

Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: Rēzekne Academy of Technologies

Study field: Social Welfare

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Summary of the Assessment of the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

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The report includes the assessment of the Study Field “Social Welfare” (SF) implemented by Rēzekne Academy of Technologies (RTA), Faculty of Education, Languages and Design, and two study programmes: professional bachelor's degree programme “Social Work and Social Rehabilitation” (joint study programme realised together with Siauliai Academy (ŠA) (Lithuania) and first level professional higher education study programme “Social Rehabilitation”.

The goal of the SF is to prepare specialists for the labour market and to promote the involvement of qualified social workers in strengthening the social welfare system, and development of science of social work at a national and international level. Goal of the SF is closely linked with the RTA development Strategy 2016-2023.

Latgale region is described as one with the highest welfare risks in comparison with other regions in Latvia in terms of unemployment rate, high poverty and insecurity risk, lowest salaries, ageing population, etc. SF by educating social workers and social rehabilitators promotes availability of higher education in the region, thus promoting regional development. Another aspect worth mentioning is that students, because of the previously mentioned aspects, have higher accessibility of higher education closer to their homes and working places.

Lack of both social workers and social rehabilitators in the labour market also highlights the need and demand for this SF. This allows RTA to build a strong cooperation network with regional social service providers in order to ensure students with internships.

RTA has established meaningful research opportunities both for staff and students in order to present their research findings during annual scientific conferences, possibility to apply for research grants, etc. It would be meaningful to extend publications of an academic staff in the diverse variety of international journals to share their research intelligence, thus broadening cooperation networks which have already been extended by intensive teachers' mobility in the frame of Erasmus+. The next development step might be attracting international students in the frame of Erasmus+ by providing study courses in English.

The RTA has good infrastructure and well adopted digital platforms, as well as other resources. Students, graduates and staff have well-built mutual understanding and cooperation. Meetings with above mentioned stakeholders gave an impression of good cooperation networks and supportive environment.

Study program “Social Rehabilitation” is designed in accordance with the previous version of professional standard (approved on 26.08.2015.) which should be updated. Objectives of internships should be reviewed.

The joint bachelor's study program gives an opportunity to obtain international experience, visit institutions in Lithuania, hear the study courses by Latvian and Lithuanian lecturers but at the same time knowledge of language might become a challenge. Stated specialization in social rehabilitation should be explained and justified. Joint study program gives an opportunity for graduates of the study program “Social Rehabilitation” to continue studies and acquire social worker's qualification.

I - Assessment of the Study Field

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1.1 Management of the Study Field

Analysis

The aims of the SF are clearly defined and the second goal is quite ambitious. In addition to the training of social work professionals, it is also aimed at strengthening the social welfare system, as

well as the development of the science of social work in Latvia and in the European Union. The development of the SF is based on RTA Development Strategy 2016-2023. As pointed out in Task U1.2. RTA "envisages to ensure the transfer of technological excellence and innovation for strengthening special and inclusive education, socialization and resocialization, public health and welfare [...] in the Latgale region and in Latvia in general". RTA positions itself as a regional development center which seeks to develop areas and directions important to the region and the country. An interview with employers showed that there is a shortage of social workers in the region and without any doubts RTA programs are much needed. RTA believes that implementation of SF study programs will help to improve the quality of social support measures in the region and to develop new social services. The RTA Strategy envisages a number of measures related to the development of SF and corresponding study programs. All of this confirms that SF and the relevant study programs meet the needs and the development trends of the society and national economy.

SF and the relevant study programs partly comply with the main directions of the strategic development of the academy. In the SER point 2.4.1 there is written that "the aim of RTA scientific activity is to develop the potential of knowledge-based economic development by ensuring technological excellence and transfer to the business environment and economic development" as well as "to ensure technological excellence and innovation transfer in the process of social assistance and social services, thus strengthening the business environment in Latgale region and Latvia in general". Goals indicate directions. The wording of the intermediate goals depends on the wording of the strategic goals. The scope of the goal of RTA scientific activity set in the Scientific Activity Strategy 2019-2023, which follows from the RTA Strategy, "the aim of RTA scientific activity is to develop the potential of knowledge-based economic development by ensuring technological excellence and transfer to the business environment and economic development" (2.4.1., p. 44) is too narrow. The research findings are important not only for business and economics but for the whole society of Latgale region. Research findings of Social Welfare programmes should have their impact on Latgale society. Existing strategy is valued and noticed by experts, however there is a room for development. It is recommended to formulate goals more precisely encompassing, for example, the importance of research activities for development and expansion of social welfare in Latgale region. The strong emphasis on economic development and strengthening of the business environment in the RTA strategy 2016-2023 is rather narrow in its scope and underestimates the potential of social welfare programs that go far beyond economic and business development. In the meeting with managers they explained that SF is more oriented to applied research, but social work programs are important for RTA and for the region, they have good cooperation with social partners. In the self-evaluation report (SER) point 2.1.1 there is written that "the RTA research strategy for 2019-2023 envisages increasing the number of employees in science by upgrading and developing human resources in science, technology and innovation (highly qualified specialists and researchers in science, research, education and enterprises), promoting international excellence and quality". On the one hand, the importance of social research in collaboration with international partners is emphasized, as well as a joint program is presented as a strength, but on the other hand interviews with management and academic community have shown that there is a huge language barrier. These teachers who provide study courses together with ŠA (Šiaulīši Academy) colleagues must know English - some of them have good level, some minimal.

Development plan of the SF for 2019-2025 was approved at the SF Council meeting on 22 October 2019 and is reviewed annually (Annex 3). The RTA has identified and analyzed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of strategic goals. One of the strengths of goal M.1. is Problem Based learning (PBL). In the opinion of experts, PBL is a supportable method in order to approach the goal of acquiring theoretical knowledge in practice during the study process. Several examples and an explanation of how this approach is adopted at RTA were not obtained during the experts visit. However, during the meeting with the managers of RTA, it was indicated that the teaching staff had participated in the training on PBL. It has been mentioned that PBL is used in the

study course “Professional Rehabilitation”. The implementation of the PBL in life is facilitated by the information on the website of the Social Integration State Agency (SIVA) that in 2019 there were cooperation agreements concluded with the Rēzekne Academy of Technology to provide its students with even higher quality study processes and research activities.

Some weaknesses are integrated in the Development plan, for example: to promote the involvement of lecturers in the development and publishing of textbooks and methodological materials; to cooperate with Latvian and foreign universities, institutions in the field of studies and research, and measures to promote student mobility through Erasmus + opportunities. There are no guidelines on how RTA is going to promote students’ professional development in further education even though they have an agreement with University of Liepaja that commits to provide opportunities to continue studies in the professional bachelor study program “Social Worker” (Annex 5).

The solutions for weaknesses of the goal M.2. are provided. Unfortunately the Development plan does not integrate strengths, opportunities and threats: what strengths can be used to realize the opportunities; which weaknesses can be remedied by taking advantage of the opportunities; what strengths can be used to reduce threats etc. This would help strengthen the strategic plan of SF.

A new study administration model was approved by the RTA Senate on 27 January 2015 establishing a Study Council, which includes all study program directors. It is a bit confusing as in the text of SER point 2.1.3 it is written that a Study Field Council was created while in Annex 4 a Study Field Board is presented. So it is not clear if it is the same unit or not. The organizational structure of SF consists of the Faculty Council, Study Field Board (Council), Study Field Self-Assessment Working Group and Meeting of Study Field staff. All the units (except Meeting of Study Field staff) plus employers, professional associations and alumni make up a Board of Experts for Study Field. The functions of the latter are not clear as this unit is not mentioned in the SER text. Later on, it was stated by RTA that the administration model is as follows: Faculty Council - Study Field Council - Study program directors. Taking into account that titles of the councils (units) differ in several places, to overcome confusion, it is necessary to harmonize terminology for titles of management units.

From the meetings with program directors and academic staff it is clear that the management structure together with corresponding study programs is oriented towards the development of the study field, decision-making takes place efficiently. It should be noted that the support provided by the administrative and technical staff is great and ensures all the needs of the study programs. Academic staff and program directors emphasized that they are supported very much, they have resources for student mobility, to publish students research papers, to pay for transportation to practice placements etc.

RTA has set clear admission rules based on Latvian law. They admit students in an open and equal competition who have previously completed upper secondary education. RTA has also set the procedure for receiving additional points for promising students excelled at the State Olympiads and so on. In the reporting period RTA had competition of 2 students per place in SF study programs but only for state places, for self funded students SF study programs are not attractive.

In the SER point 2.1.4 it is stated that “RTA has developed and implemented procedures for the recognition of competences acquired outside formal education or acquired through professional experience and the learning outcomes achieved in previous education”. They have students from different fields whose previous education establishments were recognized. The assessment of students' achievements and learning outcomes are logical and effective. RTA has all the necessary information for students admission in their webpage <https://2021.rta.lv>. They have good cooperation with employers and social partners and share information with all stakeholders.

RTA has clear principles and procedures for assessing achievements of students. The requirements for the assessment of study results are incorporated into the study course programs which are placed on RTA e-course website rta.lv. They can follow the progress of students' study, splitting the examination of the results of formative assessment during the semester (at least 40% of the assessment) and assessment at the end of the study course (60%). Students' independent work is

assessed in the form of summative assessment. In the SAR it is written that "All information about the summative assessment of study results is available to students in the RAIS environment, where each student has access. The results of formative assessment are only partially available on the RTA e-course website ekursi.rta.lv." Students have rights to request explanations and to challenge the assessment provided in the Regulations.

The principles of academic integrity are governed by the Senate-approved regulations. RTA takes measures to control and prevent plagiarism during formative assessment. For final study research works RTA uses the unified computerized plagiarism control system of the universities of Latvia. RTA uses the plagiarism tracking system PlagScan, which controls the materials uploaded to the study website ekursi.rta.lv, conference administration website conferences.rta.lv, and on the free access website 24.journals.rta.lv. In the meeting with academic staff teachers explained that they also use other systems like PLAG.LV. RTA takes care about the principles of academic integrity implementing the necessary measures to promote the development of the internal culture of the academy.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions:

SF and the relevant study programs meet the needs and the development trends of the society and national economy. The aims of the SF are clearly defined, SF and the relevant study programmes meet the needs and the development trends of the society and national economy, but SF and the relevant study programmes partly comply with the main directions of the strategic development of the academy. RTA has identified and analyzed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the study field, but the strategic plan could be more detailed and concrete. The management structure is oriented towards the development of the study field, decision-making takes place efficiently, the support provided by the administrative and technical staff ensures all the needs of the study programmes corresponding to SF. RTA has clear rules and admission procedures work well. Principles and procedures for assessing achievements of students are clear. RTA has established the principles of academic integrity and mechanisms for their observance.

Strengths:

- RTA has set clear admission rules and developed procedures for the recognition of competences acquired outside formal education or acquired through professional experience and the learning outcomes achieved in previous education.
- RTA has clear principles and procedures for assessing the achievements of students, ensuring their rights to request explanations and to challenge the assessment.

Weaknesses:

- The strong emphasis on the economic development in the RTA strategy 2016-2023 underestimates the potential of social welfare programs that go far beyond economic and business development.
- The potential of strategic planning is not fully exploited.
- The description of the governing structure is a bit confusing.

1.2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

Since 2005 RTA has been implementing a study quality management system that covers development strategy, academic staff, study programs, study process, infrastructure and other quality aspects. Quality policy is developed in accordance with the EFQM Excellence model and taking into account principles set forth by ESG 2015. The quality management system of RTA is part of RTA Development Strategy 2016-2023. Quality system works in several ways: annual student,

graduate and employer surveys which are evaluated by the study field council; self-evaluation of study field including evaluation of quality indicators in study process in accordance with internal evaluation calendar; participation in international platforms that deal with analysis of indicator for particular courses for example StudentPlus system for evaluation of study experience of students. Apart from this RTA has also developed a Quality management handbook which is available online in their webpage. Although all available documentation regarding Quality policy is in good order, there is an incoherence between formal quality procedures and informal quality culture meaning that all involved stakeholders should know what is the aim of the current event or procedure that is taking place. However there is proof that the quality management system regarding study program development is lagging behind, for example by the fact that the study program "Social Rehabilitation" has not yet been updated to the recent professional standard. It was mentioned by RTA that the workgroup of the SER considered it unacceptable to rely on the standard that has not been approved and has come into force in the final version, however, it should be considered that institutions should follow the newest tendencies and, to the extent possible, participate in the improvement process, which would, among other things, help to ensure faster compliance of the programmes with the most current requirements and needs of the industry as well as would help to increase cooperation with industry partners.

New program development is based on internal collaboration where a new workgroup is created involving academic staff, administrative staff and students. There is a well defined path on how programs are being proposed, developed and approved. As it was noted during the visit and available information in SER development and project management of grants and other activities that are outside of scope of direct study process but are adjacent to it are done in a systematic manner taking into account principles of quality management. There is lack of sufficient proof that continuous quality assurance regarding study process is taking place including tailoring within reasonable levels the study curriculum in accordance with students' previous experience, skills, knowledge and interests as the RTA in some cases was struggling to provide proof of improvements that followed after student feedback. Therefore RTA should reconsider ways on how they are collecting actionable information from the student body and review its implementation of principles of student centered learning. Some of the practices that RTA should consider is implementation of mid-semester surveys, so that students can see for themselves how their opinion is being taken into account in the on-going study processes. Or, alternatively, semi-regular student group meetings with study program management in order to discuss news, announcements and other questions related to the study process, quality and curriculum. The student body within the study field is relatively small and in this case low student numbers enable more agility and adaptability of curriculum and other questions related to the study process by enabling more direct and informal feedback methods. In conclusion RTA collects all necessary feedback from employers, graduates and students, yet in some of the cases it seems that follow-up on this feedback is lacking as RTA was struggling to provide necessary proof of following actions.

All internal documents are available to students via an internal web server. RTA has a well defined pathway on how submission of complaints and suggestions are being conducted. There are clear areas of responsibilities and institutions where students can submit suggestions or complaints by nature of their inquiry. Quality system requires the person in charge to record complaints and suggestions, and to inform the relevant staff and the process supervisor. The Student Council plays an active role in ensuring efficiency of this process by providing - for example - "trust email" for students who seek to submit complaints in alternative ways. Students in general are informed about such opportunities to submit inquiries and receive feedback.

RTA collects various information - student attendance; employment data from State Employment Agency; data on qualification of the academic staff and student; graduate, and employee survey data. All collected statistical data is being analyzed by RTA. Although the level of information collection is at a good level, RTA should seek more ways on how actionable information is being

collected as it struggles with providing sufficient proof on how collected feedback information is being acted upon, for example, by organizing discussions with employers, graduates or collecting feedback from internship supervisors. In general graduates are valuable resources for the Academy and they should be leveraged more - by seeking ways on how to include them in the study process after finishing their studies - for example - by providing internship placement opportunities to current students, guest-lecturing, study-trips or any other way.

