

# Latvia

## VET in Europe - Country Report

2010

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# 1. GENERAL CONTEXT – FRAMEWORK FOR THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

## 1.1 POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Latvia is an independent democratic republic established in 1918. From 1940 to 1991, it was occupied by the Soviet army and was incorporated into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Latvia regained its independence in 1991.

Legislative power is held by the parliament (*Saeima*), which consists of 100 representatives elected for a period of 4 years. It is elected through proportional representation by citizens aged 18 and above. The present 9th *Saeima* was elected in October 2006, and next elections are expected in October 2010.

The head of State is the President who is elected by the *Saeima* for 4 years. Executive authority rests on the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of Ministers. The *Saeima*, the Cabinet of Ministers and the Ministry of Education and Science are the main decision-making bodies for vocational education at national level. The Ministry implements a unified national policy and development strategy in education.

Until December 31, 2008 there were 26 districts in Latvia, which consisted of 26 counties and 444 civil parishes with elected local governments. In order to optimise the structure of the local authorities, the territorial administration has been reformed to regions (*apriņķis*) including 9 republic cities (min. 25 thousands inhabitants) under state jurisdiction, and 109 counties (*novads*, min. 4 thousands inhabitants), which may consist of one or several parishes and/or towns. The administrative reform is planned to complete until 2012; and still there are ongoing discussions regarding the reform.

The number of inhabitants continues to decrease gradually (from 2.346 million in 2002 to 2.261 million in 2009) due to migration (-0.08% in 2002 and -0.11% in 2008 of total population) and ageing (15.95% in 2002; 22.29% in 2009 of inhabitants above age 60). Long term migration saldo in 2008 (-2542 inhabitants) comparing to 2007 shows a significant negative growth (nearly four times) due to the increase of inhabitants leaving country; still in longer period the difference is not as evident, e.g. saldo has increased negatively by 38.6% between 2008 and 2002. The most of population in 2009 lived in urban area (67.8%), of which 57.82% lived in Riga and its district (Central Statistic Bureau of Latvia, 2010). The urban/rural ratio in the total number of population has not changed during last 5 years. The majority of social and economic facilities are concentrated in Riga and in great cities, therefore, availability of education and other services in rural regions should be particularly promoted. However, inland migration is not as great, as migration to other states. The main inhabitant migration stream may be observed from rural regions to Riga.

## 1.2 POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Latvia covers 64,589 km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 2.261 million people (CSB, 2010). Between 1990 and 2000 the population has decreased by 10.74%, while decrease in population rates between 2000 and 2009 reached 5.06%.

The share of the population below working age is decreasing (18% in 2000; 13.7% in 2009). The proportion of the population of schooling age is expected to decrease further until at least 2015. Proportion of population aged 60 and above shows steady increase, i.e. difference in rates between 2000 and 2009 is 1.3%, in 2009 accordingly 22.29% of population were aged 60 and above.

The proportion of economically active inhabitants in the population has increased due to an increase in the pension age (58.9% in 2000 and 66.2% in 2009). According to national statistics, the economically active part of the population shows slight increase between 2000 and 2010; however, there will be a fall between 2010 and 2020 when a general ageing of the population is expected.

YEAR	TOTAL	0-19	20-59	60 +
2005	2 305.1 (100%)	526.3 (22.8%)	1 267.5 (54.9%)	511.3 (22.2%)
2010	2 239.6 (100%)	450.1 (20.1%)	1 282.2 (57.3%)	507.3 (22.7%)
2015	2 174.2 (100%)	421.2 (19.4 %)	1 243.2 (57.2%)	509.8 (23.5%)
2020	2 115.4 (100%)	440.1 (20.8%)	1 150.2 (54.4%)	525.2 (24.8%)
2025	2 068.1 (100%)	443.7 (21.5%)	1 079.9 (52.2%)	544.4 (26.3%)

Source: Demography 2007, Riga: CSB, 2007

Meanwhile, Eurostat forecasts indicate that rate of old-aged inhabitants will increase more than twice by 2060 (see table below). Taking into account the decrease in schooling age population that later will have impact on working population, in the next decades the inhabitants of working age will experience a growing economical burden to provide sufficient support for the State social budget.

GEO\TIME	2010	2015	2020	2030	2040	2050	2060
EU 27	25.9	28.26	31.05	38.04	45.36	50.42	53.47
LV	25.17	26.23	28.08	34.57	40.72	51.18	64.45

Source: Eurostat (EUROPOP2008 - Convergence scenario, national level); date of extraction: 30.04.2010; last update: 11.03.2010

### 1.3 ECONOMY AND LABOUR MARKET INDICATORS

#### ECONOMIC COMPOSITION BY SECTOR

During the period of 2005-2007, the Latvian economy grew rapidly, when GDP grew annually by 10.9% on average, while in 2007 – by 10%. According to the Ministry of Economics, the high growth rates were mainly ensured by the domestic demand and foreign investment. Private consumption and investment experienced considerable increase. However, since 2007, the growth rates started to decrease, when domestic demand fell, and in the middle of 2008 became negative. At the beginning of 2009, there was still a fall in State economy, although at the end of the year the decrease slowed down and some improvement could be observed. For example, at the end of 2009, the amount of production increased in such sectors as woodworking, chemical industry, metalworking, paper production, as well as in printing and publishing industry. GDP per capita according to purchasing power standards was 49% of the EU-27 average in 2009 (estimation of Eurostat); total value of GDP in 2009 was EUR 18 470.2 millions, while in 2008 – EUR 22 590.2 millions (Laws on the State budget for 2008, 2009).

The structure of the economy has slightly changed during the last years in favour of services sectors, while the growth of sectors related to production of goods was slower. In 2009, the share of services sectors in terms of value added showed greater increase comparing to three previous years; while in construction sector added value and employment rate fell accordingly. However, the employment rate by sectors is different due to noticeable differences observed in the levels of productivity in various economic sectors and the unregistered employment (see table below). The majority of people employed without labour contract work in building, trade and various services.

YEAR	BY VALUE ADDED					BY NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES				
	2000	2006	2007	2008	2009	2000	2006	2007	2008	2009
PRIMARY SECTORS*	4.8	4.0	3.6	3.5	3.6	14.2	10.8	9.6	7.9	9.0
INDUSTRY	17.3	15.4	13.2	13.4	13.5	20.5	18.0	17.2	17.4	15.6
CONSTRUCTION	6.1	6.8	8.4	8.9	6.6	6.0	9.5	11.2	11.2	7.7

<b>SERVICES</b>	71.8	74.8	74.7	74.2	76.3	58.8	60.9	61.3	63.5	67.6
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\* Agriculture, hunting and forestry; fishing

Source: CSB, 2010

## EMPLOYMENT RATES

The employment rates have changed slightly comparing the years 2008 and 2009, e.g. total (aged 15-64) employment rates have increased from 95.7% to 96.6%, although in actual numbers employment has decreased. Totally, in 2009, round 463.6 thousand men (546.8 thousand in 2008) and 489.5 women (529.4 thousand in 2008) were employed; the data shows that comparing to 2008 the number of employed males has experienced more significant fall than the number of females.

Referring to the employment rates by age groups and the highest level of education attained (see table below), the highest employment rate in Latvia is for age group 25-49 having education of ISCED 5-6, i.e. on average 88.6% from 2006-2009 (similarly in EU-27 it is 88.2%). The lowest rate is for young people (age group 15-24) with a low level education (ISCED 0-2) – on average 14.9% (EU-27 – on average 24.2%); moreover, decreasing tendency may be observed for this group – from 17.1% in 2003 to 10.7% in 2009.

	TIME	2003			2006			2009		
	ISCED / AGE	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64
EU 27	0-2	25.1	66.1	41.9	24.8	66.9	43.5	22.8	64.1	43.3
	3-4	47.2	79.1	54.9	48.1	80.5	57.9	46.3	80.5	59.5
	5-6	62.0	88.0	72.4	60.5	88.5	74.2	58.4	88.2	74.5
	No A.	14.9	72.6	39.1	5.1	76.0	5.6	5.5	75.6	63.9
	TOTAL	36.0	77.4	51.5	36.6	79.1	54.4	35.2	78.8	56.5
LV	0-2	17.1	61.7	40.5	16.9	64.1	42.5	10.7	55.1	40.0
	3-4	53.2	78.6	56.0	53.3	81.5	65.4	42.1	73.5	61.1
	5-6	63.4	88.4	66.0	85.0	90.7	78.3	65.7	86.8	74.6
	No A.	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	TOTAL	32.7	78.3	53.5	35.9	81.4	63.0	27.7	75.0	60.9

Source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey); extracted on 30-04-2010; last update: 23-04-2010

Special values – : not available

## UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

An unemployment register has existed since 1992. The registered unemployment rate reached a peak in 1998 by 9.2% (111.4 thousand inhabitants) and decreased gradually since 1999 reaching the lowest point in 2007 at 6% (52.3 thousands inhabitants); thereafter, the unemployment rate started to increase, particular growth (in double) was observed in 2009 – 16% in December 2009 (7% in December 2008). The total number of unemployed people at the end of 2009 was 179,235, which is more than twice comparing to 2008 in the same period, i.e. 76,435 unemployed.

The CSB data shows that usually the unemployment rate is higher among men than among women; the difference in unemployment rates between genders was very significant in 2009 – 20% for men and 13.8% for women (in 2008 it was 8.1% and 7.0% respectively). However, as illustrated in the table below, women tend to use the services of the State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra*, SEA) more every year (50.8% at the end of 2009) than men, although the rate difference between genders has decreased.

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>MALES</b>	41.0	40.1	39.1	38.0	48.0	49.2
<b>FEMALES</b>	59.0	59.9	60.9	62.0	52.0	50.8

Source: State Employment Agency, 2010

Registered unemployment differs in various areas of country: traditionally, the highest unemployment rate is registered in Latgale, the eastern part of Latvia – 21.1%, while in other regions the average unemployment rate was 17.8%. In Riga and its district there was the lowest registered unemployment rate 13.2%, in December 2009. The proportion of the employed in urban and rural areas increases continuously; and although the rate of employed inhabitants in cities is higher, the unemployment rate in urban areas is also higher than in the country side, which may be explained by the following facts: first, inhabitants in cities tend to use services of SEA more frequently; second, the education offer for the unemployed in rural regions does not correspond to inhabitants' needs.

The other issue is unemployment of young people, which is one of the risk groups. The unemployment rate among young adults (younger than 25) has decreased since 2000, i.e. from 21% to 14.5% in 2009, which is lower than the EU-27 rate 19.7%. According to CBS, the proportion of those seeking employment out of the total number of the economically active population aged 15-19 or 20-24 was 48.3% and 26.1% in 1996; 35.8% and 19.6% in 2000; and 54.8% and 29.9% in 2009, which is around twice more comparing to 2008, i.e. accordingly 29.7% and 10.2%. It should be taken into account that the proportion of students is still comparatively high, i.e. in 2009/2010 there were 501 students per 10,000 inhabitants (5.0% of population studied in HEI in 2009), although evident decrease in student numbers has been experienced comparing to 2008/2009 (554 students per 10,000 inhabitants) (CSB, 2010).

Speaking about the education of the unemployed, the proportions among the groups are rather stable. The greatest group (36.4%) of the registered unemployed has vocational upper-secondary education (ISCED 3B + ISCED 4), which is followed by general upper-secondary education graduates (ISCED 3A) – 27.7% – and inhabitants having basic education (ISCED 2) with 19.3% and higher education (ISCED 5) with 13.1%. Comparing to 2008, the greatest increase may be observed in case of individuals having vocational upper-secondary education, i.e. in 2008 the rate was 32.7%, while the rate of the unemployed with basic education has fallen the most (from 22.8%). However, it should be noted that large part of the unemployed having vocational education have graduated several decades ago, and due to the changes in economic structure their qualification does not correspond to current needs of labour market.

The unemployment rates by age groups and highest level of education attained (see table below) indicate that the greatest part of the unemployed in Latvia has education of 0-2 ISCED in the age group 15-24, which on average is 31.9% from 2006-2009 (the rate of EU-27 has similar tendency – 22.4% on average). However, Latvian rate has experienced more evident increase: from 23.9% in 2003 to 49.9%. The lowest unemployment rates may be observed among unemployed with education of ISCED 5-6 in the age group 25-49, i.e. on average 5.2% (in EU-27 – on average 3.6% but for age group 50-64). Generally, for all age groups regardless education level unemployment rates show increasing tendencies.

	TIME	2003			2006			2009		
		15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64
<b>EU 27</b>	<b>0-2</b>	20.2	11.6	7.2	21.2	11.2	7.5	25.9	14.8	9.1
	<b>3-4</b>	17.7	8.4	7.7	15.4	7.3	6.9	16.9	7.5	6.2
	<b>5-6</b>	12.0	4.8	3.7	13.4	4.3	3.6	15.4	4.8	3.4
	<b>No A.</b>	13.9	7.8	7.4	20.1	:	:	22.0	7.5	:
	<b>TOTAL</b>	18.0	8.3	6.6	17.2	7.3	6.3	19.7	8.2	6.3



LV	0-2	23.9	17.7	12.2	22.1	13.4	:	49.9	26.7	20.6
	3-4	14.5	9.3	11.3	8.8	5.9	6.3	29.0	17.9	15.6
	5-6	:	4.8	8.8	:	3.6 (u)	:	21.8	7.8	7.2
	No A.	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	TOTAL	17.5	9.3	11.0	12.2	6.1	6.4	33.6	15.8	14.0

Source: Eurostat (LFS); extracted on: 30-04-2010; last update: 23-04-2010  
Special values: u – extremely unreliable data; : – not available;

## PUBLIC EXPENDITURE ON EDUCATION

Although expenditures for education usually constitutes comparatively great part of the General government consolidated budget expenditures (see table below), i.e. expenditures for education is the second largest position after the social protection, in actual numbers the funding is not sufficient. In 2009, education sector experienced rather significant reduction of funding – from EUR 501 937 776 in 2008 to EUR 295 537 535 in 2009 (by 41.1%).

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
FROM THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET	16.3	17.2	16.7	19.7	20.2	19.6
FROM GDP	5.8	6.1	6.2	7.1	7.8	8.4

Source: Report on the economic development of Latvia. ME, Riga, June 2010.

## 1.4 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF POPULATION

Since 1991 only primary and lower-secondary level (9 grades) are compulsory; students have to obtain basic education or stay in education until they turn 18. At present (2010), there are discussions that upper-secondary education should be stated as compulsory again. As showed in table 7 below, the rate of population aged 18-24 having only lower-secondary education for last years keeps quite close to EU-27 average.

GEO/ TIME	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
EU 27	17.0	16.6 (b)	16.1	15.8	15.5	15.1	14.9
LV	16.9	18.0	14.7	14.4	14.8	15.1	15.5

Source: Eurostat (LFS); extracted: 30-04-2010; last update 26-04-2010

Speaking about gender distribution in ISCED 3, statistics show that through the years vocational route is chosen more by men, while women prefer general education programmes (see table 8a). In comparison with EU member states where 47% of the population in 2007 achieved ISCED level 3-4, 62% achieved the same level in Latvia (see table below).

YEAR		2005					2007				
GEO	S	3 GEN	3 PV	3 VOC	4 GEN	4 VOC	3 GEN	3 PV	3 VOC	4 GEN	4 VOC
EU 27*	F	1015169	108171	984823	22749	215435	1298881	98757	1176169	25386	212113
	M	743694	157951	1157304	22432	189312	965600	134924	1374844	23488	177657
	T	1758863	266122	2142128	45182	404747	2264481	233681	2551014	48874	389770
LV	F	11654	:	2873	:	1314	12172	:	3173	:	919
	M	8534	:	4554	:	816	9101	:	4614	:	528
	T	20188	:	7427	:	2130	21273	:	7787	:	1447

Source: Eurostat (UOE Data collection); extracted: 01-05-2010; last update: 13-01-2010

\* Available total – calculated by Cedefop; S=sex; M=males; F=females; T=total; GEN=general; PV=pre-vocational; VOC=vocational  
Special values – : not available

In higher education (ISCED 5-6) in all routes (academic and professional), there has been higher women participation than men's, e.g. 62.8% of students were women at ISCED 5 in 2009/2010 and 61.9% in 2000/2001 (CSB, 2010). The actual numbers are reflected in table 8b. Traditionally, there has been a premium for people obtaining higher level education (66.4% of upper-secondary school graduates continued studies in 2009) because a higher education degree is considered to provide greater career prospects and bolster social status (CSB, 2010).

YEAR		2005						2007					
GEO	S	5 GEN	5 PV	5 VOC	6 GEN	6 PV	6 VOC	5 GEN	5 PV	5 VOC	6 GEN	6 PV	6 VOC
EU 27*	F	11896 46	8752 6	40302 6	7709	3906 8	19938 99	11148 03	3974 31	33215 4	4448	4073 6	18918 03
	M	87611 3	6956 7	27099 4	3441	5096 3	14394 16	79238 1	2492 18	20711 7	3715	5070 0	13041 18
	T	21136 14	1570 93	67799 0	1115 0	9252 5	34944 81	19601 32	6544 80	54516 6	8163	9344 2	32646 01
LV	F	10820	4706	2835	0	67	18428	11044	5452	2648	0	87	19231
	M	4211	2114	1324	0	47	7696	4258	2034	1170	0	59	7521
	T	15031	6820	4159	0	114	26124	15302	7486	3818	0	146	26752

Source: Eurostat (UOE Data collection); extracted: 01-05-2010; last update: 13-01-2010

\* Available total – calculated by Cedefop; S= sex; M=males; F=females; T= total; GEN=general; PV=pre-vocational; VOC=vocational

According to Eurostat data (see table below), youth education attainment level generally has an increasing tendency, i.e. in 2001 – 71.7%, and in 2008 – 80.0% had completed upper-secondary education, which is slightly higher than the average youth education attainment level in EU-27 (76.6% in 2001 and 78.5% in 2008). More people are involved in education through programmes for unemployed, evening schools and pedagogical correction programmes (see 5.2).

TIME	2002			2005			2008		
GEO	T	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M
EU 27	76.7	79.3	74.0	77.5	80.2	74.8	78.5	81.3	75.6
LV	77.1 (b)	84.3 (b)	70.0 (b)	79.9	85.2	74.7	80.0	86.0	74.3

Source: Eurostat (LFS); extracted: 30-04-2010; last update 26-04-2010

Special values – **b** break in series

Women also tend to participate more in adult education than men – accordingly 9% and 4.3% in 2008, which is lower than EU-27 average (see table 10), i.e. percentage of the population aged 25-64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey. Since 2005, there is a slight decrease in LLL participation rates, which is more significant in Latvia comparing to EU-27 average. Adults participate in continuing education programmes, professional improvement programmes and adult education programmes, i.e. various study courses of languages, computer, accounting etc, as well as educational activities for the unemployed (see section 6).

TIME	2002			2005			2008		
GEO	T	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M
EU 27	7.2	7.8	6.6	9.8	10.5	9.0	9.5	10.4	8.7
LV	7.3	9.2	5.1	7.9	10.6	5.0	6.8	9.0	4.3

Source: Eurostat (LFS); extracted: 30-04-2010; last update 26-04-2010

Mobility in vocational education is ensured through the Leonardo da Vinci programme. In 2009, around 600 individuals related to vocational education (students and teachers, people in labour market, counselling specialists and other representatives of personnel) took part in the mobility projects.

## 1.5 DEFINITIONS

**GENERAL EDUCATION** (*vispārējā izglītība*) – the definition of “general education” in Latvia does not differ noticeably from the international definition, i.e. education mainly designed to lead participants to a deeper understanding of a subject or group of subjects, especially, but not necessarily, with a view to preparing participants for further education at the same or a higher level. These programmes, which are with a general orientation and do not focus on a particular specialization, are typically school-based. After a successful completion of these programmes the participants are not provided with a labour-market relevant qualification at this level. However, the term “general education” is mostly used to refer to upper-secondary education, while the term “academic education” is used for higher level education programmes.

**PRE-VOCATIONAL EDUCATION** (*pirms-profesionālā izglītība*) – this term is not used and is not applicable to the Latvian education system.

**VOCATIONAL EDUCATION** (*profesionālā izglītība*) – in the Latvian context the term has the same meaning as stated in the international definition. Education mainly designed to allow participants to acquire the practical skills, know-how and understanding necessary for employment in a particular occupation or trade. Successful completion of such programmes leads to a labour-market relevant recognized vocational qualification. Mostly, the term “vocational education” refers to upper-secondary education, while “professional education” is used to refer to higher level education programmes.

**TECHNICAL EDUCATION** (*profesionālā izglītība*) – this term is not usually applied, see vocational education.

**TERTIARY EDUCATION** (*augstākā izglītība*) – see higher education

**HIGHER EDUCATION** (*augstākā izglītība*) – an educational level, which is acquired after upper-secondary education, in science or art; development of the individual in a selected academic or professional field of science or art, or in an academic or professional study stream in preparation for scientific and professional activity (Education Law, 1998).

**FURTHER EDUCATION** (*tālākizglītība*) – continuation of previously acquired education and professional skill improvement in conformity with the requirements of the specific profession (Education Law, 1998).

**POST-SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY EDUCATION** (*pēcvidējā izglītība*) – in Latvia the programmes (ISCED 4) lie between the upper-secondary and tertiary levels of education, as well. However, nationally they are qualified as upper-secondary programmes. The further vocational programmes (1-3 years long) and professional improvement programmes (at least 160 hours long, which may be as a part of qualification) fall in this category. These programmes are oriented only to acquisition of professional knowledge and skills. Educational process and assessment is organised likewise to other upper-secondary education programmes. The students are usually older than those at level 3.

**TRAINING** (*apmācība*) – the term is more applied to separate courses, e.g. professional improvement or further education programmes for adults with vocational and practical orientation, or particular educational processes, while “VET” is referred as “vocational education”.

**INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING** (*sākotnējā profesionālā izglītība*) – formally organised vocational education, mostly at upper-secondary education level, which is similar to the international definition, i.e. education undertaken after full-time compulsory education (mainly 9 years long primary and lower-secondary education) to promote the acquisition of the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to entry an occupation. The management and legal basis of initial vocational education are not separated from continuous vocational education; therefore, frequently initial vocational education is referred as “vocational education”.

**CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING** (*profesionālā tālākizglītība*)—a special kind of vocational education which provides an opportunity for adults with previous education and professional experience to acquire a specific level vocational qualification (Vocational Education Law, 1999). Thereby, the term is interpreted similarly to the international definition, i.e. CVET can be broadly defined as professional or vocational development through education and training undertaken typically after one has completed initial vocational education and training. It is provided and undertaken at the initiative of public authorities, social partners, sectors, enterprises, individuals as well as a range of voluntary and community organisations. However, all recognised CVET programmes lead to certification; it is not considered daily education.

**SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMMES** (*skolas realizētas programmas*) – this term is not largely applied, since majority of vocational education programmes, apart from apprenticeship, are implemented partly in educational institutions, i.e. they include practice training in enterprises.

**ALTERNANCE TRAINING** (*alternatīvās apmācības*) – no exact term in Latvian, since “alternance training” is not applicable to the Latvian education system.

**APPRENTICESHIP** (*mācekļu apmācība*) – in the Latvian context, the term has very similar explanation as in the international definition: systematic, long-term training alternating periods in a school or training centre and at the workplace; the apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and may receive remuneration. The employer assumes responsibility for providing the trainee with training leading to a specific occupation according to education programmes developed by the Chamber of Crafts and the Ministry of Education and Science.

