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## **PAQUALITY**

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# **PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION EDUCATION IN LATVIA**

**(country report prepared for the intellectual output 01 – Assessment of  
methodology and materials of public administration teaching and its  
relevance for practice)**

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*Note: The report expresses an opinion of the author. The EC doesn't have responsibility for any utilization of included information.*

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The PAQUALITY projects aims to support changes in the area of public administration (PA) education in conformity with Bologna objectives, mainly:

- Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies, and
- Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programs of study, training and research, which haven't been fully applied in the area of the public administration high education in Latvia and the new EU states yet.

High education public administration programs vary a lot especially in the Central and Eastern European member countries of the EU - in the new EU member states (NMS). From this perspective it is highly relevant to facilitate quality assurance mechanism which would ensure not only comparable quality of education processes but also comparable outcomes of the education (e.g. quality of graduates, their knowledge, skills and experience) in these countries.

In addition, the project aims at tackling skills gaps and mismatches in the area of public administration high education through designing and developing curricula that meet the learning needs of students that are relevant to the labour market and societal needs, including through better use of open and on-line, work based, multi - disciplinary learning and new quality assessment criteria. Simultaneously, with a view of this priority, promoting and rewarding excellence in teaching and skills development, training of academics in new and innovative pedagogical approaches, new curriculum design approaches and sharing of good practices through collaborative platforms will be in the centre of the project.

This report on Latvia represents an input for the intellectual output 01 of the PAQUALITY project. Within this intellectual output country studies developed based on guidelines and surveys are anticipated. The studies will be used in other project phases but also for mutual information of the project partners at the beginning of the project.

This report summarizes findings on

- the national educational system related to present state of PA education,
- system of evaluation
- findings on PA programmes existing in the country
- relevancy to practice based on research among alumni and civil servants / employers. This research focused on the eight programmes including the public administration element.

It is based on data available as of 2019.

## 2. NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND PA EDUCATION AND TRAINING

### 2.1 PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AS A DISCIPLINE IN COUNTRY

PA is an established discipline in practice in Latvia, as Latvia are always seeking improvement and progress within the field of public administration. The development of public administration is an ongoing process which, by adapting to the influence of external environment, developing the national economy and the socioeconomic situation in the country, requires changes both in the institutional system of the public administration and the process management and competences<sup>1</sup>.

Latvia was established as an independent state in 1918, although there was no public administration as an academic field of study in Latvia at that time. As Latvia was occupied during the two World Wars and after WWII, the field of public administration at the academic level did not develop. The main background of civil servants at that time was economic science and law science<sup>2</sup>.

The first public administration sub-programme as an academic field of study in Latvia was established after renewal of the Republic of Latvia in 1991 at the Faculty of Economics and Management of the University of Latvia. It was a bachelor's degree sub-programme (sub-direction) under the label "organization of the local self-government". This sub-programme was an integral part of a bachelor's programme in business administration. This means, that students received their degree in business administration while during studies they had a chance to complete several courses in public administration.

The necessity of such sub-programme was connected with the process of decentralization of state power and increasing the role of local governments. By that time (i.e., 1991-1992), there were around 555 municipalities and they required staff equipped with new knowledge in management of municipal issues. The first master programme in public administration was also established at the Faculty of Economics and Management of the University of Latvia in 1994.<sup>3</sup> Programmes were accredited by the Accreditation Committee of the Ministry of Education and Science in September 1997 (bachelor's sub-programme) and in May 1998 (master's programme).

A BA sub-programme in regional development and administration (RDA) as part of the bachelor's programme in economics was established in 1995 at the Faculty of Economics of the Latvian University of Agriculture. An MA programme in regional development and administration (RDA) was established as well two years later in 1997. In 1996, an MA programme in sociology of organizations and public administration was established at the Institute of Humanities of the Latvian University of Agriculture. Finally, a BA programme in sociology of organizations and public administration started from September 1999.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Public Administration Reform Plan for 2020*. [https://www.mk.gov.lv/sites/default/files/editor/public-administration-reform-plan-2020\\_.pdf](https://www.mk.gov.lv/sites/default/files/editor/public-administration-reform-plan-2020_.pdf) Valsts Kanceleja, Riga 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Vanags, E. *Public administration education in Latvia*.

