

Coronavirus pandemic in the EU – Fundamental Rights Implications

Country: Latvia

Contractor's name: Latvian Centre for Human Rights

Date: 2 July 2020

DISCLAIMER: This document was commissioned under contract as background material for a comparative report being prepared by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) for the project “Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak in the EU – fundamental rights implications”. The information and views contained in the document do not necessarily reflect the views or the official position of the FRA. The document is made available for transparency and information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice or legal opinion.

1 Measures taken by government/public authorities

1.1 Emergency laws/states of emergency

Provide information on emergency laws/declarations of states of emergency, including actions taken by police to enforce them and court rulings concerning the legality of such measures. Please include in particular information on developments relating to the protection of the right of association/demonstration; for example, with respect to the public gatherings that took place concerning the death of George Floyd, or other such events.

As of 30 June, Latvia had conducted 152,778 Covid-19 tests, 1,121 persons were infected (of those 974 had recovered) and 30 persons have died.¹

The emergency situation ended on 9 June. The parliament (*Saeima*) adopted a special regulation in order to restore the general legal order and specify epidemiological safety measures after the end of emergency situation. The new regulation includes provisions introduced during the emergency situation. The Law on the Management of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection (*Covid-19 infekcijas izplatības pārvaldības likums*) entered into force on 10 June². The Law grants the Cabinet of Ministers (government) the powers to introduce special requirements and restrictions in case of COVID-19 spread in the areas including gathering, cultural and religious activities, entertainment, sports, carriage of passengers, education process, provision of health services etc. The Law determines basic principles for the operation of public authorities and the rights and obligations of public authorities and private individuals for the prevention and management of the threat created by the spread of COVID-19 infection. The Law stipulates fines for the failure to comply with the isolation, quarantine, or gathering restrictions specified by the Law and other regulations issued pursuant to the Law – from EUR 10 to EUR 2,000 for natural persons and EUR 140 to EUR 40,000 for legal persons. The fines can be imposed by the State police (*Valsts policija*), Health Inspectorate (*Veselības inspekcija*), or municipal police as of 1 July when the Law on Administrative Liability (*Administratīvas atbildības likums*) comes into force.

The Law on the Suppression of Consequences of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection (*COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības seku pārvarēšanas likums*) provides for a set of appropriate measures in order to ensure the improvement of the economic situation and to promote the stability of the national economy.³

Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 360 On Epidemiological Safety Measures for the Containment of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection (*Noteikumi Nr. 360 Epidemioloģiskās drošības pasākumi COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības ierobežošanai*) contains more concrete epidemiological safety measures.⁴ The regulation includes the requirements and restrictions for gathering; the special epidemiological safety measures to be taken by persons; the restrictions on tourism and travel, the requirements for the carriage of passenger services, and for the provision and use of own-account carriage services; the conditions for the operation of sites for the performance of cultural, religious

¹ Latvia, Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (*Slimību kontroles un profilakses centrs*), [COVID-19 izmeklējumi, apstiprinātie gadījumi un iznākumi](#), 1 July 2020

² Latvia, Saeima (2020), [The law on the management of the spread of COVID-19 infection \(COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības pārvaldības likums\)](#), 10 June 2020

³ Latvia, Saeima (2020), [Suppression of Consequences of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection \(COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības seku pārvarēšanas likums\)](#), 10 June 2020

⁴ Latvia, Cabinet of Ministers (*Ministru kabinets*) (2020), [Regulation No.360 on Epidemiological Safety Measures for the Containment of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection \(Noteikumi Nr. 360 Epidemioloģiskās drošības pasākumi COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības ierobežošanai\)](#), 10 June 2020.

activities, entertainment, sports, and other recreational sites; the conditions for the organising and course of the educational and sports process; the conditions for the receipt of social services; the requirements for isolation, home quarantine, and self-isolation and others.

The regulation stipulates gradual increase of gatherings starting with no more than 100 persons in June and up to 250 in August for indoor events, no more than 300 persons in June and up to 3000 persons in August for outdoor events.

There are no more specific regulation concerning the right of association/demonstration. On 5 June, Youth association “Protests” organised a protest action against racism in Riga. Around 110 participants took part in the action.⁵ The participants split themselves in groups of about 20 persons with a distance of two meters among each other. One group after another took a knee with posters and held a 5 minute silence in remembrance of the victims of racism and police brutality.⁶

From 10 June state funded testing for COVID-19 is available to every person with signs of acute respiratory infection, if the person has stayed abroad for a period of 14 days. All Latvian nationals without any sickness symptoms, but who are suspected of being infected by COVID-19 and want to make a test in order to assess their health status and prevent other persons from being infected can make the test free. Non-nationals without sickness symptoms can take the test for a fee.⁷

In order to have the test taken, the person has to call 8303 and sign-up for testing. Persons who do not have signs of an acute respiratory infectious disease may come to the testing point by their own personal transport, bicycle, on foot or by public transport using face and nose cover. Persons with signs of acute respiratory infectious disease can come to the testing place only by their own personal transport.⁸

Number of tests carried out for the COVID-19 tests and number new cases is published on the website of the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (*Slimību profilakses un kontroles centrs*) on daily basis.⁹ The website also updates the list of the countries, whereto the international carriage of passengers should not be performed. The Ministry of Health continues to inform people on necessary precautions and remaining restrictions to avoid the spread of the COVID-19.¹⁰

⁵ Youth organisation “Protests”, [Post about the protest action](#), 6 June 2020

⁶ Jauns.lv (2020), [Video: jaunieši Rīgas centrā protestē pret policijas vardarbību ASV](#), 5 June 2020

