professional Bachelor study programmes, there are two possibilities:

- A certificate of general secondary education is required if the second-level professional higher education programme is offered as an integrated Bachelor programme.
- A diploma of first-level professional higher education is required if the programme is offered in the second cycle of professional higher education.

The prerequisite for the admission to a Master programme is a Bachelor degree in the same or related field of study. Graduates with a relevant Bachelor degree (academic or professional) are eligible for Master degree programmes. The requirement to enrol in Doctoral programmes includes a Master degree or an equivalent qualification.

#### **5. Enrolment Levels**

Figure 1 shows trends in enrolment levels (ISCED 5A, 5B and 6, ISCED 97) in Latvia between 2003 and 2012. Tertiary Type 5A and 5B enrolment levels have overall decreased whereas the number of students in Tertiary Type 6 has increased.

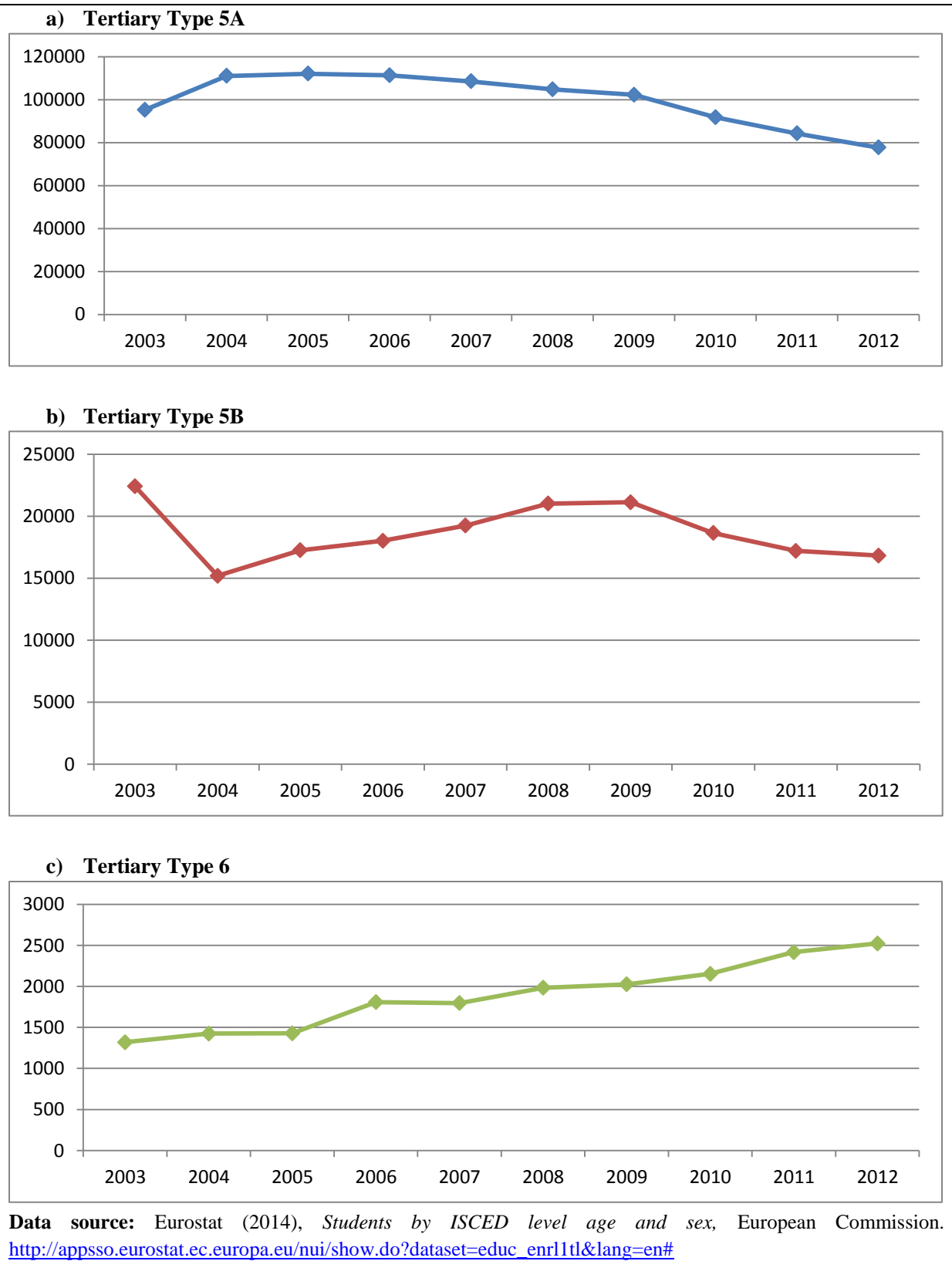
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<sup>8</sup> Eurydice. (2014). *Bachelor*. Retrieved from <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Latvia:Bachelor>

