



Latvia

VET in Europe - Country Report

THIRD ISSUE

ReferNet Latvia

Riga 2011

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The preparation of this report has been co-financed by the European Community.

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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 11th *Saeima* was elected in September 2011.

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 (*Ministru kabinets*, CoM). The *Saeima*, the Cabinet of Ministers and the Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*, MoES) are the main decision-making bodies for vocational education at national level. The ministry implements a unified national policy and development strategy in education.

In December 31, 2008 the reform of territorial administration was initiated optimising the structure of the local authorities; and regions (*apriņķis*) including 9 republic cities (min. 25 thousands inhabitants) under state jurisdiction, and 110 counties (*novads*, min. 4 thousands inhabitants), which may consist of one or several parishes and/or towns, were formed. The administrative reform is planned to be completed until 2012; and there are ongoing discussions regarding this reform.

1.2 POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Latvia covers 64,589 km² and has a population of 2.23 million people. Between 1990 and 2000 the population has decreased by 10.74%, while decrease in population rates between 2000 and 2010 reached 5.7%. The number of inhabitants decreases due to migration (-0.08% in 2002 and -0.35% in 2010 of total population) and ageing (15.95% in 2002; 22.6% in 2010 of inhabitants above age 60) (CSB, 2011).

The share of the population below working age is decreasing (18% in 2000; and 13.7% at the beginning of 2011). The proportion of the schooling age population 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 at the beginning of 2011 is 1.6%; thus, 22.9% of population was aged 60 and above at the beginning of 2011.

The proportion of economically active inhabitants in the population has increased due to an increase in the pension age (58.9% in 2000 and 66.0% in 2010). 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 (see table 1 below).

TABLE 1. FORECASTS FOR POPULATION OF LATVIA BY AGE GROUP AT THE BEGINNING OF 2005-2025 (THOUSAND PERSONS)

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, the 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.

TABLE 2. PROJECTED OLD-AGE DEPENDENCY RATIO, 2010-2060							
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: 19.05.2011; last update: 16.05.2011.

Inland migration is not as great, as migration to other states. Long term migration saldo in 2010 (-7912) comparing to 2008 (-2542 inhabitants) shows a significant negative growth (nearly three times) due to the increase of inhabitants leaving country; although in longer period the difference is not as evident (CSB, 2011).

The most of population in 2010 lived in urban area (67.7%), of which 46.5% lived in Riga and its region (CSB, 2011). 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 big cities, therefore, availability of education and other services in rural regions should be particularly promoted. The main inhabitant migration stream may be observed from rural regions to Riga.

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 the rates became negative reaching the greatest fall down in the third quarter of 2009 (-19.1%). At the end of the 2009, the decrease slowed down and GDP started to grow since middle of 2010. The government consistently continues the implementation of the “Economic stabilisation and growth revival programme of Latvia” (*Latvijas ekonomikas stabilizācijas un izaugsmes atjaunošanas programma*) adopted by the Saeima in December 2008 and updated in June 2009. Implementing this programme has helped preventing insolvency of the state and fostering the economical development. Thus, GDP rates by sectors in 2010 have increased in: manufacturing (15.4%); electricity, gas and water supply (12.7%); primary sectors (3.8%); trade, hotels and restaurants (3.2%); and in transport and communication (3.0%). Decrease in GDP rates (2010) was observed in: construction (-24.2%); other commercial services (-7.8%); and in public services (-3.6%). GDP per capita according to purchasing power standards was 52% of the EU-27 average in 2010 (estimation of Eurostat); total value of GDP in 2010 was EUR 16 920.2 millions, while in 2009 – EUR 18 470.2 millions (Laws on the State budget for 2009, 2010).

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 2010, the share of services sectors in terms of value added showed greater increase comparing to five 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 construction, trade and various services.

TABLE 3. STRUCTURE OF THE LATVIAN ECONOMY (%)						
	BY VALUE ADDED			BY NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES		
YEAR	2000	2007	2010	2000	2007	2010
PRIMARY SECTORS*	4.8	3.6	4.1	14.2	9.6	8.8
INDUSTRY	17.3	13.2	12.7	20.5	17.2	16.9
CONSTRUCTION	6.1	8.4	5.0	6.0	11.2	7.1
SERVICES	71.8	74.7	78.2	58.8	61.3	67.2

Source: CSB, 2011. * Agriculture, hunting and forestry; fishing

EMPLOYMENT RATES

The employment rates have changed slightly comparing the years 2009 and 2010, e.g. total (aged 15-64) employment rates have decreased from 60.9% to 59.3%; thus, employment growth in 2010 comparing to 2009 is negative: -4.8% in total; for males -5.3% and for females -4.8%. Totally, in 2010, round 445.3 thousand males (463.6 thousands in 2009) and 473.5 females (489.5 thousands in 2009) were employed; the data show that comparing to 2009 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 84.4% in 2010 (similarly in EU-27 it is 87.4%). The lowest rate is for young people (age group 15-24) with a low level education (ISCED 0-2) – on average 10.9% (EU-27 – 21.5%); moreover, decreasing tendency may be observed for this group – from 17.1% in 2003 to 10.9% in 2010.

TABLE 4: EMPLOYMENT RATES BY AGE GROUPS AND HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED (%), 2003, 2006 AND 2010										
	TIME	2003			2006			2010		
	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	21.5	62.8	43.1
	3-4	47.2	79.1	54.9	48.1	80.5	57.9	45.0	79.7	59.6
	5-6	62.0	88.0	72.4	60.5	88.5	74.2	57.1	87.4	74.5
	No A.	14.9	72.6	39.1	5.1	76.0	5.6	5.2	72.8	62.2
	TOTAL	36.0	77.4	51.5	36.6	79.1	54.4	34.1	78.1	56.7
LV	0-2	17.1	61.7	40.5	16.9	64.1	42.5	10.9	55.8	35.2
	3-4	53.2	78.6	56.0	53.3	81.5	65.4	37.7	72.4	55.0
	5-6	63.4	88.4	66.0	85.0	90.7	78.3	71.4	84.4	73.0
	No A.	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	TOTAL	32.7	78.3	53.5	35.9	81.4	63.0	26.4	74.0	56.7

Source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey); extracted on 19.05.2011; last update: 12.05.2011. Special values – : not available; No A. – no answer

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 – from 7% in December 2008 to 16% in December 2009 reaching 17.3% in March 2010, when the rate started to fall by 14.3% at the end of 2010. The total number of unemployed people at the end of 2010 was 162 463, which is slightly less comparing to 2009 in the same period, i.e. 179 235 unemployed.

The CSB data show that usually the unemployment rate is higher among men than among women; the difference in unemployment rates between genders was less significant in 2010 than in the previous year – 21.9% for males and 16% for females (in 2009 it was 20.0% and 13.8% 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 (54.3% at the end of 2010) than men, and the rate difference between genders has decreased.

TABLE 5. REGISTERED UNEMPLOYED BY GENDER (AT THE END OF YEAR IN %)			
	2005	2007	2010
MALES	40.1	38.0	45.7
FEMALES	59.9	62.0	54.3

Source: *State Employment Agency, 2011*

Registered unemployment differs in various areas of country: traditionally, the highest unemployment rate is registered in Latgale, the eastern part of Latvia – 22.3%, while in other regions the average unemployment rate was 15.9%. In Riga and its district there was the lowest registered unemployment rate 10.9%, in December 2010. 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) decreased since 2000, i.e. from 21% to 10.7% in 2007, and then grew to 34.5% in 2010 which is higher than the EU-27 rate 21.1%. 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 61.5% and 31.4% in 2010, which is significantly 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 2010/2011 there were 466 students per 10,000 inhabitants (4.4% of population studied in HEI in 2010), although constant decrease in student numbers has been experienced since 2005/2006, e.g. in 2008/2009 – 554 students per 10,000 inhabitants (CSB, 2011).

Speaking about the education of the unemployed, the proportions among the groups are rather stable. The greatest group (36.3%) of the registered unemployed has vocational upper-secondary education (ISCED 3B + ISCED 4), which is followed by general upper-secondary education graduates (ISCED 3A) – 28.1% – and inhabitants having basic education (ISCED 2) with 20.0% and higher education (ISCED 5) with 12.3%. Comparing to 2009, the differences in rates are less than 1%, yet comparatively greatest increase may be observed in case of individuals with basic education, while the most significant fall was for the inhabitants with higher education. 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 qualifications do 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 33.9% from 2006-2010 (the rate of EU-27 has similar tendency – 24.3% on average). However, the Latvian rate has experienced more evident increase from 23.9% in 2003 to 49.9% in 2009 and then a slight decrease in 2010 to 45.6%. The lowest unemployment rates may be observed among unemployed with education of ISCED 5-6 in the age group 50-64 (8.1% in 2010), while in EU-27 the rate was 3.6%. Generally, for all age groups regardless education level unemployment rates show increasing tendencies.

TABLE 6: UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY AGE GROUPS AND HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED (%), 2003, 2006 AND 2010

	TIME	2003			2006			2010		
	ISCED / AGE	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64
EU 27	0-2	20.2	11.6	7.2	21.2	11.2	7.5	27.4	16.3	10.2
	3-4	17.7	8.4	7.7	15.4	7.3	6.9	18.1	8.2	6.7
	5-6	12.0	4.8	3.7	13.4	4.3	3.6	16.2	5.3	3.6
	No A.	13.9	7.8	7.4	20.1	:	:	:	8.2	:
	TOTAL	18.0	8.3	6.6	17.2	7.3	6.3	20.8	8.9	6.9
LV	0-2	23.9	17.7	12.2	22.1	13.4	:	45.6	27.8	27.1
	3-4	14.5	9.3	11.3	8.8	5.9	6.3	33.2	18.6	18.8
	5-6	:	4.8	8.8	:	3.6 (u)	:	:	10.4	8.1 (u)
	No A.	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
	TOTAL	17.5	9.3	11.0	12.2	6.1	6.4	34.5	17.0	16.7

Source: Eurostat (LFS); extracted on: 19.05.2011; last update: 12.05.2011; Special values: u – extremely unreliable data; : – not available; No A. – no answer

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 (by 41.1%) – from EUR 501 937 776 in 2008 to EUR 295 537 535 in 2009, thereafter, in 2010 the funding reduction was smaller – to EUR 279 453 312.

TABLE 7. EXPENDITURE DIRECTED TO EDUCATION FROM THE STATE BUDGET, IN %

	2005	2007	2010
FROM THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET	17.2	19.7	16.7

FROM GDP	6.1	7.1	6.7
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Source: *Report on the economic development of Latvia. ME, Riga, December 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. During the last years (2009-2011), there are discussions that upper-secondary education should be stated as compulsory again. As showed in table 8 below, the rate of population aged 18-24 having only lower-secondary education for last years keeps quite close to EU-27 average.

TABLE 8: EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS (%), 2002-2009								
GEO/T IME	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
EU 27	17.0	16.6 (b)	16.1	15.8	15.5	15.1	14.9	14.4
LV	16.9	18.0	14.7	14.4	14.8	15.1	15.5	13.9

Source: *Eurostat (LFS); extracted: 19.05.2011; last update 01.04.2011.*

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 9 below). However, in 2009 the proportion of females in vocational education has increased, while the proportion of males has fallen in both education sectors.

TABLE 9: GRADUATES AT ISCED LEVEL 3 AND LEVEL 4 BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION, PROGRAMME ORIENTATION AND SEX (NUMBERS), 2007 AND 2009													
YEAR		2007						2009					
GEO	S	3 GEN	3 PV	3 VOC	4 GEN	4 PV	4 VOC	3 GEN	3PV	3 VOC	4 GEN	4 PV	4 VOC
EU 27*	T	2393291	:	2595569	49493	:	424537	2319746	:	2480373	:	:	394682
	M	1022202	:	1400317	23958	:	194372	995733	:	1344532	:	:	188195
	F	1371089	:	1195251	25535	:	230165	1324013	:	1135842	:	:	206487
LV	T	21273	:	7787	:	:	1447	20739	:	7076	:	:	1110
	M	9101	:	4614	:	:	528	8975	:	4197	:	:	386
	F	12172	:	3173	:	:	919	11764	:	2879	:	:	724

Source: *Eurostat (UOE Data collection); extracted: 19.05.2011; last update: 29.04.2011; * 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 evidently higher women participation than men's, e.g. 63.3% of students were women at ISCED 5

in 2005/2006 and 61.1% in 2010/2011 (CSB, 2011). The actual numbers are reflected in table 10. Traditionally, there has been a premium for people obtaining higher level education (59% of upper-secondary school graduates continued studies in 2010) because a higher education degree is considered to provide greater career prospects and bolster social status (CSB, 2011).

TABLE 10: GRADUATES AT ISCED LEVEL 5 AND LEVEL 6 BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION, PROGRAMME DESTINATION, 1ST/2ND STAGE AND SEX (NUMBERS), 2007, 2009

YEAR		2007						2009					
GEO	S	5 A1	5 A2	5 B1	5 B2	6	5 - 6	5 A1	5 A2	5 B1	5 B2	6	5 - 6
EU 27*	T	2348435	916150	691661	10355	109512	4076113	2465221	915360	706581	10850	100723	4198735
	M	971270	357768	280571	2703	59335	1671647	1020740	365808	278346	2568	54413	1721875
	F	1377165	558382	411090	7652	50177	2404466	1444481	549552	428235	8282	46310	2476860
LV	T	15302	7486	3818	0	146	26752	14144	7129	4560	0	174	26007
	M	4258	2034	1170	0	59	7521	4132	1894	1343	0	73	7442
	F	11044	5452	2648	0	87	19231	10012	5235	3217	0	101	18565

Source: Eurostat (UOE Data collection); extracted: 19.05.2011; last update: 29.04.2011; * Available total – calculated by Cedefop; S= sex; M=males; F=females; T= total; 5A1= 5a all first degrees; 5A2=5a second degree; 5B1=5b first qualification; 5B2=5b second qualification, 6=level 6, 5-6= level 5-6

According to Eurostat data (see table 11 below), youth education attainment level generally has an increasing tendency, i.e. in 2002 – 71.1%, and in 2009 – 80.5% had completed upper-secondary education, which is slightly higher than the average youth education attainment level in EU-27 (76.7% in 2002 and 78.6% in 2009). Furthermore, attainment rates of females in Latvia tend to be higher comparing to the EU-27 than those of male. More people are involved in education through programmes for unemployed, evening schools and pedagogical correction programmes (see 5.2).

TABLE 11: YOUTH EDUCATION ATTAINMENT LEVEL BY SEX (%), 2002, 2005, 2009

TIME	2002			2005			2009		
GEO	T	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M
EU 27	76.7	79.3	74.0	77.5	80.2	74.8	78.6	81.4	75.9
LV	77.1 (b)	84.3 (b)	70.0 (b)	79.9	85.2	74.7	80.5	84.8	76.2

Source: Eurostat (LFS); extracted: 19.05.2011; last update 01.04.2011; Special values – b break in series

Women also tend to participate more in adult education than men – accordingly 6.9% and 3.6% in 2009, which is lower than EU-27 average (see table 12), i.e. percentage of the population aged 25-64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey. Between 2002 and 2005, there was a slight increase in LLL participation rates, but then decrease may be observed, which is more significant in the Latvian rates, particularly for females. Thus, the difference in rates between genders has fallen. 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).

