

LATVIJAS UNIVERSITĀTE
HUMANITĀRO ZINĀTŅU FAKULTĀTE

**NORVĒGIJAS UZNĒMUMI LATVIJĀ: DARBA KULTŪRA LATVIJAS
KONTEKSTĀ**

MAĢISTRA DARBS

Autore: **Renāte Dekante**

Studenta apliecības nr. rd16030

Darba vadītāja: profesore Dr.oec. Biruta Sloka

RIGA 2018

UNIVERSITY OF LATVIA
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

**NORWEGIAN COMPANIES IN LATVIA: WORK CULTURE IN THE LATVIAN
CONTEXT**

MASTER'S THESIS

Author: **Renāte Dekante**

Student ID card nr. rd16030

Scientific advisor: Professor Dr.oec. Biruta Sloka

RIGA 2018

Anotācija

Maģistra darba tēma ir “Norvēģijas uzņēmumi Latvijā: darba kultūra Latvijas kontekstā”. Autore izvēlējās šo tēmu, jo vēlas veikt pētījumu Norvēģijas uzņēmumā Latvijā, kurā viņa strādā. Pētījuma mērķis ir atrast un analizēt darba kultūras atšķirības starp divām Baltijas Jūras Reģiona valstīm – Latviju un Norvēģiju. Šie aspekti ietver: vērtības un prioritātes, dzimumu līdztiesību, darba un privātās dzīves līdzsvaru, lietišķo komunikāciju, etiķeti un darba vidi.

Lai sasniegtu darba mērķi, tika izvirzīti šādi uzdevumi:

- Apkopot pieejamo informāciju par Norvēģijas un Latvijas darba kultūru no latviešu, angļu un norvēģu valodas avotiem;
- Izpētīt kādas atšķirības novērojamas abu valstu darba vidē;
- Salīdzināt divu Latvijā esošo Norvēģijas uzņēmumu servisa centru darbību (*DNB Servisa Centrs Rīga* un *Evry Latvia*);
- Izmantojot intervēšanas metodi, salīdzināt *DNB Servisa Centrs Rīga* un *Evry Latvia* darbinieku viedokļus, kuri ir devušies darba komandējumos uz Norvēģiju;
- Noskaidrot kādas atšķirības ir Latvijas un Norvēģijas darba kultūrā, lai no iegūtajiem secinājumiem rastu ieteikumus, kas spētu uzlabot situāciju Latvijas darba vidē.

Informācija pētījumam iegūta izmantojot kvalitatīvo pētījuma metodi, kā arī ekscerpējot piemērus no iepriekš veiktiem zinātniskiem pētījumiem Norvēģijā un Latvijā.

Rezultātā izdarītā analīze ļāva secināt, ka dzimuma līdztiesība, darba vide un cilvēka labklājība tiek vērtēta visaugstāk Norvēģijas darba kultūrā, nodrošinot darbiniekiem labvēlīgus darba apstākļus. Viens no faktoriem, kas nošķir Latvijas darba kultūru no Norvēģijas, ir atvērtas biroja telpas, kurā ietilpst gan tīra darba virsmu, gan mainīgo darba vietu politika. Tas ne tikai veicina dzimumu līdztiesību darbā, bet arī uzlabo saziņu starp vadītāju un padoto, jo produkcijas laikā abas personas atrodas vienā telpā.

Maģistra darbu var izmantot kā piemēru citam pētījumam par darba kultūras atšķirībām Baltijas Jūras Reģionā. No iegūtajiem rezultātiem izveidot ieteikumus, lai uzlabotu situāciju Latvijas darba vidē un darbinieku attieksmē pret darba procesu. Maģistra darbs sastāv no 3 nodaļām, 16 apakšnodaļām un trijiem pielikumiem.

Atslēgvārdi: *Evry Latvia*, *DNB Servisa Centrs Rīga*, darba kultūra, dzimuma vienlīdzība, darba un privātās dzīves līdzsvars, Norvēģija, Latvija, daļēji strukturēta intervija.

Annotation

The theme of the Master's thesis is "Norwegian Companies in Latvia: Work Culture in the Latvian Context". The author chose this topic because she wants to do a research in a Norwegian company she works. The aim of the research is to find the differences in the work culture between the two countries of the Baltic Sea Region – Latvia and Norway. These aspects include: values and priorities, gender equality, work-life balance, communication, business ethics and work environment.

To achieve the research goal, the following tasks were set:

- Collect available information about the Norwegian and Latvian work culture from Latvian, English and Norwegian literature sources;
- Explore the differences observed in both country work environments;
- Compare the activities of two Norwegian company service centres in Latvia (*DNB Service Centre Riga* and *Evry Latvia*);
- Using interview method, compare *DNB Service Centre Riga* and *Evry Latvia* employees opinions, who have participated in the business trips to Norway;
- Find out what differences exist in the business culture between Latvia and Norway. Think of solutions that could help and improve work environment in Latvia.

Information for the study was obtained using a qualitative research method, as well as excerption of examples from other Scientific Research papers.

The result of the analysis has led to the conclusion that gender equality and persons wellbeing is valued the most in the Norwegian work culture, providing employees great working conditions. One of the factors that distinguish Latvian work culture from Norway is open office space, which includes clean desk and unassigned seating policy. Not only does it promote gender equality at work, it also improves communication between the boss and the subordinate, as the manager during the production sits in the same room as the employee.

The Master paper could be used as an example for another research study on work culture differences in the Baltic Sea Region. From the results obtained, examples could be taken to improve the situation in the Latvian work environment. Master thesis consists of 3 chapters, 16 sub-chapters and three appendices.

Keywords: *Evry Latvia*, *DNB Service Centre Riga*, work culture, gender equality, work-life balance, Norway, Latvia, semi-structured interview.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	6
1. WORK CULTURE IN NORWAY	9
1.1. Values and priorities in Norwegian culture.....	12
1.2. Gender equality in Norway	15
1.3. Parental leave and family policies in Norway.....	16
1.4. Work-life balance	18
1.5. Business Etiquette & Protocol in Norway.....	20
2. BUSINESS ETHICS AND WORK CULTURE IN LATVIA.....	22
2.1. Work Environment in Latvia.....	23
2.2. Business meeting planning.....	25
2.3. Work-life balance	27
2.4. Intercultural communication in the Latvian business environment	28
2.5. Gender equality and women employment in Latvia	31
2.6. Parental leave and family policies in Latvia	34
3. ANALYSIS OF COMPANY CULTURE AND ITS IMPORTANCE	38
3.1. The work environment and structure in Evry Latvia	41
3.1.2. Working hours and work-life balance in <i>Evry Latvia</i>	43
3.1.3. Workplace in <i>Evry Latvia</i>	45
3.2. The work environment and structure in DNB Service Centre Riga.....	50
3.2.1. Business Communication in the Company	53
3.2.2. Working hours and work-life balance in DNB Service Centre Riga	54
3.2.3. Workplace in <i>DNB Service Centre Riga</i>	58
3.3. Differences between the Norwegian and Latvian work environment.....	60
3.4. The future of work culture and environment	61
3.5. Company management in future	62
CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS	63
Conclusions:.....	63
Proposals:	65
LIST OF REFERENCES AND SOURCES.....	66
APPENDICES	77
Appendix #1 Interviews	78
Appendix #2 Table: Public Holidays in Norway in 2018	93
Appendix #3 Randstad workmonitor Q1 - March 2018 Results.....	93

INTRODUCTION

For any country's economic development the main asset is its workforce and the Baltic Sea Region States is no exception. Good working conditions, low unemployment and sustainable labour policies are some of the aspects that contribute to a welfare state. In the Master's thesis "Norwegian Companies in Latvia: Work Culture in the Latvian Context" the influential factors of the Latvian and Norwegian work culture are analysed. These factors include: values and priorities, gender equality, work-life balance, business communication, etiquette and work environment. The author chose to make a comparison between these specific countries because she works in a Norwegian-owned company here in Latvia.

The aim of the thesis is to find differences in the work culture between Latvia and Norway. In order to make a comparison author collects data from Latvian, English and Norwegian sources. The research will be based on the examination of two Norwegian companies that have developed service centres in Latvia.

To achieve the research goal, the following tasks were set:

- Collect available information about the Norwegian and Latvian work culture from Latvian, English and Norwegian sources;
- Explore the differences observed in both country work environments;
- Compare the activities of two Norwegian-owned company service centres in Latvia (*DNB Service Centre Riga* and *Evry Latvia*);
- Carry out an interview to illuminate a diversity of *DNB Service Centre Riga* and *Evry Latvia* employees viewpoints, who have taken business trips to Norway;
- Find out what differences exist in the work culture between Latvia and Norway. Think of suggestions that could help and improve work culture in Latvia.

In this thesis the following mixed research methods are used: scientific publications analysis, analysis of companies' materials. In the empirical research there is used the qualitative research method: in-depth interviews. To analyse and understand the overall situation in Latvia and Norway, examples are gathered by using the method of excerpt, by examining previously made scientific researches in both of these countries connected to business culture.

The work culture aspect is a topical subject in the nowadays society, as there have been carried out several studies and research papers about gender equality in workplace, work management, working conditions, work environment and intercultural relations. In 2012, a researcher from the University of Latvia participated in a closing conference of the Norwegian Days "Innovation, Leadership & Teamwork – the Nordic Management model as a

Competitive Advantage” (NCCL, 2012). The researcher prepared a presentation about “Norwegian Business Culture in the Latvian Context” where the Norwegian business culture and characteristics have been discussed (Cimdina, 2012). To make a comparison about the situation nowadays and in the past, the author has found two conducted polls in the European Union. The older one is carried out in 2007 by *EurWORK* (Aasnass, 2007) which has gathered comparative information, based on contributions from the *Network of Eurofound* correspondents within all 28 EU Member States and Norway. The newest data is gathered in March 2018 by *Randstad* (Randstad, 2018) where the results of employee surveys are calculated in figures. In Latvia there has also been carried out a research by Felberga and Griķe “Harmonization of Intercultural Barriers in International Business: Case of Latvia and Norway” (Felberga and Griķe, 2015). The research focuses on finding solutions for organizations to succeed in international relations between employees and employers.

Nowadays companies are building their success based on local resources and people's demands. The Scandinavian countries are best known to be very successful on their inventions, products and use of natural resources. “Nordics follow a culture of combining economic interests within a broader societal interest” (Midttun, 2006). One of them is Norway, which has improved its economy thanks to oil resources, banking strategies and IT development. Furthermore, in any industry sector nothing functions well without a powerful workforce and successful performance of the company will always be influenced by their employees. This is a problem no country in the future can avoid; actually the situation is already changing. To stabilize such huge changes in the country structure, national companies make a decision to employ foreign workforce. As mentioned before, it is caused by the factor that working age population is shifting and country lacks good employees. They need more people who can overtake more difficult tasks, in the same time not creating unemployment in their homeland.

In other words, the best strategy for the company's future development is to invest in the human resources. Of course, more economically for the company is to hire people from foreign countries or even better – create service centres, located in different areas or countries. For example, there are several Norwegian companies that provide services in Latvia, the most known are the former *Statoil Asa*, *Orkla Asa*, *Gjensidige*, *Tele2*, *Norwegian*, *Nordea*, *Accenture*, *DNB (Den Norske Bank)*, and *Evry Asa*. Particularly two Norwegian companies: *DNB* and *Evry Asa*, which have invested many resources to develop service centres in Latvia. The companies have created special training program for Latvians to master processes they lack employees in their homeland. It is also cheaper and easier to build a service centre in

Latvia, compared to living standards and wages in Norway, as well as people capacity to process data and execute tasks.

In theoretical part the author have gathered materials about the general situation in the Norway's work culture. It is already known that Norway is famous for gender equality, which is valued the most in the country by giving employees equal rights to achieve high positions and avoid discrimination in the workplace. Another aspect is examining the overall case in the Norwegian culture, what society and the state values and prioritizes. Third, but not least, essential in the Norwegian work culture: the work-life balance and business etiquette. When the information about Norway is gathered, the author analyses Latvia, including the same aspects in order to make a comparison and find out differences in the work culture. Practical part will consist on the analysis of primary and secondary sources, previously made research papers about Norwegian and Latvian work culture. Separate analysis of the statistic data and interviews obtained from employees who work at *DNB Service Centre Riga* or *Evry Latvia* and have taken business trips to Norway. The work environment and structure analysis in both companies and the overall conclusions of the findings.

In future the Master paper "Norwegian Companies in Latvia: Work Culture in the Latvian Context" could be used as an example for another research study on cultural differences in the Baltic Sea Region. From the gathered results, the findings could be taken as an advice to improve the situation in the Latvian work environment.

The following Master thesis consists of 3 chapters, 16 sub-chapters and three appendices, which fully disclose the previously named tasks. However, by complying with the company's internal rules, some details have not been stated and described. Some details about the internal work in *Evry Asa Latvia* and *DNB Bank ASA* by their confidentiality rules and politics could be used only within the institution.

1. WORK CULTURE IN NORWAY

Work culture characterises not only the performance of the employee but also the operation of the organization, company and the country itself. There are many keywords related to work culture, it can also be defined as workplace culture, office culture, company culture, business culture or organization culture. In all of these word combinations the purpose stays the same “it's what makes organization unique and is the sum of its values, traditions, beliefs, interactions, behaviours, and attitudes” (ERC, 2013). But what is so special about Scandinavian countries and their style of organization? “Unlike the rest of Europe, the Nordic countries have traditionally been portrayed as generous welfare states, where high employment rates, equality standards, and employers’ corporate social responsibility and contribution to social inclusion are well-established” (Halvorsen and Hvinden 2015; OECD, 2017). According to the 2018 poll in “*Randstad Workmonitor Global Report*” by the recruitment company *Randstad* “the highest job satisfaction rating in Europe belongs to Danish Workers (81 percent) followed by Norwegians (78 percent) and Swedes (74 percent). Only Switzerland and The Netherlands share the ranking between the fellow Scandinavian countries” (Randstad, 2018: 41). This means that in people’s opinion the Scandinavian countries are considered to have the best work culture and conditions. Unfortunately, Iceland was not included in the report, but it can easily be assumed that this country would make the cut in the top 5.

Another research by Børve and Kvande states: “the key role of the state in working life means that the Nordic countries, in contrast to other European countries, are considered to have a regulated workplace context with control systems that follow national laws and rights” (Børve and Kvande, 2012: 118). These countries have a well-developed labour law which protects employees as well as employers and the company. Moreover, “Norwegians are usually motivated by personal development, a good working environment and friendly colleagues, rather than financial or other quantitative rewards. Employers are relaxed, flexible and generous towards employees” (IMDi, 2016). Managers genuinely care more about workers well-being than his performance at work. This cannot be caused by the strict laws of state government but truly it is the way Norwegians operate at work. Employees are more productive in the companies because they do not feel pressured by their managers. “The so-called Norwegian model is built on trust and welfare” (Itland, 2016) and maybe that is why “Norway has topped UN’s Human Development Index many years in a row” (Itland, 2016). Indeed, a perfect country for people who are looking for a job with the best work environment.

Furthermore, Norwegians in their work culture value the most collaboration and cooperation, regardless of the diversity in departments, sectors and the smallest units. It is the company's and Norwegians characteristic to support each other in the workplace. "Co-workers are perceived as helpful resources and not as competitors" (Tekna, 2015). I believe this an excellent working strategy in the company as it reduces stress in the workplace as well as tension between colleagues. There is a little competition among employees and competitors from different enterprises usually have a friendly relationship towards each other. Everybody tries to be friendly to each other most of the time but there are some exceptions. Of course, employees may work for the company's common goal, but there will always be individuals who want to achieve more and perform better. For example: sales and financial sector, where employees' personal efforts and work is driven by competition and achieving better results.

Although Norwegians are very understanding and respectful of others opinions, decision making is often consensus. "There is a high degree of autonomy in both what employees do and how they do it, and there is generally a high level of trust that everyone contributes to the common goals and objectives" (Itland, 2016). The Norwegian employees are working independently, but at the same time, trust each other with the work responsibilities. It may be a good thing not to question others' performance but sometimes it can resolve in mistakes and serious consequences. Moreover, it is easier to do business in Norway because "hierarchy in Norwegian companies is more flat which means that level of democracy on management of business processes is higher" (Felberga and Griķe, 2015: 940). This promotes equality in workplace and there is less complains about management structure in the company. Also employees feel free to speak their mind at work, alert direct manager about issues and discontent.

In exploring all the positive aspects of the Norwegian work culture, there are some benefits that distinguish Norway from the European countries. In Norway it is very hard to get fired, some would say almost impossible. "The only reason people get laid off is when there is downsizing due to a poor market situation (like with oil and gas right now)" (Itland, 2016). Believe it or not, the state has made it very difficult for company to lay off someone, as the employee is protected by many laws. "When someone is laid off they have a minimum three month notice period and often get additional compensation packages after that" (Itland, 2016). This is not bad for a country that can afford to pay off compensation packages for people, who are fired just couple of years before their retirement. The system works very well in Norway, as there are no complains even from recently unemployed people. Norway, including other Nordic country, accepts and supports people with disabilities, trying to integrate them in

the employment: “Nordic countries have not implemented quotas in mainstream employment, but have prioritised rehabilitation, vocational training, job placement services (e.g. work training in regular workplaces) and, in some cases, publicly subsidised and sheltered jobs at private companies” (Kuznetsova and Bento, 2018: 35). In Norwegian work culture it is important to prioritize equality in all matters, but it can be harder for a foreigner to apply for a job position. “Since Norway became a popular destination of labour migrants at the turn of the century” (Friberg et al., 2014), the population in the country has changed. According to data “today, the labor-migrant population in Norway from the new EU countries represents more than two hundred thousand people” (Friberg, 2016). Moreover, there is a higher chance a native will be recruited in a new job position, rather than an immigrant. Norwegians and the state are not very supportive to immigration and their employment. There is a high emphasis on the language skills: “unless you speak fluent Norwegian, you do not enter the labour market here on equal footing with others” (Noonan, 2007: 9). Furthermore, there are separate “levels of education and types of employment conditions and occupational diversity observed among these migrants” (Huang, Krzaklewska and Pustulka, 2016: 64). There is no chance that Norway can avoid multiculturalism, sooner or later they will need to implement strategies to integrate people in their society. “Now, in the early 21st century, Norway is seeing the arrival into the labour market of its first non-European second generation” (Noonan, 2007: 9) and the state has to ready for the second generation when they will enter into the employment. It is a possibility that they will have an easier footing than “their fellow citizens of an ethnic Norwegian background” (Noonan, 2007: 10). Temporary employment is also a work cultural trade mark in Norway because students chose to work in summer time rather than to have a stable workplace. There are usually young people, more women than men, who are temporary employed, part besides doing studies, others at the start point in their career (Nergaard, 2004; Nergaard, 2016). Students have difficulties to balance their work life with studies and employers put them in a risk group. In contrast: “low-education people are less likely to have a stable connection and to a greater extent have unsafe employment relationships, or are outside the labour market and education system” (Svalund, 2017: 60). This indicates that temporary employment is an insecure fire in the workforce for young and low educated. Situation also affects the state overall labour market, as it may cause a higher rate of unemployment. To sum up work culture in Norway and peculiarities which are characteristic to Norwegian labour market, the theoretical part further addresses the following main topics: values and priorities in Norwegian culture, gender equality, parental leave and family policies, work-life balance, business etiquette and protocol in Norway.

1.1. Values and priorities in Norwegian culture

Education oneself in a foreign culture values and differences are important before the development of business relations. “Cultural differences significantly influence interaction, communication, and negotiations” (Luka, 2011: 147). Avoiding stereotypes about another culture is essential as it can create cultural-barrier between two nations. “Stereotypes or naivety about the culture of some country or nation frequently cause serious problems” (Luka, 2011: 147). The study of a culture and its values can be useful in communication and it also helps to understand better the reasons and actions behind the country’s decisions. Norway as a nation prioritize the most the well-being of families, by giving full support to new parents, specially related to work conditions and parental leave. Most importantly, children are highly valued in the Norwegian society as the future of the nation and this also influences work culture. “It is acceptable for families with young children to leave work early to pick up their children from kindergarten” (IMDi, 2016). This is one of the great aspects in the work-life balance and other European country sticks to the same principle. In Norway: “there is a general notion that people work to live rather than live to work” (IMDi, 2016). Moreover, people prefer to focus on their personal hobbies and want to spend as much time outdoors as possible. The Norwegian lifestyle includes outdoor life, doing sports, the focus on family, health, environment, education and voluntary work.

The priority of education in Norway is mandatory: schools are considered to be relatively equal, not promoting any prestige education institutions. The government wishes to focus on children's and young people's social skills, as well as school skills, through preventive measures, and wishing that these measures should build must be based on knowledge. The Norwegian education system is well developed and grades in school are viewed as the most important factor. They can only receive a Masters or PhD in something that directly rates to previous education. “One of the biggest differences in Norwegian education is that students choose their intended career field very early on in life” (Smith: 2015). This means that most of the scholars have decided their careers when they apply to high schools with specific study courses. When there is a question about accessibility to education in age groups, Norway provides very good lifelong learning programs and adult education closely linked to it. *The Royal Ministry of Education and Research* defines: “lifelong learning is an important principle in Norwegian education policy” (Baek and Hormann, 2017: 29). In general, access to education and learning for adults is an opportunity that should be valued and definitely used. Because of the changes in labour market related to technology development, the demand for adult learning is increasing more than ever. The

studying really does not stop in the university as the Norwegian working environment act claims “an employee who has been in the work force for at least three years and has been employed, in the same enterprise for two years, has the right to be on part time leave or full time to participate in organised education for up to three years” (TNWA, 2017). I believe this is one the best introduced laws in the company, as it allows students to use study leave or acquire new courses for personal growth. As observed, Norwegians tend to invest more resources in their employees, thinking about long-term commitment rather than employees’ high productivity for a shorter time.