⁷ Latvia, Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (*Slimību kontroles un profilakses centrs*), [Valsts apmaksātas COVID-19 analīzes – kam tās veic un kā jārikojas](#)

⁸ Latvia, Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (*Slimību kontroles un profilakses centrs*), [Valsts apmaksātas COVID-19 analīzes – kam tās veic un kā jārikojas](#)

⁹ Latvia, Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (*Slimību kontroles un profilakses centrs*), [Aktualitātes par COVID-19](#)

¹⁰ Latvia, Ministry of Health (*Veselības ministrija*), [Aktualitātes par COVID-19](#)

1.2 Measures affecting the general population

1.2.1 Social distancing

Focus on:

- *Lifting of stay at home restrictions, and measures/rules for general physical distancing when in public or at home.*
- *Enforcement and penalties*

After the end of the emergency situation, physical distancing of two metres should be observed where possible¹¹ (6.1.). The requirement does not refer to the meeting of two persons, persons living in one household, a parent and his or her minor children if they do not live in one household, persons who cannot comply with the above mentioned requirements due to work or service duties, athletes, sports specialists, and sports employees serving athletes during sports trainings (sessions) and sporting events, at pre-school education institutions and sites where child supervision services are provided within the scope of one group; at camps for children within the scope of one group; actors, ballet artists, dancers, and orchestra musicians during rehearsals, sessions, and events.¹²

The mandatory requirement for the passengers to use mouth and nose covers in public transport has been ceased as of 1 July.¹³

In June, in public catering the publicly available area per visitor in indoor spaces should be at least 4 m², but starting from 1 July at least 3 m².¹⁴

There are no specific recommendations for any particular group for stay at home requirements.

After the end of the emergency situation, the parliament introduced amendments to the Latvian Administrative Violations Code (*Latvijas Administratīvu pārkāpumu kodekss*) stipulating fines for the failure to comply with the isolation, quarantine, or gathering restrictions.¹⁵ As the Latvian Administrative Violations Code has been replaced by the Law on Administrative Liability as of 1 July, the Law on the Management of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection includes the corresponding provisions. There are no penalties for failure to hold distancing between private individuals.

During the emergency situation from 13 March to 9 June, the State Police in cooperation with the municipal police has carried out 109 474 checks and issued 1074 administrative violation protocols.¹⁶ There is no information about fines imposed after the end of the emergency situation.

¹¹ Latvia, Cabinet of Ministers (*Ministru kabinets*) (2020), [Regulation No.360 on Epidemiological Safety Measures for the Containment of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection \(Noteikumi Nr. 360 Epidemioloģiskās drošības pasākumi COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības ierobežošanai\)](#), Section 6.1., 10 June 2020.

¹² Latvia, Cabinet of Ministers (*Ministru kabinets*), [Regulation No.360 on Epidemiological Safety Measures for the Containment of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection \(Noteikumi Nr. 360 Epidemioloģiskās drošības pasākumi COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības ierobežošanai\)](#), 10 June 2020.

¹³ Latvia, Ministry of Health (*Veselības ministrija*), [Mazina atsevišķus COVID-19 izplatības vājināšanai noteiktos ierobežojumus](#), Press release, 30 June 2020.

¹⁴ Latvia, Cabinet of Ministers (*Ministru kabinets*) (2020), [Regulation No.360 on Epidemiological Safety Measures for the Containment of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection \(Noteikumi Nr. 360 Epidemioloģiskās drošības pasākumi COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības ierobežošanai\)](#), Section 20, 10 June 2020.

¹⁵ Latvia, Saeima (2020), [Amendments to the Latvian Administrative Violations Code \(Grozījumi Latvijas Administratīvo pārkāpumu kodeksā\)](#), 9 June 2020

¹⁶ News agency LETA (2020), *Policija ārkārtējās situācijas laikā noformējusi ap 4200 administratīvā pārkāpuma protokolus*, 10 June 2020

1.2.2 Education

Focus on:

- *Steps to reopen educational institutions (schools, third level and kindergartens). Include any specific measures aimed at children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.*
- *Measures to protect students and staff as they return to educational institutions (e.g. related to physical distancing, shift patterns, health and hygiene, etc.).*

Education process in educational institutions should be organised remotely with some exceptions until 31 July 2020. Maximum number of persons per group in adult continuous vocational training, vocational in-service training, and non-formal adult education programmes is 50 until 31 August.¹⁷ On-site educational activities have to be organised following relevant epidemiological measures and restrictions with some exceptions. Kindergartens function as regular observing general epidemiological safety measures, except for the requirements for physical distancing within one group of children.¹⁸ State exams, vocational qualification exams and practical classes in higher educational establishments (e.g. colleges, universities) can be organised in person if it is not possible to organise those remotely keeping general requirements for epidemiological safety.¹⁹

The Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*) prepared guidelines on the safety measures for on-site organisation of Interest education and classes,²⁰ and for the organisers of children's summer camps.²¹ NGO which provides assistance to foreign students raised concerns about the lack of support measures for foreign students who stayed in Latvia, arguing that many of them who were employed lost jobs due to the crisis caused by COVID-19 and therefore might be at risks of dropping out from educational establishment due to the inability to cover tuition fee.²² Ministry of Education and Science in cooperation with innovative web-based platform for schools and school Edurio has conducted an online survey on the evaluation of distance learning and teaching process, attitude and challenges faced in the last semester of this academic year from 26 May to 12 June for general and vocational education and training actors – principals, teachers, pupils and parents. In total 10 177 students, 4 662 teachers, 8 352 parents took part in the survey. The survey was distributed through schools and social media. There is no assessment whether the survey reached those who might have no access to technologies for remote learning and disadvantaged groups. Final results show that 83% of students, 94% of teachers and 77% of parents evaluated distance learning as “well” or “very well”, all involved in the education process have been able to adapt to the new situation, completely reorganise their daily and learning habits, and successfully overcome difficulties and challenges. According to teachers' assessment, 87% of pupils were able to adapt to distance learning

¹⁷ Latvia, Cabinet of Ministers (Ministru kabinets) (2020), Regulation No.360 on Epidemiological Safety Measures for the Containment of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection (Noteikumi Nr. 360 Epidemioloģiskās drošības pasākumi COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības ierobežošanai), Section 25, 10 June 2020.

