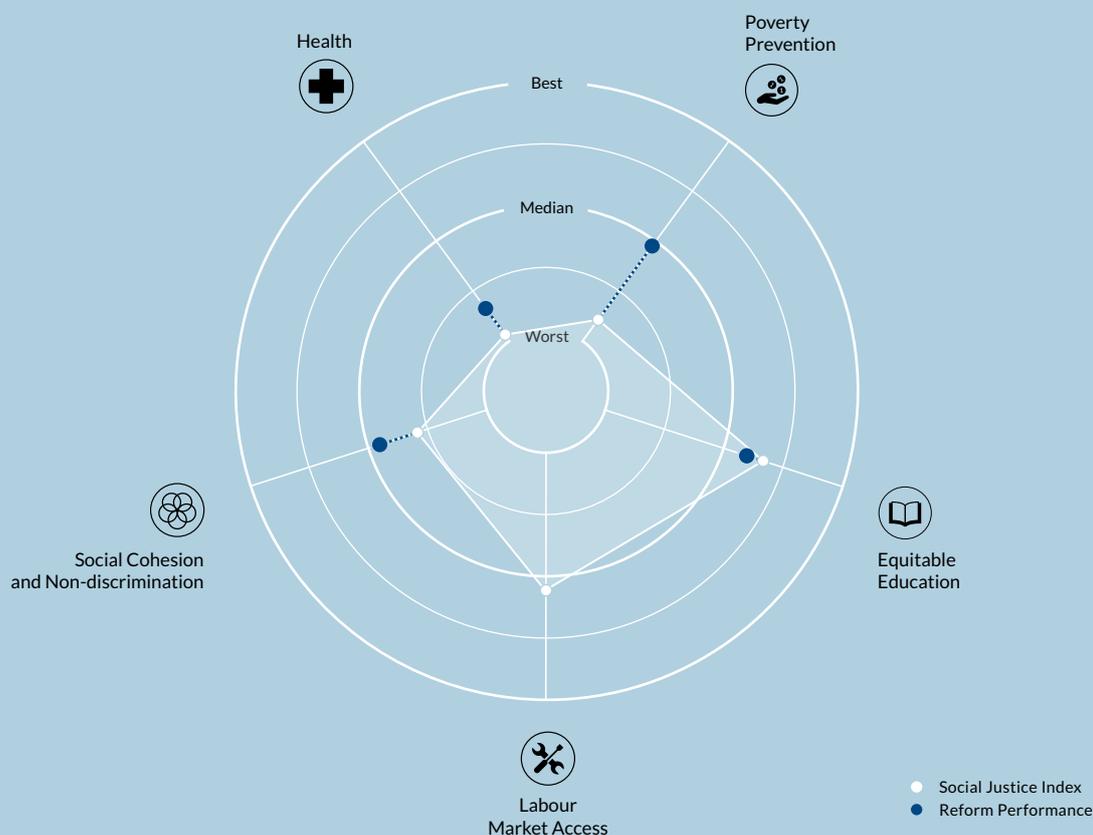


Findings by Country


Latvia

How does the country rank in the EU?



Overall Findings

Need The experts assess the overall need for social reforms in Latvia to be relatively high (2.21, rank 14/23). This is in accordance with the country's 2015 Social Justice Index (SJI score) of 4.98, which was well below the EU average (rank 20/28).

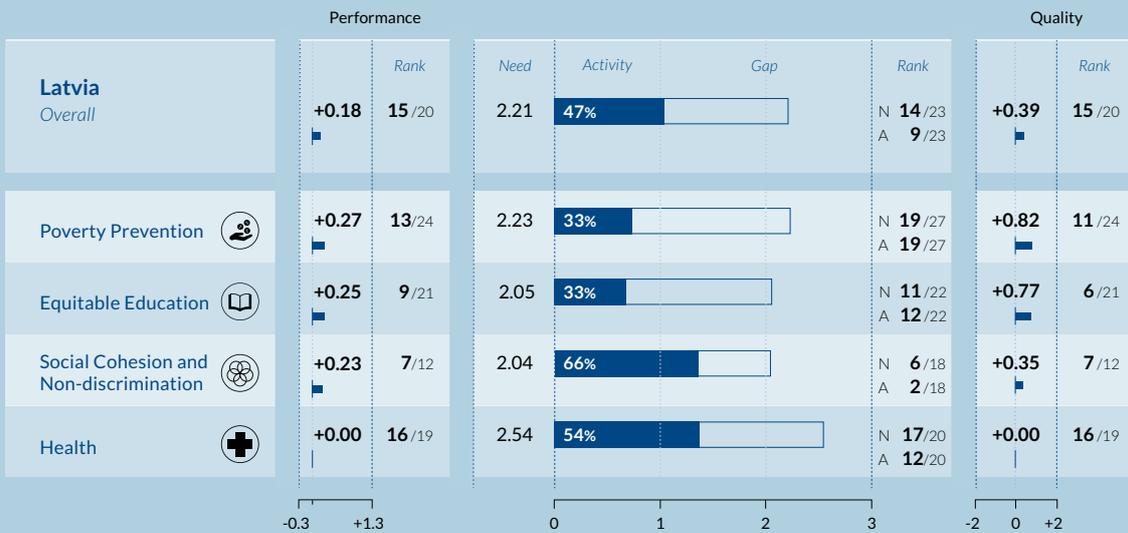
The highest need for reform is seen in the Health dimension (2.54, rank 17/20). Here, the need was evaluated as extremely high with regard to the improvement of public health (3.00), the unmet needs for medical help (2.88) and the accessibility and range of health services (2.75). The need for reform is also seen as quite high in the dimension of Poverty Prevention (2.23, rank 19/27), especially concerning senior citizens (2.88) and children (2.88) as well as single parents (2.75).

