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# Latvia

## VET in Europe – Country report

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**2013**

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# Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1. External factors influencing VET .....	6
1.1 Structure/development of the population .....	6
1.2 Structure/development of the labour force .....	6
1.3 Economy structure/the relative weight of different industries and their dynamics .....	8
1.4 Degree of regulation of the labour market, labour supply/labour demand, mismatches .....	9
1.5. Degree of regulation of access to occupations/professions .....	9
1.6. Main features of welfare/employment policies relevant to VET .....	10
1.7. Value of VET qualifications on the labour market .....	11
CHAPTER 2. Providing vocational education in a lifelong learning perspective .....	13
2.1. Diagram of the national education system .....	13
2.2. Government-regulated VET provision.....	14
2.2.1 Vocational education pathways.....	14
2.2.2 Apprenticeship system.....	20
2.2.3 VET provision for target groups .....	21
2.2.4 Specific financial and governance issues.....	22
2.2.5 Education and training providers.....	26
2.2.6 Teachers and trainers .....	27
2.2.7 Implementation of the Latvian Qualifications Framework .....	28
2.2.8 Increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education .....	30
2.3 Other forms of learning.....	30
2.3.1 Learning providers, typical programmes and target groups.....	30
2.3.2 Sectoral education programmes .....	30
2.3.3 Workplace learning .....	31
2.3.4 Funding mechanisms.....	32
2.4 Discussion on the new trends in adult education .....	33
CHAPTER 3. Shaping VET qualifications.....	34
3.1 Methods for anticipating labour market needs and applying the results in VET .....	34
3.2 How and by whom qualifications are designed .....	36
3.3 Ensuring the labour market relevance of VET .....	37
3.4 Quality assurance.....	38
3.5 Validation of non-formal and informal learning.....	39
3.6 Success in cooperation with stakeholders .....	39
CHAPTER 4. Promoting participation in vocational education and training .....	41
4.1 Types and characteristics of incentives for individuals, enterprises and providers .....	41
4.2 Guidance and counselling, structures and services .....	43
4.3 Current key challenges.....	44
Annex 1 Initial vocational education at basic and secondary level (mainly school-based) .....	46

Annex 2 Professional education at tertiary level (mainly school-based) .....	47
Annex 3 Definitions .....	48
Acronyms and abbreviations .....	51
References .....	52
Web pages.....	56

## List of tables and figures

### Figures

Figure 1.	Flow of funds for initial vocational education .....	25
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### Tables

Table 1.	Employment rates by age groups and highest level of education attained (%), 2010-12 ...	6
Table 2.	Unemployment by age groups and highest level of education attained (%), 2010-12 .....	7
Table 3.	Structure of the Latvian economy, 2010-12 .....	8
Table 4.	Shares of different population groups by the obtained education level (%), 2011-12 .....	11
Table 5.	Students in VET programmes in the beginning of a study year .....	16
Table 6.	Students by field of study in vocational schools in the beginning of school year 2010/12	17
Table 7.	Participation of adults (25-64) in education (%), 2008-13 .....	18
Table 8.	Classification of continuous vocational education programmes .....	18
Table 9.	CVET courses by field of education (%), 2011 .....	19
Table 10.	Participation in education (25-64) by the level educational attainment (%), 2011 .....	19
Table 11.	Participation in education (25-64) by the labour status (%), 2011 .....	20
Table 12.	Sources of vocational education funding .....	25
Table 13.	Education level of VET teachers.....	28
Table 14.	Formal qualifications and EQF/LQF levels .....	29

## CHAPTER 1.

## External factors influencing VET (1)

## 1.1 Structure/development of the population

Latvia has 2.02 million inhabitants (2013) and a territory of 64,589 km<sup>2</sup>. The population has been decreasing in the last 20 years due to negative demographic trends (natural increase: -0.48% in 2010, -0.47% in 2011 and -0.45% in 2012) and emigration (net migration: -1.68% in 2010, -0.97% in 2011 and -0.58% in 2012) mainly for employment reasons.

The share of population below the working age has been decreasing from 2000 (18.0%) except for the past four years (13.8% in 2010, 14.2% in 2011, 14.3% in 2012, and 14.4% at the beginning of 2013). The proportion of the schooling age population is expected to decrease further until at least 2015. Proportion of population above the working age shows steady increase during the last years, i.e. 20.2% in 2010, 21.6% in 2011, 22.1% in 2012, and 22.4% at the beginning of 2013. The proportion of working age population in the recent years has decreased (64.2% in 2011, 63.6% in 2012 and 63.2% in 2013).

In 2013, the largest share of population lived in urban area (67.5%), of which 47.3% – in Riga. The urban/rural ratio has not changed significantly since 2009. The majority of social and economic facilities are concentrated in Riga and in other big cities, thus, education and other services in rural areas are limited. There is also an inland migration from rural areas to Riga.

## 1.2 Structure/development of the labour force

The employment rate for the age group 15-64 in 2012 (63.1%) has increased slightly comparing to 2010 (59.3%) and 2011 (60.8%). However, this is still below the rate of 2008 (68.6%). For males employment rate was slightly higher – 64.6% than for females – 61.7% in 2012.

The employment rate in 2010-12 (Table 1) for people with higher levels of education (ISCED 5-6) in Latvia was higher than in the EU-27 in all age groups, being the highest (70.0%; 54.6% in the EU-27) in 2012 for young people (15-24). At the same time the same age group with low education levels (ISCED 0-2) demonstrates the lowest employment rate (10.4%; 19.6% in the EU-27).

Table 1. Employment rates by age groups and highest level of education attained (%), 2010-12

	TIME ISCED/AGE	2010			2011			2012		
		15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64
EU 27	0-2	21.4	62.8	43.1	21.7	62.1	43.3	19.6	60.7	43.7
	3-4	44.9	79.7	59.6	44.5	79.8	60.4	43.5	79.3	61.3
	5-6	56.9	87.4	74.5	55.6	87.0	74.8	54.6	86.5	75.7
	No R.	4.7	72.8	61.3	5.6	73.4	61.3	5.8	74.3	65.2
	Total	34.0	78.1	56.7	33.7	78.0	57.5	32.9	77.5	58.6
LV	0-2	10.9	55.8	35.2	9.8 <sup>(b)</sup>	54.2 <sup>(b)</sup>	38.1 <sup>(b)</sup>	10.4	59.1	39.0
	3-4	37.7	72.4	55.0	37.3 <sup>(b)</sup>	73.2 <sup>(b)</sup>	56.7 <sup>(b)</sup>	39.9	73.2	57.8

(1) In this report VET is referred to 'vocational education' (in Latvian: '*profesionālā izglītība*'). It includes periods of practical training.

TIME	2010			2011			2012		
	ISCED/AGE	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49
5-6	71.4	84.4	73.0	67.8 <sup>(b)</sup>	87.5 <sup>(b)</sup>	77.1 <sup>(b)</sup>	70.0	89.6	78.5
No R.	:	: <sup>(u)</sup>	:	:	:	:	:	: <sup>(u)</sup>	:
Total	26.4	74.0	56.7	25.8 <sup>(b)</sup>	75.2 <sup>(b)</sup>	59.3 <sup>(b)</sup>	28.7	76.9	60.8

Source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey); last update: 06-09-2013, extracted: 13-09-2013  
Special values – : not available; No R. – no response; u – low reliability; b – break in time series.

The unemployment rate (share of job seekers (15-64) of total economically active population) has doubled during the economic crisis from 7.8% in 2008 to 19.0% in 2010; then decreased to 16.5% in 2011 and 15.2% in 2012.

The greatest unemployment rate in Latvia is among the young people (15-24) with lower levels of education (ISCED 0-2). It has decreased from 45.6% in 2010 to 44.1% in 2012. The current EU-27 unemployment rate is lower but has the opposite (growing) trend. In 2012, the lowest unemployment rate (5.4%; 6.2% in the EU-27) was among the population (25-49) with higher levels of education (ISCED 5-6) (Table 2).

Table 2. Unemployment by age groups and highest level of education attained (%), 2010-12

	TIME	2010			2011			2012		
		ISCED/AGE	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49	50-64	15-24	25-49
EU 27	0-2	27.4	16.3	10.2	28.2	16.9	10.8	30.3	19.1	12.6
	3-4	18.2	8.2	6.7	18.6	8.1	6.5	20.0	8.8	6.7
	5-6	16.3	5.3	3.6	16.7	5.5	3.7	17.9	6.2	3.7
	No R.	19.3	8.3	6.6 <sup>(u)</sup>	19.7	8.6	5.2 <sup>(u)</sup>	21.9	8.4	5.1 <sup>(u)</sup>
	Total	20.9	8.9	6.9	21.3	9.0	6.9	22.8	9.9	7.4
LV	0-2	45.6	27.8	27.1	40.1 <sup>(b)</sup>	29.7 <sup>(b)</sup>	21.1 <sup>(b)</sup>	44.1	22.6	22.7
	3-4	33.2	18.6	18.8	31.9 <sup>(b)</sup>	16.7 <sup>(b)</sup>	17.3 <sup>(b)</sup>	26.5	17.0	16.0
	5-6	20.5	10.4	8.1	14.3 <sup>(u)</sup>	6.7 <sup>(b)</sup>	7.4 <sup>(b)</sup>	13.7 <sup>u</sup>	5.4	8.0
	No R.	:	: <sup>(u)</sup>	:	:	:	:	: <sup>(u)</sup>	: <sup>(u)</sup>	: <sup>(u)</sup>
	Total	34.5	17.0	16.7	31.0 <sup>(b)</sup>	14.9 <sup>(b)</sup>	14.9 <sup>(b)</sup>	28.4	13.6	14.2

Source: Eurostat (Labour Force Survey); last update: 6.9.2013, extracted: 13.9.2013  
Special values – : not available; No R. – no response; u – low reliability; b – break in time series.

The registered unemployment rate at the State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra*, NVA) has increased during the crisis from the minimum level of 6% in 2007 to 17.3% in March 2010. It has decreased to 9.6% in June 2013 with the total of 94 757 unemployed people that is less than in 2012 (117 606). The share of young people (15-24) of the total number of registered unemployed gradually decreases from 14.5% at the end of 2009 to 11.8% in 2011, 10.0% in 2012 and 9.1% in June 2013.

Women use NVA services more (57.3%; June 2013) than men (42.7%). Share of the registered unemployment in the regions remains stable. The lowest unemployment rate (June 2013) was registered in Riga region (6.2%) that was three times less than in Latgale region 19.8% (eastern part of the country with usual unemployment rate higher than in other regions).

The most (36.9%) of the registered unemployed (June 2013) have vocational upper-secondary education (ISCED 3B or ISCED 4) followed by the general upper-secondary education (ISCED 3A) graduates (26.9%), basic (primary) education (ISCED 2) graduates (19.5%) and higher education (ISCED 5) diploma holders (13.5%). The 2.9% of registered unemployed have lower than primary education. Since 2010 the relative weight of groups remains stable (<1% deviation).

### 1.3 Economy structure/the relative weight of different industries and their dynamics

During the crisis, the gross domestic product (GDP) decreased by 25%, yet in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2009, the growth resumed, and, in 2010, a gradual increase of GDP has been observed. In 2011, the growth was 5.5%. The national economy continued growing at a rapid pace in 2012 and the GDP increased by 5.6% (the fastest growth in EU) compared to 2011. Despite the unfavourable external market environment growth remained rapid throughout 2012 – quarterly by 1.4% on average and throughout 2013 – quarterly by 1.0%.