**CURRICULUM** (*izglītības programma*) – the term frequently referred as “education programme”, which is a document regulating the educational activity of education institution. In line with the education level, the type of education, the target group and the State education standard, the education programme determines goals, tasks and planned results of the education programme; requirements for previous student education; educational content as a unified contents summary of study subjects or courses; plan for the implementation of the education programme; assessment of the personnel, funds and material resources necessary for the educational programme implementation in accordance with the Cabinet Regulations regarding the minimum expenditures for the implementation of education programmes per one learner (Education Law, 1998).

**QUALIFICATION** (*kvalifikācija*) – evaluation of educational and professional skills with respect to a particular profession, confirmed by documentary evidence (Education Law, 1998). The national definition is similar to the given international one: a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards.

**SKILLS** (*prasmes*) – the Latvian context for the term is similar to the international definition, i.e. the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems.

**COMPETENCES** (*kompēteses*) – the term is frequently used and understood interchangeably with “skills”, since in the Education Law (1998) the terms “knowledge, skills and attitudes” are used to describe education and its process; while within the ESF project “Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners” (2005-2007) the combination of “knowledge, skills, attitudes and professional competences” is used. However, the international definition could be applied: the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/ or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

## 2. POLICY DEVELOPMENT – OBJECTIVES, FRAMEWORKS, MECHANISMS, PRIORITIES

### 2.1 OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES OF THE NATIONAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT AREAS OF VET

Vocational education has gone through four major stages of development since 1995:

1995-1998: the main goals for the development of vocational education were defined and determined by the *Strategic Programme for the Development of Education 1998-2003 (Izglītības attīstības stratēģiskā programma)*. During this time, Phare projects were of great importance.

1999-2001: the Vocational Education Law (*Profesionālās izglītības likums*), adopted in 1999 formed the juridical basis for vocational education (please see 4.2). The Law regulates the forms of vocational education, the level of qualifications to be obtained and their requirements as well as the responsibility of the different vocational education structures. Phare projects assisted the implementation of the Law.

2002-2005: reforms continued linked to the process of joining the EU. *The Education Development Concept for 2002-2005 (Izglītības attīstības koncepcija 2002.-2005.gadam, 2002)* was adopted, as was the *Vocational Education Development Programme for 2003-2005 (Profesionālās izglītības sistēmas attīstības programma 2003.-2005.gadam, 2003)* with much more specific goals (improving quality in, and access to vocational education and to promote efficient expenditure). A number of other strategic documents have been adopted promoting lifelong learning and human resource development, including improving vocational education opportunities, for example, the annual National employment plans. The overarching aim of the Education Development Concept was to carry out the necessary changes in the education system to enhance the building of a knowledge-based, democratic and socially integrated society that would increase economic competitiveness and simultaneously preserve and develop Latvian cultural values.

2007-2013: *the National Education Development Guidelines for 2007-2013 (Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013.gadam, 2006)* worked out by the Ministry of Education and Science underpins current policy priorities. Before preparing the Guidelines, a survey on education development during 2002-2005 was carried out to identify improvements and problems, such as pre-school education availability, poor quality of basic education, the low status of teacher profession, the mismatch of vocational and higher education to labour market demands etc. The identification of problems assisted in stating general policy priorities for 2007-2013. The main objectives of the Guidelines among others are:

- to introduce and finance teacher assistant posts to provide support to pupils (Forms 1-6) with learning difficulties;
- to provide additional support for those with low levels of education and training;
- to prepare a structural model for higher education programmes with additional available places;
- to provide continuous state investment for arranging and modernising education establishments;
- to increase the role of social partners in vocational education.

In recent years vocational education prestige, quality and social dialogue have become a great policy priority, therefore, in 2009 the concept *Raising Attractiveness of Vocational Education and Involvement of Social Partners within Vocational Education Quality Assurance (Profesionālās izglītības pievilcības paaugstināšana un sociālo partneru līdzdalība profesionālās izglītības kvalitātes nodrošināšanā)* developed by the Ministry of Education and Science was approved. The Concept aims to outline solutions for key challenges in vocational education policy and reach agreement between state and social partners regarding most appropriate solutions for the problems. Discussion among the social partners on the solutions offered in the Concept is expected to serve as basis for the new Vocational Education Law, thus, this document is rather significant step in vocational education policy development. The Concept addresses the following issues:

- Raising the attractiveness of vocational education;

- Improving the types and programmes of vocational education;
- Development of NQF;
- Differentiation of vocational schools;
- Balancing the conditions of acquiring general and vocational upper-secondary education;
- Strengthening the participation of social partners and professional organisations within state policy development and implementation at national, regional and sectoral level;
- Strengthening the tripartite cooperation between state institutions and social partners at regional and sectoral level;
- Determining the participation and responsibility of the state institutions, social partners and professional organisations within formal and informal or non-formal education.

Another topical policy issue, which emerged mainly due to economic and demographic regression, is the optimisation of vocational education school network including several major reforms. One of the most representative documents designed by the Ministry of Education and Science is Guidelines for Optimization of Vocational Education Establishments Network for 2010-2015 (*Profesionālās izglītības iestāžu tīkla optimizācijas pamatnostādnes 2010.-2015.gadam*, January 2010). For more detailed information see section 3.2.3.

Modernization of the guidance and counselling system is high on policy agenda, as well. Different reforms and measures have been or are being implemented both in the education and labor sectors. Actions are taken as well to increase synergies between the two sectors. For more detailed information see section 2.1.2.

### 2.1.1 NATIONAL LLL STRATEGY

The most recent LLL policy planning document was *the Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013 (Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādnes 2007.–2013.gadam, 2007)* prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science, which outlines the vision for 2013 in terms of the needs of different target groups; mainstream development; policy aims and results indicators; and resources available. The following aims for lifelong learning policy were listed:

- To develop a **qualitative education offer** for adults providing sustainable competences for further socioeconomic and civic activities – in the Guidelines, the following activity directions are given: to create state regulated mechanisms for impacting the offer and demands of education and labour market, to coordinate adult education within the education system, to develop state support for adult education providers, to evaluate the quality of adult education, to implement a validation system for informal and non-formal learning;
- To ensure the **availability of lifelong learning** for all social groups – it is planned to create conditions for progress of educated people within all schools, to ensure flexible second chance education according to individual needs, to strengthen formation of education support system for career guidance and counselling, to promote offer of formal and informal/non-formal education, to arrange territorial access to lifelong learning, and to organise activities for minimising gender differences within lifelong learning;
- To form harmonized **legislative system and effective resource (including financial) governance** respecting principles of shared responsibility and sector policy interaction – it is planned to establish a lifelong learning administrative structure both at the local and national levels, to develop a legal basis for lifelong learning, to create lifelong learning financing mechanisms.

At the end of 2009, the Guidelines and the *Programme for Implementing the Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013 in the period of 2008-2010 (Programma mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādņu 2007.-2013.gadam ieviešanai 2008.-2010.gadā)* were revised introducing some major changes:

- Sources of funding have been changed – from state funding to structural funds and foreign funding.
- The anticipated results for the aim regarding the qualitative education offer (see above) have been stated: system for recognizing informal/non-formal learning outcomes and NQF is introduced, qualitative education for work is provided;

- The anticipated result for the aim regarding the availability of lifelong learning (see above) has been stated: school territorial availability is preserved;
- The anticipated results for the aim regarding the legislative system and effective resource (including financial) governance (see above) have been stated: support for provision of adult education in formal education establishments is increased; contribution of local governments in provision of adult education is increased.

The implementation period of the Programme has been prolonged until 2013.

## 2.1.2 POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN THE MAIN VET POLICY AREAS

### GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING

Initial vocational education governance and financing is determined by the *Education Law* (1998), the *Vocational Education Law* (1999), the *Crafts Law* (1993) and regulations of the Cabinet, as well as by statutes of particular vocational education institutions. At present (2010), a new *Vocational Education Law* is being worked out.

According to the directions set in the *Education Development Concept for 2002-2005 (Izglītības attīstības koncepcija 2002.-2005.gadam, 2002)*, schools under the authority of the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture since July 2004 were to be reassigned to the MoES, which assisted in simplifying vocational education management and funding. The MoES overtook previously separate systems of funding mechanisms, institutional networks, curricula development, and quality monitoring; thus, ensuring pursue of consistent information on vocational education and unified decision making.

Subsidies come from the state general budget, local governments and private sources. The amount of state subsidies is determined by the Cabinet of Ministers in conformity with the number of persons in education and the minimal educational cost per one learner. This normative funding in vocational education was introduced in 2000 through approving relevant Cabinet Regulations, which experienced several amendments. Now the *Cabinet Regulations on the Expenditures Minimum per One Student for Implementing Vocational Education Programmes (Noteikumi par profesionālās izglītības programmu īstenošanas izmaksu minimumu uz vienu izglītojamo, 2007, 2010)* are in force. Education establishments make an inquiry for fund every year. After the state budget confirmation school receive funding and spend it to realise their educational programmes according to the legislation. However, in reality the state does not cover all the expenses determined by the Cabinet Regulations, i.e. yearly costs for one vocational education student should be EUR 547.81, yet in 2009 the amount of state funding was EUR 274.61. The difference is partly covered by schools from their own income, but due to the limited resources education establishments are not able to pay for public facilities, e.g. heating, and thus their payment debts increase evidently. The calculations of MoES show that average state actual expenditures for vocational students are smaller than for basic education pupils. See Theme 9 on financing for more details.

The Ministry of Education and Science in its Informative Report on *Procedure of Education System Structural Reform and Planned Measures for Its Implementation (Informatīvais ziņojums par izglītības sistēmas strukturālās reformas norisi un plānotajiem pasākumiem tās tālākai īstenošanai, September 2009)* recommended to change the above normative funding system by introducing united procedure for financing in general and vocational education and allocating (to local governments) united subsidy for education, which should be divided according to the number of students in particular school. This step was considered and started to be implemented.

These and other reforms are introduced through *The Guidelines for Optimisation of Vocational Education Establishments Network for 2010-2015 (Profesionālās izglītības iestāžu tīkla optimizācijas pamatnostādnes 2010.-2015.gadam)*, approved in January 2010, which comprise changes in funding arrangements and reorganisation of school network. In the course of reorganisation, part of vocational schools is planned to reassign to the local governments, thus, changing the procedure of funding. See 3.2.3.

## GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

Different innovative activities to modernise the guidance and counselling system have been launched during last years in Latvia at national level. However, in conditions of economic recession, more emphasis is put on counselling of the unemployed, while young people (students) are not provided with sufficient counselling opportunities (see 9.2).

The main document stipulating guidance and counselling policy is the *White Paper on the Improvement of the Career Guidance System (Konceptcija „Karjeras attīstības atbalsta sistēmas pilnveidošana”, 2006)*, which was developed by the Ministry of Welfare in cooperation with three other ministries (the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Economics, Ministry of Regional Development), with the Association of Local Governments, the social partners' organisations and the guidance practitioners. The Paper covers all aspects of lifelong guidance including the mechanisms to ensure better cooperation and coordination between key players in guidance and counselling at different levels.

In 2007, the National Forum on guidance and counselling (*Karjeras attīstības atbalsta sistēmas sadarbības padome, NF*) was established involving the policy makers from relevant ministries, guidance providers, social partners and clients. The NF aims at being an advisor on necessary improvements to guidance and counselling policy and systems at national and local levels. The NF contributes to the development of guidance and counselling policy and systems by promoting dialogue among stakeholders. The NF cooperates with the Latvian delegation to the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN), to add the European dimension to its activities, particularly in the areas of cooperation and coordination mechanisms and guidance quality issues.

To optimise the system of guidance and counselling within the labour sector, the former Professional Career Counselling State Agency (*Profesionālās karjeras izvēles valsts aģentūra, PCCSA*) was incorporated into the State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra, SEA*) in September 2007. According to the current legislation, the SEA is responsible for provision of guidance and counselling for all individuals irrespective of their age and social status (including the employed, the unemployed, and students from age 16). Several new regional offices were established during the last years and different National and ESF funded programmes and projects were implemented to support capacity building of institutions responsible for labour market and gender equality policies and to support information dissemination and increase public awareness. However, as of 2009, the situation in the labour sector has considerably changed, as explained in section 9.2.

The State Education Development Agency under the Ministry of Education and Science (see 9.1) implemented the project *Provision of Career Education Programmes within Education System (Karjeras izglītības programmu nodrošinājums izglītības sistēmā, 2005-2008)* with the objective to improve access to and quality of guidance and counselling in all educational institutions irrespective of their type and level. During the project the following activities were implemented:

- In-service training courses for the guidance practitioners currently working in the educational sector;
- Developing, testing and piloting methodological and training materials for careers education purposes in schools;
- Developing various information resources on learning opportunities including a national data base and self-assessment tests for e-guidance;
- Developing a national qualification framework and a Master's level study programme for training of guidance counsellors, as well as piloting the study programme.

In 2010, the State Education Development Agency and the State Service for Education Quality cooperated to draft amendments for the Cabinet Regulations *Procedure of accrediting vocational education programmes, education establishments and examination centres* (July 2009) which would integrate quality criteria on guidance and counselling, thus, fostering consistency of services and development of a systemic approach to guidance and counselling in schools. The amendments were adopted in September 2010, and new version of these regulations was passed: *Procedure of accrediting general and vocational education programmes, education establishments and examination centres*.



Furthermore, the Ministry implemented the ESF National Programme project *Fostering the Implementation of Vocational Guidance Provision and Careers Education in the Educational Sector* (*Karjeras izglītības programmas nodrošinājums izglītības sistēmā, 2005-2008*) to improve the accessibility and quality of vocational guidance provision and careers education at providers.

## TEACHER EDUCATION

Improving teacher training and the professional development system has been viewed as a mechanism to improve vocational education quality in several policy documents, e.g. *the Education Development Concept for 2002-2005* (*Izglītības attīstības koncepcija 2002.-2005.gadam, 2002*), *the Vocational Education Development Programme for 2003-2005* (*Profesionālās izglītības sistēmas attīstības programma 2003.-2005.gadam, 2003*).

There is no separated education system for vocational education teachers, yet specific requirements for general and vocational education teachers' qualification and education exist, as well as payment regulations. Raising teachers' salaries has been set as one of the major priorities before the economic regression. However, due to the crisis salaries were not raised, on the contrary, they suffered substantial decrease.

Until the *Vocational Education Law* (1999) was passed, vocational education teachers were only specialists in the vocation field, few had a pedagogical qualification. As result of the law, in 2009/2010 the proportion of teachers having pedagogical education reached 87.8% of the total number of vocational teachers.

In 2002, Vocational Teacher Occupational Standard was approved and consequently, four universities started implementing Vocational Teacher Education Programmes. The impulse for this programme was given by the Cabinet Regulations on *Demands for Necessary Education and Professional Qualification to Teachers* (*Noteikumi par prasībām pedagogiem nepieciešamajai izglītībai un profesionālajai kvalifikācijai*, approved in 2000 and enforced in 2004). It set unified demands for teacher qualifications according to which all full time teachers working at school have to possess pedagogic qualification. Latest amendments of these regulations (September 2010) stipulate that vocational education teachers for their pedagogical qualification need to acquire 72 hours long pedagogy courses in HEI instead of 320 hours long courses of various themes and arranged in different institutions. Before these amendments the procedures for vocational teachers acquiring education and participating within professional improvement programmes were outlined by the Cabinet Regulations *Procedures on the Acquisition of Education and Professional Improvement of Vocational Education Teachers* (*Profesionālās izglītības pedagogu izglītības ieguves un profesionālās pilnveides kārtība, 2005*); at present (September 2010), the new version of the regulations is submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers for discussion.

During the period of 2006-2008, the Ministry of Education and Science coordinated the implementation of the ESF National Programme project *Development of Further Teacher Education Network* project *Development of Further Teacher Education Methodological Network and Provision* (*Pedagogu tālākizglītības metodiskā tīkla nodrošinājuma izveide*). In terms of project system of further teacher education was developed, which included content, assessment, coordination, financing and career development aspects. See 7.1.3.

A significant issue is teacher ageing, although in conditions of economic recession, the statistics have improved: in 2000/2001, 11.5% of vocational education teachers were older than 60 years, compared to 9.5% in 2009/2010.. Due to limited financial resources and disadvantageous Cabinet regulations for working pensioners, rather great part of teacher at age of pension left their work (comparing to 2008/2009, the ratio of teachers at age above 65 has decreased by 4.9%). Meanwhile, the number of novice teachers (younger than 30 years) comparing to 2008/2009 shows slight increase (from 6.5% to 7.4% in 2009/2010), although generally this increase does not cover the fall since 2000/2001, when the rate of novice vocational education teachers was 14.8%. Therefore, according to the Ministry of Education and Science, in teacher policy there is a shift from quantity to quality in the number of employed teachers, as well as there is focus on attracting more novice teachers to work in schools.

The teacher payment principle "money follows student" (previously funding was allocated to school) has been introduced since September 2009, i.e. funding allocated to local governments for

general education teacher payment depends on number of students in particular administrative territory.

For what concerns attracting young people to teacher profession, since 2007, several private and public organisations have implemented the activity "Possible Mission", which aims to put education as a value and is arranged for HEI graduates. In terms of this project HEI graduates at least for two years work as full-time teachers in general schools in their speciality and, in the same time, have pedagogy and leadership courses. The funding is provided from private and public sector, non-profit organizations and donations. Although the Education and Science Workers Trade Union (*Latvijas Izglītības un zinātnes darbinieku arodbiedrība*) supports the necessity to attract more young teachers, the trade union evaluates this initiative negatively because, first, the participants in the project do not have sufficient pedagogic education and still they receive additional grants, which in a way diminishes the meaning of formal teacher education. Second, since the participants work in school only for 2-3 years, the sustainability of education is threatened, as well as gradualness and consistency in students' learning.

Due to the school network optimisation, part of teachers became unemployed. To help teachers, who have lost or are in risk to lose their job, in 2009 the ESF National Programme project *Promotion of Teacher Competitiveness in Conditions of Education System Optimisation (Pedagogu konkurētspējas veicināšana izglītības sistēmas optimizācijas apstākļos.)* was launched by the Ministry of Education and Science. See section 3.2.3.

Regarding the pupils having special needs, teacher education programmes, which are implemented by HEI, include study course on special education issues (4-6 ECTS). According to the Cabinet Regulations on *Demands for Necessary Education and Professional Qualification to Teachers* (2000, 2010), teachers working with students with special needs have to acquire relevant further education programmes. However, according to the Education and Science Workers Trade Union, vocational teachers are not provided with adequate further education opportunities to acquire skills for the work with students with special needs. Theoretical study courses included in teacher education programmes in HEI cannot ensure sufficient ground; moreover, such courses usually are acquired by general subject teachers, but not vocational subject teachers. The other problem is that additional payment for the work with students having special needs receive only those teachers, who have acquired particular further education (some teachers have to work with students having special needs anyway). Therefore, vocational education teachers should be offered more education opportunities (both pre- and in-service) including practical training concerning this issue.

## SKILL NEEDS STRATEGY

All topics related to the anticipation of skill needs and qualifications are defined in the *National Development Plan for 2007-2013* (2006). The next steps in terms of reviewing the Latvian situation include the implementation of the following planning documents: *Long-term Economic Strategy of Latvia for 2001-2030*, *National Economy Single Strategy for 2004-2030*, *Common Declaration for Employment Priorities of Latvia 2003* (issued by the government and European Commission), *National Action Plan on Employment for 2004*, *Law on Unemployed and Job Seekers* (2002).

Information on skill needs is collected partly, but not systematically, at national level. The Ministry of Economics prepares and publishes twice a year reports on economy development to reflect long-term forecasts. The State Employment Agency twice a year organises national surveys of employers to develop short-term forecasts on employers' demands and expectations. A few sector analyses e.g. in metalworking and engineering industry, and research in terms of individual projects, e.g. the ESF project the *Ministry of Welfare Studies* (2005–2007), have been conducted in recent years to gather information for planning education provision.

## VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

The system for validating skills and competences acquired through informal/non-formal education is not completely developed yet. Therefore, establishing such system has been set as one of policy objectives, e.g. within the *Programme for Implementing the Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013 in the Period of 2008-2013*.

In the framework of the ESF National Programme project the *Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners (Vienotas metodikas izstrāde profesionālās izglītības kvalitātes paaugstināšanai un sociālo partneru iesaistei un izglītošanai, 2005-2007)* the procedure for validating informal/non-formal learning was designed. The ideas regarding this developed procedure were applied in the new concept *Raising Attractiveness of Vocational Education and Involvement of Social Partners within Vocational Education Quality Assurance (Profesionālās izglītības pievilcības paaugstināšana un sociālo partneru līdzdalība profesionālās izglītības kvalitātes nodrošināšanā, September 2009)*. The Concept outlines possible procedure for the validation and recognition, as well as tasks and responsibilities of state, social partners and sectoral organisations within non-formal and informal education. According to the Concept, the procedure of validation should comprise the following steps:

- Candidate (individual at least 18 years old with at least two year work experience or voluntary work experience) submits self-evaluation to non-formal and informal learning recognition body; in the self-evaluation form the candidate marks professional competences relevant to particular specialisation and the way of acquiring the competences, includes prior formal and non-formal/informal learning certificates, and recommendations of employer or other legal or physical person (that has provided the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences);
- The experts of the non-formal and informal learning recognition body evaluate the application and the relevance of acquired competences to chosen specialisation; if necessary, they visit the candidate's work place; and arranges professional qualification exam for obtaining professional qualification; and awards certificate of qualification.

The introduction and maintenance of validation system are planned to be funded from the resources of ESF and state for period 2007-2013. It is planned that candidates will have to pay for validation. The institutions carrying out the validation are planned to be the competence centres, which are expected to be established according to several policy documents, e.g. *Informative Report on Planned Structural Changes within Education Sector, Their Implementation and Anticipated Benefits* (April 2009), and the *Guidelines for Optimisation of Vocational Education Establishments Network for 2010-2015 (Profesionālās izglītības iestāžu tīkla optimizācijas pamatnostādnes 2010.-2015.gadam, January 2010)*.

The latest amendments (July 2010) in the *Vocational Education Law* introduced a paragraph on the validation of professional competence acquired outside formal education system, which states that procedure is determined by the Cabinet of Ministers. Therefore, the Ministry of Education and Science has prepared a project of regulations on validation of non-formal/informal learning and submitted the document to the Cabinet of Ministers for discussion.

### 2.1.3 CURRENT DEBATES

There are several issues discussed related to vocational education and employability: first and most important because of the economic situation, raising efficiency of vocational education financing and optimisation of school network (see 3.2.3); second, strengthening the social dialogue among stakeholders; third, raising attractiveness of vocational education. Both last issues have been addressed in the new concept *Raising Attractiveness of Vocational Education and Involvement of Social Partners within Vocational Education Quality Assurance (Profesionālās izglītības pievilcības paaugstināšana un sociālo partneru līdzdalība profesionālās izglītības kvalitātes nodrošināšanā, 2009)*.

## 2.2 THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF EUROPEAN TOOLS

It is impossible to discuss policy progress concerning the EU tools EQF and ECVET in Latvia since they have not been introduced yet. However, linking the Latvian professional qualifications system (see 11.3) to EQF is in progress. There are several policy planning documents, which support implementation of NQF, e.g. *Amendments in the Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013* (December 2009) states that shift towards education offer based on learning outcomes oriented national framework has to be ensured. The development of NQF is one of the activity directions within the concept *Raising Attractiveness of Vocational Education and Involvement of Social*

*Partners within Vocational Education Quality Assurance (Profesionālās izglītības pievilcības paaugstināšana un sociālo partneru līdzdalība profesionālās izglītības kvalitātes nodrošināšanā, 2009).*

Since February 2008, the Academic Information Centre, which also supervises Latvian representation of ENIC-NARIC network, Europass and ReferNet, acts as a national EQF information coordination point (NCP) to promote introduction of the framework and support cooperation among stakeholders at national level.