Another aspect very relevant in Norwegian culture is personal health and social security. “Several studies identify the Nordic countries as having employment regimes that combine flexibility and security, in which the risk of increased job insecurity in flexible labor markets is compensated by employment and income security, thereby reducing detrimental results for employees” (Muffels and Luijkx, 2008; Muffels et al. 2014). Norway provides extensive health services and a well-developed social security net. “About 35% of the annual Norwegian state budget, or 7-8 % of the gross national budget, is spent on health and social care, making it one of the European countries – and the Nordic country – with the highest level of public spending on health per capita” (Bergstrøm and Heimly, 2004: 337). Norwegians are promoting equal distribution of health care in all the state territories: “the state does not only think about the most populated but also smaller the Nordic health care model, with its traditional focus on local governance, opens up geographical variations in service levels that are determined both by local differences in preferences and by differences in income levels” (Magnussen, 2010:450). Managers are usually more concerned about employees’ well-being and health rather than his about ability to work productively. “The key role of the state in working life means that the Nordic countries, in contrast to other European countries, are considered to have a regulated workplace context with control systems that follow national laws and rights” (Børve and Kvande, 2012: 118). Norwegians are striving for the agenda that in all companies there must be a healthy working environment and security. This does not only affect Norway but also other countries and it is an issue everyone needs to take action with. “Employment security has the expected relationship in Finland and Sweden: those with good perceived opportunities of finding a new job report better mental well-being than those with poor perceived opportunities. In Norway, there is no significant effect of employment security on mental well-being according to this model” (Vulkan, 2015:43). Furthermore, “Results from several national working condition analyses, as well as the European survey on working conditions, concludes that musculoskeletal disorders and stress

can be related to health problems caused by situations in the work environment (social, psychological, physical and organisational causes)” (Eurofound: 2014). These mentioned health problems are often seen as the main reasons why employees are absent and needs medical treatment. This also means that changes in working conditions, including shift work and higher demands, can cause health problems.

In Norway, volunteering is a key aspect of work life. “Many organizations encourage employees to volunteer in their local communities and will often allow some paid time off for those who wish to participate” (Engasjert Byrå, 2018). In Trondheim, which is a city in Norway, there is organised a special volunteering day, called “*Gi Bort Dagen*, which roughly translates to ‘Give Away Day’” (GBD, 2018). The idea of the event has come from “Marianne Danielsen (city manager in Trondheim), when in 2012 she realized there was an extra day in her calendar” (Smith: 2015). Now in a leap year, every two years, on February 29 “companies and employees are encouraged to clean up their offices, work space, or other areas and donate any unneeded items to charity” (GBD, 2018). In other services volunteering is also encouraged, for example: health, development, and children’s programs. Norway’s actions have helped me understand why it is of one of the happiest countries in the world, ranked by the Human Development Index (Technoport, 2018). This is a great example for other countries to take an example from.

In summary, strong community and personal autonomy are both highly valued in Norway. Confidence in parliamentary democracy and respect for the state is combined with moderate scepticism of government and politicians. Openness, equality and equal rights in general—such as economic, social and gender equality – are important values to most Norwegians. It is also an established fact that people with physical and mental challenges should have equal rights and be treated with as much respect as other people. Naturally, international students also benefit from these values and rights. There is high and increasing national pride, high and increasing interpersonal trust, strong local and regional identities, and identification with the State Church, combined with low levels of religious practice. All this boils down to a sense of collective identity, which could stem from the small population, ethnic and cultural homogeneity, and perhaps most importantly – socioeconomic equality. Equality and trust also contribute to a sense of security, which allows for greater individual appreciation of delayed payoffs and such, as investment in the oil fund. It is also encouraging to note that on most issues, Norwegian values and attitudes are not very different from those of other countries with comparative levels of economic development, as this suggests that there could be democratic support for adopting similar economic models in other countries.

1.2. Gender equality in Norway

Worldwide the role of women in politics and economics is still much lower than men. They have no equality with men in the labour market, and most often they receive lower remuneration for equal work. Also women have fewer chances to take politically important positions. However, women have come closer to the opposite sex in access to education and health in both developed and poor countries. On a better note, Scandinavian countries are considered to be one of the most gender equal countries in the world. According to *World Economic Forum* “for nine years Iceland has held the top spot in the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index, which ranks 144 countries based on how close they are to achieving gender equality” (WEF, 2017). The Global Gender Gap Report 2017 reveals that “Iceland has now closed more than 87% of its overall gender gap” (WEF, 2017). Iceland is a leader on female political empowerment and a strong performer on wage equality. But where in the The Global Gender Gap Report stands Norway? The report shows: “Norway ranks in the 2nd place, followed by Finland” (WEF, 2017). Still, while Norway ranks as number 2nd, there remains number of challenges to gender equality and new issues keep surfacing in the country.

As Norway is a big country and more inhabited in the southern part, the distribution of information is not fully developed. “Gender equality policies have more or less successfully integrated into many areas, while other areas lag behind” (GIN, 2006). This means that country still has much to achieve in gender equality by educating schools and promoting equality in work all across Norway. The official Norwegian strategy indicates: “to achieve equality between men and women includes both gender mainstreaming and gender specific actions” (Niskanen, 2017:110). To make these strategies work, it demands “knowledge of gender perspectives as well as an intersectional approach - seeing how gender intersects with race, age, sexuality etc.” (Government, 2013). Specific measures are taken in order to achieve gender equality in Norway, for example the progress is already showing: “Nordic females participate in the labour market to almost the same extent as their male counterparts” (Government, 2013). Comparing to other European countries, the results are more positive than in other countries. Also regardless of gender “employment benefits and union protection for part-time and full-time workers are the same” (Sier et al., 2001). I believe Latvia is very far from reaching the gender equality level as it is in Norway. Still, according to “Norway’s gender equality minister, who is the new leader of Nordic gender equality cooperation” (Måwe, 2017) some gender equality problems still remains unsolved.

Norwegians also closely sticks to the *Janteloven*: “*The law of Jante* at its simplest describes the way that all Norwegians (and in fact, other Scandinavians too) should behave: putting society ahead of the individual, not boasting about individual accomplishments or being jealous of others” (Nikel, 2017). The law of Jante teaches people to be modest and not to be selfish and “it is demonstrated in most people's refusal to criticize others” (NG, 2017). Norwegians try to see everyone as being equal and they do not brag about their success, wealth or financial achievements, looking askance at those who do. Another great aspect in Norwegian work culture is that “women are highly respected in business and generally receive equal pay and have access to senior positions” (NG, 2017). Taking into account Midtboen research paper “Social Investment in Gender Equality? Changing Perspectives on Work and Welfare in Norway” situation still is not how it should be. “In Norway, both female employment and fertility levels are high, but women still have a looser connection to the labour market compared to men, for example due to the large proportion in part-time positions, which makes changes in work and welfare policies an interesting case for exploring the relevance of the social investment perspective in this context” (Midtboen, 2014). This means that regardless of women’s choice, there are higher demands in the labour market for part time jobs. Furthermore, in Norway “part-time employment is a popular way to reconcile family and work and treated as a transitional stage for mothers who later resume full-time work.” (Muszynska, 2004: 4). For women it is a great way to balance work and private life, plus employment in the state is influenced by government and changes in demand of professions in labour market rather than gender or social status.

1.3. Parental leave and family policies in Norway

Universal parental leaves with job protection and earnings compensation increase women's labour market attachment, but very long leaves may have negative consequences at both individual and societal levels. If a woman decides to stay home with pre-school children she receives a monthly stipend from the government. Women may take up to one year's maternity leave at 80% pay or 10 months at 100% pay (NG, 2017). According to Ronsen’s research statement “Norwegian mothers did enter work faster after childbirth in the late 2000s than a decade earlier” (2014). This could be explained by the priorities in Norwegian society. They prefer to develop their personal careers rather than start a family in an early age. It is observed that Norwegians tend to get married and start a civil life later than in Latvia, about age 30. Maybe because of this choice a mother after childbirth wants to return in the work life and continue to achieve career goals. The situation concludes to cases variety of fathers using parental leave. As a 21st century country with modern thinking, Norwegians tend not to stick

with traditional living standards and have more freedom to choose which partner in the relationship wants to succeed in career or take care of the family. It is not exclusively women's role to take care of house work and children while man earns money for their welfare.

“In Norway parents get up to 12 months paid leave for 49 weeks at 100% salary or 59 weeks at 80% salary (split between them but there are some requirements)” (NAV, 2013). Compared to Latvia, the rates are higher because the economic situation in country is better. The Norwegian government also has invested many resources in their society's well-being. By law, ‘the mother MUST take 9 weeks paid leave after the child is born and the father MUST take a total of 14 weeks paid leave before the child turns 3 years old’ (NAV, 2013). In Latvia the system is different, because there does not exist any law that enforces father to use two weeks of parental leave. Also the parental leave in Norway is “not paid by the government so that pay entirely depends on individual or collective agreements” (Eurostat, 2007: 88). This means that the pay of parental leave depends on the company and employee's mutual agreement.

In Norway “employers are generally very respectful of the parents' choice in how to use the rest of the paid leave days” (Naz, 2010: 313). Personal matters are not judged or discussed in the work place. But fathers' participation in childcare is not only important in promoting gender equality but can be also important for the child's better upbringing. To promote fathers' involvement and participation in childcare, “in the 1990s Norway and other Scandinavian countries have evolved their parental leave schemes such that employed fathers may have equal access to paid parental leave as mothers” (Naz, 2010:313). Fathers' workplace type has no effect on their use of paternity quota, but they opt to take gender-neutral leave if they are working in female-dominated professions. In addition the effects of mothers' relative income, education, working time and number of pre-school children are more important for the use of gender-neutral leave by fathers as compared with leave up to the paternity quota. According to “Norway's Labour and Welfare official homepage” (NAV: 2018), there will be changes in the parental benefit scheme from 1 July 2018. “On 10 April 2018 the Government submitted a proposal to Norway's government (*Stortinget*) to extend the quotas to 15 weeks” (NAV: 2018). If the proposal gets approved, officially Norway will have better parental leave conditions than any other Scandinavian country, which have almost the same quotas. Further the new law will may contribute to decrease depopulation and increase birth rate in the country.

1.4. Work-life balance

The Norwegian working environment act indicates that “the balance between the ‘working life’ and the ‘private life’ is mandatory” (TNWA, 2017). The main focus is that there must be a possibility for both parents to participate in the working life and to have a “family life”. In the most European countries flexible working hours are arranged in the organization. A business article “The 13 countries with best work-life balance for expats” (Brinded, 2017) states that: “achieving a healthy work-life balance is a top priority for most people and there are some countries that promote a better culture of that than others” (Brinde, 2017).

A survey by *InterNations* “the world’s largest network for people who live and work abroad, the company asked 14,300 expats, representing 174 nationalities and living in 191 countries or territories, to rate 43 different aspects of life abroad on a scale of 1-7” (Brinded, 2017). From this, *InterNations* calculated the scores to get an overall average.

The Quality of Life index took into account factors such as:

- Leisure Options;
- Personal Happiness;
- Travel and Transport;
- Health and Well-Being;
- Safety and Security.

Norway ranked in the 1st place, “expats work on average 41.7 hours per week but Norwegians rated it the best in the world for work-life balance and excellently for raising a family” (Brinded, 2017). The Norwegian working environment act (TNWA, 2017) from January 2006 emphasises that there is a time for job contribution and a time for rest, family life and spare time. “*The Royal Ministry of Labour and Government Affairs* wish to make safe the workplaces through flexible overtime provisions, but this has to cater to the employees’ health in the long run” (TNWA, 2017). Efforts in the work life and responsibilities for family must be combined. The time for work and time for a family should be equal for male and female employees. It is believed that a flexible working hour arrangement will contribute to an easier way to balance work and family. This is successfully achieved where there is a possibility to work flexible hours, perhaps with the possibility to work at home a few days a week. In some companies, employee has to be at the workplace at a certain time, as in the service centres, flexible work is therefore not an issue. On the other hand, in these companies there are often possibilities for part time jobs or reduced hours.

“From the beginning of the Norwegian work-life balanced debate it has been a goal of the government side to adapt the working life to periods of childcare” (Aasnass, 2007). In the community debate there is also an evolving discussion about balancing work and family life,

as there is a need for flexibility related to senior employees who have responsibilities for older parents. This is a discussion especially is connected with social benefits, which is in turn related to absence from the job due to urgent needs to take care of elderly parents. “Today an employee has the right to 10 days sickness benefit because of absence from work as a result of caring for a sick child and 15 days if the employee has two children” (Aasnass, 2007). Although Norwegian government is very supportive towards family matters and the personal health, nobody can predict the cases when 10 or 15 days is actually not enough to care about sick children. It also depends of the company management; because there is possibility that employee can use more free days than is written in the labour act. The government also thinks about single parents: “if the employee is a single parent, you have the right to 20 days sickness benefit and 30 days, if the employee has two children” (Aasnass, 2007). This means that marital status takes an important role when deciding about the children’s health. Also it is twice as hard to care about children, when an employee is doing it all by himself. Another great aspect is that “some workplaces arrange that the employee include the travel time in work time if the employees have a long way to work” (Aasnass, 2007). Many of them have permission to bring their laptops and documents home and while employee is traveling, he can organize his work. This also gives the possibility to include travel time in the work time, which is limited to some workplaces.

Another great research is by Solheim “Inclusive working life and value conflict in Norway”, which examines the problems that occurs in inclusive working life. The paper analysis the “conflicting values behind Norway's much celebrated inclusive working life (IWL) programme, which aims to reduce sickness absenteeism, to increase the average age of retirement, and to hire functionally challenged persons” (Solheim, 2010: 340). Reading this article, I found out that IWL is a program established especially for Bank employees and each year more companies are applying this method to see how many people are employed with disabilities and who use sickness absence because of work related problems. The statistic data was gathered: “in 2004 we selected 86 enterprises with a total of approximately 90 000 employees from the Inclusive Working Life (IWL) Bank of Models of Good Practice” (Lie, 2008: 555). This means that about 90 000 workers in Norway enterprises retire early, use sickness absences or have disabilities. Furthermore, “frequent use of disability pensioning was associated with high rate of sickness absence and having many employees older than 50 years” (Lie, 2008: 553). In overall, the high results can be explained by the assumption that in Norway there are more employed elderly people who have worked in the company for several years. Also this causes employees to use more sickness leaves that younger employees, because of bad health condition in older years.

1.5. Business Etiquette & Protocol in Norway

Nowadays Norway is one of the best welfare countries in the world, the state funded health care and education (including higher education institutions), and of course, wide social security system. The state government has created a good tax system, although taxes are high, the wages compensate the difference. The highly developed country is thinking about the future and always moves forward when speaking about business organisation and new alliances. Therefore, “the most important cultural attributes that will be seen operating in business in Norway, would be” (Norway Guide, 2017):

- Informal style;
- Individual interests;
- Transactional relationships;
- Direct communication.

The Norwegian corporate style of management is usually democratic, informal, and relatively non-hierarchical. Although decisions are made by senior executives, they generally take into account the recommendations of lower-level employees. “The Norwegians use direct communication in meetings and are ready to discuss business matters just after short introductory words” (Buholcs, 2014: 38). Norwegians do not hold on to strict clothing requirements, suits and ties in business talks may not be needed. “Do not dress in an overtly ostentatious way or wear too much flashy, expensive jewellery as this would be contrary to just about every Jante Law” (Norway Guide, 2017). “As with the men, ladies tend towards smart casual with trousers much in evidence – especially in the colder months” (Warburton, 2017). Greetings are casual, with a firm handshake, direct eye contact, and a smile. Norwegians are egalitarian and casual; they often introduce themselves with their first name only. “In some circumstances people may use the honorific title "Herr" (Mr.) or "Fru" (Mrs.) and their surname” (Warburton, 2017). Norwegians are transactional and do not need long-standing personal relationships in order to conduct business.

Nonetheless, Norwegians prefer to do business with those they trust, so it is important that you provide information about yourself and the company you represent prior to meeting business colleagues. Relationships develop slowly and depend upon the other person being professional and meeting all agreed upon deadlines. Giving a well-researched presentation indicates that you are serious about conducting business. Norwegians are excellent time managers who do not require face-to-face contact in order to conduct business. Appearing overly friendly at the start of a relationship may be viewed as weakness. Maintaining eye contact, while speaking is interpreted as sincerity.

Norwegians “have no difficulty telling their colleagues that they disagree with something that has been said” (CGC, 2017). Their communication is straightforward and relies on facts. “They are conservative and deliberate speakers who do not appreciate being rushed. Norwegians are “scrupulous about honesty in communication, often to the point of pointing out the negatives in their own proposals in greater detail than the positives” (Kulchawik, 2015: 13). Internal communications is always two-way communications. “Employee feedback helps managers decide if the communication has been received and understood” (Finch, Hansen and Alexander, 2010: 3). As well, employees have important operational information that can help to make the government more successful in achieving its goals. Norwegians are not emotive speakers and their body language is subtle.

Appointments are necessary and should be made as far in advance as possible. “As is to be expected in a consensus-oriented culture, meetings can be lengthy and involve lots of open debate” (Warburton, 2017). It is often difficult to schedule meetings during July and August, which are popular vacation times; during the two weeks before and after Christmas; and during the week before and after Easter. There is not much small talk. Norwegians prefer to get to the business discussion quickly. Presentations should be precise and concrete, and backed up with charts, figures and analysis.

In negotiating Norwegians do not generally give discounts, even to good customers or for large orders. It is imperative to adhere to deadlines and commitments. New concepts should be shown to be high quality, practical, and already market tested.

Another great example is the research by Griķe and Felberga “Harmonization of Intercultural Barriers in International Business: Case of Latvia and Norway” which examines the gap between the two Baltic Sea Region countries in the business context. The results prove that “In Norway managers trust more to their employee letting them to be independent organizing the jobs, setting the only goal of the work. In Latvia manager is determined by both to set the goal for their employees and organize the job schedule for them” (Griķe and Felberga, 2005:4). As mention before, Norwegians as managers trust more to their employees, in other words may say “allowing them free rein” while removing responsibility from themselves and giving full power to their subordinates.

Also in Norway managers let their employees organize the job schedule which is in contrast with Latvian managers. I guess our work culture will never change in this matter, because we will never put such big trust and responsibilities to people who are less competent or experienced. That is why Norwegians in summers hire interns and carelessly put much trust in them that resolves in some future work failures.

2. BUSINESS ETHICS AND WORK CULTURE IN LATVIA

“Latvian business culture is characterised by business communication, business etiquette, business meeting etiquette, internship and student placements, cost of living, work-life-balance and social media guide” (Warburton, 2017). “Latvians are probably closer to Germans in their behaviour” (Warburton, 2017), as they tend to be very reserved and do not like expressing their emotions in public. “They say little and like to get straight to the point and it is best to adopt a very direct approach when addressing business topics with them” (PTR, 2011). “Latvians will certainly try not to hurt somebody’s feelings at the first meeting, but they will say what they are thinking and will expect the same from you” (PTR, 2011).

“As Latvians do not like long meetings, it is expected to be well prepared for the meeting, with all the relevant information at immediate disposal” (PTR, 2011). “It is important to present all the key facts and be able to answer any direct questions on the spot” (PTR, 2011). There is a high risk of a business failure, when presentation is not rightfully set: “if presentation is not credible or something makes potential business partners feel uncomfortable, they may withdraw from the meeting and cancel further negotiations” (PTR, 2011). “When it comes to punctuality, Latvians are relatively tolerant, but at a meeting with a foreign partner, they will try to arrive on time, but may not succeed” (PTR, 2011). “Latvians express their seriousness about business through their formal approach to the way they dress and conduct meetings” (Warburton, 2017). “Their business style follows a clearly hierarchical approach and significant business decisions are made by the top management in the organisation, which can sometimes slow down the negotiation process” (PTR, 2011).

“With Latvians, there are no topics of conversation that should be avoided but it is important not to criticize the people of Latvia or their country, even as a joke” (PTR, 2011). “When Latvians criticize their own country, government or economic situation, it is better to reassure them by saying you think things are getting better or that you are sure everything will be fine in the end” (Warburton, 2017). “Sometimes it might seem even surprising how trustfully the subsidiaries of Western companies in Latvia follow the standards of their parent companies and corporative traditions when doing business in Latvia” (Warburton, 2017). However, sometimes the business culture of national companies, which employ people of various approaches, can be surprising.

Furthermore, Latvians are used to adapt themselves. Most probably it is because the Latvians are used to adapt themselves to various situations. “The people in Baltic countries are eager to learn and master everything new, modern, progressive (foreign countries, achievements in techniques and technology and etc.)” (Warburton, 2017). On the other hand, the people living on the Baltic coast have preserved their proximity to nature which stretches

its roots in the history of the nation, and in many cases are too shy to express their self-estimate. “Sometimes the Latvians are not even sure about their own sense of humour” (PTR, 2011).

“The best way to contact someone in Latvia is to make a telephone call” (PTR, 2011). Latvians enjoy using their phone and they will gladly receive your call. “Contact by email is becoming increasingly popular, but response times still vary considerably and it may take a while before you receive an answer” (PTR, 2011). “Nevertheless, email is often preferred in the business environment because there is a clear written record that can easily be referenced” (PTR, 2011).

“Letters are also popular in Latvia for business communications, but this is definitely a slower form of communication with replies taking up to two weeks” (PTR, 2011). To get things done, it is best to invest in regular and constant direct interaction. “Latvian business people like to look straight into your eyes while discussing business; so, eye contact is an important part of business meetings in this area of the world” (PTR, 2011). “Failure to make eye contact signals a lack of interest and may be interpreted as an effort to hide something. Shaking hands is an imperative part of greeting one’s partner” (PTR, 2011). “Latvians shake hands with all participants at both the beginning and the end of meeting” (PTR, 2011). “As they are not talkative by nature, Latvians prefer to get straight to the point without small talk” (PTR, 2011). “They do not show their emotions while discussing business and their verbal communication style is simple and direct” (PTR, 2011).

In the 2016 report “Economic development of Latvia”, the situation is not as bad as we would think. The business environment in Latvia compared to other European countries is rather positive. “In the assessment of the business-friendly environment, Latvia is ranked 10th among the EU member states, in this assessment giving way to Denmark, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Estonia, Austria, and also Lithuania” (Barānovs, 2016: 132). If Latvia in 2016 was in the top 10 countries, the measures of improvement could lead the country to one of the best business friendly environments in Europe.