The strong economic growth in 2012 was based on both external and domestic demand. Trade (7.3%), manufacturing (9.3%), construction (14.6%) and transport (4.0%) sectors contributed the most to the growth (Table 3). The volume of public services sectors remained at the level of the previous year. It was influenced by the implemented fiscal consolidation measures.

Table 3. Structure of the Latvian economy, 2010-12

SECTOR \ YEAR	GDP growth (%)			Employment in sectors (% of total)		
	2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012
<b>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</b>	-8.9	-0.5	6.9	2.3	2.4	2.5
<b>Manufacturing</b>	19.1	11.7	9.3	13.1	13.5	13.6
<b>Other industry</b>	2.8	-0.9	-0.2	2.9	2.8	2.8
<b>Construction</b>	-31.1	11.9	14.6	5.9	6.3	6.6
<b>Trade</b>	0.2	9.5	7.3	20.6	20.2	20.3
<b>Transport</b>	-1.8	8.1	4.0	8.6	8.5	8.7
<b>Public services</b>	-8.2	0.6	-0.6	27.6	26.7	25.4
<b>Other commercial services</b>	2.5	1.2	3.4	19.1	19.5	20.1

Source: The National Economy of Latvia: Macroeconomic Review (2013) CSB, Ministry of Economics

Most of the labour force in 2010-12 was employed in services and trade. The share of employees in manufacturing has been approximately 13%.

Exports of goods and services remained the key growth driver in 2012. The improved competitiveness of local producers and diversification of export markets allowed increasing the exports value of Latvian goods by 15%. Taking into account the complicated external environment (a low demand in some trading partner countries), it is a remarkable achievement. The export of agricultural and food products has increased by 43.3% compared to 2011, metal and metal articles – by 11.4%, and wood and products of wood – by 3.1%.

In 2012, the state budget expenses for education were the third highest (16.6%), following the social protection (28.2%) and economic activities (18.6%). Education budget constitutes 6.1% of GDP – less than in the previous years (8.4% in 2009, 7.1% in 2010 and 6.6% in 2011).

In 2011-13 budgets, the subsidy to MoES has decreased from EUR 412.89 million in 2011, to EUR 367.37 million in 2012 and to EUR 320.52 million in 2013. However there is a small increase in MoES budget for its VET institutions. (from EUR 54.07 million in 2011 to EUR 56.45 million in 2012 and to EUR 55.64 million in 2013). It is still less than in 2008 and 2009 (EUR 77.65 million and EUR 60.53 million accordingly).

Both in vocational and general education funds are allocated per student. In general education this applies only to teachers' salaries. The amount per VET student is regulated by the government (Regulations on the minimum expenditure per one student for vocational education programmes,

*Noteikumi par profesionālās izglītības programmu īstenošanas izmaksu minimumu uz vienu izglītojamo*, 2007). It covers salaries, student allowance and expenditures for culture and sports. However the actual government's funding is below the approved amount. Schools use own revenue to compensate the difference. On average MoES has provided EUR 1877 in 2011, EUR 2089 in 2012 and EUR 2398 in 2013 per student per year.

The modernisation of VET project has been co-financed by the EU structural funds and will be completed in 2015. In total EUR 160.6 million have been invested.

#### 1.4 Degree of regulation of the labour market, labour supply/labour demand, mismatches

Labour market is regulated by the Labour Law (*Darba likums*, 2002), the Law on the Support for the Unemployed and Job Seekers (*Bezdarbnieku un darba meklētāju atbalsta likums*, 2002), and the Unemployment Insurance Law (*Likums 'Par apdrošināšanu bezdarba gadījumam'*, 2000).

The employment policy is responsibility of the Ministry of Welfare (*Labklājības ministrija*, MoW) together with the NVA. In 2010, MoW has elaborated the strategy for the shift from short-term active labour market policy measures (for combating consequences of crisis) to the traditional active labour market policy measures (*Stratēģija pārejai no īstermiņa krīzes sekas mazinošiem aktīvās darba tirgus politikas pasākumiem uz tradicionālajiem aktīvās darba tirgus politikas pasākumiem*) that extends lifelong learning measures to the unemployed and persons at the unemployment risk.

The education policy is responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*, MoES). The Education development guidelines for 2014-20 (*Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādnes 2014.-2020.gadam*, 2014) foresee close cooperation with employers.

According to the National Reform Programme of implementation of the 'EU 2020' strategy (*Latvijas nacionālā reformu programma „ES 2020” stratēģijas īstenošanai*, 2011) one of the national macro-structural challenges is to combat structural unemployment by ensuring better correspondence of qualifications and skills to the requirements of the labour market. The major policies for combating the structural unemployment are:

- improving the active labour market policy measures by a gradual shift from combating the consequences of crisis to the traditional active labour market policy measures;
- efficient reengagement of economically inactive population to the labour market and support to the regional mobility;
- promoting efficiency of public employment service; and
- introducing the lifelong learning approach.

#### 1.5. Degree of regulation of access to occupations/professions

The Vocational Education Law (*Profesionālās izglītības likums*, 1999) states that the content of vocational education is regulated by the national VET standards (state vocational education standard, state vocational secondary education standard and state standard for the first level of professional higher education), occupational standards, and VET programmes.

As part of the classification of occupations (legislation) (*Noteikumi par Profesiju klasifikatoru, profesijai atbilstošiem pamatuzdevumiem un kvalifikācijas pamatprasībām un Profesiju klasifikatora lietošanas un aktualizēšanas kārtību*, 2010) occupational standards define the key tasks and duties for professions and requirements (including knowledge/ skills/ attitude/ competences) of VET qualifications. The procedure for developing occupational standards approved by the government (*Profesiju standartu izstrādes kārtība*, 2007) stipulates that MoES (for EQF levels 5-7) and the National Centre for Education (*Valsts izglītības saturs centrs*, VISC) (for EQF levels 3-4) coordinate the design of occupational standards in cooperation with the social partners (National Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment, and professional organizations) and line ministries.

The Law on the Regulated Professions and the Recognition of Professional Qualifications (*Par reglamentētajām profesijām un profesionālās kvalifikācijas atzīšanu*, 2001) and relevant government regulations stipulate special requirements (e.g. the minimum requirements for educational programmes or professional knowledge/skills, regular re-certification or evaluation, and sub-division of professions) for regulated professions:

- to ensure the conformity of activities with the specific requirements, e.g. safety, health;
- to protect certain professions from unqualified personnel by determining higher profession requirements;
- to ensure recognition of Latvian qualifications abroad and foreign qualifications in Latvia;
- to promote free movement of persons in the EU and the member states of the European Free Trade Association.

Regular re-certification/evaluation is usually conducted by the NGO certification (by delegation) centres of the relevant sector, e.g., Certification Centre of the Latvian Railwayman Society, Certification Commission of the Latvian Nurse Association. There are currently 68 regulated professions, 164 specialities and 89 sub-specialities (2013) included in the legislation (Regulations regarding professions regulated by lists of specialities, sub-specialities and additional specialities, *Noteikumi par specialitāšu, apakšspecialitāšu un papildspecialitāšu sarakstu reglamentētajām profesijām*, 2006).

## 1.6. Main features of welfare/employment policies relevant to VET

According to the Law on the Support for the Unemployed and Job Seekers (*Bezdarbnieku un darba meklētāju atbalsta likums*, 2002), the MoW in cooperation with the MoES provides vocational education, career guidance, and re-qualification and professional improvement for the unemployed and job seekers, non-formal learning and qualification raise for the (self-)employed under the unemployment risk. The ministries propose the employment policy improvements and support the involvement of unemployed/job seekers/(self-)employed through the state and EU co-financed projects.

The national policy for reducing unemployment is implemented by the NVA – a public agency under the supervision of the MoW. The NVA cooperates with the state and local government institutions, NGOs, and other private and legal entities. The policy is implemented in line with the government approved procedures for organising and financing active employment measures and preventative measures for unemployment reduction (*Noteikumi par aktīvo nodarbinātības*

*pasākumu un preventīvo bezdarba samazināšanas pasākumu organizēšanas un finansēšanas kārtību un pasākumu īstenotāju izvēles principiem, 2011).*

The strategy for the shift from short-term active labour market policy measures for combating consequences of crisis to the traditional active labour market policy measures (2010) has introduced education vouchers and other measures for promoting youth employment, such as real-life try-out of three professions (three weeks each) to explore careers.

The education establishments that implement educational activities for the unemployed are selected by the NVA according to the public procurement procedure. The list of occupations and skills is proposed annually by the MoW commission with representatives from the ministries (welfare, economy, education), the NVA, the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments (*Latvijas Pašvaldību savienība*), the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia (*Latvijas Brīvo arodbiedrību savienība*), the Employers' Confederation of Latvia (*Latvijas Darba devēju konfederācija*), as well as other institutions upon request. A pilot project on CVET for unemployed in vocational education institutions is to start in 2014.

## 1.7. Value of VET qualifications on the labour market

When comparing rates of the employed and unemployed by their education (Table 4), it is evident that the share of individuals with higher education among the unemployed is smaller, while the rate of those persons with general (upper-secondary and basic) education among the unemployed is higher than among the employed. This shows that inhabitants with higher and vocational education are in more favourable situation in labour market comparing to the inhabitants with general education.

Table 4. Shares of different population groups by the obtained education level (%), 2011-12

EDUCATION \ YEAR	Employed *		Registered unemployed (at the end of year)**		Graduates*		Registered unemployed: young people (15-24, at the end of year)**	
	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
Higher	32.5	34.2	12.4	12.5	34.5	34.4	8.1	9.0
Vocational (upper-secondary level)	35.3	34.0	36.3	37.2	11.9	12.4	21.0	22.8
General (upper-secondary or basic)	31.7	31.5	47.8	46.8	53.7	53.2	63.7	61.2
Beneath basic	0.4	0.3	2.8	3.0	-	-	6.5	6.6

Source: \* CSB, [www.csb.gov.lv](http://www.csb.gov.lv); \*\* NVA

In Table 4 the column “Registered unemployed - young people (15-24)” shows that in this group of unemployed there are mainly persons with general education (61.2% in 2012) and without professional qualification. At the same time the share of individuals with vocational education among unemployed young people (22.8% in 2012) is significantly lower than among all the registered unemployed (37.2% in 2012).