TABLE 12: LIFELONG LEARNING - ADULT PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING BY SEX (%), 2002, 2005, 2009

TIME	2002			2005			2009		
GEO	T	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M
EU 27	7.2	7.8	6.6	9.8	10.5	9.0	9.3 (p)	10.2 (p)	8.5 (p)
LV	7.3	9.2	5.1	7.9	10.6	5.0	5.3	6.9	3.6

Source: Eurostat (LFS); extracted: 19.05.2011; last update 01.04.2011; p - provisional value

1.5 DEFINITIONS

ALTERNANCE TRAINING – 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 an 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.

COMPETENCE (*kompetece*) – regarding the national framework, the term is expressed as analysis, synthesis and assessment. In Vocational Education Law (1999, with amendments in July 2010) only “professional competence” is defined: necessary skills, knowledge and responsibility in certain working situations. 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.

CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (CVET, *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.

FIRST STAGE OF TERTIARY or HIGHER EDUCATION (ISCED 5, *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).

FORMAL LEARNING (*formālā izglītība*) – a system which includes basic education, secondary education and higher education levels the acquisition of the programme of which is certified by an education or professional qualification document recognised by the State, as well as an education and professional qualification document (Education Law, 1998).

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.

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”.

LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION (ISCED 2, *pamatizglītības otrais posms*) – the division of lower- and upper-secondary education is not used in Latvia; therefore, this stage of education belongs to basic education level and is called the 2nd stage of basic school (grades 7-9) including both general and vocational education programmes.

NON-FORMAL LEARNING (*neformālā izglītība*) – in the Latvian system more “informal learning” is used, which is educational activities in conformity with interests and demand organised outside of formal education (Education Law, 1998).

OCCUPATION (*profesija*) – see profession.

POST-SECONDARY (NON-TERTIARY) EDUCATION (ISCED 4, *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 in upper-secondary education.

PRE-VOCATIONAL or PRE-TECHNICAL EDUCATION – this term is not used and is not applicable to the Latvian education system.

PROFESSION (*profesija*) – a type of occupation of a natural person in the field of the production of goods, distribution or services, as well as in education, culture and art which requires a certain preparedness (Vocational Education Law, 1999).

QUALIFICATION (*kvalifikācija*) – evaluation of educational and professional skills with respect to a particular profession confirmed by documentary evidence (Education Law, 1998). This term raises ambiguity in the Latvian context: the English term “qualification” in Latvian means “education document” or “diploma”; while the Latvian term “kvalifikācija” refers only to vocational education. 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.

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

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.

UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION (ISCED 3, *vidējā izglītība*) – the division of lower- and upper-secondary education is not used in Latvia; upper-secondary education level refers to secondary education after 9-year basic school; it lasts 3-4 years and includes both general and vocational education programmes.

2. MODERNIZING VET TO SUPPORT LLL, INTERNATIONALIZATION, AND MOBILITY

2.1 VET POLICY DEVELOPMENTS AND PRIORITIES IN SUPPORTING LLL

The juridical basis for vocational education was ensured by adopting the Vocational Education Law (*Profesionālās izglītības likums*, 1999) that also regulates continuous vocational education (please see 4.2).

Current education policy priorities are defined in the “National education development guidelines for 2007-2013” (*Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013.gadam*, 2006), which were worked out by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES). 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.

The main LLL policy planning document is the “Guidelines for lifelong learning policy for 2007-2013” (*Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013.gadam*, 2007) and relevant implementation programmes prepared by the MoES. 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 for 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: geographical availability of schools 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.

In April 2011, the MoES provided an informative report “The implementation progress in 2009 and 2010 of the Guidelines for lifelong learning policy for 2007-2013” (*Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādņu 2007.-2013.gadam īstenošanas gaita 2009. un 2010.gadā*) to inform the CoM about the conducted LLL policy measures during the period. According to the report, in order to promote access to education and ease management for private schools, in March 2010 amendments in the Education Law (1998) came in force stipulating that private providers (those who are not under the direction of state or local government) do not need any more to receive a licence from the relevant local government for initiate the implementation of adult non-formal learning programmes. The measures to support LLL development include several ESF projects, for example, about raising attractiveness of vocational education and developing sectoral qualifications systems (see 3.2.3), introduction of the national framework (see 2.2), and the establishment of the system for validation of learning outcomes acquired outside formal education (see 6.3), as well as optimisation of vocational school network (see section 3.2.3) etc..

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 MoES was approved. The Concept aims at outlining solutions for key challenges in vocational education policy and reaching 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 (project expected by August 2012), 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 the Latvian qualifications system and referencing vocational education qualifications to the EQF;
- 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.

Some of these activities have been already introduced, e.g. the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) has been established, others are currently ongoing, e.g. development of sectoral qualifications system, the revision of vocational education programmes.

As mentioned above, the **optimisation of vocational education school network** including several major reforms is a topical policy issue, which emerged mainly due to economic and demographic regression. One of the most representative documents designed by the MoES is the “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 one of policy directions, as well. Different reforms and measures have been or are being implemented both in the education and labour sectors. For more detailed information see section 9.1.

The development of **system for validating skills and competences acquired through informal/non-formal education** had been set as one of policy objectives, e.g. within the “Programme for implementing the Guidelines for lifelong learning policy for 2007-2013 in the period of 2008-2013”. This system was established in the beginning of 2011 by approving the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations “Procedure how professional competence obtained outside formal education system is assessed” (*Kārtība, kādā novērtē ārpus formālās izglītības sistēmas apgūto profesionālo kompetenci*); and in June 2011 first qualifications were awarded using this procedure. See 6.3.

2.2 IMPLEMENTATION OF EUROPEAN TOOLS AND PRINCIPLES

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LATVIAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

At present (September 2011), the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) has been established and Latvia will officially present the referencing results to the EQF Advisory Group meeting in October 2011. The LQF consists of eight levels, which descriptors are based on learning outcomes, and the framework includes the formal Latvian education of basic, secondary and higher education stages, i.e. general and vocational education sectors.

In February 2008, the Academic Information Centre, which also supervises the Latvian representation of ENIC-NARIC network, Europass and ReferNet, was appointed as the national coordination point (NCP) for EQF to promote introduction of the framework and organize national consultation process.

Active referencing process started in September 2009, when referencing working group was established by the MoES to supervise the preparation of the Latvian level descriptors. The working group included the main stakeholders and participated in the entire referencing process, also by reviewing and approving the national Self-Assessment Report. The experts from the National Centre for Education elaborated descriptors for LQF levels 1-4 using the national education standards, occupational standards and study subjects standards. For higher education (5-8 levels) the level descriptors had been already developed by the Rectors' Council working group (established in 2009), and adopted by the Higher Education Council. The working group referred to the Dublin descriptors (2002-2004), Bloom's taxonomy and the EQF descriptors when formulating the level descriptors.

The level descriptors were included in the CoM Regulations “Regulations on the classification of Latvian education” (2.12.2008) with the amendments of October 2010. Similar to the EQF, the Latvian level descriptors are expressed in three dimensions: knowledge (knowledge and comprehension), skills (ability to apply knowledge, communication, general skills), and competence (analysis, synthesis and assessment). The amendments also placed all formal education programmes of all education stages on relevant LQF/EQF level. The placement of the Latvian formal education qualifications on eight LQF/EQF levels is illustrated in the table below.

TABLE 1: THE PLACEMENT OF THE LATVIAN FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS IN THE LQF AND EQF	
LQF/ EQF LEVEL	LATVIAN EDUCATION DOCUMENTS (QUALIFICATIONS)
1	Certificate of general basic education (for students in special educational programmes for students with severe mental development disorders or several severe development disorders)
2	Certificate of general basic education (for students in special educational programmes for students with mental development disorders)
3	Certificate of general basic education Certificate of vocational basic education
4	Certificate of general secondary education Certificate of vocational education (without rights to enter HE)

	Diploma of vocational secondary education (with rights to enter HE)
5	Diploma of first level professional higher education (1st level professional higher (college) education. The length of full-time studies 2-3 years)
6	Bachelor's diploma Professional Bachelor's diploma Diploma of professional higher education, diploma of higher professional qualification (2nd level professional higher education, the length of full-time studies - at least 4 years)
7	Master's diploma Professional Master's diploma Diploma of professional higher education, diploma of higher education, diploma of higher professional qualification (2nd level professional higher education, the total length of full-time studies - at least 5 years)
8	Doctor's diploma

The Academic Information Centre arranged the national consultation process from January to April 2011 involving various stakeholders (ministries, national agencies, employers' organizations, trade unions, students' organizations, quality agencies, education providers), as well as international experts. The consultation included expert meetings, national and international conferences, and virtual discussions via the Latvian NCP website (<http://nki-latvija.lv>). As result of consultation process, the decision was taken to arrange referencing in two steps since this process is time-consuming and requires reforms of large scale. The phases are the following:

1. Phase (2009-2011) – included the establishment of the LQF; and the referencing of the formal Latvian education system to the EQF for lifelong learning and the QF-EHEA.
2. Phase (2013-2015) – foresees the review of the Self-Assessment Report, on the basis of the new Vocational Education Law, Higher Education Law and the results of several existing projects, e.g. ESF project "Development of sectoral qualifications system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education" (2010-2013).

The 1st phase is almost concluded as the Self-Assessment Report has been prepared. The 2nd phase will assist in grasping the ongoing changes in education and focus on further development of the LQF. Thus, further referencing of the national qualifications, which have not been placed in the framework yet (e.g. informal/non-formal, masters of crafts qualifications), will be exercised. Also the inclusion of reference to the LQF/EQF levels in all education documents is planned to be introduced during the 2nd phase of referencing.

IMPLEMENTING A UNIT-BASED CREDIT SYSTEM IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

At present (2011), a unit-based credit system is not introduced in vocational education. The new Vocational Education Law, which project has to be elaborated by August 2012, is expected to provide legal basis for ECVET.

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ROLE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS/PROVISIONS

Quality assurance was one of the issues explored in the Self-Assessment Report about referencing the Latvian qualifications to the EQF. National education quality assurance system imparts whole formal education system. In September 2010, new CoM Regulations "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*) were adopted, uniting the accreditation of both general and vocational education accreditation systems. These Regulations stipulate a uniform accreditation procedure, clearly define quality requirements in general and vocational education (the EQF levels 1-4). At higher education level accreditation of institutions and programmes is conducted according to the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995). See 5.1.

In the referencing process quality agencies – the Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre, the Higher Education Council and the State Education Quality Service – were involved as full-fledged stakeholders. The activities of these agencies are based on the European principles and guidelines.

When licensing education programmes or during the accreditation process, the external experts from the State Education Quality Service evaluate the correspondence of education programmes to the state education standards, occupational standards, occupational classifier, as well as to requirements of legal regulations regulating education content and process, also making sure that the planned content of education programmes would allow students to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and competences, i.e. whether the content and outcomes of education programme corresponds to the relevant qualification level description.

EUROPASS DOCUMENTS

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 (209 773 visits in 2010), in which the most visited section is about Europass CV (46.5% of all visitors in 2010). 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 and 769 passes in 2010, of which 351 were issued to Leonardo da Vinci programme participants, 140 – Erasmus programme participants, 239 – Comenius programme participants, 10 – Grundtvig programme participants and 29 – to participants of other programmes.

2.3 INTERNATIONALISATION ⁽¹⁾ AND TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITY IN VET ⁽²⁾

2.3.1 POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION AND TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITY IN VET

MAIN POLICY PRIORITIES AND RELATED STRATEGIES

One of the policy planning documents stipulating policy priorities and related strategies to promote internationalization and transnational mobility in education is the “Guidelines for lifelong learning policy for 2007-2013” (*Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013.gadam*, 2007) prepared by the MoES (see 2.1). The Programme for implementing the Guidelines from 2008-2013 among other objectives includes: introduction of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission providing education and mobility for teachers, students and adults including those from social risk groups.

For higher education intended reforms and measures are outlined in the “Plan of activities for necessary reforms in higher education and science for 2010-2012” (*Pasākums plāns nepieciešamajām reformām augstākajā izglītībā un zinātnē 2010.-2012.gadam*, 2010) that was issued as an order of CoM and was developed in the cooperation with the social partners. The planned activities are aimed at improving quality of studies and science, modernising higher education and science material supply, promoting internationalization and export capacity of higher education, integrating the development of higher education, science, economy and society.

The international migration of qualified work force has been fostered by the recognition of professional qualifications. In 2001, the Law on the Recognition of Regulated Professions and

⁽¹⁾ *Internationalization of education is understood as the process of integrating an international, intercultural and/or global dimension into the goals, functions (teaching/learning, research, services) and delivery of education (adapted from Internationalization of Higher Education: New Directions, New Challenges, IAU 2005 Survey).*

⁽²⁾ *Transnational mobility in VET is understood as any period that a worker, jobseeker, VET student, teacher or trainer spends abroad in an education or training institution, a company or any other organisation for learning or teaching purposes. Comment: knowledge, skills and competences acquired during the period spent abroad may be validated and lead to certification (Cedefop definition).*

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. Therefore, no legal obstacles exist to the educational and professional mobility.

Higher education institutions are responsible for completing and issuing Diploma Supplement, which provides more information about the issued education document. The template for Diploma Supplement in Latvian and English since 2002 has been introduced in some and since 2004 is obligatory for all higher education institutions. The content and issuing procedures of the Diploma Supplement are regulated by the CoM Regulations “Procedures by which state recognized documents certifying higher education are issued” (*Kārtība, kādā izsniedzami valsts atzīti augstāko izglītību apliecinājoši izglītības dokumenti*, 2007).

The aspect of internationalization in vocational education is promoted through the vocational education standards (2000), which stipulate that the European dimension should be included in students’ learning. Vocational education should provide an insight in world heritage, ensure acquisition of at least one foreign language, foster the understanding of the Latvian history in the context of Europe and world, allow to gain perception of the EU as a modern model of the European social-economic relations, and about principles of labour force mobility and a common economic area, as well as help developing skills for living in democratic society, including tolerance of other national and social groups.

The implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme and its four sub-programmes (Leonardo, Erasmus, Comenius and Grundtvig) since January 2010 is supervised by the State Education Development Agency. The aim of the LLL Programme is to facilitate institutional cooperation in education in Europe. In total 545 projects with total funding EUR 8 715 255 were approved in 2010. The basic information about the four sub-programmes is outlined below:

- Geographic mobility in vocational education since 1998 has been fostered in the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci programme. In 2010, there were approved 51 preparatory visits, 102 mobility, 4 transfer of innovation and 7 partnership projects. In 2010, around 420 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 2 391 000.
- The mobility within higher education is provided by LLL Programme sub-programme Erasmus (and Socrates until the end of 2006). The popularity of mobility has increased, i.e. in 2000 in total 10 HEI, while in 2009/2010 – 37 HEI and colleges participated. After 2006/2007 number of outgoing Latvian students increased rapidly: from 807 in 2006/2007 to 1493 in 2008/2009, which may be explained with the economic situation. The increase in mobility rates from 2008/2009 to 2009/2010 exceeded 7%; and Erasmus students as proportion of the graduates in 2009/2010 in Latvia was 6.68%, which is higher comparing to the EU average (4.51%). In 2009/2010, 2519 persons participated in mobility (1269 students in study period, 467 students in practice period, 390 teachers as guest lecturers, and 393 HEI personnel experience exchange). In 2010, the Agency supervised and managed 105 Erasmus mobility projects, 10 intensive programme projects, and 4 projects of intensive language learning courses.
- General school partnerships, individual teachers and student teachers mobility, projects for the professional improvement of school teaching personnel, as well as school education networks are supported by Comenius programme. By July 2010, 54 Comenius multilateral and 5 bilateral partnerships (initiated in 2008) were continued involving 928 teachers and 6 839 students, while in mobilities 721 teachers and 598 students participated. Also 59 multilateral, 4 bilateral and 5 Regio partnerships (initiated in 2009) were continued. In 2010, 59 multilateral, 3 bilateral and 5 Regio partnership projects were approved; the approved projects comprise 1 326 mobilities.
- Adult education providers or institutions dealing with adult educations mainly participate within the Grundtvig programme, but since 2009 any adult can take part in the Grundtvig workshops (educational activities and seminars). Latvia is the second the most active participant in the workshops organized by other countries. In 2010 in terms of this programme 11 projects for the professional improvement of adult education personnel, 21 learning partnership projects, 5

preparatory visits, 1 assistantship, 4 study visits and exchange projects, 6 Grundtvig workshops and 1 voluntary working project for seniors. The total grant amount available was EUR 508 000.