¹⁸ Latvia, Cabinet of Ministers (Ministru kabinets), Regulation No.360 on Epidemiological Safety Measures for the Containment of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection (Noteikumi Nr. 360 Epidemioloģiskās drošības pasākumi COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības ierobežošanai), Section 6.2.6, 12.1., 10 June 2020.

¹⁹ Latvia, Cabinet of Ministers (Ministru kabinets), Regulation No.360 on Epidemiological Safety Measures for the Containment of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection (Noteikumi Nr. 360 Epidemioloģiskās drošības pasākumi COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības ierobežošanai), Section 25.7, 25.8, 10 June 2020.

²⁰ Latvia, Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*), [Vadlīnijas piesardzības pasākumiem interešu izglītības mācību programmu un nodarbību īstenošanai klātienē](#) 10 June 2020.

²¹ Latvia, Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*), [Vadlīnijas piesardzības pasākumiem bērnu nometnu organizētājiem](#), 11 June 2020.

²² NGO “Make Room”, [Aicinām augstskolas atlikt augstskolu maksas ārvalstu studentiem ārkārtējās situācijas laikā](#), Press release, 28 May 2020

in a good or very good manner. In addition, 90% of teachers acknowledge the school managed to organize distance lessons quite well or very well. Only 1% of the respondents rated this process as quite bad or very bad. Distance learning created bigger workload for teachers who often felt overworked (74%) and required greater engagement of parents – 42% parents spent three and more hours in helping a child with learning.²³ The survey showed, that not all students are equipped with all the necessary technologies for distance learning – 23% of students need more stable internet connection, 23% need personal computer²⁴, 16% had to share a computer or tablet with other family members.²⁵

The first digital body measurement device was installed in June in Ādaži elementary school in cooperation with a private company and municipality. It was demonstrated to the wider public on 1 July. The device operates remotely without a contact with people, and it has been adjusted to detect the temperature of a large flow of people upon entering school. In the case of high temperature the device will signal to the school administrator who will react in line with established procedure. The device has two cameras – thermal camera and optical camera, which function in synergy. Technologies permit to edit videos if the face is covered. Similar devices were installed in many public buildings in Europe.²⁶ It is a local initiative, and there is no information whether there are plans to equip other schools with the device.

1.2.3 Work

Focus on:

- *Steps for specific sectors/the general population to return to work and measures to protect employees in the workplace (physical distancing, health and hygiene, shift patterns, etc.). Please include any specific measures aimed at people in precarious work.*
- *Ending of furlough/short-time work programmes for specific sectors/the general population.*

New active employment measures have been introduced together with the improvement of the existing ones. Financial support is provided for employers who employ previously unemployed persons. The employer has the right to receive a subsidy for the salary of 50% of the employee's monthly salary for a period of three months, but not more than EUR 430 per month. Unemployed students have the right to obtain financial support by participating in the programme of the skills and competences development within their universities/colleges. Students involved in the programme receive a grant of EUR 10 per day. The programmes' duration is up to six months. The period for how long unemployed persons who does not receive unemployment benefit have the right to participate in temporary social works has been extended from four up to six months.²⁷

²³ Latvia, Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*), Edurio, (2020), [Mācību gada noslēguma aptaujas IZM un Edurio aptauju rezultāti](#)

²⁴ Latvia, Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*) (2020), [Attālināto mācību novērtējums](#), preliminary results, 2 June 2020

²⁵ Latvia, Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*), Edurio, (2020), [Mācību gada noslēguma aptaujas IZM un Edurio aptauju rezultāti](#)

²⁶ News agency LETA (2020). Ādažu skolā uzstāda Latvijā pirmo digitālo ķermeņa temperatūras mērīšanas ierīci, 01 July 2020

²⁷ Latvia, Cabinet of Ministers (*Ministru kabinets*) (2011), [Regulations No 75 on Procedures for organising and financing of active employment measures and preventive measures for unemployment reduction and principles for selection of implementer of measures \(Noteikumi Nr. 75 "Noteikumi par aktīvo nodarbinātības](#)

As of June 6, the legal definition of the accident at the work place includes an illness with infectious disease if only such illness is related to the specific identified extraordinary event during the work and this event directly caused the illness of the employee. Such definition is applied not only to the COVID-19, but also to others infectious diseases.²⁸

As of June 6, sick leave can be issued remotely following the information from the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control about a person diagnosed with dangerous infectious disease and required to stay in quarantine. Fully state funded sick leave can be issued to one of the parents or official representative of the child subjected to quarantine.²⁹

Until 30 June, employees of enterprises affected by the economic crisis have the right to stand-off benefit (*dīkstaves pabalsts*) in the amount of up to 75% from the amount of the average remuneration of the previous six months but not more than EUR 700 per calendar month for one employee.³⁰ While, the employee has the right to give a notice of termination of the employment contract not observing one month period as provided by the Labour Law (*Darba likums*) if he/she does not agree with reduction. In such case, the employer has an obligation to disburse a severance pay to the employee.³¹