Information in the official registers corresponds to actual information that is being published on the website of the Academy. Yet in the RTA website there is only limited information available. Admission requirements in depth are available in a dedicated 29 page document. In the individual chapters within the webpage of programs of the study field the information is very basic - there is data only on admission criteria, credit point amount, duration of studies, qualification, degree, language and tuition amount while any description about courses, curriculum and aims are lacking. The current webpage of RTA is under development as this version is relatively new, therefore it has not been properly updated yet. However, availability of in-depth information to potential students is important. The information available in official registers - VIIS and E-platform - corresponds with information available on the RTA webpage.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions:

RTA has developed and maintains a quality assurance system, which contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field. The process of continuous improvement including action following received feedback could be improved. RTA collects information at a good level from all involved stakeholders. There is a well defined mechanism on dealing with student complaints and suggestions. RTA collects relevant statistical data and conducts analysis on it. However there is limited information available on the RTA webpage regarding study programs.

Strengths:

- RTA has well established an internal quality system.
- Information collection by the institution is at a good level.

Weaknesses:

- There is lack of sufficient proof that continuous improvements following stakeholder feedback are being implemented.
- Only limited information available on RTA webpage regarding study programs.

Assessment of the requirement [1]

- 1 R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The RTA has established a quality policy and a quality system; establishing a system of collecting data (SER p. 29); has procedures on submitting suggestions and complaints (SER p. 26-28). Yet there is a lack of sufficient proof that continuous improvements following stakeholder feedback is being implemented.

- 2 1.1 - The higher education institution/ college has established a policy and procedures for assuring the quality of higher education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

RTA has developed an internal quality assurance system (as set forth in SER 2.2, and RTA Quality Management Handbook).

- 3 1.2 - A mechanism for the development and internal approval of the study programmes of the higher education institution/ college, as well as the supervision of their performance and periodic inspection thereof has been developed.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

There is a procedure in place on how study programs are being developed and approved. RTA conducts annual evaluation of performance of study programs (SER 2.2.2). Quality management system regarding study program development is lagging behind, for example by the fact that the study program "Social Rehabilitation" has not yet been updated to the recent professional standard. Content in some study courses is overlapping.

- 4 1.3 - The criteria, conditions, and procedures for the evaluation of students' results, which enable reassurance of the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, have been developed and published.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Criteria for evaluating students' results are clear and ensure the achievement of learning outcomes (SER 2.1.5).

- 5 1.4 - Internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the academic staff and the work quality have been developed.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

RTA continuously works on providing opportunities for its staff to raise qualification levels (SER 2.3.5, 2.3.6).

- 6 1.5 - The higher education institution/ college ensures the collection and analysis of the information on the study achievements of the students, employment of the graduates, satisfaction of the students with the study programme, efficiency of the work of the academic staff, the study funds available and the disbursements thereof, as well as the key performance indicators of the higher education institution/ college.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

RTA collects analysis various data regarding employment and satisfaction of studies. RTA has defined its KPIs (SER 2.2.4 and RTA Operational and Development Strategy).

Level of information collection is at a good level, RTA should seek more ways on how to collect data from various stakeholders and give specific description on how collected feedback information is being acted upon, for example, by organizing discussions with employers, graduates or collecting feedback from internship supervisors. This should be seen as a further development opportunity.

- 7 1.6 - The higher education institution/ college ensures continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its quality assurance systems.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

There is lack of sufficient proof that continuous improvements following stakeholder feedback are being implemented (according to visit and SER 2.2.4., 2.2.1.).

1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

In SER p. 31 the RTA has provided insight on financial resources for the implementation of SF study programs. Studies are funded from the state budget and students' tuition fees. Between 2018 and 2021 there has been a rapid increase in the funding. Although there is an increase in the state budget funding there is no significant difference between enrolled students in SF study programs. But at the same time there is a benefit for the students as they can study from the state budget funding instead of their private, which gives an opportunity to students from different financial backgrounds in the region.

A system for funding scientific research for RTA is not divided within the study field, it is directed to the provision of RTA scientific activities (SER p. 32). During a meeting with the academic staff and director of the SF it was stated that all of the parties are satisfied with the division of the funding for scientific research. In SER p. 32 it is visible that during the three-year period total funding for provision of research has decreased (more than 800 thousands euros in 2 years (2018-2020)). There are both reduction and increase of finances at several positions (rapid increase has been for funding of national research programs and decrease for EU structural funds). During meetings with administrative and academic staff it was discovered that over the next period detailed focus will be on allocation of EU funds, one of the project proposals has been prepared for Horizon Europe grants. Funding for the students' self-government is provided annually in the amount of at least one twentieth of the state funding for the study process and tuition fee revenues and fluctuates at around twelve thousand Euros per year (SER, p. 33, Table 3.3.1.4).

During the visits, the experts could check that the infrastructure of RTA is well developed and friendly for both the teachers and the students. The facilities of RTA are spacious, the workplaces in the auditoriums are well-equipped, there are two spacious computer classrooms and conference rooms, a large library and a reading room, free access to Internet and Wi-Fi networks is provided. Resources for education, science and study field are concentrated in one place, namely a multi-sensor room in the Laboratory of social pedagogy and rehabilitation technologies, which demonstrates alternative rehabilitation methods and techniques for developing physical, intellectual, social and communication job skills for people with disabilities. Such examples provide a great opportunity (in addition to the study field) for the acquisition of practical skills and development of an interdisciplinary vision for specific problem solutions.

Students at RTA have the opportunity to use computers for the study process, in addition the reading room is equipped for individual work.

At present there is a hotel available for students at 22 Maskavas street and in 2022 a student hostel is planned to be opened in the territory of the RTA student campus at Atbrīvošanas aleja 115 (SER pp. 34 - 35). This indicates that RTA plans to further improve the necessary infrastructure. During the visit it was stated that students can stay in the hostel in single, double and triple rooms which makes the hostel fee more student-friendly in case the services of the hostel are necessary.

When assessing the accessibility of RTA buildings visually, they are accessible to people with disabilities, though they are not specifically intended for people with visual or hearing impairments.

RTA has a canteen for the teaching staff and students.

According to SER (SER p. 29 - 30), expenditures for replenishment and acquisition of library collections (periodicals and books) have been increasing in the period from 2018 to 2020.

The latest literature on the relevant fields is regularly purchased and most of the funding is used for the acquisition of books in English in the relevant field. In accordance with the "Regulations on the Provision of Literature", book requests are regularly submitted to the Library (SER p. 35 - 36, Tables 3.3.2 and 3.3.3). During the visit the teaching staff stated that they have an opportunity to apply for the literature required for their course or research needs. The library staff reaffirmed that the required literature is included in the list of books or periodicals to be purchased. The teaching staff and students also confirmed that the mandatory literature which is included in the description of the study courses is available in the library, however occasionally additional literature should be sought using other resources.

In the academic year 2021-22 RTA Library offers databases: iFinances, iTiesības, iBizness, Latvian Standard Library, BilancePLZ, EBSCO, ScienceDirect, Scopus, Web of Science, LNB Digital Collections. Database trials are also offered: in AY 2020-21 there were 4 offers. Databases can also be used remotely (SER p. 37). By using the electronic catalogue of the RTA library, it is possible to select literature in a specific field of interest. For the convenience of users, a section “e-resources” has been created on the Library's website, where links to databases, scientific articles of RTA and other universities, open access resources, and e-books have been compiled. The Open Access Resources section does not provide for a separate section “Social Security and Social Assistance” which could help students to find the necessary resources during the study process of “Social Welfare”. The opportunities offered by RTA demonstrate that the teaching staff and students have an opportunity to use various databases for reading topical and latest literature remotely.

During the visits the experts observed that students were reluctant to speak and answer questions in English. This fact suggests that reading literature in English and understanding the translated text correctly without additional support might cause difficulties. RTA should consider all possibilities to ensure more books (including in English) in the library specific to the field of study. Positive if the teachers develop more methodological teaching materials and books themselves, thus promoting the development of evidence-based study field in Latvia.

In order to inform students about the RTA library e-resources, their use and availability, the library offers classes and individual consultations (SER p.37). During the visit, the experts failed to obtain obvious examples that the students of the SF who had been searching for study literature had used direct support from the library and reading room staff.

Library resources are not adapted for people with visual impairments.

RTA uses the Moodle system in the study process and student attendance is also recorded in the Moodle environment. RTA Regulations on lecturers stipulate that for each study course the lecturer develops a description of the study course, which includes study course materials, which cover the theoretical material of the study course, students' self-examination tasks, tasks for independent work, learning outcome evaluation criteria/materials. The lecturer uploads the study course materials on the study course website ekursi.rta.lv, where a study course template is developed, including questionnaires that the lecturer can use for feedback after the completion of the study course (SER, p. 38).

During the visit the Moodle system was demonstrated to the experts and the system users, both the teaching staff and the students were satisfied with the opportunities and benefits provided by this system. Students noted that they are satisfied that information about the study process is available all in one place. University e-mails have been developed for communication with RTA students.

During the experts visit the teaching staff noted that there were no insurmountable technical difficulties in ensuring the distance learning process. Technical support has always been promptly provided by IT support staff when needed. Lecturers indicated that Zoom or Microsoft Teams communication tools are used for the learning process (SER p.38 mentions Microsoft Teams or Google Meet). According to the opinion of the teaching staff, the distance learning process has a negative impact on practical skills acquisition because it prevents an effective use of certain teaching methods which are important for practicing counselling, observation, etc, however this is not related to technical provision of distance learning process.

According to SER (p. 38), the teaching staff has an opportunity to receive individual counselling and training for work on RTA communication platforms and the lecturers have used it regarding Microsoft Team communication tool.

The qualifications of academic staff of the study field are ensured by applying RTA system competition and assessment. Internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the academic staff and the quality of work have been developed. There is a special procedure set up to motivate the academic staff for career development and engagement in research by providing extra payment.

For attracting qualified staff RTA developed number of documents, including (SER, p. 39, Annex 3 Development plan of the study field "Social Welfare" for 2019-2025):

- RTA academic staff planning issues are regulated in Operation and Development Strategy of RTA 2016-2023 (approved at the meeting of the Senate of the RTA of Technology on 25.10.2016. (with amendments by the RTA Senate decision No.7 on 29.10.2019) and Academic Staff Development Guidelines 2018-2023 (approved at the Study Council Meeting on 16.01.2018. , minutes Nr.5, decision Nr.2.2.);
- Regulations on planning, registration, control and payment of RTA lecturers' methodological developments and scientific research (approved by RTA Study Council on 08.10.2019. decision No.7);
- Procedure for planning and accounting of workload of RTA academic staff (approved by the decision No. 9 of the RTA Study Council meeting on 11.09.2018, with amendments made by the decision No.1 of the RTA Study Council meeting on 12.02.2019, the decision No. 1 of the meeting as of 14.05.2019, the decision No.3 of the meeting on 10.11.2020);
- Procedure for assessing the quality of work of RTA academic staff (approved by the Senate Chair decision No. 1 of 30.03.2021.);
- Regulations on academic positions at Rēzekne University of Technology (approved by the RTA Senate decision No. 8 as of 26.11.2019 (with amendments made by the Senate decision No. 8 of 30.03.2021, decision No. 2 of 25.05.2021);
- Development plan of the study field "Social Welfare" for 2019-2025.

RTA assistants, lecturers and assistant professors are elected for six years in accordance with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions. Professors and associate professors shall be elected for a term of six years, providing the conversion of a fixed-term contract into a contract of indefinite duration after the assessment of eligibility within the time limit set by RTA. (SER, p. 39). All vacancies for academic staff are advertised in an open competition, published in the newspaper "Latvijas Vēstnesis", and other information sources. Applicants' eligibility for the advertised vacancy is assessed in accordance with the Regulations on Academic Positions in RTA. To attract foreign teaching staff, RTA publishes advertisements on the Euraxes portal (SER, p.39). For example, the website of RTA demonstrated a vacancy for a lead researcher at the Research Institute of Business and Social Processes of the Faculty of Economics and Management published on 18.03.2022.

The evaluation of the teaching staff as well as the evaluation of the qualification system is comprehensive, motivating, strategic and providing feedback. The qualification of the teaching staff of RTA is assessed, improved and stimulated in several ways. It is also structured as follows:

- it is established that the academic staff must undertake the professional development programme "Higher education didactics" or "Innovations in higher education" in the amount of 160 hours, it is also possible to take additional other courses, a student-centered approach including;
- a motivating remuneration system has been established – the teaching staff has an opportunity to apply for the evaluation of their academic work quality. This system envisages the determination of the quality coefficient, which is applied to the next year's salary. The established system is also aimed to encourage research;
- development of professorship - it is planned that by 2022 SF will employ 2 more professors (currently 2);
- lecturers involved in SF increase their English language skills, acquire digital skills and leadership competencies;
- process for exchange of knowledge at inter-university level, international level including has been developed;
- during the study process, student surveys on the competence and professionalism of the teaching staff are organized.

In the Development plan of the SF for 2019-2025 one of the priorities is - to increase the participation of practitioners of social work in the implementation of study courses (up to 20%

practitioners in the program) (Annex 3). The field of study purposefully plans the involvement of the academic staff, including the promotion of the involvement of practitioners working in the field of social work (SER p.39). The provision of the teaching staff - social work and social rehabilitation practitioners is definitely very important for implementation of the study field "Social Welfare". Experts support and emphasize the need to increase the number of practitioners in the implementation of study programs. The significance of the objective set is in accordance with the problem identified in the Strategy for Social Protection and Labour market Policy 2021-2027 (approved by Cabinet order No. 616 of 1 September 2021) in the field of social work education (hereinafter - Strategy) (Strategy on Social Protection and Labour Market Policy 2021-2027 (likumi.lv)). In particular, since 2018, the process of changing the content and form of social work education in the world has been characterised by the role of social work practitioners, it is also emphasized in the social work practices of the IFSW European Unit. The Strategy also includes a study-based finding that the lack of skills for social workers to apply theoretical knowledge in practice is partly due to shortcomings in social work study programmes, where some teachers lack practical knowledge, so examples from real social work practice are not fully provided. It is inconceivable to integrate different social work methodologies into social work education programmes without involving social work practitioners, which is provided for in the Plan for Improvement and Development of Social Services for 2022-2024 (approved on 30 March 2022 by Cabinet order No. 231) (hereinafter - Plan). In the Plan, the Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia has provided for one of the tasks to be performed in institutions of the traineeship sector of teachers of higher education – social services of local governments and social work associations and foundations for diversification of practical competences for social work with different target groups. RTA needs to think carefully about how to solve the problem related to the lack of social work practitioners in the implementation of the Bachelor's study programme, possibly it can be solved by forming co-operation with other institutions of higher education of social work in Latvia, in co-operation with employers to motivate practitioners to become social work educators by attracting guest speakers, etc. The development of RTA co-operation with individual employers has to be evaluated, where within the framework of co-operation teachers have been found an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the specificities of social work, including by observing social work practice. RTA identifies scientific and professional competence as one of the most important criteria for selection of academic staff, emphasizing doctoral studies is an important direction for professional development of the academic staff.