Education practitioners and experts may participate in study visits (ex-Arion, ex-CEDEFOP) to promote international information and experience exchange. The grants are available under the Transversal programme, which implementation also was assigned to the State Education Development Agency by January 2010. In total 37 individuals took part in the study visits in 2008/2009 (latest statistics available).

The number of mobility and exchange project outside the EU programmes is rather limited and statistics are not gathered. Speaking about mobility outside the EU, there are individual grants for students (usually at higher education level) offered by hosting countries via the Ministry of Education and Science or relevant embassy or consulate, French Culture Centre, Embassy of Italy, Embassy of China, German Academic Exchange Service. Since January 2010, the State Education Development Agency on behalf of the ministry manages grants offered by other countries – Czech Republic, Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia), Greece, Estonia, Israel, China, Lithuania, Mexico, Germany (practical training in Bundestag) – on basis of bilateral agreements between governments and ministries about cooperation in education and science. With some countries there are no agreements but they also offer grants for higher education students: Switzerland, Denmark, Iceland (Icelandic language and culture studies), and Slovakia. According to the data of the State Education Development Agency, in 2010/2011 totally 45 students received for scholarships in other countries both in and outside EU (Switzerland, Lithuania, Estonia, Belgium, China, Hungary, Mexico, Greece and Czech Republic). The duration of mobility was from two weeks to one study year, or even several years, e.g. scholarship of China for master studies, or scholarship of Mexico).

Latvia also offers grants for foreign students on basis of various bilateral agreements. In 2010/2011 scholarships were received by 23 foreign persons, i.e. 13 for studies (6 from Lithuania, 4 – Czech Republic, per 1 – Hungary, Azerbaijan and Israel) and 10 for the participation in the Latvian summer schools. For 2011/2012 scholarships were allocated to 79 foreign persons: 57 scholarships for studies (5 from Lithuania, 3 – Greece, 10 – Czech Republic, 3 – Finland, 2- Ukraine, 10 – Germany, 8 – UK, 5 – Uzbekistan, 8 – Turkey, 3 – Poland, per 1 – Mexico, Hungary and Egypt) and 22 for the participation in summer schools.

MAIN “STRATEGIC” COUNTRIES FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

There are no particularly strategic countries for the international cooperation in vocational education sector. However, in the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci mobility projects 1998-1999 and 2000-2006, Latvia most actively has cooperated with Germany – in 2000-2006, 41% of the projects chose for partnership some institution in Germany (16% in Finland, 8% in Sweden, 6% in United Kingdom, 5% in Italy, 5% in France and 16% in other countries). Since 2000, joint projects have been carried out with all the Leonardo da Vinci programme participant countries. In 2007-2010 most frequently Latvia cooperated with Germany, Finland and Poland and as potential placement and experience exchange country special interest has gained Turkey.

MEASURES ADDRESSING OBSTACLES TO THE MOBILITY IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Legally there are no obstacles for any legal entity (public or private institutions, companies, employers' or employees' organizations, education providers and other organizations) to submit a project proposal for the Leonardo da Vinci programme. In fact, the private sector – commercial companies (especially SMEs), NGO organizations and private education establishments – has actively used opportunities offered by the programme.

It should be noted that the project applications annually exceed the allocated funding; thus, the interest about the LLL Programme is evident.

At individual level, the measures to promote mobility are related also with the introduction of the European tools, e.g. ECVET and LQF.

MEASURES TO SHIFT FUNDING TOWARDS SPECIFIC TARGET GROUPS

The policy priorities already include individuals representing social risk groups. Yet in the Leonardo da Vinci programme when applying to project for social risk groups, the applicants may require additional funding up to 50%.

2.3.2 TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITY PROGRAMMES AND SCHEMES IN VET

As mentioned above, the most common mobility programme for vocational education is LLP Leonardo da Vinci programme, which, along with the state, is also the main source for the funding.

Target groups for the Leonardo da Vinci programme are persons from initial vocational education, people in the labour market and professionals in vocational education. Statistics show that in 2010 the main target group is students (49.1%). The second target group is vocational education professionals (28.8%). The third target group is young workers or recent graduates/unemployed (22.1%).

Placements of the vocational education students take place both at partner schools and workplaces. Most common it is combined mobility.

After participation at the LLP Leonardo da Vinci project participants receive acknowledgments of the receiving partners. However, the recognition of the knowledge, skills, and competences acquired abroad during a study period is conducted by the students' home education establishments. The recognition of education documents is carried out by the Academic Information Centre (AIC), which fulfils functions of the Latvian ENIC-NARIC (since 1995). The AIC follows the principles and procedures set by the Council of Europe /UNESCO "Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region" (1997), EU Directives and the Latvian legislation, e.g. Education Law (1998), CoM Regulations "Procedures by which state recognized documents certifying higher education are issued" (2007).

In last years among vocational education students about 95% have received Europass Mobility. The number individuals obtaining Europass Mobility increases year by year. See 2.2.

At higher education level, Latvia is a partner country for Tempus programme, which includes three types of projects: joint projects, structural measures, and accompanying measures (the latter are not started yet). In terms of the programme HEIs may improve their study programmes, modernise their man terms of the programme HEIs may improve their study programmes, modernise their management structures, invite teaching personnel for experience exchange and learning, or provide guest lecturers for other HEIs. In 2010 Latvia coordinated 2 project applications, in 25 applications Latvia was involved as coordinator or partner.

Since 2008, Latvia together with other Baltic States participates in the Nordplus programme, which comprises Youth education programme, Higher education programme, Adult education programme and the Horizontal programme. The programme aims at introducing improvements in the education systems of partner countries through acquiring and exchanging experience and social networking (mobilities, projects, networking). Statistics about this programme are not collected in Latvia.

HEIs in Latvia may develop joint degree programmes. This activity was legally promoted by the latest amendments (July 2011) to the Law on Higher Education Institutions (*Augstskolu likums*, 1995) introducing an article about joint degree programmes. According to the law, HEIs (including colleges) may elaborate together with other accredited HEI in Latvia or abroad a study programme on basis on written mutual agreement. To develop a joint programme, HEIs have to follow a list of criteria, e.g. the partners should implement the same level of education programmes; each partner should provide at least 10% of the joint programme; mobility of students shuld be ensured; and the requirements for the certification should be the same etc..

2.3.3 ARRANGEMENTS TO SECURE WORK PLACEMENTS FOR TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITY IN VET

In order to raise public awareness regarding Leonardo da Vinci opportunities, the State Education Development Agency in 2010 arranged 11 informative activities (in 2009 – also 11 events), one informative material "Leonardo da Vinci Newsletter" has been prepared and published (in 2009 – 6 materials). The newsletter, which is for free, provides information about the results of project contests, project tenders, local and international events, recommendations for project application

and implementation. Informative brochure “Projects participants’ success stories” has been published, in which experience of 15 nominated individuals, who took part in the contest “Wings 2008” for mobility project participants, is included. The Agency maintains and updates section in its official website (www.viaa.gov.lv) focused on the mobility projects. In 2010, 9 events were organized to foster quality and effectiveness of project results.

There are no specific procedures or frameworks in place to facilitate recognition of the periods of work placement abroad, except the possibility for the participants to obtain Europass Mobility.

The provision of work places for transnational mobility in vocational education is in general targeted at vocational education students, graduates/unemployed, but not exclusively at students in the apprenticeship system.

The applicant institutions of the Leonardo da Vinci programme are published at the State Education Development Agency website (www.viaa.gov.lv).

Table 2.3.2. Overview of VET transnational mobility programmes and schemes

TITLE OF PROGRAMME/ SCHEME AND GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE	MANAGING AUTHORITY	SOURCES OF FUNDING AND CORRESPONDING LEVEL OF FUNDING FOR THE PROGRAMMING PERIOD	START - END DATE (PROG- RAMME PERIOD)	TARGET GROUPS	AVERAGE DURATION OF MOBILITY PER TARGET GROUP (IN MONTHS)	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	OF IMPLEMEN- TATION MECHA- NISMS	PRACTICES TO RECOGNIZE THE KSC ACQUIRED ABROAD	SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDING EVALUATION REPORTS)
EU programmes									
Leonardo da Vinci (EU Member States, Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, and Turkey)	State Education Development Agency	LLP funding, state budget In total: 2007 - EUR 1 960 560.50 2008 - EUR 1 231 011.00 and EUR 1 091 477.5 (prepar. visits, innovative, partnership projects) 2009 - EUR 1 204 168.00 and EUR 1 122 052.06 (prepar. visits, innovative, partnership projects) 2010 - EUR 2 391 000.00	2007-2013	IVET students People in labour market Vocational education professionals	IVET students:1.2 Apprentices: - VET professionals: 0.3 People in labour market: 1.4	In 2008: IVET students: 223 VET professionals: 156 People in labour market: 79 In 2009: IVET students: 199 VET professionals: 132 People in labour market: 88 In 2010: IVET students: 205 VET professionals: 120 People in labour market: 92	Standard procedure is applied	Participants receive statements from the receiving partners. Study periods are recognized by the students' home establishment	http://viaa.gov.lv/lat/muzizglibas_programma/leonardo_da_vinci/programmas_rezultati

* IVET students in school-based programs;

** IVET students in apprenticeship

*** Teachers, and trainers

3. VET TO SUPPORT RECOVERY FROM THE CRISIS

3.1 OVERVIEW

THE MAIN AFFECTED ECONOMIC SECTORS

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% (18% in 2009 and 0.3% in 2010); the unemployment rate has increased from 5.3% at the end of 2007 to 20.5% at the beginning of 2010 and then has decreased to 16.9% at the end of 2010. Due to the significant fall in the State budget, general government budget deficit in 2010 reached 7.6%, which was less than in 2009 (9%). The most critical period for the economic sectors was 2009; although regression continued during the first half of 2010, it became slower. In the other half of 2010, GDP started to grow and industry experienced a slight increase. At present (2011), the economic recession is considered to be over in Latvia. In the 4th quarter of 2010 the GDP has increased by 1.1% and the volume of GDP has exceeded the level of the 4th quarter of 2009 by 3.6%. Export growth rates in 2010 have been rather impressive and since the 3rd quarter the export volumes have exceeded the pre-crisis level. The export of goods has increased by 29.5% (in current prices) in 2010 (Report on the Economic Development, 2011).

Economic activities in the sectors of the economy are closely related to dynamics of domestic and external demand. The higher decrease of output has been observed during the crisis in sectors, which are oriented towards domestic demand – trade and construction. In 2010, along with improvement of the global economy and by increase of external demand, tradable sectors gained more significant role for the Latvian economy. In 2010 growth was observed in all commodity production and services sectors that are related to export. During the 1st quarter of 2011 compared to the corresponding period of 2010, manufacturing has increased by 14.6%, primary sectors – by 8.2%, transport and communications – by 6.6%; and due to the increase in entire trade volume, trade sector has increased by 7.5%. In the 1st quarter of 2011, slight increase has been observed also in other commercial services. However, in services sector and construction in the 1st quarter of 2011 comparing to the same period of 2010, output volumes have decreased. Due to the positive tendencies of export growth and stabilization of domestic demand, positive growth is expected in all economic sectors in 2011, except public services (National Economy in Latvia, 2011).

THE MOST AFFECTED SOCIAL GROUPS

As economic regression influenced all sectors, also in a way all social groups were affected. The increase in unemployment rates was observed in all sectors. However, the greatest unemployment risk was experienced by low-skilled workers in construction and trade service; also other vulnerable groups listed in section 6.5 (young people, people of pre-retirement age, long-term unemployed etc.). The lowest point in labour market was in the 1st quarter of 2010 when employment rate was only 57.7% and unemployment ratio was 20.5% of all economic active inhabitants. In 2010 the situation gradually improved, yet on average number of employed was less than 3.5% (34.1 thousands) comparing to the previous year because the employment increase had a very low starting point (Report on the Economic Development of Latvia, 2011). On average unemployment rate in 2010 reached 18.7% (see 1.3). The unemployment affected more males than females, since more males were employed in constructions and trade. Yet male employment rates started to increase in the 2nd quarter of 2010, and at the end of 2010, male employment rate (61.4%) exceeded the level of female employment (58.8%).

In 2010, the greatest decrease in the number of employed comparing to 2009 was experienced in public service, trade and hotel sectors, as well as in construction sector (Report on the Economic Development, 2011).

Generally, statistics show that in 2010 changes in the Latvian economy more negatively affected females, long-term unemployed (1-3 years), individuals with vocational and basic education, individuals aged from 50-54 and at pre-retirement age (55-59), individuals with special needs, and persons after parental leave.

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. However, in 2010 opposite tendencies were observed: number of students selecting general education decreased to 60.9%, while the number of students selecting vocational education (33.8%) and the number of students discontinuing education (5.3%) increased. Greater interest in vocational education might be explained by ESF funded monthly scholarships offered to vocational education students. 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%. In 2010, vocational students' distribution by thematic groups was the following: engineering, manufacturing and construction – 43.4%; services – 22.5%; social sciences, business and law – 14.5%; humanities and art – 8.6%; natural science, mathematics and IT – 5.8%; agriculture – 2.6%; health and welfare – 1.8%; and general education (CSB, 2011).

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 2010/11. During last 10 years, the number of students, who dropped out due to the change of place of living, has increased, and the number of students, who dropped because of an illness or insufficient learning assessment, has decreased. Secondary education graduates' preferences were quite steady until 2009, when the tendencies changed – less graduates continued in HE (from 75% in 2008 to 59.0% in 2010) and more graduates discontinued their education (from 22.2% in 2008 to 37.0% in 2010).

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, 3 893 unemployed participated in vocational education, re-qualification or qualification promotion, while in 2010 – 8297 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 for 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 2010 the number of clients reached 78 404, of which 78.5%% were the unemployed or job seekers and 21.5%% 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 47.3% from 2007 to 2010) (SEA, 2011).

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 2010, 1590 documents for academic and 48 for professional recognition were submitted. Mostly the foreign qualifications are issued by education institutions in Russia, Germany, Ukraine, Nigeria, UK, Sweden and Norway; however, it does not

mean that the persons from these countries successfully undergo recognition and other legal procedures to be allowed to study or work in Latvia. Increasingly recognition is sought also by the individuals from Latvia in other countries. The Latvian ENIC-NARIC provides informative support for these persons on their request.