In September 2009, a work group involving various stakeholders was established to link the Latvian qualification system to the EQF and formulate level descriptors by spring 2011. At higher education level (5-8 levels) the level descriptors have been developed according to QF-EHEA and EQF by the Rectors' Council working group; and the descriptors have been adopted by the Higher Education Council. At basic and secondary education level (1-4 level) the descriptors also have been formulated. The level descriptions are included in the project of the Cabinet Regulations on education classification, which has been submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers for discussion.

At present (2010), a unit-based credit system is not introduced in vocational education. The new Vocational Education Law is expected to provide legal basis for ECVET.

Geographic mobility since 1998 has been fostered in the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci programme. The implementation of the Programme for Community Action in the Field of Lifelong Learning – LLP Leonardo da Vinci sectoral programme – is supervised by the State Education Development Agency. In 2009, there were approved 53 preparatory visits, 86 mobility, 6 transfer of innovation and 8 partnership projects. In 2009, around 600 persons in total (vocational education students and teachers, people in labour market, counselling specialists and other representatives of vocational education personnel) received grants and participated in the mobility projects. The total grant for the activities approved was EUR 2 335 000. Totally the agency supervised 425 projects in 2009.

In 2001, the *Law on the Recognition of Regulated Professions and Professional Qualification (Likums „Par reglamentētajām profesijām un profesionālās kvalifikācijas atzīšanu”)* was adopted determining the procedure for the recognition of vocational qualifications in regulated professions obtained in foreign countries (not only in EU countries) which assisted in providing legal basis for supporting mobility.

Since 2005, the National Europass centre (NEC) has fulfilled the tasks defined by the European Commission, such as the coordination of receiving Europass documents and the promotion of the use of Europass documents. It has also implemented several support measures e.g. National Europass website [www.europass.lv](http://www.europass.lv), in which the most visited section is about Europass CV (38.6% of all visitors in 2009). NEC has provided the Europass Mobility form to all the inhabitants having the mobility experience in programmes Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius and Erasmus and having expressed the wish to obtain one. The interest in the Mobility documents has increased: 62 Europass Mobility Passes were issued in 2005, while 626 passes – in 2009, of which 332 were issued for Leonardo da Vinci programme participants, 65 – Erasmus programme participants, 181 – Comenius programme participants, 11 – Grundtvig programme participants.

### 3. VET IN TIMES OF CRISIS

#### 3.1 OVERVIEW

The effect of economic regression to a certain extent may be observed in all economic sectors. During the crisis, the GDP has decreased by 25%; the unemployment rate has increased from 5.3% at the end of 2007 to 19.7% at the end of 2009. Due to the significant fall in the State budget, general government budget deficit reached 9% in 2009. The most critical period for the economic sector was first half of 2009; although regression continued during the other half of year, it was slower and industry experienced a slight increase.

During the period of rapid development (2004-2007) such sectors as construction, trade and commercial services experienced great increase, while manufacturing constituted rather small part of the Latvian economy (very below EU average), as result this economic structure failed to provide a stable and sustainable progress and was very sensitive to the world economic regression.

Therefore, the Ministry of Economics supports opinion that there should be a shift from an economic model, in which domestic demand increased rapidly due to the high inflow of foreign capital, to a sustainable model, in which main drive is export. According to data, those sectors involving export show actual improvement. There is still tense situation in the labour market, although there is a slight decrease in the numbers of unemployed since April 2010, which may be explained by fact that part of the unemployed lost their status because did not fulfil their requirements or by increase in the seasonal labour force demand.

The rapid development (prior to the regression), which was mainly based on domestic demand initiatives, changed the structure of economy in favour of service sectors, i.e. their progress was much more intensive than the development of trade sectors. The ratio of service sectors in added value increased from 71.7% in 2000 to 76.2% in 2009; the increase of ratio continued also during the economic recession (2008-2009). In 2008, despite the recession in some sectors the volume of production continued to grow, e.g. transport and communications, public services, as well as in activities related to real estates. However, in 2009 the fall in service sectors, except trade, was much slower than the average in the economy.

Speaking about changes in the structure of economy by number of employees, the output decreased faster in sectors focused on domestic demand. In 2009, the turnover of retail trade and the amount of construction production decreased substantially, i.e. by 28% and 33.6% respectively. The amount of commercial services related to domestic demand decreased greatly, while the turn-over of transport transit services fell slightly.

The main priorities of the Ministry of Economics in 2010 are: restructuring and supporting the development of economics, support for export activities, the development of micro-enterprises, and facilitating energy independence. In 2009 and by end of 2010, the Ministry will have provided the inflow of EUR 498 005 134 through State support instruments and EUR 953 324 113 using the attracted private investment in state economy. This is the most significant State support for enterprises in last 20 years, e.g. in 2008, the Ministry provided EUR 28 457 436 from the State. With the financial support of ESF, several national programmes have been commenced or continued, e.g. Development and implementation of new products and technologies in production, Contact points of transfer of technologies, Business incubators, which focus on fostering knowledge-based economy.

The state funding for educational sector, including vocational education, has been reduced in 2009 approximately by EUR 132,327,078 in the framework of state economy recovery and development programme. Analysing funding distribution in education sector, in 2009 comparing to 2008, there was no funding allocated for the scheduled increase of teachers' salaries (-100%); investments were reduced by 41.6%, sector management – 38.1%, leisure time education – 35.4%; vocational education – 30%; general education – 29.7%; and higher education – 26.6% (MoES, 2009).

As result of economic regression, the unemployment rate started to increase reaching 7.5% in 2008 and 16% in December 2009 (see 1.3). The greatest unemployment risk was experienced by

low-skilled workers in construction and trade service; also other vulnerable groups listed in section 6.3 (young people, people of pre-retirement age, long-term unemployed etc.).

Provision of guidance and counselling by target groups changed in favour to the unemployed and job seekers, while young people and students appeared to have lost sufficient access to career consultations. Due to limited resources, the State Employment Agency does not provide such services to the previous extent (see statistics in the next section) and school administrations have been forced to remove the post of career counsellor.

## 3.2 EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS ON VET AND CORRESPONDING MEASURES

### 3.2.1 TRENDS IN LEARNERS' BEHAVIOUR

The **distribution of students by types of programmes** (initial secondary general and vocational) has been rather stable for last five years, i.e. 64:36. The ratio of students who after basic education chose general education, during the period of 2004-2007, fell from 65.7% to 62.1%, while the ratio of students preferring vocational education slightly increased from 29.6% to 30.4%. The ratio of students who discontinued education also showed increasing tendencies in the same period – from 4.7% to 7.5% (which was the highest rate at least since 1995). During the economic recession, there were opposite tendencies in the ratios, i.e. numbers of students selecting general education increased (68.4% in 2009), ratio of vocational students (28.1% in 2009) and students discontinuing education (3.5% in 2009) decreased. Speaking about vocational students' distribution by thematic groups, no evident changes have occurred, during the last five years the distribution ratios vary within 1-2%.

There are not critical changes in numbers regarding the fact whether **learners stay longer or leave earlier**. During 2004/05-2007/08, the ratio of drop-outs in vocational education increased from 15.6% to 16.6%, while, thereafter, the ratio fell from 15.5% in 2008/09 to 13.3% in 2009/10. Secondary education graduates' preferences were quite steady, until 2009, when less graduates continued in HE (from 75% in 2008 to 66.4% in 2009) and more graduates discontinued their education (from 22.2% in 2008 to 31.3% in 2009).

**Participation rates in continuing vocational education** may have increased due to the education courses for the unemployed arranged by the State Employment Agency: in 2007, 3893 unemployed participated in vocational education, re-qualification or qualification promotion, while in 2009 – 9 954 unemployed. The other motivating aspect to participate in adult education programmes is learning activities supported by ESF through various projects, which provided (and provides) education courses for free or for reduced fee. Still, the political ambition is to increase education participation rate of adults (25-64) from 7.5% in 2009 to 12.5% in 2013, which has been reflected in the *Amendments in the Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013 (Grozījumi Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādņēs 2007.-2013.gadam*, December 2009).

Due to the increasing rate of unemployment, the unemployed adults show greater interest in **counselling services**. According to the statistics, in 2007 the number of individuals who received career counselling was 44.252, of which 27.6% were the unemployed or job seekers and 72.4% were other groups (including students, unregistered unemployed, employed, students' parents, prisoners, individuals after maternity leave, pre-pension individuals, and individuals with special needs); in 2008 the number of clients increased greatly (67.939) and in 2009 the number of clients was 55.084, of which 82% were the unemployed or job seekers and 18% were other groups. Thus, counselling services were used more by the unemployed, due to economic situation and changes in funding distribution. Other groups, particularly young people, have appeared in more disadvantaged situation (the number of career counselling services for young people (15-24) has decreased by 20.2% from 2008 to 2009).

According to view of the SEA, the main reasons for the decrease in number of consultations between 2008 and 2009 despite the growth of unemployment rate may be that: first, individuals who have lost their job are more motivated to register as unemployed; second, due to the structural changes in the SEA, since September 2009 counsellors are not employees of the SEA, but provide their services externally.

The statistics of the Academic information Centre, which fulfils functions of the Latvian ENIC-NARIC, indicate that there is generally increasing tendency in numbers of applications for **recognition** (particularly academic): 843 documents were submitted for academic recognition and 43 – for professional recognition in 2007; while in 2009, 1250 documents for academic and 45 for professional recognition were submitted. Mostly the foreign qualifications are issued by education institutions in Russia, Germany, Norway, UK, Bangladesh, and Ukraine.

### 3.2.2 TRENDS IN ENTERPRISES' BEHAVIOUR

The data on training in enterprises is collected by the Central Statistics Bureau only in terms of European Survey (1999, 2005); therefore, it is not possible to state any trends caused by economic recession. General trends show that in many sectors there was a reduction of financial resources; thus, enterprises had to re-evaluate their business priorities and frequently the personnel professional improvement activities had to be postponed or cancelled.

Regarding the number of enterprises providing apprenticeship places, there is data only on the work-based training arranged in the frameworks of the active employment and unemployment preventive activities (initiated in May 2008) supervised and coordinated by the State Employment Agency. Generally, more adults are interested in the provided possibilities because of the high unemployment rate, and the demand even exceeds the offer since the funding is limited. In 2009, within the active employment and unemployment preventive activities 166 305 unemployed, job seekers and individuals exposed to the unemployment risk were involved, of which 166 305 (78 in 2008) participated in work-based training in enterprises.

### 3.2.3 MEASURES TAKEN AT GOVERNANCE LEVELS (NATIONAL, REGIONAL, LOCAL)

#### FINANCIAL MEASURES

In the situation of economic recession, vocational education budget experienced rather critical reduction, i.e. from EUR 86 861 528 in 2008 to EUR 68 225 643 in 2009 (by 21.5%) and to EUR 59 899 413 in 2010 (by 12.2% comparing to 2009). According to current legislation – the Cabinet Regulations on the Expenditures Minimum per One Student for Implementing Vocational Education Programmes (*Noteikumi par profesionālās izglītības programmu īstenošanas izmaksu minimumu uz vienu izglītojamo*, 2007, 2010), funding for vocational schools is allocated by the state regarding the expenditures minimum per one student for implementing vocational education programmes (normative financing). However, even before the economical difficulties schools did not receive all funding stipulated by the law, e.g. in 2008 vocational schools received on average 60% of the budgeted financing, while in 2009 – 50.1%. The difference is partly covered by schools from their own income, but due to the limited resources education establishments are not able to pay for public facilities, e.g. heating, and thus their payment debts increase evidently. Due to the limited financial resources schools had to review their functions; and in many cases there were cuts in support services for students, e.g. medical care.

#### PROJECTS FINANCED BY ESF

The contribution of EU funds has a significant role in the implementation of structural education reforms. Together with the planned changes in education, the EU fund activities were reviewed, restructured, and their funding was redistributed in order to provide additional support for more important fields. Regarding the *Informative Report on Procedure of Education System Structural Reform and Planned Measures for Its Implementation* (September 2009) prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science, for attaining strategic aims of vocational education development (in conditions of crisis), the ESF support is provided to:

1. **The arrangement of vocational education establishment network:** the ministry has prepared amendments, which would stipulate that the remainder of funding quota available for the regions is allocated to give additional support for implementing the functions of regional competence centres (see 2.1.2).
2. **The support for promoting attractiveness of vocational education** (the project was initiated in March 2009) – the aim is to improve the attractiveness of initial vocational education programmes for young people; thus, increasing ratio of vocational education students. In terms of the sub-activity vocational education students are provided with

scholarships; total public funding of sub-activity is EUR 57 627 330 (it is planned to increase funding and enlarge the circle of organisations applicable for support).

### 3. The improvement of vocational education quality:

- Sub-activity *Support to the Quality Improvement and Implementation of Initial Vocational Education Programmes (Atbalsts sākotnējās profesionālās izglītības programmu īstenošanas kvalitātes uzlabošanai un īstenošanai)* – the aim is to facilitate the ability of education system to prepare workforce according to the region development needs and for progressing towards knowledge-based economy; total public funding is EUR 11 664 706; projects were started at the end of 2009.
- Sub-activity *Raising Competence of Teachers Involved in Vocational Education (Profesionālajā izglītībā iesaistīto pedagogu kompetences paaugstināšana)* – the sub-activity comprises provision of opportunity for vocational education teachers to have work-based training in enterprises. Total public funding of sub-activity is EUR 10 588 235; projects was initiated in spring 2010.
- Sub-activity *Development of Sectoral Qualification System and Restructuralization of Vocational Education (Nozaru kvalifikāciju sistēmas izveide un profesionālās izglītības pārstrukturizācija)* – the aim is to improve vocational education quality and efficiency regarding the sectoral economic needs by introducing structural alterations in vocational education system, by developing sectoral qualification system, by carrying out sectoral research, by developing or improving occupational standards and basic requirements for professional qualification, as well as developing validation of informal/non-formal learning. Total public funding of sub-activity is EUR 3 628 323; the sub-activity is initiated in autumn 2010.

Due to the limited resources, in April 2009 the Cabinet of Ministers decided to postpone the implementation of several activities by removing funding from the activities:

- Development of career guidance and counselling within education system;
- Promoting availability of career guidance and counselling for young people, development of vocationally oriented education.

## ROLE OF SOCIAL PARTNERS

The social partners are involved in the development of vocational education through the participation in designing occupational standards and the final qualification exams, as well as provision of practice training places. Strengthening cooperation with social partners has been one of the policy priorities also before recession. At present, this issue is addressed in the concept *Raising Attractiveness of Vocational Education and Involvement of Social Partners within Vocational Education Quality Assurance (Profesionālās izglītības pievilcības paaugstināšana un sociālo partneru līdzdalība profesionālās izglītības kvalitātes nodrošināšanā, September 2009)*. The Concept determines the participation and responsibility of the state institutions, social partners and professional organisations within formal and informal or non-formal education. See 2.1.

## TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

The main impact of regression related to teachers was reduction of their payment and, due to the reorganization of the school network, job losses (or risk of job losses) for part of the teachers or changed work conditions. The reorganisation of school networks that had already started before the recession (more information under Training providers below) has led to the need to integrate students from the closed schools in other schools. Thus, the number of students per group increases, and teachers need to help these students adapting to new learning environments.

**Teachers' payment** was reduced due to limited financial resources; and despite the *Programme for the Increase of Teachers' Salaries for 2006-2010 (Pedagogu darba samaksas paaugstināšanas programma 2006.-2010.gadam, 2005)* in 2009 no funding was allocated for this activity.

The Ministry of Education and Science has initiated to introduce the principle “money follows student” (previously funding was allocated to school) to promote school competitiveness and to provide equal and transparent allocation of funds to each student. This principle has started being implemented in general education since September 2009. Funding allocated to local governments for general education teacher payment depends on the number of students living in particular



administrative territory. Thus, the recession may open up opportunities for improving quality of system in general, according to the ministry. For the time being, the recession has reflected negatively on individuals (school administration), who have lost their job or experienced great salary reduction.

Taking into account the negative consequences of crisis, the Education and Science Workers Trade Union (*Latvijas Izglītības un zinātnes darbinieku arodbiedrība*) has demanded, first, to avoid further reduction of teachers' payment. Second, in terms of the principle "money follows students" expenditures per student have to be increased. Third, the trade union objects to the introduction of 40 hours work week for teachers proposed by the Ministry of Education and Science (at present teachers work load is calculated for 21 contact hours per week) without changing payment amount and working conditions.

Given the new challenges and changed work conditions, projects are launched to retrain teachers and/or improve their professional competences within the ESF National Programme. Regarding **retraining of teachers**, who due to the optimisation of education system have appeared in new work conditions at school or are at risk losing their job, in 2009 the sub-activity of the ESF National Programme *Promotion of Teacher Competitiveness in Conditions of Education System Optimisation (Pedagogu konkurētspējas veicināšana izglītības sistēmas optimizācijas apstākļos.)* was introduced by the Ministry of Education and Science. Supporting measures comprise career guidance for teachers in cooperation with the State Employment Agency, arranging courses for teacher professional improvement or re-qualification. While participating in the courses, teachers receive monthly scholarships.

It is planned also to introduce and continue to develop an evaluation system aimed at supporting teachers' career progress and their professional improvement. For implementing the foresaid activities, the results of the ESF National Programme project *Development of Further Teacher Education Methodological Network and Provision (Pedagogu tālākizglītības metodiskā tīkla nodrošinājuma izveide, 2006-2008)* are applied. See 7.1.3.

Furthermore, the State Education Content Centre (*Valsts izglītības saturs centrs*) in April 2010 initiated ESF project *The Improvement of Theoretical Knowledge and Practical Competences for Vocational Subject Teachers and for Supervisors of Practical Training (Profesionālo mācību priekšmetu pedagogu un prakses vadītāju teorētisko zināšanu un praktisko kompetenču paaugstināšana, 2010-2012)*. The project, with total funding EUR 3 811 916, is aimed at improving the theoretical knowledge and practical competences for initial vocational education teachers and for the supervisors of practical training by referring to updated vocational education content, innovations in economy, development of production technologies and by establishing sustainable and continuous cooperation between vocational schools, social partners and other stakeholders in all regions of Latvia. It is planned to design methodological aid for developing electronic learning materials; to design and implement six modules for improving teachers' and trainers' theoretical knowledge; to arrange 96 further education courses both in presence and distance (e-learning) studies.

#### **TRAINING FOR THE UNEMPLOYED (TYPE OF TRAINING AS PART OF THE STIMULUS PACKAGES)**

The State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra*, SEA) pays particular attention to activities related to training for the unemployed people and career counselling. The SEA arranges the following learning activities:

- Continuing vocational education programmes (vocational education programmes of professional qualification levels 2-3, professional improvement programmes);
- Informal education programmes;
- Measures for raising competitiveness (lectures, seminars, courses from 8 hours to five days).

In 2009, 31 618 individuals participated in the learning measures arranged by the SEA: 11 294 – in vocational education, re-qualification or professional promotion programmes (including 441 individuals participated in training at enterprises to prepare specialists required by the employer), 20 324 – informal learning. Regarding the further career opportunities of those who participated in the learning activities – 8.4% of vocational education participants (in 2009) became employed

during the following six months after the learning; 62.6% of those from learning in enterprises, and 11.1% of those from informal learning activities (SEA, 2010).

The learning activities are focused on improving basic knowledge, skills and competences required by the labour market. The list of required occupations and skills to be provided through the unemployed training is designed by a commission established by the SEA, which takes into account analysis of statistics, discussions with job placement companies, and relevant ministries. Comparing to 2009, in 2010 more emphasis is put on general skills and competences, particularly on education courses about entrepreneurship development. In 2010, the most demanded vocational education, re-qualification or qualification promotion programmes are those of hairdresser, finishing work worker, secretary, caretaker, accountant, cook, and project manager. In case of informal learning programmes, the most unemployed and job seekers have started learning in: English for beginners, computers (for beginners), State language at beginner's level, driver of category B and C, and project management. The most demanded lectures in terms of measures for raising competitiveness are related to such issues as communication, public speech, job interviews etc (SEA, 2010).

### REVISION OF EXISTING PROGRAMMES

Revision of occupation standards, on which education programmes are based, is an ongoing process; the standards are updated at least every five years. Since 2007, the standards besides knowledge and skills have to include professional competence, i.e. necessary skills, knowledge and responsibility in certain work situations; therefore, all standards designed before had to be updated. In case standards (occupation or education) are altered, the education programmes have to be adapted accordingly; otherwise, these programmes would not be accredited.

In July 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science presented its *Informative Report on Revision of Vocational Education Programmes of First to Third Professional Qualification Level (Informatīvais ziņojums par pirmā līdz trešā kvalifikācijas līmeņa profesionālās izglītības programmu pārskatīšanu)* with the aim to assess the correspondence of the provided vocational education programmes to the labour market long- and short-term needs, as well to state, in which occupation the graduates are at most in risk to become unemployed in the course of labour market changes. This review of education programmes acted more like a skill forecasts analysis by various occupational sectors.

To respond to the high rates of unemployed youth, it is planned to amend vocational education standards and to introduce 1-1.5 year long education programmes (post-secondary level) for individuals younger than 25 within initial vocational education system. Previously these programmes lasted for 2 years requiring more time for young people to become involved in the labour market.

### TRAINING PROVIDERS

Optimization of school network started already before the recession (from 120 schools in 2000/2001 to 92 schools in 2007/2008, and 85 schools in 2009/2010), but it forced to list further steps more clearly. In 2009, nine vocational schools under the direction of the Ministry of Education and Science were already reorganised. It is planned to continue optimizing the school network and differentiating remaining vocational schools by their functions, which also would promote access to vocational education for adults.

As a reaction to the negative demographic indicators, which result in decrease of the number of students, and to the limited financial resources, the Ministry of Education and Science designed *the Guidelines for Optimisation of Vocational Education Establishments Network for 2010-2015 (Profesionālās izglītības iestāžu tīkla optimizācijas pamatnostādnes 2010.-2015.gadam)*, January 2010). The Guidelines are aimed at providing further implementation of the vocational education system structural reforms by optimising the number of vocational schools and their geographical coverage and by differentiating vocational schools. The optimisation imparts the reduction of the number of vocational schools (from 59 in 2009/2010 to 30 schools under direction of the Ministry of Education and Science in 2015), and at the same time their modernisation. These 30 schools will be differentiated by their functions and management. Five types of schools are planned to be formed:

- Vocational education competence centre (14) – vocational school having relevant material facilities for acquiring qualifications within all basic occupations of a particular sector; and whose task is to provide methodological support to other vocational schools; about provision of qualifications and to serve as a place for mastering the latest technologies both by young people and adults. The centres are also expected to fulfil the functions of examination centres including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.
- Vocational education establishment with specialisation (14) – vocational schools providing qualification specialisation of basic occupations in a certain education programme and having relevant material facilities for acquiring qualifications within basic occupations.
- Vocational education establishment for acquiring basic competences (2) – vocational school providing education programmes, in which basic competences of one or several occupations are acquired, and with relevant material facilities for mastering basic competences.
- Affiliate of vocational education establishment – structural unit of a competence centre or a vocational school with specialisation, which is territorially separated from the education establishment and which provides education programmes for mastering basic competences in one or several occupations.
- Integrated education establishment (10) – school providing various general and vocational education programmes, as well as adult and continuous education.

