

Country: LATVIA

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A BRIEF REPORT ABOUT THE PROFESSION OF PSYCHOLOGISTS IN LATVIA

The Law on Psychologists in Latvia entered into force on 1 January 2018.¹ As a result, the psychologist has become a regulated profession.² The aim of the Law on Psychologists is "to regulate professional activity of psychologists in order to ensure qualified services of psychologists' professional activity". Also, in accordance with the Law on Psychologists, there have been adopted Regulations of Psychologists³ (Cabinet Regulations No. 301, 29 May, 2018) and Certification Council Regulation of Psychologists⁴ (Cabinet Regulations No. 302, 29 May, 2018).

By the Law on Psychologists, the registry is managed by the State Education Quality Service, which provides registration, certification and re-certification of psychologists as well as the supervision (see <https://ikvd.gov.lv/en/>).

Educational requirements are regulated by the profession standard.⁵ Also, there is developed Code of Ethics of Psychologists⁶, which is in line with the Meta Code of Ethics of European Federation of Psychologists' Associations⁷.

Figure 1 illustrates the requirements for certification of psychologists in Latvia.

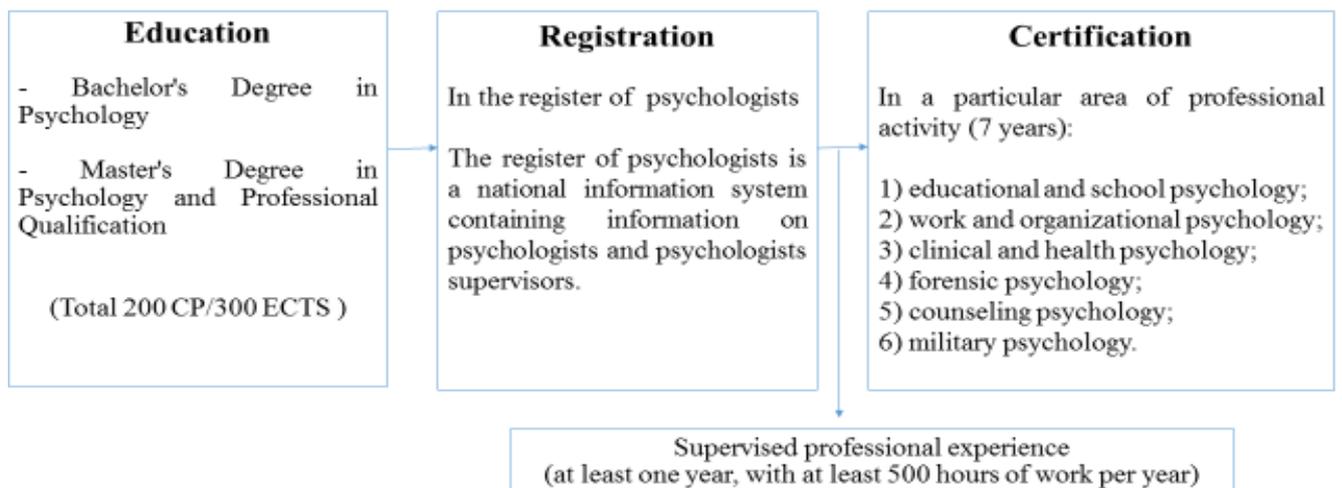


Figure 1

¹ Law on Psychologists (see: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=290115>)

² Law on regulated professions and recognition of professional qualifications (see: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=26021>)

³ Regulations of Psychologists (Cabinet Regulations No. 301, 29 May, 2018) (see: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/299322-psiologu-noteikumi>)

⁴ Certification Council Regulation of Psychologists (see: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/299323-psiologu-sertifikacijas-padomes-nolikums>)

⁵ Professional Standard for Psychologists (see: <https://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-108.pdf>)

⁶ Code of Ethics of Psychologists (see: https://ikvd.gov.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Psiologu_etikas_kodekss.pdf)

⁷ Meta Code of Ethics (see: <http://ethics.efpa.eu/metaand-model-code/meta-code/>)

Educational Requirements in Law on Psychologists.