Persons who within a year prior to the declaration of the emergency situation graduated from a higher educational institution or college and who obtained the status of unemployed person during the emergency situation or within three months after the end of the emergency situation have the right to apply for allowance for young specialists. The amount of the allowance is EUR 500 during first two months and EUR 375 during third and fourth month. The right to apply for the allowance is until 31 December.³² The Latvian Students Union criticized the provision for not covering those students who graduate after the end of the emergency situation.³³

Groups of persons associated with a particularly high risk of COVID-19 - medical practitioners, pharmacists and pharmacist assistants, employees of social care institutions and shelters, employees of operational services (police officers, firefighters, border guards, customs officers, inspectors of the State Environmental Service, etc.), active military of the Latvian National Armed Forces, employees of the Food and Veterinary Service (*Pārtikas un veterinārā dienests*), news journalists, TV and sound operators, photo reporters, employees working in the retail sector, and employees of the Latvian post if they have symptoms of respiratory infectious disease can take free COVID-19 tests upon the order of the employer. Employees of international transport service providers, civil experts approved for

[pasākumu un preventīvo bezdarba samazināšanas pasākumu organizēšanas un finansēšanas kārtību un pasākumu īstenotāju izvēles principiem](#)", 19 June 2020

²⁸Latvia, Cabinet of Ministers (*Ministry kabinets*) (2010), [Regulation No. 950 on Procedures for Investigation and Registration of Accidents at Work \(Noteikumi Nr. 950 "Nelaimes gadījumu darbā izmeklēšanas un uzskaites kārtība\)](#)

²⁹Latvia, Cabinet of Ministers (*Ministru kabinets*) (2001), [Regulations No 152 on Procedures for issuance of sick-leave certificate \(Noteikumi Nr. 152 "Darbnespējas lapu izsniegšanas un anulēšanas kārtība\)](#)

³⁰ Latvia, Saeima (2020), The law on the suppression of consequences of the spread of COVID-19 infection <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/315287-law-on-the-suppression-of-consequences-of-the-spread-of-COVID-19-infection> (*COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības seku pārvarēšanas likums* [https://likumi.lv/ta/id/315287-COVID-19-infekcijas-izplatības-seku-parvaresanas-likums](https://likumi.lv/ta/id/315287-COVID-19-infekcijas-izplatibas-seku-parvaresanas-likums)), Section 15, 10 June 2020.

³¹ Latvia, Saeima (2020), [The law on the suppression of consequences of the spread of COVID-19 infection \(COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības seku pārvarēšanas likums\)](#), Section 17, 10 June 2020.

³² Latvia, Saeima (2020), [The Law on the Suppression of Consequences of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection \(COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības seku pārvarēšanas likums\)](#) Section 19, 10 June 2020.

³³ Latvian Students Union, [Studenti-bezdarbnieki nodarbinātības programmā varēs saņemt 200 eiro stipendiju mēnesī](#), 19 June 2020

participation in international missions and operations, employees of kindergartens, as well as, clients of social care institutions and shelters are subjected to testing upon the decree of the employer or head of the institution without any symptoms.³⁴ (See Bulletin #2)

1.2.4 Access to justice

Focus on:

- *Steps to lift restrictions previously imposed on court proceedings and any strategies to deal with case backlog or increased litigation due to COVID-19 measures (e.g. criteria to prioritise certain types of cases/disputes).*
- *Continued use of remote hearings and videoconferences within court proceedings despite the lifting of restrictions (e.g. for which proceedings).*

Law on the Management of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection includes regulation for the operation of the judicial system and state and municipality institutions introduced during the emergency situation. Thus, court may examine a civil case in the written procedure if the conformity with the procedural rights of the participants can be ensured and the court decided that it is not necessary to try a case in a court hearing. The court shall inform the participants about trying the case in the written procedure and specify the time limit for the submission of the explanations or procedural requests. Application for legal protection proceedings, insolvency proceedings of a legal person and insolvency proceedings of a natural person may be submitted electronically.³⁵

Instances when a criminal case can be tried in a written procedure have broadened. Thus, in addition to the instances mentioned in the Criminal Procedure Law (*Kriminālprocesa likums*)³⁶, the new law regulates that under appeal procedure, a criminal case may be tried in a written procedure unless a prosecutor or a person whose interests and rights are infringed by a complaint or protest objects thereto.³⁷ A person directing the proceedings may suspend criminal proceedings if all the procedural actions which are possible without a suspect or accused have been performed and the circumstances preventing the suspect or the accused from participating in the criminal proceedings due to the epidemiological safety measures have been ascertained. The Law also provides that the transfer of the prisoners from and to foreign countries, and the execution of a European arrest warrant may be postponed, and during the escorting of prisoners (upon requests of the persons directing the proceedings or to court hearings) the shortest conveying route and the return of the prisoner to the prison on the same day shall be ensured. The above mentioned regulation is not limited to a timeframe.

The Law stipulates to continue to provide state funded legal counselling in regards to the family law, protection against violence, labour disputes, recovery of losses, and performance of obligations through a hotline 116006 “Hotline for victims of crime” and online consultation tools as far as funding is available.³⁸ The hotline as such operates since 2015, however, the instances when a legal

³⁴ Latvia, Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (*Slimību kontroles un profilakses centrs*), [Valsts apmaksātas COVID-19 analīzes – kam tās veic un kā jārikojas](#)

³⁵ Latvia, Saeima (2020), The law on the operation of state authorities during the emergency situation related to the spread of COVID-19 (*Par valsts institūciju darbību ārkārtējās situācijas laikā saistība ar COVID-19 izplatību*), 5 April 2020.