RTA also demonstrates efforts to attract social work and social rehabilitation practitioners in the implementation of the study field. Increased attention should be paid to this goal in the plans for attracting RTA academic staff by identifying targeted motivational measures. Consequently, more practitioners would be involved in the implementation of the study field, with a view to become academic staff. Currently, sole social work professionals are involved in the implementation of the study field (SER, p.40).

According to SER p. 41 24 lecturers are involved in the implementation of SF study programs. 20 are in an academic position and 4 are guest lecturers. 10 lecturers are elected to academic and scientific positions. Most of the lecturers are involved in the implementation of both study programs ("Social Work and Social Rehabilitation" and "Social Rehabilitation") (Annex 9), 4 lecturers are involved only in the implementation of joint study program "Social Work and Social Rehabilitation" and only one in "Social Rehabilitation". Some lecturers are teaching one study course and some have more study courses.

In accordance with Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 445 "Regulation on remuneration for teachers' work" full-time academic staff have following number of working hours: an associate professor has 800 hours per year, an assistant professor with a doctor's degree - 900 hours per year, an assistant professor without a doctor's degree, lecturer, assistant - 950 hours per year (SER p. 41). These hours include teaching, conducting research work and evaluation of the study outcomes.

According to SER p. 41 scientific work is a mandatory part of the work of the academic staff. This can be done by working as a scientist, scientific technical staff or scientific service staff. The academic load of the teaching staff employed in the SF, like at RTA in general, prevails over the volume of scientific work. If the RTA wishes to increase the number of publications in high quality journals, workload devoted to the research should be increased, especially for academic staff which has a number of study courses.

According to the information provided in the SER, the findings of the expert visit and the discussions with the students and graduates, it is to be concluded that the support system developed by RTA for students should be assessed as very good. Not only good study infrastructure makes the study environment comfortable, but also a favourable and supportive psychological climate as it was observed within the relations between the students and the teaching staff.

The RTA environment is adapted for people with reduced mobility. Assessing the informative and material base of RTA, the learning process is most likely to be difficult for students with visual, hearing or other impairments. This is due to the fact that so far there have been no students with special needs in the social work and social rehabilitation programs. SER does not provide information on the support system for the students with visual, hearing, autism spectrum disorders, dyslexia or other groups of students who would need RTA support. Provision of support should be considered so that the students who need it could show interest and acquire RTA study programs, including social welfare study field, without any difficulties and with the same requirements, compared to other students. This definitely also requires training and education of teaching, support and administrative staff. In order to adapt the well-developed learning environment of RTA to the needs of people with various disabilities, it is necessary to consider the accessibility of the information posted on the RTA website to all potential target groups who would be interested in studying at RTA, as well as the provision of library resources, including various information and technology tools that would help the people with visual and other disorders to perceive information.

The RTA environment is adapted for people with reduced mobility. Assessing the informative and material base of RTA, the learning process is most likely to be difficult for students with visual, hearing or other impairments. This is due to the fact that so far there have been no students with special needs in the social work and social rehabilitation program and RTA has not developed a special strategy to integrate these students. The library resources also do not provide special ICT solutions, for example, for students with visual impairments to the same extent as to the students without health problems.

Organization and provision of distance learning was rated as very good by the students. As the majority of the students who were attending the meetings were working students, it was pointed out that it is easier to combine distance learning with work. At least one student of the study field had used services of the psychologist provided by RTA and she appreciated that consultations at RTA are provided free of charge.

In addition to a wide range of psychological support, RTA also offers free of charge individual and group career counseling services. As SF students have not yet taken advantage of ERASMUS + mobility, stating that combining work with family life and studies is impossible in order to go for an exchange of experiences to another country, a career counselor could assess whether this aspect could be justified and the students have made their choice correctly. RTA has a career portal where information on study field, work and volunteering opportunities is available. The career portal is one of the resources that could collect information on study field, volunteer work and job opportunities from social service providers, as well as from other regions of Latvia. The RTA student support system provides for the possibility to create individual support plans for full-time studies, if it is justified by objective considerations. There is an opportunity for the students to meet with the director of the study program once in two months to discuss topical issues related to the study process and this has been purposefully developed.

The students assessed the provision of distance learning as very good. Feedback on the Moodle

system and the information in it was also good.

RTA students participate in various activities, organize events themselves, as well as participate in local and national public events. Students can participate in the choir "Sonitum", join the students dance group "Dziga" and learn the skills of acting in the student theater "KerRA". There is a Students' Self-Government in each faculty, where it is possible to gain experience in managing and organizing projects and events, meet like-minded people, as well as solve various topical issues. Students can also be involved in the Student Council of RTA and represent the academy at the Student Union of Latvia (www.rta.lv).

The External Relations Section of RTA has been established and since 2013 there is the Foreign Students Division established there, the aim of which is to attract foreign students to study at RTA. (RTA Yearbook 2020/21, Contents (rta.lv)). There are no foreign students in the study programs of the SF, except those students who study together with ŠA (Šiaulilai Academy Lithuania) in the professional bachelor study program "Social work and social rehabilitation". The experts did not have the opportunity to ask the students of ŠA about their satisfaction with the support and resources provided by RTA. During the experts visit, it was clarified that the challenges of the language barrier that the Lithuanian students face when visiting social service providers in Latvia are overcome in a maximum supportive way, namely, the study field representatives try to translate the necessary information into English. The necessary support is provided also by Latvian students.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions:

RTA has developed a system for determining the field of study and the financial resources necessary for the implementation of the respective study programs. The available funds of the SD "Social Welfare" implemented by the RTA are determined by the state budget funding, income from tuition fees and RTA own revenues. The infrastructure of RTA is well developed and friendly for both the teachers and the students. The facilities of RTA are spacious, the workplaces in the auditoriums, conference, library rooms are well-equipped, incl. IT resources. The opportunities offered by RTA demonstrate that the teaching staff and students have an opportunity to use various databases for reading topical and latest literature remotely. RTA should consider all possibilities to ensure more English books in the library specific to the field of study.

When assessing the accessibility of RTA infrastructure and informative resources, they are not specifically intended for people with visual or hearing impairments. There is no special diversity strategy or guidelines.

The information and communication technology solutions used to ensure the study process are appropriate and effective. According to the assessment of the teaching staff, the distance learning process has a negative impact on practical skills acquisition because it prevents effective use of certain teaching methods which are important for practicing counselling, observation, etc.

RTA has defined and implemented procedures for attracting qualified teaching staff. At the same time there is no clear strategy on how to attract social work and social rehabilitation professionals to the field of study. The academic load of the teaching staff employed in the study direction, like at RTA in general, prevails over the volume of scientific work. Support system developed by RTA for students should be assessed as very good.

Strengths:

- State budget places for SF exist.
- The study infrastructure provided to the staff and the students at RTA is good.
- Accessibility of buildings to people with disabilities is provided.
- There is a support system available to students.

- RTA has established a structured system of professional development and job evaluation of teaching staff.

Weaknesses:

- The accessibility of the environment (buildings) for people with visual and hearing impairments has not been considered. No diversity strategy for students with different special needs.
- There are not enough books available in the field of social welfare in foreign languages (English).
- RTA lacks a strategy on how to attract more students to the study program.

1.4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

From the SER p. 44-45 it is visible that the directions of the scientific research correspond with the overall goals of the RTA. Teaching staff is evenly distributed in order to cover both academic and scientific work. RTA organizes conferences and publishes publications that are connected with the research field of the study programme. There is also international cooperation in terms of publishing in a scientific journal ("Socialne Sveikata", SER p.44).

Scientific work in the RTA is also backed up by the REGI institute which is strongly orientated towards research. Teaching staff and RTA students are supported for conducting and participation in the projects and conferences. REGI also publishes scientific journals that are cited in known international publishing databases.

From the CV's of the teaching staff (Annex 10) it is visible that the publications and projects of the staff are aligned with the study field of RTA.

Scientific work and study processes are connected in a logical way. From the SER p. 46 and from the meetings with students, students are involved in the scientific processes through involvement in projects and presentation of their work at scientific conferences organized by RTA.

The outcomes of the research are also connected with the study field. In the SER p. 46 and in the meetings with the teaching staff it is mentioned that the results of the projects are used to enhance the study process by using the results in the study courses, i.e. "Gerontology and social work with seniors".

The RTA with the ŠA conducts a joint study programme "'Social Work and Social Rehabilitation" in which staff from both institutions participate in the joint research activities such as projects and publishing as mentioned by the SER section 2.4.3. and management and teaching staff in interviews. There are also Erasmus + activities of the staff through which joint projects are conducted as mentioned in SER and also by management and teaching staff in the interviews. The themes and the aims of those collaborations are aligned with the aims of the study programmes.

However, there is no clear strategy on how to attract more researchers to visit RTA in order to broaden and strengthen international cooperation. It should be considered offering visiting scholar grants to attract foreign research, to conduct research and to teach at the RTA. Also, it should be considered offering existing courses in English in order to attract foreign students to come and study at the RTA.

In the meeting with the management of the RTA and in the meeting with the teaching staff information was given and confirmed about the funds available to the teaching staff for the research and for the attendance at the conferences. Funds are available through national funds and also internal RTA funds. The meeting with the management staff also confirmed that the teaching staff is provided with the funds for attending the conferences. In the meeting with the management information is obtained that there is support for the staff who wish to apply for the funds for the projects outside of the RTA from the newly formed department. The staff also actively participates in the Erasmus + exchange scheme.

During the meeting with the teaching staff it is mentioned that not many staff members are able to

write projects. There is no clear strategy on how to educate more staff members for writing project proposals. Although staff have participated in the realization and development of the projects, experts see that it would be advisable to raise competencies in order to apply for projects with high added value, for instance, Erasmus Mundus projects, Horizon Europe, etc.

In the SER section 2.4.5., there is clear information regarding the structure and amount of the student's scientific work. From the meetings with the teaching staff and the students, information has been obtained that students are actively involved in the scientific research. One way the students are involved is through the projects led by the RTA staff, and the other is through RTA grants for which students can apply in order to conduct research. From the SER report, section 2.4.5., It indicates the number of students from study programmes who are/were involved in the projects. Furthermore, through the meeting with the students, information was obtained about their involvement in participation in the scientific conferences organized by the RTA. Students are encouraged and they participate in the conferences with the presentations of the results of their research. The funds for the participation of students at the RTA conferences are also available to students and the conference fee for them is reduced.

RTA has introduced a digitized system for the students and the staff using the Moodle environment for the registration for the semesters and courses as well as for the tracking of their attendance for the classes. The system is also used by the teaching staff for sharing the materials and other course work. SER in section 2.4.6. as well as the meeting with teaching staff mentions the Latvian-Lithuanian cross border project whose results were used in the creation of the new study course "Stress management".

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions:

The identified weaknesses do not affect the overall requirement assessment as fully compliant since the incoming foreign students and researchers do not crucially affect the quality of the study field. Furthermore, there are circumstances beyond the responsibility of the RTA that can affect the numbers of incoming foreign students and researchers. However, it would be good to have a strategy on how to work on raising their numbers.

As it was seen from the biographies of the teaching staff, and from the meetings with RTA staff and students, there are numerous projects being conducted at the RTA and there is a strong support for research and project activities. Since it was not clarified what kind of project applications this refers to, it should not be considered as the crucial weakness that significantly affects the overall assessment.

Strengths:

- Visible scientific orientation of the institution, teaching staff and students.
- Strong support of the RTA for teacher's and student's cooperation in projects and publications.
- Students are actively involved in scientific activities.
- Developed international cooperation in the research.

Weaknesses:

- Low number of incoming foreign students and researchers.
- No clear strategy in order on how to attract more visiting researchers and students.
- Not enough staff capable of writing project applications.

Assessment of the requirement [2]

- 1 R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Biographies of the teaching staff members (Annex 10).

List of the publications, patents, and artistic creations of the teaching staff over the reporting period (Annex 14). The identified weaknesses do not affect the overall requirement assessment as fully compliant since the incoming foreign students and researchers do not crucially affect the quality of the study field. There is a strong support for research and project activities.

1.5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

RTA has a good collaboration with employers, regional municipalities and private institutions within the framework of SF. In the experts meeting with different groups it was confirmed that RTA uses different forms of cooperation such as provision of student internships, participation in the organization of events, participation in different commissions, etc. RTA also offers employers to deliver lectures and seminars organized within the framework of RTA cooperation networks. Employers invite students to study tours, to work as volunteers, as well as to work permanently in their organization.

In the experts meeting academic staff emphasized that they have a good relationship with Municipality Social Service and other organizations. In the meeting the director of the programs pointed out that they have discussions with employers about the program and courses to be developed. This is also validated in the meeting with employers as they emphasize the discussion of topics with the director and academic staff. Employers also emphasize that the director of the program pays attention to the remarks about important topics and incorporates them into the subjects. They are also involved in defense commissions.

In SER p. 54 it is stated that "cooperation agreements are concluded when the cooperation is actually taking place within the framework of projects, organizing joint seminars and webinars". However in Annex 15 there are 12 cooperation agreements in SF. 7 of them are newly signed in 2021 or 2022. The oldest is Bilateral agreement between Šiauliai University (Lithuania) and Rēzekne University (Latvia) on the planned bachelor study program "Social Work and Social Rehabilitation" signed in 2013 which was renewed in 2017. One agreement with Viļaka Municipality Council ended in 2021. Most agreements (seven) are with universities and colleges whose aims are oriented towards cooperation in the fields of studies and scientific research.

In SER point 2.5.1 RTA lists strategic partners involved in the social work sector such as Social work specialists cooperation council (SDSSP), Rēzekne Municipality Social Service, Rēzekne city council administration "Social Service", Ludza municipality social service, Rēzekne territorial organization of the Latvian Society of the Blind, Rēzekne regional society of the Latvian Association of the Deaf, Autism support service in Rēzekne, association "Eņģeļi ar mums" in Rēzekne. Yet agreements are signed only with two of the listed partners: Rēzekne Municipality Social Service, Rēzekne city council administration "Social Service", Ludza municipality social service. In total they have 3 working agreements with social partners that aim at organization and performance of professional practice of students. This seems a bit insufficient for successful organization of students' internships.