A person's right to pursue independent professional activity as a psychologist are attested by a diploma of higher education in accredited bachelor's program and accredited master's program in psychology of at least 200 credit points (300 ECTS). At least one of these programs is a professional study program.

Registration Requirements in Law on Psychologists.

If candidate has the appropriate education, he / she must be registered in the Register of psychologists kept by State Education Quality Service. The registered psychologists carry out their professional activity under supervision for at least one year, with at least 500 hours. In December 2019, there were registered 1268 psychologists.

Conditions for obtaining a psychologist's certificate and re-certification.

For the evaluation and supervision of professional activity of psychologists, by the Minister of Education and Science there was established the Certification Council of Psychologists which includes five representatives of state institutions and two representatives from both the Latvian Association of Psychologists and Latvian Federation of Psychologists' Associations. Secretariat functions of the Certification Council of Psychologists are provided by State Education Quality Service. The Certification Council of Psychologists performs various tasks, for example, organizes certification and re-certification of psychologists and grants the supervising psychologist's rights; decides on registration of a psychologist and suspension, termination and renewal of psychologist's professional activity, issuance, suspension of a psychologist's certificate. It supervises and controls the professional activity of psychologists and contributes to the development and training of psychologists. A candidate must pass the examination to obtain the certificate of a psychologist in the chosen area of professional activity in which he or she has been under supervision for at least one year. The Law states that psychologists may carry out their work in six areas of professional activity: clinical and health psychology; educational and school psychology; work and organizational psychology; forensic psychology; counselling psychology; military psychology.

In order to be re-certified after seven years, a person must practice as a psychologist in the area of professional activity for which it is certified for at least 700 hours during the period of validity of the psychologist certificate; develop professional competence and skills on at least 100 academic hours during the period of validity of the psychologist certificate; and collaborate with the psychologist-supervisor for at least 35 academic hours individually. Certified psychologist with at least five years of independent professional experience in the relevant area of professional activity may pass the psychologist-supervisor examination. A certified psychologist may simultaneously acquire the rights of a psychologist-supervisor in no more than two areas of professional activity of a psychologist.

I) HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY IN LATVIA 2018-2019

The development of health psychology in Latvia is facilitated by various factors. One of these factors is the formation and successful work of the Latvian Health Psychology Association in 2012 (see: <http://veselibaspsihologija.lv/lv/>) and formation of the professional master's study program in Health Psychology in 2013 at Rīga Stradiņš University. Number of graduates with advanced knowledge, skills and competencies in health psychology work as professional psychologists in public health care or hospitals and rehabilitation institutions, educational institutions, social services, social agencies, the National Armed Forces (Professional Military Service) and private practice.

Since its adoption in 2018, the Law on Psychologists has significantly changed the situation in Latvia and has had a great impact on the education and professional activity of health psychologists. As mentioned above, by the Law, psychologists may carry out their work in six areas of professional activity, including the clinical and health psychology.

Descriptions of the professional activity of the psychologist are given in State Education Quality Service's website, (see in Latvian: https://ikvd.gov.lv/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/5.piel._jomu-apraksti_IKVD_parskatits_29.08.2018..pdf).

Clients of clinical and health psychologists (both children and adults) may be individuals with a variety of mental and physical health problems, including psychological difficulties that need to be mitigated

or evaluated in both acute (crisis) and chronic situations. Clinical and health psychologists, based on evidence-based practice, work independently or in a multi-professional team to identify and determine features or existing abnormalities of the of clients' psyche, predict and mitigate psychological problems to promote clients' well-being and growth at different stages of life, promote physical and mental health of individuals, groups, communities and society, prevent and treat diseases as well as identify health-promoting factors that are linked to the causes and response to the disease, perception of the disease and behaviour during the disease. Psychologists practicing in this area of professional activity deal with a wide range of mental and physical health problems and psychological difficulties of clients, including identifying of psychological risk factors as well as protective resources that can help to mitigate the problem.