A lower need for reform was assessed in the dimensions of Equitable Education (2.05, rank 11/22) and Social Cohesion (2.04), where Latvia ranks 6th out of 18 assessed countries. However, the experts stated that reform is very much needed to ensure that the learning success of children is independent of their socioeconomic background (2.57).

Overall Reform Performance Ranking



Overview of Reform Barometer Scores



Activity Overall, the activity rate is 47 percent, ranking Latvia 9th out of 23 evaluated countries. However, activity rates differ widely among the four assessed policy dimensions. In the dimensions of Health and Social Cohesion, 54 and 66 percent, respectively, of the reform need is being addressed. But in the dimensions of Poverty Prevention and Equitable Education, Latvia shows far lower activity rates (33% each).

In the Health dimension, which is in the most need of reform, activity rates also range widely: Two of the three most pressing challenges (improvement of public health and access to health services) received activity rates of 73 percent each. However, the unmet needs for medical help, which is the second-most pressing issue, is only seeing an activity rate of 48 percent. And the financing of the Latvian health system, the fourth-most pressing challenge, is assigned the lowest rate (16%).

In the Poverty Prevention dimension, which has the second-highest need of reform, activity rates overall were relatively low. With regard to the most pressing challenges of preventing poverty for senior citizens and children, the activity was measured at 40 and 45 percent, respectively.

Quality Although the experts assess the activity rate to be relatively high, their assessment of the effectiveness of those measurements is less positive. Overall, the quality score is 0.39 (rank 15/20). While the policy reforms on Poverty Prevention (0.82, rank 11/24) and Equitable Education (0.77, rank 6/21) are expected to have a positive effect, the government action with regard to Social Cohesion (0.35, rank 7/12) is expected to have only very slight effects. The quality of Health reforms, which are the most pressing ones for Latvia, are evaluated as practicably ineffective (0.0, rank 16/19).

Dimension Findings



Poverty Prevention

Need The need to introduce policy reforms concerning Poverty Prevention is very high in Latvia, according to the experts. While the overall need is rated at 2.23, it is even higher for senior citizens (2.88), children (2.88) and single parents (2.75). In stark contrast, the need is rated far lower for foreign-born people (1.14) and refugees (1.50).

Activity Although the need for reform is high, activity rates regarding Poverty Prevention were rated as low by the experts (33%), ranking Latvia 19th out of 27 assessed EU member states. Three experts stated that reform was especially needed with regard to minimum income in Latvia, and explained that while the government plans to act on this issue, there have so far been no concrete results. One expert stated: “There is a strong and acute necessity to introduce an official subsistence minimum.”¹ The experts also expressed that pensions need to be raised to prevent poverty among the elderly.

Looking at the societal groups with the greatest need for reform, the activity rates were slightly higher: 45 percent with regard to the prevention of child poverty, and 40 percent regarding the risk of poverty in old age. Fewer policy reforms were introduced for single parents (31%) and refugees (27%). In accordance with the limited demand for policy reforms for the foreign-born population in Latvia, the activity rate was estimated as being close to zero (2%).

Quality While the experts expressed the view that only a small amount of the reform need is being addressed, the policy reforms that have in fact been introduced are expected to have positive effects on poverty prevention overall (0.82, rank 11/24) and even more on the at-risk groups of senior citizens (1.37) and children (1.00).