However, it should be noted that there is rather a high level of opposition against the closure of vocational schools expressed both by education establishments themselves and society. The argument is that schools often serve as social and cultural centres in rural areas, and the infrastructure is not developed sufficiently to arrange transport for students to reorganised schools, which frequently are located at long distance from their home. Therefore, there is a risk that part of students from the closed or reorganised schools may drop out of the education system. The other issue is related to teachers and school administration, which become unemployed due to the structural reforms.

Furthermore, to provide specialists for labour market, the ratio between the number of general and vocation students is planned to balance to 50:50 (at present the ratio is around 64:36).

Regarding vocational education for adults, vocational schools provide education programmes for the unemployed in terms of the learning activities arranged by the State Employment Agency.

### 3.3 LONGER TERM CONSEQUENCES AND FUTURE RESPONSES

As mentioned above, at present (2010) the Ministry of Education and Science is implementing the activities outlined in the *Guidelines for Optimisation of Vocational Education Establishments Network for 2010-2015 (Profesionālās izglītības iestāžu tīkla optimizācijas pamatnostādnes 2010.-2015.gadam*, January 2010). The reorganisation and optimisation of vocational schools is expected to have long-term consequences, e.g. more effective use of resources. However, now the optimisation cannot be evaluated; furthermore, it can hinder some unanticipated aspects.

Regarding guidance and counselling, if young people are not provided with guidance sufficiently, the risk of skill mismatch may increase in the future. To promote availability of counselling for students, in terms of the strategy *EU 2020*, the Ministry of Education and Science is planning, with the support of ESF, to introduce the post of counsellor in schools with more than 400 students; as well as to establish 40 guidance offices in youth centres across the regions to provide individual consultation for young people and methodological support for schools.

Although the unemployment rate has decreased slightly since April 2010 (part of the unemployed lost their status because did not fulfil their requirements), the stabilisation features in the labour market are not permanent. In July 2010, the vacancies registered at the State Employment Agency increased, while the number of people who found job independently decreased, which means that work skills of the unemployed do not match with labour market needs. To balance labour force offer with labour market demand, in April 2010, the Ministry of Welfare approved *Strategy for the Shift from Short-Term Active Labour Market Policy Measures for Combating Consequences of*

*Crisis to the Traditional Active Labour Market Policy Measures (Stratēģija pārejai no īstermiņa krīzes sekas mazinošiem aktīvās darba tirgus politikas pasākumiem uz tradicionālajiem aktīvās darba tirgus politikas pasākumiem).* Particularly fostering lifelong learning and vocational education for the unemployed are addressed in this strategy.

## 4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, LEGISLATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

### 4.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Present vocational system is the result of reforms carried out in 1990-ties, which were influenced by urgent need to re-build state economy after the Soviet occupation. During the Soviet period, Latvia SSR economy was based on heavy industry and vocational education was oriented on preparing workers for these enterprises. When the Soviet Union collapsed, most of the producing enterprises were closed and their equipment was withdrawn from the territory of Latvia.

The main characteristics of the Soviet education sector were:

- Education content included mandatory political ideology coursework;
- Total government funding was provided for all levels of education;
- Five and seven year economy planning was implemented regardless actual demand;
- Admission requirements and procedures, curricula, awarding of scientific degrees were regulated centrally;
- Education based on standardization discouraging individuality;
- Globalisation and mobility in education was restricted (outside the Soviet Union).

In the Soviet period assessment was done in five point scale (5 – excellent, 2 – bad, failing); for some courses or assignments grades “pass” and “fail” were used. In 1990-ties, the five point scale was altered into ten point scale (10, 9 – high level grades, 8-6 – optimal level grades, 5-4 – average level grades, 3-1 – fail level grades). It should be noted that in the Soviet period according to final qualification exam results graduates were awarded with one of five level categories (1 – the highest, 5 – the lowest). The obtained category determined how high professional position and payment person would get.

#### HISTORIC OVERVIEW OF IVET AND CVET LEGISLATION

During the meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> December 1919, the People’s Council (*Tautas padome*) adopted the Law on Latvian Education Institutions (*Likums par Latvijas izglītības iestādēm*), which constituted legal grounds for the Ministry’s operation. The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (1922; renewed in 1991) stipulates that everyone has the right to basic education, that the state provides opportunities to obtain basic and upper-secondary education free of charge, and that basic education is obligatory.

In course of the Soviet period all education sectors and levels were regulated by the People Education Law of Latvian SSR (*Latvijas PSR Tautas izglītības likums*) and by the number of regulations and decrees issued by the relevant ministries. Until 1984, compulsory general secondary education comprised of primary grades (1-3), intermediate grades (4-8) and upper-secondary grades (9-10), when it was changed to 1-4 primary grades, 5-9 intermediate grades and 10-11 upper-secondary grades, i.e. school starting age of children was transferred from 7 to 6.

The above law and several decrees issued by relevant ministries stipulated continuing vocational education as well. The law stated that working individuals could and should participate in part-time or in evening education programmes, education courses starting from secondary education level either to obtain a qualification or to promote their qualification.

#### HISTORIC OVERVIEW OF INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR IVET

The Ministry of Education (*Izglītības ministrija*) was established immediately after the proclamation of the Latvian state in 1918. The School Department (*Skolu departaments*) and its Basic School Division (*Pamatskolu nodaļa*) and Secondary School Division (*Vidusskolu nodaļa*), which in 1921 was reorganized into Secondary and Trade School Section (*Vidusskolu un arodskolu daļu*), supervised schools. In 1924-1928, the School Department was transformed into the School Central Board (*Skolu virsvalde*) divided into three directorates: folk school, secondary school and trade school, which were preserved after the re-establishment of the department.

During the Soviet occupation (1940-1991) the Ministry of Education was closed (along with other government structures of independent Latvia), and instead the People's Commissariat of Education of the Latvian SSR (*Latvijas PSR Izglītības tautas komisariāts*) was established, which in 1946 was reorganized into the Common Republican Ministry (*koprepublikāniskā ministrija*); such common republican ministries were created in the sectors where peculiarities of the united republics had to be taken into account in parallel with certain centralization. The Ministry of Education of the Latvian SSR (*Latvijas PSR Izglītības ministrija*) supervised basic schools, secondary schools, evening (shift) secondary schools, boarding schools, orphanages, children's pre-school and out-of-school institutions. It also coordinated teachers' qualification promotion, provided schools with teaching aids and text books, and settled juvenile guardianship and trusteeship issues. In 1966, one more ministry – the Higher and Secondary Special Education Ministry of the Latvian SSR (*Latvijas PSR Augstākās un vidējās speciālās izglītības ministrija*) – was founded (on the basis of a Committee) to plan the long-term development, to provide methodological guidance for these education sectors and lead research work in HEI. All HEI and nine secondary special education institutions (i.e. a type of vocational schools) were under direct jurisdiction of the Ministry. In late 1980-ties both ministries were joined into Ministry of Education and Science. Almost all the Soviet period there was a separate Vocationally Technical Education Committee (*Profesionāli tehniskās izglītības komiteja*) and other committees.

At the implementation level, during the Soviet Period general secondary education was implemented in general secondary schools, vocationally technical secondary schools and secondary special schools. In broad terms, there was no division in lower- and upper-secondary vocational education, since in secondary vocational-technical schools and specialized secondary schools students could enter after graduation of 8 (or later 9) year education or general secondary education. The vocational education was implemented by:

- Vocational-technical secondary schools (*profesionāli tehniskās vidusskolas*) – education programmes (2-3 years) included both full general education and vocational education for skilled and semiskilled jobs in industry, agriculture and office work. On graduation students were awarded with qualification that allowed entering HEI.
- Specialized secondary education establishments (*vidējās speciālās mācību iestādes*) – commonly called technicums (*tehnikums*), education programmes (3-4 years) included both two grades of general education and vocational education at advanced level in such fields as engineering, health care, law, pedagogy and arts. Graduates could work as pre-school and primary school teachers, paramedics, and technicians or could enter HEI.

Practical training in enterprises was part of vocational education programmes; usually vocational schools had an agreement with a base enterprise, institutions or organizations and education was arranged according to the needs of particular organizations. The students had work-based training in base organizations, and the organizations provided support for schools, e.g. with equipment and tools.

It should be noted that also general secondary school programmes included vocationally oriented learning. Usually it was a single profile for whole school and included some work-based training.

Higher education was implemented by universities, institutes, academies and other establishments. Institutes and polytechnics were more specialized and stressed specific applied disciplines, e.g. engineering, education or medicine. Full-time study programmes lasted for 4-5.5 years depending on the field of studies. Since studies were free of charge after graduation graduates were expected to work in occupation and enterprise for 2-3 years assigned by the government.

An interesting aspect was the “chefs of general secondary schools”, which were enterprises, collective farms, or organizations providing patronage for particular school. According to a certain procedure these chefs supported their schools with equipment, arranging students' practical training, various out-school activities, school work and leisure camps, as well as helped in students' professional orientation.

## 4.2 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR IVET

All legislative documents had to be designed or revised when the independence of Latvia was re-established in 1991. Educational reforms started in 1991 with the adoption of the Education Law, which set the educational system principles and regulated vocational education and training and continuing education. The law stipulated that studies are compulsory until the age of 15, or until the primary school graduation (grades 1-9, in the Soviet system upper-secondary education was obligatory). This law was completely revised in 1998 since additional laws for general and vocational education were developed; the Education Law version of 1998 has been amended several times and is still in force. The new law states that primary school for children aged 5-6 is obligatory, and raises the age of compulsory education to 18.

Since 1993, the Law on Crafts (*Par amatniecību*) has determined the organisational basis for crafts, basic regulations for apprenticeship and the procedure for stating craftsman qualifications.

Vocational education experienced evident reforms, when in 1999 Vocational Education Law was adapted, which with several amendments is the main law regulating vocational education. At present (2010), a new version of Vocational Education Law is being developed by the Ministry of Education and Science.

For higher education level, in 1995 the Law on Higher Education Institutions was passed to determine the principles for organising and implementing higher education. Now a project for a new Higher Education Law is submitted to the Cabinet for discussion.

To summarize, at present the following laws and regulations stipulate vocational education (both initial and continuous):

**The Education Law** (*Izglītības likums*, 1998, 2001) regulates the whole system of education including initial and continuous education, determines the rights and duties of the state, local governments, public organizations, professional associations, individuals, educational institutions, parents and students, as well as levels and types of education and types of educational institutions.

**The Vocational Education Law** (*Profesionālās izglītības likums*, 1999, 2001) sets out the principles for organising, implementing and awarding qualifications both for initial and continuous vocational education; states the division of tasks and competences and the relationship between employers, teachers and students; recognises an active role for social partners in vocational education; states the different pathways for pursuing vocational education, the structure of programmes and the funding principles.

**The Law on Higher Education Institutions** (*Augstskolu likums*, 1995) states the cooperation between HEI and state institutions to harmonize autonomy of HEI (also providing higher professional education programmes) with interests of society and state; regulates legal basis of HEI and colleges, sets and protects the autonomy of HEI.

**Regulations issued by the Cabinet of Ministers** (*Ministru kabineta noteikumi*) regulate the enacting of laws. One of latest documents (September 2010) is the *Procedure of accrediting general and vocational education programmes, education establishments and examination centres* (*Kārtība, kādā akreditē vispārējās un profesionālās izglītības programmas, izglītības iestādes un eksaminācijas centrus*), which outlines the procedure for accrediting vocational schools and programmes (see 5.1).

## 4.3 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR IVET AND ORGANIGRAM

### DECISION-MAKING LEVEL

In 1991, the Ministry of Education was reorganised into the Ministry of People Education (*Tautas izglītības ministrija*), which in course of state administration re-establishment reform in 1993 was transformed into the present Ministry of Education and Science (MoES).

The latest institutional reorganisation occurred in 2008-2009 due to the economic recession. In summer 2009, the state agencies were reorganised and their functions were reviewed. At the end of 2008, the Department of Vocational and Continuing Education of the MoES, which used to

develop state policy and strategy in vocational education, was united with the General Education Department of the MoES and the Department of Vocational and General Education was formed. The functions of the former Department were assigned to the Vocational Education Unit of the new Department of Vocational and General Education of the MoES. In June 2009, the reorganisation of the Vocational Education Administration (*Profesionālās izglītības administrācija*, 1994), which implemented state vocational education policy, was commenced and the functions of Administration were divided between the newly established the State Service for Education Quality (June 2009) and the State Education Content Centre (July 2009).

In 1990-ties vocational education establishments were under the direction of several ministries according to their professional field, i.e. the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Defence. All these ministries acted independently, allocated financial resources, planned and set up their own institutional networks, organised curricula development groups, set up quality monitoring mechanisms and dealt with student enrolment issues. Since there were overlaps and irrational use of financial and human resources, in July 2004 reform of vocational school administration was initiated – vocational education institutions or vocational colleges under the authority of the Ministry of Welfare (1), the Ministry of Health (6) and the Ministry of Agriculture (34) were resigned to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Science.

At present (2010) vocational education system is managed by the following state institutions:

**The Cabinet of Ministers** (*Ministru kabinets*) determines the state's political and strategic areas in vocational education, funds vocational education providers according to criteria established by the Ministry of Education and Science, sets the framework for issuing state recognised qualifications and determines the recognition of foreign qualifications.

**The Ministry of Education and Science** (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*, MoES) develops the framework regulations for vocational education and accredits providers, creates and updates the register of occupational standards and makes proposals about the allocation of funds from the state budget, supervises guidance and counselling services and researches skills demands of the labour market, employs the heads of vocational education institutions under its supervision.

**The Department of Vocational and General Education of the MoES** (*IZM Profesionālās izglītības un vispārējās izglītības departaments*) and its Vocational Education Unit (*Profesionālās izglītības nodaļa*) develop state policy and strategy in vocational education. The Unit guides, plans and coordinates vocational education development and supervises vocational education providers. The Unit assures that national policy meets EU demands and takes part in developing international agreements. It collaborates with employer organisations and trade unions and provides technical support for the work of the National Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment (*Profesionālās izglītības un nodarbinātības trīspusējās sadarbības apakšpadome*). The Tripartite Sub-council was founded in 2000 by the ministries (Welfare, Economy, Finance, Justice, Agriculture, Education and Science, Regional Development and Local Government Affairs), the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia (*Latvijas Brīvo arodbiedrību savienība*) and the Employers' Confederation of Latvia (*Latvijas Darba devēju konfederācija*). The task of the Subcommittee is to promote dialogue between state, employers and employees on vocational education and employment issues.

**State Education Content Centre** (*Valsts izglītības satura centrs*, the former Education Content and Examination Centre) is under the direction of the MoES. In vocational education the Centre carries out such functions as providing the development of content for vocational basic (lower-secondary), vocational, vocational secondary (upper-secondary), continuous vocational education, professional improvement and vocationally oriented education regarding state standards; providing the development of content and procedure for united state examinations; coordinating the development of study literature corresponding to vocational education standards; coordinating and implementing the professional improvement of vocational teachers.

**State Service for Education Quality** (*Izglītības kvalitātes valsts dienests*, the former State Inspectorate for Education) is also under the direction of the MoES. In vocational education the Service performs the following functions: licenses education programmes (except leisure education, informal/non-formal education for adults and higher education programmes); evaluates quality of vocational education (except professional higher education).



Implementing labour market policies and programmes for the unemployed is the main function of the **State Employment Agency** (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra*, SEA, 1991), which is under the supervision of the Ministry of Welfare (*Labklājības ministrija*). Furthermore, the Ministry of Welfare and its Labour Department are responsible for managing active and passive labour market policy.

Please see the attached organigram.

#### IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

At the beginning of 1990-ties, when Latvia had regained its independence in 1991, vocational schools could be divided in two types:

- Institutions of vocational education (vocational basic schools, vocational secondary schools, vocational schools, vocational gymnasiums), which lead to a worker qualification; the duration of studies varied between 1-4 years (after 9-year basic school). Only 4-year programmes (implemented by vocational gymnasiums) parallelly provided general secondary education and, thus, access to higher education.
- Institutions of specialized secondary education, which lead to a technician, musician, nurse qualifications (and some more); duration of education programmes was 4-5 years (after 9-year basic school) or shorter period after secondary education. All these institutions (usually called polytechnics or colleges) provided general secondary education and access to higher education.

The reforms in school structure were initiated by introducing Vocational Education Law in 1999, which established present institutional framework of vocational schools (see 5.1).

According to *the Education Development Concept for 2002-2005 (Izglītības attīstības koncepcija 2002.-2005.gadam, 2002)*, already in mid-nineties optimisation of school network was set as an objective and continued in following planning periods. Optimisation of schools regards to proportion between numbers of students and teachers, number of students in class and education quality. Thus, the number of vocational schools has decreased since the beginning of the 1990's – 133 schools in 1995/1996, 120 – in 2000/2001, and 85 – in 2009/2010. The issue became even more significant in the conditions of economic recession (see 3.2.3). At the same time, the number of higher education institutions and colleges has increased by double (28 HEI and colleges in 1995/1996, 33 – in 2000/2001, and 61 – in 2009/2010), because many private institutions were founded.

#### 4.4 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR CVET

The Education Law (1991) stipulated that qualification promotion, re-qualification and self-education were part of the education system and had a section on these types of learning. However, there was not further education included as such. The law set the main tasks of the institutions offering qualification promotion and re-qualification, the duties of employers and employees concerning this aspect. The individuals, who had improved their knowledge through self-education, could pass exams externally to obtain a certain diploma or qualification.

The procedure of organising qualification promotion and re-qualification was stipulated by regulations issued by the relevant branch ministry.

Qualification promotion and re-qualification for employees with higher education was provided by the relevant profile HEI.

When the Vocational Education Law (*Profesionālās izglītības likums*) was passed in 1999, it included vocational further education programmes in the vocational education system and stated that admission to and duration of vocational further education programmes were not regulated. In 2001, significant amendments to the Vocational Education Law were adapted regarding continuing education when two new types of vocational education programmes were introduced:

- Continuing vocational education – defined as a type of vocational education that allows adults with previous education and professional experience to obtain a professional qualification at a certain level;
- Professional improvement – clarified as a special type of vocational education allowing individuals regardless of their age and previous experience or professional qualification to

acquire a systematic professional knowledge and skills relevant to the demands of the labour market.

Thus, these amendments introduced vocational continuing education for adults and formed an education system, which allows people, regardless their age and previous experience or qualifications, to acquire the knowledge and skills relevant to the demands of the labour market. These and other amendments in Vocational Education Law (1999) form basis for the present legal framework for continuing vocational education (see 4.1).

#### **4.5 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR CVET AND ORGANIGRAM**

In 1990-ties, according to Education Law (1991), one of vocational education and vocational specialized education tasks was provision of qualification promotion and re-qualification. Qualification promotion and re-qualification for employees with higher education was provided by relevant profile HEI.

The Vocational Education Law (1999) introduced new types of continuing vocational education, which basically are provided by the same vocational education establishments offering initial education and adult education centres. At present, there is range of private adult education providers; some of them are rather large and have branch offices throughout the regions of Latvia.

Please see the attached organigram (in 4.3).

## 5. INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

### 5.1 BACKGROUND TO THE INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM AND DIAGRAM OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

The **Latvian educational system** comprises pre-school education (*pirmsskolas izglītība*), 9-year basic education (*pamatizglītība*), secondary education (*vidējā izglītība*) and higher education (*augstākā izglītība*). Post-secondary education is not clearly discriminated; it mostly belongs to secondary level.

Pre-school education (ISCED 0) is for children aged 5-7(6) years and is provided by general education establishments or kindergartens as a part of compulsory basic education.

Basic (primary and lower-secondary) education (ISCED 1 and 2) lasts 9 years and is compulsory for children aged 7 (or 6 years since 2009) and above. The National Basic Education Standard (*Valsts pamatizglītības standarts*) determines the curriculum and content of national examinations. Successful completion is awarded by a certificate of basic education.

Those who do not complete basic education by 16 should continue studying to complete the programme by the time they are 18. They can also choose vocational education programmes that allow them to obtain a first or second level professional qualification and to complete the obligatory basic educational programme.

After basic education, students may choose either general or vocational route (ISCED 3). General secondary education has 4 study fields: general; humanities and social sciences; mathematics, natural science and technical; and vocational (arts, music, business, and sports). There are a number of obligatory subjects (e.g. Latvian, two foreign languages, maths, computer science, etc.). Every programme includes obligatory and optional subjects relevant to the particular field of studies. Provision is regulated by the state which determines its level, form and target groups. It also defines the strategic goals and main tasks of each programme; its obligatory content, basic principles and assessment.

Successfully completing general secondary education programmes, graduates are awarded with the Diploma of General Secondary Education (*Atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību*) and a list of school results. After taking compulsory central state examinations, students are awarded with the Certificate of General Secondary Education (*Vispārējās vidējās izglītības sertifikāts*), which gives rights to enter HEI. It should be noted that these exams are compulsory for all secondary education students; students have to take 4 state examinations – 3 in compulsory (Latvian, Mathematics, foreign language) and one in optional study subject.

The vocational education programmes are provided by vocational secondary schools (vocational secondary education programmes) and vocational schools (basic vocational and vocational education programmes). The Vocational Education Law (revised in 2001) stipulates that VET programmes are classified as follows:

- vocational basic education programmes lasts for 3 years and are foreseen for students without a certificate of basic education (after completion of at least 7 grades of basic education, but they must be at least 15 years old); graduates receive a certificate of basic education and qualification level 1;
- vocational education programmes last for 2-3 years for students with basic education or persons at least 15 years old and graduates receive a Certificate of vocational education and qualification level 2; they may continue in 2 year vocational secondary education programmes(see below);
- vocational secondary educational programmes take 4 years and are open to students who have completed compulsory basic education, Graduates receive a diploma and a Level 3 vocational qualification (see below).
- post-secondary non-tertiary vocational education (ISCED 4B) are to be implemented after graduating from general secondary programmes. They are focused towards mastering purely professional skills and knowledge.

- first level professional higher education (college education) programmes.
- second level professional higher education (university education) programmes

After vocational education programme, students wishing to acquire Certificate of General Secondary Education may participate in an intermediate programme in general secondary education (2 years). These programmes consist of general subjects and are concluded with final state central examinations (see above).

At higher education level (ISCED 5) there are academic and professional study programmes which are provided by universities or other HEI. In line with the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995) and the Vocational Education Law (1999), there is another division of higher education level programmes: the first level professional higher education or college education and the second level professional higher education or university education. See 5.7.

According to the ownership, vocation schools are divided in **state, local government and private schools**. The same regulations for accreditation of formal education institutions refer to all schools. Only accredited local governments' and private vocational education establishments may apply for state funding for implementing vocational further education, vocational improvement and vocationally oriented education programmes. The majority of vocational education establishments are owned by the state: in 2009/2010 there were 5 schools of local governments, 6 private schools and 74 state schools.

**School curricula** are designed by vocational schools in line the National Standard of Vocational Education (*Valsts profesionālās izglītības standarts*) and the Occupational Standards (*Profesiju standarti*) and recommendations set by the State Education Content Centre since July 2009 (see 4.3). Thereafter, curricula are evaluated by the Centre and licensed by the State Service for Education Quality since June 2009 (see 4.3). The Centre arranges the development of templates for vocational basic, vocational, vocational secondary education programmes (as well as for continuing vocational education) and provides consultations for the schools. The social partners are more involved in designing occupational standards, on which basis schools develop education programmes.

