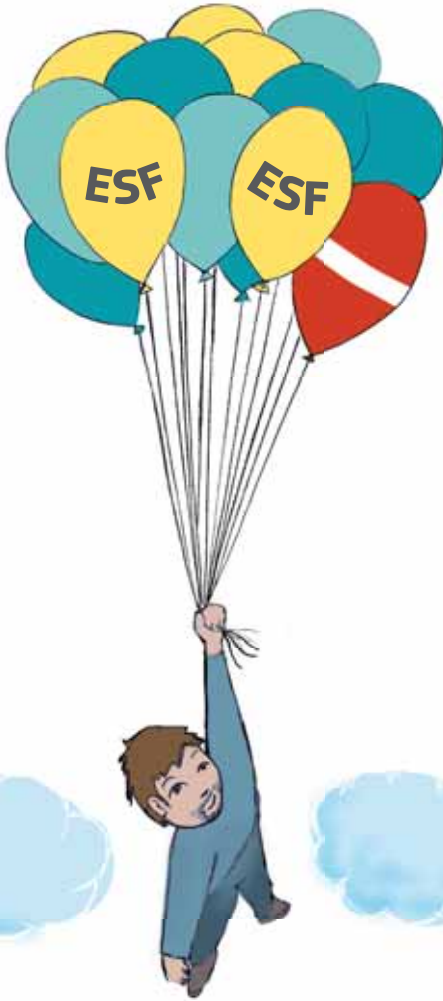




European  
Commission



# LATVIA

## AND THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

A key aim of Latvia's growth strategy is to shift its economy towards more hi-tech industrial sectors as well as boosting exports. In view of this, ESF activities are targeting better jobs for workers, through better education and training. In particular, Latvia is promoting technical careers for young people, and more vocational training for workers, the unemployed and vulnerable groups as a way of improving living standards and avoiding the trap of long-term unemployment.

*Social  
Europe*

LATVIA

# INVESTING IN PEOPLE AND JOBS: THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LATVIA

The global economic downturn hit Latvia hard, putting many people out of work and leading to a high level of emigration, particularly of young and highly educated workers. In response, Latvia is taking a series of measures. A key objective is to increase the number of university graduates who can fill the highly skilled jobs Latvia needs as its economy moves towards more hi-tech sectors – at present, only one in seven scientists are employed in the private sector, compared to around 50% in the rest of Europe. In addition, Latvia is boosting vocational training and life-long learning. One reason is to give its people – especially the unemployed and vulnerable groups – the skills they need to avoid falling into long-term unemployment and to get jobs. Another reason is that boosting exports is an important aim for Latvian enterprises to help restore growth – so workers with the right skills are needed to fill the jobs this effort demands – skills that make them more productive and adaptable for the future.

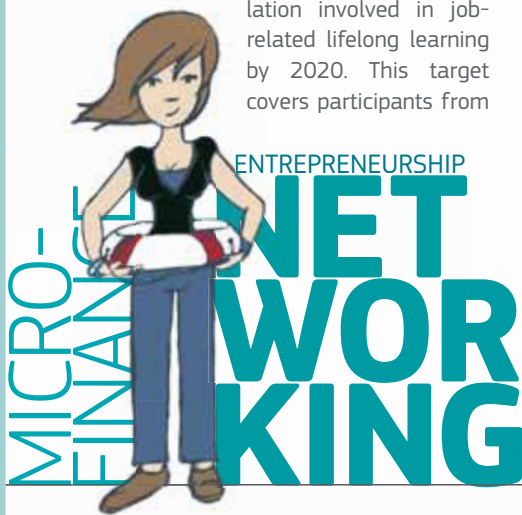
As part of this training effort, Latvia is aiming to have 15% of the working-age population involved in job-related lifelong learning by 2020. This target covers participants from

*“More productive and adaptable workers”*

all backgrounds and social groups, including older workers, women and people with disabilities. Promoting entrepreneurship is also a priority for Latvia – training and support for business start-ups is creating jobs, including in rural areas, while ESF funding is contributing to providing loans to businesses to help them grow and employ more workers. Latvia is also using training to help lift 121 000 of its citizens out of the at-risk-of-poverty group, in particular by making access to a job easier for older people, returning parents, young people and those with disabilities.

## ESF spending in Latvia

Each Member State manages its ESF funding according to the particular challenges it faces. For 2007-2013, Latvia is receiving over EUR 583 million of ESF funds. With national co-funding, this brings total ESF spending on jobs to nearly EUR 686 million. There are five priority areas: higher education and science; education and skills; promotion of employment and health at work; promotion of social inclusion; and administrative capacity-building.



# LATVIA'S ESF PRIORITIES

## Matching skills to jobs

Education is a priority for ESF spending which is improving access to general education and vocational education for all social groups. This includes boosting lifelong learning, as well as attracting more students on to job-related courses. Over 2 400 Masters and PhD students have been supported by ESF funding so far, above all in the sciences; and training is on offer to over 27 000 teachers. The key objective is to strengthen the capacity of educational institutions to contribute to creating sustainable jobs and careers. And Latvian enterprises are helping, for example through traineeship work placements for up to 14 000 young people – with childcare facilities for young parents who take part – who can gain both work experience and acquire the new skills that are in demand. The Latvian government is also using ESF funding to support business start-ups and promote self-employment, in order to boost entrepreneurship.

## A more inclusive work environment

At the same time, ESF funding is also being used to help more people participate in the workforce and find jobs that are suitable for them. Boosting job opportunities for economically inactive people and disadvantaged groups is a key objective of many projects that are encouraging more flexible working practices and providing training – or retraining – for both employed and unemployed people. So far, training and support have been offered to more than 97 000 unemployed people and job-seekers, and more than 27 000 people at risk of social exclusion. To help achieve this, Latvia is modernising its public administration at local, regional and national levels in a bid to improve the quality and accessibility of its employment services while improving co-operation with social partners and NGOs.

*“Better skills for  
better jobs”*

# THE ESF IN LATVIA: SOME EXAMPLES

## Raising teaching standards

The ESF project 'Raising teachers' was launched to help teachers to broaden their areas of expertise and develop the skills necessary to adapt to new demands. Over 22500 teachers participated in the training on offer, which has enabled them to teach a wider variety of classes, including higher education levels, special needs classes or new subjects. Attention was also given to improving the quality of education by means of regular quality control and monitoring.

## Bridging the silence gap

For deaf people, many very simple tasks can be quite daunting and communications difficulties can lead to physical and social isolation. The ESF-funded 'World of Silence' project is helping deaf people stay in touch with the rest of society. World of Silence includes 14 specific activities aimed at improving services for deaf people in Latvia, helping them integrate into the labour market and also training new sign-language interpreters – official figures for 2008 showed only 20 qualified sign-language interpreters in the entire country. Reaction to the project has been extremely positive, with more and more people asking to participate.

### Do you want to...?

- ...learn more about the ESF in Latvia?
- ...understand better how the ESF works?
- ...see video clips on projects from across the EU?

Then visit the ESF website:  
<http://ec.europa.eu/esf/latvia>