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. However, enterprises were interested in participating in ESF funded projects administered by the Investment and Development Agency of Latvia (*Latvijas Investīciju un attīstības aģentūra*) offering skill development activities for their employees to raise competitiveness of the enterprises.

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. This measure is special because employers need both to provide learning and, thereafter, employ the trainee. The employers tend to be reluctant to show their active participation in this measure, mainly due to restrictive conditions of the programme. However, recruitment of unemployed people who participated in this programme was very high in comparison to those participating in other education programmes provided by the State Employment Agency. In 2010, 1 129 unemployed (441 in 2009; and 78 in 2008) participated in work-based training in enterprises (in total, 60 013 unemployed were involved in various learning activities) (SEA, 2011).

3.2.3 MEASURES TAKEN TO ADDRESS THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OR AS A RESULT OF THE CRISIS (BY PUBLIC AUTHORITIES AT NATIONAL, REGIONAL, LOCAL AND BY SOCIAL PARTNERS)

FINANCIAL MEASURES

National measures are implemented through the “Economic stabilisation and growth revival programme of Latvia” (*Latvijas ekonomikas stabilizācijas un izaugsmes atjaunošanas programma*) that was adopted by the *Saeima* in December 2008 and updated in June 2009.

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 2007 state vocational schools received on average 76.9% of the budgeted financing, while in 2010 – 60.6%. 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.

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. The social dialogue institutionally is arranged through the National Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment (*Profesionālās izglītības un nodarbinātības trīspusējās sadarbības apakšpadome*), relevant regional sub-councils, and since 2011 Sectoral Expert Councils (see 4.3). Strengthening cooperation with social partners has been one of the policy priorities also before recession. 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.

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 network that had already started before the recession 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 and in 2010 no funding was allocated for this activity. Actually the state funding for teachers' salaries in 2009 was reduced by 25.2% comparing to 2008, and in 2010 – additionally by 14.9%; while in 2011 the funding has remained nearly the same (increased by 1.7% comparing to 2010).

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.

The development of 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.

The contribution of **EU funds** has a significant role in the implementation of structural education reforms. The ESF support is provided to:

1. **The arrangement of vocational education establishment network:** the ministry 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 below).
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; in total, 6 projects were started during 2010.
- Sub-activity “Development of sectoral qualifications 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 was initiated in autumn 2010.

Due to the limited resources, in April 2009 the CoM 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.

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, vocational education standards were amended in August 2010 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. These short programmes are implemented through ESF project “Support to the quality improvement and implementation of initial vocational education programmes” (*Atbalsts sākotnējās profesionālās izglītības programmu īstenošanas kvalitātes uzlabošanai un īstenošanai*). The State Education Development Agency cooperates with 25 vocational education establishments that have developed and are implementing the mentioned education programmes that were harmonised with the sectoral organizations and the National Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment. First students were enrolled in October

2010, and in August 2011 one-year programmes were graduated by 387 students (81% of enrolled). It is planned to involve 2000 young people in vocational schools and 300 young people in prisons during the project.

Necessary occupational knowledge, skills and competences are researched in 12 economic sectors in terms of the ESF project "Development of sectoral qualifications system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education" (2010-2013). The aim of the project is improving vocational education quality and efficiency regarding the need of economic sectors, creating also sectoral qualifications system. The project supports several activities: the establishment and activities of Sectoral Expert Councils; research of competences and skills in economic sectors for making education demand; development of sectoral qualifications system; development or improvement of sectoral occupational standards for basic professions; development of the relevant professions and basic requirements for specialization qualifications; introduction of modules system in the development or improvement of vocational education programmes for acquiring a basic profession, relevant profession or specialization including continuing vocational education programmes; improving examination; piloting validation and recognition system of knowledge, skills and competence acquired outside formal education.

In spring 2011, the ESF project "Improvement of study programmes' content and implementation and development of academic personnel's competence" was launched for evaluating higher education programmes (including higher professional education programmes) and developing recommendations. Starting from September 2011, national and international experts are assessing 40 higher education programmes in detailed manner to promote the quality, efficiency, international competitiveness of higher education, and to review the correspondence of higher education programmes to economic needs. In the assessment procedures the use of learning outcomes and qualifications level descriptors when developing and providing higher education programmes is taken into account.

MEASURES TARGETED AT EDUCATION PROVIDERS

Optimization of school network started already before the recession (from 120 schools in 2000/2001 to 92 schools in 2007/2008, and 83 schools in 2010/2011), 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 are differentiated by their functions and management. Five types of schools are 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. Since September 2011, 6 vocational schools were granted the status of competence centre and started implementing designed functions.
- 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 still 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.

MEASURES TO PROMOTE ACCESS TO LEARNING

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);
- First and second level professional higher education programmes;
- Informal education programmes;
- Measures for raising competitiveness (lectures, seminars, courses from 8 hours to five days);
- Lifelong learning activities for employed.

In 2010, 60 013 individuals participated in the learning measures arranged by the SEA: 9 426 unemployed – in vocational education, re-qualification or professional promotion programmes (including 1 129 individuals participated in training at enterprises to prepare specialists required by the employer), 42 658 – informal learning. Regarding the further career opportunities of those who participated in the learning activities – 12.1% of vocational education participants (in 2010) became employed during the following six months after the learning; 29.4% of those from learning in enterprises, and 11.4% of those from informal learning activities (SEA, 2011).

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 (SEA, 2011).

Vocational education for adults is mainly provided by the same vocational schools as initial vocational education through the learning activities offered to the unemployed by the State Employment Agency.

There is a political ambition to balance the ratio between the number of general and vocation students to 50:50 (in 2010, the ratio was around 64:36). To promote the **popularity of vocational education**, several projects supported by ESF are implemented (see above).

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, the Latvian 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.

HISTORIC OVERVIEW OF IVET AND CVET LEGISLATION

During the meeting of 8th 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 basic school (grades 1-3), eight-years school (grades 1-8) and secondary school (grades 1-10/11), when it was changed to basic school (grades 1-4), incomplete secondary school (grades 1-9) and secondary school (grades 1-11), 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 evening education programmes, education courses starting from secondary education level either to promote their qualification or obtain one.

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. 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 (2011), 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 (August 2011) is the “Procedure of professional qualification examinations in accredited vocational education programmes” (*Profesionālās kvalifikācijas eksāmenu norises kārtība akreditētās profesionālās izglītības programmās*), which stipulate the organization of professional qualification examinations, including centralized professional qualification exams, at the conclusion of accredited vocational education 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 Education Quality Service (June 2009) and the National Centre for Education (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 (MoES). Further changes in the management of vocational schools are planned according to the “Guidelines for optimisation of vocational education establishments network for 2010-2015” (*Profesionālās izglītības iestāžu tīkla optimizācijas pamatnostādnes 2010.-2015.gadam*, 2010), which foresee to assign some vocational schools under the direction of local governments.

At present (2011) 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 established by the Ministry of Education and Science according to certain criteria, 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*) 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 the 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 Sub-Council is to promote dialogue between state, employers and employees on vocational education and employment issues. In 2011, according to 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), the Sectoral Expert Councils in 12 economic sectors (e.g. construction; wood industry; metalworking, mechanical engineering and sciences) were established with the aim to improve involvement of sectoral social partners in education, particularly in vocational education.

National Centre for Education (*Valsts izglītības saturs centra*, 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 state centralized examinations; coordinating the development of study literature corresponding to vocational education standards; coordinating and implementing the professional improvement of vocational teachers.

State Education Quality Service (*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

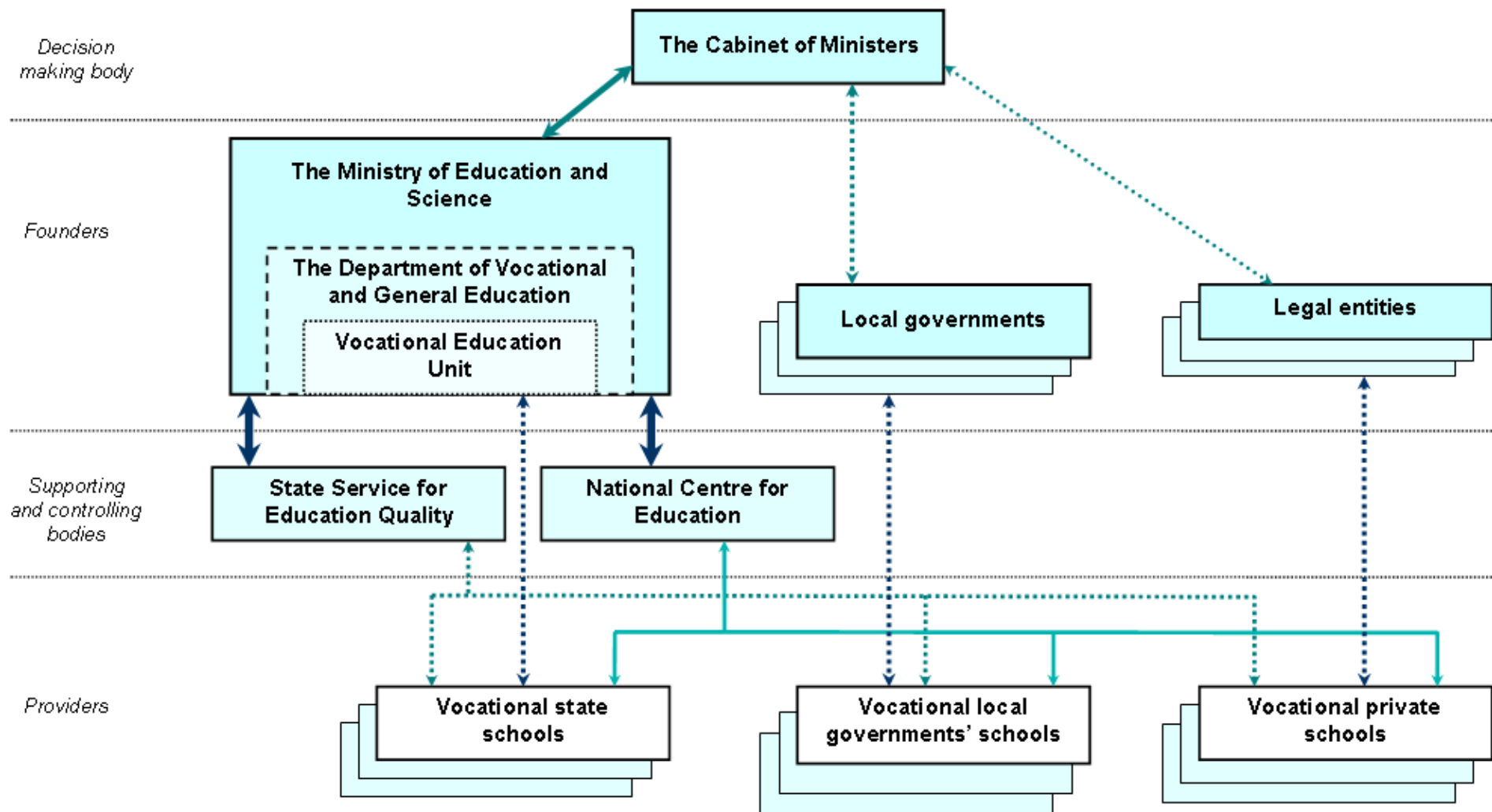
At the beginning of 1990-ties, when Latvia had regained its independence in 1991, vocational schools could be divided in two types:

- 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) in parallel 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. The vocational schools are divided according to their ownership: **state, local government and private schools**. The majority of vocational education establishments are owned by the state: in 2010/2011 there were 73 state schools, 6 schools of local governments and 4 private schools.

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-ties – 133 schools in 1995/1996, 120 – in 2000/2001, and 83 – in 2010/2011. 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 58 – in 2010/2011), because many private institutions were founded.

DIAGRAM 1: ORGANIGRAM OF THE INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION



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 was 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 4.2).

The other important step in legislation was the adaptation of the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations “Procedure how professional competence obtained outside formal education system is assessed” (*Kārtība, kādā novērtē ārpus formālās izglītības sistēmas apgūto profesionālo kompetenci*, February 2011), which establishing the system of validating informal/non-formal knowledge and skills. The Regulations stipulate the procedure how professional competence (except for regulated professions) that corresponds to the EQF level 3-4, obtained outside formal education is assessed and a formal education document is awarded.

4.5 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR CVET AND ORGANIGRAM

In 1990-ties, according to Education Law (1991), one of tasks for vocational education and vocational specialized education 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 organigram under 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 General Basic Education (*apliecība par vispārējo pamatizglītību*).

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 is 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 through education standards which determine its level, form and target groups. The state education standards define 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 state central examinations, students are awarded with the Certificate of General Secondary Education (*vispārējās vidējās izglītības sertifikāts*), which gives rights to enrol HE programmes. 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 vocational education programmes are classified as follows:

- Vocational basic education programmes last for 3 years and are foreseen for students without a Certificate of General 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 Vocational Basic Education and professional 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 professional 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 of Vocational Secondary Education and professional qualification level 3 (see below);

- Post-secondary non-tertiary vocational education programmes (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 centralized 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.

When graduating vocational or professional higher education programmes, a professional qualification of a certain level is awarded. According to the Vocational Education Law (1999), there are five professional qualification levels in the Latvian vocational education system:

- Level 1 (EQF level 3) – theoretical and practical training that prepares students for performing simple tasks in a certain area of practical activity (assistant cook, carpenter etc.);
- Level 2 (EQF level 4) – theoretical and practical background that allows the holder to perform qualified work independently (carpenter, hairdresser, cook, welder etc.);
- Level 3 (EQF level 4) – 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 (EQF level 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 (EQF level 6-7) – the highest qualification of a specialist in a field that enables the holder to plan and perform research and scientific work in the field.

To acquire professional qualification, vocational students have to take state qualification exam at the end of the education programme. The development of qualification exam content and procedure at basic and secondary education level is determined by the CoM Regulations “Procedure of professional qualification examinations in accredited vocational education programmes” (*Profesionālās kvalifikācijas eksāmenu norises kārtība akreditētās profesionālās izglītības programmās*, August 2011).

The strategic **aims and main objectives of initial vocational education** are defined in the state vocational education standards that are regulated by the relevant Cabinet Regulations (2000). The strategic aims of vocational education are:

- To prepare students for a particular profession, promoting their development as mentally and physically developed, free, responsible and creative personality;
- To promote the acquisition of knowledge and skills, attitudes, which provide students their professional qualification and contribute to their competitiveness in changing social and economic conditions;
- To facilitate student’s positive attitude towards peers and the country, promote their self-confidence and ability to take Latvian citizen’s duties;
- To create motivation for professional development and continuing education and provide students an opportunity to prepare for further studies in professional higher education.

As mentioned in section 2.1, the **main challenges for the initial vocational education** are related to raising attractiveness and quality of this education sector, strengthening cooperation with the social partners and the current reform of the vocational school network.

Promoting participation in initial vocational education and reduction of dropouts has been listed as one of the policy priorities in several planning documents. The latest one – 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) – foresaw to improve types and programmes of vocational education; implementing the national qualifications framework (activity completed); differentiating vocational schools; balancing requirements for obtaining vocational and general secondary education; and promoting the participation of social partners in developing and implementing education policy. Furthermore, initial vocational education students receive monthly scholarships funded by state and ESF. The amount of scholarship depends on students' school results and class attendance. See 10.2.