³⁶ Latvia, Saeima (2005), [Criminal Procedure Law \(*Kriminālprocesa likums*\)](#), Section 559 (4), 1 October 2005

³⁷ Latvia, Saeima (2020), [The law on the management of the spread of COVID-19 infection \(*COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības pārvaldības likums*\)](#), Section 12, 10 June 2020

³⁸ Latvia, Saeima (2020), [The law on the management of the spread of COVID-19 infection \(*COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības pārvaldības likums*\)](#), Section 19, 10 June 2020

counselling is available were broadened during the emergency situation with an aim to increase its availability to anyone who needs it due to the circumstances and consequences caused by the COVID-19 spread.³⁹ (See Bulletin #3) Informative poster is also available.⁴⁰

Ministry of Justice (*Tieslietu ministrija*) prepared the guidelines for the first and second instance courts about the organization of further work.⁴¹ Three posters about the epidemiological security measures in the court houses were published: 1) instruction about work organisation in the court houses (frequent disinfection, mandatory breaks after two hours, 2 meters distance, etc.), 2) instruction about the use of face masks in the court house; 3) instruction on measures inside the court houses.⁴²

From 10 June, priority has been given to cases that were cancelled due to the emergency situation.⁴³

The statistical data about work of the courts was published.⁴⁴ During the period from 13 March 2020 until 9 June 2020 1087 court hearings took place via video conference. Video conference was most frequently used in criminal cases and the total number of cases that were tried by video conference has been 19% higher than in the same time period in 2019. The head of the Riga regional court (*Rīgas apgabaltiesa*) acknowledges that the use of the video conferences could be used in the future (without specifying the types of the cases).⁴⁵

1.2.5 Freedom of movement

Focus on:

- *Steps to reopen borders/lift restrictions on freedom of movement to and within the EU, including rules or restrictions applying to certain categories of people (e.g. citizens; ‘essential workers’). Please mention what requirements are in place for various categories of people to enter country (e.g. negative COVID-19 test result and/or obligation to self-isolate etc).*
- *Changes to asylum application procedures (e.g. lifting of temporary suspensions or restrictions on procedures) or available statistics on numbers of asylum applications (e.g. being much lower than for same period in previous years due to travel restrictions).*

³⁹ Latvia, Saeima (2020), [Anotation to the law on the management of the spread of COVID-19 infection \(COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības pārvaldības likuma anotācija\)](#), 10 June 2020

⁴⁰ Latvia, Courts of Latvia (*Latvijas tiesas*) (2020), [Free remote legal counsellings \(Bezmaksas attālinātās juristu konsultācijas jūnijā\)](#) press release, 10 June 2020.

⁴¹ Latvia, Courts of Latvia (*Latvijas tiesas*) (2020) V [adlīnijās rajona \(pilsētu\) un apgabaltiesu darba organizēšanai atbilstoši COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības pārvaldības likumam](#), 13 June 2020.

⁴² Latvia, Courts of Latvia (*Latvijas tiesas*) (2020) informative materials available at [tiesas.lv/Media/Default/Topicality/Aizsegu%20lieto%C5%A1ana.pdf](#)
[tiesas.lv/Media/Default/Topicality/Tiesu%20darba%20organiz%C4%93%C5%A1ana%20kl%C4%81tien%C4%93.pdf](#)
[tiesas.lv/Media/Default/Topicality/Instrukcija%20par%20atra%C5%A1anos%20tiesas%20telp%C4%81s%20un%20z%C4%81l%C4%93s%20f.pdf](#)

⁴³ Latvia, Courts of Latvia (*Latvijas tiesas*) (2020) J. [Bordāns: the priority in the work of the courts – the trial of cases that have been canceled during the emergency situation \(J. Bordāns: šobrīd prioritāte tiesu darba – ārkārtējās situācijas laikā atcelto lietu izskatīšana\)](#) press release, 11 June 2020.

⁴⁴ Latvia, Courts of Latvia (*Latvijas tiesas*) (2020) [The work of the courts during the emergency situation 13.-3.2020-09.06.2020 \(Tiesu darbs ārkārtas situācijas laikā 13.03.2020-09.06.2020\)](#) press release, 18 June 2020.

⁴⁵ Latvia, Courts of Latvia (*Latvijas tiesas*) (2020) [Court could continue to work remotely \(Tiesas arī turpmāk varētu strādāt attālināti\)](#), Press release, 5 June 2020.

Most EU and Schengen residents can freely travel to Latvia from mid-June, however, residents of those countries wherein the cumulative number of COVID-19 cases per 100 000 inhabitants in 14 days exceeds 15, must self-isolate. In June these restrictions concerned residents of Sweden, Portugal, Bulgaria, Romania, and some others. The same requirements concern Latvian residents returning from these countries to Latvia. The list of countries is published on the website of the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.⁴⁶

The new regulation for control over COVID-19 spread as of 10 June includes travelling restrictions introduced during the emergency situation.⁴⁷ External borders with the majority of the non-EU countries remain closed with the exception for the Latvian nationals and their family members whose permanent place of residence is abroad, foreigners who, by crossing the Latvian territory in transit, are returning to the country of their permanent place of residence; the nationals of the European Union, European Economic Area, and Switzerland and their family members, and also persons who are permanently residing in these countries in order to return to their country of residence, including Latvia, by crossing the territory of Latvia in transit; seafarers who must reach their work place aboard a ship or must return from it and others. No other particular groups (for example, the older people, persons with disabilities etc.) have been identified regarding the limitation of movement. "Safe list" of non-EU countries to/from which travelling is permitted is updated following the recommendations of the European Commission and assessment of epidemiological situation in each third-country made by the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.^{48 49} It is not recommended to travel to the countries wherein the cumulative number of COVID-19 cases per 100 000 inhabitants in 14 days exceeds 25 and to evaluate the necessity to travel to countries wherein the cumulative number of COVID-19 cases per 100 000 inhabitants in 14 days exceeds 15. The list of countries is published on the website of the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.⁵⁰ Upon arrival from these countries, a person is obliged to sign confirmation that he/she will stay in self-isolation for 14 days. The person has to write own name, surname, personal identification number, phone number, and place of residence in the form. If the place of residence changes the person has to inform the State police. The confirmation has to be submitted to the State Border Guard (*Valsts Robežsardze*) which forwards it to the State police who monitors the cases and can impose penalties for violation of the requirements.⁵¹