According to Vocational Education Law (1999) vocational education programmes stipulate tasks, content, implementation plan of vocational curriculum, admission requirements, and necessary human and financial/material resources. Generally, curricula tend to be more input based.

**Teaching methods and materials** in line with curricula and learning situations are selected by teachers. While methods depend on the choice of teacher, there are lists of suggested books included in vocational education standards. However, teachers are encouraged to apply innovative approaches in pedagogies in order to foster development of creative attitudes and independence in learners.

National **vocational education quality control** (since 2002) is ensured through education programme and establishment accreditation, which is outlined in the Cabinet Regulations *Procedure of accrediting general and vocational education programmes, education establishments and examination centres* (2010). The principle of accreditation ensures that programme content meets the required standards of publicly provided vocational education and occupational standards. It also assists in the transparency of training; thereby, fostering the ability to recognise Latvian qualifications in other countries. The State Service for Education Quality (since June 2009) among other functions organises licensing and accreditation of vocational education programmes, as well as accreditation of vocational education institutions and examination centres. The accreditation process involves both self-assessment and external assessment; in which an external expert commission including representatives of social partners participate.

Under the circumstances of economical recession, the procedure for accrediting education programmes was simplified (amendments in Regulations in July 2009), in several ways:

- the number of experts in the commission (performing external assessment) was differentiated depending on numbers of students and education programmes implemented in a particular education establishment;
- there was introduced a possibility to prolong the accreditation period for the education establishments for two more years on the basis of the accreditation commission's proposal

or when a school founder has decided to renovate, reorganise or liquidate the establishment;

Thus, the accreditation expenditures were diminished for education providers.

At higher education level, the licensing and accreditation of institutions and programmes are implemented by the Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre (*Augstākās izglītības kvalitātes novērtēšanas centrs*) in line with the *Law on Higher Education Institutions* (1995).

[Please find attached the diagram of the education and training system in Latvia](#)

## 5.2 IVET AT LOWER SECONDARY LEVEL

Vocational education at lower secondary level is implemented through vocational basic education programmes (see table below).

Type of educational programme	Main economic sectors	Corresponding ISCED level and orientation	Balance between general and vocational subjects	Balance between school-based and work-based training	Average duration of studies	Transfer to other pathways
vocational basic education programme (including pedagogical correction programme)	primary sector, manufacturing, construction; business and other services	2A, 2C	60:40	35:65	1-2 (or 3 years with ped. correction)	Vocational secondary education programmes

Students are admitted to VET programmes (ISCED 2A, 2C) without consideration of their previous education but not earlier than in the year in which they turn 15. Those without basic education are admitted to vocational education programmes which include pedagogical correction (this is targeted at early school leavers and those with a low level of basic knowledge and skills – the aim of the programme is to integrate young people back into the education system). State and local government schools implementing basic education are for free.

Programme leads to a certificate of basic vocational education and first level qualification (ISCED 2A, 2C), which means that graduates have the theoretical and practical training to carry out simple tasks in certain fields, for example as a cook's or carpenter's assistant.

The accreditation of these programmes is arranged likewise it is in case of other vocational education programmes. The programmes are part of current qualification system. They will be included in the new NQF. Since the NQF level descriptions are not approved yet, the details cannot be discussed.

Vocational basic education is not attended on a large scale: in 2009/2010, 630 students or 0.95% of lower-secondary education students participated. Yet it is necessary to provide this type of programmes as an option for pupils who have not completed basic education.

## 5.3 IVET AT UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL (SCHOOL-BASED AND ALTERNANCE)

At upper secondary level there are only school-based programmes and no alternance is provided (see table below).

Type of educational programme	Main economic sectors	Corresponding ISCED level and orientation	Balance between general and vocational	Balance between school-based and	Average duration of studies	Transfer to other pathways
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			subjects	work-based training		
vocational education programme	primary sector and utilities, manufacturing, construction, distribution and transport, business and other services, non-marketed services	3C	60:40	35:65	2-3 years	vocational secondary education, intermediate general education programmes
vocational secondary education programme	---	3A, 3B	60:40	50:50	3-4 years, 2 years after vocational programme	higher education programmes
intermediate programme in general secondary education	---	3A, 3B	100:0	---	2 years	higher education programmes

To enter vocational upper-secondary education level programmes, candidates need to have a general or vocational basic education. The law does not stipulate any minimal or maximal age for participating in these programmes. State and local government schools implementing secondary education are for free; private schools may set tuition. However, students often need to buy learning aids both for theoretical and practical classes.

The practical training usually takes place at the schools and enterprises. Qualification practice training in enterprises for 3 years long programmes (i.e. at least 4230 hours) has a volume of 840 hours, while for two years programme (i.e. at least 2840 hours) – 480 hours.

The accreditation of these programmes is arranged in line with other vocational education programmes. The programmes are part of current qualification system, as well as they will be included in the new NQF. Since the NQF level descriptions are not approved yet, the details cannot be discussed.

Vocational education programmes leads to vocational education certificate and professional qualification level 2 (theoretical and practical aptitude for carrying out qualified executive work independently, for example as carpenter, hairdresser, cook, seamstress, welder – ISCED 3C). These vocational education programmes do not give the rights to continue studies at a HEI directly. The students, who want to continue, a 2-year intermediate course in general secondary education is available.

Vocational secondary education programmes leads to vocational secondary education diploma and professional qualification level 3 (ISCED 3A, 3B).

The education programmes represent various occupational sectors; the variety appears in the fact that there are 93 occupational standards of professional qualification level 2 and 149 occupational standards of professional qualification level 3. Graduates may enter in labour market or continue their studies.

TABLE 1. STUDENTS IN UPPER-SECONDARY EDUCATION BY PROGRAMME ORIENTATION, 2007					
COUNTRY	TOTAL ISCED 3	GENERAL PROGRAMMES AS % OF TOTAL ISCED 3	NUMBER OF PRE- AND VOCATIONAL STUDENTS ISCED 3	VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ISCED 3	
				PREVOCATIONAL (%)	VOCATIONAL (%)
EU27	22 085 482	48.5	11 365 635	5.1	46.3
LV	104 603	65.6	35 991	-	34.4

Source: Eurostat, (UOE); extracted on: 30-04-2010; last update: 19-02-2010. Special values: - not applicable

As shown in the table above, the general secondary education pathway is more popular than vocational secondary education; the proportion (65:35) has been stable for the last five years. Promoting vocational education prestige and parity of esteem has been set as priority in several policy documents, e.g. concept *Raising Attractiveness of Vocational Education and Involvement of Social Partners within Vocational Education Quality Assurance (Profesionālās izglītības pievilcības paaugstināšana un sociālo partneru līdzdalība profesionālās izglītības kvalitātes nodrošināšanā*, September 2009), as well as fostering parity of esteem is an issue included in *Guidelines for Optimisation of Vocational Education Establishments Network for 2010-2015 (Profesionālās izglītības iestāžu tīkla optimizācijas pamatnostādnes 2010.-2015.gadam*, 2010).

## 5.4 APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

### OVERVIEW OF APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM

An apprenticeship system exists on a small scale mainly in the crafts sector in traditional professions, e.g. builder, potter, lathe operator, carpenter. It is implemented quite separately from other education sectors, and is not included in education programme classification (no relevant ISCED level). The Law on Crafts (*Par amatniecību*, 1993) stipulates the organisational basis for crafts, basic regulations for apprenticeship and the procedure for stating craftsman qualifications. The main organisation involved is the Latvian Chamber of Crafts (*Latvijas Amatniecības kamera*) which is a self-governing organisation.

Apprenticeship is implemented through apprenticeship programmes, as well as the journeyman and master craftsman testing programmes. Apprenticeship programmes include both school- and work-based training for apprentices; testing programmes focus more on examinations for journeymen and master craftsmen, which are described below. Apprenticeship programmes are drafted by the corresponding craft professional association and approved by the Council of the Chamber of Crafts. Duration of the programmes depends on the particular craft association; therefore, a great variation exists. The theoretical courses for master craftsman candidates usually last for two months and are offered by the Chamber.

### APPRENTICESHIP QUALIFICATIONS, CERTIFICATION AND PROGRESSION

According to the Law on Crafts, there are the following qualification levels of apprenticeship education:

- apprentice
- journeyman
- master craftsman
- academically educated master craftsman

Apprenticeship qualifications do not provide access to regulated professions nor do they give access to continue in the formal education and training system. There are no mechanisms in place for those, who dropped out from apprenticeship before completing training, to continue in another form.

Through the apprenticeship system it is possible to obtain the journeyman qualification (*Amata zēja diploms*) and, thereafter, master craftsman qualification (*Amata meistara diploms*). The journeyman qualification is awarded after passing journeyman examination, which comprises two parts: presentation of qualification work and techniques used and theoretical knowledge. The master craftsman qualification is awarded after passing master craftsman examination. The master

craftsman, who has obtained relevant higher education, is considered to be academically educated master craftsman.

As mentioned above, mainly apprenticeships provide access to the crafts sector in traditional professions, e.g. builder, potter, lathe operator, and carpenter.

### ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND TUITION FEES

Apprentices are admitted regardless of their previous education but not earlier than the year in which they turn 16 (unless they have permission from parents or tutor).

To apply for the examination of the journeyman, the candidate, who is not student, has to attend education course on crafts history.

To apply for the examination of the master craftsman, the candidate has to have eight years work experience in the field. Both candidates of journeymen and master craftsman have to be members of the Chamber's sectoral or territorial craft association.

The fee for two months theoretical courses for master craftsman candidates is EUR 285. Application fee for qualification examinations is 57 EUR (candidate for master craftsman), EUR 85 (candidate for journeymen, currently not a student), 14 EUR (candidate for journeymen, currently a student).

### APPRENTICESHIP CONTRACTS

An apprenticeship is based on the Chamber of Crafts standard template contracts, concluded between apprentice and master. They determine the relative responsibilities of apprentices and their master. During the apprenticeship, an apprentice is regarded as a student; however, as the apprentice acquires more knowledge, skills and competences, they may receive some payment for individual projects. However, the payment procedure greatly depends on particular craft and individual agreements.

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

Apprenticeship training can be organised in two ways:

- the apprentice works with a master craftsman and looks for theoretical training possibilities in vocational schools; or
- an apprentice is a student in a vocational school and during practical placement is working with a master craftsman. After graduation, the student must pass the exam of journeyman at the Chamber of Crafts to receive a journeyman qualification.

Theoretical training for master craftsman and journeyman qualifications are offered also by the Chamber of Crafts.

According to the *Law on Crafts* (1993) and the *Crafts Development Programme (Amatniecības attīstības programma)*, Education of crafts is offered by the following education establishments:

- schools of crafts (journeymen) (*amatniecības (zeļļu) skolas*) – education of crafts is mastered at reproductive level, the duration of learning depends on the craft and students' previous education (basic or secondary)
- secondary schools of crafts (*amatniecības vidusskolas*) – along with journeyman qualification a complete secondary education is obtained; graduates have rights to enter HEI. Programmes last for five years; students' previous education mainly is basic education or education obtained in advanced classes of crafts, which are arranged parallel to basic education.
- schools of master craftsmen (*amatniecības meistarū skolas*) – i.e. colleges or *technicums*, education of crafts is mastered at creative productive level; students with journeyman qualification are admitted. Students obtain higher crafts education; along with craft master education students acquire pedagogical education for teaching apprentices and journeymen in their enterprises.
- HEI of crafts (*amatniecības augstskolas*) – i.e. academies, institutes, universities, along with higher crafts professional education students acquire also academic education



(employees dealing with issues of craft research, school pedagogy and sectoral administration).

- centres of crafts (*amatniecības centri*) – education of crafts is arranged to master various crafts.

Learning may be arranged also in other education establishments in the form of special groups and faculties.

#### **FUNDING THE APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING**

The funding sources for the apprenticeship education are tuitions mentioned above, as well as the crafts associations' membership fees. Individual membership fees at the territorial or sectoral craftsmen associations vary from EUR 8 (for pensioners) to EUR 17 per year. The company membership fees depend on their size, number of employees etc. Additional resources are attracted by participation in different projects. The state does not provide financial support to the Latvian Chamber of Crafts.

#### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

To have rights to have apprentices, crafts enterprises have to be licensed by the Latvian Chamber of Crafts or its authorized territorial or sectoral craft association. Training in crafts enterprises is controlled by the Chamber. In order to promote quality of apprenticeship education, only licensed crafts enterprises can accept apprentices.

The Latvian Chamber of Crafts is member of the European Office of Crafts, Trades and Small and Medium sized Enterprises for Standardisation (NORM APME), which is an international non-profit association founded in 1996 with the support of the European Commission. The Chamber is also member of other international organizations: UEAPME (European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises), EACD (European Association of Building Crafts and Design), and Hanse-Parlament (Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Chambers of Skilled Crafts and other institutions who promote small and medium-sized businesses from all Baltic Sea Countries).

Regarding journeyman qualification, a master craftsman can be nominated to monitor the creation process of the final practical work of the candidate. The validation process is led by the examination commission (3-5 members) established by the particular craftsmen association. The chairs of commissions are nominated by the Main Examination and Monitoring Commission of Council of Crafts, the other members are nominated by the chair of the respective organization of craftsmen and includes a representative from vocational (crafts) schools with voting rights, a representative from apprentices and journeymen union (from the relevant craftsmen association) without voting rights.

In view of obtaining master craftsman qualification, several masters craftsmen can be nominated to monitor the creation process of the final practical work of the candidate. The validation process is also led by the examination commission consisting of 5 members, which all are nominated by the Main Examination and Monitoring Commission of the Council of Crafts) and who represent members and candidates of the Latvian Chamber of Crafts, including a representative from the School of Master Craftsmen.

#### **STATISTICS**

Since 1994, in total 257 masters of crafts qualifications, 5532 journeymen qualifications have been awarded. The Chamber of Crafts is planning to introduce several measures to increase interest in apprenticeship, they include: providing more information to vocational education schools and improving the network of craft masters who would be interested in training apprentices.

### **5.5 OTHER YOUTH PROGRAMMES AND ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS**

There are no other youth programmes as alternative pathways except for the pedagogical correction programme (described in 5.2). This is part of initial vocational education system leading to the same education certificate and qualification but its main aim is to re-integrate early school

leavers and those with low level of basic knowledge and skills back to the education system and help them acquire simple professional skills.

## 5.6 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT POST-SECONDARY (NON TERTIARY) LEVEL

In Latvia this stage of education is not thoroughly developed, and according to the national education classification, post-secondary education programmes belong to upper-secondary level.

Type of educational programme	Main economic sectors	Corresponding ISCED level and orientation	Balance between general and vocational subjects	Balance between school-based and work-based training	Average duration of studies	Transfer to other pathways
vocational education programme	primary sector and utilities, manufacturing, construction, distribution and transport, business and other services, non-marketed services	4B	60:40	35:65	1 year (2 years in programmes licensed before 2009)	Labour market

This type of vocational programme differs from one mentioned in 5.3 with requirements for previous education – it is designed for general secondary school graduates at age of 18-20 and is more oriented towards acquisition of vocational knowledge and skills. Therefore, the duration of the programme is shorter. Generally other characteristics and features are the same as for upper-secondary level. See 5.3.

## 5.7 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT TERTIARY LEVEL

Since 2006, the results of general secondary education central state exams serve as HEI entrance contest criteria. All secondary students both general and vocational have to take these state exams to be awarded with the Certificate of General Secondary Education (*Vispārējās vidējās izglītības sertifikāts*). The Law does not set any age limits of students.

The registration and tuition fees are set by colleges and HEI themselves according to laws and regulations. In the state HEI part of study places is also funded by the state. These state financed study places annually are calculated centrally and distributed to all state HEI, e.g. 30.4% of HEI and college students studied with the state or local governments funding in 2009/2010.

The higher education programmes are divided into **academic** (lead to a degree) and **professional** programmes (lead to a degree and professional qualification). In accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995), it is possible to obtain the following higher education degrees:

- Bachelor – *bakalaura* (either academic or professional);
- Master – *maģistrs* (either academic or professional);
- Doctor – *doktors* (scientific degree).

The professional higher study programme leads to professional qualification level 5 and a professional bachelor's degree if the length of full-time study programme is at least four years. A professional bachelor's degree gives rights to holder to proceed to master level studies to achieve a professional or academic master's degree. The university studies in total last at least for five years to obtain a professional master's degree, of which professional master level programme takes 1-2 years. Master's degree ensures the holder rights to study in doctoral programmes (3-4 years).

The Vocational Education Law (1999) stipulates professional higher education at two levels: **first level higher professional education programmes or college programmes** (professional qualification level 4; ISCED 5B) and **second level higher professional education programmes or university programmes** (professional qualification level 5; ISCED 5A).

**First level higher professional education programmes** (2-3 years after secondary education) are available at colleges and higher education institutions. The “Diploma of the first level higher professional education” (available since June 2000) is equal to professional qualification level 4, i.e. occupations of complex level are mastered, for example, bank officers, lawyer assistants, technologists. This qualification allows working in the occupation or continuing studies in the relevant higher education programme.

The content of first level higher professional education comprises study courses (comprising general subjects, humanities, social sciences as well as technical subjects), a practical placement and a thesis. The content of the study course and the practical placement is set out in occupational standards for some professions. The volume of programmes in credit points is 80-120 (1 Latvian credit point is equal to 40 student work hours and 1.5 ECTS), of which general courses constitute minimum 20 credits, courses in speciality – minimum 36 credits, training practice – minimum 16 credits, diploma paper minimum 8 credits.

**Second level higher professional education programmes** (4-5 years after completing general or vocational secondary education) are provided by universities and other higher education institutions. The “Diploma of Higher Professional Education” is equivalent to level 5 (highest specialist qualification which provides for practical performance as well as abilities to plan and perform research and scientific work). Content comprises (for professional bachelor programmes, professional master programmes, higher professional education programmes) study courses, a practical placement and a qualifying thesis. The content of the study course and the practical placement is set by the respective occupational standards for a certain professions. The volume of professional bachelor programmes is at least 160 Latvian credits (1 Latvian credit =1.5 ECTS), of which general courses constitute minimum 20 credits, theoretical courses of speciality and IT courses – minimum 36 credits, courses of occupational speciality – minimum 60 credits, free choice courses – minimum 6 credits, training practice – minimum 26 credits, state examination (including diploma or bachelor paper) – minimum 12 credits.

There are also so-called short second level professional higher education study programmes (1-2 years), in which on the basis of the previously acquired first level professional higher education or academic bachelor's degree, students are exempted from certain parts of the study programme. Total study length to acquire professional qualification level 5 is not shorter than four years after secondary education and not shorter than two years after college education.

There are numerous programmes according to existing occupations: lawyer, electricity engineer, teacher, head of enterprises, pharmacist etc.

HEI and colleges provide various **forms of studies** – full-time, part-time and distance studies – which are available for all study levels and almost all study fields; thus, contributing to promotion of lifelong learning.

The **student assessment** is implemented through regular tests, exams, seminars, presentations, practical works, home assignments, at the end of higher professional studies students have to pass qualification exam, write and present diploma paper (evaluation in 10 grade scale, 10 – with distinction (*izcili*), 1 – very, very weak (*ļoti, ļoti vāji*)).

The distribution of HE students by programme orientation in Latvia is quite similar to EU average, as illustrated in the table below.

	TOTAL ISCED5	ISCED5A (NUM)	ISCED 5A (%)	ISCED5B (NUM)	ISCED 5B (%)	TOTAL ISCED 6
<b>EU 27</b>	18359029	15893156	86.6	2465873	13.4	525809
<b>LV</b>	127700	108458	84.9	19242	15.1	1797

Source: Eurostat (UOE); extracted on: 30-04-2010; last update: 19-02-2010

## 6. CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS

### 6.1 FORMAL EDUCATION

#### 6.1.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND (ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND FINANCING)

According to education policy documents, adult education should satisfy both the need for personal development and public needs. It should aim to fulfil individual needs and complement existing levels of education and training regardless of age and levels of previous education. Strategies for adult education in Latvia were defined in *the Concept of Adult Education of Latvia for 2002-2005 (Pieaugušo izglītības koncepcija 2002.–2005.gadam)* and in *the National Lisbon Programme for 2005-2008 (Latvijas nacionālā Lisabonas programma 2005.-2008.gadam, 2005)*. *The Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013 (Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādnes 2007.–2013.gadam, 2006)* outline the main present priorities for lifelong learning. The aims for lifelong learning policy are related to the availability, qualitative education offer and forming legislative and administrative system for lifelong learning (please see 2.1.1).

The legislation for continuous vocational education is the same as for initial vocational education (see 4.2). The Education Law (*Izglītības likums, 1998*) stipulates that adult education should be individually chosen to encourage personal development and improve labour market competitiveness. Adults have the right to follow programmes throughout their whole life, regardless of formal levels of education. On completion, adults receive a certificate of completion from the provider.

Issues related to financing of adult education are outlined in section 10.2.

Continuing vocational education programmes are developed by their providers and, according to the Vocational Education Law (1999), have to include at least 30% of compulsory content amount stated by state vocational or state secondary vocational standard. Thus, the rest of content depends on the interests of providers or clients, which also can be employers. However, the education programmes are developed in line with occupation standards, which are designed by working group including social partners (see 8.2). In case of training for the unemployed, before preparing the plan for the provision of the necessary learning activities, the State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra, SEA*) arranges regular surveys of employers to explore the most demanded occupations.

In order to promote availability of continuous vocational education, the regional network of adult educational centres was established by the local governments (1995-1996). These centres arranged education courses for adults living in a particular region; on average there were 3-4 employees in the centres acting as consultants and/or coordinators.

The participation has also increased due to learning activities (free of charge or with reduced fee) arranged with ESF support. There is a number of private education providers (education centres) located in all regions or having branch offices throughout the country, which implement both continuing vocational education and informal education programmes. Furthermore, these private providers cooperate with the State Employment Agency, which supervises the training for the unemployed people and which works on regional basis (28 regional offices), as well.

#### 6.1.2 MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF FORMAL CVET

The Vocational Education Law (*Profesionālās izglītības likums, 1999*) regulates two formal types of continuing education:

- vocational continuing education – minimum duration of programme is 960 hours (to acquire professional qualification level 3 and with vocational secondary or vocational education as previous education), 480 or 640 hours depending on the relevant occupation standard (to acquire professional qualification level 2 and with no limitations for previous education), and 480 hours (to acquire professional qualification level 1 and with no limitations for previous education).

- professional improvement – minimum duration of programme is 160 hours (professional qualification level is not awarded, no limitations for previous education).

Vocational continuing education enables adults with previous education and work experience to obtain professional qualifications. They are always concluded by a specific qualification for a specific profession acknowledged by the state. Professional improvement enables people regardless of their age and previous education or professional qualifications to master systematized professional knowledge and skills corresponding to the requirements of the labour market. They also lead to a formal qualification.

Vocational continuing education may be classified as follows:

- enterprise staff training;
- training for unemployed people (organised and funded by the State);
- adult education provided in centres of adult education, evening schools, etc. supported by local governments;
- various training programmes and projects financed by international and local donor institutions and funds, carried out by the state, local governments, nongovernmental and other organizations;
- individual continuing education financed by individuals themselves.

Descriptions of continuous education programmes levels are included in education programmes classification; continuous education programmes belong to basic, secondary (lower and upper) and higher levels; legally no comparison with ISCED levels is provided, but continuous education programmes may belong to professional qualification levels 1-4 (see 11.3).

