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The Development of Social Work Education and Practice in Latvia

The year 1991 was significant for Latvia. In 1991 Latvia regained independence and the first social work study program was initiated. Social work gained its recognition as a profession only in 1996 when it was included into Profession Classifier of Latvia. At the same time the practice field for social work was developing by establishing social assistance services in local governments. There was a tension between new practitioners without training and knowledge in social work and educated social workers which did not support the development of professional social work practice.

The first laws regulating the social service and assistance were introduced in 1995, but the terms "social work" or "social worker" were not used there. Until the 2002 when the Ministry of Education and Science approved The Standard of the Profession of Social Worker, the Profession Classifier was the only official document defining the content of social work.

Since 1991 the number of social work study programs has grown in both bachelor and master levels. The number of governmental and nongovernmental social service institutions also has grown significantly. Still professional social work is not a common and widespread practice.