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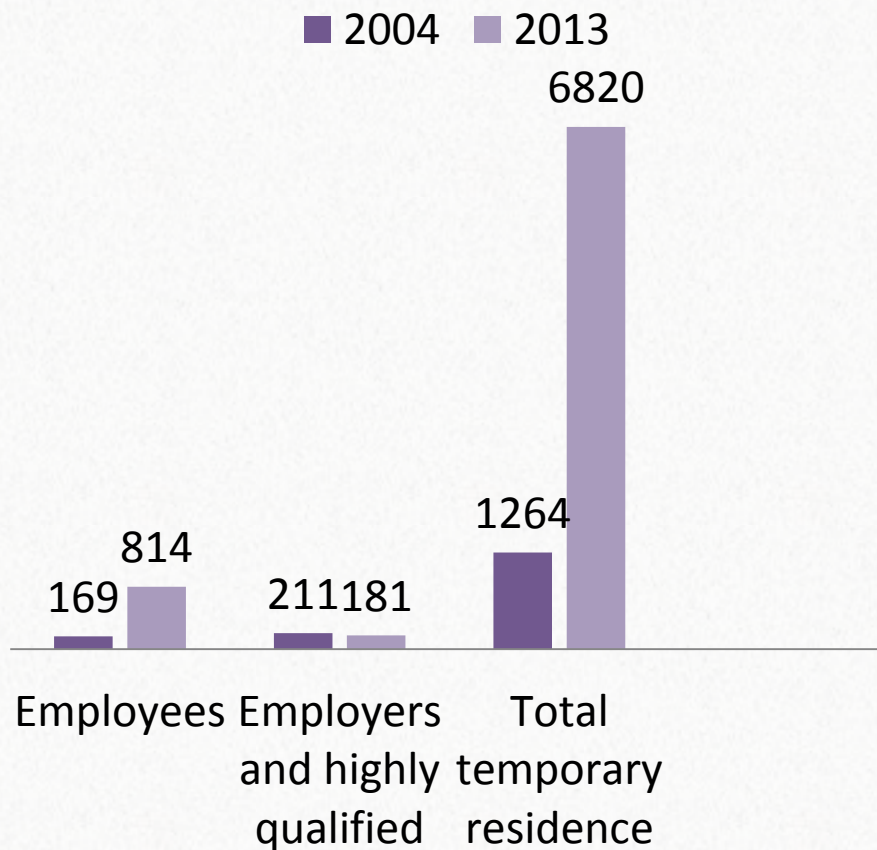
FOR EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY

# **POLICY CHALLENGES FOR THE INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS IN LATVIA: THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS AND BENEFICIARIES OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION**

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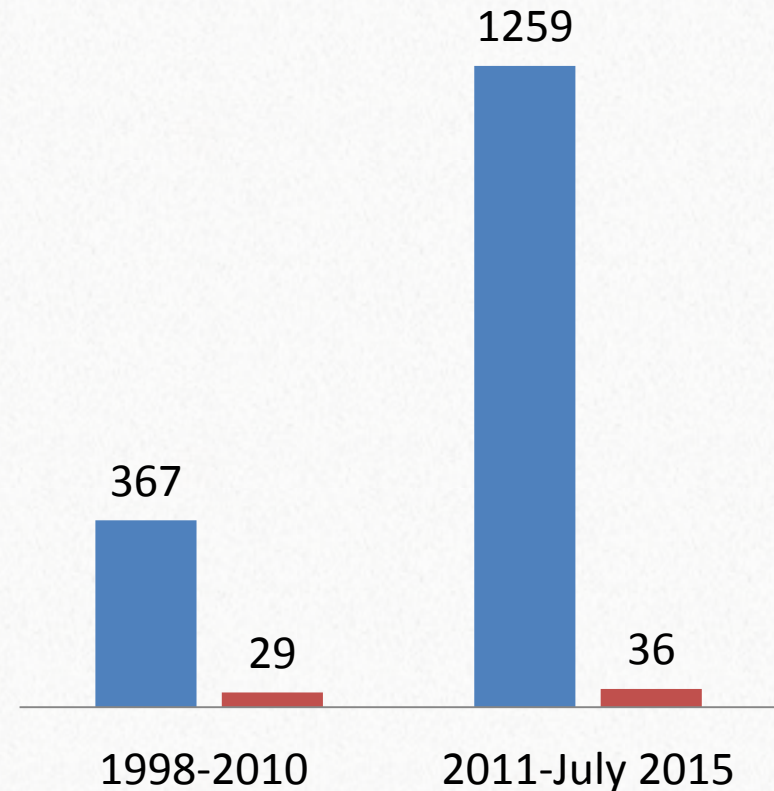
# Migrants in Latvia: a game of small numbers

## Temporary residence permits: work



## Asylum seekers

■ Applied ■ Accepted



# Migrants in Latvia: a game of small numbers

- In January 2016, only **3148** (2563 employees + 585 employers/ highly qualified) third-country nationals lived in Latvia with temporary residence permit for work.
- Total number of third-country nationals with temporary residence permits: **25761**
- Total number of asylum applications in 2015 was **328**, 6 persons gained refugee status and 23 gained alternative protection status.

(Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs)

# Stringent asylum requirements

- In 2010-2014, only 43 persons accorded refugee status, 98 accorded alternative protection status.
- This constitutes roughly **12.4% positive response rate**.
- In 2014 – **26%** (Denmark 68%, Estonia 36%).
- It is not yet clear to what extent the **Action plan for receiving persons in need of international protection** will be a game-changer (likely not much).

# Action plan

- Part of the EU Relocation plan, ad-hoc and based on a political compromise.
- Emphasis on labour market integration (right to work soon after arrival). But: language requirements exist for most jobs and will not be temporarily lifted.
- Steps towards recognition of qualifications even if documents are lost (no cases yet).
- Language support: language courses 120h (Germany 600-900h, Finland 2100h, Denmark 2000h, Portugal 300h).
- Mentoring support: yes, but so far difficult to recruit mentors.

# Wider picture: the needs of the labour market

- Latvian labour market is expected to experience serious shortages of workforce, especially in the 'middle' qualification levels, by 2020. The reasons behind this shortage are mainly demographic.
- The demand for workforce in some sectors of the economy is already difficult to satisfy (especially high value-added sectors related to technologies, science, IT).

(Ministry of Economy, 2015)

# What are good policies for labour market mobility?

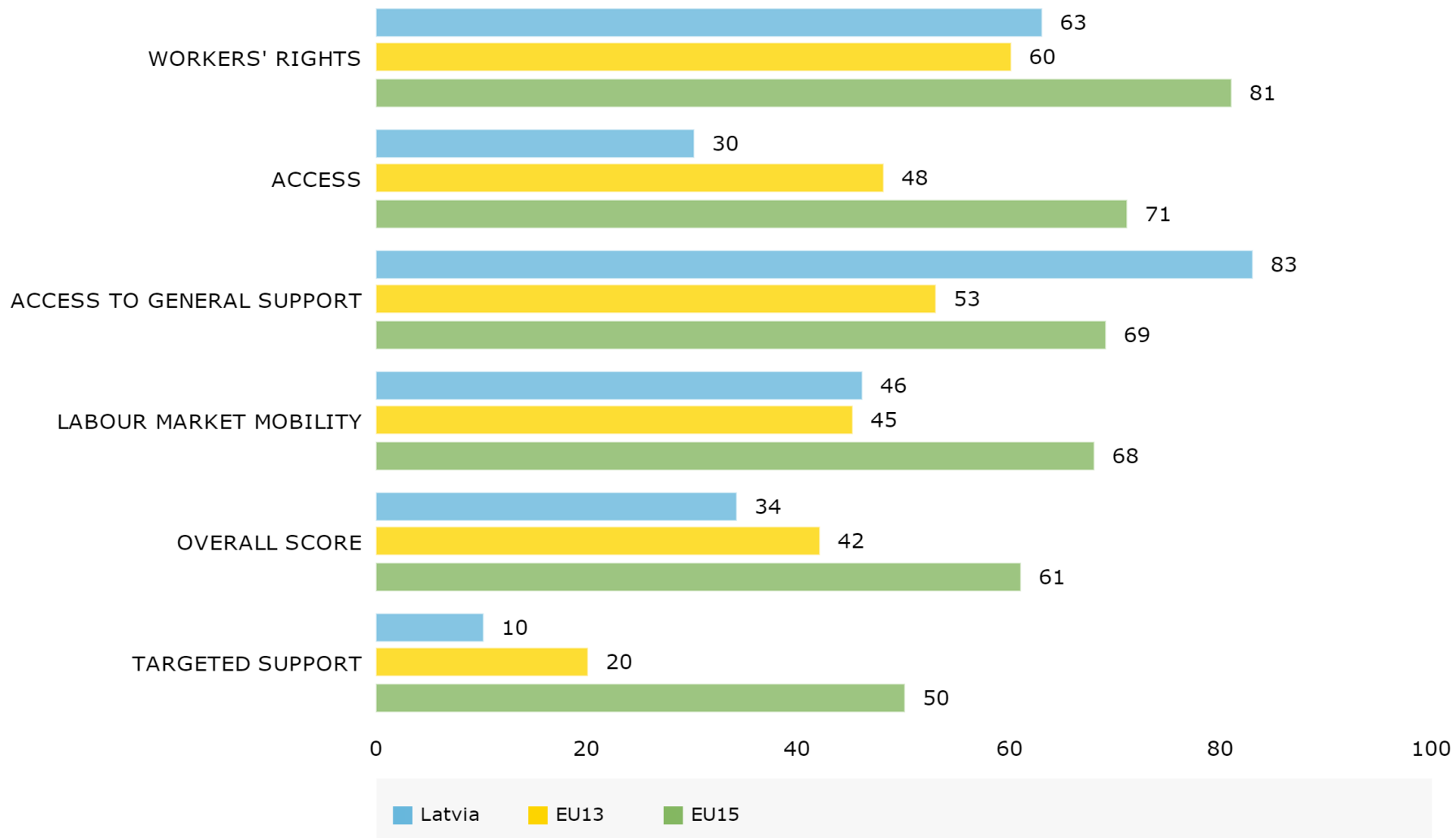
“A migrant with the right to work and live in the country has the same chances as everyone else in the labour market. From day one in the country, she can start applying for any job in the private or public sector.

