

Country Profile

LATVIA¹

Children in care in Latvia

- There are 7281 children in alternative care. 3,748 of these are male, 3,533 are female
- Approximately 1428 children are currently placed in child care institutions
- 1,233 children are in foster families. 4,620 children are in guardianship
- In some institutions one social worker may have responsibility for about 20 children, in some – about 40 children.
- Children in institutions may see their social worker every day.

Overview of care arrangements

The process of de-institutionalisation is just beginning in Latvia. The National Development Plan (2014–2020) aims to see 85 % of children in alternative care living either in foster families or with guardians.

Formal inclusion of children's rights

The Law for the Protection of Children's Rights contains a section relating to children living in out-of-family care and the provisions are monitored by the State Inspectorate for the Protection of Children's Rights. Inspectors carry out inspections in all kinds of care institutions – including out-of-family care institution, foster families and guardianship, if necessary. Child's rights violations are the main reason for inspecting and controlling childcare institutions but inspectors may carry out a preventive inspection, too. Child rights controlling agencies use a rather rigid legal approach to monitoring of child rights.

Child Care Service Workforce

A higher vocational education degree or university degree is the legal minimum requirement in terms of professional education for social workers and professionals giving specialised support to children. When it comes to follow-up learning and training, Child Rights do make up a substantial part of courses/training. These courses are a legal requirement for social workers and professionals giving specialised support to children in first years of starting the work and then in every 5 years. This is also upheld in practice and most commonly provided by training institutions.

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in report on implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Latvia (2016) as one of recommendation suggests the need to improve training on child right issues by recommending the training program on child rights acquire before starting to work and provide follow up training in every 2 years (according to the current legislation it takes place every 5 years).

The legal minimum requirement in terms of professional education for lower degrees caregivers in residential care is at least elementary vocational education degree. Child Rights are only given minimal attention and there is no requirement (but they have opportunity) to attend training on Child Rights. Such training opportunities are nonetheless stated to be regularly available. Because it

¹ The information in this country profile was drawn from the responses to three surveys which were answered by three national experts.

is no obligatory, careers don't have enough motivation to attend this training. In this case performance is formal or option is not used.

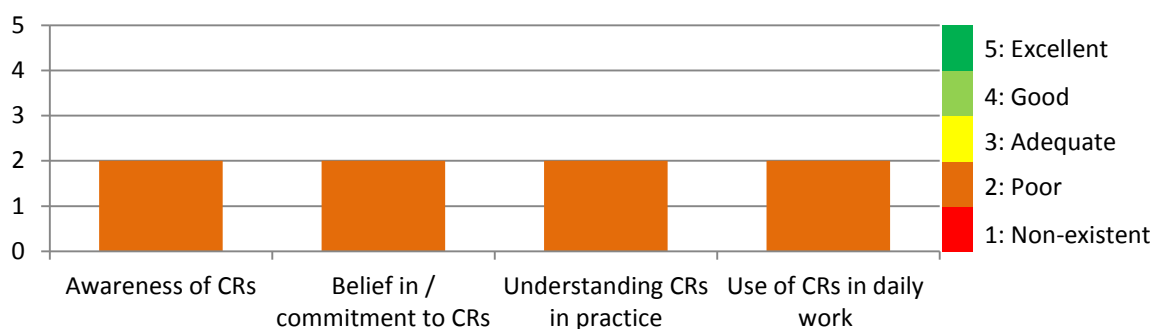
To get the status of volunteer foster parent, applicants have to attend a special training. In accordance with Curriculum approved by Regulation of Cabinet of Minister Child Rights form the part of these trainings for prospective foster parent.

Volunteer foster parents are also required to follow Child Rights courses in every 3 years. These training opportunities are provided by training institutions and trainings are regularly available. These follow up courses are requirement by law and State Inspectorate for Protection of Children Law monitors attending of courses.

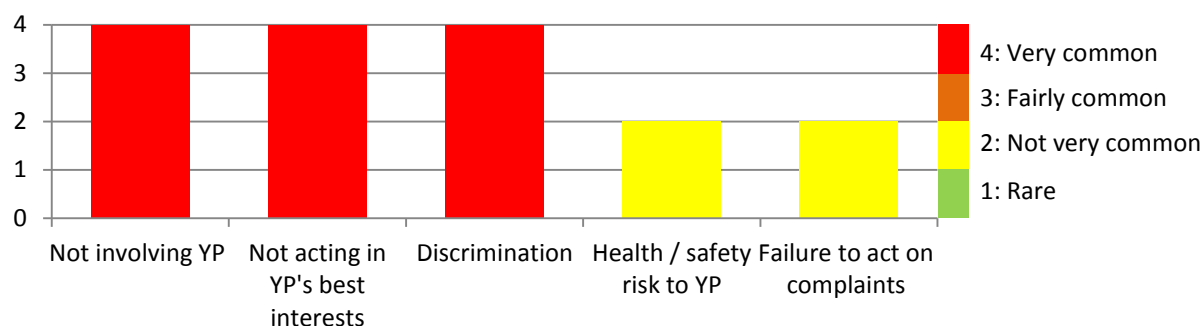
Assessing the state of children's rights

Respondents were asked to give their personal assessment with regards to care professionals and children's rights. The results are shown in the charts below.

Your assessment: care professionals and children's rights



Your assessment: how common are the following?



Key challenges

- Lack of specialized training and knowledge with focus on CR issues related alternative care
- Inability to integrate knowledge of children's rights into work with children because trainings are rarely and theoretical. It has no enough connection with the practise and has not carried out the assessment of training effect on the practise.
- A lack of support for care professionals. There is also inadequate co-operation between care professionals and formal bodies, and little co-operation among care workers themselves.

- Burn out and constant staff changes: there is a large turnover of staff working with children in care facilities. Low pay and low motivation contribute to this.
- There are professional standards with requirements for education for such care professionals as social workers, social rehabilitator, social careers and other specialists, but there is lack of a professional standard for lower degree careers.
- The obligatory Child Rights training programs are more formal and have less focus on how to implement Child Rights in daily practise.