School curricula are designed by vocational schools in line the state vocational education standards (*valsts profesionālās izglītības standarti*) and relevant occupational standards (*profesiju standarti*) and recommendations set by the National Centre for Education since July 2009. Thereafter, curricula are evaluated by the Centre and licensed by the State Education Quality Service 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.

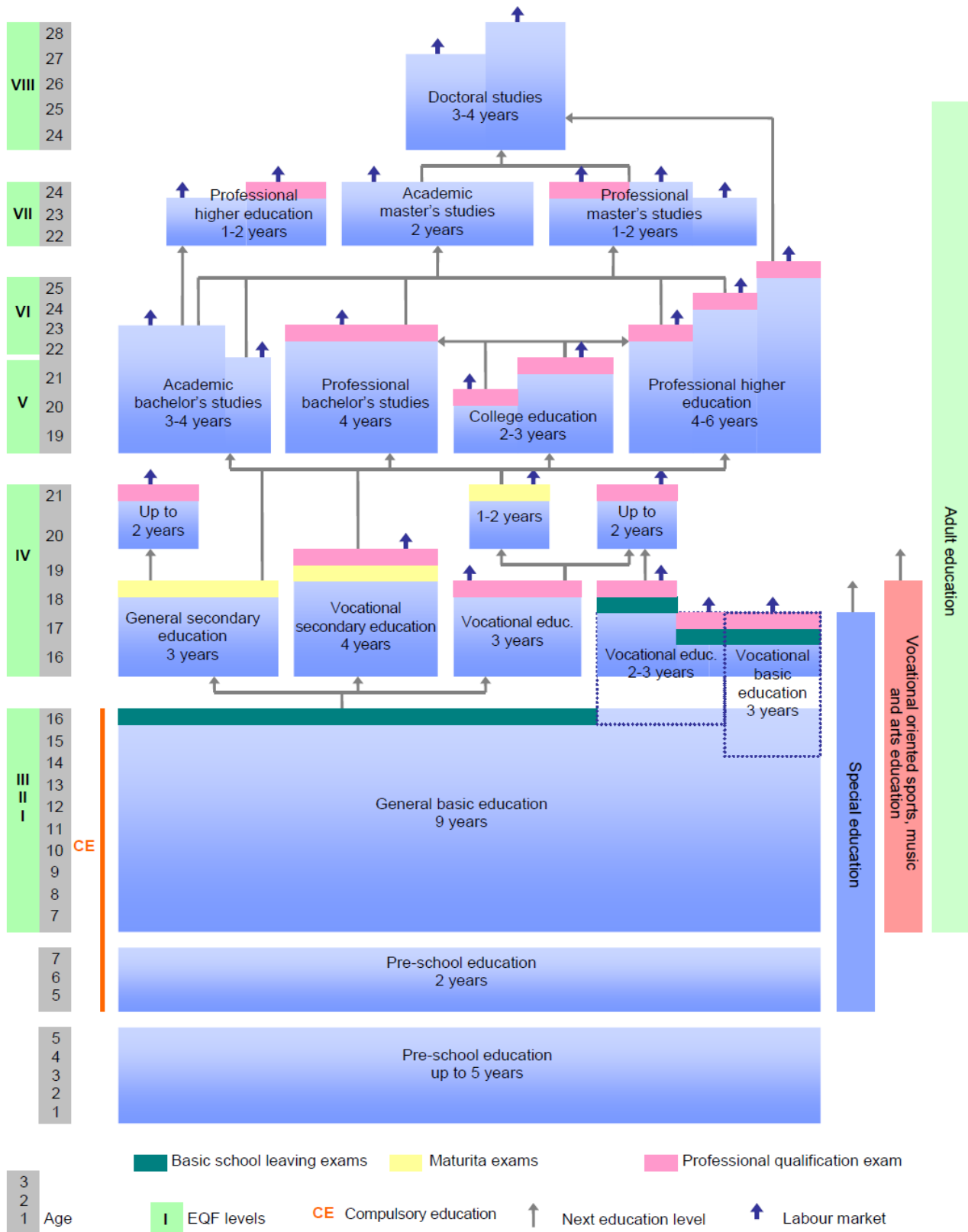
Teaching methods and materials in accordance with curricula and learning situations are selected by teachers. While methods depend on the choice of teacher, there are lists of suggested books included in vocational education standards. However, teachers are encouraged to apply innovative approaches in 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" (*Kārtība, kādā akreditē vispārējās un profesionālās izglītības programmas, izglītības iestādes un eksaminācijas centrus*, 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 Education Quality Service (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. The same regulations for accreditation of formal education institutions refer to all schools regardless their ownership (state, local government and private). 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.

Under the circumstances of economical recession, the procedure for accrediting education programmes was simplified (amendments in Regulations in July 2009) to diminish expenditures for education providers. For example, the number of experts in the commission (performing external assessment) was differentiated depending on numbers of students and education programmes implemented in a particular school. The possibility was introduced 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;

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).

DIAGRAM 2: THE EDUCATION 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).

NAME OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME	ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS	MAIN ECONOMIC SECTORS	CORRESPONDING ISCED LEVEL AND ORIENTATION/ DESTINATION	BALANCE BETWEEN GENERAL AND VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS	BALANCE BETWEEN SCHOOL- AND WORK-BASED TRAINING (SHARE IN %)	AVERAGE DURATION OF STUDIES	ACCESS TO (HORIZONTAL/ VERTICAL) TO OTHER PATHWAYS
vocational basic education programme (including pedagogical correction programme)	1) basic education 2) without basic education, but not younger than 15 y.o.	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

Pupils are admitted to vocational basic education 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).

Students' assessment in Latvia is carried out in 10 point scale (10, 9 – high level grades, 8-6 – optimal level grades, 5-4 – average level grades, 3-1 – fail level grades). If in a regular test it is not possible to assess achievements in the 10-point scale, teachers may use "pass" or "fail".

At the end of the vocational basic education students take final qualification exam to acquire professional qualification level 1 (EQF level 3), 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. Those pupils without general basic education pass state exams in Latvian (differentiated for pupils from programmes in Latvian and other languages), Math, Latvian History, foreign language, and in mother language for pupils in national minority education programmes.

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.

TABLE 1: STUDENTS ENROLLED IN LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION BY PROGRAMME ORIENTATION (VALUES AND SHARE OF THE TOTAL), 2009

GEO	TOTAL ISCED2	ISCED2GEN (NUM)	ISCE2 GEN (%)	ISCED2PV (NUM)	ISCE2PV (%)	ISCED2VOC (NUM)	ISCED2 VOC (%)
EU-27	22064045	21484802	97.4	335599	1.5	243644	1.1
LV	73698	72969	99.0	:	:	729	1.0

Source: Eurostat (UOE); extracted on: 19.05.2011; last update: 13.05.2011.

As illustrated in the table above, vocational basic education is not attended on a large scale, since general basic education is compulsory and after graduating pupils tend to choose an education

programme at secondary level. 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 (MAINLY SCHOOL-BASED)

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

NAME OF EDUCATION PROGRAMME	ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS	MAIN ECONOMIC SECTORS	CORRESPONDING ISCED LEVEL AND ORIENTATION/ DESTINATION	BALANCE BETWEEN GENERAL AND VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS	BALANCE BETWEEN SCHOOL- AND WORK-BASED TRAINING (SHARE IN %)	AVERAGE DURATION OF STUDIES	ACCESS TO (HORIZONTAL/ VERTICAL) TO OTHER PATHWAYS
vocational education programme	general or vocational basic education	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	general or vocational basic education		3A, 3B	60:40	50:50	3-4 years, 2 years after vocational programme	higher education programmes
intermediate programme in general secondary education	vocational education programme	---	3A, 3B	100:0	---	2 years	higher education programmes

As mentioned in 5.2, students' assessment in Latvia is carried out in 10 point scale, or "pass" or "fail" may be used.

When graduating both vocational education and vocational secondary education programmes students take final qualification exams to acquire accordingly professional qualification. Vocational education programmes leads to Certificate of Vocational Education 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 programmes do not give the rights to directly continue studies at a HE level. The students, who want to continue, a 2-year intermediate course in general secondary education is available.

Vocational secondary education programmes lead to a Diploma of Vocational Secondary Education and professional qualification level 3 (ISCED 3A, 3B). Additionally vocational secondary education students take four state centralized examinations in Latvian, Math, foreign language and one in optional study subject; thereafter, students are awarded with the Certificate of General Secondary Education (*vispārējās vidējās izglītības sertifikāts*), which gives rights to enter HEI.

The accreditation of these programmes is arranged in line with other vocational education programmes (see 5.1).

TABLE 2. STUDENTS ENROLLED IN UPPER-SECONDARY EDUCATION BY PROGRAMME ORIENTATION (VALUES AND SHARE OF THE TOTAL), 2009							
COUNTRY	TOTAL ISCED 3	ISCED 3 GEN (NUM)	ISCED 3 GEN (%)	ISCED 3 PV (NUM)	ISCED 3 PV (%)	ISCED 3 VOC (NUM)	ISCED 3 VOC (%)
EU27	20633767	10946188	53.0	:	:	9687579	47.0
LV	97808	62508	63.9	:	:	35300	36.1

Source: Eurostat, (UOE); extracted on: 19.05.2011; last update: 13.05.2011. Special values: - not applicable

As shown in the table above, the general secondary education pathway is more popular than vocational secondary education; the proportion (64:36) 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 ALTERNANCE TRAINING (INCL. APPRENTICESHIP)

In the Latvian education the term “alternance training” is not applicable, but **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.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

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.

APPRENTICESHIP QUALIFICATIONS, CERTIFICATION AND PROGRESSION

According to the Law on Crafts (1993), 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 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 zēļa 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. The Cabinet regulations (2009) on professions which may be considered to belong to crafts include in total 172 craft trades.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

Apprenticeship learning can be organised in two ways:

- An 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 (zēļu) 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 meistaru 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.

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.

STATISTICS

Since 1994, in total 2593 masters of crafts qualifications, 5651 journeymen qualifications and 15 000 cards for masters of crafts (self-employed persons) have been awarded; and 150 crafts enterprises have been operated. Since 2004 together with qualification documents relevant certificate of crafts practice (*amata prakses sertifikāts*) have been issued. 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.

As mentioned before, in Latvia there is mainly school-based route, while work-based learning is organized on small scale. Therefore, in the table below the data are not included.

TABLE 3: STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION BY TYPE OF PROGRAMME, 2008 [%]																			
GEO	BE	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	ES	FR	CY	LV	LU	HU	NL	AT	PL	SI	SK	FI	SE
SCHOOL BASED	96	55	1	26	99	94	96	72	N	N	77	43	70	55	88	N	60	80	N
COMBINED	4	45	99	74	1	6	4	28	:	:	23	57	30	45	12	:	40	20	:
TOTAL VET	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Cedefop's calculation based on Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 25.7.2010. (:) - not available (N) - negligible

5.5 PROGRAMMES AND ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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 (MAINLY SCHOOL-BASED)

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 and are mainly school-based.

NAME OF EDUCATION PROGRAMME	ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS	MAIN ECONOMIC SECTORS	CORRESPONDING ISCED LEVEL AND ORIENTATION/ DESTINATION	BALANCE BETWEEN GENERAL AND VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS	BALANCE BETWEEN SCHOOL- AND WORK-BASED TRAINING (SHARE IN %)	AVERAGE DURATION OF STUDIES	ACCESS TO (HORIZONTAL/ VERTICAL) TO OTHER PATHWAYS
vocational education programme	general secondary education	primary sector and utilities, manufacturing,	4B	60:40	35:65	1 year (2 years in programmes)	Labour market

		construction, distribution and transport, business and other services, non-marketed services				licensed before 2009)	
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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.

These education programmes are not largely attended; the statistics of 2010 show that 4.0% of secondary education graduates enrolled in them.

5.7 PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AT TERTIARY LEVEL (MAINLY SCHOOL-BASED)

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

NAME OF EDUCATION PROGRAMME	ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS	MAIN ECONOMIC SECTORS	CORRESPONDING LEVEL OF STUDY	BALANCE BETWEEN GENERAL AND VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS	BALANCE BETWEEN SCHOOL- AND WORK-BASED TRAINING (SHARE IN %)	AVERAGE DURATION OF STUDIES
first level higher professional education programmes (college programmes)	secondary education	primary sector and utilities, manufacturing, construction, distribution and transport, business and other services, non-marketed services	ISCED 5B Latvian professional qualification level 4 EQF level 5	36:64	70:30	2-3 years
second level higher professional education programmes (university programmes)	secondary education or (academic) bachelor's degree		ISCED 5A professional qualification level 5 EQF level 6-7	17:83	70:30	4-5 years not shorter than 4 years after secondary education and not shorter than 2 years after college education
<u>University programmes:</u>						
short cycle study programmes	first level professional higher education	primary sector and utilities, manufacturing, construction,	ISCED 5A professional qualification	Total 40 Latvian CP (1 Latvian credit =1.5 ECTS), of which:		1-2 years Total duration of HE studies

	or academic bachelor's degree	distribution and transport, business and other services, non-marketed services	level 5 EQF level 6	- 4 CP theoretical courses in the branch - 26 CP work-based learning - 10 CP state exam (including final thesis)	- at least 4 years
professional bachelor's studies or professional higher education programmes	secondary education		ISCED 5A professional qualification level 5 EQF level 6	Total at least 160 Latvian CP, of which: - min. 20 CP general courses - min. 36 CP theoretical courses of speciality and IT courses - min. 60 CP courses of occupational speciality - min. 6 CP free choice courses - min. 26 CP work-based learning - min. 12 CP state exam (including final thesis)	min. 4 years
professional master's studies	bachelor's degree		ISCED 5A professional qualification level 5 EQF level 7	Total at least 40 Latvian CP, of which: - min. 14 CP theoretical courses - min. 6 CP work-based learning - 20 CP state exam (including final thesis)	1-2 years Total duration of HE studies - at least 5 years

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 **content of first level higher professional education** comprises study courses (including 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 **content of second level higher professional education programmes** comprises (for professional bachelor programmes, professional master programmes, higher professional education programmes) study courses, a practical placement and a final thesis. The content of the study course and the practical placement is set by the respective occupational standards for a certain professions.

Colleges and HEIs develop study programmes according to state education standards and relevant occupational standard. The education standards are determined by the following CoM Regulations: “Regulations on the first level professional higher education state standard” (*Noteikumi par pirmā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības valsts standartu*, 2001), and “Regulations on the second level professional higher education state standard” (*Noteikumi par otrā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības valsts standartu*, 2001). There is tendency that HEIs revise their study programmes to introduce learning outcomes in order to undergo the accreditation.

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 final thesis (evaluation in 10 grade scale, 10 – with distinction (*izcili*), 1 – very, very weak (*ļoti, ļoti vāji*)).