She gets her qualifications from abroad recognised. She can then improve her skills through training and study grants. The state encourages her by targeting her specific needs - for example, she can take language courses focused on her profession. ...**Once employed, she has the same rights as all workers in the country.**”

**MIPEX 2015**

# Labour market mobility in Latvia

## MIPEX 2015 (score out of 100)





# Access to general support

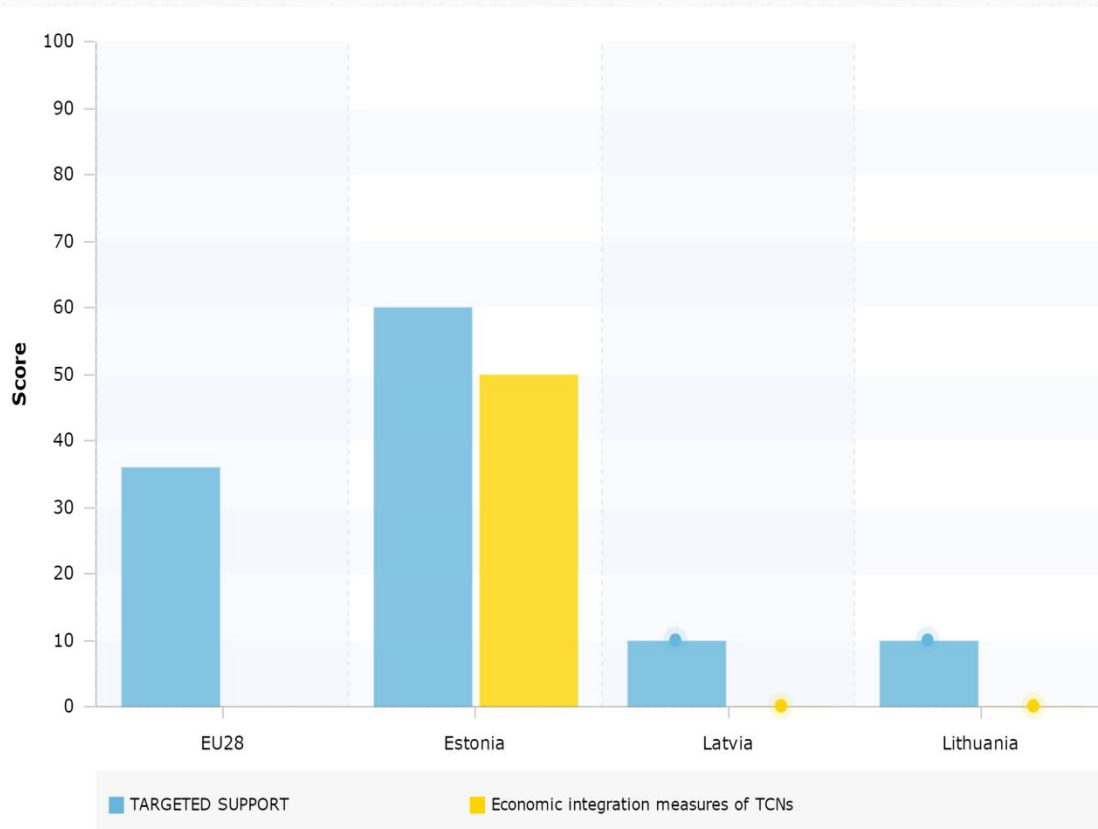
## MIPEX 2015 (score out of 100)