2.1. Work Environment in Latvia

The work environment plays a very important role in the worker's life, as we spend about a third of our work in our work. The working environment is the place of work with all the circumstances and risk factors that affect or can affect our safety and health. It is therefore very important that in this environment the employee will feel good, as comfortable and safe as possible. In the world of practice, it has been proven that in a healthy and well-functioning working environment, labour productivity is rising, the number of accidents and occupational

illnesses is reduced, employees are working more efficiently and their working lives are prolonged. The employer is responsible for the work environment and must ensure that internal monitoring of the work environment naturally forms part of the company's operations. Almost everything that happens in a company is important for creating a work environment. There have been developed tips and hints to help understand the essence and importance of internal monitoring of the work environment to facilitate the internal monitoring of the work environment in the company or institution and to better address health and safety issues at work.

Internal monitoring of the work environment is of a preventive nature and aims at identifying the risk factors in the working environment at the earliest possible stage and eliminating the risk to employees' safety and health. By eliminating the risk of planning workplaces already, as well as eliminating risks from the source, it provides employees with a safe and healthy work environment while simultaneously saving the employer's funds. A systematic internal monitoring of the work environment is not necessarily complex. The key is for all employees of the company or institution to have the opportunity to participate in the internal supervision of the work environment, contributing to improving the working environment. Good co-operation between employer and employees on labour protection issues will help to create a safe and healthy work environment, as well as prevent illness and injury.

In a conducted survey in 2015 “every third employee in Latvia believes that during the last year there has been an increase in the mental effort required to carry out the work” (VDI, 2015). This means that employment is based more on strategic work rather than physical. Furthermore, workers feel more mentally distressed by having deadlines and overload. Another aspect is the work intensity that has grown in the past years, making employees to work in shifts and take overtime. “Consequently, a quarter of Latvia's employees have health problems caused by the work environment” (VDI, 2015). These are bad indicators for work environment in Latvia, as it shows that about 15% of Latvians have work related health problems. “Although in Latvia there are areas in which the situation is good, in sectors such as construction and forestry, labour protection is sometimes at a medium or mediocre level” (VDI, 2015). Of course there is no specific data collected in each industrial sector and we cannot speak about the overall situation in the whole country work environment.

2.2. Business meeting planning

Effective timing and organization of work, planning and conducting effective meetings, are the main aspects Latvians tend to follow. A lot of things have changed since joining the EU and Latvia focuses on better methods to attract foreign investors. It should also be taken into consideration that the ages have changed and there are the number of young managers is rising. They have new visions and are can organise more creative business meetings. Of course the organisational part of the meetings stays the same. Each project manager faces meetings on a daily basis, so it is very important for him to achieve super-efficient meetings. “When proposing a meeting, it is important to offer several possible dates and allow your partner to make a choice” (Warburton, 2017). Business meeting planning should examine the participants and adapt to their schedule. Also “Latvians prefer one-to-one meetings, so it is best to limit the number of meeting attendees to one or two people at most from each side” (Warburton, 2017). It is desirable to obtain a written confirmation for the place and time of the meeting and for the people who are going to attend. “The favourite time for a business meeting in Latvia is from 9am to 1pm. A business lunch can also be arranged, after 12:30pm” (Warburton, 2017). The host will be in charge of reserving the venue, the meeting room and the refreshments.

If there would be analysed work meetings between managers and employees, it would turns out that it is often associated with the psychological aspects of a person. “Employees will usually focus more on discussing specific issues and taking decisions, but will avoid discussing topics related to feelings, relationships, and meeting the prevailing microclimate” (PTR, 2011). Interestingly, although questions relating to mutual relations are not spoken in meetings, they are spoken after a meeting, in backstage - in pairs or in small subgroups. There is criticism about what and how it was supposed to do otherwise, but at the next meeting they do not speak about these issues again. “The longer people will refrain from talking about these topics, the more conflicts will occur, the more slowly the work will go and valuable resources - time and money will be lost” (PTR, 2011). Therefore, it can be said that the effectiveness of a meeting depends not only on how well it will be prepared and managed, but also on how openly the meeting will be able to talk about mutual relationships and emotions.

Firstly, it is important to find out how employees judge themselves about what an effective meeting should be. The employee should speak his mind about what is valuable and allows them to perform more efficiently. Each company probably has different opinions, but it is worth considering that it is the question of the effectiveness of the meeting that could be one of the topics under consideration at the meeting. In any case, it is important for employees to feel that their opinions and ideas matter that they, through their participation in the meeting,

can participate in the proceedings and decision-making processes of the meeting. If employees do not have this feeling, it will appear in their attitude and behaviour - delaying the meeting, contesting ideas, questioning decisions, etc. It should be emphasized that the members of the meeting are equally responsible for the result as a meeting leader. Even though in moments it seems that organizing a meeting is the best way to deal with issues and make decisions, but is not the case. The purpose of a meeting is not a time to relax and talk about life. This does not mean that meetings must always be business-like and very serious – they must maintain the culture of the company, and at the same time they must be planned, structured and controlled. To summarize, it is necessary to evaluate the usefulness of the meetings. If a meeting is needed, then the project manager must prepare and prepare the participants. During the meeting, work must be done to make sure that the planned topics are spoken, key people have spoken, opinions are taken into account, everyone fits in on the scheduled time, and there is someone who documents decisions and tasks. After the meeting, all the participants of the meeting and stakeholders should be informed of the outcome of the meeting.

Secondly, the business negotiation in Latvia is tough. The host is not easily moved, once they have adopted a position. The main thing is to be specific and be ready to bluff, if necessary. Latvians do not express their emotions during negotiation, so it is best to adopt a similar approach and not show any sign of weakness. “The time required for negotiation depends on the attitude of the partners and the nature of the sector. It usually takes longer to negotiate with the public sector than to do business with the private sector” (Warburton, 2017). Greetings are very strict, direct eye contact and shaking hands firmly. “When introduced and in the early stages of a business relationship, it is advisable to adopt a formal approach by addressing people with their family name and educational title” (PTR, 2011).

Most Latvians speak more than one language. “Most people over the age of 15 are likely to speak Russian, as there are still lots of schools in Latvia that use it as the language in which children are taught” (PTR, 2011). “Many Russians still live in Latvia as a result of the occupation; for this reason, the second language of Latvia is Russian” (Warburton, 2017). “In business, Russian is the language of choice for middle-aged professionals working in Eastern European companies, while English is usually preferred if the potential partners are younger or from a western company” (PTR, 2011). “Apart from their own language, many Latvians speak Russian (most people over 25) and English” (PTR, 2011). “In Latvia, there are many Russians and Polish people and business people from the other Baltic States” (PTR, 2011). Finding out where the person manager is meeting is from is very important, so that in a timely manner arrangements can be made for the right interpreter, where one is needed.

2.3. Work-life balance

The balance between work and private life determines the prioritization between "work" (employment, career), "family" (including care for children and parents) and "rest" (health and well-being). Taking into account the balance between work, family and rest, the person can more effectively use the resources of work capacity (as an employee or entrepreneur) and actively participate in the labour market. Sadly, many families are still faced with work-life balance problems and often lead to "overheating" and termination of employment relationships. It is important to know employee's options and promote a family-friendly initiative in their workplaces. It could help make the most of persons' leisure time and improve the quality of his work.

“Latvians consider themselves to be uncomplicated and dependable and they expect their business partners to be the same” (PTR, 2011). “Latvia’s gradual transition to a market economy triggered the selling of numerous state companies to local businesses or to foreign companies” (PTR, 2011). So, many “Latvians have had the occasion to work with foreign people brought in to help train them” (PTR, 2011). This process has involved numerous cultural clashes, due to differences in attitudes and values. “Latvians are well educated and dislike the idea of a stranger telling them what to do in their own country” (Warburton, 2017). “So when a foreign manager understands the general business environment they are going into, the reception they receive is more favourable” (PTR, 2011). “Latvians are willing to work long hours, even overtime, in order to provide a good standard of living for their families” (PTR, 2011). As a nation they are reserved and probably will not talk about their family matters with others.

The working week is typically 40 hours with 8 hour days (PTR, 2011). “Part time work is not yet well established. The official business hours usually start at 8 to 8:30am and last until 4:30 or 5pm” (PTR, 2011). However, people in business often work late, even at weekends. “Because office hours may vary, it is better to enquire about your partners’ hours of business and make appointments in advance.” Friday is a short day in many businesses and many people leave work at around 4 pm or even earlier. “Banks generally open at 8am and close early, whereas shops generally open later and stay open until 6pm on weekdays” (PTR, 2011). Lunch breaks are normally short, except during a working lunch which can involve lengthy discussions.

According to Eurostat: “countries with long average working hours tend to register relatively high dissatisfaction rates, but there are exceptions: Latvia for instance, with a similar volume of working hours in the main job as Slovenia or the Czech Republic, reported far higher shares of persons who were unhappy with their current situation” (Eurostat, 2009:

49). This means that Latvians want to change the working hours, this could also be influenced by work environment and salary.

Latvia has one of the highest proportions of people who experience conflict in reconciling work and family life. Quite generous maternity, paternity and parental benefits provide good financial support up to the point when a child turns 1.5 years old. “Public childcare organised by local governments offers reconciliation options from 1.5 up to 7 years” (Rastrigina, 2015: 4). However, there is a shortage of places for small children and many parents are stressed where they should leave their children when they are working. Furthermore, many companies have not considered the idea of installing special rooms in the office for children to stay when their parents are working extra hours.

In the recent survey Latvians were asked if they can balance their working life with private life. “The balance between work and private life cannot be found by 39% of Latvia's population, according to a survey conducted by the labour portal *CV Market*” (Leta, 2018). Including 35% of workers who indicate work interferes with their private life, while 4% of the respondents find that because of bad time management their work suffers. In turn, 61% of respondents believe that they have managed to find a balance between work and personal life. According to the survey, “the most frequent shortage of working-age people over the age of 35 is their personal life, and especially men” (Leta, 2018). At the same time, they are also the ones who have often noted that their work is suffering from the lack of time. This tendency is more observed among younger men. Those interviewed who work most of the day-to-day, most often take leading positions, and also represent administration and assisting areas. Meanwhile, respondents who delay their work due to their private life are most likely to work in the service and sales spheres.

2.4. Intercultural communication in the Latvian business environment

Language is the only decisive way on how we proceed with the negotiations. It needs to be taking into account that body postures, traditions, nonverbal communication, behaviour and culture, has to be set as a priority related to any kind of face-to-face communication. “The key to effective cross-cultural communication in business negotiation is knowledge” (Huang, 2010). First of all it is necessary to understand the potential problems of cross-cultural communication, cultural barriers and make conclusions to overcome these obstacles. Second, it is important to comprehend that one's efforts will not always succeed and as a foreigner it is forgivable to not completely acknowledge all the cultural peculiarities of other countries.

When Latvia joined the European Union, the business environment became much more dynamic and operational wider, therefore, more and more knowledge is needed not only in business communication, but also in intercultural communication. The skill of intercultural

communication and its effective use are becoming more and more important international environment. To grow and survive, Latvian companies have to face and collaborate with other cultures in business it is therefore very important to know not only the business label of your country but also the transactions and cultural norms, traditions, values and peculiarities. Otherwise, the consequences can be intercultural communication conflicts and barriers.

There is no doubt that cultures with each other have come into contact with as never before in the history of the world. Never before has human knowledge of the world been so affordable. Economic globalization, political reform and technological development, the need to recognize and understand cultural differences is unlikely to have ever been the case essential as of today. The essence of intercultural communication is the need to learn foreign cultures to communicate. It must be adequate to respond to differences, plus these differences need to be learned. Edward Holmes stresses that the greatest challenge is not only to understand other cultures, but understand their own culture. "Start evaluating what we take for granted and this can only be achieved through the knowledge and knowledge of alien paths, cultures and differences" (Hall, 1976).

Latvians can be direct communicators, although they often temper their words to protect the feelings of the other person. As a group, they are slow to pay compliments and may become suspicious of compliments offered too readily and without sufficient reason. "Latvia is a low context communication culture and they do not require a great deal of background information and may become irritated if someone attempts to explain too much" (PTR, 2011). "Latvians are polite and courteous and can be extremely reserved" (PTR, 2011). They do not readily smile, especially at strangers, and are not comfortable making small talk. Latvians often appear to have little difficulty accepting what would be considered awkward silences in other cultures. This behaviour can make them seem austere. Once a relationship has developed though, some of the veneer will disappear. "Personal matters are seldom touched upon in business" (PTR, 2011). Today, the Latvian business world and culture is changing a lot. Upon joining the European Union, local companies in Latvia experiences increase in competition from foreign companies. Globalization is under way; the small companies that are united or developed will survive and enter the European markets. Foreign partners invest more in Latvia, developing their own businesses. Increasingly Latvians have to work with foreigners, learn languages, learn the culture of foreigners, and communicate with each other. By knowing the behaviour of different cultures, it's easier to talk, bargain, and it's very important, because one wrong, ignorant move, can break all the co-operation. People who are involved in international marketing face difficulties: contacting people with other cultures and traditions.

Intercultural differences can be disappointing, because they are often unclear and unpredictable.

Relations with foreign partners are very important for Latvian business people. They often are very polite and formal. Businessmen emotions will not show up and non-verbal language is very relaxed. Communication with Latvian people is similar with other northern men. To make successful deals and cooperation with partners of other countries, the main thing is to understand the other culture features and values and accept them.

At the same time, they can be extremely direct speakers and task focused. “Latvia has been increasingly involved in global business activities over the last decades” (Kalniņa, 2017). That way growing numbers of people are becoming more and more knowledgeable about cultural differences also for intercultural communication. Understanding and understanding of the peculiarities of Latvian culture the impact on communication with representatives of other cultures is useful for both Latvian residents (business the environment, for example, entrepreneurs and workers) and representatives of other countries. Successful operation in the international business environment depends not only on the economy and the specific business but also to a large extent on the ability to create positive communication. This ability is based on the chances of the cultural peculiarities of the partners, and also the understanding of the peculiarities of their culture, in order to could assess and be aware of its actions, its possible differences from other cultures.

In the recent study the following Latvian cultural indexes were obtained: “power distance - 48, individualism - 21, male / female dimension - 0, avoidance of uncertainty - 0, pragmatic / normative perception - 19 and satisfaction – 35” (Kalniņa, 2017). The findings of the study reflect the Latvian society as a rule, with a medium power distance and a very low degree of avoidance of uncertainty. The main values of society are modesty, quality of life and care for the weakest. The vast majority of people have a strong need for identification with a "we" group, and typical intimacy in negative memories, pessimism and hopelessness regarding the ability to determine their own lives.

In a business environment, these cultural features are manifested in the fact that workplaces often have family-owned relationship; self-initiative is supported but not absolute independence; is characterized by dislike of the form rules; direct criticism and collective discussion of failures. It is important for employees to maintain a balance between work and family. Successful incentives include flexible working hours and the ability to work outside the office (from home); customer service should observe modesty in demonstrating responsiveness and interest.

2.5. Gender equality and women employment in Latvia

The concept of gender equality is relatively new in Latvia. “The gender machinery was established in 1999. The Ministry of Welfare became the main institution responsible for development of gender equality policy” (Rastrigina, 2015: 4). Since then, Latvia has not yet managed to develop a strong and consistent gender equality policy. The accession of Latvia in the EU contributed to the promotion of gender equality in the national policy agenda. Latvia has no specific anti-discrimination law or gender equality law. The most important laws promoting gender equality are the Labour Law and the Labour Protection Law. During the last decade the Ministry of Welfare developed three Programmes for the Implementation of Gender Equality. Latvia has no legislation or recommendations for the promotion of equal gender representation in political and business spheres. Nevertheless, in this area, Latvian women are better represented in decision-making positions than women in other EU Member States, especially in business management. Gender stereotypes are commonly mentioned as the main obstacle to equal representation.

Comparing to Norway, the situation in gender equality in Latvia has changed since Post Soviet times. Women have relatively strong position in the labour market. This positive historical legacy is reinforced by financial considerations. Nevertheless, there are strong gender stereotypes and gender segregation across fields of education, occupations and economic sectors. This leads to a persistent gender pay gap which has not been addressed sufficiently by policy makers.

According to Eurostat “it appears that Latvian women frequently have a second job, as on average 1.03 hours per week were registered, far above the EU average of 0.30 hours” (Eurostat, 2009: 43). Latvian women historically have high employment rates and participation in the labour market. The Labour Law ensures equal rights to work, fair working conditions and fair pay for all people regardless of their gender. It also regulates temporary work and working hours. Segregation in economic sectors, occupations and fields of education results in, among other factors, a persistent gender pay gap. The recently announced in *Inclusive Employment Guidelines 2014-2020* a proposal to use the unadjusted gender pay gap to assess performance of gender equality policy in the labour market.

However, part-time employment and temporary employment are not very common in Latvia and do not have a strong gender dimension. Part-time employment constituted only 10% of total employment among women and 6.1% among men in 2013. The respective indicators for the EU-28 average are much higher, especially for women: 32.8%. The share of employees with fixed-term contracts was 5.3% among men and 3.6% among women in 2013.

As a general rule, employment contracts in Latvia are concluded for an unspecified period of time. Fixed-term contracts are only permitted in special cases, such as seasonal work, replacement of an employee who is absent, etc. “The EU-28 average share of employees with fixed-term contracts for men and women is 13.3% and 14.3% respectively” (Eurofound: 2014) The role of social partners for gender equality at the work place is very limited. According to *Eurofound* (Eurofound, 2014), social partners in Latvia have not developed policies to address gender equality. They are trying to make sure that the importance of the issue is understood within their organizations but there are no specific policies or concrete actions.

Although in recent years Europe has a hard work at local, national and European level has managed to achieve gradual progress in the field of promoting gender equality yet there is still a lot to be done. Until actual equality there is still a long way to go, in particular in areas such as participation in the labour market, economic independence, wages and salaries pensions, equality in management positions, combating gender-based violence, as well as gender equality in our external action. “Strategic Engagement in Promoting Gender Equality 2016-2019” labels “a new stage in the efforts to promote equality between women and men at the same time maintaining an emphasis on very important priority areas of action.” (Eiropas Komisija, 2016: 5).

Another subject often discussed is gender pay gap in the Latvian work environment. *The Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia* regularly publishes the estimates of the unadjusted gender pay gap by economic activity and by occupation. A more comprehensive national study on gender pay difference was conducted by the marketing research group *FACTUM* and *the Baltic Institute of Social Science (BISS)* in 2006. “The results show that the unadjusted gender pay gap is about 22-28% and it narrows down to 18.5-21.5% if observable characteristics of men and women (including professions) are controlled for” (Rastringa, 2015: 18). “In August 2014, the new Inclusive Employment Guidelines 2014-2020 were announced.” The aim of the guidelines is to promote the formation of an inclusive labour market, reduce social consequences of unemployment, and foster return of unemployed people into work. The guidelines also acknowledge the problem of high gender segregation in economic sectors and occupations in Latvia and the resulting gender pay gap. One of the chapters of the report discusses equal opportunities for men and women in the labour market.

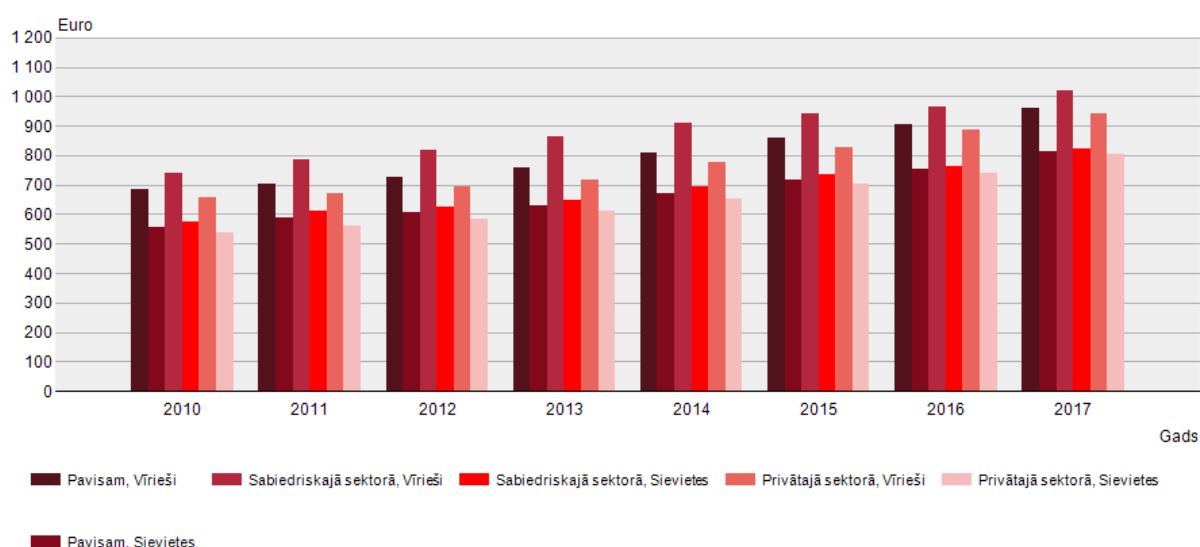
In the 21st century, the wage gap between women and men in Latvia is increasing, the study concluded by the *Central Statistical Bureau (CSB)* confirms. In Latvia, as in other countries, women earning paid employment on average earn less than men, and since the

beginning of the century, the gender pay gap has grown steadily since the beginning of the century. “In 2015, the average monthly gross wage of women was 16.2% lower than that of men, and compared to 2014, this indicator has increased by 0.8 percentage points” (Leta, 2016). As the CSB notes, “the wage gap with discrimination cannot be clearly explained, because there are different reasons why women are less remunerated” (Leta, 2016). Most women work in industries where the average remuneration is low - in accommodation, catering and household services, in the arts and entertainment sector, in commerce, in health and social care institutions. This means that also the factor for pay gap is the choice of profession.

According to the latest data from *Central Statistics Bureau of Latvia* in 2017 there still exists gender pay gap between women and men in both private and public sector. The statistics provides a brief overview of gender pay gap (GPG) statistics in the European Union, including the unadjusted gender pay gap used to monitor imbalances in earnings between men and women. “The unadjusted gender pay gap is defined as the difference between the average gross hourly earnings of men and women expressed as a percentage of the average gross hourly earnings of men. It is calculated for enterprises with 10 or more employees” (Eurostat, 2017).

Source: Centrālās statistikas birojs (CSB) (2017)

DSG04. “Vīriešu un sieviešu darba samaksa pa darbības veidiem 1. Ceturksnī (euro)” 2010-2017 gadam.