"RTA Alumni Association" has been established. According to the information available in the LURSOFT database its aim is also to promote cooperation between graduates and RTA, to involve graduates in lifelong learning and to promote RTA. Experts do not have information whether the graduates of the SF are the members of this association. According to experts, the activities of graduates in this association can contribute to the promotion of the study field.

RTA has clear criteria to select partners from the social and academic sectors. Social partners have

to meet such criteria as to work in the field of social welfare and to have experience in dealing with social welfare issues, to cooperate in joint projects, offer job opportunities, and be open to the search for new forms of cooperation. From academic partners they expect cooperation in joint projects, conferences and other study fields; preparation of specialists in the field of social work; common vision in the training of social work specialists and joint research on social welfare issues.

According to information provided in SAR point 2.5.2 the main strategic goal of RTA internationalization is to become an internationally competitive academy of engineering, social sciences and humanities. From the list of agreements in Annex 15 ŠA (Šiaulilai Academy) is the only foreign institution that has an agreement with RTA. RTA together with ŠA implements a joint bachelor's study program "Social Work and Social Rehabilitation".

An important aspect of ŠA and RTA cooperation in the field of social work is organization of practice placements of Latvian students in Lithuanian social work institutions such as Public Institution Mother Teresa's Family Home, Šiauliai City Municipal Social Service Center and Rehabilitation Centers for Addicts. In turn, Lithuanian students practice in RTA co-operation professional institutions such as Rēzekne City Council Administration "Social Service" - shelter, multifunctional social service center, nursing home, Rēzekne territorial organization of Latvian Society of the Blind, Rēzekne regional society of the Latvian Association of the Deaf.

RTA offers teachers and students the possibility to use Erasmus+ as well as invites students and teachers from foreign universities. RTA has a strategy on how to attract teachers from foreign universities. But the numbers of incoming mobility are not high. In the period 2017-2021 there were 7 teachers mobilities (Annex 18). Teachers of RTA are more active in using Erasmus+. The data presented in Annex 18 are quite impressive.

Students are not very active in using Erasmus+ , in 2016-2018 5 students from the program Social rehabilitation went to Lithuania for practice (Annex 17)) because, as it is explained in SER point 2.5.3, most of them are working, have families and children. There is no data about incoming students in Annex 17. It seems that they have no Erasmus+ students in both programs.

RTA has no strategy on how to attract foreign students to the Joint program.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions:

RTA has a good collaboration with national employers, regional municipalities and private institutions within the framework of SF. Most collaboration agreements (seven) are with universities and colleges whose aims are oriented towards cooperation in the fields of studies and scientific research, but there are very few (three) agreements with social partners that aim at organization and performance of professional practice of students. All the cooperation with foreign institutions are within the framework of the Joint program, in particular ŠA and social organizations of Lithuania. The presented strategy on how to attract teachers from foreign universities in the framework of Erasmus+ is not effective as the numbers of incoming mobility are not high. There are no Erasmus+ students in both programs. The potential of the joint program to attract foreign students not only from Lithuania is not used.

Strengths:

- Teachers are active in Erasmus + mobilities.
- RTA has clear criteria to select partners from the social and academic sector.
- RTA has a joint program and good cooperation with ŠA.

Weakness:

- Unproportional number of agreements mostly with universities/colleges for program development and research and very few with social partners for organizing and conducting professional

internships for students, no cooperation with professional social work organizations, incl. international.

- RTA has not provided any proof of cooperation with professional social work organizations, incl. international.

- Lack of incoming Erasmus + students' and teachers from abroad.

Assessment of the requirement [3]

- 1 R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

SER p. 53- 57. AS field practice is one of the most important part of the programme the number of agreements with social partners for field practice organization is insufficient (Annex 15);

There could be more incoming teachers and students from abroad (Annex 16, Annex 17).

1.6. Implementation of the Recommendations Received During the Previous Assessment Procedures

Analysis

During the previous reporting period RTA received 7 recommendations in order to improve SF. First recommendation was to expand more active cooperation with educational institutions in Latvia and abroad. To implement this recommendation RTA has implemented several activities: introduced joint study program together with ŠA which was licensed on 27.08.2014 (License No. 04048-87), expanded number of delivered lectures in frame of Erasmus+ mobility; cooperated with Higher School of Management and Social Work "Attīstība" whose students continue to study in RTA because of closing before mentioned higher education institution; RTA has participated in the activities organized by the Cooperation Council of Social Work Specialists. The recommendation is fully implemented.

Second recommendation was that students should make more use of scientific literature in foreign languages when developing study papers. In response to that in 2014 the RTA Rector issued an order, which determines the requirements for the use of foreign sources (including international periodicals) in the development of study research papers, RTA provides access to leading databases of scientific periodicals. During the reporting period RTA has introduced bachelor study program "Social Work and Social Rehabilitation" which means that before mentioned recommendation should be applied to both study programs where the situation differs. RTA has provided an expert team with 4 final thesis in both study programs. Overlooking the list of literature there can be seen that in the study program "Social Rehabilitation" literature in foreign languages is used much less in comparison to bachelor thesis in study program "Social Work and Social Rehabilitation". The recommendation is partially implemented. Experts recognized that RTA has set requirements for the use of the latest scientific literature in the development of study research papers - the vice-rector's order stipulates that when planning the study research methodology, literature and sources, the RTA Rector's decree no. 4-5 / 100, which determines the minimum of used literature, must be taken into consideration, however, it was noticed that these requirements does not work in full scale in real life. The next recommendation was to involve students in research cooperation with other institutions. The outcome is that 2-4 students with research reports participate in the annual students conference; students are involved in research conducted in the field of social welfare within Scientific Grants. The recommendation is fully implemented.

Other recommendations addressed the need to improve interactivity during internship. To fulfill this requirement, RTA in SF "Social Welfare" introduced supervisions. Another activity is that the part of

internships in the study program "Social Work and Social Rehabilitation" is organized in social institutions of Šiauliai municipality. As found out by experts during the visit, students of the previously mentioned program were satisfied with the gained experiences in Lithuanian social welfare institutions. Students also are encouraged to participate in Erasmus+ mobility for internships. The recommendation is fully implemented.

Recommendation to increase the number of literature available in the library in foreign languages in the social welfare field has been implemented by regular book purchase, giving the access to different databases, and students of the study program "Social Work and Social Rehabilitation" can use the collections of the library of ŠA. During visits at RTA's library it was stated that students use books from different scientific fields all over the library but at the same time the number of books directly related to social work and social rehabilitation in foreign languages could be increased further as well as there is not sufficient number of foreign literature in the field available. Experts highly appreciate e-resources provided by the RTA, however there is an urgent need for newest printed books, especially in foreign languages (considering that a joint study programme is being implemented). It is not that e-resources can fully provide all of the books available in the field, thus printed books are needed. It was recognized by experts that students hesitate to use online databases and one of the reasons might be that students have insufficient orientation on how to use them. These training sessions would guarantee that every student had been reached out on how to look for information on databases. This should be seen as an opportunity for students to guarantee their ability for information search specifically in online databases. The recommendation is partially implemented.

Additional recommendation to mention was to improve the use of teaching materials and applications in the electronic environment, adapting their content to students' needs. During Covid-19 pandemic RTA developed Moodle environment, materials are available online. Teaching during Covid-19 pandemic was realised from distance and several platforms were introduced: MsTeams and Zoom. Students have the possibility to submit their independent works online. During visits to RTA experts were introduced to the Moodle environment as well and students said that they do not have any challenges to study using online platforms and tools. The recommendation is fully implemented.

In order to improve lecturers' and students' foreign language skills (recommendation in both accreditation and licensing documents), a study course "Practical Foreign Language" in the study program "Social Work and Social Rehabilitation" (4 CP) was introduced. Lecturers are developing their English language skills in the frame of project project "Strengthening of RTA academic staff SF "Education, pedagogy and sports" No. 8.2.2.0/18/I/002. Although several activities were introduced to improve language skills there is a room to enhance language knowledge both for students and some of lecturers. It is crucial that the director of the joint study program as well as the students would be able to communicate in English. The recommendation is partially implemented.

In the licensed study program "Social Work and Social Rehabilitation" following changes have been made after receiving expert recommendations (SER p. 61): the common quality system of the study program has been improved; a study program development plan has been developed; improved descriptions of study courses and the lists of recommended literature for the study courses were re-evaluated and specified.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Most of the recommendations RTA has implemented in full scale (established joint study programme, international cooperation has been expanded, students involve in students conferences, etc.), however there are several challenges related to the implementation of the recommendations (use of scientific literature in foreign languages, improvement of lecturers' and students' foreign language skills). RTA has established needed procedures in order to continue its

work on implementation of the recommendations.

Strengths:

- New joint study program "Social Work and Social Rehabilitation" has been introduced in cooperation with ŠA.
- RTA has broadened its cooperation within Erasmus+ networks.
- In the study program "Social Work and Social Rehabilitation" students include a sufficient amount of foreign literature.
- Students' active involvement in student conferences.
- RTA in the SF "Social Welfare" introduced supervisions.
- Moodle is sufficiently developed and lecturers have their teaching materials online.

Weaknesses:

- In the study program "Social Rehabilitation" diploma work does not contain sufficient amounts of foreign literature.
- Amount of literature specifically on social work and social rehabilitation available in the library is insufficient.
- Although English level has been increased during the reporting period there is room for further improvements.

Assessment of the requirement [4]

- 1 R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Recommendations implemented (Annex 19). RTA has fully implemented following recommendations: involvement of students in research activities, developed Moodle with topical materials related to the study courses, expanded international cooperation by establishing joint study program, and improved interactivity during internship by organizing supervisions. Three recommendations has been implemented partially and further work should be continued on implementation of them.

1.7. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

Include the Problem-based learning approach in the descriptions of the study courses, for example, which institutions of social service providers will be visited, choice of institutions for cooperation, what problems will be solved, etc.

Number of literature on social work and social rehabilitation available in the library in foreign languages should be increased.

Continue improving knowledge of English language of staff.

Broaden collaboration networks at national and international level with employers, professional organizations and other social partners by formalizing cooperation with contracts.

Updated the current webpage of RTA; availability of in-depth information to students, incl. potential is important.

Consider offering courses in English in order to attract more foreign students.

Provide students and staff with training and introduction on how to use databases, available resources provided by the library.

Long-term recommendations

Conduct an environmental accessibility audit for people with disabilities (not just for people with mobility impairments) and develop a comprehensive plan for improvement of the study environment and communication. Provide educational training of RTA staff regarding various functional disorders of people and the necessary support they need.

Develop a strategy to attract more visiting researchers and students.

Create a strategy in order to attract more students to SF "Social Welfare" study programmes.

Make better use of strategic planning and SWOT analysis for the SF "Social Welfare" development.

Offer education on project proposal writing in order to compete for bigger EU projects.

Consider balancing publishing in RTA's journal and other journals in order to increase visibility and foster future cooperation.

Consider strengthening cooperation with the experts from the field through publications and projects.

RTA should reconsider the main directions of the strategic development of the academy by incorporating the potential of social welfare programmes.

II - "Social Rehabilitation" ASSESSMENT

II - "Social Rehabilitation" ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

The study program "Social Rehabilitation" is the first level professional higher education study program. Classification code (IKK) is 41762 which corresponds to the "social services" subsection under the thematic field of "social welfare" and first level professional higher education. The title, code and obtainable qualification are interrelated and coherent. There is a lack of clear definition of the goal of the study program in SER, especially in context of the second study program, as there is some considerable overlap in both programs. This indicates that RTA is struggling with clearly defining goals and aims of the study program. The goal of the program is not ambiguous enough as it aims to prepare qualified social rehabilitators, who are able to compete in the changing socio-economic conditions in the region and in the state labor market and are motivated for further education. Ability to compete is insufficient for a social rehabilitator. This redefinition should be done in order to make it clearer what kind of actions must be taken in future development of the program. The obtainable qualification is "Social rehabilitator" which corresponds to the level 5 of the Latvian qualification's framework (LKI). The study program has been developed according to the professional standard "Social rehabilitator" that was approved on 26th August 2015, however there is no comparison provided with most recent standard approved 15th of December 2021. The program is fully compliant with the study field "Social welfare". The length and study mode is full time 2 years and part time 2 years and 6 months - the structure of studies is in accordance with relevant standards of education - Cabinet Regulation No.141 "Regulations on the State Standard for First

Level Professional Higher Education". Study language is Latvian. The admission criteria of the study program is based on CE exams - in math, Latvian and extra foreign language with extra points being awarded for success in olympiads, previous experience in the field, social activity and so on.

According to SER since 2012/2013 study year changes in the program were made in order to stay compliant with state education standards by including courses on civil and environmental defense. In specialization courses new additions were made - Communication with clients, Ergonomics and Social rehabilitation planning. Some of the tasks for practical works were specified. All of the mentioned changes are justified and can be supported.

According to SER there was no need in the Latgale region for graduates with program specific skill sets, but in recent three years the demand for social rehabilitators has grown - as recent graduates are now employed in the field. It is mentioned in SER that "graduates of 2019/2020 study year work in accordance with the qualification acquired.". As of now there are 19 students in total in the full time program, while there is none in the part time program. The low admission levels and no groups in part time studies is explained by RTA (as mentioned in SER) with low prestige of profession, low salary levels and no demand for social rehabilitator specialists within the region, however RTA sees that in recent years there has been improvements. There is growing social and economic need for social rehabilitators in the region as indicated by SER and RTA during visitation.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions:

Study program complies with the study field. The degree, qualification and admission requirements are coherent, however the study program lacks a clear definition of its goal and profession standard to which program corresponds is outdated. The corrections made during program implementation are justified. Economic and social need for the program is getting better over time.

Strengths:

- There is a growing social and economic need for social rehabilitators in recent years.

Weaknesses:

- Study program goal is not clearly defined.
- Profession standard to which the program is compared to is outdated.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

Study program "Social Rehabilitation" is designed and implemented in accordance with social rehabilitator's professional standard (approved on 26.08.2015.) (Annex 4). Expert team discovered that there is a newer professional standard for social rehabilitators approved on 15.12.2021. (<https://www.psk.lu.lv/uploads/aukszZ02/SRprofstand2021publicts15.12.2021.pdf>).

Study course descriptions (Annex 7) are designed in accordance with RTA's study course description template. All of the study courses have a detailed structure. During meeting with students, it was clear that students know where to find study course descriptions, they are informed about the requirements of the study courses, and from lecturer-to-lecturer students are informed on the requirements of the study course during the first meeting or they are informed where to find them.