# Obvious barriers to labour market integration of migrants

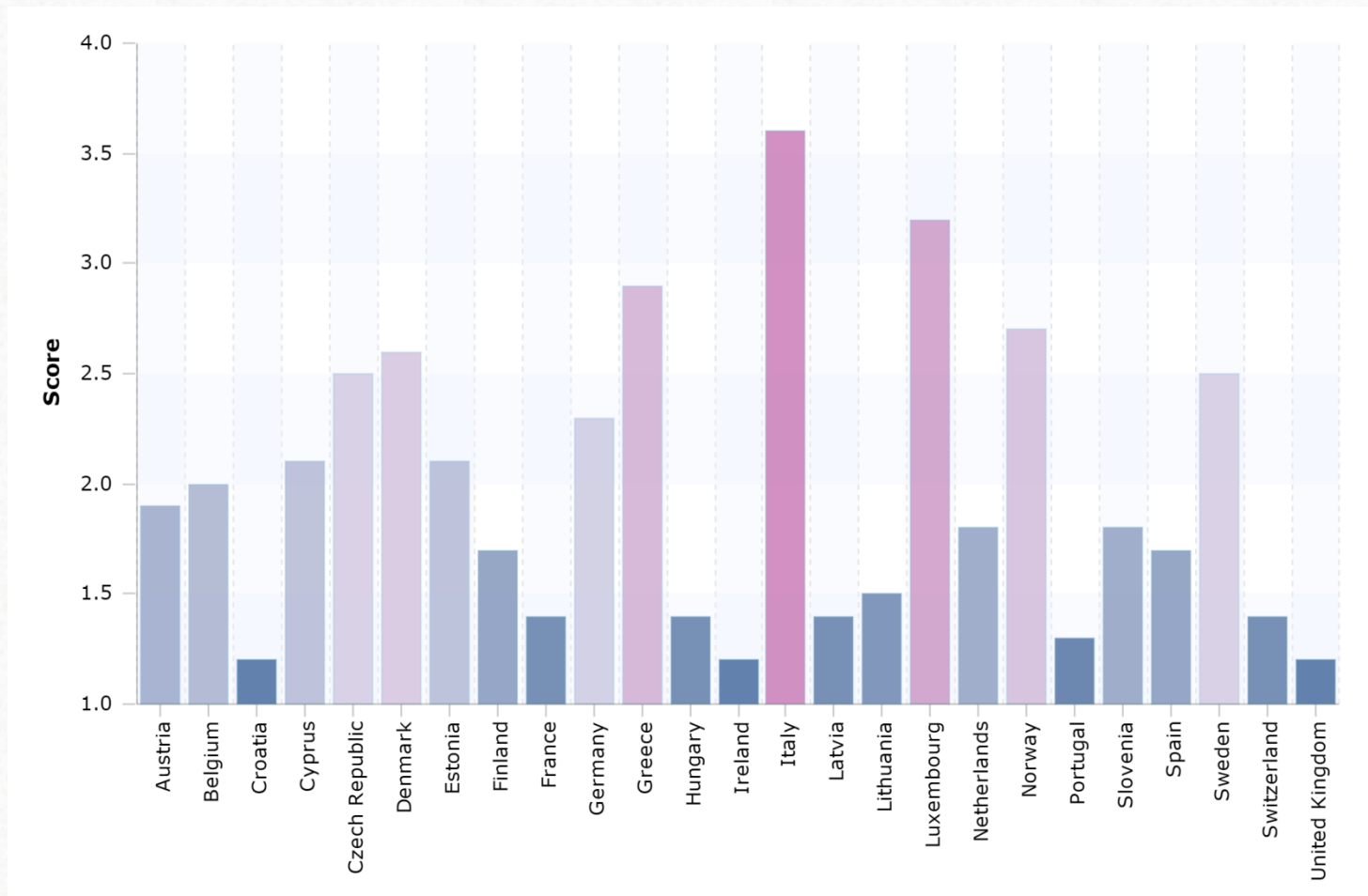
- **For third-country nationals:** the need to leave the country once the specific employment contract for which they were allowed to enter the country has ended (unless refugee/ asylum seeker, family member of LV citizen, Other EU country permanent resident or investor).
- **For asylum seekers and third-country nationals:** language requirements for most jobs (not for some positions in international companies). Precludes legal employment of asylum seekers and refugees until they learn the language.