<sup>9</sup> Eurydice. (2014). *Second cycle programmes*. Retrieved from [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Latvia:Second\\_Cycle\\_Programmes](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Latvia:Second_Cycle_Programmes)

<sup>10</sup> Eurydice. (2014). *Third cycle (PhD) programmes*. Retrieved from [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Latvia:Second\\_Cycle\\_Programmes](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Latvia:Second_Cycle_Programmes)

Figure 1: Trends in enrolment levels



## 6. Registration and/or Tuition Fees<sup>11</sup>

Higher education in Latvia can be acquired through state subsidy or through individual payments. The number of subsidised places is decided by the Ministry of Education and Science and these places are allocated only to state higher education institutions (HEIs). Students have to pay a registration fee at all higher education institutions. Students who pass the entrance or regular examinations but are not admitted to state financed places have to pay a tuition fee. The tuition fee varies between the types of institutions and by degree programmes. Students can be transferred from a tuition fee paid place to a state financed place on the basis of their academic performance. Generally, students with higher grades have the right to study on a state financed place.

## 7. Financial Support for Students<sup>11</sup>

Financial support is provided directly in the form of scholarships, grants, and loans and indirectly through discounted travel costs in public transport. Loans are paid by the bank and received by the students who study in an accredited programme in Latvia or abroad.

There are two kinds of loans – study loan, which cover tuition fee and student loans for covering living expenses. Students of private higher education institutions as well as those who study at fee paying places at public higher education institutions are eligible for study loans. Students are eligible to apply for study loans irrespective of their formal enrolment status (full-time, part-time, distance education etc.). Only full-time students receive student loans.

## 8. Note on the Latvian data provided for EUROSTUDENT V

The multiple-stage stratified sampling frame for the EUROSTUDENT V survey in Latvia was based on the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia statistics for the academic year 2012/2013. The sampling frame covered full-time students in state and privately owned HEIs, except the Doctoral level students. Further selection of sampling units took into account the level of urbanisation (Riga vs. other cities), study level, and thematic groups – all to avoid the cluster effect. The primary sampling unit was group of students as accounted by HEI or particular programme (usually around 20 students).

This report is based on the following sources:

Eurydia. (2013). *Overview Latvia*. Retrieved from

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Latvia:Overview>

Ramiņa, B., Kuļšs, D., Kinta, G., Strūberga, K., & Šenberga, A. (2012). *Referencing of the Latvian education system to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for European Higher Education Area: Self- Assessment Report*. Riga: Academic Information Centre

Rauhvargers, A. (2003). *Latvia in Bologna Process: Report on reforms in Latvia's higher education on the way towards European Higher Education Area*. Riga: Latvian Rectors' Conference.

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<sup>11</sup> Eurydice. (2014). *Higher education funding*. Retrieved from [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Latvia:Higher Education Funding](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Latvia:Higher_Education_Funding)