The following **credentials** are awarded in the higher professional education (academic degrees not included):

- Diploma of first level professional higher education (*pirmā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms*);
- Diploma of professional higher education (*profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms*) or the diploma of higher professional qualification (*augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms*);
- Professional bachelor's diploma (*profesionālā bakalaurs diploms*) or the diploma of higher professional qualification (*augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms*);
- Professional master's diploma (*profesionālā maģistra diploms*) or the diploma of higher professional qualification (*augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms*);

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

TABLE 4: STUDENTS AT ISCED LEVEL 5 BY PROGRAMME DESTINATION (VALUES AND SHARE OF THE TOTAL) AND AT ISCED LEVEL 6 (VALUES), 2009						
	TOTAL ISCED5	ISCED5A (NUM)	ISCED 5A (%)	ISCED5B (NUM)	ISCED 5B (%)	TOTAL ISCED 6
EU 27	19505749	16370782	83.9	2617882	13.4	517085
LV	125360	102211	81.5	21124	16.9	2025

Source: Eurostat (UOE); extracted on: 19.05.2011; last update: 13.05.2011.

5.8 LANGUAGE LEARNING IN IVET

LANGUAGE LEARNING WITHIN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND ITS OBJECTIVES

In basic and secondary education a foreign language and Latvian are core subjects, in which students have to pass final state centralized exams. Language learning in vocational education is stipulated by relevant state education standards. Languages are included in vocational education programmes either as the general study subjects or as part of vocational subjects (depending on the field of education).

According to the state vocational secondary and vocational education standards (2000), a compulsory part of vocational education programmes is at least one foreign language studies. In vocational secondary and vocational education programmes the section of language and communication studies comprises 45% of all general subjects (Latvian, foreign language and one optional study subject that can be second foreign language). The compulsory foreign language is called “first foreign language” as it is the first choice of a student, while the optional foreign language is called “second foreign language”. As result, during the learning vocational students should cultivate the Latvian as the state language proficiency, and improve the proficiency of a foreign language(-s).

The content of language subjects is stipulated by the standards of general study subjects for secondary (2008) and basic (2006) education stage. These subject standards are included in the relevant general education standards regulated by the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations. Additionally, in vocational education programmes students acquire specific terminology in a foreign language.

STATISTICS ON LANGUAGE LEARNING

In 2010/2011, 79% of all vocational education students learnt first foreign language as a compulsory subject and 37.1% students – second foreign language as an optional subject (see tables 5 and 6 below). Statistics show that the most popular first foreign language is English, while in the case of second foreign language the most selected is Russian. Gradually German has lost its popularity.

TABLE 5: FIRST FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION							
YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS	NUMBER OF STUDENTS LEARNING 1 ST FOREIGN LANGUAGE & %					
		TOTAL	% OF ALL	ENGLISH	GERMAN	FRENCH	RUSSIAN
2010/2011	35767	28256 100%	79.0	27660 97.9%	239 0.8%	0 0%	357 1.3%
2007/2008*	37667	31263 100%	83.0	30199 96.6%	696 2.2%	0 0%	368 1.2%
2005/2006	42737	34128 100%	79.9	31438 92.1%	2370 6.9%	27 0.1%	293 0.9%
2002/2003	46533	40253 100%	86.5	32033 79.6%	7649 19.0%	167 0.4%	404 1.0%

Source: *The Ministry of Education and Science, 2011*; * - students from private school are not included.

Table above also shows that from 2002-2010 the total ratio of students learning first foreign language has decreased (from 86.5% to 79.0%).

TABLE 6: SECOND FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION								
YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS	NUMBER OF STUDENTS LEARNING 2 ND FOREIGN LANGUAGE & %						
		TOTAL	% OF ALL	ENGLISH	GERMAN	FRENCH	TOTAL	OTHER
2010/2011	35767	13275 100%	37.1	206 1.6%	3243 24.4%	190 1.4%	9609 72.4%	27 0.2%
2007/2008*	37667	13726 100%	36.4	276 2.0%	4758 34.7%	232 1.7%	8460 61.6%	0 0%
2005/2006	42737	12832 100%	30.0	550 4.3%	4017 31.3%	410 3.2%	7855 61.2%	0 0%
2002/2003	46533	15065 100%	32.4	2881 19.1%	4359 28.9%	153 1.0%	7672 50.9%	0 0%

Source: *The Ministry of Education and Science, 2011*; * - students from private school are not included.

As second foreign language Russian and German are the most popular; the “other language” indicated in table 6 was Italian. From 2002-2010, the total ratio of students learning second foreign language has slightly increased (from 32.4% to 37.1%).

The following two tables illustrate foreign language learning according to ISCED levels.

TABLE 7: FIRST FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION BY ISCED LEVEL IN 2010/2011							
ISCED LEVEL	TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS	NUMBER OF STUDENTS LEARNING 1 ST FOREIGN LANGUAGE & %					
		TOTAL	% OF ALL	ENGLISH	GERMAN	FRENCH	RUSSIAN
2C (BASIC VOC)	487	389 100%	79.9	353 90.7%	2 0.5%	0 0%	34 8.7%
3C (VOC)	3587	2603 100%	72.6	2454 94.3%	85 3.2%	0 0%	64 2.5%
3A (VOC SECONDARY)	29562	24241 100%	82.0	23928 98.7%	54 0.2%	0 0%	259 1.1%
4B (VOC POST-SECONDARY)	1857	749 100%	40.3	659 88.0%	90 12.0%	0 0%	0 0%
N.A. (GEN INTERMED)	274	274 100%	100.0	266 97.1%	8 2.9%	0 0%	0 0%

Source: *The Ministry of Education and Science, 2011.*

In 2010/2011, English was the most frequently selected first foreign language in all ISCED levels.

TABLE 8: SECOND FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION BY ISCED LEVEL IN 2010/2011								
ISCED LEVEL	TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS	NUMBER OF STUDENTS LEARNING 2 ND FOREIGN LANGUAGE & %						
		TOTAL	% OF ALL	ENGLISH	GERMAN	FRENCH	RUSSIAN	OTHER
2C (BASIC VOC)	487	281 100%	57.7	41 14.6%	0 0%	0 0%	240 85.4%	0 0%
3C (VOC)	3587	638 100%	17.8	31 4.9%	47 7.4%	0 0%	560 87.8%	0 0%
3A (VOC SECONDARY)	29562	11971 100%	40.5	88 0.7%	3040 25.4%	190 1.6%	8626 72.1%	27 0.2%
4B (VOC POST-SECONDARY)	1857	142 100%	7.6	38 26.8%	56 39.4%	0 0%	48 33.8%	0 0%
N.A. (GEN INTERMED)	274	243 100%	88.7	8 3.3%	100 41.2%	0 0%	135 55.6%	0 0%

Source: *The Ministry of Education and Science, 2011.*

Table 8 shows that Russian as the second foreign language is selected by students in vocational education programmes (ISCED 3C); German mostly was chosen by students from general intermediate programmes (implemented after vocational education programmes). English was mostly selected by post-vocational education students.

MODES OF DELIVERY AND METHODS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

Languages are taught as separate study subjects. Methods are selected by teachers regarding education content and learning situations.

ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION STANDARD

As mentioned above, in vocational education languages are taught in line of general subject standards. The criteria for language proficiency that are included in the standards are based on Common European framework for languages (CEFL). At present (September 2011), the National Centre for Education is taking steps to include reference to relevant level of CEFL in education documents.

Since Latvian (and Mother language) and a foreign language learning is concluded with final state centralized exams, the students receive certificate of exam results (see 5.2 and 5.3).

6. CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

6.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND

MAIN POLICY OBJECTIVES OF CVET

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. The “Guidelines for lifelong learning policy for 2007-2013” (*Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādnes 2007.–2013.gadam*, 2006) and its implementation programme 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).

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 10.3.

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL PARTNERS IN PROMOTING PARTICIPATION IN CVET

Enterprises are responsible for arranging relevant learning activities for their employees. Thus, employers may decide whether their employees need to participate in learning and how it should be organized and funded (see 10.3.3). Regarding the Law on Local Governments (*Par pašvaldībām*, 1994, 2010), local governments also should support inhabitants' education, e.g. by offering co-funding for adult individuals' education in their territory, or eapplaying for the state funding in a tender and by selecting schools (see 10.3.1).

The cooperation with social partners in the field of vocational education is organized in terms of the National Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment (*Profesionālās izglītības un nodarbinātības trīspusējās sadarbības apakšpadome*) and relevant regional sub-councils (see 4.3).

ROLES AND DUTIES OF INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED IN BRINGING LEARNING CLOSER TO LEARNERS

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.

MAIN OBSTACLES IN PARTICIPATION IN CVET AND EXISTING MEASURES TO OVERCOME THEM

Due to economic recession funding for continuing vocational education was decreased by its sources (state, local governments, employers, donations etc.), and also inhabitants' resources were more limited. Meanwhile, more learning opportunities are provided through ESF projects, particularly those for the unemployed (see 6.5).

6.2 FORMAL LEARNING IN 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 Latvian professional qualification level 3 (EQF level 4) and with vocational secondary or vocational education as previous education), 480 or 640 hours depending on the relevant occupation standard (to acquire the Latvian professional qualification level 2 (EQF level 4) and with no limitations for previous education), and 480 hours (to acquire the Latvian professional qualification level 1 (EQF level 3) 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.

Education stages of continuous education programmes are included in education programmes classification (CoM Regulations “Regulations on the classification of Latvian education”, 2010); continuous education programmes belong to basic, secondary (lower and upper) and higher education stage; legally no comparison with ISCED levels is provided, but continuous education programmes may belong to the Latvian professional qualification levels 1-4, i.e. EQF levels 3-5 (see 2.2).

TABLE 1: CLASSIFICATION OF CONTINUOUS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES			
EDUCATION STAGE	LQF/EQF LEVEL	PROF. QUALIFICATION LEVEL	PROGRAMME
1. BASIC EDUC.	3	1	continuous vocational education without limits for previous education
2. LOWER-SECONDARY EDUC.	4	2	continuous vocational education for students with completed or unfinished basic education
	-	-	professional improvement after basic education
3. UPPER-SECONDARY EDUC.	4	2 or 3	continuous vocational education for students after general or vocational upper-secondary education
	-	-	professional improvement after upper-secondary education
4. HIGHER EDUC.	5	4	continuous vocational education implemented in colleges or HEI for students with at least first level professional higher education

There are a number of organisations involved in continuing vocational education 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, which are designed by working group including social partners (see 8.2), and vocational education standards by the education providers. 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. Thus, the rest of content depends on the interests of providers or clients, which also can be employers. 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.

The duration and content of professional improvement and professionally oriented education are stated by particular education programme.

The most popular continuous vocational education 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 continuing vocational education programmes longer than 480 hours and professional improvement programmes longer than 160 hours must be accredited by the Ministry of Education and Science. 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 final state centralized qualification 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 of Ministers Regulations "The Procedure of professional qualification examinations in accredited vocational education programmes" (*Profesionālās kvalifikācijas eksāmenu norises kārtība akreditētās profesionālās izglītības programmās*, 2011). 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.

TABLE 2: PARTICIPATION RATE IN ADULT FORMAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING BY HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED (%), 2007				
	ISCED 0-2	ISCED 3-4	ISCED 5-6	TOTAL
EU-27	2.7	6	12.7	6.6
LATVIA	0.3	2.8	14.7	5.4

Source: Eurostat, date of extraction: 24.05.2011; last update: 30.03.2011.

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).

TABLE 3: PARTICIPATION RATE IN FORMAL ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING BY LABOUR STATUS (%), 2007				
	EMPLOYMENT	INACTIVE POPULATION	TOTAL	UNEMPLOYMENT
EU-27	6.6	6.3	6.6	7.1
LATVIA	6.8	2.4	5.4	:

Source: Eurostat, date of extraction: 24.05.2011; last update: 13.04.2011. Special values – : not available

6.3 NON-FORMAL LEARNING IN CVET

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. Therefore, non-formal continuing vocational education is not differentiated from the formal continuing vocational education regarding administrative structure and financing (see 6.2).

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

The system of the **recognition of informal/non-formal learning** was established in the beginning of 2011. 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. In February 2011 the CoM Regulations "Procedure how professional competence obtained outside formal education system is assessed" (*Kārtība, kādā novērtē ārpus formālās izglītības sistēmas apgūto profesionālo kompetenci*) were approved stipulating the procedure how professional competence (except regulated professions) that corresponds to the Latvian professional qualification level 1-3, i.e. the EQF level 3-4, obtained outside formal education is assessed. The institutions assessing professional competence may be accredited education establishments or examination centres, which have been assigned by the State Education Quality Service. The procedure on validating professional competence obtained outside formal education includes the following steps:

1. Individual's application for assessment of their professional competence – a person, who wishes that their professional competence is assessed, has to submit relevant application to institution assessing professional competence. The institution assessing professional competence must provide to the candidate consultations free of charge regarding the requirements set in the concrete occupational standard and the procedure of professional

qualification exam. Up to the point of deciding to take the exam the procedure is free of charge for the candidate.

2. Professional qualification exam – in the period of two months after receiving an application for assessment, the institution for assessing the professional competence organises and holds the professional qualification exam in conformity with the procedure of organising professional qualification exam as defined by the legislation.
3. Awarding document certifying a professional qualification – the applicant, who has successfully passed professional qualification exam (grade no lower than “5 – satisfactory”), is awarded with a state recognized document certifying the Latvian professional qualification of level 1-3 (EQF level 3-4) by the institution for assessing the professional competence in line with procedure stated by laws and regulations.

The validation process of knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education is for a fee; thus, a person can take a conscious decision to participate with the aim to receive a professional qualification document.

By July 2011, the State Education Quality Service had delegated 8 vocational education establishments in total for 107 qualifications to perform the assessment of professional competence acquired outside formal education.

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.

TABLE 4: PARTICIPATION RATE IN ADULT NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING BY HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED (%), 2007

	ISCED 0-2	ISCED 3-4	ISCED 5-6	TOTAL
EU-27	15.6	31.4	51.5	31.3
LATVIA	11	26.1	53	30.7

Source: Eurostat, date of extraction: 24.05.2011; last update: 30.03.2011.

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	38.8	12.4	31.3	19.5
LATVIA	37.6	9.6	30.7	16.3

Source: Eurostat, date of extraction: 24.05.2011; last update: 13.04.2011.

A type on informal vocational education is **enterprise provided training**, which can assist employees adapting 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 provides an opportunity to acquire completely new skills or to add certain competences (e.g. teamwork skills). Training providers are free to produce 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, the Latvian enterprises follow the trend that the larger the enterprise the more likely it is that training is available.

6.4 LANGUAGE LEARNING IN CVET

In continuing vocational education foreign languages learning is implemented in line with the relevant occupational standard. Thus, students acquire language knowledge and skills necessary for their occupation or sector.

When graduating continuing vocational education programme, students have a test in foreign language. At present (September 2011), there are no legal regulations in force to stipulate standard of language proficiency in continuous vocational education. Yet foreign language teachers in developing and implementing language subjects follow the principles of the CEFL.

In terms of the ESF project “Development of sectoral qualifications system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education” (*Nozaru kvalifikācijas sistēmas izveide un profesionālās izglītības efektivitātes un kvalitātes paaugstināšana*, 2010-2013), the National Centre for Education is developing education standard for the professional foreign language to be included in continuing vocational education programmes.

6.5 TRAINING PROGRAMMES 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; individuals with disabilities; 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 2010 was on average 34.5% and in the first quarter of 2011 – 29.8%, which due to general increase of the unemployment rates is higher than age groups ranging from 25-74 years, i.e. on average 16.6% in 2010 and in the first quarter of 2011 – 14.6% (Eurostat). Generally, individuals with a low educational attainment are also an increasingly important target group (in 2010 – 32.3% of all job-seekers had only basic level education), as well as those, who are long-term unemployed: in 2010 – 45% of registered unemployed have been unemployed for longer than a year (Eurostat). 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).