Equitable Education

Need The experts see a strong need to introduce policy reforms regarding Equitable Education. Policy change is very strongly needed to ensure that learning success is independent of children’s socioeconomic background (2.57). Equally, the policy objectives of equal opportunities in education, the structural conditions regarding financial and human resources, and the qual-

¹ Feliciana Rajevska, Institute of Human, Economic and Social Research, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences

ity of teaching were all evaluated to be in high need of reform (2.03 each). While the degree of need ranged between 1.57 and 2.33 for the different levels of education, tertiary education was assessed to be in above-average need across all three policy objectives (2.27 or 2.25). A lower need was assessed with regard to the rate of early school leavers (1.63).

Activity The activity rate for reforming the Latvian educational system is 33 percent. In comparison to other EU member states, this is about average, ranking Latvia 12th out of 22 evaluated countries. With regard to the most pressing policy objective, the independence of learning success from socioeconomic background, the experts observed a low activity rate of just 23 percent. However, a particularly high activity rate was assessed for the level of secondary education across the policy objectives of equal opportunities (45%), structural conditions (78%) and the quality of teaching (69%). With regard to the quality of teaching, a high activity rate was also assessed for primary education (67%). Almost no policy reforms were or are being introduced to ensure equal opportunities in lifelong learning (7%) or to provide sufficient financial and human resources in early childhood and pre-primary education (6 and 10%, respectively).

Quality The experts expect the policy reforms to have a positive effect on the Latvian education system (0.77, rank 6/21). Equal opportunities are expected to improve at the primary and secondary education levels (1.00 each) and, to a lesser extent, at the level of tertiary education (0.50). The same improvement can be stated for the quality of teaching (averaging 0.97, but ranging for each education level between 0.67 and 1.23) as well as for the rate of early school leavers (0.80). While the experts also anticipate that the structural conditions regarding financial and human resources will improve at the secondary education level (0.83), they expect no improvement in tertiary education in this regard (-0.14).

Social Cohesion and Non-discrimination

Need According to the experts, the need for reform in the dimension of Social Cohesion and Non-discrimination is high. However, in comparison to other EU member states, Latvia performs fairly well, ranking in the top third. Policy changes are strongly needed to decrease the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (2.67, rank 11/15), to reduce income and wealth inequality (2.50, rank 14/22) and, to a lesser extent, to safeguard gender equality (2.00, rank 6/17). According to the experts, very little reform is needed with regard to the integration of foreign-born persons and refugees (1.00, rank 3/14).

Activity Although the need for reform in this dimension was estimated to be comparatively low, the activity rate related to social cohesion was assessed to be the second-highest among the 18 evaluated states (66%). Only Italy received a higher activity rate. For the specific policy objectives, the activity rate was slightly lower with regard to gender equality (58%) and NEETs (63%, rank 6/15). Conversely, the experts evaluated extremely highly the reform activity concerning income and wealth inequality (70%, rank 4/22) as well as integration policy (83%, rank 1/17).

Quality While the reform need is comparatively moderate and there are government actions, their effectiveness is evaluated as being quite low, at 0.35 (rank 7/12). For the reforms regarding Latvia's integration policy, which saw the highest activity rate, the experts even anticipated a slightly negative outcome (-0.20).

Health

Need The dimension of Health is in the greatest need of policy change, both compared to the other dimensions assessed for Latvia as well as to the other EU member states. Latvia only ranks third to last with regard to the need for reform. All of the eight policy objectives received scores of 2.00 or higher. The greatest need is seen in improving public health in general (3.00), reducing unmet needs for medical help (2.88) and ensuring the accessibility and range of health services (2.75).

Activity The most pressing policy objectives mentioned above received mixed government attention. While 73 percent of the need to improve public health (rank 11/24) and the accessibility of health services (rank 6/19) was addressed, the objective of meeting the need for medical assistance received an activity rate of just 48 percent. Much was also done to increase the quality (73%, rank 6/22) and the performance (66%, rank 8/19) of health care. What's more, very little policy change was introduced to advance the efficiency (36%, rank 18/20) or the sustainable and fair financing of the Latvian health system (16%, rank 17/20). Many of the experts voiced their concern about this issue, with one stating: "At this stage, the problem has reached the level of crisis."² According to the experts, the Latvian government has introduced initiatives to introduce mandatory health insurance. However, the experts remain sceptical of those plans and instead favour an increase in public financing of this sector.

Quality The Latvian health system was assessed to be in great need of policy reform. Though the experts assessed that much of the reform need is being addressed (with the exception of its efficiency and financing), they are less positive about the effects of the measures that have been taken. Concerning the quality of the reforms, Latvia only ranks fourth to last. Although the experts anticipate a positive effect for the reforms aimed at improving public health (0.75) and the quality of health care (0.34), they expect adverse consequences with regard to health care governance (-0.74), access to health services (-0.90) and meeting the need for medical help (-0.36).

² Girts Brigis, Department of Public Health, Riga Stradins University