The indicators from 2010-2017 in Latvia shows: wages have increased in the recent years and it has also influenced the employment rates in the country.

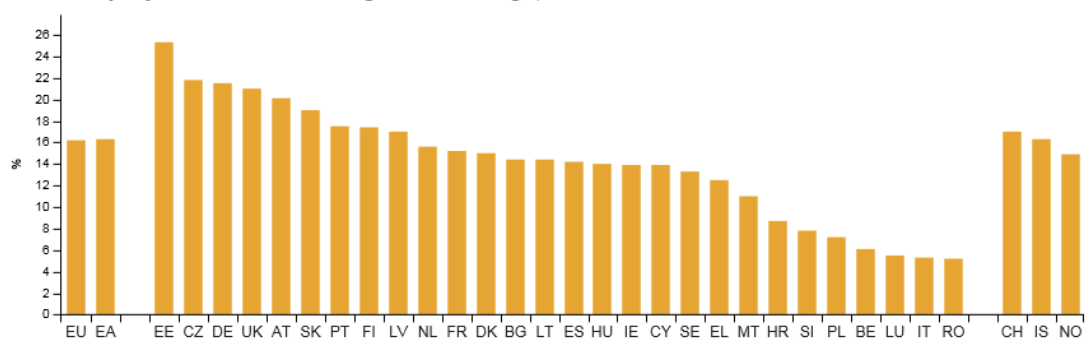
Another source compares the statistics of Latvia and other European Union countries in the *European Union's Statistics Bureau. EU statistics on gender pay gap* show the inequalities between wages of men and women, by working profile, economic activity, age, and public/private sector.

“For the economy as a whole, in 2016, women's gross hourly earnings were on average 16.2 % below those of men in the European Union (EU-28) and 16.3% in the euro area (EA-19). Across Member States, the gender pay gap varied by 20 percentage points, ranging from 5.2 % in Romania to 25.3 % in Estonia (Figure 1)” (Eurostat, 2017).

“In 2016, the highest gender pay gap in the EU was recorded in Estonia (25.3 %) and the lowest in Romania (5.2 %). 2016, women's gross hourly earnings were on average 16.2 % below those of men in the EU” (Eurostat, 2017).

Source: Eurostat (2017), “Gender pay gap in unadjusted form” (% of average gross hourly earnings of men). The indicator measures the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees and of female paid employees as a percentage of average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees. The indicator has been defined as unadjusted, because it gives an overall picture of gender inequalities in terms of pay and measures a concept which is broader than the concept of equal pay for equal work. All employees working in firms with ten or more employees, without restrictions for age and hours worked, are included.

The unadjusted gender pay gap, 2016 (difference between average gross hourly earnings of male and female employees as % of male gross earnings)



The diagram shows the gender pay gap in unadjusted form by age - NACE Rev. 2 activity (B-S except O), structure of earnings survey. From statistics there can be observed that there exists higher gender pay gap in Latvia with 17% rather than in Norway 14,9%.


There also is a lower gender pay gap for young employees. “The gender pay gap is generally much lower for new labour market entrants and tends to widen with age” (Eurostat, 2017). However, those differences over age groups can have different patterns across the


countries (Table 1). The gender pay gap might increase with age as a result of the career interruptions women experience during their working life, particularly older women unable to benefit from specific equality measures which did not yet exist when they started to work.

	< 25 years	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65 years +
Belgium	-2.7	0.6	5.3	7.1	15.4	:
Bulgaria	6.9	13.9	20.0	17.6	6.2	2.0
Czech Republic	11.4	13.8	27.4	23.8	15.1	20.4
Denmark	6.5	10.9	16.1	18.2	16.0	11.0
Spain	10.3	7.7	10.4	16.7	22.7	48.6
France	-3.8	8.4	12.8	18.9	21.1	29.2
Italy	16.0	5.1	5.7	6.4	5.7	:
Cyprus	6.1	-0.6	9.7	23.8	26.3	51.9
Latvia	13.2	16.1	21.0	14.9	13.5	17.1
Lithuania	14.1	17.3	20.0	11.2	10.3	13.8
Hungary	3.7	10.5	19.7	15.8	7.7	22.3
Malta	2.7	9.0	13.1	11.9	7.1	21.1
Netherlands	3.6	1.0	9.5	20.1	21.1	15.9
Poland	7.6	9.0	12.0	6.9	2.3	-13.7
Portugal	8.0	8.3	14.9	23.5	23.2	43.0
Romania(*)	-1.1	1.1	6.7	4.8	2.8	17.5
Slovenia	6.8	7.0	9.7	12.2	6.4	0.0
Slovakia	10.9	12.6	24.2	21.8	17.0	22.1
Finland	4.4	11.4	18.0	19.1	21.3	21.2
Sweden	4.5	8.4	14.8	16.4	16.1	14.3
United Kingdom(**)	4.5	12.7	22.0	27.7	26.9	26.8
Iceland	2.3	8.6	18.4	24.4	21.0	20.1
Norway	1.9	7.8	14.8	18.4	20.8	19.6
Switzerland	3.4	7.1	15.4	22.1	22.9	31.5

Note: For all countries except the Czech Republic: data for enterprises employing 10 or more employees, NACE Rev. 2 B to S (-0); for the Czech Republic: enterprises employing 1 or more employees, NACE Rev. B to S; data not available for Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Croatia, Luxembourg and Austria.

: data not available
 (*) Provisional data
 (**) Estimated
 (***) Estimated by Eurostat

Table 1: The unadjusted gender pay gap by age (%), 2016 

Source: Eurostat ([earn_gr_gpgr2ag](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&plugin=1)) 

In 2016, the majority of the EU countries (for which data are available) recorded a higher gender pay gap (in absolute terms) in the private sector than in the public sector. This might be due to the fact that within the public sector, in most countries, employees are protected by collective pay agreements and other similar contracts establishing pay. The gender pay gap varied in the private sector from 6.8 % in Romania to 24.0 % in Germany, and in the public sector from -6.6 % in Cyprus to 24.4 % in the United Kingdom.

The overall results show that in Latvia, the gender pay gap is the lowest for young employees, but the highest gender pay gap is in the public sector. The statistics indicate, that gender pay gap is also very actual in other Baltic Sea Region countries. Estonia was the highest in rank in 2016, but Latvia's results were above average level in EU which was 16,2%.

2.6. Parental leave and family policies in Latvia

When the child is born or is adopted, the child's mother and father are entitled to parental leave. A member of a foster family, who has entered into an agreement with a municipality, guardian or other person who in accordance with the decision of the Orphan's court, can take care of a child. “Almost two decades after Latvia regained political independence, demographic policies, including family policy, developed in a passive manner” (Āboliņa, 2015). Furthermore, “some administrations declared their intention to implement demographic recovery programmes or elaborate pronatalist policy measures” (Āboliņa, 2015). In recent years family policy issues have gained a more notable importance. At present Latvia has one of the most rapidly growing economies among the European Union countries (Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Latvia, 2013: 16) and the situation today is quite different from that of five years ago, “when Latvia experienced a severe economic crisis, which in turn seriously affected the wellbeing of the majority of Latvian families” (Āboliņa, 2015). Now the situation and the laws in the labour system have changed.

The employee has the right to choose the time of parental leave by splitting or using it in full. Of course, it must be remembered that parting the parental leave is to be agreed with the employer. Also, the employee is obliged to notify the employer in writing about the beginning and duration of the parental leave or a part of the parental leave one month in advance. This means that whenever a staff member decides to use part of the parental leave, whether it is one day or a year, he must tell the employer a month in advance so that he can find a replacement in time for the absent employee or redistribute the work among others employees. The employer has an obligation for a staff member who is taking parental leave to retain his previous work. If this is not possible, the employer must provide equivalent or comparable work with the employee with the least favourable working conditions and employment conditions. The employer has no right to terminate the employment contract during parental leave.

When parental leave is granted for a specified period (the relevant employer's order is issued), “the employee cannot decide and stop it at any time because the employer has to reckon with the rights and interests of the employee who has been admitted to the position of the absent employee” (Āboliņa, 2015). In this situation, the employee must respect and take into consideration the order issued by the employer. Of course, if the employer and employee agree on the termination of leave, this can be done at any time.

As mention before, both the child's mother and the child's father are entitled to parental leave. “A paid paternity leave of 10 calendar days is granted to Latvian fathers”

(Eurostat, 2009: 87). Finally, in Latvia, the benefit paid for the whole period of paternity leave is equal to 80% of the insured's average earnings during the last 6 months. "Parental or childcare leave is granted for each parent for a period not exceeding 18 months (and can be used until the child reaches eight years)" (Rastrigina, 2015: 20). Parental benefit is paid only to one of the parents: a mother or a father. However, there are no provisions which would allow parents to share the paid leave equally.

Family policy guidelines in Latvia have been strongly aimed at strengthening the traditional family as a concept (the main emphasis is on promoting traditionally married couples with children as the best of family type for rearing children), thereby increasing the marriage rate and decreasing indices of divorce. A policy was also set for 2011-2017 with the goal of increasing fertility as well as improving support for families. "One of the serious problems with maternity and parental leaves is the violation of mothers' rights to return to exactly the same employment conditions after the leave" (Rastrigina, 2015: 21). The discrimination in this area is very difficult to prove. *The Ombudsperson* (2013) provides alarming survey-based statistics on the discrimination of mothers of newly born children returning from parental or maternity leave to their workplace. *European Commission* (EC, 2012) offers an in depth analysis of the existing Latvian legislation and its gaps related to discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy, maternity and parenthood.

3. ANALYSIS OF COMPANY CULTURE AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Organizational culture is the driving force of the employee satisfaction, employee growth and consequently company growth. Every organization has different organizational culture, impacting the behaviour of its employees in different manner. The effect of culture of the organization upon the performance of company's employees and their job satisfaction has been discussed in this work. Different parameters to access the employees' job satisfaction, work culture and gender equality. In this practical part the author will compare two Norwegian companies in Latvia: *Evry Latvia* and *DNB Service Centre Riga*.

EVERY ASA is a “Norwegian information technology company that supplies services relating to computing, including operation, outsourcing and online banking” (EVERY: 2017). The company is headquartered in Oslo. “It was established through a merger between *EDB Business Partner* and *ErgoGroup* in 2010 and has 10,000 employees at 135 offices in 16 countries” (EVERY: 2017). Every day more than five million people in the Nordic region use solutions delivered by *EVERY*. Through its strong local presence and in-depth technological and commercial insight, *EVERY* is a driving force for innovation and modernisation at its customers. *EVERY* reported turnover of NOK 12.2 billion in 2016 and has 8,500 employees across nine countries. ‘*EVERY* headquarters are located at *Fornebu* just outside Oslo, and the company is listed on Oslo stock exchange’ (EVERY, 2017).

As one of the leading IT companies in the Nordic region, *EVERY* has a strong local and regional presence. Evry employees have in-depth expertise and extensive experience, and we offer both local and global delivery models. We develop solutions that give our customers a digital advantage, modernise business processes, and make IT operating services more efficient. Through our insight, solutions and technology, we contribute to the development of the information society of the future, for the benefit of our customers and society as a whole. *EVERY* delivers business-critical solutions to companies and public sector organisations at the national and local government level. Over four million people in the Nordics use services delivered by *EVERY* each day. We are the force behind a whole range of innovations that have transformed and simplified the way people access services across society. Throughout the day and night, people are logging into internet banking, retrieving important work documents, or just checking the time of the next train home. The company provide industry-leading solutions to large and complex customers as well as to smaller businesses that need off-the shelf products. The company’s ability is to make use of their strong local knowledge while also drawing on international resources that puts them in a unique position.

“*EVERY* is divided into the following market segments: *EVERY* Financial Services, *EVERY Norway* and *EVERY Sweden*” (EVERY: 2017). *EVERY* Financial Services delivers services to the banking and finance sector internationally, while *EVERY Norway* and *EVERY Sweden* serve their respective markets. *EVERY* Operations and Global Delivery work across the three market segments to provide IT operating services and outsourcing services respectively, with *EVERY* offering offshoring to India, near shoring to Ukraine and first-line customer service from Latvia. “*EVERY* has some 8,200 employees across Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, India, Great Britain, Ukraine, Latvia and Bulgaria” (EVERY, 2017). Evry has many service centres located in European Union, which proved employment for foreign nations. In future, there is a big possibility that the company will expand and open more customer services.

DNB (Den Norske Bank) is Norway's largest financial services group and one of the largest in the Nordic region in terms of market capitalization. *DNB* Bank is the owner of total 18 branches worldwide. One of the branches *DNB Bank ASA Latvia* is located in Riga since the year 2012. The *DNB* provides a full range of financial services, including loans, savings, advisory services, insurance and pension products for retail and corporate customers. While providing in-store postal and banking outlets, Post office counters, Internet banking, mobile services (depending of the country of operations) and international offices the bank ensures satisfaction of customers and growth. *DNB* is one of the world’s leading shipping banks and has a strong position in the energy sector, and the fisheries and seafood industry. The bank is also a leading foreign exchange bank in the Nordics. At the end of 2017 the bank employed approximately 11000 employees in full time positions worldwide. The Bank is providing its customers with full range of services like loans, finance consulting, insurance and pension saving for both: private and corporate clients. However there are four main areas where *DNB* is specializing:

- Payments (both international and domestic)
- Deposits and loans
- Investing, pension and insurance services
- Online banking

DNB group is guided by common values and mission, which is crucial for achieving goals. The goal for the company is client satisfaction and their needs. Bank puts effort in order to be helpful, professional and innovative while performing good and growing financially. *DNB* regards corporate social responsibility as contributing towards sustainable development in its operations. The company shows that it is putting in efforts in order to voluntarily work in favour of society. The *DNB* group is integrating its policies in whole world in its everyday operations. Key areas, which *DNB* is highlighting:

- Eliminating economic crime, putting efforts in Anti-money laundering.
- Promoting financial understanding in the community and human rights
- 40 percent women in leading roles, which emphasizes the fight for gender equality.

While being an international leader in finance industry, it is important to raise social awareness and image to keep their positions in the market and grow. To be as an example for other companies, the *DNB* group since 2004 has taken part in the United Nations global agreement, in order to raise corporate social awareness. More than 10 thousand companies worldwide have taken part in the agreement, including worldwide known brands like “*Nike*”, “*H&M*” and many others (United Nations Global Compact, 2015). The agreement is based on 10 principles with are strengthening corporate social awareness, for example, to respect international human rights and improve working conditions. By joining international agreements companies can also get benefits, which can help companies in order to improve competitiveness by cooperating with other companies.

As the culture of the companies is constantly evolving, a different culture model may be more suitable for every business situation. The cultural models can also be shaped differently for different large corporate entities. The analysis and the results of this research can differ, as *DNB ASA* and *EVERY ASA* specialises in different sectors and their work structure is more adapted to the daily processed they have. The goal of this research is to understand and compare how both companies work and find out which is the most appropriate corporate culture model for employees, which will more effectively achieve the desired results and will take into account employees wellbeing and satisfaction.

3.1. The work environment and structure in Evry Latvia

As one of the largest IT companies in the Nordics, *EVERY* provides very extensive deliveries to Nordic companies, financial institutions, national public sector entities, municipalities and health authorities. Evry Latvia is the youngest member of the *EVERY* family, providing Scandinavian speaking:

- IT Help Desk Support for Scandinavian corporate customers,
- Finance & Accounting, Sales and HR services for *EVERY* group.

The company has an international mix of energetic people who enjoy their work and love to learn something new every day. In *Evry Latvia* there are about 120 employees. Evry Latvia was established in Latvia in December 2012 the same time as DNB Service Centre Riga. Both of these companies are located in Riga's Skanstes street.

From its foundation year in 2012, *Evry Latvia* in 6 years has expanded to a fully developed company in Latvia, providing more than 150 work positions and an employee friendly office environment. Even University of Latvia has cooperation with this IT Company, giving a chance for university graduates to make their career in one of the biggest Norwegian enterprises. The company is looking for new employees and highly appreciates receiving applications from Scandinavian speaking specialists (from beginners to natives). They are looking for students with high communication and leader skills, person who is motivated, shows initiative and has analytical thinking.

According to the interview results, people who work in Evry Latvia are very satisfied with their work, especially work environment. The company holds on to the Norwegian work culture aspects by trusting their employees to make decisions and come up with new ideas. Evry Latvia values the most the employees' well-being by providing health-care services, ventilated office space and clean desk policy which means that the manager sits with his employees and there exists no anarchy. The employees feel safe at their workplace and the managers think about activities that can improve co-workers relationships. In summer *Evry Latvia* organizes sport games and team building to make collaborations between new and experiences employees. Other events include summer festival, New Year's ball and celebration of Latvian National holidays.

Further in this research, the author will examine such work culture aspects in *Evry Latvia* as gender equality, work-life balance, employee satisfaction and wellbeing and general opinion about Norway's influence on working environment.

3.1.1. Gender equality in *Evry Latvia*

In Latvia gender equality in workplace is a very topical subject, as there are many fields in the industry that still do not employ female workers. Another aspect, which we unfortunately will not examine in the research (contains company internal rules) is equal pay for both genders. Does working in a Norwegian company make a difference in gender topic and what does the female and male employees think about gender equality in the workplace? These are the main questions the author of this research wants to find about.

In the interview with *Evry Latvia* employees, the gender equality question was asked: “Does your company prioritize gender equality in the workplace? (Also taking into account achieving high positions in the company)”

The male employee with 6 month experience in the company stated:

“I do not know if the gender equality is prioritized but I can say that in my opinion there is no issue with gender prioritizing in my workplace. That includes also high positions. Of course, there are not a lot of women in my specific industry (IT). This is because not a lot of women are interested in this field.”

From this we can conclude that in *Evry Latvia*, which is working with IT solutions; there are not many female employees, although the issue is influenced by other factors. Looking deeper in this specific topic, the problem is with the old traditional stereotypes, which include that women do not belong to professions that inquire psychical or complex work tasks. For example: female electricians, pilots, mechanics, surgeons, bus drivers and etc. Things really are changing and I can assure that IT field is one of them. In the article by *Riga TechGirls*, there is discussion about the recent commercial by LMT “LMT. *Business. Inovācijas.*” This ad features men as being “innovators” and “woman” who is listening to male innovator explaining the new strategy. The author of the article explained: “We can understand that LMT media communication strategy might not include gender balance. And sadly, the ad illustrates the current situation: in EU women represent only 17% of the IT workforce” (Riga TechGirls: 2018). When the statistic data is so low in the European Union, it is no wonder why in *Evry Latvia* there just a small group of female workers. On the bright side, Riga TechGirls have created organisation in Latvia to help change the drastic situation by encouraging and challenging females to break these stereotypes.

Turning back to the gender equality subject in *Evry Latvia*, a female worker was asked the same question. The answer was pretty short and convincing: “Yes, it is highly prioritized”. She has worked in *Evry Latvia* for 6 years, implying that comparing with the fellow male employee; she has observed the management and other employees’ behaviour at workplace. This means that the company values and prioritizes gender equality at workplace,

as well as it is no obstacle to achieve high positions. As the male employee stated, there are no problems for women to get promotions. Even further, the female respondent holds a high position in *Evry Latvia*, which shows that there are no obstacles for women only the lack of female employees in the company.

3.1.2. Working hours and work-life balance in *Evry Latvia*

The company offers shift-work and flexible time which means that employees are able to collect hours by coming earlier to work and choose to go home early. Working in Norwegian time and calendar, the employees must adapt to National Holidays in Norway and work in National Holidays in Latvia. In the interview one of the *Evry Latvia* employees responded: *“sometimes things are happening too slowly in Norway, which impacts the work in Latvia. Mostly I think it is Norway’s work culture and Latvians mostly are more impatient and want to get things done”*. This means that intercultural differences affect the work process and hours when serious decisions must be made.

For the following question: “Does working in a Norwegian company affect your work-life balance?” respondent answered *“I feel like it does affect my work-life balance. Working for a Norwegian company allows me to have more free time for my personal life, hobbies and traveling. The work hours are more flexible and it is possible to go to the doctor in the middle of a work day etc. I know that in a lot of Latvian companies it would not be possible.”* From this we can conclude that company offers employees time for personal development and manage other things in their life. This aspect is characteristic to Norwegian culture as they prioritize the employee’s well-being, health and family. I agree with the statement that many Latvian companies would not be so tolerant towards employee making medical appointments in the work day as well as choose annual leave or a free day of work because of personal reasons.

Another positive response to the same question was: *“Yes but I would say in a positive way. In a Scandinavian company there is a clear border between the two. Our spare time is respected and there is no pressure to work longer”* This proves that the organization respects people’s personal matters and does not expect that work will overtake your whole life. The managers have other interests and duties in the company and it is more important to achieve organisations goals than follow each and every employees step. This means that there is mutual trust and understanding between the leader and the employee. The same model is preferred in Norway work-life balance, the management understands that their employees have personal lives and work is not really everything in their life. They support their employees’ wishes and when it comes to additional holidays, with a serious reason they let

them sort things out without asking more questions. It also is the tendency in Norwegian culture to not talk about personal matters in workplace, in contrast with Latvians who maybe speak too much about their life. Latvians are more opened to conversations than Norwegians and can joke about anything. This creates a more relaxed atmosphere in the work environment. The work-life balance in the company also depends on the distribution of work duties. To reduce the stress level in today's intensive work culture, manager needs to think about work organization in departments. In many cases, overwork can lead to burn-up - the state of physical and mental exhaustion when the human capacity for work is exhausted. It is important that the employee feels satisfied with his work and it does not interfere with his health and personal life.

In the interview a very specific question was asked about the comparison of work cultures here in Latvia and Norway. "Compared to Latvian work environment, which one is better?" Of course, this question could be too general for the employee, but taking into account that the respondent has been in business trips in Norway and has both worked in *DNB Service Centre Riga* and *Evry Latvia*, the answer was more interesting than others.