In 2010, the SEA enlarged the variety of activities and implemented the following measures:

1. Preventive employment measures:

- Career services: individual/group career counselling, individual self-assessment career counselling, individual/group diagnostic career counselling, group informative career counselling – career services were received by 78 404 persons, of them 61 522 unemployed and job-seekers and 16 882 other persons at unemployment risk.
- Vocational education 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 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). 2634 persons were involved in training.
- Lifelong learning measures for employed – aimed at providing opportunity for employed persons to improve knowledge and skills necessary for their work in terms of informal/non-formal learning or professional improvement. 5155 persons were involved in learning.

2. Active employment 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. 59 515 persons participated.
- Training at enterprises – is arranged on basis of employer's suggestion to prepare necessary specialist for particular company (max. duration 3 months); the employer has to employ programme participants after graduation at least for six months. 1129 unemployed were involved.
- Measure for particular social groups (unemployed with special needs, persons without regular paid work for last six months, persons without secondary education or professional qualification, 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). 2 132 persons started participating.
- Vocational education, re-qualification and qualification promotion – 7 608 unemployed were involved to improve their professional knowledge and skills.
- Informal/non-formal learning activities – 42 658 unemployed and job seekers were engaged.
- Acquisition of first and second level professional higher education programmes – participants receive voucher up to EUR 1422.9 plus monthly scholarship of EUR 99.6 to support their studies in HEIs or colleges. Thus, 690 unemployed have enrolled programmes.
- Complex support activities – include consultations and workshops (motivating, solving personal problems, individual/group career consultations) and developing work skills (testing a work place for 6 months). 16 957 persons participated in 22 184 complex activities; in the activity "Work practice for young people" 2 235 persons were supported.
- 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). 34 679 work practice places were created and 52 821 unemployed were involved.

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, 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.

At present (2011), the learning opportunities (vocational education, re-qualification and qualification promotion) for the unemployed and job-seekers are arranged in terms of the ESF projects: *Training for the Unemployed and Job-Seekers in Latvia – 2 (Bezdarbnieku un darba meklētāju apmācība Latvijā – 2*, 2009-2013) and *Training for the Unemployed and Job-Seekers in Latvia – 3 (Bezdarbnieku un darba meklētāju apmācība – 3.kārta*, 2010-2012). 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 professional qualification level 2 (EQF level 4, 480 and 640 hours) for individuals with basic education;
- Programmes of professional qualification level 3 (EQF level 4, 960 hours) for the individuals with secondary education;
- Professional improvement programmes (160 and 320 hours) without acquirement of qualification.

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 the learning 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 PRIORITIES IN TRAINING VET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

PROVISIONS FOR ENTERING AND DEVELOPING TEACHERS' CAREER

Improving teacher education and continuing education system has been set as one of the directions for action in the list of policy planning documents, of which in force is *the National Education Development Guidelines for 2007-2013 (Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013.gadam, 2006)*.

The 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 that stipulate the requirements for teachers' education and qualification. For example, 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 were outlined in these regulations.

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 were introduced 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 determine education requirements and education acquisition procedures also for vocational education teachers. According the mentioned amendments in the Regulations, vocational education teachers without pedagogical qualification need to acquire 72 hours long pedagogy courses in a HEI instead of 320 hours long courses of various themes and arranged in different institutions. To clarify the education acquirement procedures, new Cabinet Regulations "Procedure for the improvement of teachers' professional qualification" (*Pedagogu profesionālās kvalifikācijas pilnveides kārtība*) were adopted in June 2011. These Regulations determine the procedure how the improvement of teachers' professional qualification is implemented; as well as what credentials are issued. Teachers are responsible for obtaining the relevant professional improvement in a certain amount of hours (at least 36 hours during three years).

At present (2011), **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.

As shown in the table below, most of the teachers have higher education, of which 24% (2010/2011) have participated in further teacher education programmes.

TABLE 1. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TEACHERS ACCORDING EDUCATION OBTAINED										
SCHOOL YEARS	TOTAL NUM.	EDUCATION LEVEL								
		SECONDARY					HIGHER			
		TOTAL	INCL. GEN. SEC.	INCL. VOC. SEC.	INCL. WITH PED. ED.	STUDENTS	TOTAL	INCL. HIGHER PED. ED.	INCL. OTHER TYPE PED. (>320 H)	PH D
2005/06	5,028	721	60	661	473	0	4,307	3,041	1,164	59
2007/08	4,687	398	47	351	222	177	3,117	2,211	808	39
2010/11	4,261	276	29	247	130	100	2,888	2,109	694	20

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 2011

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

To improve the quality of the teacher pre-service education, 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 state centralized examinations 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.

Generally 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.

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); and in 2011 second level higher professional education programmes are provided with the project funding. The

target group of the project is 1200 teachers, of which 250 should obtain teacher's qualification and 950 – mentor's certificate.

Also significant measures related to vocational teachers' further education are included in the ESF project sub-activity "Raising competence of teachers involved in vocational education" (*Profesionālajā izglītībā iesaistīto pedagogu kompetences paaugstināšana*), which is targeted at initial and continuing vocational education teachers, trainers, crafts education teachers, teachers' educators, and teacher students. The project includes such activities as developing and implementing specific education courses, providing support for work-based learning in enterprises, improving vocational education teachers' education, providing support to the acquisition of teacher's qualification, and supporting the elaboration and introduction of innovative approaches within vocational education (including ICT, e-resources, and e-learning environment).

Furthermore, the National Centre for Education (*Valsts izglītības satura 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 (in total for 1570 persons) 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. At present (September 2011), experts have developed and piloted supporting material "Methodological aid for developing and using learning aids in e-environment" (*Metodiskais līdzeklis mācību materiālu izveidošanai un īstenošanai e-vidē*), and 22 modules for theoretical knowledge improvement (by sectors) that are posted online; furthermore, teachers' in-service learning at enterprises has been initiated and five large seminars by sectors have been organized.

CURRICULUM REFORM AND INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

Along with other HE programmes, teacher education programmes are undergoing changes to promote the use of learning outcomes.

SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' EDUCATION PROVISIONS

According to the Cabinet "Regulations on demands for necessary teacher education and professional qualifications" (*Noteikumi par prasībām pedagogiem nepieciešamajai izglītībai un profesionālajai kvalifikācijai*, 2000, 2010), special education teachers should have professional higher pedagogic education and teacher's qualification in particular direction of special education. Otherwise, teachers should start specific further education in a year's time after taking up their post.

Special education pre-service teachers' education is provided by HEIs together with other teacher programmes (see 7.2) as one of the speciality. At present (September 2011), such HE programmes are provided by two HEIs, and the content was developed in line with the Teacher Occupational Standard. Also regular teacher education programmes impart some courses about special education.

In-service education for special education teachers is ensured through further education courses (see 7.2). After graduation teachers are awarded with a certificate (*sertifikāts*) if they have professional higher pedagogic education and teacher's qualification in a study subject.

In January 2011, the National Centre for Education (*Valsts izglītības satura centrs*) started ESF project "Development of support system for learners with functional disorders" (*Izglītojamo ar funkcionāliem traucējumiem atbalsta sistēmas izveide*), in which one of the activity is focused on promoting professional capacity of teachers working with children having special needs, as well as on developing methodological aids for special education teachers.

TEACHERS' LANGUAGE SKILLS

The CoM Regulations “Regulations on demands for necessary teacher education and professional qualifications” (2000, 2010) do not include special provisions regarding teachers' language skills.

According to the Teacher Occupational Standard (2004), teachers should acquire languages (Latvian and a foreign language) and communication knowledge and skills at such proficiency level to be able to use the language. The standard does not specify which foreign languages teachers should acquire. Therefore, pre-service teacher education programmes usually include some foreign language studies along with other general subjects.

7.2 TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN IVET

7.2.1 TEACHERS, TRAINERS AND TRAINING FACILITATORS IN IVET

TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

Within the vocational education system vocational education teachers are both teachers and trainers, while the term “facilitator” is not common in the Latvian education. Teachers 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*, Latvian professional qualification level 5, EQF level 6-7) and Vocational Teacher Occupational Standard (*Profesionālās izglītības skolotāja profesijas standards*, the Latvian professional qualification level 4, EQF level 5). Additionally there is an occupational standard (Latvian professional qualification level 5, EQF level 6-7) 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*).

Thus, 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 initial and continuing vocational education at basic and upper-secondary level.

RESPONSIBLE BODIES

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

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 National Centre for Education.

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

7.2.2 PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE EDUCATION OF IVET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

PRE-SERVICE (INITIAL) EDUCATION

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

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). In 2010/2011 these programmes were implemented in part-time form; in total 42 students participated, of which 11 were females. The qualification was awarded to 17 students, of which 11 were females.

IN-SERVICE (CONTINUING) EDUCATION

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 (at least 36 hours in three years). 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.

As mentioned above, the Cabinet Regulations “Procedure for the improvement of teachers’ professional qualification” (*Pedagogu profesionālās kvalifikācijas pilnveides kārtība*, June 2011) stipulate further education for teachers. Regarding teachers’ needs two types of professional improvement programmes are offered:

- A programme – consisting of modules on various topics and implemented by education establishments and relevant national agencies; topics may include latest innovations in the field, subject, teaching methods, psychology, bilingual education, special education and inclusive education, school management, ICT, and quality assurance. After graduation students are awarded a certificate (*apliecība*) by education provider.
- B programme – focused on pedagogy, psychology and didactics and implemented by HEI providing teachers education programmes; duration is at least 72 hours; target groups are general education teachers and vocational school teachers of general subjects, which teach subject with a small amount of hours (max. 105 hours) and which have higher academic or professional education in the field, as well as vocational education and vocationally oriented education teachers of vocational subjects, leisure education teachers and house-keeping and

technology teachers, who do not have higher pedagogic education. After graduation students are awarded a certificate (*sertifikāts*) by particular HEI.

If a teacher wishes to continue their education in HE programme, the hours of A and B programmes may be transferred. Prior implementation education providers have to harmonize these teacher programmes with the Ministry of Education and Science, i.e. the National Centre for Education.

The quality assurance of in-service teacher education programmes is ensured along with other continuing vocational education programmes (see 6.2).

7.3 TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN CVET

7.3.1 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 7.2).

Thus, the same bodies are responsible both for the education of initial and continuing vocational education teachers (see 7.2).

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

The system of **pre-service education** and **in-service education** for continuing vocational education teachers is the same as for initial vocational education. See 7.2.2.

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)

MAIN MECHANISMS AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

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-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 (Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments). This Council has annual meetings to discuss the middle-term labour market forecasts proposed by the ministry. 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, 2010 and 2011 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.

EMERGING AND NEW SKILLS

In labour market currently (2011) employees that are flexible and are capable to perform duties of several posts are demanded. Labour market experts consider that in Latvia the competences promoting citizens' professional flexibility are: entrepreneurship, foreign language skills, good Latvian language skills, computer skills, time management skills, and social networking skills (MoES, 2011).

The "Informative report about the middle-term policy directions of economy recovery" (*Informatīvais ziņojums par ekonomikas atveseļošanas politikas virzieniem vidējā termiņa periodā*, 2009) prepared by the Ministry of Economics includes the list of national prior sectors. Thus, in the middle-term state supported sectors are:

1. Manufacturing sectors with a significant contribution to the growth of added value and export at present and in the future (i.e. food industry, timber);
2. Manufacturing sectors with on average high and high added value and growth potential for the future (i.e. chemical and related industries, production of electrical and optical equipment, engineering and metal working);

3. Export-oriented service sectors (transport and logistics, tourism, information and communication technology).

Furthermore, the “Informative report on short-term labour market forecasts for 2011, and on prior directions of the unemployed and job seekers’ training” (*Informatīvais ziņojums „Par darba tirgus īstermiņa prognozēm 2011.gadam un bezdarbnieku un darba meklētāju prioritārajiem apmācību virzieniem*, 2011) that was prepared by the Ministry of Welfare outlines sectors having the potential to create new jobs. The named sectors are as follows:

1. Sectors related to mobility, transport, and movement;
2. Sectors related to measures focusing on the mitigation of climate change and the introduction of green economy (power industry, waste management, agriculture, construction, production of eco goods, environment protection and preserving nature heritage);
3. Health sector and social services to meet the needs of an aging society;
4. Information and communication technologies.

In order to ensure correspondence of education provision to labour market demands, the Ministry of Education and Science is planning to ground the changes in the implementation of vocation education programmes on the mentioned middle- and short-term priorities. The ministry has prepared a concept on further implementation of vocational education programmes (July 2011), which is not approved yet.

EXAMPLES OF RECENT STUDIES

One of the 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 National Centre for Education 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 were 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 National Centre for Education, the State Education Quality Service, the Employers' Confederation of Latvia, and the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia) introduced the ESF National Programme project "Development of sectoral qualifications system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education" (*Nozaru kvalifikāciju sistēmas izveide un profesionālās izglītības efektivitātes un kvalitātes paaugstināšana*, 2010-2013). 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 National Centre for Education (*Valsts izglītības satura centrs*) for the Latvian professional qualification levels 1-3 (EQF levels 3-4) and the Ministry of Education and Science for levels 4-5 (EQF levels 5-7). 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. Thus, every 5th year 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 skills, knowledge and responsibility in certain working situations) necessary to carry out those tasks. Standards also outline place of occupation in sectoral qualification system including description of employability, and 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 July 2011, 466 occupation standards had been drafted and approved, of which 14 were added to standard register in 2010 (e.g. chemical process technician, insurance specialist, SPA master, forestry machine operator etc) and 26 standards were reviewed and amended.

Vocational education programmes comprise: objectives, content and implementation plan of vocational education programme; requirements regarding previous education; and personal, financial and material resources necessary for its implementation. Vocational education programmes are elaborated by education establishments in line with education, occupational standards as well as with recommendations set by the National Centre for Education (*Valsts izglītības satura centrs*). Thereafter, programmes are evaluated by the Centre and licensed by the State Education Quality Service. Thus, if an education programme does not reflect relevant knowledge, skills and competences included in the standards, it is not licensed or accredited and education establishment may not issue state recognized education documents.

Also the content of final qualification examinations, which conclude vocational education programmes and consist of theoretical and practical part, is drafted in line with occupational standards. In the examination commission representatives from relevant sectoral organization (employers, workers) are represented.

Regarding **teacher education**, the teacher education programmes are also designed according to relevant occupation standards (see 7.2.2). Since the teacher education programmes are mainly implemented by HEIs, respecting their autonomy the state cannot directly influence the study content, thus, HEIs are responsible for matching education programmes to labour market.

9. LIFELONG GUIDANCE FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT

9.1 STRATEGY AND PROVISION

CURRENT KEY CHALLENGES

One of the challenges is ensuring access to guidance and counselling for young people. Prior economic recession the State Employment Agency ensured career consultations also for school students, but with the increase in the unemployment rates the focus shifted to the unemployed. In the meantime, in 2009, because of the limited resources two activities related to career guidance and counselling were postponed – 1) the development of career guidance and counselling within education system, and 2) promoting availability of career guidance and counselling for young people, development of vocationally oriented education. Therefore, at present (2011), measures need to be taken to re-establish system of career counsellors in schools.