When reading all of the study courses it was visible that some of the topics between different study courses repeat, for instance, topics on social services and social benefits law, social security are covered in such study courses as Human rights and regulatory enactments in social work, Social problems, Professional Characteristics of a Social Rehabilitator; topics on social problems are covered in such study courses as Social problems, Social rehabilitation in work with target groups;

human rights topics are overlapping in several study courses. Overlapping of topics between different study courses could be seen as one of the problems. If there are different approaches on how topics are presented then it should be described in the study course descriptions.

However there should be adjustments made to the study course descriptions as some of the courses have an unrealistic amount of mandatory literature - numerous whole length books which, likely, do not reflect actual reading needed in the course and would exceed allocated time for individual and preparatory work mandated by credit point amount.

Another issue is that several study courses are in direct contact with social work as a profession and justification on why social rehabilitators at 1st level higher education should acquire knowledge needed to social workers should be explained. Professional borders between two professions should be kept, especially in cases when another study program within the same SF for social workers is provided.

Overall study courses comply with a social rehabilitator professional standard but at the same time some of the study courses exceed the requirements (for instance, Entrepreneurship in social work, Social work case).

The mapping of study courses should also be revised, as certain topics to be acquired by social rehabilitators are not reflected in the study course description, for instance, topic on volunteer movement resulting from professional standards has not been found in the specified study course Social rehabilitation in work with target groups but such topics as street work, homeless persons, etc. are included which again rises the question whether these are topics which complies with professional standard.

During meetings with students and employers it was clear that social rehabilitators as professionals are very demanded in the labour market which gives students opportunity to get job offer during their field placements. It can be seen both as a strength and as a challenge because these students who are parallelly working can have a negative impact on study quality and outcomes of the study results. Although students and employers stated that it is possible to both work and study from a distance at the same time, it causes doubts on the quality of the studies.

The learning outcomes are evaluated with qualitative and quantitative indicators; evaluation of the student's knowledge is divided into two stages: formative and summative (SER p. 101). Evaluation forms include lecturer and students' feedback and gives the opportunity to lecturers to check the outcome students achieve by checking different works.

In the study course descriptions students can find information on what evaluation methods during the study course will be used. Study course descriptions also serve students as a verification mechanism on results which are achieved.

In the study program various methods are used: tests, reports, presentations, study projects, lectures, practical classes, practices, etc.

During the pandemic while distance teaching and learning is implemented several platforms and tools are used: MsTeams, Zoom, WhatsApp, Skype, etc.

Student-centred approach is implemented which is described in SER p. 102.

During the two-year study period students must take three field placements: 1) with an aim to observe social rehabilitators work in its institution; 2) analyse social problems of clients; 3) learn how to develop and implement social rehabilitation plans. Total volume of internships is 16 CP.

As stated by the students during the visit of RTA, none of the students had any problems with finding an institution. Students can choose the institution in accordance with their professional interests and geographical location of the institution. If there is a need, RTA helps with finding a field placement. In some cases, it was mentioned that some of the students continue their field placement in the same institution. On the one hand it can be seen as a strength, on the other hand the more institutions students visit, the more diverse insight she/he gets on social rehabilitator work. In the first case in depth insight in the institutions and professionals work can be achieved. Meeting with graduates confirmed the premise that they are prepared for the practical work after graduation.

Although it should be mentioned that most of the students already start their professional work which makes it difficult to distinguish what is learned during studies and what during professional work.

The objectives of social rehabilitation practices should be more clearly defined and consistent with the objectives set. For example, the objectives of the second and third practices are not consistent with the objectives pursued. The purpose of the second practice is to develop a social rehabilitation plan for the client, but there is no such task. It should be assessed whether both practices require familiarity and a report on the functions and tasks of the social institution. It should be assessed whether within the framework of one practice the student is able to focus both on assessing the needs of the individual client and drawing up a social rehabilitation plan and preparing proposals for improvement of the social rehabilitation service.

Students can choose topics for their qualification thesis based on their professional interests which can be developed during internship and/or acquiring different study courses. As stated in the meeting with academic staff several cases could be identified when students found their interest in some topics during study courses which they continued in their qualification thesis.

By overviewing topics of the qualification thesis several groups were identified: seniors, persons with disabilities, children and families. All of the specified topics focus on different aspects of social rehabilitators work. Topics also give hints on the themes covered during different study courses which means that students are guided in their research interest.

Although students integrate in their final thesis some amount of foreign literature as mentioned in one of the recommendations (Annex 19), it would be advisable that students 1) rise the number of foreign literature; 2) include a sufficient amount of recent scientific discoveries, ideas of authors. Many sources are old and not always are able to represent changes in the profession, understanding of terminology, and shift of paradigm. Also, many sources of literature published by SDSP "Attistiba" which are old and some of them lost their relevance.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions:

Study programme is mapped in accordance with the social rehabilitator's professional standard (approved on 26.08.2015.). As discovered by the expert's group there is a newer professional standard for social rehabilitators approved on 15.12.2021.

Experts found that at the time when the report on SF was prepared by experts at the web page of National Centre for Education Republic of Latvia (13.04.2022.) there were published two versions of the professional standard (older and newer version). Considering that RTA submitted a report on SF at the time or before the newer version of professional standard was accepted and published, experts do not consider it as a major shortcoming. Experts also made a short comparison on both versions of the professional standard and concluded that besides very broad description of the performed tasks of social rehabilitator in the newest version, there are no considerable differences in the both versions of the professional standards, which might negatively impact the realisation of the program. Although RTA should map study program in accordance with the newly introduced professional standard.

Study program is needed as the demand in the labour market exceeds the RTA's ability due to the number of enrolled students to provide enough social rehabilitators and it is prognosed that there will be an increase of the employees in the Latgale region.

Strengths:

- Social rehabilitators are demanded in the labour market.
- Several platforms and tools were introduced during distance teaching and learning.
- Study courses are regularly updated.

- Students are demanded at the labour market already during their studies.
- Variety of methods during studies are used.

Weaknesses:

- Study courses are not mapped in accordance with the latest social rehabilitator professional standard.
- Several topics of the study courses are overlapping.
- Some study courses exceed the requirements of a social rehabilitator.
- The mapping of study courses should also be revised, as certain topics to be acquired by social rehabilitators are not reflected in the study course descriptions.
- The goals and tasks of the internship are not very clear and unambiguous.

Assessment of the requirement [5] (applicable only to master's or doctoral study programmes)

- 1 R5 - The study programme for obtaining a master's or doctoral degree is based on the achievements and findings of the respective field of science or field of artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Not relevant.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

The facilities of RTA are spacious, the workplaces in the auditoriums are well-equipped, there are two spacious computer classrooms and conference rooms, a large library and a reading room, free access to Internet and Wi-Fi networks is provided. RTA uses the Moodle system in the study process. During the visit the Moodle system was demonstrated to the experts and the system users, both the teaching staff and the students were satisfied with the opportunities and benefits provided by this system. University e-mails have been developed for communication with RTA students. During the experts visit the teaching staff noted that there were no insurmountable technical difficulties in ensuring the distance learning process. Technical support has always been promptly provided by IT support staff when needed. Lecturers indicated that Zoom or Microsoft Teams communication tools are used for the learning process. (SER p.38 mentions Microsoft Teams or Google Meet).

The RTA environment is adapted for people with reduced mobility. Assessing the informative and material base of RTA, the learning process is most likely to be difficult for students with visual, hearing or other impairments.

Funding for the science and for scientific activities (performance) is not divided within the study field, but directed to the provision of RTA scientific activities (SER p. 32). In order to promote research, several sources and types of funding are available for the research activities of the academic staff.

Separate examples can be identified and these prove that the capacity of study programme is being strengthened thanks to available resources of RTA. For instance:

- The Latvian translation of the book The professional rehabilitation of people with special needs: preconditions for success written by two Dr. paed was published in 2014. This book is used in the implementation of the study programme Social Rehabilitation. (SER, p.84).
- In 2018, SPRTL equipped a multisensory room, which is one of the most modern in the Baltic States. The equipment has been purchased within INTERREG LAT LIT projects MODPART LLI-223 (2012-2013) and POZCOPING LLI-163 (2017-2019) for research in the field of social rehabilitation and stress reduction. (SER, p. 34). Multisensory room as a resource is used in the study programme.

The latest literature on the relevant fields is regularly purchased and most of the funding is used for the acquisition of books in English in the relevant field. In accordance with the "Regulations on the Provision of Literature", book requests are regularly submitted to the Library. (SER p. 35 – 36, Tables 3.3.2 and 3.3.3). During the experts visit the teaching staff pointed out that they have an opportunity to apply for the literature required for their course or research, which is accordingly included in the list of books or periodicals to be purchased. Students also expressed satisfaction with the literature resources available in the library. The opportunities offered by RTA demonstrate that the teaching staff and students have an opportunity to use various databases for reading topical and latest literature remotely.

The sources of funding of the study programme are created by the state budget financing, student tuition fees and RTA own revenues. The costs of the study place in the study programme "Social Rehabilitation" are determined taking into account the basic costs of the study place, the level of study programmes, duration, form, as well as the structure of the academic staff and the field of study. (SER, p. 108).

One of the factors that determines the long-term life of the study programme, is the number of students in the particular programme. In the study programme "Social rehabilitation" from study years 2016/17 the less number of students in places funded by the state budget was four and in study year 2019/20 no one student was enrolled. But in study years 2020/21 8 students were enrolled in the 1st year course, and in study years 2021/22 10 students have started their studies in state paid places (SER, Annex 2). In the process of attracting students', RTA can consider the possibility to develop cooperation not only with the regional municipalities and employers, but also with other regions, where the study programme "social rehabilitator" is not offered.

The total cost of study per student is estimated to be EUR 4 890.33 per year, which does not exceed the cost of preparing one student in a similar speciality in European countries. Minimum number of students in the study programme to ensure the profitability of the study programme is 7. (SER, p.108).

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions:

RTA has available resources (state funded places, good material-technical provision, including IT, different sources for research funding) to achieve good results of studies. It also has the number of students to ensure the rentability of the study programme, but a specific strategy to attract more students has to be considered.

More observations which are based on the information provided from meetings with RTA administrative, academic staff and students are mentioned in the part "Assessment of the Study field" in criteria "1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field."

Strengths:

- RTA has good technical (incl., for distance learning) and informative base (incl., resources of the library) to ensure implementation of the study program.
- State budget places and a stable system of extra funding attraction are available.
- There is an intellectual potential in order to promote the achievement of the goals of the study program.
- Multisensory room as a resource is used in the study program.

Weaknesses:

- In order to attract the larger number of students, the strategy of action is necessary.
- Resources are not fully available for students with special needs.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

- 1 R6 - Compliance of the study provision, science provision (if applicable), informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study provision, science provision, informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision fully compliant with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

The RTA fulfills the requirements for the elements of standard 2.4.1 at a fully compliant level of quality. There is evidence that the qualifications of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study program comply with the requirements for the implementation of the study program and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments. The study program employs enough of the teaching staff with appropriate levels of qualifications and involves guest/visiting lectures with appropriate qualifications that take part in the implementation of the study program, as seen in SER p. 110. Additional pedagogical courses for the teaching staff that require them are offered and financially aided which was also confirmed in the meeting with the assessment staff. Internships in various institutions are also provided for.

The qualifications of the teaching staff member align with the aims and learning outcomes of the study program and the relevant study courses. Both scientific, teaching, and professional skills of the teaching staff cover all areas needed to achieve the aims and learning outcomes of the study program and the relevant study courses.

The SER p. 111 mentioned that the participation of the professionals from the practice needs to be increased in the teaching study courses. However, the SER does not mention plans on how to do it.

The RTA fulfills the requirements for the elements of standard 2.4.2 at a fully compliant level of quality. There is evidence from the self-assessment data that changes in the composition of the teaching staff do not negatively affect the quality of the implementation of the study program, e.g., the data from the self-assessment documentation shows that the number of the staff that reached higher scientific and academic levels has increased. These changes are also aligned with the requirements specified in regulatory enactments.

The RTA fulfills the requirements for the elements of standard 2.4.4. at a fully compliant level. Teachers are encouraged to publish their work in domestic and foreign journals. There is evidence that teachers of the RTA publish regularly in the domestic and international publicly available databases. The RTA management supports participation of the teachers at the conferences and publishing in various scientific publications through financial support. From the available teacher's CV's from the Annex 10, it seems that there is a tendency for teachers to publish their work in the conference proceedings book of the RTA organized conferences and RTA published journals.

The RTA fulfills the requirement for the elements of standard 2.4.5. at a fully compliant level of quality. The RTA has established mechanisms that ensure that the work of the teaching and support staff is aligned with the aims of the study program. There are documents that regulate the management of the study program, cooperation planning and quality control options. The teaching staff and the professionals from the practice also cooperate through student's professional practice and other ways mentioned in the SER p. 114.

During the Covid pandemic RTA management implemented remote communications tools to support the online study process. The RTA actively involves the professionals from the field in the

development of the study and planning of the activities for improvement of the study process and outcomes.

From the available teacher's CV's, it seems that there is a tendency for teachers to publish their work in the conference proceedings book of the RTA organized conferences and RTA published journals.

In the Annex 14 there are CV's of the teaching staff with their references of the published work. Majority of the published work of all the teaching staff for which CV's are available tends to be in the journals that are published by the RTA and conference proceedings materials from the conferences organized by the RTA.

Technically, this is not a problem since journals usually have strong peer review procedures. However, to facilitate cooperation on the international level, it is strongly advised to also publish in international journals to reach an international audience. This is also the way to attract more international scholars.

More problematic are conference proceedings because a large number of the materials published in the conference proceedings are not peer-reviewed. Usually, the abstracts are peer-reviewed but not the full papers if submitted. Furthermore, there is a limit of pages for the papers if authors want to publish a full paper. However, since proceedings are getting more and more cited in the prestigious databases like WoS and Scopus, many authors opt to publish their work here, but not in the regular journals. On the RTA website there is no information whether papers published in the conference proceedings of the conferences organized by RTA underwent a full review process, but since they are cited in WoS and Scopus, they are automatically regarded as of high quality.

To conclude, publishing in RTA journals and conference proceedings of the conferences organized by the RTA does not imply that the work published is of less quality. However, because of the facts stated above, it is advised that work should be published in both domestic (RTA) and international based journals and materials in order to enhance the quality of the papers and to facilitate international cooperation, among others.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by indicating strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions:

There is enough evidence to conclude that RTA ensures that the teaching staff members have enough qualifications, scientific, teaching, and professional skills, and support for the implementation of the study programme according to the regulatory enactments, however participation of the professionals from the practice should be increased. RTA successfully managed to implement a range of communication tools to ensure remote studies during Covid pandemic.

Strengths:

- Teaching staff have competences to provide suitable knowledge for students.
- Strong orientation to publish and conduct projects.
- Good cooperation between teaching staff, students and experts from the field.