By December 2019, there were registered 669 psychologists specialising in clinical and health psychology. Also, there were registered 121 supervisors working in this area.

II) EDUCATION, TRAINING & PROFESSIONALIZATION

Education and training initiatives/programs

As mentioned above, the Law on Psychologists states general requirements on the education of psychologists. University of Latvia, Rīga Stradiņš University, Daugavpils University and Baltic International academy (state-accredited higher education institutions in Latvia, in which one can obtain psychological education) have either rebuilt in last year or are currently rebuilding the model/standard of education of psychologists in accordance with the requirements of the Law. The current model of education provides a bachelor's degree and a professional master's degree (Total 300 ECTS). This model of education does not include compulsory specialization in a certain area of professional activity and, after receiving a diploma, psychologists can choose any of the six areas of professional activity. However, above mentioned state-accredited higher education institutions offer in-depth courses in a specific area or areas of professional activity. In Latvia, two universities offer in-depth courses in clinical and health psychology:

- Rīga Stradiņš University (RSU), the Faculty of Public Health and Social Welfare, provides professional master's study program in health psychology. Study courses are conducted by the Department of Health Psychology and Pedagogy, Laboratory of Psychology. For further academic development of graduates, RSU offers a doctoral study programme in Psychology. RSU doctoral study programme students' themes contribute to the research and development of practice of psychological treatment.
- University of Latvia, the Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art, provides professional master's study program in psychology.

Another two state-accredited higher education institutions offer in-depth courses in other areas of professional activity.

For modernization purposes, during the study process, the modernization and digitalisation of psychological research methods is actively taking place at RSU, for example, in cooperation with RTU specialists there has been digitized Latvian Clinical Personality Inventory (LCPI), which facilitates the practice of psychological research and the mastering of this research method. Digitized LCPI provides fast, easy and accurate analysis of the data (see the information on the project below).

The RSU Laboratory of Psychology provides students with simulation-based education, for example, the Laboratory of Psychology has purchased a computerized electroencephalogram machine, Mitsar-EEG 202-24, which allows for an in-depth assessment of cognitive evoked potentials in the brain, that is, studying of the functioning of the human brain. Students can master the Biological Feedback Method in work with adults and children. This computer-based method is used by psychologists to help clients develop their self-regulation and self-control skills. Other psychological research equipment and digitized tests are also available in the Laboratory and Department of Health Psychology and Pedagogy. Students can develop their psychological counselling and research competency through internship courses.

Students of RSU doctoral program "Psychology" can also receive a European Social Fund scholarship, which is a support for doctoral students helping them to study in the program and obtain a scientific degree. For example, Kristīne Šneidere, a PhD student (LHPA member), received funding for her

research on relationship of physical activity and cognitive reserves to neural efficiency and cognitive processes in women, and received smart devices for obtaining objective physical activity measures.

RSU study program "Health Psychology" has concluded agreements on student supervision with working and certified psychologist-supervisors in hospital. It should be noted that in 2018 and 2019 several students have received a job offers after an internship in medical institutions, and after graduation continue to work there as psychologists.

Activities for students

For students, there have been developed methodological and informative materials (see part III, Activities).

Students conducted innovative interdisciplinary research using the latest generation technologies, e.g., within the framework of the project "Development of a computerised personality assessment system of an individual". One of the defended master's theses in this project is (information on project see below):

- Reidzane, A (2019). Computerized personality assessment system and validation of social desirability scales. RSU.

The students participated in the development and approbation of the programme "How to maintain mental health and acquire new knowledge and skills" in the project NPAD-2017-10077, "Age is not an obstacle" (see: <http://www.vecumsnavskerslis.lv/>). The aim of the project was to develop a program for seniors in Baltics states on "how to maintain physical and mental health". As a result of this project, two master's works were defended:

- Fomicева, J. (2019). Relationship between the symptoms of depression and the attitude toward own aging and perceived social support for seniors.
- Kozjutinska, M. (2019). Relationship between quality of life and personality traits and social support in seniors. RSU.

