

UNESCO: Latvia Position Paper
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Due: Thursday November 10th, 2016

Topic 1: Governance and the effects on education

Background information

Latvia is a country that is located on/near the Baltic Sea, and Lithuania and Estonia. Latvia is a peaceful country that is apart of the baltic region. During the 1940's, Latvia wanted to be their own country where they signed an independence, but the arrival of World War I forced the country into the Soviet Union (Danzig,2015). This happened because in 1939, there was a secret Nazi-Soviet pact that forced Latvia, and other countries surrounding them like Lithuania and Estonia into the soviet union. Latvia was a part of the soviet union until its collapse in the 1980's and the country was then free by August 21st, 1991. Upon leaving the Soviet Union, they joined the Europe Union (EU), and they started on working on their political views which lead them into their work with UNESCO. (Latvia, 1990-2010)

Corruption

The united nations has been able to recognize many countries for being corrupt when it comes to the politicians and government officials. In order to see if a country is corrupt, the country needs to be assessed on the type of corruption that it is. “ ‘corruption’ is an intentionally broad term that includes such diverse acts as theft of state assets, bid- rigging, petty bribery, and political payoffs” (world bank, 1998). With the definition of corruption, we want to see if Latvia is corrupt, and if there are chances to fix the corruption that may be there.

According to transparency international, on January 26th, 2016, a study on corruption was done to see how corrupt Baltic states are when it comes to the forms of corruption. On a scale from 0-100 (100 being not corrupt at all), Latvia places 55 on that scale. That is known to be very high when it comes to the scale. Latvia is also known not to care about the corruption that is occurring in the country. This can be seen on their official website where it was stated that they would be placing 55th again. “ for the third year, Latvia is not among the countries where corruption is considered to be a serious problem. Latvia's improvement from 43rd least corrupt country in the world in 2014, to 40th in 2015.” (Rivkin, 2016). With this being said, Latvia thinks that in any country, there will be corruption, but we can try to manage if so that it will be improved.

Political instability

With corruption there comes a form of political instability. With Latvia, they have a very nice political system when it comes to being “all about the people”. According to Latvia EU, Latvia has a government type senate called the Saeima. The Saeima is known to represent the citizens/people of Latvia and make the laws that are upheld there. Their job is to ratify international agreements and appoints major public officials. (Latvia EU, 2014) the way that the political Saeima works is: The political The Saeima is chaired by the Speaker and two Deputy Speakers. Together with the Secretary and his Deputy they form a 5-member Presidium. The Presidium sets the agenda and supervises the Chancery of the parliament. The Speaker takes over duties of the Head of State when the President cannot do so. (EU, 2014). With this being said, it can be seen that the political stability is at that point where it seems strong, and it can be because it depends on the people and the government.

Improving education in refugee camps

In the world, there has been a rise in the amount of refugees that flee their country. There has been talk that each country has a duty to take a certain amount of refugees, to help contribute to taking away the strain. Latvia is not a big country, but they still need to take refugees into their country. Latvia is not too happy about having to take in refugees into their country because they believe that it will be hard for them to adapt to it. (Leitans, 2015). It can be seen that an official from Latvia was quoted by saying “We are absent from the meetings of European leaders and we don't know about what economic, social and security consequences could follow if we decided not to participate [in the refugee program].” (Edgar Travis). This quote tells us that Latvia feels like if they do not cooperate, they will then feel it later on in the consequences from other countries. In the end, they do have refugee camps, and people should learn how to speak the language but that will not come from refugee camps. So Latvia disagrees with the idea of Refugee camps.

Topic 2: Preservation of world heritage sites

Background information

Latvia is a very old country that has gone through a lot of colonization, building, and fixing. With that being said, each country has its own world heritage sites. Latvia is a country that is known to have two heritage sites. They have the historic centre of Riga, and the Struve Geodetic Arc. These are the two sites that are the most known, and are very important to Latvia.