EMBEDDING LL GUIDANCE IN LLL AND EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES

There is a shift from the professional orientation system where individuals were directed towards specific learning 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” (*Koncepcija „Karjeras attīstības atbalsta sistēmas pilnveidošana”*), 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.

Lifelong learning strategy is outlined in the “Guidelines for lifelong learning policy for 2007-2013” (*Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013.gadam*, 2007) prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science (see 2.1). 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 for 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 are 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). The SEA establishes a commission to design the list of required occupations and skills in cooperation with the job placement companies and relevant ministries (see 3.2.3).

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 career 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 the 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*, May1995) 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*, SEDA) 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 SEDA, 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 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.

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 underdeveloped yet.

COOPERATION BETWEEN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT SECTORS/ADMINISTRATIONS

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 Information and Career Guidance Department of SEDA acts as a secretariat to the Forum. The Forum cooperates with the Latvian delegation to the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN).

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 SEDA develops some methodological materials to support cooperation activities.

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 6.5 are 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 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. As mentioned above, 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), which includes information about general, vocational and higher education institutions and education programmes they offer. In 2010, the State Education Development Agency started to design an e-tool “Job Town”, which is expected to be finished by the end of 2011 and 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.

SEA web portal “Career Services” (*Karjeras pakalpojumi*, <http://www.nva.gov.lv/pkiva/>) provides information about education establishments, self-assessment tests, descriptions of occupations, as well as opportunity to receive e-consultations.

Youth Consultations launched web portal www.prakse.lv (2008), which is considered to be the largest in Latvia providing information on career and education development issues. The portal includes sections for young people, employers and education establishments. The following topics are addressed: vacancies for practical training, jobs, voluntary work; information about education institutions and studies; information about employers and tools to contact them via the portal; articles and consultations about the choice of career, professions, success stories; latest events in career choice; employers’ views on professions and recommendations about studies; descriptions of professions and a career test. In cooperation with the Employers’ Confederation of Latvia, a section for study research papers is developed to promote elaboration of students’ research papers (course papers, diploma papers, theses) in cooperation with employers, i.e. students would choose a research topic proposed by an enterprise, and the enterprise would ensure support for the research.

Euroguidance Latvia, which is located within the Agency, in 2010 designed and posted online an interactive e-tool regarding mobility “To go or not to go?” (Are you ready for a foreign experience?) 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).

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 Education Quality Service 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 (Latvian professional qualification level 5, EQF level 6-7), which outlines knowledge, skills and professional competence necessary to do professional duties. The other document is the occupational standard for teachers (Latvian professional qualification level 5, EQF level 6-7) 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 2011), 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 National Centre for Education, one of the modules designed and implemented during the project for improving teachers’ theoretical knowledge should focus on cooperation between education and the labour market (see 7.1). 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. 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 learning 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 improvement of guidance practitioners/teachers currently working in the educational sector (3700 teachers in 2006 and 1525 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

10.1 VET FINANCING POLICY

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.

As in many other countries, primary funding policy aims are related to increasing cost-effectiveness; the issue became even more challenging in the condition of economic recession. Funding allocated to the education sector increased during the period from 2000 to 2008 by 69.8%, but actual amounts due to the inflation and other factors remained insufficient. Then 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). Thus, funding reduction carried out in 2009 hindered several challenges to successful functioning of the education sector. See section 3.2.3.

10.2 FUNDING FOR INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

INSTITUTIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR FUNDING

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 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 education 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.

FUNDING SOURCES AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION

Education institutions according to their ownership are financed from State budget, local government budget or private sources (see table below).

TABLE 1. SOURCES OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FUNDING				
EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS ACCORDING TO THEIR FOUNDERS	TEACHERS' SALARY	FIXED EXPENSES*	NON-FIXED EXPENSES**	
STATE VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS	State budget funding	State budget funding	State budget funding	

LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS	State budget funding	Local government budget funding	Local government budget funding (except teachers' salary)
PRIVATE VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS	Private funding	Private funding	Private funding

* Fixed expenses – the expenditures of missions, payment for services, energy and water, as well as costs from purchasing learning aids, equipment and modernising equipment.

** Non-fixed expenses – scholarships, maintenance costs of student dormitories, rehabilitation measures and catering for persons with special needs, expenditures of qualification practice organization, costs for culture education and sports, as well staff's salary (wages and compulsory state social security contributions of employer).

One of the sources also can be students' 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).

Pre-school, basic and general secondary education establishments are mainly 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. 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.

HEIs are funded by their founders, as well as the founders provide financial supervision of the HEI. The state HEIs 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 10.3.1.

The overall budget for vocational education in 2010 was EUR 59 899 413 (EUR 68 225 643 in 2009 and EUR 46 401 181 in 2005). The funding for vocational education establishments in 2010 comprised 87.2% of subsidies from the state general budget (EUR 36 717 095) and 12.8% of their own income (paid services provided by vocational education institutions, amounting EUR 5 380 452). Comparing to the previous year these proportions have changed only slightly (+/- 1.5%), although the state funding has experienced a significant reduction.

In 2010, 84.6% (81.5% in 2009) of state funds allocated to vocational schools were for recurrent costs, including salaries for staff, i.e. 47.7% (49.1% in 2009) of total expenditures, and just 0.6% (0.7% in 2009) towards capital investment.

FUNDING MECHANISMS/CRITERIA FOR DISTRIBUTION

State subsidies for vocational education 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.

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)*. 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.

In Latvia there are such financing mechanisms as tax incentives, scholarships in initial vocational education, and study loans.

The legal basis for **tax incentives** is formed by the Law on Enterprise Income Taxes (*Par uzņēmumu ienākuma nodokli, 1995, 2011*) and the Law on Personal Income Tax (*Par iedzīvotāju ienākuma nodokli, 1993, 2011*). The former concerning tax allowance for donors stipulates that tax is reduced for residents by 85% of sums donated to education institutions that have been granted public benefit organisation status. Regarding reimbursed expenses, the law and regulations state that expenses (both payer's and their family members') related to professional development, acquisition of speciality, and education are reimbursed and deducted from the amount of annual taxable income, before taxing particular inhabitant's 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 (and health care) costs. However, the amount individuals are paid back is comparatively small – EUR 213.43 before 2009, when it was doubled (EUR 426.86), and since 2010 this sum has been decreased to the previous amount. Expenses may be requested to be reimbursed in three 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, 2011*). 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.

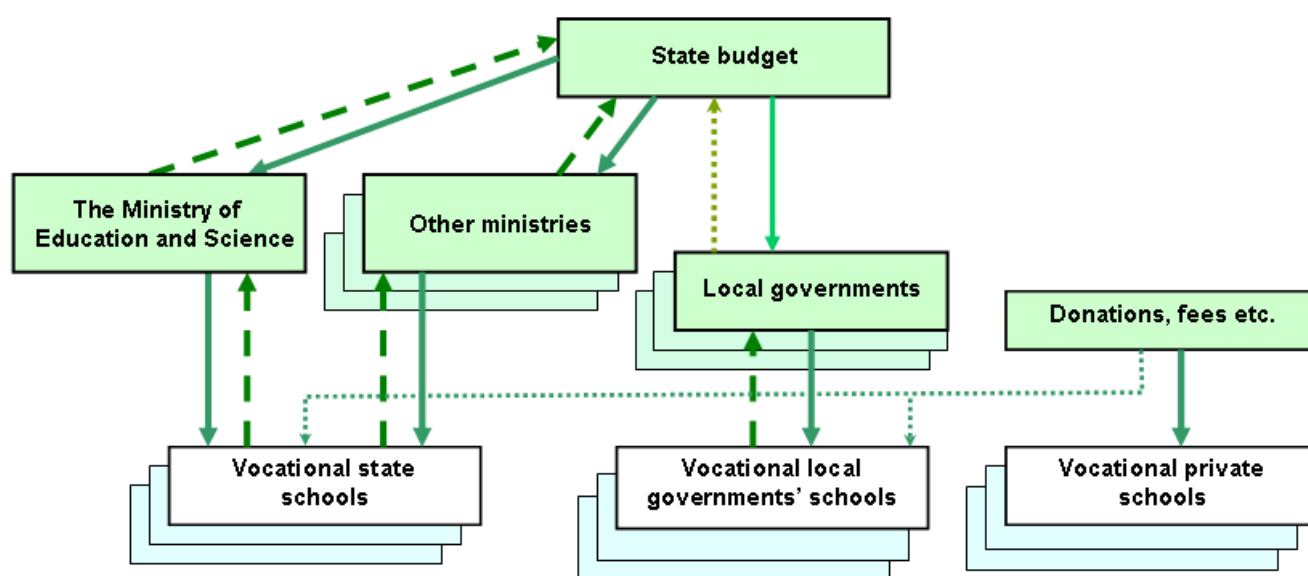
Only tertiary education students can apply for **study loans**. Allocation of study loans from the state budget was established in 1999 and the contract with students was made from July 2000. Since September 2001, study loans are allocated from funds of credit institutions with the State guarantee. Tertiary 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 programmes 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).

CHANGES OCCURRING

Current discussions include the assigning of state vocational education establishments to the local governments, thus, also altering the flow of funding. This reform was proposed through the “Guidelines for optimization of vocational education establishments network for 2010-2015” (*Profesionālās izglītības iestāžu tīkla optimizācijas pamatnostādnes 2010.-2015.gadam*, January 2010) prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science. The other reform is related to the shift towards the principle “money follows students” (see above). About other measures in the time of crisis see section 3.2.3.

DIAGRAM 3: FLOW OF FUNDS FOR INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION



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10.3 FUNDING FOR CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, AND ADULT LEARNING

10.3.1 PUBLIC FUNDING SCHEMES AND MECHANISMS TO FINANCE CVET (EXCLUDING THOSE SPECIFICALLY TARGETED AT UNEMPLOYED)

The institutional framework for continuing vocational education is not separated from the initial education (see 10.2). 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. Some local governments allocate a fixed percentage from the budget to adult education. Important source of funding is EU, Swiss and Norwegian financial assistance instruments, including structural

funds and the EU Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013, which through various projects opened more learning opportunities for adults.

Nationally data on continuing vocational education funding are not collected anymore (latest data are only about 2005). Partly information about adult education funding is available on learning activities supported by ESF, state budget and partly local governments. Data about employers' and individuals' funding are not regularly collected.

Total spent funding for lifelong learning was EUR 39 967 661 in 2009 and EUR 90 025 237 in 2010. This sum also includes EUR 17 348 217 in 2010 from state budget as co-funding for ESF projects and provision of second chance offer in general (evening) schools and vocational schools for the acquisition of basic and secondary education, focusing on socially disadvantaged groups.

According to the Law on Local Governments (1994, 2010), local governments should support inhabitants' education. Local governments may perform this function by claiming the state funding in a tender and by selecting education providers. Local governments can also motivate the inhabitants in their territory to invest their funding in adult education, e.g., by offering to co-finance some service. However, during the economic recession due to limited resources many local governments cut off their funding for adult learning. In 2009, 65 education establishments were allocated co-funding or funding by local governments for adult informal learning. Totally 29 069 inhabitants participated in learning funded by local governments. Spent expenditures provided by local governments were EUR 1 288 815 (see table below).

TABLE 2. FUNDING FOR ADULT INFORMAL LEARNING FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENTS BY REGION (2009)	
REGION	SPENT FUNDING (EUR)
RIGA	162 425
KURZEME	89 732
LATGALE	105 362
VIDZEME	211 460
ZEMGALE	719 792
TOTAL IN LATVIA	1 288 772

Source: *The Ministry of Education and Science, 2011*

The Ministry of Education and Science is planning to introduce (in 2011) a measure on ensuring the new key skills to 15% of adults (including those with special needs) in the territory of local governments in cooperation with general, vocational and higher education institutions. More information about adult learning opportunities see 6.2 and 6.3.

10.3.2 PUBLIC – PRIVATE COST-SHARING ⁽³⁾

There are 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. See previous section.

⁽³⁾ Where Government and employers and/or individuals share the costs, namely: vouchers/ILAs, grants, tax incentives, loans, saving schemes, human capital contracts (Government and individuals); tax incentives, grants and vouchers (Government and employers).

10.3.3 COLLECTIVE (EMPLOYER, EMPLOYEE) INVESTMENT TO FINANCE CVET (⁴)

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.

TABLE 3. COST OF CVT COURSES AS % OF TOTAL LABOUR COST (ALL ENTERPRISES), (2005 vs. 1999)								
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.

10.3.4 REACHING THE GROUPS AT RISK THROUGH FUNDING SCHEMES AND MECHANISMS

Funding schemes outlined in 10.3.1 and 10.4 also include persons for socially disadvantaged groups. More information about learning measures for disadvantaged groups is in section 6.5.

10.4 FUNDING FOR TRAINING FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

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. Active employment measures are financed from the social budget and constitute less than 10% of funding.

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 projects "Training for the unemployed and job-seekers in Latvia – 2" (*Bezdarbnieku un darba meklētāju apmācība Latvijā – 2*, 2009-2013) and "Training for the unemployed and job-seekers in Latvia – 3" (*Bezdarbnieku un darba meklētāju apmācība – 3.kārta*, 2010-2012). The total funding for the projects is EUR 86 455.7 thousands, of which at least 89.37% (referable costs) is covered by ESF. For more information about learning activities for the unemployed and statistics see 6.5.

(⁴)Where the costs are covered by employers and employees, namely private cost-sharing among enterprises (training funds) and private cost-sharing between employers and employees (paid and unpaid training leave, payback clauses).

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www.aiknc.lv Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre (*Augstākās izglītības kvalitātes novērtēšanas centrs*)

www.csb.gov.lv Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (*Latvijas Republikas Centrālā statistikas pārvalde*)

www.em.gov.lv Ministry of Economics (*Ekonomikas ministrija*)

www.ikvd.gov.lv State Education Quality Service (*Izglītības kvalitātes valsts dienests*)

www.izm.gov.lv Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*)

www.lak.lv Latvian Chamber of Crafts (*Latvijas Amatniecības kamera*)

www.iddk.lv Employers' Confederation of Latvia (*Latvijas Darba devēju konfederācija*)

www.lizda.lv Education and Science Workers Trade Union (*Latvijas Izglītības un zinātnes darbinieku arodbiedrība*)

www.lm.gov.lv Ministry of Welfare (*Labklājības ministrija*)

www.muzizglitiba.lv website for Lifelong Learning Latvia

www.niid.lv The national data base on learning opportunities

www.nva.lv State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra*)

www.valoda.lv The Latvian Language Agency (*Latviešu valodas aģentūra*)

www.viaa.gov.lv State Education Development Agency (*Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra*)

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

11.3 LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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

CoM – Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia (*Latvijas Republikas Ministru kabinets*)

CP – credit points (*kreditpunkti*)

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

EQF – European Qualifications Framework (*Eiropas kvalifikāciju ietvarstruktūra*)

ESF – European Social Fund (*Eiropas Sociālais fonds*)

LQF – Latvian Qualifications Framework (*Latvijas kvalifikāciju ietvarstruktūra*)

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

MoW – Ministry of Welfare (*Labklājības ministrija*)

NCP – National Coordination Point (*Nacionālais koordinācijas punkts*)

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

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

NQF – National Qualifications Framework (*Nacionālā kvalifikāciju ietvarstruktūra*)

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*)