<http://unpan1.un.org/intrdoc/groups/public/documents/NISPAcee/UNPAN006434.pdf> Riga, pp 6.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pp7.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pp 6.

Meanwhile, in 1989, the Department of Political Sciences at the University of Latvia was established<sup>5</sup>. During 1989-1992 1992, political science was taught as a general subject in many study programmes. Only in 1992, the Department started to offer BA, MA and PhD programme in political science covering five disciplines – political theory, international relations, comparative politics, public administration. To be frank, there were other universities in Latvia at that time offering courses in the field, but only the University of Latvia had a full spectrum of programmes covering at all levels of higher education.

In 1998, also Riga Stradiņš University offered BA programme in political science with major in “International Relations – European Studies”<sup>6</sup>.

The proliferation of political science-public administration – international relation programmes started once Latvia expressed its goals to be full member of EU and NATO. Thus, design of such a programmes was collective process of learning social sciences and experience of democratic governance. In addition, the number of students interested in studying political students was very high around 2000. For example, only Department of Political Science admitted around 100 new BA students per year. Since University of Latvia and Riga Stradiņš University offered the widest choice in their political science study programmes, the number of students at such programmes was one of the highest in these universities respectively. Such a mushrooming of political science-public administration programme was also related to understanding that professionally educated experts in politics are crucial for management of political processes in the democratic country. The demand for programmes was caused by the need for in-depth knowledge about the EU and the integration process in Europe.

Following the tendencies, now University of Latvia and Riga Stradiņš University are the key players offering courses in political science. Riga Stradins University is heading towards more in depth studies and expertise in international relations, while University of Latvia towards public administration and diplomacy.

Another important factor affecting development of public administration under the umbrella of political science is classification of sciences approved by the Latvian Academy of Science. Already at the beginning of 1990ties, Latvia Academy of Science stated that public administration is sub-field of political science. Thus, any programme offering courses in public administration still shall be under “political science”.

To sum up, development of PA as an academic science was mainly related with the renewal of the Republic of Latvia. However, PA is still developing and establishing as a discipline in Latvia.

## **2.2 PA EDUCATION AND ITS SPECIFICS**

The Latvian education system consists of pre-school education, basic education, secondary education and higher education. General education in Latvia in total lasts 12 years, consisting of 9 years of compulsory basic education and 3 years of secondary education.

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<sup>5</sup> Bara D., Muceniece D. “Political Science in Latvia”. In Political Science in Europe at the Beginning of the 21st Century. Jagiellonian University Press 2015

<sup>6</sup> Bara D., Muceniece D. “Political Science in Latvia”. In Political Science in Europe at the Beginning of the 21st Century. Jagiellonian University Press 2015

Additionally, pre-school education at age of 5-6 is compulsory in Latvia.<sup>7</sup> Specialised courses and lectures on political science – public administration are usually available at the level of secondary education or higher education.

From 2018, the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Latvia provides courses for high school students (grade 10 - 12) to spark interest in the field of Political science. These courses were created with the aim to increase the visibility of political science, politics and diplomacy among young people, facilitating access to information on the role and importance of subjects related to political science in society, as well as promoting secondary school involvement in political science research.<sup>8</sup>

The training program consists of theoretical and practical lessons devoted to the following fundamental issues of the following policy science sub-disciplines:

- International relations and diplomacy;
- Public administration and public management;
- Political theory;
- Comparative politics.

This future-oriented program helps to improve the overall situation regarding political science and public administration as a discipline in our country, by reaching out to potential students and providing them with opportunities for feedback and communication.

For public servants, employed at the ministries or the municipalities, there are two requirements. First, they can enter public service only with BA degree at least. Second, they are involved in the continuous vocational education after BA in the form of short on-spot training courses offered by the Latvian School of Public Administration. Originally, the School was created to be as a Latvian “ENA” (*École nationale d'administration*) to deliver training for civil servants and candidates, and to prepare staff for work in the public administration. However, the slow introduction of the Civil service law of 1994, the lack of flexibility in offering training programmes, and the rapid development of private training facilities were decisive factors while the School was struggling for its role in the public administration development. Once the new Civil service law (2000) was passed, the School lost an important function – to be an examining body for civil servants and was offering training courses for public servants on the competitive basis with private training centres.