**TABLE 1: CLASSIFICATION (*NOTEIKUMI PAR LATVIJAS IZGLĪTĪBAS KLASIFIKĀCIJU, 2008*) OF CONTINUOUS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES**

<b>1. BASIC EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	continuous vocational education without limits for previous education (awarding professional qualification level 1)
<b>2. LOWER-SECONDARY EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	continuous vocational education for students with completed or unfinished basic education (awarding professional qualification level 2)
	professional improvement after basic education
<b>3. UPPER-SECONDARY EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	continuous vocational education for students after general or vocational upper-secondary education (awarding professional qualification level 2 or 3)
	professional improvement after upper-secondary education
<b>4. HIGHER EDUCATION LEVEL</b>	continuous vocational education implemented in colleges or HEI for students with at least first level professional higher education (awarding professional qualification level 4)

There are a number of organisations involved in CVET and the network of providers includes: ministries; employers' organisations; trade unions; university continuing education departments and their distance learning centres, the school of state administration; local training centres; chambers of commerce, centres of adult education, State Employment Agency and other educational organisations and associations, as well as private providers. General education programmes and parts of vocational education can be pursued part-time during the evenings.

The continuous vocational education programmes are drawn according to the occupational standards and vocational education standards by the education providers. As mentioned above, according to Vocational Education Law (1999), continuous vocational education programmes have to include minimum 30% of content stipulated by the state vocational or vocational secondary education standards. The duration and content of professional improvement and professionally oriented education are stated by particular education programme.

The most popular CVET courses are in social sciences, entrepreneurial activity, law, services, health and social care, foreign languages, liberal sciences and arts, as well as engineering sciences, production and building, and teacher education.

The accreditation system is based on standards determined in the Vocational Education Law (1999). Providers can only offer courses in programmes which have been licensed and programmes must meet both educational and occupational standards. All publicly provided CVET

programmes longer than 480 hours and professional improvement programmes longer than 160 hours must be accredited by the Ministry of Education and Science (*MoES, Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*). Applications must include information about how the programme will be funded, the target audience, the length of the programme, where it will be implemented, etc. Providers must also be certified by MoES. If professional improvement programmes are shorter than 160 hours, provider must acquire a license from their local government for implementing such programmes.

Participants completing a vocational continuing education programme take a centrally determined examination which is organised by the Ministry of Education and Science. They aim to ensure that all the graduates, obtaining a certain profession, have identical knowledge, competencies and skills. Social partners are also involved in evaluating examination performance.

At the end of professional improvement programmes, an examination following centralised procedures and methodologies are taken, which are stipulated by the *Cabinet Regulations on the Procedure of the Centralized Professional Qualification Examinations (Centralizēto profesionālās kvalifikācijas eksāmenu norises kārtība, 2007)*. To issue a certificate of professional improvement, the programme must be at least 160 hours long.

Distance learning is provided both by private and state education institutions. Education institutions may provide both full time and part time extramural studies. Mainly higher education institutions offer distance learning programmes. For example, Distance Education Centre of Riga Technical University, which was formed in 1997 in frameworks of Phare programme, offers several study courses (computers, business planning, languages etc.). Also private education providers offer e-learning courses, for example, learning centre Buts Ltd implements 29 e-learning courses (September-November 2010) of 160 or 320 hours regarding quality leadership, computers, qualification promotion for accountants etc.

.Participation of low- and medium-qualified adults (ISCED 0-2 and 3-4 respectively) in formal adult education and training is lower than the EU average, whereas adults with university degrees (ISCED 5-6) participate in non-formal training in higher numbers than in the rest of the EU. Table 2 shows that in Latvia, as in the rest of the EU, the lower education level people have, the less they participate in education and training activities during their working lives, but the gap between rates is greater

	<b>ISCED 0-2</b>	<b>ISCED 3-4</b>	<b>ISCED 5-6</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>EU-27</b>	2.5	5.7	12.2	6.3
<b>LATVIA</b>	0.3	2.8	14.7	5.4

Source: Eurostat, date of extraction: 03-05-2010; last update: 13-01-2010

According to Eurostat data, participation rate in formal adult education of employed inhabitants (25-64) was slightly higher than EU-27 average, while inactive population participation rate was obviously lower than EU-27 average (see table below).

	<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>INACTIVE POPULATION</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>UNEMPLOYMENT</b>
<b>EU-27</b>	6.2	6.4	6.3	6.3
<b>LATVIA</b>	6.8	2.4	5.4	:

Source: Eurostat, date of extraction: 03-05-2010; last update: 13-01-2010. Special values – : not available

## **6.2 NON-FORMAL EDUCATION**

### **6.2.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND (ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND FINANCING)**

The non-formal continuing vocational education is not differentiated from the formal continuing vocational education regarding administrative structure and financing (see 6.1.1).

## 6.2.2 MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF NON-FORMAL CVET

Adult education can be pursued in state owned, local government, private with state investment or private which include enterprise training centres and other educational establishments.

According to the Vocational Education Law (1999), there is no such division into formal and informal continuing vocational education, which is defined as a special type of vocational education allowing adults with previous education and professional experience to obtain a professional qualification of a certain level, i.e. there is only formal continuing vocational education.

Regarding main characteristics of the education provision in non-formal education, as well as distance learning programmes please refer to 6.1.2. Registration and/or tuition fees are stipulated by education providers.

Most programmes need to be accredited but publicly owned providers can also offer informal/non-formal training programmes without obtaining a license.

The system for the recognition of informal/non-formal learning is not completely established yet but the legal base is formed now. The latest amendments (July 2010) in the Vocational Education Law (1999) included a paragraph stating that validation of professional competence acquired outside the formal education system is carried out according to relevant occupational standards; validation may be assigned to accredited education establishment or examination centre; procedure how the validation is conducted is determined by the Cabinet of Ministers. Therefore, at present (September 2010), the project of the Cabinet Regulations for validating skills and competences acquired through informal/non-formal education is submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers for discussion. The new concept *Raising Attractiveness of Vocational Education and Involvement of Social Partners within Vocational Education Quality Assurance (Profesionālās izglītības pievilcības paaugstināšana un sociālo partneru līdzdalība profesionālās izglītības kvalitātes nodrošināšanā*, September 2009) outlined a possible procedure for validating informal and non-formal education. See section 2.1.2.

### **Example paving the way to the accreditation of non-formal and informal learning:**

The ESF project *Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners (2005-2007)* implemented by the former Vocational Education Administration aimed to strengthen the cooperation between the education and labour sectors by facilitating the compliance of education to labour market needs. Total programme costs were EUR 875 301. The project included the development of the procedure for recognition of acquired skills within informal/non-formal education for adults.

Participation of low- and medium-qualified adults (ISCED 0-2 and 3-4 respectively) in informal/non-formal education is lower than the EU average, whereas adults with university degrees (ISCED 5-6) participate in non-formal training slightly more than in the rest of the EU. Table 4 shows that in Latvia, as in the rest of the EU, the lower education level people have, the less, they participate in education and training activities during their working lives, but the difference in rates is more evident.

	<b>ISCED 0-2</b>	<b>ISCED 3-4</b>	<b>ISCED 5-6</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>EU-27</b>	16.3	33.3	52.8	32.7
<b>LATVIA</b>	11	26.1	53	30.7

Source: Eurostat, date of extraction: 03-05-2010; last update: 13-01-2010

Eurostat data indicate that tendencies in participation rates by labour status are quite similar to EU-27 average (see table below).

TABLE 5: PARTICIPATION IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND LABOUR STATUS (%), 2007				
	EMPLOYMENT	INACTIVE POPULATION	TOTAL	UNEMPLOYMENT
EU-27	40.5	13.2	32.7	20.4
LATVIA	37.6	9.6	30.7	16.3

Source: Eurostat, date of extraction: 03-05-2010; last update: 13-01-2010

A type on informal vocational education is **enterprise provided training**, which can assist employees to adapt to new tasks or to re-qualify to improve their career chances. Legally training in the enterprises is addressed only in the Labour Law (2001, 2006). However, in most cases, training in enterprises depends on enterprise initiative and resources, since training is a voluntary activity.

Training is available to learn a completely new skill or to add certain competences (e.g. teamwork skills). Every training provider produces a study programme of different courses. Trainers may be employed by a training provider or may be contracted to provide a certain course directly by the employer. It is usually at the discretion of the provider to design their own training programmes but for certain regulated professions other bodies may be consulted to ensure that relevant occupational standards are met. The quality of provision is not otherwise monitored.

Enterprise management usually takes the decision to provide training for their employees and the human resource and training departments would seek the most appropriate training depending on the size of the enterprise. Training courses would usually be funded by the enterprise although employees may have to contribute.

Enterprises tend to provide training through external or internal courses. Other means such as job rotation within the organisation may also be used. Study groups and participation in conferences can also constitute training provision. In terms of provision, compared to other enterprises in the EU, Latvian enterprises follow the trend that the larger the enterprise the more likely it is that training will be available.

### 6.3 MEASURES TO HELP JOB-SEEKERS AND PEOPLE VULNERABLE TO EXCLUSION FROM THE LABOUR MARKET

Nationally as vulnerable groups are considered: young job-seekers aged 15-24; those of pre-retirement age (aged 55-64); long-term unemployed (seeking work for more than 12 months); individuals during six months after parental leave; ex-prisoners and ex-drug addicts (*Law on the Support for the Unemployed and Job Seekers*, 2002).

Young people (up to 25) are an especially important target group given that their rate of unemployment in May 2010 was 14.2%, which due to general increase of the unemployment rates is lower than age groups ranging from 25-54 years. Generally, individuals with a low educational attainment are also an increasingly important target group (in May 2010, 19.3% of all job-seekers had only basic level education), as well as those, who are long-term unemployed: in May 2010, 22.3% of registered unemployed have been unemployed for longer than a year. The issue related to the long-term unemployed gained more significance in course of economic regression.

Involving these **vulnerable groups** into the active employment measures to foster their inclusion in the labour market is the strategic aim of the State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra*, SEA). The SEA functions on a regional basis (28 offices),.

The SEA implements the following measures:

- Measures for raising competitiveness – focus on raising competitiveness of inhabitants subjected to unemployment risk and impart individual consultations and group activities (lectures, seminars, courses etc.) for acquiring work seeking methods, psychological support and for acquisition of basic skills required in labour market. 38 720 persons participated in 2009.
- Preventive measure of combating unemployment for employed individuals subjected to unemployment risk – provides opportunity for inhabitants to improve their professional skills through participating in lifelong learning, while the work amount in enterprises has



decreased due to crisis or globalization. Participants (part-time officially employed) receive voucher of a certain sum (EUR 355.7 or EUR 426.9-711.4 plus monthly scholarship of EUR 99.6 for six months) to pay for their learning (continuing vocational education programmes, professional improvement programmes, informal education programmes).

- Measure for particular social groups (unemployed with special needs, persons without regular paid work for last six months, persons without secondary education, persons older than 50, single parents, representatives of ethnical minority who need to improve their state language and professional skills, persons unemployed longer than 24 months) – includes employing these persons in work places co-financed by state for 24 months (persons with special needs) or for 12 months (for other groups).
- Practical training for young people (unemployed aged 15-24) – young people participate in work-based training in enterprises (6-12 months) and receive a monthly scholarship (EUR 170.7). Some funding is also allocated for practice supervisors, theoretical learning, adapting work places for training (when the trainee has special needs) etc.
- Work practice at local governments with scholarships – intended to provide support for the unemployed who do not receive unemployed benefits and cannot find work due to lack of vacancies. Individuals perform low-qualified jobs (physical work) receiving a monthly scholarship of EUR 142.3 (max. 6 months per year). 19 295 persons participated in 2009.

The needs of the different vulnerable groups have been addressed as well through various ESF projects (the main institution in Latvia responsible for ESF programme governance and implementation (across all sectors) at national level is the Ministry of Finance). For example, the ESF project *Providing Training for Social Exclusion Risk Groups, Including Information and Communication Technology Support to Disabled Persons (Apmācību nodrošināšana sociālās atstumtības riska grupām, iekļaujot informācijas un komunikācijas tehnoloģiju atbalstu invalīdiem, 2004-June 2007)* was implemented by the SEA. This promoted the integration of unemployed people at risk of exclusion by improving their professional qualifications and their competitiveness on the labour market.

It should be mentioned that the demand for these activities is higher than the offer, and the unemployed often have to wait to participate in relevant measures.

For what concerns the **job-seekers**, as mentioned before (see 3.2.3), the measures to support them are arranged by the SEA together with the activities intended for the unemployed. The job-seekers have the rights to participate in the above-mentioned measures for raising competitiveness and learning activities, to receive information about vacancies and the employers' requirements, to have a career counselling.

The individuals may participate in learning activities if their professional qualifications and/or work experience are no longer required on the labour market; if they lost their professional skills or they have not any professional qualification; and if they are registered as unemployed or job-seekers. As demand outstrips supply, motivation is also taken into account when selecting participants. Training programmes for unemployed can also be organised according to employer proposals who are seeking employees with certain skills; where this is the case, the employer must provide a job for the trained person for at least one year.

At present, the learning opportunities (vocational education, re-qualification and qualification promotion) for the unemployed and job-seekers are arranged in terms of the ESF project *Training for the Unemployed and Job-Seekers in Latvia – 2 (Bezdarbnieku un darba meklētāju apmācība Latvijā – 2, 2009-2013)*. The objective is to provide vocational training in skills required on the labour market for both adults and young people who have obtained an educational level necessary to master a profession. The following education programmes are provided:

- programmes of qualification level 2 (480 and 640 hours) for individuals with basic education;
- programmes of qualification level 3 (960 hours) for the individuals with secondary education;
- professional improvement programmes (160 and 320 hours) without acquirement of qualification.

The SEA statistics show that job seekers constitute a very small proportion of participants in these activities comparing to the unemployed, i.e. 100 job-seekers started to take part in the measures for raising competitiveness and informal learning in 2009 (115 job-seekers in 2008).

Since the SEA procures training from licensed education and training providers, there is a certain tendering and contractual procedure. When procuring training, SEA examines the following:

- material and technical facilities for implementing educational programmes;
- teachers comply to the education and professional qualification requirements of the training programmes;
- ability to meet the course and programme schedules and keep appropriate records.

Providers are responsible for programme quality. The SEA follows up on the training provision at education establishments at least once in the quarter. The education provider also awards graduates with certificate.

## 7. TRAINING VET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

### 7.1 TYPES OF TEACHER AND TRAINER OCCUPATIONS IN VET

Within the vocational education system vocational education teachers are both teachers and trainers. They implement a range of programmes: vocational basic education; vocational education, vocational upper-secondary education; and professional development and continuing vocational education programmes.

Vocational secondary programmes comprise general subjects, professional subjects, practical training and work placements. Therefore, **teachers in the initial vocational education** system are: general subject teachers or vocational subject teachers. Practical training is taught by vocational subject teachers. Accordingly there are two occupational standards outlining the knowledge, skills and professional competence necessary to do professional duties: Teacher Occupational Standard (*Skolotāja profesijas standards*, professional qualification level 5) and Vocational Teacher Occupational Standard (*Profesionālās izglītības skolotāja profesijas standards*, professional qualification level 4). Additionally there is an occupational standard (professional qualification level 5) designed for social teachers (*Sociālā pedagoga profesijas standards*) dealing with the protection of children and youth rights and their re-socialization and for the teachers of social sciences (*Sociālo zinību skolotāja profesijas standards*).

Vocational education **teachers for continuing education programmes** do not have a specific reference within vocational education terminology. They have the same requirements and the same occupational standards as initial vocational education teachers.

#### 7.1.1 TEACHING AND TRAINING OCCUPATIONS IN VET

According to the Register of Occupational Standards, there is vocational education teacher, teacher of social sciences, teacher, and social teacher. With the exception of the social teachers, all the other **teachers' work involves**:

- Implementation of education programmes according to national vocational education standards and occupational standards. Syllabi are developed by teachers and are approved by the head of education institution;
- Assessment and analysis of the knowledge and skills of students acquired during the learning process;
- Fostering development of creative attitudes and independence in learners;
- Search for and application of new ideas, technologies, and methods.

Vocational education teachers can be categorised according to the level of programme taught: basic vocational and upper-secondary vocational, although they can work at both levels if they have the appropriate education. All vocational education teachers can teach both in IVET and CVET at basic and upper-secondary level.

Regarding the demands of vocational education teacher education and qualification, amendments in the Vocational Education Law (in force since January 2004) stipulate that all vocational education teachers are required to gain a teacher (pedagogical) qualification. More specifically, these issues are outlined in the Cabinet *Regulations on Demands for Necessary Teacher Education and Professional Qualifications (Noteikumi par prasībām pedagogiem nepieciešamajai izglītībai un profesionālajai kvalifikācijai*, 2000, 2010), which include the following requirements:

- the vocational qualification requirements to be met by vocational education teachers;
- the training programmes which should be followed to qualify to work as a vocational education teacher.

At present (2010), **all vocational education teachers** must be in one of the following situations:

- having vocational upper-secondary education or master crafts level qualification awarded by the Latvian Chamber of Crafts and teacher education – for basic education level;
- having professional higher education and teacher education *or* having higher education acquired through programmes 1) which lead to professional qualification in the relevant

field if teacher practical training is included in the programme or teacher work experience is six years, or the course of pedagogy or psychology is mastered; or 2) which lead to master's or doctor's degree in pedagogy or relevant field – for secondary education level;

- having vocational upper-secondary education or master crafts level qualification awarded by the Latvian Chamber of Crafts and higher teacher education (in vocational education programmes or relevant subjects and practical training of vocational secondary education programmes – teacher education) – for secondary education level.

According to the latest amendments in these regulations (September 2010), vocational education teachers without pedagogical qualification need to acquire 72 hours long pedagogy courses in HEI instead of 320 hours long courses of various themes and arranged in different institutions.

As shown in the table below, most of the teachers have higher education, of which 23.3% (2009/2010) have participated in further teacher education programmes.

TABLE 1. VET TEACHERS ACCORDING EDUCATION OBTAINED									
SCHOOL YEARS	TOTAL NUMBER	EDUCATION LEVEL							
		SECONDARY				HIGHER			
		TOTAL	INCL. GENERAL SECONDARY	INCL. VOCATIONAL SECONDARY	INCL. WITH PED. EDUCATION	TOTAL	INCL. HIGHER PED. ED.	INCL. OTHER TYPE PED. (>320 H)	PH D
2004/05	4,775	842	88	754	465	3,933	2,674	1,027	48
2005/06	5,028	721	60	661	473	4,307	3,041	1,164	59
2006/07	4,824	590	70	520	304	4,234	2,867	734	50
2007/08	4,687	398	47	351	222	3,117	2,211	808	39
2008/09	4,918	421	51	370	229	3,181	2,295	810	37
2009/10	4,250	349	28	321	185	2,879	2,113	670	25

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 2010

Requirements for HEI and college teacher education and professional qualification are stipulated by the *Law on Higher Education Institutions* (1995).

There is not any research available regarding the popularity of vocational school teacher profession comparing to other education sectors. According to the Ministry of Education and Science, vocational school teacher profession is quite attractive because there are no open vacancies in schools, and, generally, there is greater lack of sciences teachers than vocational subject teachers. Meanwhile, Education and Science Workers Trade Union (*Latvijas Izglītības un zinātnes darbinieku arodbiedrība*) expressed opinion that vocational teacher profession is not a very attractive option because teachers need to obtain two qualifications (in field and in pedagogy), payment tends to be lower and work load – greater comparing to general school teachers. General subject teachers have to manage their subject in smaller amount of hours, and there is no specific national methodology developed for this task. Student groups in vocational schools have more varied level of previous knowledge and skills, and their age is more heterogeneous, which, of course, introduces more challenges in the teacher's work.

### 7.1.2 RESPONSIBLE BODIES AND ORGANIGRAM

According to the Education Law (1998), the Ministry of Education and Science and its subsidiary body the State Education Content Centre are the institutions responsible for co-ordinating teacher education and their continuing education.

Education for teachers is organised in higher education establishments (as other higher education programmes). To apply, candidates must have acquired either vocational secondary or general secondary education diploma.

There are two types of pathways depending whether the teacher is studying to be a general subject teacher in a vocational school or a teacher of a specific vocation:

- Teacher education programmes for general subject teachers are the same whether the teacher will work at the general education or vocational education system. The study

programmes include both pedagogical courses and courses related to the particular field. Thus, students study a higher teacher education and achieve a teacher qualification.

- For the teachers of vocational subjects, professional education programmes are available in different occupational sectors. First, graduates obtain a professional qualification or scientific degree in the branch. Second, to have rights to work in vocational schools, graduates have to continue in a separate teacher education programme (for no less than 72 hours) at a higher education institution.

Since 2005, four HEI implement a first level higher education programme “Vocational education teacher”, which duration is 2 years (full-time) or 2.6 years (part-time) and for admission secondary education is required. It was designed according to the occupational standard for vocational education teachers (2002).

Teacher education programmes in HEI are licensed and accredited along with other HE study programmes by the Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre (*Augstākās izglītības kvalitātes novērtēšanas centrs*, HEQEC) in line with the procedure stipulated by *Law on Higher Education Institutions* (1995). Meanwhile, teacher professional improvement programmes are harmonised by the State Education Content Centre.

All teaching staff (teachers, school director, deputy directors, methodologists, leisure education teachers, social teacher, librarian etc.) have to participate in **further education** to improve their professional qualification every third year. Different continuing education programmes, courses, seminars, projects and other teacher tools could be used as long as they are not less than 36 contact hours in total. The Education Law (1998) states that teachers are responsible for their professional development, and teachers have rights to use 30 calendar days every third year for professional development as a paid training leave. It is the responsibility of the head of a vocational school to monitor their staff development. With the ESF support, it is possible to provide teachers with this 36 hours long further education.

Various organisations provide continuing training for vocational education teachers including school boards, municipalities, professional associations, the State Education Content Centre, learning and examination centres, universities and higher education institutions, as well as continuing vocational training centres.

### 7.1.3 RECENT REFORMS TO VET TEACHER/TRAINER TRAINING

Improving teacher education and continuing education system has been set as one of the directions for action in the list of policy planning documents: *the Education Development Concept for 2002-2005 (Izglītības attīstības koncepcija 2002.-2005.gadam, 2002)*, *the Vocational Education Development Programme for 2003-2005 (Profesionālās izglītības sistēmas attīstības programma 2003.-2005.gadam, 2003)*, and *the National Education Development Guidelines for 2007-2013 (Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013.gadam, 2006)*.

As described in the previous section, most of reforms in teacher education have occurred around 2005 or shortly before: introduction of requirements for pedagogical qualification (2004), designing Vocational Education Teacher Occupational Standard (2002) and Teacher Occupational Standard (2004). Generally, changes in teacher education are usually implemented through the Cabinet Regulations on Demands for Necessary Teacher Education and Professional Qualifications (*Noteikumi par prasībām pedagogiem nepieciešamajai izglītībai un profesionālajai kvalifikācijai, 2000, 2010*).

During the period of 2005-2010, the Cabinet Regulations *Procedures on the Acquisition of Education and Professional Improvement of Vocational Education Teachers (Profesionālās izglītības pedagogu izglītības ieguves un profesionālās pilnveides kārtība, 2005)* outlined the procedures for vocational teachers acquiring education and participating within professional improvement programmes. In September 2010, essential amendments (see 7.1.1) were introduced in the Cabinet Regulations on Demands for Necessary Teacher Education and Professional Qualifications; therefore, at present (September 2010), the new version of the regulations on procedures is submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers for discussion.

It is planned by September 2012 to introduce in HEI aptitude tests for teacher education students candidates, as well as to stipulate with what grades in central final exams the candidates have to

have to be allowed to apply. This measure will be taken because teacher education programmes are rather popular, but frequently graduates do not work in schools.

