



## **Weekly Briefing**

**Latvia social briefing:**  
**Latvia's education system in times of Covid-19**  
**Nina Linde**

### **China-CEE Institute**

Kiadó: Kína-KKE Intézet Nonprofit Kft.  
Szerkesztésért felelős személy: Chen Xin  
Kiadásért felelős személy: Huang Ping

 1052 Budapest Petőfi Sándor utca 11.  
 +36 1 5858 690  
 [office@china-cee.eu](mailto:office@china-cee.eu)  
 [china-cee.eu](http://china-cee.eu)

## Latvia's education system in times of Covid-19

*On March of 2020 the educational system of Latvia had to transform due to the Covid-19. The sudden shift outlined both the positive and negative aspects of the educational system of Latvia. Despite the flaws overall it was seen that the education system of Latvia had the capacity to adjust to the global changes in terms of education as overall students, parents, and teachers had valued positively the new conditions of distance learning.<sup>1</sup> Although the epidemiological situation in regards of Covid-19 has improved, yet there is still a chance of infection as according to the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control of Latvia in July of 2020 there have been detected more than 100 cases of Covid-19.<sup>2</sup> As stated by the Ministry of Education it is planned switch back to the on-site learning on the next schoolyear. However, due to the active cases of Covid-19 new safety procedures will have to be taken into account to ensure safe on-site education process.*

### **The new school year is originally planned on-site**

Currently, the Ministry of Education and Science is working on a scenario that envisages that the school year in Latvian schools will start in person. Although there is a possibility that the epidemiological situation may change, due to the increase in the cumulative number of Covid-19 patients in recent weeks, the emphasis has been put on starting the school year as usual and on-site. To decrease the risk of infection the Ministry of Education and Science, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, have been jointly forming the conditions for the organization of educational work for the next schoolyear. In order to ensure on-site learning process and to protect both teachers and children from COVID-19 infection risks, the Ministry of Education and Science has prioritized the maintenance of the safety measures, especially when planning the use of common areas of students and teachers.

According to the Ministry of Education and Science the practical key conditions for ensuring on-site learning process have been identified as:

- Establishing internal procedures in schools;
- Organizing flow of students and teachers;

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://home.edurio.com/izm-attalinato-macibu-rezultati>

<sup>2</sup> <https://covid19.gov.lv/covid-19/covid-19-statistika/covid-19-izplatiba-latvija>

- Ensuring personal hygiene, monitoring of individual health conditions, particularly for persons at risk;
- Frequent room cleaning algorithm, ventilation of rooms.

Additionally, in accordance to the decision of the supervisor of the educational institution there will be an option for the supervisor whether or not to ensure the educational activities remotely for students from 7<sup>th</sup> up to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, vocational institution students, and higher education students to promote distancing depending on the epidemiological situation in the country.

Currently there is being developed an action plan for schools in case if the epidemiological situation gets worse. Furthermore, the head of the educational institution will have to determine the procedures for the organization of teaching and pedagogical work, including communication channels with pupils and parents, so in case of epidemiological risks parents and as well students could be informed instantly. It has been suggested that the class should be equated with a more closed group of people, similar to a workplace for adults or a larger family. Thus, it is not planned to maintain a mandatory requirement to follow the distance principle of two meters. The draft regulations developed by the Ministry of Education and Science state that the requirement to keep a distance of two meters between persons in the group or class of one educational institution is applicable only if it is objectively possible. However, in the common areas of the school such as gym, canteen, hallways, between different classes the general distance requirements will apply.

On the other hand, in special schools, the opposite will be the case - it will be necessary to wear individual protective equipment and there will be a requirement to keep a distance, as a result of which parents would not even be able to meet their children. This led to a wide-ranging debate among specialized educational institutions and because of that it is seen that this regulation will be reviewed by the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia.