In practice, the division between civil service and public employment is almost non-existent. The Latvian public administration is open to external appointment to attract the staff with the necessary skills. The same rules apply for training and development – there is no difference for training for civil servants and employees with labour contracts. Thus, public administration agencies exercise wide discretion how to train their staff. Each agency is free to decide whether to use services offered by the Latvian School of Public Administration or

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<sup>7</sup> *System of education*. <http://www.aic.lv/portal/en/izglitiba-latvija/system-of-education> Akadēmiskās Informācijas Centrs (*Academic Information Centre*).

<sup>8</sup> *The School for New Politicians* <https://www.szf.lu.lv/par-mums/zinas/zina/t/46358/> Faculty of Social Sciences.

procure training from the private sector and universities. As the School has limited budgetary resources for training, it follows the order of State Chancellery regarding training modules and offers limited amount courses for public money. The main part of training is still covered either by institutions itself or EU funding.

**2.3 REQUIREMENTS ON ENTRANCE TO CIVIL SERVICE AND ON IN-SERVICE TRAINING**

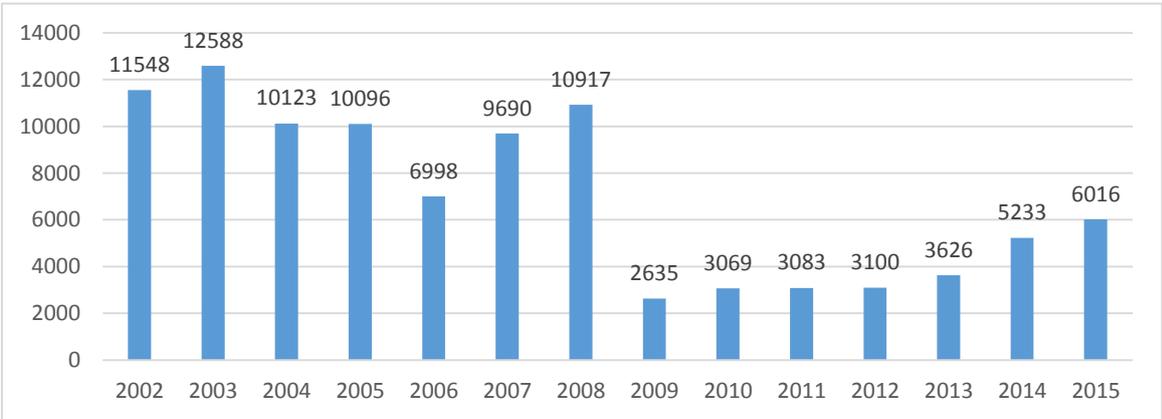
Public administration programmes (sub-programmes) are taught at the University of Latvia, and at Rīga Stradiņš University (RSU).

The Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Latvia provides a wide range of study programmes, thus ambioning their students to be prospectively employed as civil servants. The University offers both bachelors and masters study programmes in political science with specialisation in public administration. Thu, universities are providing BA degree for public servants to enter the service.

The Latvian School of Public Administration (LSPA) carries out civil servant training. It is the largest training centre for civil servants and public administration employees in Latvia that provides professional development courses and consultation services according to the needs of its customers. Itwas established in 1993 as a public administration institution under direct supervision of the State Chancellery. The main task of the LSPA is to provide a high-quality training and consultation service to meet the current and future needs of public administration and municipalities.<sup>9</sup>

The LSPA has a history of success, which has resulted in loyalty and recognition. As a result of this long-term cooperation, the LSPA has developed and maintains a database of over 7,000 public administration employees. LSPA trainers are subject matter experts in public administration, experienced business leaders and university lecturers. The content of the training is based on the incumbent needs and regulations of the public administration as well as adopting the best practices from other countries.<sup>10</sup> Thus, it is very common that the same professors are lecturing as the universities as well as at the Latvian School of Public Administration.

