



# LATVIA

## INFOPACK - RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD IN GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

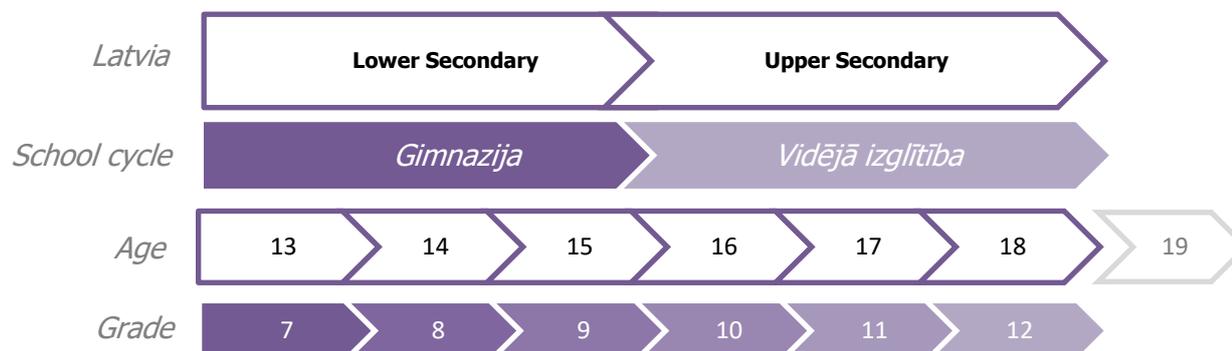
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The information below gives an overview of procedures<sup>1</sup> for the recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school. It can be consulted by pupils, as well as their families and teachers, who are or plan to be involved in long-term individual pupil mobility programmes abroad. Please note that this general overview does not include details on different programme types (which may be run by governmental agencies, civil society organisations, private companies or schools themselves) and such information can be obtained directly with the provider of the respective mobility programme.

<sup>1</sup> Based on data gathered in February 2021.

## GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM



Upper secondary education in Latvia is not compulsory. General upper secondary education (*vispārējā vidējā izglītība*) is provided by:

- *vidusskola* – general upper secondary school;
- *ģimnāzija/Valsts ģimnāzija* – Gymnasium or Grammar School which may also provide the lower secondary education programme, namely the last grades of basic education (grades 7-9).

Different programmes are offered: General, Humanities and Social Science, Mathematics, Natural Science and Technical. All programmes include at least 12 subjects, of which 5 (Latvian language and Literature, Mathematics, Foreign language, History, Physical education) are compulsory and no less than seven are elective<sup>2</sup> (30 % of the curriculum). Subjects are structured in three educational levels (basic, optimal and higher) and each level offer two courses (basic and advanced). Pupils further specialise in subjects at their choice during the last two years of schooling.

### Graduation and Certification

The school-leaving certificate (*atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību*) is awarded upon completion of an assessment in all courses of the chosen programme, and successful passing of the final centralised examinations.<sup>3</sup> Pupils must take at least four exams which can be written or combined: three are mandatory (Latvian language and literature, a foreign language and mathematics), while the fourth is chosen by the pupil. One examination out of the four must be on an advanced level subject.<sup>4</sup> The certificate with the results of exams is accompanied by the General Secondary Education memorandum of marks and the Secondary school certificate.

The certificate of general secondary education provides access to higher education programmes.<sup>5</sup> Some universities select students on the basis of their average mark and the results of the

<sup>2</sup> The elective subjects are chosen from the following: physics, chemistry, biology, computer science and information technology, economic geography, basics of business, technical drawing, visual arts, handicraft, second and third foreign language; nature and society; music, history of culture, history of religion, drama; or other subjects proposed by the school (depending on the available school curricula) and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science.

<sup>3</sup> The contents and procedure of exams is defined by the Cabinet of Ministers, and the materials are developed by the National Centre for Education.

<sup>4</sup> Education system of Latvia: [http://www.aic.lv/ENIC/ds/Latvian\\_syst.htm](http://www.aic.lv/ENIC/ds/Latvian_syst.htm)

<sup>5</sup> General Upper Secondary Education: <https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/vispareja-videja-izglitiba>

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end-of-school examination, and some hold entrance exams.

For more information on the structure and features of the different national education systems in Europe please see the Eurydice overview: National Education Systems | Eurydice (europa.eu).

## INFORMATION FOR PUPILS GOING ABROAD FROM LATVIA

### Age and grade

Pupils usually go on exchange in the first or second year of upper secondary school when they are 16/17 or 17/18 years old. During the third year of upper secondary schools, pupils prepare for the final exams and are advised against going on exchange.

### Registration in the sending school

Before going abroad, you must make all the necessary arrangements with the school, and discuss the status you will hold in your sending school while abroad. Schools have the discretion to make their own decisions on your status. It is unlikely that you will lose your place in the school.

Before going on an exchange programme, you/your parents submit a request to the school in which you indicate that you are leaving on a mobility programme, and indicate its duration, which should not be for longer than a school year<sup>6</sup>. The submission of this official request allows you to keep your place in the school, although the school is free to decide and can still disenroll you.