The employee responded: *"I think that Norway has better work environment. The average worker is very protected when working in Norway, maybe that is the reason why they take things slow. In Latvia you need to prove yourself all the time and that results in rivalry inside your organization, which results in stress and so on."*

The respondent preferred the Norwegian work environment rather than Latvian. The reasons are many, as one of them is social security that is better provided in Norway. Also Norwegian labour law protects employee from suddenly being released. The manager needs to give the employee 3 months' notice before releasing him from work duties. This also gives time for employee to find a new job position in other company. The system works well in the state as it decreases the unemployment level. Young mothers also are protected by the labour law, it is unlawful for the company to dismiss employee because she is pregnant. Unless the employer can prove that the release is unrelated to the pregnancy. The respondent also mentioned that Norwegians tend to take things slow in business and the decisions are not rushed and productivity at workplace is not pressured. This subject also leads to the question of competition. In Latvia's work culture, competition for many people is the main driving force in the work environment. Some would argue that competition is the motivator in people's willingness to achieve the best at what they do. I believe Latvians are one of those nations who gives in the competition spirit, because they always are striving improve their performance. In companies it is a good thing to motivate employees and to never stop learning something new. But there are also risks, as having competition creates pressure and a

sense of fear. Further, it resolves in a need to hurt each other morally and psychically instead of promoting collaboration between co-workers. The best way is to have a “healthy” competition which should be organised as a chance to join forces with other employees in order to solve problems. *Evry Latvia* has a good company structure as it uses such implementation methods as “brainstorming” and “*Lean*”. In my own words *Lean* is a method that requires employees and managers to work together to think about ideas that could improve the company processes. By joining *Lean*, employee shows initiative and his motivation and commitment to work.

3.1.3. Workplace in *Evry Latvia*

Workplace is an important aspect of work environment and culture, because it can motive and influence employee’s willingness to attend work. In every company workplace should be designed as employee friendly, creating atmosphere where ideas and communication is free and not pressured. Workplace is the place where employees will generate ideas and discuss work related problems. Harmful and non-hazardous occupational risk factors (noise, dust, vibration, overload, uniform movements, stress, etc.) are present in any profession. However, not all employers and employees understand it and pay close attention to it. But the consequences of such an attitude can be critical: accidents and can cause work related illnesses. About a third of our lives we are at work, so the working environment conditions are very important for ensuring health and quality of life. Although the employer is responsible for assessing the risk factors of the work environment and for improving the working environment, the employee should also be vigilant and take care of his safety and health at work. In order to analyse working conditions in *Evry Latvia*, the respondents were asked the following questions: “Do you have a clean desk or free seating policy in your company and what is your opinion about it?” and “Are you satisfied with your working conditions?”

The answers to the first question were pretty similar:

- “*No, we don’t find it effective and efficient*”
- “*We do not have open desk policy, but we have a clean desk policy. I do not have an issue with free seating policy. So I am Ok with that.*”

Conclusion is pretty obvious, that *Evry Latvia* does not use free seating policy which means that they do not have open offices where employees sit with their managers. They sit in a closed office spaces, where communication is more difficult to manage between co-workers. This could be viewed as beneficial factor because the manager can do his work duties without any interruptions and can organize business meetings in his private office space. Furthermore,

manager can make business calls and not worry about confidentiality as the room is isolated from others. The same goes for employees because they feel freer in their work environment when the manager is not sitting next to them and observing every action. Closed office space in Evry Latvia could be one of the differences the company has not borrowed from their fellow Norwegian colleagues. On the other hand, positive aspect about *Evry Latvia* workplace structure is clean desk policy. A clean desk policy can be an import tool to ensure that all sensitive and confidential materials are removed from the employees work area and are hidden when the materials are not used or the worker leaves his place of employment. In many Norwegian and Latvian companies this policy is not optional but obligatory. Especially, when on the desk there are placed materials, which contain confidential information about the clients, employees or the company itself. Incorrect data storage could lead to a breach of company's internal laws and even worse – the dismissal of an employee. Another important aspect in clean desk policy is when person takes an annual leave or a sick leave, his place stays clean and it is easier to organize his workplace. Comparing to Norway, Latvians tend to be more organized in their workplace as they perceive everything seriously in their work.

To test employees' opinion related to working conditions, the author asked the following question: "Are you satisfied with your working conditions?" All 5 respondents answered that they are satisfied with their working conditions in *Evry Latvia*. Although, from these results we cannot make an assumption that all employees are pleased with their working conditions, there are some influence factors the author can take into consideration. For example, business meetings are more relaxed in the company based on the following questions:

- Do Norwegian business people address people in second names?

"I have not experienced that they do. It could be because Latvian names are harder to pronounce."

"No, they usually address us by the name."

"Frankly I haven't paid much attention to that. As far as I can recall me and my Norwegian colleagues have been addressing each other on the first name bases since we came into contact."

This means that when traveling to Latvia, Norwegians tend to keep the informal style in business communication. For Latvians at the beginning it may seem a little bit unprofessional to address people by their first names. As a nation, Latvians are used to formal speech and the same reflects in the business culture. They usually do not start the conversation and are very serious about work related matters. This also responds to the next question asked in the interview:

- Do you agree with the statement that “Norwegians tend to be more opened to conversations than Latvians”

“I agree to this statement. Most of the Latvians are introvert when it comes to job. Just do your tasks and go home.”

“Both yes and no. Norwegians are more opened to talk about their problems within work environment as they feel more equal to their superiors than most of Latvians do. However, Scandinavians sometimes have it hard to step out of their box.”

“No, I think both nationalities tend to be more introverted, yet Scandinavians are more likely to have a meaningless chit-chat regarding weather etc.”

“Yes, I agree with this statement. As I now have worked with Norwegians for a month I feel like they do not talk as much with each other during the workday, but they tend to ask about the way you spend your free time, how are you feeling, what are your plans for the weekend etc. Latvians are more private, we talk about these things with just our closest co-workers.”

The answers were similar among both companies *Evry Latvia* and *DNB SCR*, so the author of the research paper chose to combine the answers to get a better understanding about Norwegian communication style. The respondents believe that there are many factors which influence the communication between two nationalities. One of them is that both cultures people feel introvert at workplace and are not big chatters. Another aspect is equality at workplace that is a characteristic in Norwegian work culture. Managers see their employees as equals and the atmosphere is more relaxed in the workplace. Furthermore, Norwegians can be curious about your wellbeing at work, as they prioritize health and family matters. But what about specific requirements at workplace, from what author already knows, the common thing in both companies is language skills. To find out more about the requirements, the employees were asked:

- Are there any specific rules that are applied working in this kind of company?

“There aren’t really any rules. Actually, I cannot think of any rule. You get the basic understanding about Norwegian culture from learning the language and that is enough.”

*“You have to be good at languages and flexible to different kind of cultures. Working in *EVRY* means working with people of different races as well, so being tolerant is key.”*

“Yes, the language. Apart from that one must remember that they like to take their time with everything and that they are quite conservative and do not show friendly affections easily.”

One of the main requirements is the Norwegian language, because *Evry Latvia* client centre works with client consulting in Norway. Another requirement is a good level of English. In their work environment they are asked to communicate in Norwegian to keep the language proficiency level. As well as the person needs to have good communication skills because

Evry Latvia belongs to an international company that has clients all across the world. Moreover, employee must be ready to handle non-standard situations, because people have different natures and tolerance is one of the characteristics that can help to deal with these situations.

Last but not least is the question about traditions and respecting both Norwegian and Latvian cultures. The respondents were asked the following questions:

- Is there some kind of Latvian traditions/ work cultural aspects kept when working in a foreign company?

“Yes we usually get cakes from the company on Latvian holidays and there are some office activities.”

“As we are working on some Latvian holidays, we still celebrate all the holidays and red days. I cannot think of any more traditions related to work.”

The disadvantage working in a Norwegian company could be that there is necessary to follow the Norway's official holiday calendar (*see Table in Appendix#2*). Although employees have to work in some Latvian holidays, the company thinks of ways to celebrate with their employees. There are also many advantages because employees receive double pay for working in Latvian national holidays. Also Norwegians have many national holidays in May, related to proclamation of state laws. *Evry Latvia* complies with Norwegian holidays and workers have 3 extra free days in Latvia.

To make a full comparison with Latvian work culture, the respondents were asked: Is there any kind of characteristics that Norwegians are lacking in business culture?

“Being open-minded and flexible, ability to step out of their comfort zone.”

“I think that sometimes things are happening too slow in Norway which impacts the work in Latvia. Mostly I think it is Norway's work culture and Latvians mostly are more impatient and want to get things done.”

The answers match very well with the gather materials about work culture in Latvia and Norway. Norwegians may be a society who promotes gender equality, but in their work culture they lack the ability to be more open-minded and flexible. They do not manage their time to think more about work improvements, or want to step out of their comfort zone to experiment with new ideals. They like routine work and employees are used to leave work precisely when the work day ends. Norwegians can balance their work and private life, because they do not stress about work related issues at home. Latvians tend to bring their

work at home and creative when it comes to implementation of new ideas. Often Norwegians want Latvians to be flexible and stay overtime instead of them. The decision making in Norwegian culture is slow, there is no rush. On the other hand, Latvians want things to be done fast and with good results.

Last but not least was the question about improvements or changes in the *Evry Latvia* work culture.

- Do you believe something needs to be changed in business culture?

“People need to be more opened to trying new things. It is good for the business in general.”

“Not really. For now, everything is in order.”

The respondents had different views about this matter. One of them wants employees, possibly co-workers to be more opened in trying new things. This could be related to their fellow Norwegian colleagues. There are no changes, if both sides cannot come up with new ideas. In the work environment there does not exist the so called “brainstorming” which I mentioned before. For development of the company, employees need have good characteristics and communication skills. In a 2013 report “Business Culture and Values in The Baltic States” companies in Latvia most often mentioned that their employees had characteristics such as “being hardworking, diligent, enterprising, competitive, hardy, tough, stubborn, patient, and survivors” (Kāle, 2013: 14). This means that Latvians should leave their stubbornness and try new things. Of course, Norwegians also should change their attitude towards the acceptance of upgrades.

In overall *Evry Latvia* employees are satisfied with their working conditions, there is no gender inequality and company are trying to find ways how to attract more female employees in this IT field. The company structure and work environment is well developed, people feel safe and secure in their workplace. Although the company needs to follow Norwegian timeline and their national holidays, people find it easy to balance their work and private life. Speaking about the comparison of Latvian and Norwegian work culture, the respondents of the interview considers Norway to have a better work environment as it give more social and health warranties. In communication aspect, Norwegians use informal speech while Latvians are used to addressing people in second names. Both nationalities are characterized by being introvert, but in some cases the younger generation employees question this statement as they are more open to conversations and feels equal to speak with their managers in informal manner. Slowly the work culture is changing, implying that in future the results could be a better for both country company employees.

3.2. The work environment and structure in DNB Service Centre Riga

‘The DNB parent bank – the largest financial institution in Norway in 2012 established a new operations unit in Latvia with the aim of providing a high level of service to the bank’s clients in Norway’ (Luminor: 2012). DNB Service Centre Riga concentrates on Lean and automatization of the processes. Team in Riga has grown to more than 260 employees during these five years. ‘The establishment of the centre was the result of a project launched by the parent bank at the beginning of 2012’ (Luminor: 2012). In evaluating of location for the project, the bank looked at various factors such as practical banking operations, the relevant country’s macroeconomic situation, political stability, language skills, security aspects and accessibility. Following the review, Latvia was selected as the location for the new service centre. Local and foreign specialists took part in the evaluation. The Latvian Investment and Development Agency (LIAA) provided some of the specialists.

“Foreign companies, particularly from Scandinavia, have focused more and more on Latvia as a place to establish service centres,” says *LIAA* director Andris Ozols. “This is the second time that cooperation between the state and the private sector has resulted in such an establishment. With the support of the *LIAA*, Statoil Fuel & Retail from Norway officially opened a service centre in Latvia some months ago. I am particularly delighted by the highly qualified job opportunities this offers. People in Latvia provide professional services within finance, IT, personnel management, etc. I am sure that we will also justify *DNB*’s decision to choose Latvia.”

Ellen Annette Nordli, the previous head of the new Service Centre Riga, explained: “I have been working for the project from the beginning, and I am pleased that the Latvian bank was judged to be the best alternative. The establishment of an operations unit in Latvia which will provide services to clients in Norway will strengthen our image as a powerful Norwegian company, and it will also represent an investment in Latvia’s economy,” she says. ‘The new unit will operate at the *DNB Bank* headquarters at Skanstes Street 12 in Riga. *DNB* will have 850 employees in Latvia, including the new unit’ (Luminor, 2012).

From 2018 Intars Sloka has been chosen to be the new head for *DNB Service Centre Riga*. “*We are a young organization who likes to learn and work. Our company employs 300 years of young employees who manage and use at least four languages every day. The Scandinavian business tradition is part of our everyday life, as we maintain a Scandinavian style of work and actively collaborate with colleagues in Norway and other countries. Working in our company is a good starting point for the future career in Scandinavian companies,*” Intars Sloka (Luminor, 2018).

When evaluating the location for the project, DNB Bank considered various factors such as practical banking operations, the relevant country's macroeconomic situation, political stability, language skills, security aspects, and accessibility, location. As the conclusion of this review, Latvia was selected as the location for the new Service Centre.

The Service Centre started out with 52 employees in 2012. By the end of 2017, there were approximately 300 hundred employees within different areas: payments, credits, accounts and special loans, and the unit is continuously growing. Almost all employees have minimum B2 level Norwegian skills, which makes it is easy to communicate with Norwegians and provide the required level of service. The Norwegian language courses are provided by the company and are not decisive in order to be employed.

The Service Centre has an innovative working environment that focuses not only on daily tasks, but also on continuous improvement, promoting an assertive culture, and helping others make processes more efficient. The LEAN, which is implemented, helps the employees focus on customer needs by asking themselves: if I were a customer here, what would I like to improve? Answering this question, DNB Service Centre insures continuous improvement in all areas. The author of this report, as all employees in the DNB has experienced the LEAN training which is provided by the company.

There are total 14 departments in the DNB Bank ASA, however the company is continually growing its operations in Latvia, therefore there are new departments added. The author of this report had the chance to gain experience in the payments department, which consists from 4 different departments – payments 1, 2, 3 and international units.

Recently DNB Service Centre Riga celebrated its 5th anniversary and what started from a group of 52 people now has expanded to a bigger client oriented service centre with 300 employees. At the beginning, the tasks, that were overtaken from Norway in 2012, was not as complicated, as they are now. Each year there are organized special meetings in order to distribute tasks for each section and department. Some of those projects demand experienced and qualified employees which need to be deducted from production and learn new tasks by going to business trips in Norway. The business trip can last from a month even up to a year. Those are just a few of the tasks Latvians are willing to do in order to gain competence in specific field.

Before all the training and knowing more about bank processes starts, the employees have to fulfil the mandatory requirement in the DNB Service Centre Riga which is Norwegian. Each employee has to pass all the Norwegian language exams and achieve B2 (upper intermediate) level in grammar and vocabulary. The service centre provides language courses that prepare employees for exams. The priority at the beginning of employment is

Norwegian and each division's leader knows how to balance workers language study time with work duties. At first those are 6 hours of language learning and 2 in work environment, after passing A2 level divided in equal parts 4 hours for courses and 4 hours for work duties. After passing B2 level and having a small "graduation party" as we like to call it, employee is full time working in his division.

Nevertheless, the leader values employee's initiatives and ideas, showing outstanding performance in workplace. Regardless of gender or social status each employee has a right to qualify for a promotion. Everything is happening in the order of competition, were the leader evaluates each employee's abilities and motivation to achieve higher results and make changes in the task processing. Although not everyone is suitable for specific positions, there are other activities where employee can take part in. For example, implementation team that monitors and answers for employees ideas in our special Facebook page as well call it "Workplace" where everyone shares their ideas and progress in new developments. There is also a festival and sports committee that is responsible for all celebrations and events to entertain employees and help them relax from daily work-routine. Separately, there are organized team buildings in each division to improve social relations and define roles between co-workers.

For DNB it is very important to provide simple, fast communication between its employees, especially if they are working in different countries. There are numerous ways, how DNB has improved its environment in order to stay connected. Employees can communicate through email, fast specially designed chat for DNB or Face book for work. Through this chat, also conference calls are being held, which is also important aspect for communication within the company.

At the beginning of work, all employees receive computer, which is later on used for working purposes. All the employees get access to systems in order to fulfill their working tasks. Working from home is not possible because there are too high risks in the banking industry, since it is not possible for the bank to provide full security for data in the homes of their employees. Nowadays, the security of banks clients date is one of the most important aspect in the finance industry.

DNB Service Centre Riga is a growing company by increasing the amount of services offered. Therefore, they are constantly looking for new employees. They are needed half a year before starting work, as new employees must first complete their training and pass the final exams. The turnover of employees in the company is relatively low, but given the fact that the average age of employees is 27, many colleagues are encouragingly attending both childcare and study leave.

3.2.1. Business Communication in the Company

The DNB as well as the financial services industry is in a period of rapid change when innovation, technology, competitiveness and customer insight are becoming increasingly important. For a Financial institution such as DNB a lot of what it does depends on the trust and communication between various stakeholders – clients, employees, shareholders, institutions as well as industry as a whole. The business communication in the DNB is based on internal communication systems, which are using the latest high tech solutions in order to perform at the highest level.

Employees must meet new requirements, and this affects, not least, how DNB puts together the Group's collective expertise. In order to meet the needs of tomorrow, DNB has to both attract new competencies and develop what the Group already has. Tomorrow's employees will also have different requirements which their employers will have to meet. These factors must be taken into account when organising various tasks and to ensure that the Group will continue to be an attractive employer. To achieve its business goals and succeed with the vision “the art of serving the customer”, DNB is dependent on having motivated employees. HR has the main responsibility for this.

The direction of the DNB organisation's cultural and competence development is determined by the group strategy and is also affected by the increasing pace of digitalization. The group policy for people and organisation is guiding for the work to promote adaptability and change capacity. The policy is elaborated on in the guidelines for attracting and appointing new employees and the guidelines for leadership and competence development. The group policy for people and organisation states that competence development is based on the Group's strategic and business targets and should enable the individual employee to capitalise on his or her talents. Managers must ensure that employees have clearly defined goals for their work and that each individual sees the connection between his or her work and the Group's value creation. DNB facilitates professional and personal development so that employees are stimulated and given the opportunity to develop their competencies. DNB's variable remuneration scheme is in compliance with the Group's guidelines and supports its strategy, financial targets and values. The total remuneration should be competitive and cost-effective and not expose the Group to unwanted risk.

3.2.2. Working hours and work-life balance in DNB Service Centre Riga

DNB Service Centre Riga sticks to Latvian working hours, although many tasks in bank operate according to Norwegian time (minus 1 hour from Latvian time) because all systems are synchronized with their time. We have a full 8 hour work time all year (Latvian Labour Act) but Norwegians in relation to Labour Act they have reduced working hours in summer time. This year from 15th May they shifted to summer time which means they have a 6 hour work day. I believe it's one of the best benefits working in Norway, as it allows employees to have more leisure time for other activities in summer. Also it is easier to balance work and personal life, by planning trips and feeling more relaxed next day coming back to work. One of the things I really wished we implemented here in Latvia.

Another great aspect about working hours here and in Norway is flexible and reduced working hours, which mean that each employee is entitled to collect extra hours in their work schedule to exchange them for 3 work holidays in a year. Also according to work contract all are have the right to have one annual holiday. The enterprise policy is very open and supportive to students who decide to work and study at the same time. The leaders of division also can give extra free days to finish school work. Company thinks of its people and also allow them to apply for free course that can help develop employee's individual skills. Some of these courses can be attended in working hours and are completely paid off.

In the interview the respondents were asked about their work-life balance: Does working in a Norwegian company affect your work-life balance? Answers were very different:

“Not really.”

“Yes. Since DNB Service centre Riga has regular work day on Latvian national holidays. What I also like is that there is no necessity to work from home, but that is more due to work specific, not so much as business culture.”

“Yes, in positive way, more flexibility.”

“Not really.”

In overall, the answers were positive, because it easy to balance work and private life, when the employee can leave the work duties at work and feel relaxed at home. The *DNB Service Centre Riga* offers their employees to be more flexible and manage their free time. The thing I like the most in our company is that we respect Norwegian culture and traditions. For example every celebration in Norway is a celebration in our DNB Service Centre. Of course we work in accordance with Norwegian calendar, which is easier to keep track with their celebrations (see table in Appendix #2). As well as in Norway we have a work holiday here in DNB Service Centre Riga. I would not deny that working in Norwegian company does

not come without some great benefits. Speaking about national holidays, there can be also minus points, because all Latvian holidays except Ester, Christmas and New Year is an average work day in the company. This aspect also sums up with Latvian traditions related question to DNB SCR employees: “Is there some kind of Latvian traditions/ work cultural aspects kept when working in a foreign company?” The answers were as follows:

“Yes, although we are a Norwegian company, we still celebrate Latvian traditions at work. We quite often have to work when there is a free day in Latvia, but our HR and company in general always arrange some kind of party at work.”

“Yes, of course. We celebrate both Norwegian and Latvian holidays.”

“There is no limitation to practise Latvian traditions in our company, only exception is fact that Latvian holidays are working days in Norway.”

“Due to local corporate culture chaos, hard to answer.”

As a consolidated organization *DNB Service Centre Riga* think of ways how to be festive in Latvian holidays. A special festival committee always organises events to honour Latvian national holidays with great food and activities. In my opinion, the work environment is more positive and friendlier as employees in these kind of events can develop better relations and relax for a while from work duties. Furthermore, it shows that company cares about their employees and can create a better work environment.

Another question asked was related to work cultural differences. The respondents were asked two questions:

- Is there any kind of characteristics that Norwegians are lacking in business culture?

“I think this is a very subjective question, as it depends on your personal preferences. I think that Norwegian business culture is great as they are very professional, but never arrogant and mean. They talk about business, but they are never condescending and they take into account that not everyone knows everything they do. It is refreshing to be able to ask sometimes silly questions, because Norwegians will never lough at you for not knowing things.”

“I don't think so.”

“Comparing to Latvians I would say that we are more proactive and more willing to learn new things.”

“Discipline. They tend to complicate things and involve more people/steps in situations when solution should be simple.”

Collecting answers, the majority believes that Norwegians are lacking willingness to develop new things and are more proactive. They are understanding and accept differences.

In today's dynamic environment, young people are ready to accept growing career challenges in order to gain sufficient work experience and be able to find the work of their souls. Working in an international company, it is possible to establish new contacts, go on business trips and get acquainted with the culture of other countries. *DNB Service Centre Riga* has definitely added value – Norwegian language and culture. It is an opportunity to perfect oneself as a personality and get a good direction in the future career.