Weaknesses:

- More need for the professionals in the teaching process.
- Narrow scope of diversity where publications are published.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

- 1 R7 - Compliance of the qualification of the academic staff and visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Biographies of the teaching staff members (Annex 10).

List of the publications, patents, and artistic creations of the teaching staff over the reporting period (Annex 14).

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

- 1 - The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study program "Social rehabilitation" complies with Regulations of Cabinet No. 141 "Noteikumi par pirmā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības valsts standartu".

- 2 - The study programme complies with a valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided if the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Study program complies with 5. level (LKI) professional standard "Social rehabilitator" approved 26th August 2015, yet there is no comparison provided for comparison with standard approved on 15th December 2021. Experts have evaluated study programmes' compliance with the newest professional standard (approved on 15th December 2021) and concluded that study programme mostly complies with the stated requirements in the standard, however there were found several flaws (for additional information see Ch. 2.2. and conclusion section).

- 3 - The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 561, Paragraph two and Section 562, Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached study course descriptions complies with regulations set forth in Law of Higher Education Institutions, although, for instance, number of mandatory literature and its compliance with the study course, defined skills and knowledge for social rehabilitator should be revised.

- 4 - The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure according to which state recognised documents of higher education are issued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The provided Diploma sample complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued according to MK No. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus".

- 5 - The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Not relevant.

- 6 6 - Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Not relevant.

- 7 7 - At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Not relevant.

- 8 8 - The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached resumes of staff and confirmation in Annex 11 verify that state language proficiency is compliant with MK. Nr. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi".

- 9 9 - The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Not relevant.

- 10 10 - The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Sample of attached study agreement complies with MK. Nr. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi".

- 11 11 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme or another higher education institution or college (agreement with another accredited higher education institution or college) if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex 5 confirms that cooperation agreement is in place with P. Stradins Medical College of the University of Latvia (Latvijas Universitātes P. Stradiņa Medicīnas koledža) with possibility to continue studies within first level professional higher education programme "Social Rehabilitator".

- 12 12 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's license is revoked due to the actions (actions or omissions) of the higher education institution or college and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex 6 confirms that the institution guarantees compensation for losses if the study program is not accredited or the licence of the study program is revoked due to the actions of the college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study program.

- 13 13 - The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 55.(1), Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Not relevant.

- 14 14 - Compliance with the requirements specified in other regulatory enactments that apply to the study programme being assessed (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Not relevant.

Assessment of the requirement [8]

- 1 R8 - Compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

"Study program "Social rehabilitation" seems that mostly complies with latest (approved on 15th December 2021) professional standard "Social rehabilitator". RTA has provided comparison only with earlier standard version. In all other aspects study programme complies with requirements set forth in regulatory enactments.

General conclusions about the study programme, indicating the most important strengths and weaknesses of the study programme

Study program complies with the requirements for the study field. The qualification and admission requirements are coherent, however the study program lacks a clear definition of its goal and profession standard to which program corresponds is outdated. As mentioned in the analysis in Ch. 2.2 experts made a brief comparison on both versions of the professional standard (one approved on 26.08.2015., another approved on 15.12.2021.) and concluded that besides a very broad description of the performed tasks of social rehabilitator in the newest version, there are no considerable differences in the both versions of the professional standards. In the opinion of experts RTA has not had a chance to map the study program in accordance with the newest version of the standard since it was a time when RTA submitted all of the documentation for accreditation. Experts see that RTA has to map study program in accordance with the latest professional's standard and it will be possible to perform this task as soon as possible.

Economic and social need for the program is getting better over time. Several study courses are in direct contact with social work as a profession and justification on why social rehabilitators at 1st level higher education should acquire knowledge needed to social workers should be explained. During mapping RTA will exclude overlapping topics in the study courses and reconsider results in

the study courses where the requirements for social rehabilitators exceeds, also make needed precisions on goals and tasks of the internships.

RTA has available resources and provisions (state funded places, good material-technical provision, including IT, different sources for research funding) to achieve good results of studies. It also has the number of students to ensure the rentability of the study program, but a specific strategy to attract more students has to be considered.

Strengths:

- There is a growing social and economic need for social rehabilitators in recent years.
- Social rehabilitators are demanded in the labour market.
- Several platforms and tools were introduced during distance teaching and learning.
- RTA has good technical (incl., for distance learning) and informative base (incl., resources of the library) to ensure the study program.
- State budget places and a stable system of extra funding attraction are available.
- There is an intellectual potential in order to promote the achievement of the goals of the study program.
- Multisensory room as a resource is used in the study program.
- Strong orientation to publish and conduct projects.
- Good cooperation between teaching staff, students and experts from the field.

Weaknesses:

- Study courses are not compared and mapped in accordance with the latest (which was approved on 15th December 2021) social rehabilitator professional standard.
- The mapping of study courses should also be revised, as certain topics to be acquired by social rehabilitators are not reflected in the study course description, while some topics within the courses are overlapping or exceeding the requirements of a social rehabilitator
- In order to attract the larger number of students, the strategy of action is necessary including clear definition of study programme goal.
- More need for the professionals in the teaching process.

Evaluation of the study programme "Social Rehabilitation"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Social Rehabilitation"

Short-term recommendations

Map study courses in accordance with the latest professional standard of social rehabilitator (approved in 2021) and revise content of the study courses in order to exclude unneeded knowledge and include the needed competencies for social rehabilitator.

Redefine the goal of the study programme.

Consider inviting more guest lecturers from the field to enhance the study process and prepare the students for the practical work.

Increase the number of foreign literature in the diploma works of the modules/study courses of the study programme "Social Rehabilitation" with ratio 50:50.

Review the list of literature in the study course descriptions to avoid a large number of mandatory literature with a whole length books. Instead you can point on specific chapters and pages.

Update the list of literature in study course descriptions by adding newest literature in the field.

To review the goals and tasks of the internships in cooperation with the employers.

Long-term recommendations

As graduates are valuable resources for RTA, they should be leveraged more - by seeking ways to include them in the study process after finishing their studies.

Consider signing contracts with field placements.

Attract more lecturers from the field who work as a social rehabilitators.

II - "Social Work and Social Rehabilitation " ASSESSMENT

II - "Social Work and Social Rehabilitation " ASSESSMENT

2.1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

The study program "Social Work and Social Rehabilitation" is the professional bachelor study program with the goal to prepare educated, professional, competitive specialists with the qualification "Social worker" for the work in public and municipal institutions. The qualification "Social worker" corresponds to the level 6 of the Latvian qualifications framework (LKI) and level 5 in professional qualification framework (PKL). Degree to be obtained is a professional bachelor degree in social work with qualification - "social worker". Classification code (IKK) is 42762 which corresponds to the "social services" subsection under the thematic field of "social welfare" and professional bachelor higher education. The Diploma provided is by RTA with diploma supplement where the issuing institution is mentioned both RTA and Šiauliai Academy of Vilnius University. Diploma supplement is signed by RTA and ŠA rectors. The title, code, degree and obtainable qualification are interrelated and coherent and fall within the scope of the general aims of the study programme.

The study program has been developed according to the professional standard of social worker that was approved on 14th October 2020 and is still in force. The program is fully compliant with the study field "Social welfare". The length and study mode is full time 4 years and the structure of studies is in accordance with relevant standards of education - Cabinet Regulation No. 512 'Regulations on the second level of professional higher education state standard'. Study language is in Latvian and English as study program is joint with Šiauliai Academy of Vilnius University. During meetings with the study program director, it was acknowledged that English is used for these study courses where lecturers from RTA and ŠA are involved and during internships when Latvian students visit institutions in Lithuania and vice versa. During study course "Practical foreign language" students can acquire English terminology related to social work and achieve other study results in accordance with the study course description. Although this is an opportunity for students to improve their knowledge of English it might not be sufficient to compensate for gaps in the knowledge for acquisition of the results of study courses where English is teaching language. During meetings academic staff and program directors of RTA and ŠA mentioned that Russian is also used in the communication process, and both students and teachers help with the translation in languages students can understand. Experts would like to emphasize the need to use English in

these parts of the study program which are joint.

According to SER, a fraction - 1/10 - of the program is implemented in cooperation with both Latvian and Lithuanian lecturers. The program focuses on knowledge and abilities working with children, youngsters, and people with disabilities. The self-assessment report seeks to explain why the title of the bachelor's degree program is "Social work and social rehabilitation" (SER, p.70). However, reasons provided do not create confidence that an in-depth theoretical and practical assessment has been made in accordance with the situation in Latvia and also during the experts visit, the director of the study field "Social Welfare" did not provide additional arguments as to the conceptual justification of the specialization - social rehabilitation. Furthermore, the themes of the bachelor's study program diploma theses demonstrate that students choose different topics with seniors, alcohol addicts and the homeless as the target groups. The expert group took note of the SER information (p.70): "The program development workgroup of Siauliai Academy of Vilnius University and the Faculty administration found it necessary to include social rehabilitation in the title as the indication of the specialisation. As both Siauliai Academy and RTA have diverse experience in implementing special education programmes, it was decided to use this in the programme 'Social work and social rehabilitation', for the social work target groups are people with disabilities, children, youngsters, and their families." For more information, there were expert questions in the expert meeting, however a convincing answer was not received. In general experts do not mind that the title of the study programme is "Social work and social rehabilitation". At the same time, even if RTA has not meant social rehabilitation as a specialization (only as an accent us one of the directions in social work), there still lacks an explanation in SER for this concept.

The aim of the program is to prepare students to work in the field of social work with a high level of professional and intercultural competencies. The aim to develop cross-cultural competences is presented in SER p. 70. Unfortunately the development of intercultural or cross-cultural competences are not mentioned in the results of the study program although there is a subject Problems of multiculturalism in social work. In addition, there is also a goal to direct students in their research work. The admission criteria of the study program is based on CE exams - in math, Latvian and extra foreign language with extra points being awarded for success in olympiads, previous experience in the field, social activity and so on. Yet there have been indications during visitation that students' English language skills are at low level. It is important for such joint programmes that English language skills are at sufficient level, therefore English language requirements during admission process should be reworked by RTA.

The study program was first licensed in 2014 and since then there have been some changes to the study program mainly related to changes in the professional standard. According to SER as of now the study curriculum between Latvian and Lithuanian counterparts differs by about 18%. There have been changes in general courses in 10 CP amount, theoretical specialization courses in 6 CP and in professional specialization courses in 12 CP amount. As of now there is no indication that changes made in the program by the institution are not justified - the internal quality system of RTA ensures that changes are analyzed, justified and well prepared.

The study program emphasizes the actual need of society and labour market demands within the social work field. Graduates are highly sought after and all employers during visitation highlighted the necessity of study program, need for both students, graduates and research within the field. According to SER the first graduation in the study program took place in spring of 2019. In total 11 students have graduated from the program now, all of them work in social welfare field institutions with most of them in the region. Social workers are in demand in the labour market. According to SER the employment rate is as follows - 44 % of students are already working in the field and 83% of the final year students work in the field. There is a stable tendency in total student amount as well - during the first year - 2016/2017 - of study program there were only 12 students in the program, while during 2021/2022 there are 29 (Annex 3). The total numbers of students are a bit higher at ŠA as they - according to SER - received the license earlier and they started the implementation of the

program already in 2014/2015 study year. The main reason for dropouts during study time - according to SER - can be explained by the fact that studies are available only in full time format and students sometimes find it tough to combine studies with employment.

One of main reasons for development of the joint study program is compliance with the RTA strategy which states that institution must seek cooperation opportunities not only with Latvian but abroad institutions as well in order to promote the amount of available financial resources and further internationalisation efforts. In other study fields RTA has good cooperation experience with other Lithuanian institutions of higher education including other joint programs. During the development of the joint study program RTA followed a predefined set of criteria and followed its quality assurance principles ensuring that joint study program is justified.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions:

Study program complies with the study field. The title, aims, degree, professional qualification, outcomes (although could be supplemented with intercultural competences) and admission requirements are well interrelated and coherent. The corrections made during program implementation are justified by the fact that all changes must be made in accordance with the internal quality system. Economic and social need for the program is evident and demonstrable. The development of a joint study program followed set quality principles and is justified by RTA strategy. It would be necessary to review the enrollment in the study programme criteria for the students knowledge of English.

Strengths:

- Study program complies with the study field.
- Strong economic and social justification of the study program.

Weaknesses:

- Intercultural competences are not incorporated in the learning outcomes of the program.
- One of the reasons for student dropouts can be explained by the fact that only full time study mode is available in this study program.
- Not sufficient admission requirements for English language skills in the joint study programme.

2.2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

Study program is designed in accordance with the national regulation for 2nd level professional higher education: Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia No. 512 of 26 August 2014 "Regulations on The State Standard of Second Level Professional Higher Education" (Annex 4).

Study courses are structured in compliance with social worker's professional standard which was approved in autumn 2020 and is mapped according to professional competencies defined in professional standard (Annex 6). Study courses are in connection with objectives and results of the study program.

According to information received during meeting with academic staff, study courses are updated once per year.

As stated in the SER p. 76 to respond to labour market needs RTA works in cooperation with employers in development of the study courses. This information was approved during meetings where employers and lecturers gave an example on how acknowledged needs by employers are implemented in the program.

Employers are involved in the bachelor thesis defense in order to evaluate actuality of chosen topics, students' preparedness for the labour market, and also propose research topics based on their needs for further research. During a meeting with the study director from ŠA it was mentioned that in order to strengthen cooperation in the realization of a joint study program representatives from ŠA are involved in bachelor thesis defense.

In looking for what is joint in the program in the meeting with the program director of ŠA it was told that ŠA and RTA implement the same program, where some courses are different, but specialization courses are the same. There are also other joint elements: quality assurance council which consists of 4 representatives from Latvia and 4 from Lithuania, that meet once per year; two separate defense commissions for bachelor works but with Latvia and Lithuania representatives in each; field placements, tasks and goals, 4 study courses (Professional rehabilitation, Counseling and mediation in social work, Socialization and social rehabilitation of people with disabilities, Individual social work), mobility of teachers to Latvia and Lithuania.

All the changes in the program are coordinated, but not many changes are possible as it is quite difficult to count credits. Lithuania has ECTS and Latvia has a national system. It is quite difficult to make changes to the program, as the number of credits in the Latvian and Lithuanian systems differs. Specialization subjects are adjusted and not changed a lot, but general university subjects are quite different as there is more freedom to change. The director of ŠA said that there are difficulties when transferring the credits from Latvia to ECTS or vice versa, because the different number of credits does not allow for an accurate calculation, sometimes there may be a lack of credits in total at the end.