The information regarding the international travel and restrictions, recommendations and warnings is also periodically updated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Ārlietu ministrija*).⁵²

⁴⁶ Centre For Disease Prevention and Control (*Slimību profilakses un kontroles centrs*), [Valstu saslimstības rādītāji ar COVID-19](#)

⁴⁷ Latvia, Cabinet of Ministers (*Ministru kabinets*) (2020), Regulation No.360 on Epidemiological Safety Measures for the Containment of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection (*Noteikumi Nr. 360 Epidemioloģiskās drošības pasākumi COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības ierobežošanai*), Section 36, 10 June 2020

⁴⁸ Latvia, Cabinet of Ministers (*Ministru kabinets*) (2020), Regulation No.360 on Epidemiological Safety Measures for the Containment of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection (*Noteikumi Nr. 360 Epidemioloģiskās drošības pasākumi COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības ierobežošanai*), Section 36, 10 June 2020

⁴⁹ Latvia, Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (*Slimību kontroles un profilakses centrs*), [Valstu saslimstības rādītāji ar COVID-19](#)

⁵⁰ Centre For Disease Prevention and Control (*Slimību profilakses un kontroles centrs*), [Valstu saslimstības rādītāji ar COVID-19](#)

⁵¹ Latvia, Cabinet of Ministers (*Ministru kabinets*) (2020), [Regulation No.360 on Epidemiological Safety Measures for the Containment of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection \(Noteikumi Nr. 360 Epidemioloģiskās drošības pasākumi COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības ierobežošanai\)](#), Section 38, 10 June 2020.

⁵² Latvia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Ārlietu ministrija*), [Informācija par starptautiskajiem pasažieru pārvadājumiem uz Latviju un došanos uz ārvalstīm](#)

The statistics about the number of asylum seekers entering Latvia during the reporting period is not yet available.

1.3 Impact of measures on particular groups

Select the three most relevant groups from the following:

- *persons with disabilities,*
- *homeless people,*
- *older people,*
- *women,*
- *Roma and Travellers (Note – for those countries requested to collect additional data on the impact of COVID-19 on Roma – Service request No 33 (Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Hungary, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden), information submitted on Roma for Bulletin 4 should not be exactly duplicated in this additional data collection; however, a summary of main points concerning the Roma can be included in your submission for this Bulletin – to ensure that, where appropriate, any major developments in your Member State concerning this group are reported in Bulletin 4. The same approach applies regarding information supplied on asylum seekers/refugees).*
- *Detainees (including measures on early release or alternatives to detention)*
- *or another group not listed that have emerged in your country as facing particular challenges - before selection, this should be discussed with FRA.*

Persons with disabilities

Ombudsperson (*Tiesībsargs*) called upon the parliament to introduce fairer provisions on the assistance to unemployed persons with disabilities. Currently, the Law on Insurance in Case of Unemployment (*Par apdrošināšanu bezdarba gadījumam*) stipulates the right of unemployed person to continue to receive the unemployment assistance allowance in the amount of EUR 180 up to four months after the end of the payment of the unemployment benefit⁵³. However, the allowance is not available for persons with disabilities with the status of unemployed. In the opinion of the Ombudsperson, such limitation to the allowance limits the right of persons with disabilities to receive equivalent aid since the purpose of the unemployment assistance allowance is to provide support to those persons who are still in unemployment status.⁵⁴

Older people

Safety measures and some restrictions are in force in social care and social rehabilitation institutions.⁵⁵ The Centre for Disease Prevention and Control has issued recommendations for gradual reduction of restrictive measures e.g. it is allowed to organise events for clients in small groups (up to 10 persons) ensuring 2 meters of physical distancing; to renew receipt of packages without direct contact; to arrange pre-planned and registered meeting with relatives ensuring physical distancing, face masks, disinfection of hands; to organise outdoor sporting activities; admission of new clients and transfer

⁵³ Latvia, Saeima (2000), [Law on Insurance in Case of Unemployment \(Par apdrošināšanu bezdarba gadījumam\)](#), 26 April 2020.

⁵⁴ Ombudsperson (*Tiesībsargs*), [Bezdarbniekiem invaliditātes pensiju saņēmējiem valsts atbalsts – bezdarbnieka palīdzības pabalsts – iet secen](#), Press release, 16 June 2020

⁵⁵ Latvia, Ministry of Welfare (Labklājības ministrija), [Piesardzības pasākumi COVID-19 izplatības ierobežošanai ilgstošas sociālās aprūpes un sociālās rehabilitācijas institūcijās saglabājas](#), 2 July 2020

of clients between institutions; and others. However, all the epidemiological safety measures are in force in institutions where COVID-19 cases were identified.⁵⁶

Covid-19 testing has been continued throughout June in social care homes with previous incidence of infection or suspicion about infection or upon the request by social care home.⁵⁷ On 16 June two clients, aged 80-85, died in the social care home of Mārsnēni, which was the hardest hit social care home throughout the pandemic.⁵⁸ On 29 May, 47 persons were infected in the above social care home, of those 8 staff and 39 clients. By 17 June 13 persons had recovered.