- Do you believe something needs to be changed in business culture?

“At this point, no. Maybe when I will have worked for this company a lot longer there will be things that I will want to change, but for now I feel like our work environment and culture is well thought out and always being improved taking into account the opinions of employees.”

“No.”

“Yes, I think that SCR should have more independence from concern to ensure better service quality and ownership for improvements we make.”

“If here, than SCR should finally develop its own corporate culture, cause at this point there seems to no culture at all.”

If comparing a job with a local company with a job in a Norwegian company, it is hard to miss a series of differences. 300 employees of the *DNB Service Centre Riga* work daily in a well-developed Scandinavian work culture environment and, in addition to the coursework, acquire various additional knowledge, including Norwegian language, as well as travel to Norway. Career opportunities are similar to any other bank, which means that the company hierarchy provides 2 to 3 career advancement steps and the company actively supports the professional and personal growth of employees by acquiring various new knowledge and acquiring skills in various courses and training. *DNB Service Centre Riga* has three levels of management without a specialist level – department heads, service managers and branch manager – as well as a number of experts who provide opportunities for professional growth both for managers and experts in their field.

Another question asked: Are there any specific rules that are applied working in this kind of company?

“You have to know Norwegian language and you have to use it every day in your job.”

“Frihet under ansvar” – Freedom under responsibility

Working at *DNB Service Centre Riga* requires serious preparation. Young employees must complete half-yearly training before starting work. During this time, the employee learns

to work with computer banking systems, as well as learn Norwegian, reaching B2 level under the supervision of certified trainers. Taking into account that daily work is related to the processing of transactions by the Norwegian bank customers, the significance of the Norwegian language is extremely high. Norwegian and English are used for daily communication.

In the interview, where DNB Service Centre employees were asked: “Do you have an open desk policy in your company and what is your opinion about it?” The majority answered that in their divisions they have clean desk policy.

“Yes, we have an open desk policy. When working in Latvia we tend to stick to the same desk we always work at, but in Norway you can choose a new placement every day. Every day after finishing work we take our personal belongings and place them in a box, so the next morning we can take our things and choose a desk to work at.”

“Yes, we have open desk policy but it does not really work. I do not like it so much because there are small things that are necessary every day to do my job and it is difficult to take with you all these things and put them in right place every day. It takes time.”

“Yes, we do. However, I dislike not being able to personalize my environment. In addition, what we call free seating policy works only at team level as you still need to be seated near your colleagues to work productively.”

“Yes, it is possible to practise this kind of policy, but not every department and their needs are applicable for this policy.”

Overall, the clean desk and free seating policy is known in each division, but it is their free choice to accept this kind of structure. Nobody is pressuring them to change seats and gather their things after each work day. Some places this really works and people do not attach themselves to things and are more flexible to move to other floors or buildings. This comes in handy when workers go to business trips or annual leaves. Colleagues can easily use this free seating for a new co-worker or intern that usually comes in summer period. There also respondents who are against free seating and clean desk policy because the employee feels more comfortable to do their job when personal things are displayed at his table. Also it is the time consuming to organize every day your workplace.

3.2.3. Workplace in *DNB Service Centre Riga*

In order to get the best out from its employees, there are measures accepted by the DNB to improve the working environment with aim to prevent and reduce health-related problems arising from the work situation. DNB tends to create positive working environment which is based on trust and loyalty in all departments, moreover safety measures aim to prevent and reduce the harmful effects of occupational injuries. Health, safety and environment (HS&E) are therefore important elements in the group policy for people and organization. DNB is committed to preventive working environment measures that promote employees' safety, health, well-being and job satisfaction.

The governing document is the group policy for people and organization. The policy is elaborated on in the group guidelines for health, environment and safety. Cooperation between management and employees should ensure that efforts to improve the working environment are future-oriented and an integral part of daily operations. All DNB managers must be updated on HS&E issues and new managers must complete HS&E training which complies with the Norwegian Working Environment Act and DNB's internal HS&E requirements. Safety representatives receive HS&E training in accordance with the guidelines for the financial industry. A total of five managers and 35 safety representatives completed HS&E training in 2016. The training is mainly made for the Group's Norwegian operations, however there are actions done also in Latvia. In addition, managers are trained in how to handle sickness absence. First aid expertise is continually assured among the employees through courses and films. DNB places importance on having an inclusive working environment. DNB's targets specified in the inclusive workplace agreement are: sickness absence reductions, special adaptation for employees with reduced capacity for work and an increase in the average retirement age.

In DNB's operations in Norway, the physical and ergonomic working environment is surveyed annually, together with knowledge related to the Group's environmental goals and physical security.

Through the *HS&E survey*, the employees have the possibility to influence their own working environment so that measures can be implemented. To counteract the consequences of sedentary work, there is good access to adjustable height desks and the possibility for ergonomic advice via the company health service. In Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim, facilitating physical activity by having DNB training and exercise classes is an important preventive measure. Special adaptations are made for employees with reduced capacity for work. The number of disabled parking spaces has been adapted to the actual requirements in

each building. The DNB has guidelines on harassment, bullying and other improper conduct. The guidelines shall ensure that a reported event is assessed swiftly, predictably and consistently. The risk of robbery has been practically eliminated due to the transition to cashless branch offices. Consequently, courses on how to deal with robberies are no longer held in the Norwegian part of the organization.

In the interview I included question: Compared to Latvian work environment, which one is better? Employees from both companies had a mutual opinion that Norwegian environment is better.

“Norwegian work environment is a lot better in my opinion. I feel like Latvians put too much pressure and stress into doing things, but the results are still the same as when you take things easy.”

“I think that Norway has better work environment. The average worker is very protected when working in Norway, maybe that is the reason why they take things slow. In Latvia you need to prove yourself all the time and that results in rivalry inside your organization, which results in stress and so on.”

“Latvian work environment is in early development stage after years being part of USSR and closed economical model. We are used to hard working paradigm not thinking about efficiency. But lately this has been actualized. At the same time Norwegians has already long traditions of wellbeing and equality in market. That is why comparing is not objectively in this case.”

“At the moment I would say that Norwegian working environment is more preferable for me. I fell that company really cares of their employees and offers many benefits to make an employee feel good at his/her work environment so that one could work efficiently and creatively using their potential as much as possible in the position.”

“Definitely Norwegian”

Almost all respondents agreed that working in a Norwegian company and accepting their work culture is a lot better than Latvian work culture. There are different factors that influence their opinions, for example, one of them is that employees feel more secure at their job and there are better gender equality policies in the company. Also the company does not promote unhealthy competition between employees and they do not feel pressured to always do their best. The management structure and equality allows employees to speak more freely with their managers. There is also the question of self-development and improvement of work efficiency because employees see themselves as a part of organisation not as individuals.

3.3. Differences between the Norwegian and Latvian work environment

From analysing the theoretical materials and the interviews with in Norwegian company working employees, there can be found differences in Norwegian and Latvian work environment. Differences are connected not only with mentality and communication, but also with business tactics and values. National differences and business traditions are taken into account in terms of communication.

- Not only in terms of how are the duties of managers and employees perceived, but also concerning social protection.
- The majority of Norwegians rely on public institutions knowing that they will assume responsibility for people's interests and security.
- In Latvia, confidence in the social protection that might be expected from the state is minimal.

What will happen, should the employee lose his or her job? The feeling of existential insecurity... "I better raise no objections and do as much as I can: to have a job is the main thing that matters." In Latvia workers do not voice their opinion, do not advance initiatives, do not tell about their failures, do not object, waited for orders and are humble –out of fear of losing their jobs rather than trusting the promises of workplace democracy... These are just a few of differences in Norwegian and Latvian work culture. The employees are more scared to speak their mind, in contrast with Norway were managers and employees are viewed as equals.

In Latvian work environment:

- It is difficult for Norwegian managers to get a deeper insight into the Service Centre's socio-cultural environment;
- To appreciate that Latvians are hardworking, flexible, they do not object to working in several shifts and in Latvian National holidays;
- The Service Centre has flexible working hours: the main thing is to get the work done.

Workplace democracy

One of the best ideas taken by Norwegian work culture in my opinion is free seating and clean desk policy, in the conducted interviews almost all employees agreed with the statement that it is a great way to promote democracy and avoid anarchy in the office. Only *DNB Service Centre Riga* has a free seating policy, which means that each day employee chooses a new placement in the office. The process is that every day after finishing work employee's personal belongings are placed in a box, so the next morning the desk is clean for

another employee. This is also very convenient when someone is taking a vacation or a business trip and there is a free vacant seat in the division. Both *Evry Latvia* and *DNB SCR* have a clean desk policy, which indicated that the companies comply with internal rules and their data is well protected. This also shows that employees are organized and can work from other locations. *DNB SCR* also has a good working environment, because the office is adjusted for everyone. The tables in the office are electronic and employees can lift tables and work in a standing position. The company has modern office space with plants and employees have access to fresh fruit and water. Each week there comes a physiotherapist that motivates employees to do exercising at workplace to reduce the ability of work caused sicknesses. *Evry Latvia* employees are satisfied with their working conditions and believe that they do not need free seating policy. This can be explained by the fact that the company structure is different and employees need to be in a specific place all the time.

3.4. The future of work culture and environment

Comparing both work cultures and summarizing the results, there a question arises what the future workplace will look like. Some of the employees have already expressed their views about the business culture in Latvia. The respondent implies that Latvian work culture has not yet developed, and it will be determined by next generations. The lack of knowledge and experience in business is a legacy of the Soviet regime for the older generation. In contrast, new generations are taking on practices from foreign countries. In Latvia there is a mix of various business cultures – German, Swedish, Norwegian and Russian.

The emergence of more and more advanced technological solutions has not only changed the way companies organize their daily lives but also facilitated and transformed their professional work processes and work environment. With the advent of new technologies, there is also fear that technology could take over the responsibilities that people fulfil. But it has been demonstrated so far that they have largely only made employees more humane. Companies decide to look at the changes introduced by technology and how technology define modern working environment.

Due to the easy availability of information, the modern employee has incomparably easier access to education and can keep up with the industry's latest news and interesting details. In addition, ever new, simplified and inexpensive technological additions provide a quick and intuitive learning of new skills. The working environment no longer relates to a lone computer screen and a stationary phone in the corner of the table. The modern employee has conglomerates of technological devices and solutions, for which the previous generations alone were able to dream.

3.5. Company management in future

The newest technologies provide not only smooth, enjoyable and faster work execution, but also management and planning of work. Work administration programs provide an easy way to review and analyse the work done and optimize overall processes, in particular financial management. In addition, the range of programs for managing various levels continues to grow, offering also detailed management systems for enterprise-specific business niches.

Occasional (and not only) life-related contact is increasingly unavailable on-site. An "eye to eye" meeting in today's professional environment seems to be taking place only in particularly necessary cases. Nowadays in professional communication e-mails, conferences or individual video-calls, or remote collaborative work are mostly used. Digital collaborative tools allow the team to work remotely without having to meet in the presence of each participant to individually edit the document as needed. This, in turn, has resulted in unusual forms of cooperation and teamwork across the world. Some of these methods applied in *DNB Service Centre Riga* and *Evry Latvia*, as the business communication usually happens in conference and individual video-calls. This spares not only the time for travel but other expenses for the companies. Moreover, *DNB Service Centre Riga* follows the 21st century concept of office. There were three basic conditions for creating a smart office: creating a flexible environment in one specific location (by floors), providing sufficient space for individual work, and promoting communication, collaboration and creativity among employees. Now a large part of the staff has a free seating policy, employees do not have their own one specific workplace, and at the time when the employee is at a meeting, lunch or outside the office, the workplace is used appropriately by another colleague. The change of everyday workplace helps to concentrate on a specific task and also reduces the risk of disability inherent to office workers. In both companies the implementation of clean desk policy has improved the work and client security, as well as it eases the process of moving to another workplace.

Social networks and online communication have also brought about changes in the culture of the company's internal relations. Interesting and often unnoticed changes brought about by modern technologies are the presence of companies, not just their products in our everyday lives. Thanks to social networks, companies are given the opportunity to humanize themselves, or to overcome a humanity gap. Companies are able to show their personality to a very wide audience and they are no longer just abstract names and forms of production.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

Conclusions:

1. It is important for the company to recognize its employees as they are the most valuable resource in their development
2. Working in a Norwegian company is definitely challenging, taking into account, that it requires specifically skills, for example learning a new language and accepting their work culture.
3. Norwegians as employers are very concerned about their employee's well-being and satisfaction of work. The theoretical part confirmed that Norwegians value and prioritize family, education, health and gender equality in everything they do, this also reflects to working conditions.
4. The work culture is closely linked with the impact of those who hold the capital, as a result, business practices in Latvia has a visible Norwegian influence in the management structure, work environment and decision making.
5. *Randstand Workmonitor Global Report* March 2018 results show that Norwegians feel very satisfied with their work and only 6% want to make changes in their daily work life.
6. Compared to Latvian data, the Nordic country has a better legislation regarding parental leave and statistics show that more fathers in Norway choose to use this in advantage.
7. One of the cultural barriers is power distance which in Latvia is much more distinct in contrast with Norway.
8. Differences can be observed in such simple things as office structure (closed office for leaders), decision making, eating and greeting habits among the employees and employers.
9. Compared to Norwegian work culture, there still exists "hierarchy" in Latvian work culture, because employees do not have a say in the company operation.
10. According to interviews, Latvians believe Norwegians work more chaotic and needs discipline, while Latvians have a better sense of order.
11. Employees in *DNB Bank* and *Evry A/S* both agree that Norway has a better work environment; although one person prefers a mixed work culture.
12. *DNB Bank* and *Evry A/S* both are intercultural companies' that employs people from different nationalities, cultures and/or racial backgrounds.

13. The interview results show that both company employees have no problems to balance their work with private life. The Norwegian companies offer flexible working hours and the management prioritizes the health and wellbeing of the employee.
14. According to respondents, the service centres equally respect Norwegian and Latvian National Holidays, by organizing special events in the companies.
15. *DNB Bank* and *Evry A/S* have no specific gender related issues at the work-place and there was no problem in taking instructions from women managers. Employees regardless of their background had the same opportunities for promotion if they have the relevant competence.
16. The difference between *Evry Latvia* and *DNB Service Centre Riga* is the free seating and clean desk policy. *DNB SCR* has implemented this in several departments, but not all employees follow the system.
17. The interviewees at both companies demonstrated general awareness about non-discrimination, equality and accessibility standards.
18. Women and men have equal rights to achieve higher positions in the company, although there are some changes in ratios and some positions favour men. For example IT department (observed in *Evry Latvia*) but in *DNB SCR* board there are more women than men.

Proposals:

1. The *DNB Bank ASA* should continue to create an environment where it supports its employees to learn and develop individually to eliminate the chance that they would start looking for a job in other place.
2. To promote gender equality in *Evry Latvia*, the company should provide IT courses to women who want to master more difficult tasks
3. In Latvia great way to improve the well-being and health of employees, is to install electronic tables, so the employee can work in a standing position.
4. Latvian companies should think more about their employee wellbeing and working conditions as it is the main factor that influences their willingness to work productively.
5. Latvian intercultural companies should organize special presentations to the employees on how to avoid cultural barriers in communication and work with foreign colleagues.
6. Latvian companies should create a better policy in work-life balance structure, allow employees to organize their time and personal matters.
7. To improve management system and gender equality in Latvia, the companies should allow employees to be more involved in the decision making. Moreover, decisions concerning employees wellbeing and working conditions.
8. Implement the Norwegian workplace structure in Latvian companies by using free seating and clean desk policy. This method can improve relations between the employee and employer as they would be treated as equals.
9. Latvia should avoid unhealthy competition in the Latvian work culture, as it causes stress and unnecessary distance between coworkers, use *Lean* and brainstorming as systematic method that is widely used applied in the Norwegian work culture.
10. The last but not least the Latvian enterprises should think more about their employees' welfare and security, how to improve work environment to stimulate work satisfaction and decrease unemployment level in Latvia.

LIST OF REFERENCES AND SOURCES

Aasnass, S. (2007). 'Quality in work and employment — Norway', *EurWORK*, [Online], Available: shorturl.at/ilH37 [3 May 2018].

Abramoviča, L. and L. Ābola (2002), *Women in Entrepreneurship and High-level Management in Latvia: Obstacles and Solutions*, Bachelor Thesis at Stockholm School of Economics, Rīga, [Online], Available: <http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=4883> [26 March 2018].

Afanassieva, M. (2005). 'Gender, work, and equal opportunities in central and eastern Europe', *Women in Management Review*, Vol. 20, Issue 6, pp. 397-411.

Āboliņa, L. (2015). *Family Policies: Latvia (2015)*, [Online], Available: <https://www.perfar.eu/policy/family-children/latvia> [14 May 2018].

Baek, C. and B. Hormann (2017), 'Policy learning in Norwegian school reform: a social network analysis of the 2020 incremental reform', *Journal Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, vol. 4, issue 1, pp. 24-37.

Baldershem, H. and K. Ståhlberg (1999), *Nordic Region-Building in European*. Political Science.

Barānovs, O., Gergelevičs E., Skribāne I. (2016). *Economic Development of Latvia*. [Online] Riga: Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Latvia, pp. 132-138. Available: https://www.em.gov.lv/files/tautsaimniecibas_attistiba/zin/2016_jun_eng.pdf [13 May 2018].

Bergstrøm, R. and V. Heimly (2004), 'Information technology strategies for health and social care in Norway', *International Journal of Circumpolar Health* 63:4, pp. 337-338.

Billington, R., Strawbridge S., Greensides L. (1991). *Culture and Society: Sociology of Culture*, Wallingford: Palgrave, pp. 231.

Brinded, L. (2017). *The 21 countries with the best quality of life in the world for expats*, [Online], Available: shorturl.at/fhzJO [13 May 2018].

Bondeson, U. (2008). *Nordic Moral Climates: Value Continuities and Discontinuities in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden 1st Edition*. Routledge

Børve, H.E. and E. Kvande (2012), 'The Nordic Model in a Global Company Situated in Norway: Challenging Institutional Orders?', *Nordic journal of working life studies*, vol. 2, no. 4, pp. 117-134.

Buholcs, J. (2014). 'Norvēģija. Biznesa etiķete. Skaitļi un Faktori. Nozīmīgākās izstādes 2014.gadā', *Kapitāls*, Februāris, pp. 35-38.

Cimdina, A. (2012). *Norwegian Business Culture in the Latvian Context*, Conference, [Online], Available: shorturl.at/duNR1 [15 March 2018].

Centrālās Statistikas Birojs (CSB) (2017). 'DSG04. Vīriešu un sieviešu darba samaksa pa darbības veidiem 1. ceturksnī, euro', [Electronic], Available: http://data.csb.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/Sociala/Sociala__ikgad__dsamaksa/DS0040_euro.px/?rxid=c-dcb978c-22b0-416a-aacc-aa650d3e2ce0 [26 May 2018].

Commisceo Global Consultancy (CGC) (2017). *Latvia Guide, A Look at Latvian Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette*, [Online], Available: <https://www.commisceo-global.com/country-guides/latvia-guide> [10 Feb 2018].

Commisceo Global Consultancy (CGC) (2017). *Norway Guide, A Look at Norwegian Culture and Etiquette*, [Online], Available: <https://www.commisceo-global.com/country-guides/norway-guide> [10 Feb 2018].

DNB (2017). *Corporate social responsibility*, [Online], Available: <https://www.dnb.no/en/about-us/corporate-social-responsibility.html> [17 March 2018].

DNB (2017). *Bak Tallene*, [Online], Available: <https://community.dnb.no/t5/Bak-tallene/bg-p/fakta> [20 March 2018].

Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) (2015). *Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning Opportunities*, [Online], Available: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/179EN.pdf [20 April 2018].

Eiropas Komisija (2017). *Stratēģiskā iesaistīšanās dzimumu līdztiesības veicināšanā 2016.–2019. gadā*, *Luksemburga: Eiropas Savienības Publikāciju birojs*, pp. 5-11.

ERC (2013). *Workplace Culture: What It Is, Why It Matters, & How to Define It*, [Online], Available: <https://www.yourerc.com/blog/post/Workplace-Culture-What-it-Is-Why-it-Matters-How-to-Define-It.aspx> [10 May 2018].

Ellingsæter, A. (2005). *Reconciliation of Work and Private Life in Norway – the Norwegian national report*, European Commission's Expert Group on Gender, Social Inclusion and Employment report for the Equal Opportunities Unit, DG Employment.

Engasjert Byrå (2018). *Engasjert Byrå*, [Online], Available: <https://engasjertbyra.no/> [17 May 2018].

European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2015). *Reconciliation of work, family, and private life in the European Union Policy Review*, [Online], Available: <http://eige.europa.eu/rdc/eige-publications/reconciliation-work-family-and-private-life-european-union-policy-review> [10 May 2018].

European Intercultural Workplace (EIW) (2006). *The Intercultural Workplace – Norway*, [Online], Available: http://immi.se/eiw/texts/National_Report_Norway.pdf [17 May 2018].

European Commission (2012). *Fighting Discrimination on the Grounds of Pregnancy, Maternity and Parenthood. European Union*, [Online], Available: <http://tiny.cc/nbe3ty> [12 May 2018].

Eurostat (2009). 'Reconciliation between work, private and family life in the European Union', Statistical books, 2009 edition, [Electronic], Available: <http://tiny.cc/6be3ty> [10 May 2018].

Eurostat (2017) 'Gender pay gap statistics', *Electronic Publishing Platform* [Electronic], Available: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender_pay_gap_statistics#Gender_pay_gap_levels_vary_significantly_across_EU [26 May 2018].

Feldberga, E. and K. Griķe (2005), 'Harmonization of Intercultural Barriers in International Business', *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 213, December 2015, pp. 938-943.

Finch, K., Hansen C. and R. Alexander (2010), 'Internal Communications: It's Not Rocket Science', *Communications Nova Scotia*, pp. 3-12.

Fosters, D. (2005). *Lietišķā etiķete Eiropā*, Rīga: Zvaigzne ABC, pp. 400.

Friberg J.H. (2016). 'Arbeidsmigrasjon. Hva vet vi om konsekvensene for norsk arbeidsliv, samfunn og økonomi?' *Fafo-rapport 2016* February issue, pp. 6-9.