RSU is looking for effective solutions that enable students to provide psychological support through information technology opportunities. Collaboration with the developers of the web-based intervention MePlusMe (see www.meplusme.com) has been established, and preparations have been made to conduct a study on the use of interventions to promote health behaviour in the RSU's foreign students (see: <https://www.rsu.lv/en/meplusme-project>). As a result of the adaptation this programme, three master's works in study programme "Health psychology" were defended:

- Porozova, A. (2019). Academic self-efficacy and mental well-being of RSU students, their relation and changes during the usage of MePlusMe intervention. RSU.
- Gaspare, I. (2019). Anxiety and depression of RSU students, their relation and changes during the usage of MePlusMe intervention. RSU.
- Ivzans, I. (2019). Depression, anxiety, psychological well-being, academic self-efficacy and socio-demographic characteristics of students using different routes of MePlusMe web-based intervention. RSU.

During the Psychology Days in 2018, there have been organised several activities at the RSU: guest lecture by Dr. biol. J. Nikolajeva, *Application of electroencephalogram in psychology research* (Russia); guest lecture by Dr. psych. O. Strizickaja, *Current issues in neuroscience* (Russia); Open lecture by Dr. psych. J. Koļesņikova un a student of the RSU study program "Health Psychology", *Insight into occupational health psychology or what is a health promoting work environment*; open lecture by Mg. psych. K. Sneidere, *Brain development and aging, or what promotes retention of cognitive function in seniors*.

During the Psychology Days in 2019, there have also been organised several activities at the RSU: guest lecture by PhD. P. Tzozoli, *Digital technologies in psychology*; guest lecture by PhD. A. Kairys, *Time perspective: theory and research*; guest lecture by Dr. psych. L. Lagutina, *Understanding trauma*; guest lecture by J. Volonts, *Creative activities to reduce burnout for professionals*.

In October 2019, celebrating The International Day of Older Persons, RSU together with JSC “Pasažieru vilciens” (Passenger Train) organized the annual event *Health Express*. Students of the study program in Health Psychology participated in this event for the first time and provided psychological education to train passengers on the components of healthy aging.

In 2019 (28 September) in the European Researchers' Night events (the theme: Science for us) RSU hosted participation with many activities, one of them was organized by the members of the LHPA and RSU lecturers K. Sneidere and J. Kolesnikova, *Cognitive challenge relay-race*. Visitors had an opportunity to solve different tasks involving cognitive processes.

III) ACTIVITIES

Major research projects

1. Latvian National Research Programme (2018–2021). Project “NRP Challenges and solutions of Latvian State and Society in International Framework (INTERFRAME-LV)”. Project Supervisor: Prof. Dr. sc. inf. Sergejs Kruks.
2. Based on the results of Latvian National Research Programme's BIOMEDICINE subproject Nr. 5.8.2., *Research and reduction of health problems caused by cognitive dysfunction*; RSU continues to finance the project in 2019–2020. “The Effect of Lifetime Physical Activity on the Burden Caused by Cognitive Dysfunction and Depression in Elderly (ELPA-COG)”. Scientific supervisor: A. Stepens.
3. Based on Latvian Clinical Personality Inventory (LCPI), which was developed within the framework of the National Research Program BIOMEDICINE, RSU research team in cooperation with the Ministry of Defense and National Armed Forces is implementing Project No. 48-23/2017/0452. 2017–2020. “Development of a computerised personality assessment system of an individual “. Project Supervisor: Dr. med. Ainārs Stepens.