Regarding the further teacher education, there is an action direction to establish a system of further teacher education, and more opportunities for teachers have been developed with the support of ESF. For example, the ESF National Programme projects *Development of Further Teacher Education Methodological Network and Provision* (2006-2008), and *Promotion of Teacher Competitiveness in Conditions of Education System Optimisation (Pedagogu konkurētspējas veicināšana izglītības sistēmas optimizācijas apstākļos, since 2009)*, which both were/are implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science. For more detailed information on the latter see 3.2.3.

The ESF National Programme project *Development of Further Teacher Education Methodological Network and Provision (Pedagogu tālākizglītības metodiskā tīkla nodrošinājuma izveide, 2006-2008)* aimed to ensure professional improvement opportunities for teachers according to the needs of the education system and of every teacher and, thus, also enabling teachers to work with different target groups. In terms of project a system of further teacher education was developed, which included content, assessment, coordination, financing and career development aspects – a 5 level teacher qualification category system was developed and piloted. The system includes a model of professional teacher career development, i.e. the level of category depends on the teachers' qualification and work experience. A higher category involves not only additional functions, e.g. methodological work and education planning, but also impacts positively on teachers' payment. This model is expected to foster the establishment of a quality assurance system of teacher work.

97 methodologists were prepared to deal with issues related to teacher further education content, assessment, organisation and teacher career development. A guide was prepared and published providing methodological support for teachers, school administration, as well as teacher further education providers, organizers and controllers. More than 3000 teachers participated in educational activities; additionally 5000 teachers took part in courses about using IT in learning process. Five independent studies were conducted to explore the situation.

It is planned by September 2012 to establish the mentoring system for novice teachers, i.e. there will be a mentor per school to provide support for novice teachers and student teachers having practical training. The University of Latvia has designed professional improvement programme for mentors (teachers with experience) in terms of ESF project *Innovative and Practice-Based Acquisition of Teacher Education and Mentors' Professional Improvement (Inovatīva un praksē balstīta pedagogu izglītības ieguve un mentoru profesionālā pilnveide, 2010-2013)*, which is expected to be implemented in January 2011.

## 7.2 TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN IVET

Within the vocational education system vocational education teachers are both teachers and trainers. They implement a range of programmes: vocational basic education, vocational education, vocational upper-secondary education, and professional development and continuing vocational education. See 7.1.

### 7.2.1 TYPES OF TEACHERS, TRAINERS AND TRAINING FACILITATORS IN IVET

As vocational secondary programmes comprise general subjects, professional subjects, practical training and work placements. Therefore, **teachers in the initial vocational education** system are: teachers of general subjects or of a vocational subject. Practical training is taught by vocational subject vocational education teachers. See 7.1.

### 7.2.2 PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING OF IVET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

There is no separate teacher education system for initial and continuing vocational education teachers. See 7.1.2.

### 7.3 TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN CVET

Within the vocational education system vocational education teachers are both teachers and trainers, who provide all types of programmes, both initial and continuing. See 7.1.

#### 7.3.1 TYPES OF TEACHERS, TRAINERS AND TRAINING FACILITATORS IN CVET

There are four types of occupations regulated by law, namely: vocational education teacher, teacher, social teacher and teacher of social sciences. There are no differences between vocational education teachers in the initial vocational or continuing vocational education system, and teachers for continuing education programmes do not have a special reference in vocational education terminology. They have the same requirements as other vocational education teachers (see section 7.1.2).

Vocational education teachers in vocational schools provide both initial vocational and continuing vocational education courses, and there is no distinction regarding their education requirements. In enterprises in-company teachers and trainers could be involved in local training, nevertheless, there is no regulation on their education requirements. Those involved in apprenticeship training should have a craftsman qualification (see 5.4).

#### 7.3.2 PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING OF CVET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

The system of **pre-service education** and **further education** for continuing vocational education teachers is the same as for initial vocational education. See 7.1.2.

## 8. MATCHING VET PROVISION (SKILLS) WITH LABOUR MARKET NEEDS (JOBS)

### 8.1 SYSTEMS AND MECHANISMS FOR THE ANTICIPATION OF SKILL NEEDS (IN SECTORS, OCCUPATIONS, EDUCATION LEVEL)

The responsibility of providing labour market forecasts rests with the Ministry of Economics and the State Employment Agency, which is under the direction of the Ministry of Welfare.

**The Ministry of Economics** (*Ekonomikas ministrija*) ensures middle- and long-term forecasts. The ministry has arranged the Advisory Council for Labour Market Forecasting (*Darba tirgus prognozēšanas konsultatīvā padome*) to deal with relevant issues and to establish a platform for dialogue between the state (Unit of Economical Development and Labour Market Forecasting of the ministry), employers (Employers' Confederation of Latvia), employees (Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia), and the local municipalities (The Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments). Along with other measures, the ministry prepares reports on economical development (*Report on Economic Development of Latvia*) twice a year, in which previous period is reflected and some forecasts are provided. Additionally, in 2009 this ministry prepared the *Informative Report on Forecasts for Compliance of Labour Force Demand and Offer in Middle-Term (Informatīvais ziņojums par prognozēm darbaspēka pieprasījuma un piedāvājuma atbilstībai vidējā termiņā)*, which data was used by the Ministry of Education and Science to design vocational education provision plans.

**The State Employment Agency** (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra*) carries out short-term labour market forecasting and twice a year conducts express employers' surveys to clarify planned changes in number of employees during the next half year, the reasons for these changes, as well as demanded and unclaimed occupations by employers. The results of these surveys are applied to design and arrange training for the unemployed during the following half of year.

However, these reports and surveys do not ensure sufficient anticipation of skill needs to implement long-term economy and business planning strategies. Thus, information on skill needs is collected partly at sector level or in terms of some projects, but not systematically at national level.

The **employers** provide expertise concerning labour market forecasts; they participate in the surveys arranged to explore demand for qualifications. If sectors have resources, they also conduct studies on skill needs.

One of the most recent and largest studies focused on skill needs analysis was conducted during the project *The Ministry of Welfare Studies (Labklājības ministrijas pētījumi)* in the framework of ESF National Programme project Labour Market Studies (*Darba tirgus pētījumi, 2005-2007*). In total 13 themes were explored, of which more linked with vocational education were:

- Career development of post graduates – to clarify reasons why graduates did have work related to their profession, as well as the numbers of graduates continuing their education.
- Vocational and higher education programmes and labour market demands – to study the procedure how the occupational standards are developed and to find out how the standards correspond to the Occupation Register; to clarify how many students enrol and finish their vocational studies (within 120 occupations); to state reasons influencing the choice of studies.
- Occupational mobility – to study current situation of workforce occupational mobility and to state major reasons of the mobility; to give suggestions for improving the situation (on creating policy documents); and to develop recommendations for improving occupational mobility of education policy.
- Geographical mobility – to study the inner and outer flow of workforce depending on the balance between demand and supply within labour market; to develop recommendations for arranging active and preventive events to foster employment in entire country, thereby decreasing regional differences.



- Working conditions and risks – to study the sphere of work protection in enterprises and to develop recommendations for improving the legal base of labour market, and for implementing social, economical, technical, preventive and organizational activities.
- Unemployment and social exclusion – to find out the reasons and length of unemployment and social exclusion, through clarifying the link with low-level educational attainment and making suggestions on ways to combat unemployment and social exclusion.

However, it should be noted that these studies explored situation before the economic recession, therefore, part of data is not applicable anymore.

In spring 2010, the State Education Content Centre in cooperation with the Department of Vocational and General Education of the Ministry of Education and Science conducted phone poll of sectoral organisations to explore which qualifications (levels 1-3) are required by sectors across all regions of Latvia. The collected data was applied by the Department to design vocational student enrolment plan (basic and secondary level) for the following study year.

In autumn 2010, the State Education Development Agency (in cooperation with the State Education Content Centre, the State Service for Education Quality, the Employers' Confederation of Latvia, and the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia) is planning to introduce the ESF National Programme project *Development of Sectoral Qualification System and Restructuralization of Vocational Education (Nozaru kvalifikāciju sistēmas izveide un profesionālās izglītības pārstrukturizācija, 2010-2012)*. In terms of this project, the sectoral research is expected to be conducted, on the basis of the research occupation standards should be reviewed or developed, as well as a sectoral qualification system should be established. The project may serve as a platform for further regular sectoral research.

## 8.2 PRACTICES TO MATCH VET PROVISION (SKILLS) WITH SKILL NEEDS (JOBS)

Skills needs are taken into account when drafting vocational qualifications through the definition of occupational standards for different professions. Standards are developed by representatives of educational institutions and social partners through working groups organized by the State Education Content Centre (*Valsts izglītības saturs centrs*) for professional qualification levels 1-3 and the Ministry of Education and Science for levels 4-5. Occupational standards are confirmed by the National Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment (*Profesionālās izglītības un nodarbinātības trīspusējās sadarbības apakšpadome*) and by the Minister of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija, MoES*). Standards usually are updated and reviewed as necessary but not often than every 5th year. Every 5 years standards are assessed and updated by education providers, employers, students, government organisations, quality assurance agencies and external experts. Representatives of the MoEs and other ministries, the Latvian Union of Local Governments, the Employers' Confederation of Latvia (*Latvijas Darba devēju konfederācija*), non-governmental field organizations, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, and vocational education providers take part in developing and reviewing occupational standards.

Occupational standards comprise a description of specific tasks and employee duties as well as the abilities and skills, professional competence necessary to carry out those tasks. Standards also determine to which level of professional qualification each specific profession corresponds. When developing educational programmes, educational institutions have to ensure the acquisition of all the knowledge, skills and professional competence mentioned in the occupational standards. By August 2010, 457 occupation standards had been drafted and approved, of which 16 were added to standard register in 2009, e.g. journalist, real estate manager, photo design specialist etc.

Also the content of final qualification examinations, which consist of theoretical and practical part, is drafted in line with occupational standards.

Regarding teacher education, the teacher education programmes are also designed according to relevant occupation standards (see 7.6). Since the teacher education programmes are mainly implemented by HEI, respecting their autonomy the state cannot directly influence the study content, thus, HEI are responsible for matching education programmes to labour market.

In case of a sectoral research, the procedure for the revision of occupational standards is commenced to integrate new findings into the standards. If occupational standards are revised, education establishments have to adapt their education programmes accordingly, as well as the content of final qualification examinations has to be updated. To be licensed and accredited education programmes have to correspond to relevant occupation standards; therefore, the process of embedding sectoral studies' findings into occupational standards is quite dynamic.

Due to the limited financial resources, sectoral studies are mainly conducted if a sector displays initiative and possesses funding. For example, the sector of chemistry, pharmacy and biotechnology, which is one of prior sectors in the State economy, requested to develop a new continuing vocational education programme for technicians of chemical processes (professional qualification level 3). In summer 2009, work group involving representatives of employers (pharmacy company), teachers (implementing similar programmes) and the State Education Content Centre (provision of methodological support) started to design 960 hours long education programme. Thus, in autumn, with the support of the local government, training of unemployed was commenced; learning was arranged both in schools and in pharmaceutical company. This work group also designed two occupational standards and one more secondary vocational education programme.

The ESF National Programme project *Development of Sectoral Qualification System and Restructuralization of Vocational Education* (2010-2012) supervised by the State Education Development Agency (see 8.1.) is expected to introduce mechanisms for conducting such studies on regular basis.

## 9. GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING FOR LEARNING, CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT

### 9.1 STRATEGY AND PROVISION

#### EMBEDDING LL GUIDANCE IN LLL AND EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES

There is a shift from the professional orientation system where individuals were directed towards specific training and employment opportunities promoted by the planned economy to a career development support system, which is a range of activities aiming at assisting individuals at different ages and experience levels to choose the most appropriate type and place of learning and/or employment. The latter system was initiated in 2006 with the approval of the *White Paper on the Improvement of the Career Guidance System* (see 2.1).

Lifelong learning strategy is outlined in *the Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013 (Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013.gadam, 2007)* prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science (see 2.1.1). One of the lifelong learning policy aims – availability of lifelong learning for all social groups – includes the goal to advance the development of educational support structures through recruitment of professional staff and provision of information and guidance to all citizens when making educational, vocational and career choices.

The strategic plan for implementing the 2007-2013 LLL policy guidelines envisioned the establishment of 48 education support institutions, i.e. career development and counselling centres, as well as to increase the number of services ensured by these bodies by implementing 150 career education projects. Yet due to the economic recession and reduction of funding, these activities were postponed.

Employment strategies are developed by the Ministry of Welfare together with the State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra, SEA*). To implement lifelong guidance strategy providing opportunity for everyone to promote their qualification or obtain other qualification and to realize their potential, the SEA arranges a list of active employment measures and preventive measures combating unemployment.

In 2009, a new preventive measure combating unemployment was initiated, i.e. *Training Programmes for Individuals Subjected to Unemployment Risk (Apmācību programmas bezdarba riskam pakļautām nodarbinātām personām)*, which includes the opportunity for part-time employed and self-employed to participate in vocational education programmes and receive a voucher for covering tuition.

In 2010, a new measure *Training Programmes for Engaging Adults in Lifelong Education (Apmācību programmas pieaugušo iesaistei mūžizglītībā)* was started, which is available not only to part-time employed. In terms of active employment measure *Vocational Education, Re-Qualification and Qualification Promotion (Profesionālā apmācība, pārkvalifikācija un kvalifikācijas paaugstināšana)* also new measure was started in 2010 – *Acquisition of the First and Second Higher Professional Education Programmes (Pirmā un otrā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības programmu apguve)*, which allows the unemployed to receive vouchers to complete their studies in the first or second higher professional education programmes or to obtain a new qualification in second higher professional education programme.

#### EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY AND STRATEGY MAKING

Both the *White Paper on the Improvement of the Career Guidance System* (2006) and the *Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013* (2007) included field studies in order to determine the issues to be addressed.

As mentioned previously in the section 8.1, the data concerning the skill needs is collected partly on a sectoral basis, but not systematically and regularly at national scale.

In order to design the offer of education programmes for the unemployed, the State Employment Agency arranges regular surveys of employers about required qualifications and skills (see 8.1). As mentioned in the section 3.2.3, the SEA establishes a commission to design the list of required occupations and skills in cooperation with the job placement companies and relevant ministries.

## COOPERATION BETWEEN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT SECTORS/ADMINISTRATIONS IN THE AREA OF LL GUIDANCE

The *White Paper on the Improvement of the Career Guidance System* (2006) stated the need to form a policy coordinating institution at national level, which would include both representatives of ministries and social partners. Since 2007, the National Forum on guidance and counselling provides a platform for cooperation between the policy makers from relevant ministries, guidance providers, social partners and clients. The State Education Development Agency Information and Career Guidance Department acts as a secretariat to the Forum. The Forum cooperates with the Latvian delegation to the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN).

However, in reality at school level communication between education establishments, employers and parents occurs informally and irregularly in the context of activities not included in the ordinary curriculum, e.g. project weeks or career days. The intensity of communication greatly depends on the individual education establishments and their management staff; thus, some schools are more active than others. There are no national mechanisms in place to coordinate school and enterprise cooperation in guidance. However, the State Education Development Agency develops some methodological materials to support cooperation activities.

## BODIES RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES

### Bodies in education and employment

The Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*, MoES) (see 4.3), and the Ministry of Welfare (*Labklājības ministrija*, MoW) are **responsible bodies for career guidance and counselling**. The State Education Development Agency (*Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra*, subsidiary of MoES) supports implementation of careers education policy within education sector. The State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra*, subsidiary of MoW) is responsible for provision of career counselling throughout the country.

The Education Law (*Izglītības likums* 1998) stipulates that the local governments ensure the provision of guidance and counselling for children and young adults while the Vocational Education Law (*Profesionālās izglītības likums*, 1999) stipulates that the MoES organizes introduction of guidance and counselling in vocational education. This division is due to the fact that primary and secondary schools are under the management of local governments, while the MoES administers vocational schools.

The **Ministry of Welfare's policy** was implemented by the Professional Career Counselling State Agency (*Profesionālās karjeras izvēles valsts aģentūra*, PKIVA), until September 2007 when the organisation was incorporated into the State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra*, SEA) as the Career Service Department in accordance with the *White Paper on Improvement of the Career Guidance System* (2006). In October 2009 the Career Service Department was reorganised into the Career Methodology and Client Service Unit (*Karjeras metodikas un klientu apkalpošanas nodaļa*), which in September 2010 was renamed as Career Development Support Unit (*Karjeras attīstības atbalsta nodaļa*). The SEA operates in accordance with the Labour Law (2002), the *Law on Social Security (Par sociālo drošību*, May 1995) and the *Law on the Support for the Unemployed and Job Seekers (Bezdarbnieku un darba meklētāju atbalsta likums*, May 2002). The latter states that the functions of SEA include: preparation of suggestions for developing and implementing state employment policy; performing short-term labour market forecasts including employers' surveys; registration of the unemployed and job seekers; assisting the unemployed, job seekers and other economically inactive inhabitants to integrate into the labour market; ensuring information exchange with employers and registration of available vacancies; arranging active employment measures and preventive measures to reduce unemployment; ensuring free career consultations for the unemployed, job seekers and others. The SEA is the only state institution providing career counselling (individual, group, present or e-counselling).

In 2000, the **Ministry of Education and Science** delegated the State Education Development Agency (*Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra*, VIAA) to represent Latvia in the Euroguidance Network by creating the National Resource Centre for Vocational Guidance (*Profesionālās orientācijas informācijas centrs*, POIC), which provided information on education opportunities in Latvia and other EU countries. Since 2007, the Centre has been re-organised into the Information and Career Guidance Department of VIAA, which is partly financed by the Ministry and partly by

the EU Lifelong Learning programme. Within the Euroguidance network, the Department collaborates internationally with similar organisations in Europe to exchange best practices in guidance as well as information on learning opportunities to support student mobility. Before the Latvian administrative territorial reform (December 2008), in each of 38 regional education boards there was a coordinator responsible for guidance and counselling, with whom the Department cooperated in information distribution and exchange. As a result of the reform, the number and the functions of bodies (education boards or units, education expert) responsible for education issues in administrative territories has changed. Meanwhile, the reduction of funding during the economic recession has forced local governments to limit the functions and human resources of these bodies; thus, this information distribution channel lost its previous efficiency and needs to be re-established.

According to the *Law on Higher Education Institutions (Augstskolu likums, 1995)*, students of HEI have the rights to receive information on issues regarding their studies and potential career. In some HEI there are career centres specifically designated to providing information on education and career opportunities, while in other HEI these duties are performed by faculty staff.

As mentioned in section 2.1.2, since 2007, the National Forum on guidance and counselling (*Karjeras attīstības atbalsta sistēmas sadarbības padome*), in which the policy makers from relevant ministries, guidance providers, social partners and clients are represented, serves as an advisor on necessary improvements of guidance and counselling policy and system at national and local levels, contributing to the development of guidance and counselling policy and system. The Forum also cooperates with the Latvian European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) delegation.

#### Other bodies

In 1996, as an initiative of career consultants and the former Professional Career Counselling State Agency (*Profesionālās karjeras izvēles valsts aģentūra, PCCSA*) the Association of Career Consultants was founded to foster professional development of career consultants, to exchange experience and to represent Latvia in the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance. Yet the Association does not function actively, since PCCSA was incorporated into the State Employment Agency.

In 2009, the Association of Latvian Career Development Support (*Latvijas Karjeras attīstības atbalsta asociācija*), which is a NGO, was established to promote the formation of a support system for career development. The Association has designed several projects to foster guidance and counselling, for example, a project on mobile career buses, which would assist in promoting access to guidance across regions, and a project on guidance for youth at risk to include all inhabitants in guidance activities.

In the private sector, the provision of guidance services is as yet underdeveloped.

## **9.2 TARGET GROUPS AND MODES OF DELIVERY**

Up until the economic recession, the former Career Service Department of State Employment Agency offered career counselling for all: young people about to choose a career, adults – whether employed, unemployed or returning to the labour market; disabled people, parents and educators; i.e. the target groups which in the section 6.3 were classified as “vulnerable groups”. The services are adapted to the needs of target groups, e.g. inhabitants after paternal leave may receive information about their legal rights how to combine time for work and family; young people – about education opportunities, labour market tendencies, skills required for a successful career; persons with special needs – assistance to find occupation corresponding to their health condition etc. Due to the economic recession (see section 3.2.1) the distribution of clients has changed evidently – more emphasis is put on the unemployed and job seekers, while other groups are in a way neglected. The most disadvantaged group in this situation is young people who have no work experience; because the access to career consultations is limited and they cannot register as unemployed to receive some. Furthermore, when funding for schools was reduced, the post of career consultant in schools was not introduced as planned or was removed, thus, students are not provided with career consultations regularly.

The State Education Development Agency has developed and still develops various types of information materials both to provide methodological support for career guidance practitioners working at schools and guidance materials for young people and adults. Within the framework of the ESF project *Fostering the Implementation of Vocational Guidance Provision and Careers Education in the Educational Sector (Karjeras izglītības programmas nodrošinājums izglītības sistēmā, 2005-2008)*, the Agency established an education opportunities data base ([www.niid.lv](http://www.niid.lv)), which includes information about general, vocational and higher education institutions and education programmes they offer. At present (2010), the State Education Development Agency has started to design an e-tool “Job Town”, which is expected to include information on various types of enterprises. The tool will outline the services offered by these enterprises and employees’ duties, as well as necessary qualifications and will indicate which education establishments provide relevant training. Piloting of the first five “enterprises” is planned to take place in mid 2011.

Euroguidance Latvia, which is located within the Agency, is designing an interactive e-tool “Are You Ready for Mobility?” in order to help inhabitants to evaluate their capabilities in this aspect.

The SEA provides the following types of career counselling services:

- individual career consultations – exploration of vocational aptitude, design of individual career plan; analysis of life and work values, exploration of personal and professional characteristics; preparing for work interview (writing CV and work applications)
- group career consultations – class on exploration of vocational aptitude and career planning.
- individual diagnosing consultations – stating professional preferences, exploration of personality characteristics and their relevance to professional expectations.
- group diagnosing consultations – solving career issues, exploration of correspondence between professional preferences, work capability and professional expectations.
- Individual self-determination consultations – independent work with self-exploration methods and materials.
- group informative consultations – providing information on education and career development opportunities, labour market requirements.
- E-consultations – online career consultations, information about choice of occupation and work seeking issues through the SEA website ([www.nva.gov.lv](http://www.nva.gov.lv)).

The counselling methods are selected according to the needs of the clients. The first consultation is devoted to clarifying the aims of the visit and selecting the most appropriate working method, which may be focused on exploring professional interests, vocational aptitude, exploring clients’ knowledge, skills and competences, values (by using relevant methodology or tests). Career counselling is also provided prior to the participation in the learning activities arranged by the SEA. If need be, a psychological support is ensured in form of a structured conversation for discussing possible solutions.

Before 2009, when career consultants were employees of the SEA, the Agency organised regular further education courses for its counsellors to ensure quality of guidance provision. The Agency has developed methodological materials to help the counsellors in their work. Now it is the responsibility of the contracted service provider to ensure professional up-grading of career counsellors. Since 2006, five higher education institutions provide a Master of Science education programme for career counsellors; thus, also pre-service education specifically for counsellors is provided. As career counselling in schools is mostly provided by class teachers, part of HEI implementing teacher education programmes have also included a module on guidance and counselling.

To promote quality assurance for guidance implemented in schools in 2010, the State Education Development Agency and the State Service for Education Quality drafted a set of amendments for the Cabinet Regulations stipulating procedures for accrediting vocational education programmes and schools in order to integrate quality criteria on guidance and counselling which were passed in September 2010.