Friberg, J. H., Tronstad, K. R., Dølvik, J. E. (2014). Central and Eastern European labour migration to Norway. *Free Movement of Workers and Labour Market Adjustment*, pp. 147-172.

Gi Bort Dagen (GBI) (2017). *Den største glede du kan ha er å gjøre andre glad!* [Online], Available: <http://gibortdagen.no/> [17 May 2018].

Government (2013). *Gender equality*, [Online], Available: <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/equality-and-social-inclusion/likestilling-og-inkludering/gender-equality/id670481/> [19 May 2018].

Gender in Norway (GIN) (2006). *Gender Equality*, [Online], Available: http://www.gender.no/Policies_tools [12 May 2018].

Hall, E. (1976). *Beyond Culture*, New York: Anchor Press Doubleday, pp. 298.

Halvorsen, R., Hvinden, B. and M.A. Schøyen (2015), 'The Nordic welfare model in the twenty-first century: The bumble-bee still flies!' *Social Policy and Society*, vol. 15, issue 1, pp. 4-6.

Hansen, I. L. S. and H. Haualand (2012), 'Diskriminerende barrierer i arbeidslivet. Aktivitets- og rapporteringsplikt som virkemiddel for området nedsatt funksjonsevne' [Discriminatory barriers in working life. Activities and reporting obligation regarding persons with disabilities], *Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183-2803)*, vol. 6, issue 2, pp. 34-45.

Hazans, M. (2005). 'Latvia: working too hard?', in Waughan-Whitehead, D. (Ed.), *Working and Employment Conditions in New EU Member States: Convergence or Diversity?*, ILO Publications, Geneva, pp. 161-212.

Huang, L. (2010). 'Cross-cultural Communication in Business Negotiations', [Online] Available: www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ijef/article/download/5907/4687 [3 May 2018].

Huang, L., Krzaklewska E. and P. Pustulka (2016), 'Young Polish migrants in Norway: Education, work and settlement choice', *Tidsskrift for Ungdomsforskning*, 16(1), pp. 63-78.

Huettinger, M. (2008). 'Cultural dimensions in business life: Hofstede's indices for Latvia and Lithuania', *Baltic Journal of Management*, Vol. 3, Issue 3, pp. 359-376.

Holliday, A. and J. Kullman (2004), *Intercultural Communication: An Advanced Resource Book for Student*.

Itland, M. (2016). *What is the work culture, such as working hours and work efficiency, like in Norway?*, [Online] Available: <https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-work-culture-such-as-working-hours-and-work-efficiency-like-in-Norway>, [26 Feb 2018].

Karasek, R. and T. Theorell (1990), *Healthy Work: Stress, Productivity, and the Reconstruction of Working Life*. New York: Basic Books.

Kāle, M., Klāsons G. and I. Šterna (2013), 'Business Culture and Values in the Baltic states', *Centre for Sustainable Business at SSE Riga*, pp. 14-23.

Kalniņa, D. (2017). 'Starpkultūru komunikācija biznesa vidē: Latvijas profils pēc Hofstedes indeksiem', *Sociālās zinātnes*, pp. 340.

Kāpiņa, L. (2006). 'Gender Equality Aspects in the Labour Market', *Project Studies of the Ministry of Welfare*, No. VPD1/ESF/NVA/04/NP/3.1.5.1./0001/0003 [Electronic], Available: <http://tiny.cc/2ee3ty> [14 April 2018].

Kulchawik, K. (2015). 'Trade Shows From One Country to The Next', *Page Publishing Inc.*, pp. 15-35.

Kuznetsova, Y. and J.P.C. Bento (2018), 'Workplace Adaptations Promoting the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Mainstream Employment: A Case-Study on Employers' Responses in Norway', *Global Perspectives on Disability*, vol. 6, issue 2, pp. 34-45.

Leta (2018). 'Aptauja: 39% Latvijas iedzīvotāju nespēj rast līdzsvaru starp darbu un privāto dzīvi', [Online], Available: <http://www.aprinkis.lv/sabiedriba/dzive-un-ticiba/item/43871-aptauja-39-latvijas-iedzivotaju-nespej-rast-lidzsvaru-starp-darbu-un-privato-dzivi> [3 May 2018].

Leta (2016). 'Latvijā darba samaksas atšķirības starp sievietēm un vīriešiem arvien pieaug', [Online], Available: <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/ekonomika/latvija-darba-samaksas-atskiribas-starp-sievietem-un-viriesiem-arvien-pieaug.a204611/> [7 May 2018].

Lie, A. (2008). 'Inclusive Working Life in Norway – Experience from “Models of Good Practice” Enterprises', *Croatian Medical Journal*, vol. 49, issue 4, pp. 553-559.

Luka, I. (2011). 'The Enhancement of Prospective Managers' Cultural Awareness in Business Related Studies', 5th international UNeECC conference "Culture in/and crisis?" At: Belgium, Antwerp, Lessius University College, *UNeECC Forum*, vol. 4, 2012, pp. 147-150.

Luminor (2017). *DNB bank establishes new Service Centre in Latvia to provide client services in Norway*, [Online], Available: <https://www.luminor.lv/en/news/dnb-banka-establishes-new-service-centre-latvia-provide-client-services-norwayalposanai> [20 May 2018].

Magnussen, J. (2010). 'Equal access for equal need? Constructing and implementing a capitation-based formula for the distribution of health care resources in Norway', *International Journal of Circumpolar Health* 69:5, pp. 450-453.

Midttun, A., Gautesen K., Gjørberg M. (2006). 'The political economy of CSR in Western Europe', *Corporate Governance: The international journal of business in society*, vol. 6 issue 4, pp. 369-385.

Midtboen, A. (2014). 'Social Investment in Gender Equality? Changing Perspectives on Work and Welfare in Norway', *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, vol. 44, issue 4, pp. 267-282.

Måwe, I. (2017). *Gender equality in the labour market – a Norwegian focus*, [Online], Available: <http://www.nikk.no/en/news/gender-equality-labour-market-norwegian-focus/> [3 May 2018].

Muffels, R. and R. Luijkx (2008), 'Labour market mobility and employment security of male employees in Europe: 'trade-off' or 'flexicurity'? *Work, Employment and Society* 22(2), pp. 221–242.

Muszynska, M. (2004). 'Employment after childbearing: a comparative study of Italy and Norway', *MPIDR Working Paper WP 2004-030*, pp. 4.

Muffels, R., Chung, H., Fouarge, D., Klammer, U., Luijkx, R., Manzonni, A., Thiel, A. and T. Wilthagen (2008), *Flexibility and Security over the Life Course*. Report for the European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions. 8 February. Dublin.

Naz, G. (2010). 'Usage of parental leave by fathers in Norway', *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, vol. 30, Issue 5/6, pp. 313-325.

Norwegian Chamber of Commerce in Latvia (NCC) (2012). *Conference: Innovation, Leadership & Teamwork – Nordic Model as Competitive Advantage*, [Online], Available: <https://www.nccl.lv/en/events/conference-innovation-leadership-and-teamwork--the-nordic-management-model-as-a-competitive-advantage> [12 May 2018].

Neimane, A. (1999). *Dzimums un tautas attīstība Latvijā*. Rīga: UNDP, pp. 10-32.

Nergaard, K. (2004). 'Atypisk arbeid: Midlertidige ansettelser og deltidsarbeid i Norge', *Oslo: FAFO: Rapport 430*

Nergaard, K. (2016). 'Tilknytningsformer i norsk arbeidsliv: Nullpunktsanalyse', *Oslo: Fafo-rapport 2016:07* pp.18-19.

Nikel, D. (2015). 'What Exactly Is Janteloven?' *Life in Norway*, [Online], Available: <https://www.lifeinnorway.net/what-exactly-is-janteloven/> [20 May 2018]

Niskanen, K. (2011). 'Gender and power in the Nordic countries – with focus on politics and business', *NIKK Publications*, pp. 23-39.

Noonan, E. (2007). 'How Norway approaches integration. Education and employment as paths towards an inclusive society', *NASC symposium: Integrating the future*, pp. 7-10.

Norges Arbeids- og velferdsetaten 2018 (NAV) (2013). *Parental benefit*, [Online], Available: <https://www.nav.no/en/Home/Benefits+and+services/Relatert+informasjon/parental-benefit> [20 May 2018].

Norges Arbeids – og velferdsetaten (NAV) (2018). *Endringer i foreldrepengeordningen fra 1. juli 2018*, [Online], Available: <http://tiny.cc/zge3ty> [20 May 2018].

Norwegian Guide (NG) (2017). *A Look at Norwegian Culture and Etiquette*, [Online], Available: <https://www.commisceo-global.com/resources/country-guides/norway-guide> [20 May 2018].

The Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) (2016). *Work culture*, [Online], Available: <http://www.nyinorge.no/en/Ny-i-Norge-velg-sprak/New-in-Norway/Useful-information/Facts-about-Norway1/Work-culture/> [25 Feb 2018].

OECD (2017). *Employment outlook*, OECD, [Online], Available: https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/oecd-employment-outlook-2017_empl_outlook-2017-en#page1 [19 May 2018].

Official Holidays (2018). *Public holidays in Norway*, [Online], Available: <https://www.officeholidays.com/countries/norway/index.php>, [15 May 2018].

Østebø, M. and H. Haukanes (2015), 'Shifting meanings of gender equality in development: Perspectives from Norway and Ethiopia', *Sage Journals*, vol. 16, issue 1, pp. 39-51.

Passport to Trade (PTR) (2011). *Latvian business culture*, [Online], Available: <http://businessculture.org/eastern-europe/latvia/>, [18 Feb 2018].

Price, W. (1969). *Penguin Modern Psychology Readings Cross-Cultural Studies*. Penguin Books, 1st edition.

Preuss, B. (2017). 'Nordic Management and Sustainable Business', *Journal of Business & Financial Affairs*, vol. 6, issue 2, pp. 2-6.

Ronsen, M. (2014). 'Gender-Equalizing Family Policies and Mothers' Entry into Paid Work: Recent Evidence From Norway', *Feminist Economics*, vol. 21, issue 1, pp. 59-89.

Randlesome, C. (1993). *Business Cultures in Europe*, Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, pp. 373

Randstad (2018). *Randstad workmonitor Q1 - March 2018*, pp. 41-42, [Online], Available: <http://tiny.cc/hme3ty> [10 May 2018].

Rastrigina, O. (2015). 'The Policy on Gender Equality in Latvia. In-depth analysis', *Womens Rights and Gender Equality, Policy Department C: Citizens Rights and Constitutional Affairs*, [Electronic], pp. 4-20., Available: <http://tiny.cc/3me3ty> [10 May 2018].

Riga TechGirls (2018). 'No women-no innovation', [Online], Available: <https://medium.com/@RigaTechGirls/no-women-no-innovation-10a56c924caf> [15 May 2018].

Reznik, O. (2016). 'Determinants of Involvement in Work for Voluntary or Charitable Organizations in European Countries', *Sage Journals*, vol. 1, issue 1, pp. 3-12.

Smith, D. (2015). *Working Culture in Norway, Life in Norway*, [Online], Available: <https://www.lifeinnorway.net/working-culture-norway/> [19 May 2018].

Solheim, L.J. (2010). 'Inclusive working life and value conflict in Norway', *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, vol. 30, issue 7/8, pp. 399-411.

Søderholm, G. (2012). 'Culture Matters: Norwegian Cultural Identity Within a Scandinavian Context', *Sage Journals*, vol. 2, issue 4, pp. 2-12.

Stenroos, L.A. (2018). 'Building B2B relationships via initiation contributors: Three cases from the Norwegian-South Korean international project business', *Industrial Marketing Management*, vol. 68, January 2018, pp. 74-85.

Strang, J. (2016). *Nordic Cooperation: A European region in transition*, Routledge, pp. 210.

Svalund, J. (2017). 'Midlertidig ansettelse i Norge – en vei inni stabilt arbeid?' [Temporary employment in Norway – A pathway to stable employment?], *Søkelys På Arbeidslivet*, issue 34, nr. 1-2–2017, pp. 44-62.

Svensson, G. (2006). 'A comparison of perceived quality in business relationships in Norway and Sweden: Similarities and differences' *Baltic Journal of Management*, Emerald Group Publishing Limited., vol. 4, Issue 1, pp. 7-33.

Technoport (2017). *An Introduction to Norwegian Business Culture*, [Online], Available: <http://www.technoport.no/content/381/An-Introduction-to-Norwegian-Business-Culture> [17 May 2018].

Teknisk naturvitenskapelig forening (Tekna) (2015). *Norwegian Work Culture*, [Online], Available: <https://www.tekna.no/en/career/work-culture/> [17 May 2018].

Teknisk naturvitenskapelig forening (Tekna) (2015). *Working time regulations according to the Norwegian Labour Act*, [Online], Available: <https://www.tekna.no/en/salary-and-negotiations/legal-advice/working-time-regulations/> [15 May 2018].

The Local (2011). *Norwegian workforce Europe's 'most content*, [Online], Available: <https://www.thelocal.no/20110919/norwegian-workforce-europes-most-content> [10 May 2018].

The Working Environment Act (TWEA) (2017). *The Working Environment Act. Translated from «arbeidsmiljøloven»*, [Online], Available: <http://tiny.cc/nqe3ty> [20 May 2018].

Trapenciere, I. (2005). 'Reconciliation of Work and Private Life in Latvia – the Latvian national report', European Commission's Expert Group on Gender, Social Inclusion and Employment report for the Equal Opportunities Unit, DG Employment.

United Nations Global Compact (2017). *Our participants*, [Online], Available: <http://tiny.cc/mre3ty> [15 May 2018].

Universium (2017). *The most attractive employers in Norway*, [Online], Available: <https://universiumglobal.com/rankings/norway/> [3 May 2018].

VDI (2015). *Latvijā turpina pieaugt negadījumu skaits darba vietās, šogad darba vietā miruši jau 43 darbinieki*, [Online], Available: <http://www.vdi.gov.lv/lv/jaunumi/latvija-turpina-pieaugt-negadijumu-skaits-darba-vietas-sogad-darba-vieta-mirusi-jau-43-darbinieki/> [5 May 2018].

Vulkan, P. (2015). 'Job Insecurity and Mental Well-Being in Finland, Norway, and Sweden' Consequences of Flexicurity in a Nordic Welfare Setting, *Nordic journal of working life studies*, vol. 5, nr. 2, June 2015, pp. 43-47.

Warburton, K. (2017). *Business Culture in Norway. Norwegian Meetings*, [Online], Available:<https://www.worldbusinessculture.com/country-profiles/norway/culture/business-meetings/> [17 May 2018].

Welter, F. and S. Kolb (2006), 'Women and Entrepreneurship in Latvia', TeliaSonera Institute Discussion Paper No. 4, Riga: TSI and SSE.

World Economic Forum (WEF) (2017). *These are the world's most gender-equal countries*, [Online], Available: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/11/these-are-the-world-s-most-gender-equal-countries/> [16 May 2018].

World Economic Forum (WEF) (2017). *Global Gender Gap Report 2017*, [Online], Available: <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2017/> [15 May 2018].

APPENDICES

Appendix #1 Interviews

Sample of the interview

*UNIVERSITY OF LATVIA
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES*

Dear participant!

Your opinion is very important for research conducted at the University of Latvia. The questions are being asked as part of Master thesis “Norwegian Companies in Latvia: Work Culture in the Latvian Context”

The aim of the research is to find differences in the business culture between two Baltic Sea Region countries. In order to make a comparison author collects data from Latvian, English and Norwegian sources. The scientific research will compare different factors that influence work culture both in Latvia and Norway. These aspects include values and priorities, gender equality, work-life balance, business communication, etiquette and work environment.

**Your participation is completely voluntary and strictly confidential.*

Questions

1. Does working in a Norwegian company affect your work-life balance?
2. Do you agree with the statement that “Norwegians tend to be more opened to conversations than Latvians”
3. Are there any specific rules that are applied working in this kind of company?
4. Does your company prioritize gender equality in the workplace? (Also taking into account achieving high positions in the company)
5. Do you have clean desk policy or free sitting office policy in your company and what is your opinion about it?
6. Do Norwegian business people address people in second names?
7. Is there something that you must adapt to when communicating with Norwegians?
8. Are you satisfied with your working conditions?
9. Is there some kind of Latvian traditions/ work cultural aspects kept when working in a foreign company?
10. Is there any kind of characteristics that Norwegians are lacking in business culture?
11. Do you believe something needs to be changed in business culture?
12. Compared to Latvian work environment, which one is better?

Please fulfil the required information bellow.

- **Gender:**
- **Age:**
- **Years of employment in the company:**
- **Work position:**

Thank you for your participation!

Further information about research can be found in the University of Latvia, Faculty of Humanities Study Program “Baltic Sea Region Studies”.

Contact information: Website <https://www.lu.lv> Email hzf@lu.lv Phone number 6703 4908

Gender: Male

Age: 27

Years of employment in the company: 6 months

Work position: System Consultant (Evry Company)

Questions

1. Does working in a Norwegian company affect your work-life balance?

Not really. I would say that my work-life balance is affected less than working in a Latvian company.

2. Do you agree with the statement that “Norwegians tend to be more opened to conversations than Latvians”?

I agree to this statement. Most of the Latvians are introvert when it comes to job. Just do your tasks and go home.

3. Are there any specific rules that are applied working in this kind of company?

There aren't really any rules. Actually, I cannot think of any rule. You get the basic understanding about Norwegian culture from learning the language and that is enough.

4. Does your company prioritize gender equality in the workplace? (Also taking into account achieving high positions in the company)

I do not know if the gender equality is prioritized but I can say that in my opinion there is no issue with gender prioritizing in my workplace. That includes also high positions. Of course, there are not a lot of women in my specific industry (IT). This is because not a lot of women are interested in this field.

5. Do you have a clean desk or a free sitting policy in your company and what is your opinion about it?

We do not have open desk policy, but we have a clean desk policy. I do not have an issue with open desk policy. So I am Ok with that.

6. Do Norwegian business people address people in second names?

I have not experienced that they do. It could be because Latvian names are harder to pronounce.

7. Is there something that you must adapt to when communicating with Norwegians?

Well like with any non-native language you always need to think forward when you are speaking. So that it is understandable when you, for ex., use Norwegian language. It is better to avoid misunderstandings.

8. Are you satisfied with your working conditions?

Yes, I am.

9. Is there some kind of Latvian traditions/ work cultural aspects kept when working in a foreign company?

As we are working on some Latvian holidays, we still celebrate all the holidays and red days. I cannot think of any more traditions related to work.

10. Is there any kind of characteristics that Norwegians are lacking in business culture?

I think that sometimes things are happening too slow in Norway which impacts the work in Latvia. Mostly I think it is Norway's work culture and Latvians mostly are more impatient and want to get things done.

11. Do you believe something needs to be changed in business culture?

Not really. For now, everything is in order.

12. Compared to Latvian work environment, which one is better?

I think that Norway has better work environment. The average worker is very protected when working in Norway, maybe that is the reason why they take things slow. In Latvia you need to prove yourself all the time and that results in rivalry inside your organization, which results in stress and so on.

Gender: **female**

Age: **25**

Years of employment in the company: **2**

Work position: **Transaction processing specialist (DNB Service Centre Riga)**

Questions

1. Does working in a Norwegian company affect your work-life balance?

I feel like it does affect my work-life balance. Working for a Norwegian company allows me to have more free time for my personal life, hobbies and traveling. The work hours are more flexible and it is possible to go to the doctor in the middle of a work day etc. I know that in a lot of Latvian companies it would not be possible.

2. Do you agree with the statement that “Norwegians tend to be more open to conversations than Latvians”?

Yes, I agree with this statement. As I now have worked with Norwegians for a month I feel like they do not talk as much with each other during the workday, but they tend to ask about the way you spend your free time, how are you feeling, what are your plans for the weekend etc. Latvians are more private, we talk about these things with just our closest co-workers.

3. Are there any specific rules that are applied working in this kind of company?

If we take specific rules as less strict rules, then yes. Norwegians are much freer in their working environment. Dress code, for example. Norwegians allow more self-expression at work. As I have both tattoos and a visible piercing, I feel like Norwegians are a lot more accepting of personal style and preferences.

4. Does your company prioritize gender equality in the workplace? (Also taking into account achieving high positions in the company)

Yes, it is a topic that is talked about often. In Norway when we talk about statistics and how our company is doing, gender equality is one of the main topics we look at. Working in the company I feel like we are all looked at the same way and the main thing that is taken into account when talking about raises and promotions is our work performances, not our gender and if you are a potential pregnant woman.

5. Do you have a free seating or clean desk policy in your company and what is your opinion about it?

Yes, we have a free seating policy. When working in Latvia we tend to stick to the same desk we always work at, but in Norway you can choose a new placement every day. Every day after finishing work we take our personal belongings and place them in a box, so the next morning we can take our things and choose a desk to work at.

6. Do Norwegian business people address people in second names?

Norwegians usually introduce themselves with just their first name. They are very informal, so you never feel like you are talking to someone who is “better” or “more special” than you. I recently met few people who are in a very high position in our company, but all of them were very welcoming and friendly and I can say hi to them every day and I do not have to feel like I am just a simple worker and they are the bosses.

7. Is there something that you must adapt to when communicating with Norwegians?

This is hard for me to answer as I have worked with Norwegians in almost all of my jobs. I think that it is harder to adapt to working with Latvians, there a lot more etiquette and pleasantries one needs to remember. Norwegians are very laid back and no one looks at you weirdly if you make a mistake or say something out of the ordinary, as I often do.

8. Are you satisfied with your working conditions?

Yes, I am very satisfied with the environment I work in and with the people I work with. I feel like our company thinks a lot about how each and every one of us feels at work, so you can express your concerns and feel like you are important. I have talked to a lot of my friends who work for Latvian companies and this is one of the most common problems they face – they feel like no one really cares if they like their job, you`re just a replaceable machine.

9. Is there some kind of Latvian traditions/ work cultural aspects kept when working in a foreign company?

Yes, although we are a Norwegian company, we still celebrate Latvian traditions at work. We quite often have to work when there is a free day in Latvia, but our HR and company in general always arrange some kind of party at work.

10. Is there any kind of characteristics that Norwegians are lacking in business culture?

I think this is a very subjective question, as it depends on your personal preferences. I think that Norwegian business culture is great as they are very professional, but never arrogant and mean. They talk about business, but they are never condescending and they take into account that not everyone knows everything they do. It is refreshing to be able to ask sometimes silly questions, because Norwegians will never lough at you for not knowing things.