### Funding for the sending school

As the governmental funding for the school 'follows' the pupil, the school continues to receive the funding if you are enrolled in the school during the period abroad.

## RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD<sup>7</sup>

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting up to a full school year. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU) and the length of the mobility.

*Please note that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership<sup>8</sup> (e.g. Erasmus+) the Learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as recognition tool for programmes of any duration up to a full school year.*

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<sup>6</sup> Procedures for Enrolling Students in and Discharging from General Educational Institutions and Special Pre-school Educational Groups, and also for Moving Them up into the Next Grade: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/277597-procedures-for-enrolling-students-in-and-discharging-from-general-educational-institutions-and-special-pre-school-educational-groups-and-also-for-moving-them-up-into-the-next-grade>

<sup>7</sup> A specific case not described in this Infopack are pupil mobility programmes within Erasmus+ school-to-school partnerships, where learning outcomes are recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

<sup>8</sup> within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

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According to the law<sup>9</sup>, before departure, you need to request to the sending school the permission for continuing studies upon return. On your return you/your parents must submit documents from the host school that certify the learning content acquired while abroad and the achievements obtained while you were abroad. Your sending school then evaluates these documents and invites both you and your parents to a meeting. The school principal will enrol you in a grade appropriate to your age and needs, taking into account the continuity of your previously acquired education<sup>10</sup>. Usually, schools allow you to have one year from your return to complete/catch up all subjects that are included in the Latvian curriculum and that you did not follow while abroad.

As the law allows for interpretation, school principals have the right to act individually and some require additional exams upon return, although this practice is becoming increasingly rare. In this case, the decision on which subjects you are to be examined in are based on the documentation from the host school<sup>11</sup>. These exams are either done upon return, or during the year following the exchange. This happens mostly for subjects such as Latvian language and literature, or for given specific courses that the school curriculum foresees. While it is unlikely, you might be asked to repeat the school year.

## INFORMATION FOR PUPILS HOSTED IN LATVIA

### Registration in the host school

As an exchange pupil, you are enrolled in Latvian schools with the same rights as regular pupils and you receive a personal code that gives you the possibility to use *e-klase*, i.e. the united electronic school management system.

You will usually be placed in classes according to your age group. If during the year it becomes clear that your level of knowledge does not correspond with the grade, you can be moved to a different class (lower or higher). It is very rare to be hosted in the last grade as very few pupils enrol in a mobility programme at the age of 18/19, and the lessons are focused on preparation for the final exams.

### Funding for the host school

The school receives the same amount of funding for the hosted pupil as for a regular pupil. It is important to register the hosted pupils in schools before the official beginning of the school year, which is 1st September, if the school is to receive this funding.

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<sup>9</sup> LIKUMI, 'Procedures for Enrolling Students in and Discharging from General Educational Institutions and Special Pre-school Educational Groups, and also for Moving Them up into the Next Grade', 2015, <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/277597-procedures-for-enrolling-students-in-and-discharging-from-general-educational-institutions-and-special-pre-school-educational-groups-and-also-for-moving-them-up-into-the-next-grade>

<sup>10</sup> Transferring of a Student from One Educational Institution to Another Educational Institution: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/277597-procedures-for-enrolling-students-in-and-discharging-from-general-educational-institutions-and-special-pre-school-educational-groups-and-also-for-moving-them-up-into-the-next-grade>

<sup>11</sup> E. Briga, 'Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning', EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

## Certification for hosted pupils

Upon request, you can obtain certification confirming participation in the exchange programme and mentioning the subjects studied and marks obtained

## Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

You can receive a certificate of secondary education and a certificate for the centralised exams if you receive a positive assessment in all the subjects included in the chosen profile at the end of 12th grade and pass the national examinations. However, it is rare for hosted pupils to take and pass the national examinations.

## TESTIMONIAL

### Kristiāne from Latvia: 6 months in Sweden

*"Your life story will become so much more interesting."*

One of my main goals before leaving on exchange was learning Swedish. Although I had already started learning it by myself at home, when I first arrived to Sweden, the language barrier was a problem. Everybody speaks English there, but learning Swedish opened many doors: new friends, appreciation from others and an easier integration process. I also learnt something very Swedish: there is no such a thing as bad weather, there is only inappropriate clothes.

Before leaving, the exchange organisation held some preparatory meetings and that was helpful, as well as getting in touch with my host family beforehand. I also had to deal with some bureaucracy both in my home and host school, to be sure I was accepted in the new school and that I could continue my studies upon my return.

*A manageable recognition, a challenging re-adaptation*

Despite being able to enrol back in my home school, adapting again to the Latvian school system was quite challenging. I also had a hard time reconnecting with friends and family because I was missing the ones in Sweden. It is all a matter of time before you feel like you belong again.

The exchange enriched my life experience and I am sure it will open many doors in the future, also in the work place, as people with such a background will be highly demanded. My advice for other students is to be thankful to have such an opportunity. There will be moments when you will feel alone; just embrace them as part of becoming more aware of yourself.

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