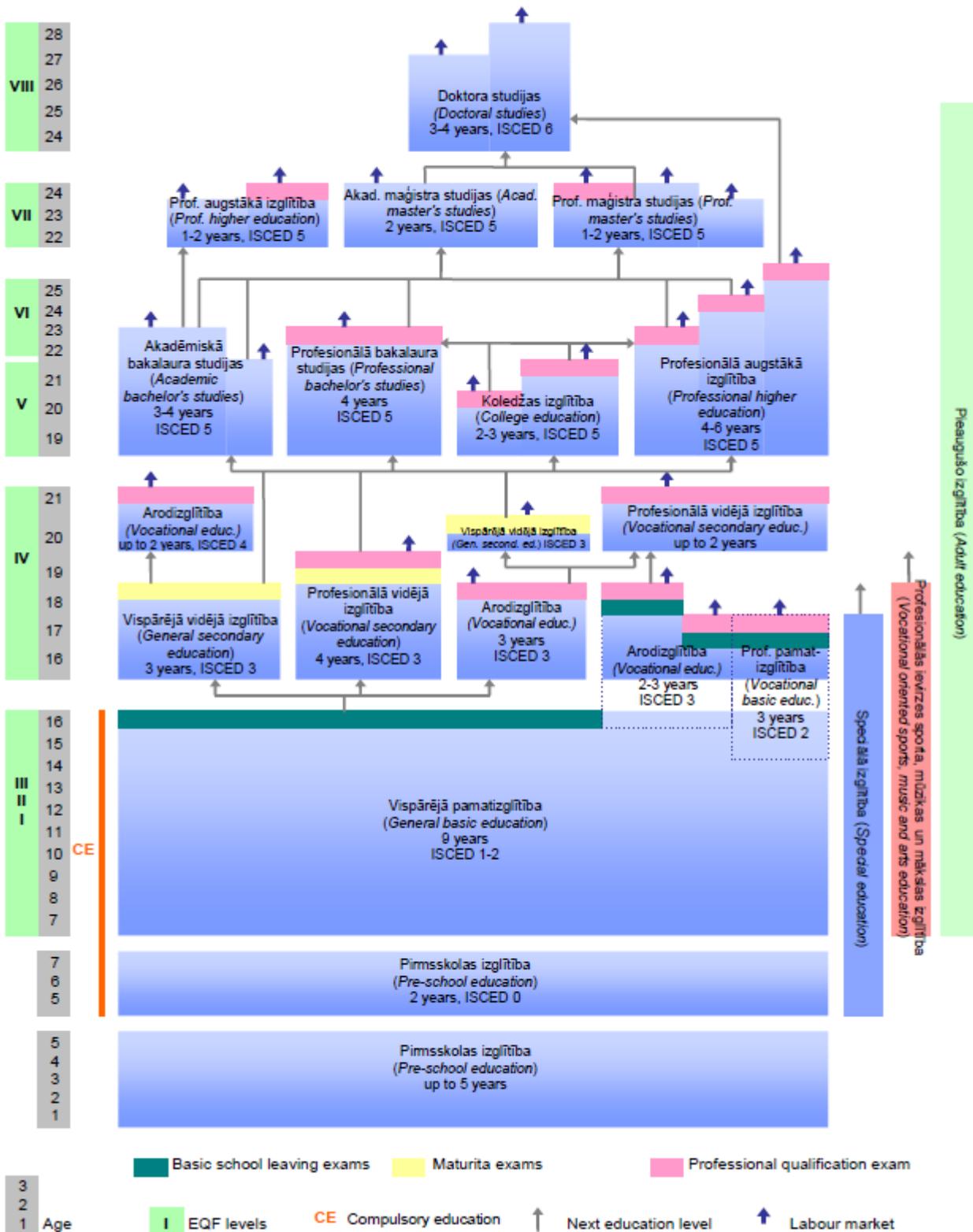
In 2012, the NVA introduced the requirement to register the education establishment that young unemployed has graduated. This data will help to evaluate the quality of education

programmes. The MoES plans to develop a data base to track overall education-to-work transitions.

CHAPTER 2.

# Providing vocational education in a lifelong learning perspective

## 2.1. Diagram of the national education system



The main elements of the Latvian education system are:

- pre-school education,
- basic (primary) education,
- secondary education,
- higher (tertiary) education.

General education in Latvia lasts 12 years: nine at compulsory basic (primary) and three at the secondary level. Pre-school education for 5 to 6 years old children is compulsory too. Basic (primary) education comprises a choice or combination of general basic education (grades 1-9) and vocational basic education. Secondary education comprises a choice or combination of general secondary education, vocational secondary education and vocational education. Higher (tertiary) education comprises both academic and professional study programmes.

## 2.2. Government-regulated VET provision

Initial vocational education is strictly regulated by the state. The Vocational Education Law (*Profesionālās izglītības likums*, 1999) regulates vocational education and is supplemented by various governmental decrees. In 2012, the government has requested the MoES to draft a new VET law. A special MoES working group has been set for this purpose to draft the law in 2014 (postponed).

Proposed by the MoES and accepted by the government current education policy priorities are defined in the Education development guidelines for 2014-20 (*Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādnes 2014.-2020.gadam*, 2014).

The main lifelong learning policy document has been the Guidelines for lifelong learning policy for 2007-13 (*Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013.gadam*, 2007) and its short-term programmes prepared by the MoES.

Considerable changes to VET policy has been presented by the MoES in 2009 in the Concept of 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 concept aims at outlining solutions for key challenges in vocational education with mutual agreement between the state and social partners.

### 2.2.1 Vocational education pathways

#### 2.2.1.1 Initial vocational education (IVET)

Vocational education establishments offer education programmes in all fields of study. The Vocational Education Law (1999) defines three levels of vocational education:

- vocational basic education;
- vocational secondary education;
- professional higher education (first level professional higher education (college education) and second level professional higher education).

Vocational education and professional higher education programmes are mainly school-based, with practical learning periods at schools or enterprises. In 2013, MoES has proposed to increase the role work-based learning in vocational education.

Students are admitted to public vocational schools according to the annual enrolment plan. The MoES collects and together with sectoral expert councils adjusts and transforms school requests into enrolment plans endorsed by the National Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment.

Vocational education at lower secondary level is implemented through vocational basic education programmes (see Annex 1). Pupils are enrolled in vocational basic education programmes (ISCED 2A, 2C) regardless of previous education but not before the year they turn 15 years old. Vocational basic education programmes lead to a certificate of vocational basic education (*apliecība par profesionālo pamatizglītību*) and the professional qualification EQF level 3 (national professional qualification level 1, theoretical and practical readiness, which allows fulfilling simple tasks in a specific sphere of practical activities, for example, a cook's or a carpenter's assistant – ISCED 2A, 2C). Those without basic education are admitted to vocational education programmes offering 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).

At upper secondary level, there are vocational education (*arodizglītība*) and vocational secondary education (*profesionālā vidējā izglītība*) programmes for students with basic (primary) education diploma (see Annex 1). The content of such education programmes is defined by state vocational education standard – government regulations on the state vocational secondary education standard and the state vocational education standard (*Noteikumi par valsts profesionālās vidējās izglītības standartu un valsts arodizglītības standartu*, 2008) and occupational standard (*profesijas standarts*). Since 2012, vocational education programmes students' previous education is not considered. Programmes lead to a certificate of vocational education (*atestāts par arodizglītību*) and professional qualification EQF level 4 (Latvian professional qualification level 2, theoretical and practical aptitude for carrying out qualified executive work independently, e.g., carpenter, hairdresser, cook, tailor, welder – ISCED 3C). These programmes do not give the right to enter higher (tertiary) education. For admission to higher education additional 1-year intermediate general secondary education course is available. Vocational secondary education programmes lead to a diploma of vocational secondary education (*diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību*) and professional qualification EQF level 4 (Latvian professional qualification level 3, increased theoretical readiness and professional mastery, which allows performing certain duties of an executor, which comprise the planning and organisation of work, for example, various technicians, car mechanics, modellers, and hospitality service specialists – ISCED 3A, 3B). In addition, vocational secondary education students take state centralized exams in Latvian, Math, foreign language and one in optional study subject. Students receive a certificate of general secondary education (*vispārējās vidējās izglītības sertifikāts*) which gives the right to enter higher (tertiary) education.

Post-secondary education programmes (see Annex 1) in contrary to their title belong to upper-secondary level. They are designed primarily for 18-20 years old general secondary school graduates for acquisition of vocational skills. Except for duration characteristics of such

programmes are the same as for upper-secondary level. At the moment they are offered with the ESF support (projects for 17- 25 years old students with basic education or secondary education).

Higher education programmes (see Annex 2) are academic (lead to a degree) and professional (lead to a degree and professional qualification). Higher education institutions (including colleges) provide full-time, part-time and distance studies available for all study levels and almost all study fields, thus, contributing to promotion of lifelong learning.

To acquire professional qualification students have to take state qualification exam in the end of the education programme. The government defines how the content of qualification exams is developed for basic (primary) and secondary education levels (*Profesionālās kvalifikācijas eksāmenu norises kārtība akreditētās profesionālās izglītības programmās*, August 2011).

Table 5. Students in VET programmes in the beginning of a study year

LEVEL \ YEAR	Students				Share of total (%)			
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2010	2011	2012	2013
Basic education	487	450	448	440	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.4
Secondary education	33149	31206	27992	26464	92.7	90.1	87.2	85.2
Post-general secondary education	1857	2782	3488	3945	5.2	8.0	10.9	12.7
General education programmes in vocational schools	274	200	158	206	0.8	0.6	0.5	0.7
Total	35767	34638	32086	31055	100	100	100	100

Source: www.csb.gov.lv

Table 5 shows the decrease of students in vocational schools in 2010-13. The decrease is similar to the demographic trend in the country. Vocational basic education is not attended on a large scale, since these programmes are provided for those with special needs (mainly with mental disabilities) or for drop-outs from general basic education. Most of VET is acquired at the secondary education level. Vocational education programmes for students with secondary education diploma becomes more popular – the number of students has doubled in the last four years, although is still comparatively small.

The distribution of students by types of programmes (general 61%:34% vocational) has been stable since 2010. A promotion of prestige and a parity of esteem of vocational education has been set as priority in VET policy (e.g. Concept for 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; Guidelines for optimisation of vocational education establishments network for 2010-15, *Profesionālās izglītības iestāžu tīkla optimizācijas pamatnostādnes 2010.-2015.gadam*, 2010).

Since 2010, the distribution of VET students between fields of study varies within 1-2% limits (

Table 6). The share of students acquiring engineering, manufacturing and construction decreased insignificantly (from 43.4% in 2010 to 40.9% in 2012). The share of students in the service field increased (from 22.5% to 24.8% in the same period) that may be explained by expanding the sector. A small increase is observed in the healthcare sector as well.

Table 6. Students by field of study in vocational schools in the beginning of school year 2010/12

FIELDS OF STUDY \ YEAR	Number of students			Share of total (%)		
	2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012
General education	274	200	158	0.8	0.6	0.5
Humanities and arts	3093	3057	3030	8.6	8.8	9.4
Social sciences, business and law	5193	4867	4328	14.5	14.1	13.5
Natural sciences, mathematics and information technologies	2085	1963	1795	5.8	5.7	5.6
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	15526	14675	13120	43.4	42.4	40.9
Agriculture	928	840	884	2.6	2.4	2.8
Health and welfare	630	727	816	1.8	2.1	2.5
Services	8038	8309	7955	22.5	24.0	24.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>35767</b>	<b>34638</b>	<b>32086</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: www.csb.gov.lv

Secondary education graduates' preferences about their further education/career were steady in 2010-11. In 2012, more graduates continued in higher education (from 58.3% in 2011 to 62.8% in 2012) and less graduates discontinued their education (from 36.4% in 2011 to 30.8% in 2012).