Fig.1. Number of participants in training organised by the School, 2002-2015.



<sup>9</sup> About us. <http://www.vas.gov.lv/en/> Latvian School of Public administration.

<sup>10</sup> About us. <http://www.vas.gov.lv/en/> Latvian School of Public administration.

Source: Latvian School of Public Administration 2016, 12.

Figure 1 reflects ups and downs in training of public servants heavily affected by the economic crises. Despite economic growth, still by 2016 the School did not reach its pre-crisis training volume. This is mainly due to the limited government resources allocated for public administration training.

## 2.4 SUMMARY

<p><b>3.1 Is PA education in your country specific for some reasons? If yes, why?</b></p>	<p>As in CEE countries, PA education is a relatively new field in Latvia. First public administration sub-programme as an academic field of study was established after the renewal of the Republic of Latvia in 1991. Thus, development of public administration as an academic field goes hand to hand with general development of social sciences.</p>
<p><b>3.2 Is PA a well-established own (inter-) discipline?</b></p>	<p>The development of public administration is an ongoing process. PA education is still developing. The main goal is to evolve and form a high-quality PA education that could stimulate inclusive economic growth and social well-being.</p>
<p><b>3.3 Is any formal exam required for entrance to civil service? If yes, what are the requirements?</b></p>	<p>There is only one requirement for a person – to have a BA degree. In general, there is no difference whether it is BA in social science or engineering.</p>

## 3. EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION SYSTEM AND PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

### 3.1 EXISTING EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION SYSTEM AND PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

The Centre of Higher Education (AIC) organizes the accreditation of HEIs and study directions and licensing of study programmes in Latvia. Meanwhile, so as to ensure the completion of the specified functions, the AIC established a specific department whose main responsibility is to organize the accreditation of HEIs and study directions, licensing of study programmes, as well as the implementation of other tasks related to higher education quality assurance. In order to draw attention to the quality function of the AIC, the chosen name for the established department is Quality Agency for Higher Education (AIKA).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> AIKA's Core Functions. <https://www.aika.lv/en/agency/aika-and-its-core-functions/> Higher Education Quality Agency.

The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) has taken their decision about granting full membership to the Quality Agency for Higher Education (AIKA), which is a valuable decision in the Latvian higher education area for further development and AIKA's operation in particular. This decision by ENQA confirms that both Latvian and foreign higher education institutions, students, and other stakeholders can trust higher education quality assessments organised by AIKA. The Quality Agency for Higher Education (AIKA) of AIC since its first activities in 2015 has purposefully been heading towards compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), thus fostering the increase and recognition of the Latvian higher education quality.<sup>12</sup>

According to Article no. 48 "Law on Higher Education Institutions", accreditation of the study programme covers 6 years. So, the next accreditation of BA, MA and PhD programme in all universities delivering courses in public administration might take place 2020-2023.

The general process of evaluation and accreditation of academic programmes includes following step:

1. Design of the programme based on the market needs;
2. Licencing the programme by the AIC
3. Admittance of the students
4. Accreditation of the programme after 2 years of operation of the study programme by AIKA.

The project "Evaluation of higher education study programmes and proposals for improvement of quality", was a joint report of experts on the academic bachelors, masters and PhD study programmes in sociology, political science, European Studies master's degree programme and demography at the University of Latvia. According to the agenda, the experts visited the University of Latvia (UL) in April 2012 and had meetings with administration, academic staff, students, graduates and employers. Furthermore, they even had a chance to get acquainted with the infrastructure at the Faculty of the Social sciences, the library and the facilities used by the study programmes, with Bachelor and Master Thesis, course works of students of all levels at all study programs in question. After careful reading of all the above-mentioned documents and well-prepared site visits and discussions with students and staff, they were able to form a rather clear general view of the programmes in question and research carried out at the Faculty of the Social sciences as well as at the Faculty of Economics and management at the UL.<sup>13</sup> The report reflected that study programmes (including political science) are at good level of quality.