To provide the suitable epidemiological plan and safety measures municipalities and school management will individually receive the support of Centre for Disease Prevention and Control epidemiologists, assessing the organization of the work process of the educational institution in a situation where the morbidity rates deteriorate or a case of Covid-19 is detected in the educational institution. The Ministry of Education and Science does not currently plan to set a specific indicator to which full-time or part-time studies should be transferred, as the it is intended to leave it up to each local government's decision.

The educational process, according to the decision of the founder of the educational institution, can be partially or fully implemented remotely, for example, it can be done one day a week to ensure the possibility of distance. Similarly, in the vocational training process, all types of traineeships, including qualification traineeships and work-based learning in companies, are planned to take place on-site or remotely, assessing the risks to all parties.

Altogether, in the event of a deterioration in the epidemiological situation, the education process will be organized partly remotely. The experience of this spring shows that, if necessary, the Latvian education system is able to mobilize quickly and adapt to the rules imposed by the pandemic. The education platform “Your Classroom”, established by the Ministry of Education and Science in two weeks’ time, was recognized by the OECD as one of the best solutions in the world used by countries to continue the educational process in times of crisis.<sup>3</sup> The Ministry of Education and Science is also currently working on the further development of a similar platform, envisaging a much wider use of smart devices in the daily educational process. To improve the Latvian education system the Ministry of Education and Science, in co-operation with the Union of Local Governments of Latvia and other partners, have been developing solutions for increasing the involvement of technologies during the study process, thus making the education system of Latvia more adaptive to the epidemiological risks and modernizing the study process.

### **Latvia is improving the quality of education system monitoring**

There are already several education quality monitoring processes in Latvia, including the system of accounting for the results of state examinations, accreditation of educational institutions, implementation of international comparative education research, analysis of statistics in the State Education Information System. To improve the quality of monitoring processes the Ministry of Education and Science is developing an innovative approach to ensure the rise of the quality of education in Latvia. The common framework will make it possible to analyze the interrelationships between the results of the various processes, assess their impact and develop evidence-based education policies at all levels of education, as well as implement the necessary support programs.

Starting from this year, it is planned to link monitoring tools with the State Education Information System. A risk identification system is also being developed so that changes in the

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://izm.gov.lv/lv/aktualitates/4191-ilga-suplinska-jauno-macibu-gadu-planojam-sakt-klatiene>

quality of education can be responded to immediately without waiting for the next accreditation of the school or educational program.<sup>4</sup>

The upgraded monitoring system will look at the quality of education in a broader context, focusing on aspects such as quality learning, an inclusive environment, good governance and compliance with objectives. More accurate information will enable students and their parents to make more informed decisions about the choice of educational institution and program. At the same time, it will be an opportunity for educational institutions to evaluate the investments made and development perspectives.

### **Summary**

The previous experience shows that the education system of Latvia has the capacity to adjust to the global changes in terms of education since overall students, parents, and teachers had valued positively the new conditions of distance learning. As the overall epidemiological situation in Latvia has improved it is planned that the upcoming schoolyear will happen on-site. However, there are still epidemiological risks that require to follow safety precautions. To ensure safe on-site education process the educational institutions will have to establish new internal procedures in schools such as organizing flow of students and teachers, ensuring personal hygiene, monitoring of individual health conditions, particularly for persons at risk, frequent room cleaning algorithm, ventilation of rooms and others. Additionally, in accordance to the decision of the supervisor of the educational institution there will be an option for the supervisor whether or not to ensure the educational activities remotely for students from 7<sup>th</sup> up to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, vocational institution students, and higher education students to promote distancing depending on the epidemiological situation in the country. To ensure not only epidemiological safety for students but to also improve the quality of education in Latvia the Ministry of Education and Science is developing a upgraded monitoring system that will look at the quality of education in a broader context, focusing on aspects such as quality learning, an inclusive environment, good governance and compliance with objectives.

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://izm.gov.lv/lv/aktualitates/4189-turpina-attistit-izglitibas-kvalitates-monitoringa-sistemu>