Conferences & meetings

Members of LHPA could participate in different conferences:

- On 19–20 September 2019, Latvian Association of Rehabilitation Professional Organisations (LARPO) and RSU in cooperation with the Latvian Association of Medical Rehabilitation and the RSU Alumni Association organised First Latvian National Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine. Riga, Latvia. It gathered a wide network of experts reflecting the multidisciplinary of the field.
- On 1–5 April 2019, RSU has organised International Research Conference on Medical and Health Care Sciences “Knowledge for Use in Practice” and International Conference on Social Sciences “Places”, Riga, Latvia. During a Science Week, Psychology lecturers and guest lecturers discussed current topics on psychological evaluation and assistance, working with different groups of clients and patients.
- On 25–27 April 2019, RSU Department of Health Psychology and Pedagogy has organised 5th International Scientific-Practical Conference “Health and Personality Development: an Interdisciplinary Approach”. Riga, Latvia. During the conference, there were raised issues of qualitative research, evaluation tools and psychological help in working with clients / patients.
- On 24–25 May 2019, Rēzekne Academy of Technologies and RSU, Latvia, in cooperation with the Klaipeda University, Lithuania, and Bialystok University of Technology, Poland, had organised 13th International Scientific Conference “Society. “Society. Integration Education”. Psychology section was organised in collaboration with Rēzekne Academy of Technologies and RSU.
- On 10–12 October 2018, RSU has organised 7th “Society. Health. Welfare” conference “Contemporary Social Dynamics and Welfare: Urban and Rural Development Perspectives”, Riga, Latvia. The conference was dedicated to urban and rural studies from different perspectives.

Publications

1. Bortaščenoks, R., Purvliče, B., Mārtinsone, K., Rancāns, E., Mihailovs, I.J., Kīvīte – Urtāne, A. (2019). Psychological help in Latvia – regulatory framework. *Society. Integration. Education. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference*, 7, 21-36.
2. Lazdiņš, K., & Mārtinsone, K. (2018). Prediction for driving behaviour in connection with socio-demographic characteristics and individual value system. *Society. Health. Welfare*, 40, 03009.
3. Ļevina, J., Perejolkina, V., Mārtinsone, K., Mihailova, S., & Koļesnikova, J. (2018). The relationship between anomia and maladaptive personality traits. *Society. Health. Welfare*, 40, 02006.
4. Ļubenko, J., Perejolkina, V., Mārtinsone, K., Rancāns, E., & Stepens, A. (2018). The relationship between suicide ideation, depressive symptoms and personality traits in elderly: pilot study results. *Society. Integration. Education. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference*, 7, 129-139.
5. Majore-Dūšele, I., Paiča, I., Mārtinsone, K., & Millere, I. (2018). Characteristics of mindfulness-based interventions for different patient groups – literature review. *Society. Integration. Education. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference*. 7, 140-152.
6. Paičs, I., Mārtinsone, K., & Ļubenko, J. (2018). Self-help practices: literature review. *Society. Integration. Education. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference*, 7, 196-207.
7. Perejolkina, V., Ļubenko, J., Koļesnikova, J., Mārtinsone, K., Stepens, A. (2019). Incremental role of pathological personality traits in the prediction of suicidal ideation in general and psychiatric inpatient sample. *Proceedings of the Latvian Academy of Sciences. Section B*, 73(721), 356-363. DOI: 10.2478/prolas-2019-0055
8. Purvliče, B., Mārtinsone, M., Pipere, A., & Bortaščenoks, R. (2018). Identity of professional groups providing psychological help: a literature review. *Society. Integration. Education. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference*, 7, 229-239.
9. Terehova R. (2018). Psychological needs of dementia patients in social care institution: a qualitative study. *Society. Integration. Education. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference*, 7, 270-279.
10. Šneidere, K., Montemurro, S., Mondini, S., Harlamova, J., Ulmane, Z., & Stepens, A. (2018). Cognitive reserve and cognitive performance in healthy Latvian seniors. *Society. Integration. Education. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference*, 7, 261-269.
11. Šneidere, K., Alruwais, N., Dowell, N., Arnis, V., Harlamova, J., Kupčs, K., ... Stepens, A. (2019). Differences in long and short-term memory performance and brain matter integrity in seniors with different physical activity experience. *Proceedings of the Latvian Academy of Sciences. Section B. Natural, Exact, and Applied Sciences*, 73(2), 158-163.
12. Ulmane, Z., Šneidere, K., Harlamova, J., Arnis, V., & Stepens, A. (2019). The relationship between personality traits in seniors with different aerobic physical activity experience. *Conference Proceedings of the 60th International Scientific Conference of Daugavpils University*. 151-157.