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<sup>12</sup> AIKA and Development of Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Latvia.  
<https://www.aika.lv/en/agency/aika-and-development-of-quality-assurance-in-higher-education-in-latvia/>  
Higher Education Quality Agency.

<sup>13</sup> Project "Evaluation of higher education study programmes and proposals for improvement of quality". European Social Fund. University of Latvia, 2012.

However, training courses of private training centres and Latvian School of Public Administration are not a subject by evaluation of AIC and AIKA. The evaluation and quality assessment for those course are based on customer satisfaction mainly.

### **3.2 EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PA STUDY PROGRAMMES**

Latvia is one of the first European Higher Education Area (EHEA) countries that have developed a quality assurance system and established a quality assurance agency. The first Latvian quality assurance agency (AIKNC) was established in 1994 and it ensured the accreditation of study programmes and institutions. However, in 2012, as an element of reforms in higher education, the Ministry of Education and Science decided to transfer accreditation activities from the AIKNC to the Ministry of Education and Science, and later to AIKA

The AIKA was established in March 2015 and started to work at full capacity on 1 July 2015. The AIKA is a new agency, but it grew rapidly due to several important growth factors. The establishment of the Agency took place at the same time as the finalisation of the ESG-2015, and the Agency could implement the new ESG version straight ahead; the AIKA also was based on the experience and knowledge it took over from the expert pool and the database of the former agency AIKNC.

The AIKA is autonomous and recognized as the national quality assurance agency for higher education, set up to improve the external quality assurance system for Latvian higher education, which would operate in accordance with the ESG and promote the quality, visibility and international recognition of Latvian higher education, covering the entire Latvian higher education system: both state and private HEIs and from short-cycle programmes to doctoral ones.

The Agency is an affiliate of ENQA since April 2015, a full member of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (CEENQA) since 2016, a full member of the Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) since 2016, and of the European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA) since 2017.

The AIKA is ensuring internationalisation in several ways: participating in the exchanges of experts, joint assessment, the exchange of experience, and information and training. AIC has been an affiliate of ENQA since April 2015 and is applying for ENQA membership. AIC is applying for registration on EQAR.

According to the amendments to the Cabinet Regulations No. 407 “Regulations on Accreditation of Institutions of Higher Education, Colleges and Study Directions” (adopted on 27 July 2017), Clause 8, the Study Accreditation Committee:

- reviews the application by the institution of higher education or the college for the accreditation of a study direction;
- takes a decision on the accreditation of the respective study direction or the refusal to accredit the respective study direction;
- approves the methodology developed by the Quality Agency for Higher Education (Agency) for the accreditation of a study direction;
- decides on introducing the amendments to the accreditation form of study directions;

- decides on whether changes to the study direction introduced by the institution of higher education or the college are admissible after the respective institution of higher education or the college, if it wishes to introduce these changes to the respective study direction, has submitted a related application on the approval of these changes to this study direction to the Study Accreditation Committee;
- approves one expert for the assessment of the changes mentioned above.<sup>14</sup>

To sum up, external quality assurance is inherited in the process of accreditation. Since the period of accreditation might be 6, 2 or 1 year, this directly reflects sustainability and weakness of the respective study programme.

### 3.3 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

Internal quality assurance consists of several steps:

- self-evaluation each year includes detailed analysis of changes in the programme (curricula, staff);
- annual customer (student) satisfaction survey and their evaluation of the courses completed;
- annual evaluation of the programme by representatives of employers.

However, the external evaluation remain the main quality assurance tool. Lately University of Latvia and Riga Stradins University has started to introduce EFQM model as internal quality management system. The Latvian University of Agriculture has certification its quality management system according to *Investors in Excellence Standard* in 2019.

### 3.4 ANTICIPATED CHANGES

On January 1st, 2019, new regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers came into force, regulating external quality assessment procedures. According to the new Cabinet Regulations, five quality assessment procedures have been defined:

- licensing of the study program;
- study field accreditation (covering all programmes of social science in the university or college);
- assessment of changes in the study programs;
- inclusion of a licensed study program in the accreditation page of the study program;
- accreditation of a university or college.