# Language and access: support

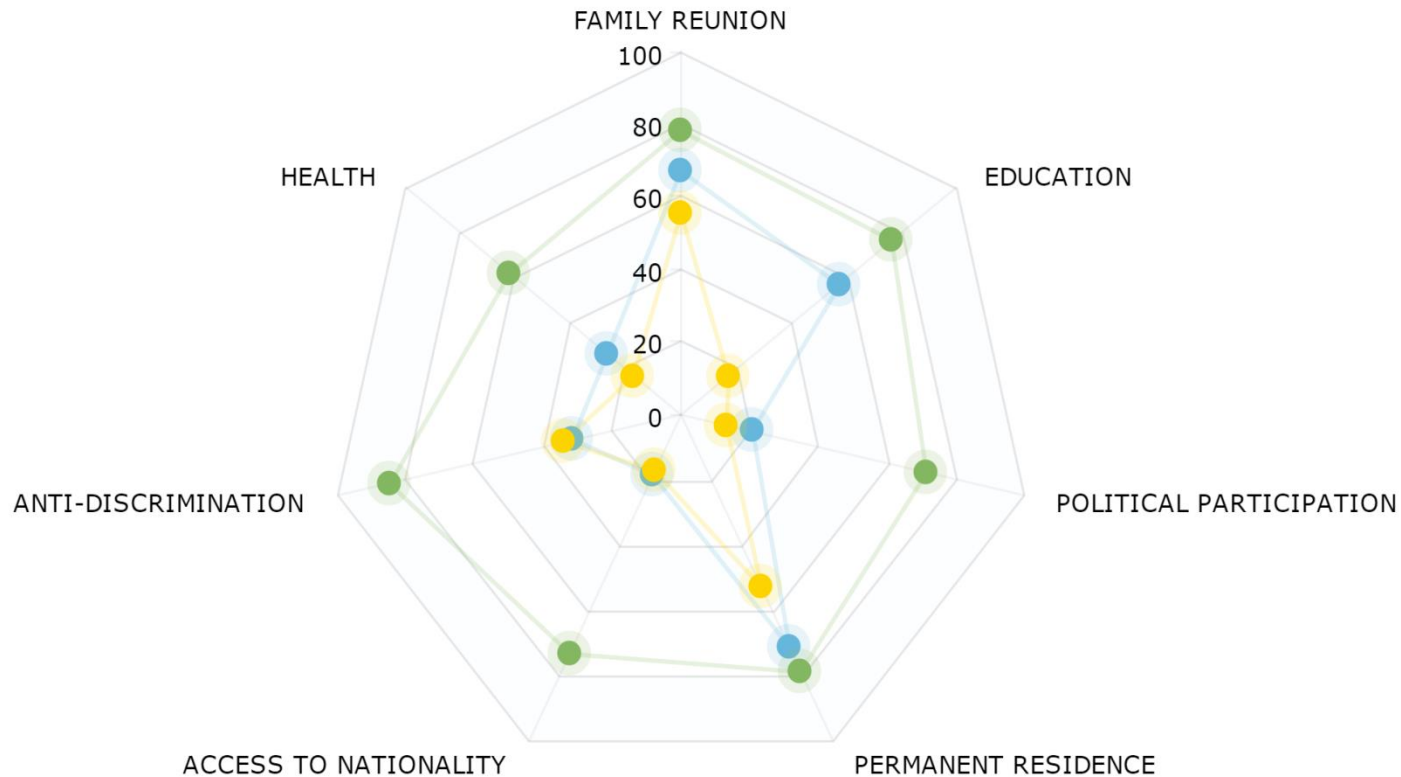


- Latvia has no permanent support measures for third country nationals in the labour market.
- Existing language trainings (except for asylum seekers) are paid for by employers or organised ad-hoc by municipalities or State Employment Agency. There are no regular free language courses for persons who are not refugees or asylum seekers.

# No disadvantage for qualified migrants: overqualification gap between foreign- born and native-born



# The broader picture: what degree of integration possible for migrants?



# To sum up

- It is not yet clear if real improvements in asylum policies have been reached. Action plan foresees labour market integration of refugees/ asylum seekers and modest support measures.
- Labour market integration policies for third-country nationals in Latvia are neither very good nor the worst in the region. The number of labour migrants is still low.
- Barriers for integration (access to nationality, political participation, access to free education and health services) remain high.

# Conclusions, recommendations

- As long as the barriers for integration (nationality, participation, access to healthcare and to quality education) remain high, even gradually changing labour market policies may not work to attract labour migrants.
- If Latvian policy makers decide to attract labour migration in the future, changes in access to other areas of integration for third-country nationals are crucial.
- Improving access to healthcare and quality education, as well as access to political participation at local level, and making support measures (such as free language courses) a priority, Latvia can dramatically change its attractiveness to labour migrants.



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