

LATVIA Training system in field of Cultural Heritage

J. Lejnieks

Geographic situation of Latvia determinate the history of the country. Neighbour states: Russia, Sweden, Germany and Poland struggled for hundred of years to rule this country nearby the Baltic sea. The Latvian culture has developed in the interaction between local Latvian folk culture with the elements of the paganism and conqueror's Christian culture.

Cultural heritage of Latvia was formed by the all European styles of Art and architecture. The objects of Latvia cultural heritage are: log buildings, handicraft, castles, palaces, manor houses, churches, civic buildings and dwelling houses which form the historical town centres.

Cultural heritage of Latvia demands mostly the restorers for log and timber frame buildings as well as for the brickwork structures. There is a necessity for the craftsmen capable to repair and to restore objects of art. They must have knowledge of styles and technology of materials.

During the soviet period the training of restorers was not organised in Latvia at the level of higher education. People received their diploma of restorers in Restoration department of St- Petersburg (Leningrad) Art institute. The professional skills mostly were acquired practically, in the workshops, under the leadership of masters. The active nowadays restorers in Latvia have achieved their qualification in practice.

In order to control the quality of conservation and restoration Ministry of Culture has established Restorers Certifying Commission. The task of Commission is to evaluate restorers work and hand out Certificate of Restorer. According to the personal skills it is for one of the three levels; Restorer. Restorer- Master, Restorer- Old Master.

1. THEORETICAL EDUCATION

The training programs in secondary and higher schools include the theoretical and practical subjects. The students can start to study after the compulsory nine class education and gymnasium or college. Theoretical course covers the following subjects: foreign language, preferable English, less German, professional Ethics, History of Art etc. Practical training is done laboratories or workshops of the schools as well in the firms and centres. Work is led by master and at the end of the practice the apprentices received the evaluation of his work; It is taken into account when the level of his knowledge is stated. In case if the restoration is studied as an additional speciality, the certificate is not given. Graduating the student receive the reference of the corresponding level.

2. PRACTICAL EDUCATION

Beside the state's schools, which receive the subsidy from the Government, there are exist private workshops and courses, where graduates acquire knowledge in the particular speciality under the leadership of the master (timber frame building, metal work etc.).

The School of Building of Craftsmen League train craftsmen on log buildings- to be able to built new as well to restore the old ones. The financing of the School is based on the commissions, accomplished by apprentices under the supervision of masters.

There are a small part of students in the Faculty of Architecture of Riga Technical University, Riga College of Handicraft, Riga College of Applied Arts specialise in the field of restoration during the last two years of studies.

Further education is possible in two ways: entering the next level of school or having practice at the master of higher level. Restorers Certifying Commission following the application of restorer evaluate his theoretical knowledge and practical restoration work and award the corresponding Restorer's Certificate.

3. URBAN CONSERVATION TRAINING

- Post-graduate training for professionals in heritage protection is offered in the Riga Technical University and Latvian Art Academy.
- As a one-off event courses for heritage inspectors in the different counties in Estonia have been conducted by experts from the State Inspection for Heritage Protection
- In the framework of the INTERSA YE program in the co-operation with Denmark courses and seminars have been organised over the period of several years in Jiirmala, Liepaja and Kuldiga. The lecturers have been architects from abroad, from the city municipalities and experts from the State Inspection for Heritage Protection.
- Restoration. Camps are organised in co-operation with the Swedish National Board for Heritage Protection experts. This training is aimed at practitioners helping to raise both their working skills and standards. The training is conducted by Swedish instructors and one camp leads for two weeks. An example of one of the camps is the restoration of synagogue in Sabile, manor house in Ungurmuiža and manor in Ramava, provided in 2001.
- Heritage protection professionals have participated in specialised and research courses organised by the European Union, but the number of such courses has decreased over the recent years.

4. COORDINATION OF CONSERVATION TRAINING ACTIVITIES

Heritage education programs in universities:

- University of Latvia
- Latvian Academy of Culture.
- Latvian Art Academy

Heritage education programs at universities are co-ordinated by the Latvia Restorers Society. The lecturers include mainly experts from the Riga Technical University, Latvian Art Academy, State Inspection for Heritage Protection and experienced engineers and architects from private companies and municipal organisations.

Co-operation partners of Latvian universities:

Riga Technical University has long term co-operationallinks with Lund University.

Latvia Art Academy has several partners in Sw'eden

For private initiatives there are some well established companies who besides their everyday practical work also deal with teaching and training of staff:

- AIG (Arhitektoniskas Izpetes Grupa; the ArchiteCtural Research Group)
- Restaurators
- Velve