### 9.3 GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PERSONNEL

The main document describing the qualification requirements for counsellors is the occupational standard for career counsellors (professional qualification level 5), which outlines knowledge, skills and professional competence necessary to do professional duties. The other document is the occupational standard for teachers (professional qualification level 5) indicating that teachers should assist students to form their understanding of working life and career planning, they should provide information on career opportunities and motivate students to have a sound career choice. The requirement for working in the as a counsellor is higher education in psychology (academic or professional degree) but a higher education degree in education is also acceptable.

#### The State Employment Agency

In 2008, there were 24 district consultation rooms in the all regions, in which 58 specialists were working as career counsellors and/or psychologists as employees of the SEA. Since September 2009, the administration of career consultation provision was altered: now instead of the Career Service Department within SEA, there is the Career Development Support Unit (*Karjeras attīstības atbalsta nodaļa*, see 9.1), which provides methodological support to counsellors regarding guidance and counselling, and the SEA concluded an agreement (for 2009-2011) with an external company, which hires career counsellors and supervises counselling. Thus, career counsellors are not employees of the SEA anymore. At present (September 2010), there are 36 counsellors working in all 28 regional offices of the SEA (6 counsellors in the capital city Riga office, and 1-2 in other offices).

#### State Education Development Agency

In schools, career education mostly is the responsibility of class teachers. Within the ESF project *The Improvement of Theoretical Knowledge and Practical Competences for Vocational Subject Teachers and for Supervisors of Practical Training (Profesionālo mācību priekšmetu pedagogu un prakses vadītāju teorētisko zināšanu un praktisko kompetenču paaugstināšana, 2010-2012)* supervised by the State Education Content Centre (see 4.3), it is planned to design and implement six modules for improving teachers' and trainers' theoretical knowledge, of which one should focus on cooperation between education and the labour market. In some secondary schools there were career counsellors and it was planned to introduce this post in all schools, but, when funding for education was reduced in 2009, the post was removed or its introduction was postponed.

There are eleven employees in the Information and Career Guidance Department of the State Education Development Agency (see 9.1), which implements activities of Euroguidance, Eurydice, and Euroskills programmes and maintains the national data base on learning opportunities [www.niid.lv](http://www.niid.lv). The Department regularly organizes seminars for class teachers and other career guidance practitioners on current trends in European guidance and also provides 1-2 day training events on various methods and tools.

In 2005-2008 the Department implemented the ESF project *Fostering the Implementation of Vocational Guidance Provision and Careers Education in the Educational Sector (Karjeras izglītības programmas nodrošinājums izglītības sistēmā)* with the objective to improve accessibility and quality of careers education at educational institutions of all types and levels. Among the main activities, there were:

- Professional upgrading of guidance practitioners/teachers currently working in the educational sector (3,700 teachers in 2006 and 1,525 teachers in 2008);
- Development, testing and piloting of methodological and training materials for careers education purposes at schools;
- Development of various information resources on learning opportunities including a national data base and self-assessment tests for e-guidance;
- Development of national qualification framework and a 2-year study programme for educating guidance counsellors, piloting the study programme.

This project fostered the implementation of initial and continuing training of guidance practitioners, developing training materials and information resources. As a result, several informative materials about education and career opportunities have been published; in 2006 professional master

education programme for career counsellors has been licensed and started to be implemented in 5 higher education institutions.



## 10. FINANCING: INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

As in many other countries, primary funding policy aims are related to increasing cost-effectiveness. Funding allocated to the education sector has increased during the period from 2000 to 2008 by 69.8%, but actual amounts due to the inflation and other factors remained insufficient. Therefore, funding reduction carried out in 2009 hindered several challenges to successful functioning of the education sector.

### 10.1 FUNDING FOR INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

**The Cabinet of Ministers** stipulates the procedure how all education sectors, levels and forms are financed; stipulates procedure how HE and vocational students receive scholarship and its amount.

**The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES)** works out budget proposals, makes inquiry to demand funds from the state budget, as well as supervises the utilisation of allocated funding. In vocational education sector MoES finances vocational schools, under its direction and its supporting institutions from state budget allocated for this purpose.

**Other ministries** provide funding (for schools under their direction) for publishing and purchasing learning literature for vocational study subjects; supervise financial and economical activities of education institutions under their direction. In vocational education sector other ministries design and submit budget proposals to receive funds from the state budget, finance vocational educational institutions under their direction and their supporting institutions from state budget resources allocated to this purpose.

**Local governments** have to provide children in their administrative territory with pre-school and basic education (compulsory education); stipulate the procedure how education establishments under their direction are financed; on basis of mutual agreement participates in the funding of state, other local government or private education establishments; allocates funding to education establishments under their direction and supervise the utilisation of resources; ensures funding transfer to the accounts of education establishments under their direction for teacher payment allocated from state budget; determines the number of study places in HEI funded by local governments.

Regarding **education fees**, state and local government schools implementing pre-school, basic and secondary education are for free; private schools may set tuition. In HE state covers study fees for a certain number of study places according to relevant annual state's demand; for other study places HEI may set tuition. Local governments may set a partial fee as co-financing for acquiring education in vocationally oriented education establishments founded by local governments (Education Law, 1998).

Education funding procedures are stipulated by the Education Law (1998), which is supported by the General Education Law (1999) for general education and by Vocational Education Law (1999) for vocational education.

Education institutions according to their ownership are financed from State budget, local government budget or private sources.

**Pre-school, basic and general secondary education establishments** mainly are under the direction of the local governments. Special education establishments and special education groups, boarding schools are funded from the state budget. State gymnasiums receive additional funding for implementing functions of regional methodological centre and teacher further education centre.

The majority of **vocational schools** are state-owned and run; therefore, the national budget is the main source of funding. Subsidies for vocational education come as well from the local governments and private sources. State subsidies are determined by the Cabinet of Ministers regarding the numbers of students and the relevant per capita costs. Providers annually submit their budget projects to MoES. Once the state budget is confirmed, schools receive funding and spend it to implement their educational programmes according to legislation.

Furthermore, in accordance with Vocational education Law (1999), accredited local governments' and private vocational education establishments may apply for state funding for implementing vocational further education, vocational improvement and vocationally oriented education programmes. The overall budget for vocational education in 2009 was EUR 68 225 643 (EUR 86 861 528 in 2008 and EUR 46 401 181 in 2005). The funding for vocational education establishments in 2009 comprised 88.7% of subsidies from the state general budget (EUR 60 530 239) and by 11.3% of their own income (paid services provided by vocational education institutions, amounting EUR 7 695 404). Comparing to the previous year these proportions have changed only slightly (+/-0.2%), although the state funding has experienced a significant reduction.

In 2009, 81.5% (91.3% in 2008) of state funds allocated to vocational schools were for recurrent costs, including salaries for staff, i.e. 49.1% (57.9% in 2008) of total expenditures, and just 0.7% (1.9% in 2008) towards capital investment.

Education institutions (both vocational and general schools) may receive additional funding in form of donations, provision of paid services and other incomes, which have to be used for institution development, for purchasing learning aids and equipment; for stimulating students materially and for teachers' payment implementing vocational basic, vocational secondary or vocationally oriented education programmes in sports, music and art at state and local government schools. A single education institution may implement education programmes, which are funded from different sources.

**Teacher payment** at state and local government education establishments (including pre-school) is provided from state budget and state budget subsidiaries. Teacher payment for those working in local government kindergartens is funded by local governments. Local governments may participate in funding teacher payment at state, local government and private schools. State may fund private school teacher salaries, if these education establishments offer pre-school, accredited basic and secondary education programmes. Since September 2009, the general education teacher payment is arranged according to the principle "money follows student" (previously funding was allocated to school), i.e. funding allocated to local governments for teacher payment depends on number of students in particular administrative territory.

**Higher education** is funded according to the procedure stipulated in the *Law on Higher Education Institutions (Augstskolu likums, 1995)*.

HEI are funded by their founders, as well as the founders provide financial supervision of the HEI. The state HEI financial resources are built up from the state budget and other incomes. The state budget funding has to be used for public services, taxes, maintaining infrastructure, purchasing equipment and tools, science or art work and for personnel payment. The state also allocates to state HEI and colleges funding to cover study fees for a certain number of study places according to relevant annual state's demand; students or other bodies cover costs of other study places. Students may receive study loans to pay their tuition, which are more described in 10.4.

The MoES, other ministries and state institutions may make mutual agreements with accredited private HEI about educating certain specialists or conducting a study with the state funding. Such agreements may be made continuously also with any state or private body.

## 10.2 FUNDING FOR CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, AND ADULT LEARNING

There is no precise recent data on total investment in continuing vocational education because information is collected on separate survey basis. While funding from the state budget can be assessed, other sources are not so easy.

### 10.2.1 FUNDING FOR PUBLICLY PROVIDED CVET

The institutional framework for continuing vocational education is not separated from the initial education (see 10.1.1). Additionally, it should be noted that:

- **other ministries** in the collaboration with the MoES, other state institutions, and local authorities organize continuing education for vocational education teachers at institutions under their direction.

- **local governments** ensure the distribution of adult education funding and supervise its utilisation.

According to the Education Law (1998), adult education may be funded from the state and local government budget, employers' resources, students' resources, donations and other sources. Since 2004, an important source of funding is ESF, which through various projects opened more learning opportunities for adults. For example, during the planning period of 2004-2006, the activity *Widening Opportunities of Continuing Education within Sectors Important for Economy (Tālākizglītības iespēju paplašināšana ekonomikai svarīgās nozarēs)* was implemented with total funding EUR 1 867 198.

Nationally data on continuing vocational education funding is not collected anymore (latest data is only about 2005, which is too outdated to be included in this report).

Some local governments allocate a fixed percentage from the budget to adult education.

### 10.2.2 FUNDING FOR CVT IN ENTERPRISES

Enterprises are responsible for arranging learning activities for their employees. At present, statistics are not collected nationally on funding in enterprises. According to the latest CSB data (2006), in 2005 enterprises allocated EUR 7,581 thousands for training their employees, which was 35.7% of total funding for adult education. The tax system does not promote employer investment in training. Only approximately 4% of enterprises had a training budget and vocational training was mainly available only in large, stable enterprises. These enterprises usually have enough funds as well as a human resource development strategy; some also have their own training centres.

STAFF	10-49	10-49	50 - 249	50 - 249	250 +	250 +	TOTAL	TOTAL
TIME	2005	1999	2005	1999	2005	1999	2005	1999
EU 27	1.1	:	1.4	:	1.9	:	1.6	:
EU 25	1.1	1.5	1.4	2.4	1.9	2.4	1.6	2.2
LV	0.3	1.3	0.8	0.8	1.2	1.3	0.8	1.1

Source: Eurostat (CVTS2 and CVTS3); extracted on: 30-04-2010; last update: 19-03-2010

Smaller enterprises tend to invest less in training (see table above). They tend to have other priorities in terms of their survival within the market.

### 10.3 FUNDING FOR TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE AND OTHER GROUPS EXCLUDED FROM THE LABOUR MARKET

The main institution for implementing labour market policy and programmes for unemployed people is the State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra*, SEA) which is a public corporation under the Ministry of Welfare. It remains a governmental organisation funded by the state but operates independently. It is financed from the State base budget, income from the provision of services, gifts and donations, as well as from other resources in accordance with regulations.

Similar to adult education, also in the case of training for the unemployed ESF support has an important role. As mentioned before, the learning opportunities (vocational education, re-qualification and qualification promotion) for the unemployed and job-seekers are arranged in terms of ESF project *Training for the Unemployed and Job-Seekers in Latvia – 2 (Bezdarbnieku un darba meklētāju apmācība Latvijā – 2, 2009-2013)*. The total funding for the project is EUR 28 291 989, of which at least 89.37% (referable costs) is covered by ESF.

However, due to the limited resources the amount of funding for active employment measures (including training) in 2009 (EUR 390.6 thousands) has been reduced comparing to 2008 (EUR 8 867 thousands) by 95.6 %.

## 10.4 GENERAL FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS AND MECHANISMS

In Latvia there are not formed such financing mechanisms as sectoral training funds, learning accounts and vouchers, as well as, saving schemes. The existing mechanisms – tax incentives, scholarships in initial vocational education, and study loans – are outlined below.

The legal basis for **tax incentives** is formed by the Law on Income Taxes of Enterprises (1995, 2007) and the Law on Income Taxes of Inhabitants (1993, 2008). The former concerning tax allowance for donors stipulates that tax is reduced for residents by 85% of sums donated to education organisations. Regarding reimbursed expenses the law and regulations state that expenses (both payer's and their family members') related with professional development, obtaining speciality, education are reimbursed before taxing year incomes. The term of education imparts higher education, all stages of vocational education, acquisition of occupation in state accredited Latvian, EU, EEA education establishments, or, when participating in state accredited education programmes, training in enterprises or occupation for acquiring or improving necessary skills and broadening knowledge, promotion of qualification level.

In practice, legal entities do not use tax allowances (a type of tax incentives) frequently because refund sum is too little, i.e. EUR 213.43 per employee who has an agreement with the employer about participation in education and for which the employer does not have to pay income tax. Any legal entity which has made the agreement with the employees and submitted their annual CIT declaration is eligible for funding.

Speaking about tax allowances for private persons, any taxpayer who has submitted their annual PIT declaration is eligible for refunding of their education costs. However, the amount individuals are paid back is comparatively small – EUR 213.43 before 2009, when it was doubled (EUR426.86), and since 2010 this sum has been decreased to the previous amount. Expenses may be requested to be reimbursed in 3 years period; therefore, the statistics about last years is not precise.

The State Revenue Service (*Valsts ieņēmumu dienests*) is the institution responsible for monitoring progress on the use of the tax incentive and taking corrective actions.

**Scholarships in initial vocational education** are stated by the Cabinet *Regulations on Scholarships (Noteikumi par stipendijām, 1995, 2002, 2004)*. During the period of 2002-2007, the average amount of stipends increased, i.e. from EUR 12.8 to EUR 28.5 per month. While later amendments in the Regulations stated the decrease of amount due to the limited financial resources, and in 2010 the average amount of scholarship reached EUR 10-14 per month.

Only tertiary education students can apply for **study loans**. Allocation of study loans from the state budget was established in 1999 and the contract with students was made from July 2000. Since September 2001, study loans are allocated from funds of credit institutions with the State guarantee. Tertiary education students may receive two different study loans: to cover study programme expenses and for personal expenses during studies.

According to the *Vocational Education Law (1999)*, students studying in accredited first level vocational higher education programs may receive student loan from the state budget or credit institution with the warranty from the government. The procedure of the allocation, repayment, and clearance of the loan is defined in the *Law on Higher Education Institutions (Augstskolu likums, 1995)*.

## 11. NATIONAL VET STATISTICS – ALLOCATION OF PROGRAMMES

### 11.1 CLASSIFICATION OF NATIONAL VET PROGRAMS

#### 11.1.1 MAIN CRITERIA USED TO ALLOCATE VET PROGRAMS

The Ministry of Education and Science determines to which level (ISCED) each education programme belongs. The classification of education programmes in accordance with ISCED levels is stipulated by the Cabinet Regulations on Education Classification (*Noteikumi par Latvijas izglītības klasifikāciju*, 2008). At present (September 2010), a new version of these Regulations has been drafted and submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers for discussion. It should be noted that some education programmes, e.g. continuing vocational education, are not awarded with any ISCED level.

#### 11.1.2 VET LEVELS IN THE NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The levels of vocational education and professional higher education that exist the Latvian education system are summarized in the table below.

Level	Equivalent in ISCED	Minimum duration	Maximum duration	Average duration	Typical starting age of pupils
<b>Basic education level</b>					
<i>Vocational basic education</i>	2C	1 year	2 years	n.a.	at least 15
<i>Vocational basic education with pedagogical correction**</i>	2A, 2B	1 year	3 years	n.a.	at least 15
<b>Secondary education level</b>					
<i>Vocational education</i>	3C	2 years	3 years	n.a.	at least 15
<i>Vocational secondary education</i>	3A, 3B	3 years	4 years	4 years	15-16
<i>Vocational secondary education (post general secondary)</i>	---	1 years	2 years	2 years	19-20
<i>Vocational education (post general secondary)</i>	4B	1 year	1 year	1 year	19-20
<b>Higher education level</b>					
<i>First level professional higher education or college education</i>	5B	2 years	3 years	n.a.	18-20

<i>Second level professional higher education or university education (bachelor degree)</i>	5A	4 years (full-time)	n.a.	4 years	18-20
<i>Second level professional higher education (post college education)</i>	--	1 year (full-time)	2 years (full-time)	2 years	19-21
<i>Second level professional higher education or university education (master degree)</i>	--	1 year (full-time)	n.a.	n.a.	21-23

\* Some programmes have not been awarded with ISCED classification.

\*\* pedagogical correction – programme for early school leavers and those with low level of basic knowledge and skills. The main aim of the programme is to integrate youngsters back to education system and help them acquire simple professional skills.

Traditionally in the Latvian education system the duration of education programmes is rather strictly stipulated; therefore, the set duration is close to average duration. In some cases, only minimal duration is stated, for example, to obtain professional master degree, studies have to last for at least five years.

## 11.2 FIELDS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Different vocational education programmes are developed and offered for all economic branches. The National Standard of vocational education (*Valsts profesionālās izglītības standarts*) and the Occupational Standards (*Profesiju standarti*) determine the curriculum and content of vocational education programmes.

The Central Statistical Bureau (CSB), which is the major (and the only legal) institution for organising the work of national statistics, uses the following **thematic groups** to describe enrolment statistics in vocational education establishments without the differentiation of education level:

- General education;
- Humanities and arts;
- Social sciences; business and law;
- Natural sciences, mathematics and information technology;
- Engineering, manufacturing and construction;
- Agriculture;
- Health and welfare;
- Services;
- Other thematic groups.

The **occupational groups** are enumerated in the Cabinet Regulations on Occupational Classifier, Basic Tasks of Occupation and Ground Demands of Qualification, and Procedure of Occupational Classifier Usage and Updating (*Noteikumi par Profesiju klasifikatoru, profesijai atbilstošiem pamatuzdevumiem un kvalifikācijas pamatprasībām un Profesiju klasifikatora lietošanas un aktualizēšanas kārtību*, 2006, 2007, 2010).

The Occupation Classifier has 9 main groups, which are listed mainly in descending order of occupational skills but they are not related with particular education levels. The major occupational groups are the following:

- Legislators, senior officials and managers (this group includes also the leaders of local municipalities and heads of enterprises and organizations of different level);
- Professionals (this group includes occupations whose main tasks require a high level of theoretical and professional knowledge in life sciences, social sciences and humanities);
- Technicians and associate professionals (this group includes occupations whose main tasks require technical knowledge in the fields of technical, life and social sciences, as well as humanities);
- Clerks (this group includes secretaries, cashiers, customer attendants, accounting, financial and other office workers);
- Service workers and shop and market sales workers (this group includes shop assistants and workers of public catering, security, social care and other kinds of services);
- Skilled agricultural and fishery workers (this group includes farmers of vegetables, cereals and domestic animals, foresters, fishery workers and hunters);
- Craft and related trades workers (this group includes workers and craft workers of different branches who have the required knowledge, experience and skills);
- Plant and machine operators and assemblers (this group includes occupations where knowledge and skills in operation and maintenance of industrial machinery and equipment is required);
- Elementary occupations (this group covers domestic and related helpers, supervisors, sweepers, transport workers, workers performing unqualified tasks in construction, agriculture, forestry, industry and other branches).

Thus, there are no particular division of sectors by education levels. Yet generally professional qualification levels 1-3 represent prior economy sectors, e.g. manufacturing, construction, services because these vocational education programmes are mainly funded by the State. Meanwhile, some occupational sectors are classified only as professional qualification levels 4-5 represent, for example, pedagogy, medicine, and law.

### 11.3 LINKS BETWEEN NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OR CLASSIFICATIONS

There are **five level professional qualifications system** defined by Vocational Education Law (1999):

- Level 1 (ISCED 2): theoretical and practical training that prepares students for performing simple tasks in a certain area of practical activity (assistant cook, carpenter etc.);
- Level 2 (ISCED 3): theoretical and practical background that allows the holder to perform qualified work independently (carpenter, hairdresser, cook, welder etc.);
- Level 3 (ISCED 3): advanced theoretical and professional background which enables the holder to fulfil certain tasks, including planning and organising work (various technicians, car mechanics, hotel service specialist etc.);
- Level 4 (ISCED 5): theoretical and practical background that enables the holder to perform complicated tasks as well as to organise and manage others in their work;
- Level 5 (ISCED 5): the highest qualification of a specialist in a field that enables the holder to plan and perform research and scientific work in the field.

At present (2010), the process of linking the Latvian professional qualifications system to EQF is ongoing. Since February 2008, the Academic Information Centre has been assigned functions of a national EQF information coordination point (NCP).

For higher education (5-8 levels) the Rectors' Council working group has designed the level descriptors according to Bologna process and EQF, which were adopted by the Higher Education Council. For basic and secondary education (1-4 level) the descriptors also have been formulated. The level descriptions are included in the project of the Cabinet Regulations on education

classification, which has been submitted to the government for discussion. NQF level descriptors are expected to be formulated by spring 2011.



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[www.aiknc.lv](http://www.aiknc.lv) Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre (*Augstākās izglītības kvalitātes novērtēšanas centrs*)

[www.csb.gov.lv](http://www.csb.gov.lv) Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (*Latvijas Republikas Centrālā statistikas pārvalde*)

[www.em.gov.lv](http://www.em.gov.lv) Ministry of Economics (*Ekonomikas ministrija*)

[www.ivi.gov.lv](http://www.ivi.gov.lv) State Service for Education Quality (*Izglītības kvalitātes valsts dienests*)

[www.izm.gov.lv](http://www.izm.gov.lv) Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*)

[www.karjerascentrs.lv](http://www.karjerascentrs.lv) Career Development Support Unit of the State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūras Karjeras attīstības atbalsta nodaļa*)

[www.lak.lv](http://www.lak.lv) Latvian Chamber of Crafts (*Latvijas Amatniecības kamera*)

[www.iddk.lv](http://www.iddk.lv) Employers' Confederation of Latvia (*Latvijas Darba devēju konfederācija*)

[www.lizda.lv](http://www.lizda.lv) Education and Science Workers Trade Union (*Latvijas Izglītības un zinātnes darbinieku arodbiedrība*)

[www.lm.gov.lv](http://www.lm.gov.lv) Ministry of Welfare (*Labklājības ministrija*)

[www.niid.lv](http://www.niid.lv) The national data base on learning opportunities

[www.nva.lv](http://www.nva.lv) State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra*)

[www.viaa.gov.lv](http://www.viaa.gov.lv) State Education Development Agency (*Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra*)

<http://visc.gov.lv> State Education Content Centre (*Valsts izglītības satura centrs*)

### 12.3 LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIC – Academic Information Centre (*Akadēmiskās informācijas centrs*)

CSB – Central Statistical Bureau of the Republic of Latvia (*Centrālās statistikas pārvalde*)

MoES – Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*)

MoW – Ministry of Welfare (*Labklājības ministrija*)

NEC – Latvian National Europass Centre (*Latvijas Nacionālais Europass centrs*)

NF – National Forum on guidance and counselling (*Karjeras attīstības atbalsta sistēmas sadarbības padome*)

PCCSA – Professional Career Counselling State Agency (*Profesionālās karjeras izvēles valsts aģentūra*)

SEA – State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra*)

SEDA – State Education Development Agency (*Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra*)