#### 2.2.1.2 Continuing vocational education (CVET)

Although education pathways are different, the initial and continuing vocational education have the same legal and governance framework. The Vocational Education Law (*Profesionālās izglītības likums*, 1999) regulates two formal types of continuing education:

(a) Vocational continuing education (professional qualification level is awarded):

- (i) for students with vocational secondary or vocational education to acquire professional qualification EQF level 4 (Latvian professional qualification level 3) the minimum duration of programme is 960 - 1280 hours depending on the field;
- (ii) without prior education requirement to acquire professional qualification EQF level 4 (Latvian professional qualification level 2) the minimum duration of programme is 480 or 640 hours depending on the relevant occupation standard;
- (iii) without prior education requirement to acquire professional qualification EQF level 3 (Latvian professional qualification level 1) the minimum duration of programme is 480 hours.

(b) Professional improvement (professional qualification level is not awarded):

- (i) without prior education requirement minimum duration of programme is 160-320 hours.

Vocational continuing education enables adult with previous education/work experience to acquire a professional qualification. Programmes are always concluded for a specific state-recognised qualification/profession. 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.

In Latvia, participation of adults in education is lower than in EU-27 (Table 7). The political ambition to increase education participation rate from 5.3% in 2009 to 12.5% in 2013 has not been fulfilled as reflected in the National reform programme for the EU 2020 strategy (*Latvijas nacionālo reformu programma „ES 2020” stratēģijas īstenošanai*, 2011). Participation rates in continuing vocational education may have been influenced by the provision of education courses for the

unemployed arranged by the NVA. Another motivating aspect of participation in adult education programmes is co-funding (ESF) that allow providing courses for free or for a reduced fee.

Table 7. **Participation of adults (25-64) in education (%), 2008-13**

YEAR	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
EU-27	9.4	9.3	9.1	8.9	9.0	10.5
Latvia	6.8	5.3	5.0	5.1	6.9	6.5

Source: Eurostat, last update: 26.06.2013, extracted: 24.07.2013

Continuous education is included in classification of educational programmes outlined in the government regulations on the classification of Latvian education (*Noteikumi par Latvijas izglītības klasifikāciju*, 2008, amended in 2010). Continuous education programmes belong to basic (primary), secondary (lower and upper) and higher education levels. No legal comparison with ISCED levels is provided. Continuous education programmes may belong to professional qualification EQF levels 3 to 5 (the Latvian professional qualification levels 1-4) (Table 8).

Table 8. **Classification of continuous vocational education programmes**

Educational level	LQF/ EQF level	Professional qualification level	Programme
1. Basic	3	1	continuous vocational education without limits for previous education
2. Lower-secondary	4	2	continuous vocational education for students with completed or unfinished basic education
	-	-	professional improvement after basic education
3. Upper-secondary	4	2 or 3	continuous vocational education for students after general or vocational upper-secondary education
	-	-	professional improvement after upper-secondary education
4. Higher	5	4	continuous vocational education implemented in colleges or HEI for students with at least first level professional higher education

Source: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=184810>

Education providers elaborate continuous vocational education programmes that are similar to initial vocational education and in accordance with the state vocational education standards and occupational standards. Occupational standards are designed by working group including social partners. Legally continuous vocational education programmes have to contain at least 30% of content from vocational standard. To ensure the most appropriate training for the unemployed the NVA arranges regular surveys of employers to explore the most demanded occupations.

The accreditation system is based on standards determined in the Education Law (1998). VET providers can only offer courses in programmes, which have been licensed. Licence is a permission to implement a particular education programme, stating that educational programme meets requirements of both educational and occupational standards and educational institution has all necessary facilities and technical equipment and, if necessary, the alignment with the industry's professional associations. The license is issued for an indefinite period.

Accreditation is the acquisition of rights for two of six years to issue a state-recognised diploma for an educational programme. In the course of accreditation the quality of implementation of the relevant educational programme is evaluated. All public continuing vocational education

programmes (480 hours or more) and professional improvement programmes (160 hours or more) must be licenced and accredited by the State Education Quality Service (*Izglītības kvalitātes valsts dienests, IKVD*). Professional improvement programmes (159 hours or less) must obtain a license from the local government. Public providers can also offer informal/non-formal learning programmes without obtaining a license.

Students of vocational continuing education programme take a final qualification exam in accordance with procedures approved by the government (Procedure of professional qualification examinations in accredited vocational education programmes, *Profesionālās kvalifikācijas eksāmenu norises kārtība akreditētās profesionālās izglītības programmās*, 2011). Examination is organised by the education provider in cooperation with VISC to ensure that all the graduates, obtaining a certain profession, have compliant knowledge, competencies and skills. Social partners are also involved in evaluating examination performance.

VET providers may provide full-time, part-time and extramural studies. Distance learning is provided both by private and state education institutions. Mainly higher education institutions offer distance learning programmes. Distance Education Centre of Riga Technical University (1997, co-funded by Phare) offers e-learning courses in computing, business planning, languages, etc. Also private education providers offer e-learning courses. Private learning centre Buts Ltd (in 2012) implemented 35 e-learning courses (160 or 320 hours) in quality leadership, computing, accountancy upskilling, etc., as well as courses (480, 640 or 960 hours) for professional qualification, e.g., accountant, clerk, computer system technician, etc.

The most popular continuous vocational education courses were in social sciences, business and law, services and health and welfare (Table 9).

Table 9. CVET courses by field of education (%), 2011

	Formal education	Informal/ non-formal education
General programmes	3.9	4.7
Teachers' education and education science	8.0	10.8
Humanities and arts	6.9	10.0
Social sciences, business and law	32.9	25.7
Natural sciences, mathematics and information technologies	7.6	6.7
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	7.1	8.2
Agriculture	1.6	2.7
Health and welfare	12.0	15.0
Services	7.3	13.0

Source: www.csb.gov.lv

Table 10 shows that in Latvia and in the rest of the EU, lower education levels mean less participation in education activities during the working life.

Table 10. Participation in education (25-64) by the level educational attainment (%), 2011

EDUCATION	ISCED 0-2		ISCED 3-4		ISCED 5-6		Total	
	Formal	Non-formal	Formal	Non-formal	Formal	Non-formal	Formal	Non-formal
EU-27	1.2	2.9	3.0	5.0	5.1	12.2	3.1	6.4
Latvia	: (u)	: (u)	1.8	1.9	3.5	6.7	2.1	3.1

Source: Eurostat, last update: 26.06.2013, extracted: 05.08.2013. Special values - : not available; (u) low reliability.

According to Eurostat data, participation rate in formal adult education of employed persons (25-64) is almost the same as the EU-27 average, while inactive population participation rate is lower (Table 11). Participation rate in non-formal education is twice lower than EU-27 average.

Table 11. **Participation in education (25-64) by the labour status (%), 2011**

EDUCATION	Employed persons		Unemployed persons		Inactive population		Total	
	Formal	Non-formal	Formal	Non-formal	Formal	Non-formal	Formal	Non-formal
EU-27	2.6	7.5	3.5	6.3	4.5	3.0	3.1	6.4
Latvia	2.5	3.5	: (u)	3.5	1.5 (u)	1.6	2.1	3.1

Source: Eurostat, last update: 26.06.2013, extracted: 05.08.2013. Special values – : not available; (u) low reliability.

Some private education providers (education centres) located (or represented) in all regions implement continuing vocational education and informal/non-formal education programmes and cooperate with the NVA – a public agency that buys the unemployed training through the network of 28 regional offices.

Since 2010 the ESF project “Acquisition of vocational education programmes, basic skills and competences for continuing career” (*Profesionālās izglītības programmu, pamatprasmju un kompetenču apguve izglītības un profesionālās karjeras turpināšanai*) runs and coordinated by the State Education Development Agency (*Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra, VIAA*) and VET schools. It provides short (1-1.5 years) VET programmes for young people (17-25) that are ineligible to receive the unemployed benefits. Since 2012 also young people with professional qualification and not (self-)employed may enrol. The majority of programmes offered within the project in 2012 were EQF level 4 secondary education programmes (Latvian professional qualification level 3). One-year programmes ensured acquisition of simpler occupations of the Latvian professional qualification level 2 (EQF level 4). In 2013, additional ESF funding was allocated for the implementation of both 1- and 1.5-year education programmes.

### 2.2.2 Apprenticeship system

The apprenticeship in crafts has a longstanding tradition (since 1992) but is provided in small scale. As defined in the Law on Crafts (*Par amatniecību*, 1993), ‘craft apprentice’ is a person who, in order to acquire the craft, has joined a crafts company or an educational institution and has signed a training contract. Apprenticeships are implemented separately from other education sectors and are not included in the educational programme classification (no relevant ISCED level). Only the Law on Crafts (*Par amatniecību*, 1993) stipulates norms for apprenticeships and procedures for craftsman qualifications. Latvian Chamber of Crafts (self-governing organisation, *Latvijas Amatniecības kamera*) is involved in the implementation of the system.

Apprenticeship is implemented through apprenticeship programmes and journeyman and master of crafts exams. The qualification exams are organized by the Chamber of Crafts. The chamber has signed cooperation agreements with a number of vocational schools. Thus, the apprenticeship programmes include school- and work-based learning. One can become an apprentice if find a a master who will agree to teach him/her. Such apprentices have to attend the educational course on crafts history provided by the chamber. Apprenticeship programmes are drafted by the relevant craft professional association and approved by the Council of the Chamber

of Crafts. The duration of programmes takes an average of three years and is proposed by craft associations.

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

The journeyman (*Amata zēja diploms*) and master of crafts (*Amata meistara diploms*) qualifications can be obtained through apprenticeship. Both candidates of journeymen and master craftsman have to be members of the Chamber's sectoral or territorial craft association. The journeyman qualification is awarded after passing journeyman examination, which comprises two parts: theoretical and practical (presentation of a project). The master craftsman qualification is awarded after passing master craftsman examination. To apply for the examination of the master craftsman, the candidate/journeyman has to have eight years of work experience in the field. The theoretical two months course for master craftsman candidates is offered by the Chamber of Crafts. The master craftsman with the relevant higher education is considered as an academically educated master craftsman.

Apprenticeship qualifications neither provide access to regulated professions nor give an access to formal education system. Currently there are no mechanisms in place for those who dropped out from apprenticeship before completing the training to continue learning.

To address a challenge of the vocational education system – to make it more responsive to the labour market needs – the MoES has begun to build a new apprenticeship-type scheme in the VET system called work-based learning in VET schools. MoES has signed the Memorandum on cooperation in vocational education and training in Europe (2012) and the declaration of intent with Federal Ministry of Education and Research of Germany on cooperation in vocational education and training (2013). It aims to support work-based learning projects. Six vocational education institutions have started implementation of work-based learning in several vocational education programmes (September 2013). This includes flexible curriculum (according to occupational characteristics) and sharing responsibilities of teaching (theory) and training (practical) between school and enterprises. Vocational education institutions ensure acquirement of theoretical knowledge, improvement of study programmes and curricula. Companies ensure professional training in a real workplace environment and allowance/wage. Students are enrolled in work-based learning project programmes according to criteria that are set by companies.

### 2.2.3 VET provision for target groups

Unemployed people are among the target groups, for whom the state and ESF support is given to acquire new to improve existing professional skills. Vocational education, re-qualification and qualification improvement is one of the active employment measures provided by the NVA. In 2012, 6.4% of registered unemployed were involved in vocational continuing education programmes (professional qualification level is awarded) and 11.3% - were involved in professional improvement programmes (professional qualification level is not awarded). The unemployed receive monthly allowance of EUR 100 to acquire or improve professional knowledge and skills.