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<sup>14</sup> *The Duties and Rights of The Comimittee for Licencing of Study Programmes*  
<https://www.aika.lv/en/agency/committee-for-licencing-of-study-programmes/> Higher Education Quality Agency.

These changes are tailored to decrease number of study programmes, as there is around 950 study programmes offered.

All these procedures are organized by the AIC, while higher education institutions / colleges may also choose any quality assurance agency included in the European Register for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (EQAR) to organize the accreditation procedure for the study field.<sup>15</sup>

### 3.5 SUMMARY

<p><b>3.1 What is the general governance structure with regard to external quality assurance of higher education institutions? Is it the same or is it different for PA programmes?</b></p>	<p>The general governance structure with regards to external quality assurance of higher education institutions is the same for PA programmes as well as other higher education programmes. Academic Information Centre (AIC) together with Higher Education Quality Agency (AIKA), has the responsibility to licence higher education programmes.</p>
<p><b>3.2 Which are the main providers of programme accreditation? Is there a national body (regulator etc), e.g. as an agency under control of the Ministry of Education, responsible for the regulation of accreditation? What is the status of relevant institutions (government authorities, semi-autonomous or independent organizations)?</b></p>	<p>The AIKA is autonomous and recognized as the national quality assurance agency for higher education, set up to improve the external quality assurance system for Latvian higher education, which would operate in accordance with the ESG and promote the quality, visibility and international recognition of Latvian higher education, covering the entire Latvian higher education system.</p>
<p><b>3.3 What are the rules and requirements for accreditation (e.g. are all programmes subject of accreditation or only new programmes? Are only state or public universities to be evaluated? etc)?</b></p>	<p>All higher education study programmes must be subjected to the accreditation process till the expiration of accreditation. AIKA operate in accordance with the ESG, covering the entire Latvian higher education system: both state and private HEIs and from short-cycle programmes to doctoral ones.</p>
<p><b>3.4 Who is allowed to do programme accreditation? Only an official government agency, (like e.g. in Austria) or other (ENQA- or EQAR-) recognized</b></p>	<p>Since April 2015, AIC became an affiliate member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. On</p>

<sup>15</sup> Regulations for External Quality Assessment

<https://www.aika.lv/2019/01/10/jauns-normativais-regulejums-areja-kvalitates-novertesana/> Higher Education Quality Agency.

institutions?	June 21st, 2018, AIC was recognized as a full member of ENQA. Therefore, AIC is a recognised international body for programme accreditation process.
<b>3.5 Who are the evaluators (bureaucrats and/or academic peers, are foreign academic peers involved)?</b>	An institution of higher education or college is evaluated by a group of experts, consisting of seven experts, including one representative delegated by the Latvian Employers' Confederation or a higher education institution or college, one representative delegated by the Latvian Student Association and at least two foreign experts. <sup>16</sup>
<b>3.6 Which methods of accreditation are primarily applied in the respective country?</b>	In the process of accreditation, a group of experts analyse academic staff qualification according to the requirements of the “Law on Higher Education Institutions”, the strategic plan for development, the resources available (library, data base, financial base for development), analysing, if higher education institution guarantees the continuous improvement, development and operational efficiency of a higher education. <sup>17</sup>
<b>3.7 Who takes the decision to accredit a programme? (is it the institution doing the evaluation or a superior government body?)</b>	The decision of having an accreditation makes the higher education institution, but the act of accreditation is executed by superior government body – Academic Information Centre (AIC) together with Higher Education Quality Agency (AIKA).

## 4. EXISTING PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

### 4.1 DATA, METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

There were selected variety of higher education programmes that fell into category of PA. Programme content were the main (and the most significant) criteria for inclusion. There were included existing PA programmes - BA, MA, BA+MA, PhD. There were used the eligibility criteria of EAPAA as a guiding tool for inclusion of relevant PA programmes. Public Administration in the

<sup>16</sup> Regulation for accreditation of universities and colleges. <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/303892-augstskolu-un-koledzu-akreditacijas-noteikumi> Legal Acts of The Republic of Latvia.