However there are some uncertainties in organizing a joint bachelor program: in the Bilateral agreement between ŠA and RTA (2013) point 2 it is written that the languages of the program are Lithuanian, Latvian and English. However, the English language is a great challenge for directors of the program (they speak English very little), academic staff (few speak English) and students. Directors in the meeting emphasized that they manage to communicate using Russian, students explained that they use google and help each other to translate, academic staff pointed out that they ask students to translate during the lectures if most of the students do not know English. This insufficient knowledge of English raises the question of the quality and proper implementation of the program. Experts specifically checked the English knowledge of those teachers who are directly involved in the study courses provision in the joint part of the programme. In the meeting with students they could not answer what subjects were taught in English, they also could not give a clear answer what subjects they had been taught by Lithuanian teachers. The academic staff also did not know which courses were taught in pairs with Lithuanian teachers or who taught from Lithuania.

However the program is highly valued by students and graduates. In the meeting both groups emphasized that they were satisfied with the quality of studies. The organization of studies helped to reconcile work and studies. They also explained that during their studies once per year they went to Siauliai to visit social institutions, meet families in family centers. It was a very good experience, they acquired experience from employers. Both groups confessed that language was a big challenge, but they managed by using google.

Students-centered learning principles have been developed in accordance with Standards and Guidelines (ENQA) for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (approved on 15-16.2015). RTA has developed formal requirements and rules for evaluation, some examples can be mentioned: rules of examinations and testing, methodological recommendations for organizing students' independent work, regulations on course exams and tests, etc. which results from SER p. 77.

Lecturers at the beginning of the study course introduce students with the requirements, assessment of the work and final examination. As stated by students and graduates during the meeting this information was confirmed. Students are informed where to find study course

descriptions and they have knowledge on how to access them on Moodle.

However there should be adjustments made to the study course descriptions as some of the courses have an unrealistic amount of mandatory literature - numerous whole length books which, likely, do not reflect actual reading needed in the course and would exceed allocated time for individual and preparatory work mandated by credit point amount.

According to "Regulation on Study Course Examinations and Tests at RTA" which is mentioned in the SER p. 78, 40% of evaluation in the study course consists of formative evaluation, other part is summative evaluation. The overall evaluation of the course consists of a sum of separate works to be completed during study course acquisition and obtained evaluations (test works, reports, presentations, study projects, etc.) (SER p. 78).

As discovered during meeting with academic staff and study program director in study courses where lecturers from RTA and ŠA are involved, teachers agree on the methods and examination procedures.

During the pandemic studies were organized from distance which impacted RTA's ability to take physical mobility in cooperation with Šiauliai Academy- pandemics restrictions impacted students' mobility to and from Lithuania and Latvia, as well as internships were affected. But nevertheless, this situation has been overcome by using different platforms and tools to guarantee successful involvement of the academic staff and students from ŠA.

According to SER p. 80 the organisation of internships at RTA is controlled by the Regulation of internships approved by the Senate which regulates types, aims, tasks and other related issues (see Annex 9).

During studies students must take 6 internships, total volume of CP is 26 (SER p. 80), which is maximum amount for professional study programs in accordance with Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia No. 512 of 26 August 2014 "Regulations on The State Standard of Second Level Professional Higher Education".

Internships are provided in cooperation with several social institutions in the regions, with some of them RTA has cooperation agreements, some of them are Rēzekne city and Rēzekne region. This cooperation gives an opportunity to students to choose a practice institution. Another option is to choose field placement close to the student's living place and in accordance with their professional interests. All of the 6 before mentioned internships have their aims and objectives. As discovered during meetings with students and graduates they have chosen their field placement based on their professional interests, geographical location, students' employment status also impacts the choice. Every internship finishes with the defence procedure and submission of practice diary.

High number of internships can be seen as a challenge. During meeting with employers, some stated that internships could be longer. This would give an opportunity for students to stay in the place for a longer time to see the development of the client's case. Aims of the internships demands students to be in different institutions in order to fulfil its aims but at same time RTA's partnership network (with whom have cooperation agreements) is rather narrow, which means that it would be an opportunity to broaden it; another issue discovered by experts during visits is that students choose to take internship in one and the same place several times which rises the question whether they can achieve aims and objective stated but every internship.

RTA sees internships as one of the most crucial parts to acquire needed professional knowledge (SER p. 81). Experts see it as an opportunity to prepare students in accordance with the needs of the labour market. In SER p. 81 it is stated that students from RTA and ŠA take an internship together, which was approved in several meetings (students, academic staff, director of the ŠA). Although it gives an opportunity for students both in Latvia and Lithuania to get familiar with the work of diverse institutions, experts also see it as a challenge and burden for students of both sides. Particularly challenging it can be in a situation where neither Russian, nor English is spoken and only one student from the group can communicate in foreign language (such situations were discovered during meeting with academic staff). But at the same time it gives an opportunity to students to see

international practices. As students stated during meetings this ability to see how different institutions in Lithuania work is unprecedented.

In order to devote more time to training practical skills in work with an individual social case, presumably it might be unnecessary to study the organizational structure of the institution (including job descriptions) during each internship because this time could be devoted to practical work with an individual client. From the descriptions in the internship diaries it could be concluded that not all students can participate in the chosen study field supervision. It is likely to be discussed with the providers of the internship and agree on solutions to prevent it. According to the experts, the goals and tasks of the first internship have been very successfully defined. With regard to other internships, it should be assessed whether the objectives are sufficiently focused, clear and not too broad. Namely, it is unclear whether the objective of the internship is to study the organizational structure and development of the institutions, or to practice individual social work with a case or another social work method.

For instance:

- During the internship II it is necessary to get acquainted with an existing project and to evaluate it, as well as to evaluate development of new social services in the internship. According to the description, the place for the internship may be a social rehabilitation service provider, whose tasks are likely not to include the development of new social services at all;
- Regarding the internship III, it is necessary to evaluate whether the planned tasks are not too extensive for a 6-week study field. It is unclear whether the internship is focused on social work with families with children or families. This is important to specify because social work with families with children is one of the most important fields of activity of a social worker;
- It follows from the description of the internship V that it is necessary to work both with an individual case and to develop suggestions for the improvement of the work of the institution. It is not clear what is meant by social rehabilitation service organisations.

Until now RTA has not had many graduates in the program, more graduates are from ŠA (Annex 3). In SER p. 82-83 bachelor thesis were on distinct topics including diverse target groups: seniors, young people, families, etc. Added value resulting from bachelor thesis as mentioned during meeting with academic staff is that students not only research the chosen topic but also propose a solution for a discovered problem in the bachelor thesis, which is described in the modelling part of the thesis. Academic staff also mentioned that during studies there were several cases when students have chosen topics of interest based on covered topics in several study courses; another source of inspiration is coming from students' professional work. As stated in the meeting with students most of them already work parallel to studies.

Chosen topics represent and correspond to the objectives and the results of the study program, as well as trends in the labour market.

Although students integrate in their bachelor thesis sufficient amount of foreign literature as mentioned in the one of the recommendations (Annex 19) from the last evaluation procedure, it would be advisable that students include in their final thesis sufficient amount of recent scientific discoveries, ideas of authors, and a shift in concepts they describe during decades. Many sources are old and not always are able to represent changes in the profession, understanding of terminology, and shift of paradigm. Also, many sources of literature published by SDSP "Atistiba" which are old and some of them lost their actuality.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions:

There are some joint elements implementing the program but English seems to be a considerable challenge for both teachers and students, and this limits the potential of the program. The joint program is highly valued by students.

Strengths:

- Study program is designed in accordance with the national regulation for 2nd level professional higher education and the latest professional standard.
- Study courses are annually updated.
- Employers are involved in different phases of implementation of the study program: development of study courses, defence of bachelor thesis.
- Students-learning principles have been developed.
- The joint program is highly valued by students.

Weaknesses:

- There are six internships which restricts students' ability to go in-depth work with clients.
- Students and supervisors at the internship institutions have difficulties communicating in one common language.
- The goals and tasks of the internship are not very clear and unambiguous.
- Literature used in bachelor thesis is rather old which might impact the understanding of different concepts and ideas nowadays.
- Difficulties in transforming ECTS to Latvian credits and vice versa.
- The amount of mandatory literature is too large, as well as there are no highlighted chapters or pages within a book.

Assessment of the requirement [5] (applicable only to master's or doctoral study programmes)

- 1 R5 - The study programme for obtaining a master's or doctoral degree is based on the achievements and findings of the respective field of science or field of artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Not relevant.

2.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

The facilities of RTA are spacious, the workplaces in the auditoriums are well-equipped, there are two spacious computer classrooms and conference rooms, a large library and a reading room, free access to Internet and Wi-Fi networks is provided. RTA uses the Moodle system in the study process. During the visit the Moodle system was demonstrated to the experts and the system users, both the teaching staff and the students were satisfied with the opportunities and benefits provided by this system. University e-mails have been developed for communication with RTA students. During the experts visit the teaching staff noted that there were no insurmountable technical difficulties in ensuring the distance learning process. Technical support has always been promptly provided by IT support staff when needed. Lecturers indicated that Zoom or Microsoft Teams communication tools are used for the learning process (SER p. 38 mentions Microsoft Teams or Google Meet).

The RTA environment is adapted for people with reduced mobility. Assessing the informative and material base of RTA, the learning process is most likely to be difficult for students with visual, hearing or other impairments.

Funding for the science and for scientific activities (performance) is not divided by study fields, but directed to the provision of RTA scientific activities (SER p. 32). In order to promote research, several sources and types of funding are available for the research activities of the academic staff. During the visit of the experts, both the RTA management and the teaching staff confirmed availability of the opportunities and support for the staff to engage in research, for example, writing project

applications. It was pointed out that some lecturers tend to lack writing skills in the English language to develop project applications or scientific publications. However, it was mentioned that there is a lot of support from the relevant structural units of RTA. The teaching staff pointed out that students are also involved in the research process and scientific work. There was an example provided of a student who had participated in the RTA annual student scientific-practical conference of the Faculty of Education, Languages and Design in which the students present their research results. Another example - a study program of social work and social rehabilitation has been supplemented with a study course "Stress management", which was created thanks to the involvement of the teaching staff. Latvian-Lithuanian cross-border project "Developing of social psychological support service system through implementation of method of positive coping strategies and enhancement of social inclusion for people in vulnerable groups" POZCOPING INTERREG" (No. LLI-163) 01.04.2017-31.03.2019. (SER, p. 47).

Such structural units as Scientific Institute of Regional Studies and RTA Lifelong Learning Centre are good resources for strengthening teaching capacity, providing research and external resource attraction.

The latest literature on the relevant fields is regularly purchased and most of the funding is used for the acquisition of books in English in the relevant field. In accordance with the "Regulations on the Provision of Literature", book requests are regularly submitted to the Library. (SER p. 35 – 36, Tables 3.3.2 and 3.3.3). During the experts visit the teaching staff of the Bachelor's study program "Social Work and Social Rehabilitation" pointed out that they have an opportunity to apply for the literature required for their course or research, which is accordingly included in the list of books or periodicals to be purchased. This was confirmed by the library staff as well. Students also expressed satisfaction with the literature resources available in the library. The diversity of scientific literature is also ensured by the resources available from Siauliai University (no annex on ŠA learning resources mentioned in SER - p. 84). The opportunities offered by RTA demonstrate that the teaching staff and students have an opportunity to use various databases for reading topical and latest literature remotely.

Cooperation is being established with the lecturers of ŠA. In addition, the teaching staff of the study program uses the opportunities of Erasmus + mobility which provides also an opportunity to develop common study materials, for example, that have already been developed for the study program "Social Rehabilitation" (SER, p. 84).

The sources of funding of the study program consist of the financing of the state budget and students' tuition fees. The tuition fee is approved by the decision of the RTA Senate for each subsequent study year. The tuition fee for the professional bachelor's study program "Social Work and Social Rehabilitation" is determined taking into account the basic costs of the study place, level, duration and form of the study program, structure of an academic staff and field of study (SER, p. 31.). RTA funding is composed not only of state budget but also research funding is being attracted from other sources, for example, from EU structural funds and from different contract works with legal persons (SER, Table 3.3.1.2., p. 32).

The increase in funding starting from 2020 is related to the allocation of state-funded study places to the RTA. If budget places were not available, there is a high risk that the number of students would not be recruited to implement the study program. In order to attract the larger number of students, the strategy of action is necessary.

Overall, the cost of one student's studies is forecast to be 4 890,33 EUR, which does not exceed the cost of European countries to prepare one student in a similar speciality. During the period from 2016, the number of students enrolled in budget places differs from 3 students in 2017/2018 study year to 11 students in 2021/2022 study year. (Annex 3). The minimum number of students in the study program to ensure the cost-effectiveness of the study program is 5 (SER, p. 85).

The profession of social worker is demanded, as confirms the survey of students conducted by RTA. 100% of respondents are employed in the field of welfare and 80% of those who study, are

employed in the field of welfare (Annex 8 “Analysis of survey among students, graduates and employers in study program “Social work and social rehabilitation”). During the visit of experts, students pointed, that they evaluate opportunities to study and work at the same time. Although it leads to the fact that students do not use all opportunities offered by the study process, for example, mobilities. If students would use the mobility, it could help to popularize the study program and in that way, to attract the foreign students and to promote the economic profit or rentability of the study program. In order to attract more students to the program of social work and social rehabilitation, RTA has to manage target oriented addressing of the potential students. As well, the cooperation with potential employers has to be expanded parallelly to the cooperation with social services, social care centers and other providers of social services. Cooperation also has to be expanded with treatment institutions, professional organizations and associations, the State Probation Service, and orphanage courts and in that way the significance and wide range of social work could be popularized.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by specifying strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions:

RTA has a strong system and base, support system including that allows to achieve the goals of the study program and implement qualitative study process. Material and technical provision (including the library) fully complies with the requirements of study program and modern technologies and is constantly improved.

More observations which are based on the information provided from meetings with RTA administrative, academic staff and students are mentioned in the part “Assessment of the Study field” in criteria “1.3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field.”

Strengths:

- RTA has good technical (incl., for distance learning) and informative base (incl., resources of the library) to ensure implementation of the study program.
- State budget places and a stable system of extra funding attraction are available.
- There is an intellectual potential in order to promote the achievement of the goals of study program.
- Multisensory room as a resource is used in the study program.

Weaknesses

- In order to attract a larger number of students, the strategy of action is necessary.
- Resources are not fully available for students with special needs.

Assessment of the requirement [6]

- 1 R6 - Compliance of the study provision, science provision (if applicable), informative provision (including library), material and technical provision and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The informative provision (libraries, electronic databases), auditoriums, and the financial resources are appropriate to ensure bachelor studies and to ensure achievement of the learning outcomes.