According to the Law on the Support for the Unemployed and Job Seekers (2002) the most vulnerable groups among unemployed are defined as:

- young job-seekers (15-24 years old);

- pre-retirement age (55-64) individuals;
- long-term (>1 year) unemployed;
- individuals after parental leave (6 months);
- individuals with disabilities;
- persons caring for a family member;
- ex-convicts and ex-drug addicts.

Involving vulnerable groups into the active employment measures (including vocational education, re-qualification and qualification improvement) to foster their inclusion in the labour market is a strategic objective of the NVA.

Another special target group are young people with special needs. To ensure education for children/adolescents with mental disabilities, in municipalities there are special boarding schools - development centres implementing both special general basic (primary) education programmes and vocational basic education programmes for acquisition EQF level 3 qualifications (Latvian professional qualifications level 1). The MoW Social Integration State Agency (*Sociālās integrācijas valsts aģentūra*) implements the national policy of social integration for persons with different special needs by providing a wide range of vocational education programmes (at levels of vocational basic education, vocational education, vocational secondary education, first level professional higher education, vocational continuing education) and social rehabilitation services for persons with (possible) special needs. A specific Alsviki vocational school (MoES) for young people with different disabilities implements vocational basic (primary) and vocational education programmes.

There are vocational basic (EQF level 3) and vocational education (EQF level 4) programmes for early leavers from general basic (primary) education and those with a low level of basic knowledge and skills. The programmes include pedagogical correction (that provides opportunity to acquire both vocational and general basic education level). Such programmes are provided by some VET schools.

#### **2.2.4 Specific financial and governance issues**

##### **2.2.4.1 Governance**

Most VET providers are state-owned. The number of VET schools established (or taken over from the state) by local governments is growing. There are also private VET schools. The MoES is responsible for the biggest share of state-owned VET schools. Some are under the supervision of other ministries (Ministry of Culture (*Kultūras ministrija*), Ministry of Welfare (*Labklājības ministrija*), Ministry of the Interior (*Iekšlietu ministrija*)).

At present (2013), vocational education system is managed by the following state institutions:

- (a) The Cabinet of Ministers (*Ministru kabinets, CoM*) determines the state's political and strategic areas in vocational education, sets procedures for: occupational standards development, organisation of practical training, examination centre accreditation, professional qualification examinations, issuing state recognised qualifications, allocation of competence centre status, earmarked teachers' wages calculation and allocation and determines the recognition of foreign qualifications;

- (b) The Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija, MoES*) develops the framework regulations for vocational education, proposes the allocation of funds from the state budget and finances vocational education providers established by the MoES. The ministry also organises implementation of career education, approves regulations and employs the heads of vocational education institutions under its supervision;
- (c) Other ministries develop proposals for allocation of funds for financing VET schools established by them and cooperate with the MoES in drafting occupational standards, quality assurance and other issues, organise further education of teachers, adult vocational continuing education and improvement and unemployed training;
- (d) MoES National Centre for Education (*Valsts izglītības saturs centrs, VISCS*) provides 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; develops the content and procedures for state centralized examinations; coordinates the development of study literature corresponding to vocational education standards; coordinates and implements the professional development of vocational teachers;
- (e) MoES State Education Quality Service (*Izglītības kvalitātes valsts dienests, IKVD*) licences the education (except hobby, adult informal/non-formal and higher education) programmes; evaluates the quality of vocational (except professional higher) education. Since 2013, IKVD coordinates the implementation of EQAVET;
- (f) Ministry of Welfare (*Labklājības ministrijs, MoW*) is responsible for active and passive labour market policy;
- (g) MoW State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra, NVA*) implements labour market policy, including programmes for the unemployed;
- (h) Municipalities participate in the implementation of vocational education, promote business development in their territory, cooperate with employers' organizations and participate in the resolution of issues related to the practice placements for students in the municipality.

The social dialogue and strategic cooperation is arranged (at institutional level) through:

- (a) The National Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment (*Profesionālās izglītības un nodarbinātības trīspusējās sadarbības apakšpadome, 2000*) which was founded by the ministries (Welfare, Economy, Finance, Justice, Agriculture, Education and Science, Regional Development and Local Government Affairs), the Free Trade Union Confederation and the Employers' Confederation. The tasks of the Sub-Council are as follows:
  - (i) to review drafts of state development plans, concepts and legal norms concerning vocational education, human resource development and employment and draw up proposals for improvements;
  - (ii) to evaluate and suggest improvements in management, funding and implementation of VET to the state and NGOs;
  - (iii) to endorse annual students' enrolment plan proposed by the Sectoral Expert Councils.
- (b) 12 Sectoral Expert Councils (*Nozaru ekspertu padomes, 2011*) have been established as part of the ESF 'Development of sectoral qualifications system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education' project (VIAA, 2010-14). They propose to VET student

enrolment plans to the MoES. Along with the representatives from the sectors, the MoES and the Ministry of Economics, Employers' Confederation of Latvia, and Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia participate. Representatives from the MoW and the NVA can participate in the council meetings as well.

As a reaction to the negative demographic trend that decreases the number of VET students and to the limited financial resources, the MoES has designed the Guidelines for optimisation of vocational education establishments' network for 2010-15" (*Profesionālās izglītības iestāžu tīkla optimizācijas pamatnostādnes 2010.-2015.gadam*, 2010). The guidelines endorse further structural reforms in VET by optimising and modernising the network of vocational schools (reduction from 59 MoES VET schools in 2009/10 to 30 schools in 2015). The schools are differentiated by their functions and management and five types of schools are being formed:

- 1) Vocational education competence centre (14 centres planned) – vocational education school with relevant facilities for acquiring qualifications within all basic occupations of a sector; and additional educational functions. Since September 2011, 8 vocational schools and 1 college were granted the status of competence centre.
- 2) Vocational education establishment with specialisation (14 schools planned) – vocational education schools providing skills in basic occupations and qualifications in specialisations of basic occupations in a certain education programme.
- 3) Vocational education establishment for acquiring basic competences (2 schools planned) – vocational education school providing education programmes, in which basic competences of one or several occupations are acquired.
- 4) Affiliate of vocational education establishment – structural unit of VET school, which is territorially separated from the education establishment.
- 5) Integrated education establishment (10 schools planned) – school providing various general and vocational education programmes, as well as adult and continuous education.

VET schools issue educational documents in accordance with the implemented programmes (see 2.2.1).

#### 2.2.4.2 Funding

Procedures of funding for vocational education are stipulated by the Education Law (1998) and further described in the Vocational Education Law (1999).

Education institutions according to their ownership are financed from the state budget (SB), local government budget (LGB) or private funding (PF) (Table 12). Funding for implementation of vocational education study programmes is allocated from the state budget per student.

Table 12. Sources of vocational education funding

VET schools	Teacher salary	Fixed expenses*	Non-fixed expenses**
State	SB	SB	SB
Local government	SB	LGB or SB	LGB or SB (except teacher salary)
Private	PF	PF	PF

\* Missions, services, energy and water, learning aid, equipment.

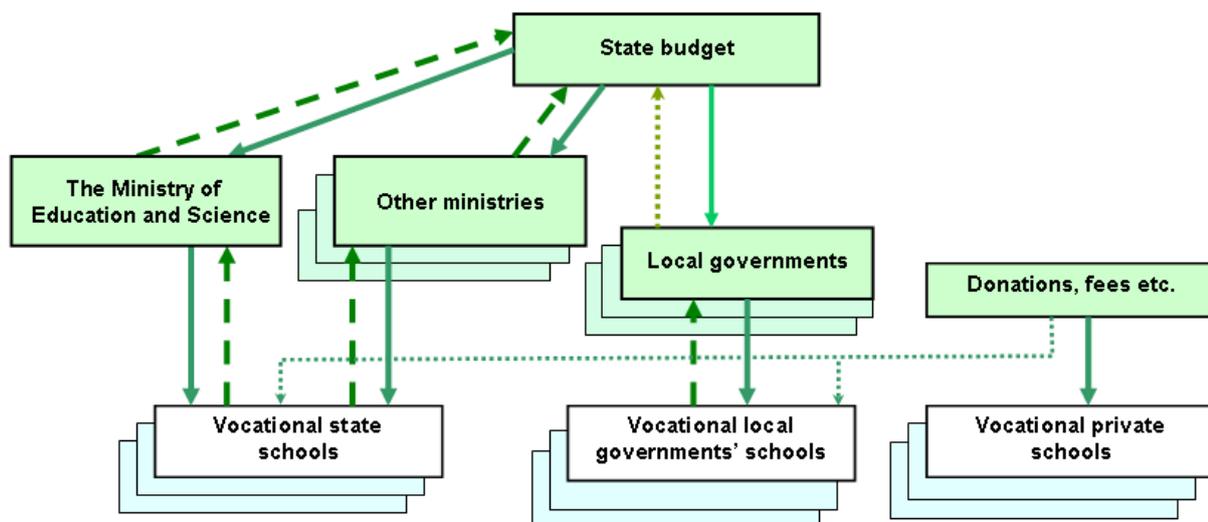
\*\* Scholarships, maintenance of dormitories, rehabilitation, catering, practice, culture education and sports, personnel salary.

Additional funding source can be student fees. State and local government school (implementing pre-school, basic (primary) and secondary education) services are for free; private schools may charge students a tuition fee. In higher education the state covers fees for a certain number of negotiated study places. Students with lower achievements or willing to enrol in a non-subsidised field of study may be charged a tuition fee. Local governments may charge a tuition fee in the municipal sports and music VET schools.

The majority of vocational schools are state-owned and run; therefore, the national budget is the main source of funding. Local governments and private entities may also provide subsidies for vocational education. Education institutions (both vocational and general) may receive additional funding from donations and paid services, and to be used for purchasing learning aids and equipment, student grants, and to (partially) cover fees. Education institution may simultaneously implement education programmes funded from different sources (Figure 1).

Initial vocational education students receive state monthly allowance co-financed by the ESF.

Figure 1. Flow of funds for initial vocational education



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Teacher salary in the state and local government education establishments (including pre-schools) is paid from the state budget. Local governments may supplement salary payment in any

type of VET schools. For accredited basic, secondary and higher education programmes state can finance teacher salary also in private schools.

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 the EU, Swiss and Norwegian financial assistance instruments, including structural funds and the EU Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013 (and in the future Erasmus+), which through various projects opened more learning opportunities for adults.

A national data collection on continuing vocational education funding has been discontinued in 2005. Partly information about adult education funding is available on learning activities supported by the ESF, state budget and partly – local governments. The statistics about employers' and individuals' funding are not being regularly collected.