Monographs

1. Mārtinsone K. Girgensone B. (red.). (2018). Psihologu profesionālā darbība Latvijā: saturs, organizācija, regulējums. Psihologu likuma komentāri [Professional Activity of Psychologists in Latvia: Content, Organization, Regulation. Commentary on Law on Psychologists]. Rīga: Tiesu namu aģentūra. 367 lpp.
2. Mārtinsone K., Sudraba V. (red.). (2019). Veselības psiholoģija. Teorijas un prakses starpdisciplinārā perspektīva. [Health Psychology. An interdisciplinary perspective on theory and practice]. Rīga: RSU izdevniecība. 415 lpp.
3. Mārtinsone K., Sudraba V. (red.) (2019). Grupu psiholoģiskā konsultēšana un psihoterapija (papildinātais izdevums) [Group psychological counseling and psychotherapy (extended edition)]. Rīga: RSU izdevniecība. 150 lpp.

Booklet

1. Mārtinsone K., Freimane G. (red.). (2019). Veselības psiholoģija: psiholoģijas zinātnes apakšnozare un profesionālās darbības joma [Health psychology: sub-branch of psychology and area of professional activity]. Rīga: RSU izdevniecība. 66 lpp.

Awards, recognitions etc.

LHPA member professor K. Mārtinsone in 2018 received Acknowledgment from Latvian Society of Psychologists on the Investment of Edition “Professional Activity of Psychologists in Latvia: Content, Organization, Regulation. Commentary on Law on Psychologists”.

Collaboration with other societies

Cooperation with the LARPO regarding the preparation of the documentation of a clinical and health psychologist professional activity in health care setting.

LHPA in cooperation with the Latvian Society of Psychologists had organized seminars for students and other psychologists.

Promotion and member recruitment

All abovementioned events and activities have promoted LHPA’s recognition and popularity, as well as attracted new members.

Communication

- We supply an EHPS blog based on topical research in health psychology with the aim of providing information to health workers and interventionists, translating it into Latvian and providing communication and information dissemination. Blogs are translated by Andžela Berķe and Kristīne Mārtinsone (see <http://practicalhealthpsychology.com/lv/vision/>).
- LHPA website (see in Latvian: <http://veselibaspsihologija.lv/lv/>).
- A Facebook page is maintained (see in Latvian: <https://www.facebook.com/veselibaspsihologija/>).
- A Twitter account is maintained.
- Participation in broadcasts on the activities of health psychologists in Psychology Days in 2018 and 2019.

IV) PLANNED / FUTURE ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES

- To prepare and submit (to Quality Agency for Higher education) accreditation documents of RSU study direction "Psychology" (bachelor, masters and doctoral study programmes).
- To organize the 6th RSU Department of Health Psychology and Pedagogy International Conference “Health and personality development: an interdisciplinary approach”.
- To organize the International Scientific Conference "Society. Integration Education” Psychology section with Rēzekne Academy of Technologies and RSU.
- To promote and improve the quality of the study program "Health Psychology", participate in the project ESF No. 8.2.3.0/18/A/011, “Improvement of management processes and modernization of study program content at Riga Stradiņš University”. The curriculum, structure and content of the study program will be improved in accordance with the Law on Psychologists and the profession standard.
- To organize seminars of continuing education about topics of health psychology for members of LHPA and other psychologists.
- To organize and plan events for the 2020 Psychology Days.