Women

If a police decision on separation or a court decision on temporary protection against violence which prohibits to stay in a dwelling has been taken with regard to a person who must implement special epidemiological safety measures during the validity of this Law and the person himself or herself is not able to ensure self-isolation, a local government shall, to the extent possible, provide this person with a place for self-isolation. The person (except for a person with disability and a person who has been recognised as a low-income or needy person) shall cover the expenses related to the provision of the place for self-isolation.⁵⁹

Detainees

Law on the Suppression of Consequences of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection grants the right to the head of the Prison Administration (*Ieslodzījumu vietu pārvalde*) to issue an order for limiting visits to prison and rights of prisoners with an aim to ensure epidemiological safety.⁶⁰

A detainee who has been recognised as a contact person or diagnosed with COVID-19, or who is suspected of being infected must be placed separately from other prisoners for a period of up to 14 days. No criminal procedural activities should be performed during this period, the detainee cannot be conveyed, involved in resocialisation measures, cannot have short and long-duration visits, receive guests, make phone calls or video communication, temporarily leave the prison, and register marriage.⁶¹

If a prison admits a prisoner who has been transferred from a foreign country, he/she must be placed in a quarantine cell for a period of up to 14 days. During this period, the prisoner is subject to the restrictions of rights mentioned above.⁶²

⁵⁶ Latvia, Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (*Slimību profilakses un kontroles centrs*). [Sociālās aprūpes iestādēm saistībā ar Covid-19](#), 10 June 2020.

⁵⁷ Skaties.LV (2020). <https://skaties.lv/zinas/latvija/lidz-25-junijam-covid-19-testi-tiek-veikti-visiem-uznemasanas-nodalu-pacientiem-iznemot-bernus/>

⁵⁸ Skaties.LV (2020). Pagājušajā diennaktī miruši divi ar covid-19 sasirgušie aprūpes centra Mārsnēni klienti, at <https://skaties.lv/zinas/latvija/pagajusaja-diennakti-mirusi-divi-ar-covid-19-sasirgusie-aprupes-centra-marsneni-klienti/>

⁵⁹ Latvia, Saeima (2020), [The law on the management of the spread of COVID-19 infection \(COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības pārvaldības likums\)](#), Section 49, 10 June 2020

⁶⁰ Latvia, Saeima (2020), The Law on the Suppression of Consequences of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection (COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības seku pārvarēšanas likums) Section 38, 10 June 2020

⁶¹ Latvia, Saeima (2020), The Law on the Suppression of Consequences of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection (COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības seku pārvarēšanas likums) Section 42, 10 June 2020

⁶² Latvia, Saeima (2020), The Law on the Suppression of Consequences of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection (COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības seku pārvarēšanas likums) Section 40, 10 June 2020

Short or long-duration meeting of detainees with relatives and other persons are allowed first giving priority to those detainees to whom visits were not ensured due to the declaration of the emergency situation. Transfer of a prisoner to a medical treatment institution outside a prison takes place on the first come, first served basis after the medical treatment institution has approved the provision of the relevant service to the prisoner.⁶³

Roma

There has been no public information about the impact of covid-19 on the Roma community in Latvia.

2 Selected issues emerging during the COVID-19 crisis

2.1 Xenophobic speech, acts of harassment and violent attacks

- *In reference to Bulletin #1 where these issues were addressed, please report incidents of xenophobic speech, acts of harassment and violent attacks against specific minority groups on the grounds of race or ethnic origin during the reporting period and on any key developments since you last reported on this issue.*

In the end of May, the Prosecutor's Office forwarded the case against a Latvian blogger charged with incitement to hatred and spread of false information to court. On 31 January 2020, the accused person posted a fake news video about the alleged arrival of a person with the new coronavirus in Riga, Latvia. Among other things, he also stated “generally those Chinese [censored] should be liquidated, the entire country should be. Nothing good ever comes from there.” The blogger has been charged with incitement to ethnic hatred under Section 78 (2) and hooliganism under Section 231 (1) of the Criminal Law.⁶⁴

2.2 Infringement of privacy and/or data protection rights

- *In reference to Bulletin # 1 and Bulletin #2 where these issues were addressed, please describe instances of infringement of privacy and/or data protection rights related to the pandemic during the reporting period and on any key developments since you last reported on this issue.*

Data State Inspectorate (*Valsts datu inspekcija*) analysed the practice of service providers asking clients to sign a confirmation paper that they have not been abroad, not diagnosed with COVID-19 or not identified as a contact person before service provision. The Inspectorate concluded that such requirement and corresponding data processing is disproportionate with the aim of the prevention spread of COVID-19. The Inspectorate stressed that it is a duty of each individual to comply with the requirements set in the legal provisions such as the prohibition to receive any services in person if

⁶³ Latvia, Saeima (2020), The Law on the Suppression of Consequences of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection (COVID-19 infekcijas izplatības seku pārvarēšanas likums) Section 41, 10 June 2020

⁶⁴ Latvia, Prosecutors' Office (*Latvijas Republikas Prokuratūra*). [Tiesai nodod lietu par nacionālā naida kurināšanu un viltus ziņu izplatīšanu saistībā ar COVID-19](#), Press release, 25 May 2020

arrived from abroad during the state of emergency, diagnosed with COVID-19 or identified as a contact person. The service provider can inform clients about their legal duties but asking for such a confirmation is disproportionate data processing.⁶⁵