In 2011, the MoES conducted a survey of local governments about their support to adult informal/non-formal education in 2010. 80% of local governments have participated. 55.3% of local governments have financially supported the coordination and implementation of adult informal/non-formal learning; the amount of funding has decreased by 41% since 2009 (EUR 761 273 in 2010, and EUR 1 288 814 in 2009). The number of adults involved in informal/non-formal learning has also decreased – 24 958 adults in 2010 compared to 29 069 adults in 2009. There are different patterns of support between regions and local governments. Meanwhile, the local governments have developed other support instruments: 1) funding or co-funding education establishments in their territory that offer adult informal/non-formal learning (adult education centres, folk schools, culture centres, general education establishments, etc.); 2) providing physical space or offering a rent discount for implementation of adult informal/non-formal learning programmes; 3) co-financing projects of foreign financial instruments that focus on implementation and development of adult informal/non-formal learning; 4) offering subsidies for NGOs that ensure the availability of education services for adults. However, these activities in general cannot ensure the achievement of the stated objective of 15% of adults taking part in educational activities by 2020.

### 2.2.5 Education and training providers

Vocational education establishments may be divided according to their ownership: state, local government and private schools. In 2012, amendments to the Vocational Education Law (*Profesionālās izglītības likums*, 1999) changed the titles of vocational education establishments according to education programmes and professional qualifications offered.

According to the law, there are the following vocational education establishments:

- 1) Vocational basic school (*profesionālā pamatskola*) – education establishment that implements vocational basic education programmes leading to the Latvian professional qualification level 1 (EQF level 3);
- 2) Vocational school (*arodskola*) – education establishment that implements vocational education programmes leading to the Latvian professional qualification level 2 (EQF level 4);
- 3) Vocational secondary school (*profesionālā vidusskola*) – education establishment that implements vocational secondary education programmes leading to the Latvian professional qualification level 3 (EQF level 4);

- 4) Technical school (*tehnikums*) – education establishment that implements vocational secondary education programmes leading to the Latvian professional qualification level 3 (EQF level 4) and that has gained the status of vocational education competence centre;
- 5) College (*koledža*) – education establishment that implements the first level of professional higher education programmes leading to the Latvian professional qualification level 4 (EQF level 5).

Vocational education establishment that implements vocational secondary education programmes leading to the Latvian professional qualification level 3 (EQF level 4), and additionally performs the functions of regional methodological centre, teacher further education centre, and the centre for evaluating professional competences acquired outside formal education may obtain the status of vocational education competence centre according to the criteria determined by the CoM.

In 2013/14 there were 35 MoES vocational education schools with 350 study active programmes. Vocational secondary education programmes may be obtained also in nine colleges under the supervision of the MoES. It is planned to continue optimizing the school network and differentiating remaining vocational schools by their type, which also would promote access to vocational education for adults. Since September 2011, nine vocational education institutions were granted the status of competence centre.

At present (2013), there are eight vocational education establishments under the direction of local governments. Some of these schools will implement both general and vocational education programmes. According to government declaration (2011) the MoES has to create pre-conditions for assigning vocational education establishments to local governments or sectoral professional organizations by September 2014. Thus, a qualitative education offer of all kinds would be concentrated in jurisdiction of local governance and regarding its needs. According to the Guidelines for optimisation of vocational education establishments network for 2010-15 (*Profesionālās izglītības iestāžu tīkla optimizācijas pamatnostādnes 2010.-2015.gadam*) it is planned to transfer vocational education establishments to local governments gradually and on a voluntary basis but not later than by 2015.

#### 2.2.6 Teachers and trainers

In the vocational education system teachers provide both theoretical courses and practical training at school. They teach vocational basic (primary) education, vocational (secondary) education, vocational upper-secondary education, and professional development and continuing vocational education programmes. Every VET teacher can work in initial and continuing vocational education at basic (primary) and secondary level.

Vocational education teachers:

- implement education programmes according to national vocational education standards and occupational standards. Syllabi are developed by teachers and approved by the head of education institution;
- assess the knowledge and skills acquired by learners;
- foster the development of creative attitudes and independence of learners; and
- discover and apply new ideas, technologies, and methods in the learning process.

In July 2013, new government Regulations on necessary teacher education and professional qualifications, and procedure for the improvement of professional qualification (*Noteikumi par*

*pedagogiem nepieciešamo izglītību un profesionālo kvalifikāciju un profesionālās kvalifikācijas pilnveides kārtību*) were adopted, and determine education requirements and education acquisition procedures for vocational education teachers. Acquisition of pedagogical course in a higher education institution (72 hours) is now required for teachers without pedagogical qualification. In addition, teachers are required to undertake at least 36 hours of an up-skilling course every three years.

In 2013, all vocational education teachers must have had:

- (a) for teaching in the basic education level:
  - (i) vocational upper-secondary education, or
  - (ii) master crafts level qualification awarded by the Latvian Chamber of Crafts and teacher education, or
  - (iii) professional higher education and teacher education;
- (b) for teaching in the secondary education level:
  - (iv) higher education acquired through:
    - professional qualification programme with teacher practical training or with six years of work experience or extra course of pedagogy or psychology, or
  - (v) master's or doctor's degree in pedagogy or relevant field, or
  - (vi) vocational upper-secondary education or master of crafts level qualification and higher teacher's education (in VET or relevant subject) and a practical training.

The most of vocational education teachers have higher education (Table 13).

Table 13. Education level of VET teachers

School year	Teachers	Teachers' education level								
		secondary education					higher education			
		total	general secondary	vocational secondary	have pedagogical education	currently students	total	pedagogical	other (including >320 hours of pedagogy)	PhD
2009/10	3228	349	28	321	185	143	2879	2113	670	25
2010/11	3164	276	29	247	130	100	2888	2109	694	20
2011/12	3102	251	29	222	124	91	2839	2000	781	12
2012/13	3112	245	15	230	110	104	2847	1962	789	20

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 2013

Requirements for higher education, including college teachers' education and qualifications are stipulated in the Law on Higher Education Institutions (*Augstskolu likums*, 1995).

### 2.2.7 Implementation of the Latvian Qualifications Framework

The Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) is established and has been presented to the EQF Advisory Group in 2011. It consists of eight levels. Descriptors of the LQF are based on learning outcomes. The framework includes formal (general/academic and vocational/professional) education: basic (primary), secondary and higher.

In 2010, the LQF level descriptors have been included in the CoM Regulations on the classification of Latvian education (*Noteikumi par Latvijas izglītības klasifikāciju, 2008*). Similar to the EQF, they are expressed as:

- (a) knowledge (knowledge and comprehension);
- (b) skills (ability to apply knowledge, communication, general skills) and
- (c) competence (analysis, synthesis and assessment).

The regulation has also linked all formal education levels to the relevant LQF/EQF level as demonstrated in Table 14.

Table 14. **Formal qualifications and EQF/LQF levels**

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 (1 <sup>st</sup> 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 (2 <sup>nd</sup> 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 (2 <sup>nd</sup> level professional higher education, the total length of full-time studies – at least 5 years)
8	Doctor's diploma

Source: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=184810>

The CoM Regulations of issuing the state recognised HE education documents (*Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus, 2013*) stipulate that diploma supplements should include LQF/EQF or EHEA framework level. The LQF/EQF levels should also be reflected in the diagram of the Latvian Higher Education System.

The Academic Information Centre, which also supervises the Latvian representation of ENIC-NARIC network, Europass and ReferNet, in 2008, was appointed as the national coordination point (NCP) for the EQF to organise the national consultation process and promote the established framework. As a result of the consultation process, the decision to arrange referencing in two consequent steps was adopted to facilitate meaningful implementation process as it is time-consuming and requires large scale reforms:

- (a) 2009-11: the establishment of the LQF, referencing of the formal Latvian education system to the EQF for lifelong learning and the QF-EHEA.
- (b) 2013-15: the review of the self-assessment report based on the new Vocational Education Law (expected), Higher Education Law (expected) and the results of on-going projects, e.g.

the ESF Development of sectoral qualifications system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education (2010-14) project.

### **2.2.8 Increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education**

Raising attractiveness of vocational education and involvement of social partners within vocational education quality assurance concept (2009) improves vocational education programmes through the ESF Development of sectoral qualifications system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education project (2010-14). In 2012-13, economic sectors were surveyed and sectorial qualifications frameworks (14) were created and linked to LQF and EQF. Modular approach in vocational education (including learning outcomes, content, teaching/learning methods, and indicators of achievement) is being discussed. The structure of education content has been changed – five modules (IVET/CVET) created by VISC – to promote acquisition of lifelong learning competences in vocational education. The lifelong learning competences are mentioned in the state education standards, occupational standards. VISC has also developed methodological recommendations for the creation of modular vocational education programmes (*Metodiskie ieteikumi modulāro profesionālās izglītības programmu izstrādei*, 2013). They are now tested in several vocational education programmes in 2013. The dialogue about alternative forms of learning outcomes evaluation in relation to the implementation of modular approach has started. In the Education development guidelines for 2014-20 (*Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādnes 2014.-2020.gadam*, 2014) work-based learning is interpreted as one of the solutions to increase the attractiveness of vocational education.

## **2.3 Other forms of learning**

### **2.3.1 Learning providers, typical programmes and target groups**

Different job-related knowledge, skills and competences acquisition or improvement is provided at sectoral or enterprises level mainly as informal/non-formal education or short professional improvement courses. Job-related knowledge, skills and competences development is offered for employees in ministries, employers' organisations, trade unions, university continuing education departments and their distance learning centres, local education centres, chambers of commerce, adult education centres, NVA and other educational organisations and associations, and private providers.

See information about continuing vocational education in section 2.2.1.2.

### **2.3.2 Sectoral education programmes**

Sectors with regulated professions or professions with special certification requirements may provide informal/non-formal education. For example, the Latvian Medical Doctors' Association offers several non-formal continuing education courses and lectures for doctors to prepare for certification exam and to collect necessary amount of continuing education credits points for medical doctors re-certification and professional upgrading.

Up-skilling of teachers (seminars, courses) is organised by the VISC. At present, the centre raises competences of teachers, heads of schools and librarians through ESF projects, e.g. 'Further education of general education teachers' (*Vispārējās izglītības pedagogu tālākizglītība*,

2010-13) and '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, 2009-13*).

Sectoral associations also use the ESF co-financed support to the training of a workforce for promoting competitiveness of companies (training organised in partnerships) (*Atbalsts nodarbināto apmācībā komersantu konkurētspējas veicināšanai – atbalsts partnerībās organizētām apmācībām*) administered by the Investment and Development Agency of Latvia (*Latvijas Investīciju un attīstības aģentūra, LIAA*). As projects are implemented through partnerships, various associations provide learning activities for enterprises. In 2011, the agency concluded 16 agreements with associations regarding the implementation of learning projects that were intended for involving 16 000 employees from more than 900 enterprises (that is 4.4% of the adults involved in non-formal education during 2011 in Latvia). Around 97% of learning was conducted in the field of computing, engineering sciences and technologies, production, design, creative industries, physical sciences, mathematics and statistics. In 2012, the Latvian Information and Communications Technology Association in the frame of the programme has signed 31 agreements on implementing 16 training programs of information technology training for small and micro enterprises.

'The plan of the national strategy for rural development of Latvia 2007-13' (2006) and "Rural development programme 2007-13' among other activities foresee the improvement of knowledge and skills for individuals working in agriculture and forestry supported by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and development of entrepreneurship. The support of EAFRD is targeted at ensuring vocational learning activities for representatives of agriculture, forestry and food procession sectors.