What is the Struve arc? “the Struve Arc is a chain of survey triangulations stretching from Hammerfest in Norway to the Black Sea, through 10 countries and over 2,820 km. These are points of a survey, carried out between 1816 and 1855 by the astronomer Friedrich Georg Wilhelm Struve, which represented the first accurate measuring of a long segment of a meridian. This helped to establish the exact size and shape of the planet and marked an important step in the development of earth sciences and topographic mapping. It is an extraordinary example of scientific collaboration among scientists from different countries, and of collaboration between monarchs for a scientific cause. The original arc consisted of 258 main triangles with 265 main station points. The listed site includes 34 of the original station points, with different markings, i.e. a drilled hole in rock, iron cross, cairns, or built obelisks.” (Unesco, Latvia).

The other heritage site is the historic centre of Riga. The historic centre of Riga is “The urban fabric of its medieval centre reflects this prosperity, though most of the earliest buildings were destroyed by fire or war. Riga became an important economic centre in the 19th century, when the suburbs surrounding the medieval town were laid out, first with imposing wooden buildings in neoclassical style and then in Jugendstil. It is generally recognized that Riga has the finest collection of art nouveau buildings in Europe.” (Unesco, Latvia)

Mitigating interests in climate change

Latvia is known to be a very cold country. But, during the last century, the mean annual temperature has increased by about 0,8-1,4°C (1). (Climate Change-Latvia, 2016). This cannot be good. As we have seen, the world suffers with a lot of climate change problems. UNESCO has been working very hard in multiple conferences (background guide) to see if there would be a change. As of now, there has not been a change in Latvia. Latvia has been working to make a change in what they do as a country relating to what their hydropower and they fund many organizations. (Climate change, EU).

Examining world heritage and unstable regions.

Latvia cares about the two world heritage sites that they have. The people of Latvia care, so in turn they have partnered up with UNESCO and have been working with various countries to determine what to do when it comes to the world heritage site. The background information said : Latvia is a country that is known to have two heritages sites. They have the historic centre of Riga, and the Struve Geodetic Arc. These are the two sites that are the most known, and are very important to Latvia.

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Topic 3: Supporting and Accomplishing Education 2030

Background information

The education system in Latvia is just like Canada. It is based more off of the US because they have to write entrance exams when it comes to being apart of higher level education. Their systems looks like “ secondary education (duration -12 years)

School year. The regular school year (excluding examination periods at grades nine and twelve) lasts 36 weeks, from the beginning of September through to the end of May. The minimum total number of 40-minute lessons per week is 20 at grade one, 29 at grade five, 34 at grade nine and 36 at grade twelve.

Basic education (pamatizglītība) begins at six or seven years of age and lasts a total of 9. Graduates receive a nine-year basic school certificate (apliecība par pamatzglītību).

General upper secondary education (vispārējā vidējā izglītība) includes studies of 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. 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, housekeeping, second and third foreign language; human, nature and society; music, history of culture, history of religion, amateur performances; or other subjects proposed by the school and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. Two different curriculum levels - basic (pamatkurss) and advanced (profilkurss) - are offered in each subject. Certificate of general secondary education (atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību) is awarded upon completion of the courses of at least twelve elective subjects and successful passing of five final examinations (two set nationally, three upon choice of the candidate). One examination must be at the advanced level of the respective subject.

Secondary vocational (arodvidusskola) programmes of four year duration and Secondary professional education (vidējā speciālā izglītība) programmes which take four to five years after basic education include the standard of general secondary education making the holders eligible for higher education studies.

Higher education

Access to higher education. All holders of general secondary education certificates and vocational education diplomas described above are eligible for admission to higher

education. However, universities are free to specify which elective subjects must be taken at the secondary school level to qualify for admission to a chosen programme.

Admission procedure may vary depending upon the competition level, the main forms being: one to four competitive entrance examinations or a ranking according to secondary school final marks, in some cases combined with an interview by the admissions board.

Higher education system

The Law on Higher Education Establishments (1995) sets a difference between academic and professional institutions of higher education and programmes rather than between university and non-university type institutions or programmes.”

Note: This data set comes from the website
http://www.aic.lv/ENIC/ds/Latvian_syst.htm

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