Mobile app “Stop Covid” (*Apturi Covid*) was launched on 29 May. The app was elaborated by the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control in cooperation with medics, scientists, State data inspector and private ICT companies. The app uses Bluetooth to anonymously detect nearby smartphones (within 2 metres proximity, present for longer than 15 minutes) that also have this app installed. This information is only kept on user’s device, and automatically deleted after 14 days. The download of the app is voluntary.⁶⁶ The State data inspectorate stresses that the legitimate aim for data processing is epidemiological safety for the protection of public health against COVID-19, including faster detection of COVID-19 cases and taking precautionary measures. Neither the app users nor the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control have access to the above information; it is stored only in an encrypted form on user’s device. The Centre for Disease Prevention and Control receives user’s contact phone only when the user’s device has been in contact with the sick person, as a potential case of COVID-19 contact.⁶⁷ By 26 June only 78 000 persons had downloaded the app. 380 000 downloads would be necessary to assess its effectiveness as currently the incidence with Covid-19 in Latvia is very low. The app and system will be only effective if downloaded by 15-20% of economically active inhabitants.⁶⁸

2.3 Spread of disinformation online

- *In reference to Bulletin #1 where these issues were addressed, please describe measures taken to counter the spread of disinformation online, during the reporting period and on any key developments since you last reported on this issue.*

In June, 53 national, regional and Latvian diaspora media received state funding from the grant programme “Support for the media to mitigate the negative effects of the COVID-19 crisis.” The aim of the program was to support the commercial print and digital media during the crisis and production of content of public interest during an emergency, in order to provide comprehensive information and views during COVID-19.⁶⁹

Journalists from two entities linked to Facebook fact checker programme – Latvian internet news portal Delfi.lv⁷⁰ and Re:Baltica with social media research hub Re:Check continued their fact-checking work.⁷¹ Fact checking includes information about COVID-19 and different conspiracy theories. The accuracy of the statements of politicians, including government ministers, also continued to be scrutinised.

⁶⁵ Latvia, Data State Inspectorate (*Valsts datu inspekcija*), [Pakalpojumu sniedzēji var informēt personas par pienākumiem, nevis pieprasīt rakstisku apliecinājumu](#), Press release, 2 June 2020

⁶⁶ www.apuricovid.lv/

⁶⁷ Latvia, Data State Inspectorate (*Valsts datu inspekcija*), [Mobilā lietotne “Apturi Covid” neizseko personas](#), Press release, 5 June 2020

⁶⁸ TV3 ziņas, [Lietotnes “Apturi Covid” efektivitāti vēl nevar pilnvērtīgi novērtēt](#), 26 June 2020

⁶⁹ Latvia, Society Integration Foundation (sabiedrības integrācijas fonds), [Pazinoti mediji, kas saņems atbalstu pamatdarbības stiprināšanai programmā "Atbalsts medijiem Covid-19 krīzes radīto negatīvo seku mazināšanai"](#)

⁷⁰ Delfi.lv (2020), Delfi journalists join Facebook fact-checkers programme (Delfi žurnālisti pievienojas “Facebook faktu pārbaudītāju programmai)

⁷¹ The Baltic Center for Investigative Journalism Re:Baltica, [Re:Check](#)

In the meeting of parliamentary sub-commission on Strategic Communication in mid-May, several experts concluded that during Covid-19 public resilience against disinformation had grown, media was acting more responsibly, and public demand for accurate information had increased.

According to the expert in strategic communication of the State Chancellery, disinformation in relation to covid-19 in Latvia mostly concerns opinions about the seriousness of illness and related restrictions. The State Chancellery (*Valsts kanceleja*) compiles daily overviews about media and social media reports that have been most widely read and discussed. These include narratives about too stringent restrictions, expensive facemasks. According to the expert of the State Chancellery, messages about controlling people with the help of 5G chips and vaccines have been less prominent. It has been concluded, that these messages do not resonate with general public. At the same time it identified cases where state information could have been better targeted.⁷²

NATO Strategic Communication Excellence Centre which is based in the Latvian capital Riga published its second bulletin on Robotrolling. Robotrolling monitors the online manipulation of information regarding the NATO presence in Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania on the social media platforms Twitter and VK. Pro-Kremlin social media accounts amplified a false story, originally shared by a Russian politician, that Poland closed its airspace to Russian planes delivering humanitarian aid to Italy. ⁷³ In mid-May the Centre concluded that Latvia was less affected by Covid-19 misinformation than certain larger countries.

The Canadian-led NATO battle group in Latvia was the target of a pandemic-related disinformation campaign that alliance commanders say they believe originated in Russia. Reports circulated in some Baltic and Eastern European media outlets that suggested the contingent at Camp Adazi in Kadaga, outside the capital of Riga, had "a high number" of cases of the deadly virus.⁷⁴

In the end of March, the internet news portal delfi.lv began publishing analysis of the most widespread covid-19 conspiracy theories with the purpose of educating the public. These included theories about that covid-19 was 5G side effect, Bill Gates devilish vaccine empire, that only China and Russian were aiding Italy amidst early pandemic, not EU.⁷⁵ Throughout pandemic vaccine denier websites became more active during the pandemic.

⁷²NRA (2020). Covid-19 veicinājis kritiskās domāšanas attīstību sabiedrībā, 14.05, at <https://neatkariga.nra.lv/politika/314083-covid-19-veicinajis-kritiskas-domasanas-attistibu-sabiedriba>;
TVNET.LV (2020), Dezinformācijas par covid-19 galvenokārt izplata melus par tā nopietnību un ierobežojumiem, <https://www.tvnet.lv/6971682/dezinformacija-par-covid-19-galvenokart-izplata-melus-par-ta-nopietnibu-un-ierobezojumiem>
⁷³ <https://www.stratcomcoe.org/robotrolling-20202>
⁷⁴ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/nato-latvia-battle-group-pandemic-covid-coronavirus-disinformation-russia-1.5581248>
⁷⁵ <https://www.delfi.lv/campus/raksti/covid-19-sazverestibu-teorijas-5g-blakusefekts-katjas-afeta-un-geitsa-pirksts?id=52003775>