### 2.3.3 Workplace learning

In enterprises the training of employees is not mandatory. It is addressed in the Labour Law (*Darba likums, 2002*) which obligates employers to pay for employees' vocational training and qualification improvement, if employees are sent to training. Thus, in most cases, learning in enterprises depends on enterprise initiative and resources, since learning is a voluntary activity. Enterprises tend to provide learning 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 a learning provision. The data on learning in enterprises are collected by the Central Statistics Bureau only as part of the European Survey (1999, 2005).

An enterprise-provided training that assists employees in adapting to new tasks to guarantee/improve their career is a type of non-formal education. It provides an opportunity to acquire completely new skills or to add certain competences (e.g. teamwork skills). Education providers (training centres in large enterprises or external (adult) education centres) are free to produce a study programme of different courses in accordance with enterprise's needs. Teachers may be employed by an education provider or may be contracted to provide a certain course directly by the employer. It is usually the responsibility of the provider to design own education programmes. 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.

Education courses are usually funded by the enterprise and employees may be asked to contribute their part.

The study of 14 sectors was conducted including the offer of initial vocational education and continuing education opportunities in the sectors supported by 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 paaugstināšanai*, 2010-14). The study results indicate that part of occupations necessary in the sectors are not provided in vocational schools; therefore, large enterprises ensure work-based learning for their employees at the enterprise. In some cases employer completely or partly covers tuition fees for employee's education.

JSC '*Rīgas Siltums*' (heating services) learning centre (1999) offers education in the specialities of the company. In cooperation with other sectoral enterprises the learning centre provides once per month also training for employees from other enterprises. JSC '*Latvijas Gāze*' (natural gas provider) employs in the simple occupations a staff without specific prior knowledge and ensures necessary learning in own education centre and through work under the guidance of a mentor. Generally, these learning activities focus on specific technical skills, e.g. performing dangerous work operations. According to the study large enterprises consider that the best way for their employees to obtain necessary skills is through in-house work-based learning. Meanwhile, many medium and small enterprises cannot provide such learning opportunities. The majority of enterprises (although mainly large) are ready to finance the up-skilling of their employees.

#### **2.3.4 Funding mechanisms**

Enterprises are responsible for arranging learning activities for their employees but they are not mandatory. At present, national statistics about funding spent on learning by enterprises are not collected. The tax system does not promote employer investments in learning. Only large, stable enterprises may have a learning budget. These enterprises usually have a human resource development strategy. Smaller enterprises tend to invest less in employees' education. They tend to have other priorities in terms of their survival on the market.

The LIAA coordinates the implementation of Human Resources development projects supported by the EU funds (regulated by the relevant government regulations). Enterprises have showed great interest in these projects.

The NVA also coordinates learning activities for the employed (including those at risk of unemployment) since 2008. The measures are implemented in line with the CoM Regulations for organising and financing active employment measures and preventative measures for unemployment reduction and principles for selection of implementing bodies of measures (2011).

Preventive employment measures include vocational education for employed individuals are subject to unemployment risk (part-time employed individuals receive voucher for EUR 427-711 to cover the learning fees and monthly allowance of EUR 100 for six months) and lifelong learning measures for the labour force. In 2012, 2 460 people (9.6% of involved in the NVA educational activities) participated in life-long learning programmes for employed.

## 2.4 Discussion on the new trends in adult education

The adult education system adjustment is a challenge for MoES and other stakeholders, including state and social partners. With the support of EU lifelong learning programme's grant new national adult education cooperation model is being designed. The MoES has organised the forum (2013) in the framework of the project in the adult education (*Eiropas programmas īstenošana pieaugušo izglītības jomā*) and discussed initiatives on adult education policy for 2014-20. The project has been financially supported by the European Commission.

Further issues of employers' motivation for cooperation with vocational education establishments (no legal provision) also to ensure further education for employees, and the lack of statistics on adult informal/non-formal learning and learning at enterprises emerge.

## CHAPTER 3.

# Shaping VET qualifications

### 3.1 Methods for anticipating labour market needs and applying the results in VET

The responsibility of providing labour market forecasts rests with the Ministry of Economics (*Ekonomikas ministrija, MoE*) and the NVA.

The MoE produces the medium-term forecasts and has set up the Advisory Council for Labour Market Forecasting (*Darba tirgus prognozēšanas konsultatīvā padome*) – a platform for the dialogue between the state (MoE), employers (Employers' Confederation), employees (Free Trade Union Confederation), and the local municipalities (Association of Local and Regional Governments). The council holds annual meetings to discuss the mid-term labour market forecasts published by the MoE, including:

- the *report on economic development* (two per year) with forecasts and reflection on the past;
- the mid-term forecasts on matching the labour demand and supply (*Informatīvais ziņojums par prognozēm darbaspēka pieprasījuma un piedāvājuma atbilstībai vidējā termiņā, since 2009*)
- the report on labour market mid-term and long-term forecasts (*Informatīvais ziņojums par darba tirgus vidēja un ilgtermiņa prognozēm, 2013*)

The reports include an overview about the supply and demand, educational areas, levels and progression routes (including vocational education) of the labour force. The data are used by the MoES to plan VET provision.

The instruments for labour market forecasting are based on the dynamic optimization model (DOM) of labour market forecasting that was elaborated within the ESF project 'Research of the long-term forecasting system of the labour market demand and the analysis of its improvement possibilities' (*Darba tirgus pieprasījuma ilgtermiņa prognozēšanas sistēmas izpēte un pilnveidošanas iespēju analīze, 2007*). DOM structure was developed based on the system-dynamic approach of the labour market balance concept. It takes into account the ageing and professional mobility of the labour force. Labour force demand by sector is determined by scenarios of national economy – future growth and changes in productivity. The demand of occupations emerges from the labour force demand and expected changes in occupation structure of a sector. The education demand is characterised by skills or educational level that is required to perform the job. Labour market forecasts are based on international classification systems adapted in Latvia; thus, the forecasts are internationally comparable.

In 2010, the MoE has launched the ESF 'Labour market demand medium-term and long-term forecasting system development' project (*Darba tirgus pieprasījuma vidēja termiņa un ilgtermiņa prognozēšanas sistēmas attīstības, 2010-13*) to improve the labour market forecasting system. Three labour market studies were produced (on future skills needs, on professional mobility of labour force and on population aging impact on skills offer). The Future strategic skills study (*Nākotnē stratēģiski pieprasītākās prasmes Latvijā, 2013*) shows trends of skills' demand in economic sectors until 2030 and suggests to invest in infrastructure, to develop content and to

raise prestige of vocational education system at secondary and higher levels by closer cooperation with employers.

An expert evaluation of the education match to occupations is used in forecasts based on the international occupational classification (ISCO-08) assumptions about skills and matching education levels. In 2011, inter-institutional working group (MoE, MoW, MoES) was established to improve the aggregation of the labour market forecasts. The working group elaborated an occupation-education matrix with assumptions regarding necessary education for performing the job.

According to the report on labour market mid-term and long-term forecasts (*Informatīvais ziņojums par darba tirgus vidēja un ilgtermiņa prognozēm*, 2013) almost 2/3 of increase in the demand of the labour force until 2020 will be in three sectors: manufacturing industry, trade and business services. Contribution to such traditional sectors as wood processing and food production will decrease. As a result, the demand for highly qualified specialists (with higher and vocational secondary education) will increase rapidly. Engineering, production and construction (mainly metalworking, mechanical engineering and wood processing sectors), natural sciences, mathematics and information technologies, as well as services (mainly hotels and restaurants, transport, and protection of persons and property) are expecting insufficient supply according to forecast. In the long-term the supply of equipment and machine operator, qualified worker and craftsman professions would be significantly lower than demand if the structure of the training remains unchanged. The similar situation will also be in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries' sectors, and in sectors with many pension age employees. Almost in all sectors, especially after 2020, the demand for low-skilled labour force will decrease.

The NVA carries out the short-term labour market forecasting. It also conducts employers' surveys (express) twice a year to anticipate the changes in the labour force structure in the following six months as well as reasons for changes, and demanded and unclaimed occupations by employers. The results are used to adjust the training offer for the unemployed.

The development of the labour market forecasting and monitoring system of the NVA (ESF, 2010-14) project has been implemented to impart several studies including sociological study of the unemployed graduates and two studies of specific target groups without job (in 2013, the last three were not yet completed).

The Central Statistical Bureau (*Centrālās statistikas pārvalde*, CSB) functions under the State Statistics Law (*Valsts statistikas likums*, 1997) and the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on European Statistics (2009). Every three months the CSB conducts a labour force survey collecting data on education levels, type of economic action, and occupational groups. Based on the survey results, the MoE prepares the mid-term forecasts on matching the labour demand and supply.

Since 2012, the national statistics system is based on the new classification of economy sectors and occupations (NACE 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ISCO-08). The MoE has reviewed previous aggregation of labour market forecasts and has elaborated forecasts of economy sectors and occupations regarding the new classifications.

The data on higher education institutions' (HEI) and vocational education providers' graduates are gathered by the institutions themselves and submitted to the MoES and the CSB for further analysis and publication. According to the amendments (2011) to the Law on Higher Education Institutions (*Augstskolu likums*, 1995) HEIs have to ensure that information about graduates'

employment is collected and analysed. Thus, more data on graduates is available. Various aspects of graduates professional activities are also explored in the Labour Force and Profession Survey conducted by the CSB and other small scale studies.

### 3.2 How and by whom qualifications are designed

Skill needs are taken into account when drafting vocational qualifications through the definition of occupational standards for different professions. In accordance with the CoM regulation ‘Procedure of developing occupational standards’ (*Profesiju standartu izstrādes kārtība*, 2007) standards are developed by representatives of educational institutions and social partners in working groups organized by the VISC for the national professional qualification levels 1-3 (EQF levels 3-4) and the MoES for levels 4-5 (EQF levels 5-7). Occupational standards are approved by the National Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment (*Profesionālās izglītības un nodarbinātības trīspusējās sadarbības apakšpadome*). MoW proposes occupational standards to the government for approval. Standards are updated and reviewed as necessary (at least every five years). Representatives of ministries, local governments, employers, employees, chamber of commerce and industry, NGOs and VET providers are involved in development and review of standards.

Occupational standards comprise a description of specific job tasks and duties, and necessary abilities, skills, and professional competence (necessary skills, knowledge and responsibility in certain working situations). A standard also places an occupation in sectoral qualification system including description of employability, and determine to which level of professional qualification each specific profession corresponds. Educational institutions ensure that the necessary knowledge, skills and professional competence of the occupational standard are included in the programme.

In 2010, new classification of occupations and its procedures (two CoM regulations) (*Noteikumi par Profesiju klasifikatoru, profesijai atbilstošiem pamatuzdevumiem un kvalifikācijas pamatprasībām un Profesiju klasifikatora lietošanas un aktualizēšanas kārtību*) were adopted. The regulations enforce occupational standards to be included in the classification of occupations as appendices. The content of vocational education programmes is defined by the state vocational education standards that are stipulated by the relevant CoM regulations (*Noteikumi par valsts profesionālās vidējās izglītības standartu un valsts arodizglītības standartu*, 2000). The state vocational education standards outline the strategic aims of education programmes, the mandatory content of education, and the basic principles and procedure for evaluating the acquired education. The standards determine the ratio of theory and practice, the ratio of subjects of general education and vocational subjects, the division of general education subjects, etc.