11. Do you believe something needs to be changed in business culture?

At this point, no. Maybe when I will have worked for this company a lot longer there will be things that I will want to change, but for now I feel like our work environment and culture is well thought out and always being improved taking into account the opinions of employees.

12. Compared to Latvian work environment, which one is better?

Norwegian work environment is a lot better in my opinion. I feel like Latvians put too much pressure and stress into doing things, but the results are still the same as when you take things easy.

Gender: Female

Age: 26

Years of employment in the company: 3,5

Work position: Senior Transaction specialist (DNB Service Centre Riga)

Questions

1. Does working in a Norwegian company affect your work-life balance?

Not really.

2. Do you agree with the statement that “Norwegians tend to be more opened to conversations than Latvians”

Yes, I agree.

3. Are there any specific rules that are applied working in this kind of company?

You have to know Norwegian language and you have to use it every day in your job.

4. Does your company prioritize gender equality in the workplace? (Also taking into account achieving high positions in the company)

I think that in my job there is gender equality. Everyone appreciate each other and it does not matter if you are a woman or a man. The most important thing is that you do your job very well and succeed.

5. Do you have an open desk policy in your company and what is your opinion about it?

Yes, we have open desk policy but it does not really work. I do not like it so much because there are small things that are necessary every day to do my job and it is difficult to take with you all these things and put them in right place every day. It takes time.

6. Do Norwegian business people address people in second names?

I am not sure about this.

7. Is there something that you must adapt to when communicating with Norwegians?

You have to be open and honest and you have to talk about problems to find the right solution. Norwegians have more focus on to find solution not problems. That's what I like the most.

8. Are you satisfied with your working conditions?

Yes, very satisfied.

9. Is there some kind of Latvian traditions/ work cultural aspects kept when working in a foreign company?

Yes, of course. We celebrate both Norwegian and Latvian holidays.

10. Is there any kind of characteristics that Norwegians are lacking in business culture?

I don't think so.

11. Do you believe something needs to be changed in business culture?

No.

12. Compared to Latvian work environment, which one is better?

I cannot compare because I have worked in Latvian environment only few months.

Gender: female

Age: 26

Years of employment in the company: 3,5

Work position: Senior transaction processing specialist at DNB Service Centre Riga

Questions

1. Does working in a Norwegian company affect your work-life balance?

Yes. Since DNB Service centre Riga has regular work day on Latvian national holidays. What I also like is that there is no necessity to work from home, but that is more due to work specific, not so much as business culture.

2. Do you agree with the statement that “Norwegians tend to be more opened to conversations than Latvians”?

No. In my experience Norwegians are quite reserved and will not engage in chit-chat apart from work related subjects.

3. Are there any specific rules that are applied working in this kind of company?

No, there are no ‘rules’; however, after working in close contact with Norwegian colleagues you start to notice how they tend to deal with things and in what way it is different from regular course of action. To achieve best result, it is worth to consider these differences (origin of which I presume is cultural) and work around them. E.g. the same task usually takes more time for a Norwegian than it does to a Latvian. Norwegians ‘take things easy’ and do not get stressed if some deadlines are missed.

4. Does your company prioritize gender equality in the workplace? (Also taking into account achieving high positions in the company)

Yes, I am confident that in my company gender equality is upheld. There are both males and females in higher positions.

5. Do you have a clean desk or free seating policy in your company and what is your opinion about it?

Yes, we do. However, I dislike not being able to personalize my environment. In addition, what we call free seating policy works only at team level as you still need to be seated near your colleagues to work productively.

6. Do Norwegian business people address people in second names?

Frankly I haven't paid much attention to that. As far as I can recall me and my Norwegian colleagues have been addressing each other on the first name bases since we came into contact.

7. Is there something that you must adapt to when communicating with Norwegians?

Yes, the language. Apart from that one must remember that they like to take their time with everything and that they are quite conservative and do not show friendly affections easily.

8. Are you satisfied with your working conditions?

Yes.

9. Is there some kind of Latvian work culture aspects kept when working in a foreign company?

Latvians like deadlines, we are diligent and precise in what we do. Latvians like that someone organises their work, while Norwegians have 'frihet under ansvar' freedom with responsibility – meaning that each employee is in charge of his/her actions and will not be controlled by manage.

10. Is there any kind of characteristics that Norwegians are lacking in business culture?

Yes, Norwegians should learn to organise their time more efficiently

11. Do you believe something needs to be changed in business culture?

Yes, I still feel that Latvians are often looked down at by Norwegian colleagues in the same job position only because of the fact that they are Latvian. No matter how many times Latvians prove themselves as quick learners and are able to perform same tasks with the same quality or even better.

12. Compared to Latvian work environment, which one is better?

At the moment I would say that Norwegian working environment is more preferable for me. I fell that company really cares of their employees and offers many benefits to make an employee feel good at his/her work environment so that one could work efficiently and creatively using their potential as much as possible in the position.

Gender: female

Age: 26

Years of employment in the company: 6

Work position: Production Leader (Evry Latvia)

Questions

1. Does working in a Norwegian company affect your work-life balance?

Yes, but I would say in a positive way. In a Scandinavian company there is a clear border between the two. Our spare time is respected and there is no pressure to work longer

2. Do you agree with the statement that “Norwegians tend to be more opened to conversations than Latvians”?

Both yes and no. Norwegians are more opened to talk about their problems within work environment as they feel more equal to their superiors than most of Latvians do. However, Scandinavians sometimes have it hard to step out of their box.

3. Are there any specific rules that are applied working in this kind of company?

You have to be good at languages and flexible to different kind of cultures. Working in EVERY means working with people of different races as well, so being tolerant is key.

4. Does your company prioritize gender equality in the workplace? (Also taking into account achieving high positions in the company)

Yes, it is highly prioritized.

5. Do you have an open desk policy in your company and what is your opinion about it?

No, we don't find it effective and efficient.

6. Do Norwegian business people address people in second names?

No, they usually address us by the name.

7. Is there something that you must adapt to when communicating with Norwegians?

Being more casual and engaging more in small talk.

8. Are you satisfied with your working conditions?

Yes, I am.

9. Is there some kind of Latvian traditions kept when working in a foreign company?

Yes we usually get cakes from the company on Latvian holidays and there are some office activities.

10. Is there any kind of characteristics that Norwegians are lacking in business culture?

Being open-minded and flexible, ability to step out of their comfort zone.

11. Do you believe something needs to be changed in business culture?

People need to be more opened to trying new things. It is good for the business in general.

12. Compared to Latvian work environment, which one is better?

Definitely Norwegian

Gender: male

Age:28

Years of employment in the company:5

Work position: Head of Dept. (DNB Service Centre Riga)

Questions

1. Does working in a Norwegian company affect your work-life balance?

Yes, in positive way, more flexibility.

2. Do you agree with the statement that “Norwegians tend to be more opened to conversations than Latvians”?

No, I think it is very depends on each personality.

3. Are there any specific rules that are applied working in this kind of company?

“Frihet under ansvar” – Freedom under responsibility

4. Does your company prioritize gender equality in the workplace? (Also taking into account achieving high positions in the company)

Yes, it is part of internal culture in our company.

5. Do you have an open desk policy in your company and what is your opinion about it?

Yes, it is possible to practise this kind of policy, but not every department and their needs are applicable for this policy.

6. Do Norwegian business people address people in second names?

No, have not seen such habit.

7. Is there something that you must adapt to when communicating with Norwegians?

Norwegians tend to be very tolerant and will not engage in direct conflict.

8. Are you satisfied with your working conditions?

Working conditions are great since employer ensure a class office conditions.

9. Is there some kind of Latvian traditions kept when working in a foreign company?

There is no limitation to practise Latvian traditions in our company, only exception is fact that Latvian holidays are working days in Norway.

10. Is there any kind of characteristics that Norwegians are lacking in business culture?

Comparing to Latvians I would say that we are more proactive and more willing to learn new things.

11. Do you believe something needs to be changed in business culture?

Yes, I think that SCR should have more independence from concern to ensure better service quality and ownership for improvements we make.

12. Compared to Latvian work environment, which one is better?

Latvian work environment is in early development stage after years being part of USSR and closed economical model. We are used to hard working paradigm not thinking about efficiency. But lately this has been actualized. At the same time Norwegians has already long traditions of wellbeing and equality in market. That is why comparing is not objectively in this case.

Gender: **Male**

Age: **30**

Years of employment in the company: **3**

Work position: **Senior Transaction Processing Specialist (DNB SCR)**

Questions

- 1. Does working in a Norwegian company affect your work-life balance?**

Not really.

- 2. Do you agree with the statement that “Norwegians tend to be more opened to conversations than Latvians”?**

No, I think both nationalities tend to be more introverted, yet Scandinavians are more likely to have a meaningless chit-chat regarding weather etc.

- 3. Are there any specific rules that are applied working in this kind of company?**

There used to be a strict rule about language usage during work hours. We were obligated to use only Norwegian for all work and non-work related conversations. Key words – used to.

- 4. Does your company prioritize gender equality in the workplace? (Also taking into account achieving high positions in the company).**

No, yet parent company’s CEO mentioned that he would to implement quota system for male/female ratio.

- 5. Do you have clean desk or free sitting policy in your company and what is your opinion about it?**

Yes for clean desk, partly for free sitting. Not implemented in all departments.

- 6. Do Norwegian business people address people in second names?**

First name basis only.

- 7. Is there something that you must adapt to when communicating with Norwegians?**

They come off as unprepared for meetings regardless of topic.

- 8. Are you satisfied with your working conditions?**

Yes.

9. Is there some kind of Latvian work cultural aspects kept when working in a foreign company?

Due to local corporate culture chaos, hard to answer.

10. Is there any kind of characteristics that Norwegians are lacking in business culture?

Discipline. They tend to complicate things and involve more people/steps in situations when solution should be simple.

11. Do you believe something needs to be changed in business culture? In SCR or Oslo?

If here, than SCR should finally develop its own corporate culture, cause at this point there seems to no culture at all.

12. Compared to Latvia's work environment, which one is better?

Latvians, as we tend to do more.

Gender: Female

Age: 28

Years of employment in the company: soon 4

Work position: Coordinator (Evry Latvia)

Questions

1. Does working in a Norwegian company affect your work-life balance?

Yes

2. Do you agree with the statement that “Norwegians tend to be more opened to conversations than Latvians”?

No

3. Are there any specific rules that are applied working in this kind of company?

It is important to pay attention to cultural differences when working with colleagues in Norway.

4. Does your company prioritize gender equality in the workplace? (Also taking into account achieving high positions in the company)

Yes, they do

5. Do you have clean desk policy or free sitting office policy in your company and what is your opinion about it?

Yes, I like it.

6. Do Norwegian business people address people in second names?

No

7. Is there something that you must adapt to when communicating with Norwegians?

Handshake just the first time you meet someone

8. Are you satisfied with your working conditions?

Yes, I am completely satisfied.

9. Is there some kind of Latvian traditions/ work cultural aspects kept when working in a foreign company?

Yes, we like to celebrate both country holidays

10. Is there any kind of characteristics that Norwegians are lacking in business culture?

They are not uptight, but friendly


11. Do you believe something needs to be changed in business culture?

No

12. Compared to Latvian work environment, which one is better?

Combination, but I prefer Norwegian

Appendix #2 Table: Public Holidays in Norway in 2018

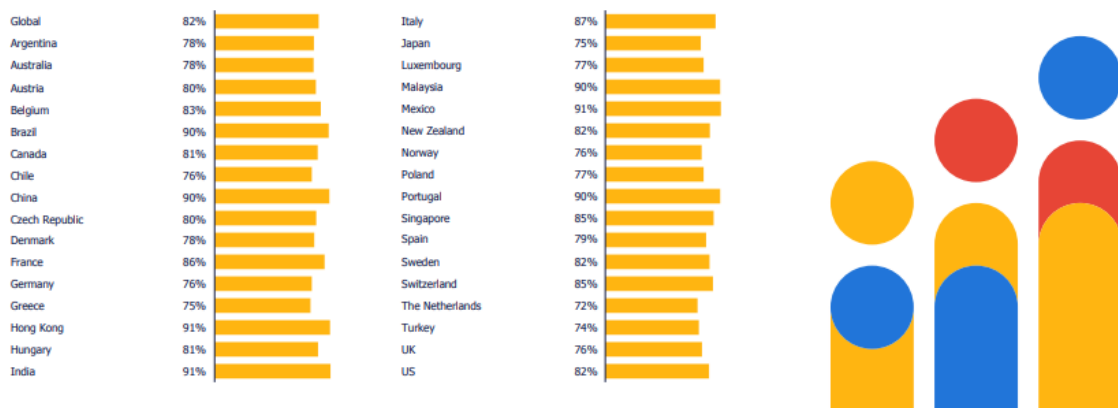
 List of national public holidays of Norway in 2018

Day	Date	Holiday	Comments
Monday	January 01	New Year's Day	
Sunday	February 11	Mother's Day	Second Sunday in February. Not a public holiday
Thursday	March 29	Maundy Thursday	The Thursday before Easter Sunday
Friday	March 30	Good Friday	The Friday before Easter Sunday
Monday	April 02	Easter Monday	Monday after Easter Sunday
Tuesday	May 01	Labour Day	
Thursday	May 10	Ascension Day	40 days after Easter
Thursday	May 17	Constitution Day	National Day
Monday	May 21	Whit Monday	7th Monday after Easter. Also Known as Pentecost Monday
Sunday	November 11	Father's Day	2nd Sunday in November. Not a public holiday
Monday	December 24	Christmas Eve	Banks are closed
Tuesday	December 25	Christmas Day	Informal celebrations on eve of December 24 the (Julaften)
Wednesday	December 26	St. Stephen's Day	

Source: *Public Holidays in Norway*, in Official Holidays website. Available: <https://www.officeholidays.com/countries/norway/index.php> [Last Accessed: 15.05.2018]

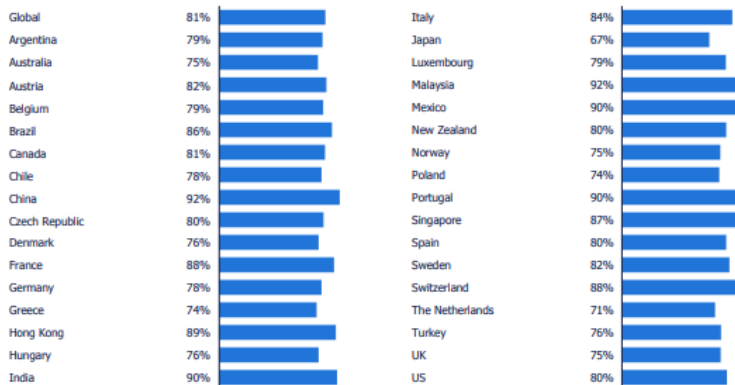
Appendix #3 Randstad workmonitor Q1 - March 2018 Results

82% like agile working as it allows them to maintain a good work-life balance.



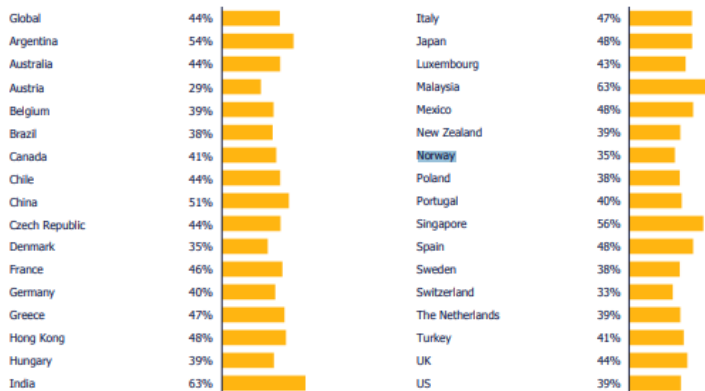
Source: Randstad (2018). *Randstad workmonitor Q1 - March 2018*. pp 41-42, [Online], Available: <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/481927/Randstad%20Workmonitor%20global%20report%20Q1%20-%20March%202018.pdf?submissionGuid=86d0eb70-b954-41c4-9dca-1497d6d7b6cc> [10 May 2018]

81% like agile working as it increases their productivity, creativity and job satisfaction.



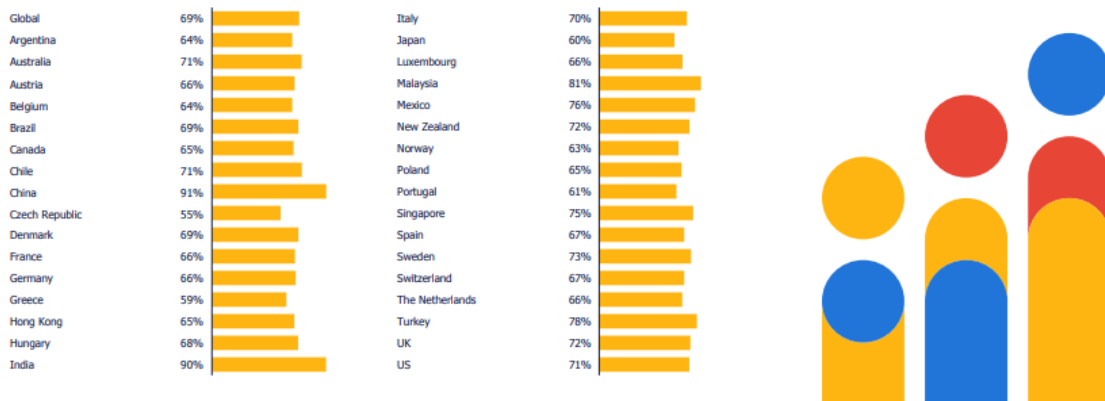
Source: Randstad (2018) *Randstad workmonitor Q1 - March 2018*. pp 41-42, [Online], Available: <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/481927/Randstad%20Workmonitor%20global%20report%20Q1%20-%20March%202018.pdf?submissionGuid=86d0eb70-b954-41c4-9dca-1497d6d7b6cc> [10 May 2018]

44% believe that agile working causes a lot of pressure on their private life as they never seem to be 'disconnected' from work themselves.



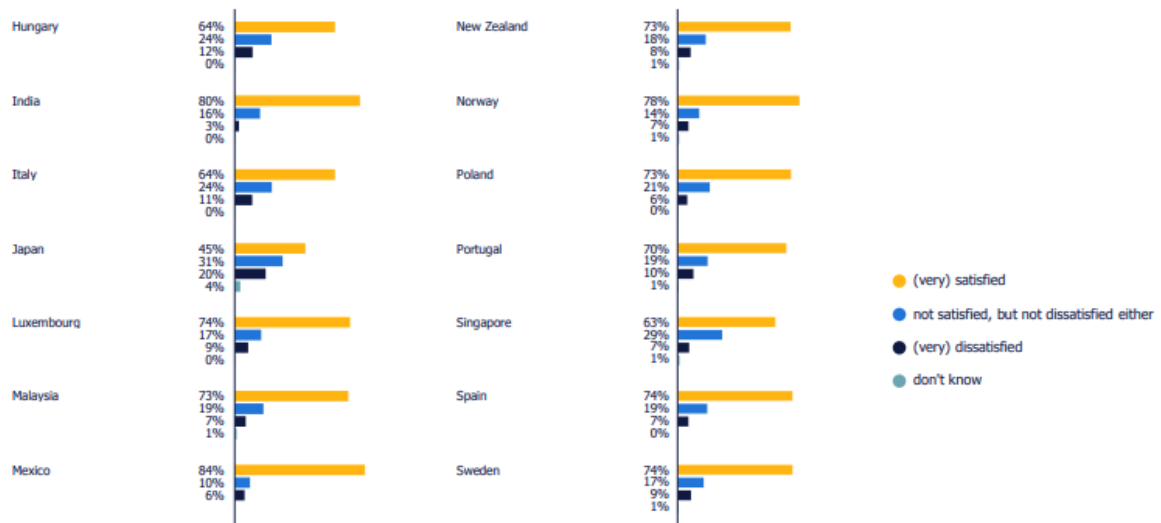
Source: Randstad (2018). *Randstad workmonitor Q1 - March 2018*. pp 41-42, [Online], Available: <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/481927/Randstad%20Workmonitor%20global%20report%20Q1%20-%20March%202018.pdf?submissionGuid=86d0eb70-b954-41c4-9dca-1497d6d7b6cc> [10 May 2018]

69% say that they regularly have in-person or face-to-face team meetings at the office, in order to keep everyone informed and aligned.



Source: Randstad (2018) *Randstad workmonitor Q1 - March 2018*. Pp. 41-42, [Online], Available: <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/481927/Randstad%20Workmonitor%20global%20report%20Q1%20-%20March%202018.pdf?submissionGuid=86d0eb70-b954-41c4-9dca-1497d6d7b6cc> [10 May 2018]

job satisfaction.



Source: Randstad (2018) *Randstad workmonitor Q1 - March 2018*. Pp. 41-42, [Online], Available: <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/481927/Randstad%20Workmonitor%20global%20report%20Q1%20-%20March%202018.pdf?submissionGuid=86d0eb70-b954-41c4-9dca-1497d6d7b6cc> [10 May 2018]

Dokumentārā lapa

Maģistra darbs "Norwegian Companies in Latvia: Work Culture in the Latvian Context"
(„Norvēģijas uzņēmumi Latvijā: darba kultūra Latvijas kontekstā”) izstrādāts LU Humanitāro zinātņu fakultātē.

Ar savu parakstu apliecinu, ka pētījums veikts patstāvīgi, izmantoti tikai tajā norādītie informācijas avoti un iesniegtā darba elektroniskā kopija atbilst izdrukai.

Autore: Renāte Dekante _____

/paraksts un datums/

Rekomendēju darbu aizstāvēšanai

Vadītāja: profesore Dr.oec. Biruta Sloka _____

/paraksts un datums/

Recenzents:

profesore Dr. geogr. Zaiga Krišjāne

Darbs iesniegts Humanitāro zinātņu fakultātē _____

Lietvede: Agnese Kirovāne _____

/paraksts/

Darbs aizstāvēts maģistra gala pārbaudījuma komisijas sēdē _____

protokols nr. _____, vērtējums _____

Komisijas sekretāre: lektore Inese Runce _____

/paraksts/