<sup>17</sup> Regulation for accreditation of universities and colleges. <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/303892-augstskolu-un-koledzu-akreditacijas-noteikumi> Legal Acts of The Republic of Latvia.

broadest sense of the word as its major subject. The public administration programme is multidisciplinary in character. This embraces governance and all the aspects of management and policy that come with it, as well as the social and economic environments that affect it and are affected by it. Also, it embraces the understanding of democratic values. The responsibility of the accredited programmes is not just to teach technical proficiency, but also to teach Public Administration according to academic standards based on positive and normative theory and empirical research.<sup>18</sup>

Programmes like security management or social work or marketing and PR or even healthcare management were not included.

#### 4.2 EXISTING PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

**Table 1 – Existing PA study programmes**

Higher Education Institutions	Bachelor SP	Master SP	PhD.	MBA	MPA	TOTAL
<b>Public HEIs</b>						
University of Latvia (UL)	1	2	1	-	-	4
Riga Stradiņš University (RSU)	1	1	1	-	-	3
Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (former Latvian University of Agriculture) (LLU)	1	-	-	-	-	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	3	3	2	-	-	8

Source: Author.

#### 4.3 AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION ON PA STUDY PROGRAMMES

Study programmes for PA education are mainly under Political science discipline. All the information about these study programmes is available on HEIs web pages, where individuals can search information on the desired study programme.

However, there are very limited options to choose from when it comes to PA education. The main provider of PA education (at BA level) is the Faculty of Social sciences at the University of Latvia.

A brief description of every study programme offered in the HEIs is also available on their website.

<sup>18</sup> *Accreditation Criteria, Version 9, January 2013.*

<https://www.eapaa.eu/wpcontent/uploads/2015/04/EAPAAccreditationCriteriaVersion9Jan2013.pdf>

European Association for Public Administration Accreditation

#### 4.4 SUMMARY

<b>4.1 How many relevant PA study programmes have you identified and what is their structure?</b>	There have been identified eight PA study programmes, out of which only one programme does not have continuation to masters and PhD. The other two PA programmes have a continuation onto masters and PhD programmes.
<b>4.2 What information is available on the study programmes on their website?</b>	On HEIs website the information about the study programmes is limited, but the main information about the study programme can be easily detected – study direction, degree conferred, accreditation date, credit points/ECTS, study language, duration of the study programme, content of the programme, teaching staff, skills and competences acquired.

## **5. CONCLUDING REMARKS, POINTS FOR PRACTITIONERS, CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE**

### **5.1 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The general governance structure with regards to external quality assurance of higher education institutions is the same for PA programmes as well as other higher education programmes.

Although there is formation available on PA study programmes and the existing PA study programmes are of good quality, still the question on future of PA education is open. Namely, PA programmes as all social sciences are facing several challenges:

- Decreasing number of students;
- Decreasing government support for studies and research;
- Negative public image as social sciences are marketed as ones do not providing added value for national economy.

Based on the recommendation of World Bank for structural reform in higher education, Latvia has started to consolidate study programmes in social sciences.

### **5.2 POINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS**

Information used for acknowledging the overall view of PA education programmes in Latvia can be found on the HEIs websites. There, a selected variety of higher education programmes that fell into the category of PA can be consulted.

However, some points for practitioners are to be identified:

- There is rather weak link between learning outcomes of PA education in universities and learning outcomes for courses offered at training centres.
- PA education is connected with general trend of social learning for democratic governance, so it provides generalist courses, while training centres provides in-depth expertise and insight.
- PA education and training courses have rather vague link with policy documents and future vision of the public administration in Latvia.

### **5.3 CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE**

The main challenges for future is as follows:

- To promote the European dimensions in higher education, a future-oriented, sustainable PA education. This challenge includes recognition of PA as separate field of science. However, due to rigid classification system of science, this task will not be accomplished in medium term. Classification of science fields are directly linked to study programmes and doctoral programmes in universities. Thus, opening a debate of PA as a separate field might be like opening a “black box”.
- The current tendency in cutting study programmes might create a risk that universities are keeping a few courses on public administration as an optional under the umbrella of a wider social science programme.

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