2.4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

The RTA fulfills the requirements for the elements of standard 2.4.1 at a fully compliant level of quality. There is evidence that the qualifications of the teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study program comply with the requirements for the implementation of the study program and the requirements set forth in the regulatory enactments. The study program employs enough of the teaching staff with appropriate levels of qualifications and involves guest/visiting lectures with appropriate qualifications that take part in the implementation of the study program, e.g., there are seven lecturers with master's degree and eight lecturers with doctoral degree relevant to the study program which is visible from the SER p. 87.

English language is a great challenge for directors of the programme, academic staff (few speak English) and students. Insufficient knowledge of English raises the question of the quality and proper implementation of the programme. In the meeting with students they could not answer what subjects were taught in English.

The qualifications of the teaching staff member align with the aims and learning outcomes of the study program and the relevant study courses. Both scientific, teaching, and professional skills of the teaching staff covers all areas needed to achieve the aims and learning outcomes of the study program and the relevant study courses.

The RTA fulfills the requirements for the elements of standard 2.4.2 at a fully compliant level of quality. There is evidence from the SER p. 87 and p. 88 that changes in the composition of the teaching staff do not negatively affect the quality of the implementation of the study program. These changes are also aligned with the requirements specified in regulatory enactments.

The RTA fulfills the requirements for the elements of standard 2.4.4. at a fully compliant level. Teachers are encouraged to publish their work in domestic and foreign journals. There is evidence that teachers of the RTA publish regularly in the domestic and international publicly available databases. The RTA management supports participation of the teachers at the conferences and publishing in various scientific publications through financial support. Teaching staff from both institutions involved in the program can publish joint publications and participate in joint projects.

From the available teacher's CV's, it seems that there is a tendency for teachers to publish their work in the conference proceedings book of the RTA organized conferences and RTA published journals.

The RTA fulfills the requirement for the elements of standard 2.4.5. at a fully compliant level of quality. The RTA has established mechanisms that ensure that the work of the teaching and support staff is aligned with the aims of the study program. There are documents that regulate the management of the study program, cooperation planning and quality control options. The teaching staff has regular meetings in order to assure the activities in the program are carried on according to the plan. In the SER p. 89, it is mentioned that there is a need for pedagogical support for the host lectures and that support is offered free of charge by the RTA. However, it is indicated that host lecturers are now always able to attend. It is not mentioned how this is planned to be overcome.

During the Covid-19 pandemic RTA management implemented remote communications tools to support the online study process. The RTA actively involves the professionals from the field in the development of the study and planning of the activities for improvement of the study process and outcomes.

From the available teacher's CV's, it seems that there is a tendency for teachers to publish their work in the conference proceedings book of the RTA organized conferences and RTA published journals.

In the Annex 14 there are CV's of the teaching staff with their references of the published work. Majority of the published work of all the teaching staff for which CV's are available tends to be in the journals that are published by the RTA and conference proceedings materials from the conferences organized by the RTA.

Technically, this is not a problem since journals usually have strong peer review procedures. However, to facilitate cooperation on the international level, it is strongly advised to also publish in

international journals to reach an international audience. This is also the way to attract more international scholars.

More problematic are conference proceedings because a large number of the materials published in the conference proceedings are not peer-reviewed. Usually, the abstracts are peer-reviewed but not the full papers if submitted. Furthermore, there is a limit of pages for the papers if authors want to publish a full paper. However, since proceedings are getting more and more cited in the prestigious databases like WoS and Scopus, many authors opt to publish their work here, but not in the regular journals. On the RTA website there is no information whether papers published in the conference proceedings of the conferences organized by RTA underwent a full review process, but since they are cited in WoS and Scopus, they are automatically regarded as of high quality.

To conclude, publishing in RTA journals and conference proceedings of the conferences organized by the RTA does not imply that the work published is of less quality. However, because of the facts stated above, it is advised that work should be published in both domestic (RTA) and international based journals and materials in order to enhance the quality of the papers and to facilitate international cooperation, among others.

Conclusions on this set of criteria, by indicating strengths and weaknesses

Conclusions:

There is enough evidence to conclude that RTA ensures that the teaching staff members have enough qualifications, scientific, teaching, and professional skills, and support for the implementation of the study programme according to the regulatory enactments. Challenges that can be recognized are the level of the English language of the staff (and students) which can affect the quality of the programme and tendency to publish work in RTA based journals which can limit the sharing results of the work with the international audience and thus facilitate more international cooperation.

Strengths:

- In the implementation of the programme there is a high number of lecturers with a doctoral degree.
- RTA has established mechanisms that ensures the work of the teaching and support staff.
- RTA provides continuing education opportunities for its staff members.
- There is a strong cooperation between the staff of the RTA and ŠA in regard to publications and projects.

Weaknesses:

- Some of the teaching staff require pedagogical support, however they are not always able to attend.
- Knowledge of English both for students and staff is a considerable challenge.

Assessment of the requirement [7]

- 1 R7 - Compliance of the qualification of the academic staff and visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the requirements set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Biographies of the teaching staff members (Annex 10).

List of the publications, patents, and artistic creations of the teaching staff over the reporting period (Annex 14).

2.5. Assessment of the Compliance

Requirements

- 1 - The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study program "Social work and social rehabilitation" complies with Regulations of Cabinet No. 512 "Noteikumi par otrā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības valsts standartu".

- 2 - The study programme complies with a valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided if the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study program complies with 5. level (LKI) professional standard "Social worker" approved on 14th October 2020.

- 3 - The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 561, Paragraph two and Section 562, Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached study course descriptions comply with regulations set forth in Law of Higher Education Institutions. The amount of mandatory literature is too large, as well as there are no highlighted chapters or pages within a book.

- 4 - The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure according to which state recognised documents of higher education are issued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The Diploma is provided by RTA. In diploma supplement the issuing institution is mentioned both RTA and Vilniaus universitetas Šiaulių akademija. Diploma supplement is signed by RTA and ŠA rectors. The provided Diploma sample complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued according to MK No. 202 "Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinājošus dokumentus" (p. 14., 23.).

- 5 - The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Not relevant.

- 6 - Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Higher Education Institutions.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Not relevant.

- 7 7 - At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Not relevant.

- 8 8 - The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Attached resumes of the RTA staff and confirmation in Annex 11 verify that state language proficiency is compliant with MK. Nr. 733 "Noteikumi par valsts valodas zināšanu apjomu, valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudes kārtību un valsts nodevu par valsts valodas prasmes pārbaudi".

- 9 9 - The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Annex 12 provides a confirmation that RTA professional bachelor study program language proficiency is at least level B2, however in the provided resumes of staff (Annex 10) not all staff members have at least B2 knowledge of language (those lecturers who ensure common study courses with ŠA (Annex 7)). During meetings with academic staff and programme directors some challenges related to the use of language were discovered.

- 10 10 - The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Sample of attached study agreement complies with MK. Nr. 70 "Studiju līgumā obligāti ietveramie noteikumi".

- 11 11 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students will be provided with opportunities to continue their education in another study programme or another higher education institution or college (agreement with another accredited higher education institution or college) if the implementation of the study programme is terminated.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex 5 confirms that a cooperation agreement is in place with the University of Liepaja (Liepājas Universitāte) with possibility to continue studies within professional bachelor programme "Social Worker".

- 12 12 - The higher education institution / college has provided confirmation that students are guaranteed compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the study programme's license is revoked due to the actions (actions or omissions) of the higher education institution or college and the student does not wish to continue studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annex 6 confirms that the institution guarantees compensation for losses if the study program is

not accredited or the licence of the study program is revoked due to the actions of the college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study program.

- 13 13 - The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 55.(1), Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Annex 2 of study program “Social work and social rehabilitation” and attached bilateral agreement with Šiauliai University confirms, that formally program complies with requirements set forth in Law on Higher Education Institutions regarding joint study programmes. As considerable challenges can be mentioned as follows: level of knowledge of English both for students and some staff members, number of literature in the study course description is too large, goals and tasks of internships, difficulties in transforming ECTS to Latvian credits and vice versa.

- 14 14 - Compliance with the requirements specified in other regulatory enactments that apply to the study programme being assessed (if applicable)

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Not relevant.

Assessment of the requirement [8]

- 1 R8 - Compliance of the study programme with the requirements set forth in the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Study program “Social work and social rehabilitation” partially complies with requirements set forth in national regulation (see p. 9 on knowledge of foreign language), however following aspects impact the overall evaluation: English is a considerable challenge both for some lecturers as well as students, which significantly impacts the quality of the joint part of the study program. It not only affects the realization of the study courses but also internships. Internships are fragmented and lack in-depth work with clients. In study course descriptions, amount of mandatory literature should be revised as it includes too large amounts of mandatory literature without a specification of chapters and pages students should focus on. Cooperation between RTA and ŠA should be strengthened in the part where the program is realized jointly. Students need to have a clear understanding on which study courses are realized in conjunction. Enrollment criteria for students' knowledge of English language should be revised.

General conclusions about the study programme, indicating the most important strengths and weaknesses of the study programme

The title, aims, degree, professional qualification, outcomes and admission requirements are well interrelated and coherent. Economic and social need for the program is evident and demonstrable. The development of a joint study program followed set quality principles and is justified by RTA strategy. Study courses are structured in compliance with the latest social worker's professional standard. Informative, material and technical provision (including the library) fully complies with the requirements of study program and modern technologies and is constantly improved. The study program employs teaching staff with appropriate levels of qualifications and involves visiting lectures with appropriate qualifications that take part in the implementation of the study program. Considerable challenge in the realisation of the joint study program is the English language both for students and some lecturers. Admissions criterias related to the knowledge of English should be

reconsidered for students. It is welcomed that RTA wants to offer its students to get acquainted with the specificity of different target groups of social work. In social work with individual cases, client and social worker go through several phases. In every phase of action worker acquire various skills and attitudes. For instance, one of them is when social worker together with a client carry out an assessment of the initial situation, which demands particular time. For instance, multi-stage evaluation can take up to 2 months, which also is stated in the Minister Cabinet regulation No. 338 "Prasības sociālo pakalpojumu sniedzējiem". Thus, in experts opinion it is important to practice under the guidance of a leading specialist for further work needed skills, experiencing several stages of social work with individual cases.

Strengths:

- Study program complies with the study field.
- Strong economic and social justification of the study program.
- Study program is designed in accordance with the national regulation for 2nd level professional higher education and the latest professional standard.
- Study courses are annually updated.
- Employers are involved in different phases of implementation of the study program: development of study courses, defense of bachelor thesis.
- Students-learning principles have been developed.
- RTA has good technical (incl., for distance learning) and informative base (incl., resources of the library) to ensure the study program.
- State budget places and a stable system of extra funding attraction are available.
- There is an intellectual potential in order to promote the achievement of the goals of study program.
- Multisensory room as a resource is used in the study program
- Enough teaching staff to run the program.
- Teaching staff have qualifications for the program.
- There is strong cooperation between the staff of the RTA and ŠA in regard to publications and projects.

Weaknesses:

- Intercultural competences are not incorporated in the learning outcomes of the program
- One of the reasons for student dropouts can be explained by the fact that only full time study mode is available in this study program.
- Not sufficient admission requirements for English language skills in the joint study programme.
- Knowledge of English both for students and staff is a considerable challenge.
- There are six internships which restricts students' ability to go in-depth work with clients.
- Students and supervisors at the internship institutions have difficulties communicating in one common language.
- The goals and tasks of the internship are not very clear and unambiguous.
- Literature used in bachelor thesis is rather old which might impact the understanding of different concepts and ideas nowadays.
- In order to attract the larger number of students, the strategy of action is necessary.
- Resources are not fully available for students with special needs.
- Some of the teaching staff require pedagogical support, however they are not always able to attend.

Evaluation of the study programme "Social Work and Social Rehabilitation "

Evaluation of the study programme:

2.6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Social Work and Social Rehabilitation "

Short-term recommendations

Reduce the number of internships and provide them with a more in-depth work with clients without losing total volume of internships of 26 CP.
To review the goals and tasks of the internships in cooperation with the employers (place for the study fields), defining the purpose and task of the study field very clearly and unambiguously.
In the learning outcomes of the study programme include intercultural competencies.
To make an amendment to the cooperation agreement between RTA and ŠA on transfer of credit points/ECTS.
Pedagogical support can be offered via internet communication tools such as Teams for the teachers who can not attend the offered courses in live.
The programme should decide on one Internet tools (Zoom, MS Teams) that should serve as a basic tool for online teaching in order to fully take advantage of the tool in the education process.
Consider opportunity to set a requirement for minimum knowledge of English for students during enrollment period.
The potential of the joint program could be exploited to attract more students from abroad.
Update the list of literature in study course descriptions by adding newest literature in the field.

Long-term recommendations

Use English as the main language of the joint programme in order to attract more foreign students.
Attract more lecturers with social worker's qualification.
Increase the number of incoming foreign lecturers and students in Erasmus+ from different countries.
As graduates are valuable resources for RTA, they should be leveraged more - by seeking ways to include them in the study process after finishing their studies.

III - Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

III - Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 2.1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study field whilst implementing its internal quality assurance system:		Partially compliant	The RTA has established a quality policy and a quality system; establishing a system of collecting data (SER p. 29); has procedures on submitting suggestions and complaints (SER p. 26-28). Yet there is a lack of sufficient proof that continuous improvements following stakeholder feedback is being implemented.
R2 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the level of development of scientific research and artistic creation (if applicable)	Fully compliant		Biographies of the teaching staff members (Annex 10). List of the publications, patents, and artistic creations of the teaching staff over the reporting period (Annex 14). The identified weaknesses do not affect the overall requirement assessment as fully compliant since the incoming foreign students and researchers do not crucially affect the quality of the study field. There is a strong support for research and project activities.
R3 - The cooperation implemented within the study field with various Latvian and foreign organizations ensures the achievement of the aims of the study field.		Partially compliant	SER p. 53- 57. AS field practice is one of the most important part of the programme the number of agreements with social partners for field practice organization is insufficient (Annex 15); There could be more incoming teachers and students from abroad (Annex 16, Annex 17).

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R4 - Elimination of deficiencies and shortcomings identified in the previous assessment of the study field, if any, or implementation of the recommendations provided.		Partially compliant	Recommendations implemented (Annex 19). RTA has fully implemented following recommendations: involvement of students in research activities, developed Moodle with topical materials related to the study courses, expanded international cooperation by establishing joint study program, and improved interactivity during internship by organizing supervisions. Three recommendations has been implemented partially and further work should be continued on implementation of them.

Assessment of the Requirements for the Relevant Study Programmes of the Study Field

No.	Study programme	R5	R6	R7	R8	Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)
1	Social Rehabilitation (41762)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Good
2	Social Work and Social Rehabilitation (42762)	Not relevant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Average

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

None.