Vocational education programme describes objectives, content, implementation plan, requirements regarding previous education, and resources necessary for implementation. Programmes are elaborated by education providers in line with the state education standards, occupational standards and VISC recommendations. They are licensed by the IKVD in case of compliance with regulations.

In addition, 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. Representatives from relevant sectoral organisations (employers, workers) work in the examination commission.

### 3.3 Ensuring the labour market relevance of VET

The MoES uses MoE's mid-term forecasts of the labour force demand and supply as one of the sources in planning vocational education supply (provision plans, including the number of potential students and types of programmes), and in policy development (guidelines) and implementation, including ESF co-financed projects for restructuring VET, raising competence of teachers, quality of IVET. Sectoral Expert Councils each year submit to the MoES proposals for provision plans in each sector.

Revision of occupation standards, on which education programmes are based, is an ongoing process. 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. With the adoption of new classification of occupations and its procedures (two CoM regulations) (*Noteikumi par Profesiju klasifikatoru, profesijai atbilstošiem pamatuzdevumiem un kvalifikācijas pamatprasībām un Profesiju klasifikatora lietošanas un aktualizēšanas kārtību*) in 2010, the occupational standards approved prior 2010 need to be reviewed. The ESF project on 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, 2010-14*) elaborates or improves 80 occupational standards in basic professions according to the labour market needs in each sector. In 2013, 48 occupational standards have been already designed and approved.

To respond to high youth unemployment vocational education standards were amended in 2010 to introduce short (1-1.5 years) IVET programmes (post-secondary level) for individuals 25 years old or younger. Previously these were two-year programmes. The short programmes' implementation is supported by the ESF project 'Support to the quality improvement and implementation of initial vocational education programmes' (*Atbalsts sākotnējās profesionālās izglītības programmu īstenošanas kvalitātes uzlabošanai un īstenošanai, 2010-15*). In 2013/14 VIAA has cooperated with 43 vocational education providers that have developed and implement short programmes. Programmes were harmonised with the sectoral organizations and the National Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment. First 387 one-year programme students (81% of enrolled) have graduated in August 2011. In 2012/13 already 1416 students have enrolled. It has been foreseen (in 2013) to enrol also 200 young people at prisons.

In 2011, the ESF project 'Evaluation of higher education study programmes and suggestions for the improvement of quality' (*Augstākās izglītības studiju programmu izvērtēšana un priekšlikumi kvalitātes paaugstināšanai*) was launched to evaluate higher education programmes (including higher professional education programmes). The use of learning outcomes and qualifications level descriptors was taken into account. 237 experts (also international) evaluated 860 study programmes in 28 study directions, and provided suggestions for improvements.

### 3.4 Quality assurance

The MoES is fully responsible for the political and strategic aspects of the accessibility and quality of education. Several MoES institutions ensure the quality agreed in policy documents and procedures.

The quality is assured and maintained by:

- elaboration of education policy and adopting strategic decisions;
- development of the education content;
- registering and accreditation of education providers;
- licensing and accreditation of education programmes;
- supervision of educational process.

National vocational education quality control is ensured through accreditation of programmes and providers according to the CoM procedures of accrediting general and vocational education programmes, education providers and examination centres (*Kārtība, kādā akreditē vispārējās un profesionālās izglītības programmas, izglītības iestādes un eksaminācijas centrus*, 2010). The principle of accreditation ensures that the content of each programme meets the required standards of vocational education provided by state or local governments. It also assists in the transparency of learning; thereby, fostering the ability to recognise Latvian qualifications in other countries. The IKVD among other functions organises licensing and accreditation of vocational education programmes, as well as accreditation of vocational education institutions and examination centres regardless their ownership (state, local government and private). Only accredited local governments' and private vocational education establishments may apply for state funding further vocational education, vocational improvement and vocationally oriented education programmes. To ensure better assessment system for the quality of vocational education IKVD has joined (2010) the EQAVET working group (European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training) and since 2013 coordinates EQAVET and follow the joint vocational education quality assurance indicators in Latvia.

During the licence or accreditation process of programmes the IKVD hired external experts and representatives of sectoral NGOs and employers evaluate programme's correspondence to the state education standards, occupational standards, the classification of occupations, and requirements of the content and process regulations. They also make sure that the content of education programmes has relevant to a description of qualification level knowledge, skills and competences.

The VISC ensures the development of education content for vocational basic education, vocational education, vocational secondary, continuing vocational education, professional improvement and professionally oriented education in compliance with the state standards. It also ensures development and implementation of a uniform content of vocational education state examinations, coordinates the development of study aids complying with the general and vocational education standards, and deliver teachers' professional improvement opportunities.

Higher Education Council (*Augstākās izglītības padome*) is responsible for higher (including professional) education quality. In 2012, new CoM regulations for accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges and study direction (*Augstskolu, koledžu un studiju virzienu akreditācijas noteikumi*) were adopted. Instead of accrediting study programmes, now a so called 'study direction' (with all same field programmes included) undergo accreditation. Furthermore, in line

with the new licencing regulation (*Studiju programmu licencēšanas noteikumi, 2013*) the evaluation of higher education institutions and colleges will be arranged by the MoES or authorised institution.

### 3.5 Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The development of system for validation of skills and competences acquired through informal/non-formal learning is a policy objective of the implementing programme of the lifelong learning strategy 2007-13 (*Programma mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādņu 2007.-2013.gadam ieviešanai 2008.-2013.gadā, 2008*).

The validation of professional competence acquired outside formal education has been launched in 2011 after amendments (2010) of the Vocational Education Law (1999). It is carried out by accredited education providers or examination centres who have obtained the IKVD permit. Validation procedure of the EQF level 3-4 (Latvian professional qualification level 1-3) qualifications is described in the government regulations (*Kārtība, kādā novērtē ārpus formālās izglītības sistēmas apgūto profesionālo kompetenci, 2011*). The validation procedure include:

- individual's application;
- professional qualification exam;
- issue of formal certificate of a professional qualification.

Validation fees exist. VET providers that assess professional competence must consult the candidate (free of charge) about the requirements of occupational standards and the procedure of professional qualification exam. Applicants who have successfully (satisfactory) passed professional qualification exam receive a formal certificate of a professional qualification according the procedure of professional qualification exams in accredited vocational education programmes (*Profesionālās kvalifikācijas eksāmenu norises kārtība akreditētās profesionālās izglītības programmās, 2011*).

For higher education level the CoM regulation of recognising the learning outcomes acquired in the previous education and professional experience (*Iepriekšējā izglītībā vai profesionālajā pieredzē sasniegtu studiju rezultātu atzīšanas noteikumi, 2012*) were approved after 2011 amendments in the Law on Higher Education Institutions (*Augstskolu likums, 1995*). The regulation determines recognition procedure and criteria. Learning outcomes acquired through professional experience may only be recognised within a study programme (including practice, course or module). Thus, they should have been acquired in a profession relevant to the topic of a study programme.

### 3.6 Success in cooperation with stakeholders

VET reform has been successfully continued on the basis of the state institutions' cooperation with stakeholders. Sectoral Expert Councils have gained a decisive role in VET alignment with sectoral needs. The 2012 sectors survey of VET needs (within the ESF co-financed VET sectoral qualifications system development project, 2010-14) has resulted in the development of descriptions and structure of sectoral professional qualifications. Standards continue to be developed and updated for the major professions and qualifications requirements – for related professions and specialisations.

Implementation of EQAVET and joint vocational education quality assurance indicators is still a challenge. In 2013, EQAVET coordinator (IKVD) has started discussion cycle on implementation EQAVET and indicators in cooperation with Sectoral Expert Councils and other stakeholders.

## CHAPTER 4.

# Promoting participation in vocational education and training

## 4.1 Types and characteristics of incentives for individuals, enterprises and providers

Promoting participation in initial vocational education and reduction of dropouts has been a priority in several policy documents. The most recent 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) foresees to:

- improve vocational education programmes;
- implement the sectoral qualifications frameworks;
- differentiate vocational schools;
- balance vocational and general secondary education requirements;
- promote the involvement of social partners in preparation and implementation of vocational education policy.

The state subsidy for VET providers is determined by the government using per capita funding. MoES and line ministries determine the number of publicly-funded students' places in accredited vocational education programs in state, local government and private educational institutions. Providers submit draft annual budgets to the MoES and receive funding after approval of the state budget. According to Vocational Education Law (1999) accredited local government and private vocational education providers may apply for state funding for vocational further education, vocational improvement and vocationally oriented education programmes.

Amendments (2013) in the Education law (*Izglītības likums*, 1998) stipulate that the state and local governments financially support adult non-formal education starting from 2015.

There are fixed and non-fixed costs in per capita formula (CoM regulations on the minimum per student cost in VET programmes, *Noteikumi par profesionālās izglītības programmu īstenošanas izmaksu minimumu uz vienu izglītojamo*, 2007, 2010). Examples of costs are:

- allowance/scholarship;
- transport compensations (EUR 45.53);
- student hotel maintenance (EUR 282.23);
- rehabilitation measures (EUR 495.66) and catering services (EUR 694.36 only in one school) for persons with special needs;
- culture education and sports (EUR 22.77);
- qualification practice (EUR 7.11 per day).

However the actual government's funding is currently below the approved amount. Schools use own revenue to compensate the difference. On average MoES has provided EUR 1877 in 2011, EUR 2089 in 2012 and EUR 2398 in 2013 per student per year.

Tertiary education students can also apply for a study loan. There are two types of loans that cover 1) study fees (study loan) and 2) the living costs (student loan). Loans are offered by the selected bank(s) (or other credit institutions) and are state-guaranteed.

According to the Vocational Education Law (1999), students in accredited first level professional higher education programmes are entitled to both types of loans. The procedure of the allocation, repayment, and clearance of the loan is defined in the Law on Higher Education Institutions (*Augstskolu likums*, 1995).

The legal basis for tax incentives is included in the Law on Enterprise Income Tax (*Par uzņēmumu ienākuma nodokli*, 1995, 2011) and the Law on Personal Income Tax (*Par iedzīvotāju ienākuma nodokli*, 1993, 2011).

Enterprises pay a reduced (by 85%) tax off donations to the state-funded entities holding a 'public benefit organisation' status.

Tax allowances for private tax-payers also exist. Individuals in their annual tax declaration may request the State Revenue Service (*Valsts ieņēmumu dienests*) to reduce their taxable income by the value (but not more than EUR 213 per year) of education and medical expenses (including expenses paid on behalf of the brother/sister/child until 24 years of age). As expenses may be claimed within a three years period recent statistics does not include all claims. The State Revenue Service is the institution responsible for monitoring progress on the use of the tax incentive and taking corrective actions.

For taxation purposes by 'education' is understood:

- state accredited educational programmes (including higher and vocational education),
- EU/EEA state-accredited occupational training,
- (up-)training in enterprises.

Unlike general education students, vocational education students receive monthly allowance according to CoM regulations on scholarships (*Noteikumi par stipendijām*, 2004, 2011). Vocational basic education, vocational education (*arodizglītība*), and vocational secondary education students in publicly financed VET receive allowance from the 'scholarship fund' of VET provider. Allowance is from EUR 10 to 71 per month. Orphans/children without parental care (not at children care institution or foster family) and best performers in studies or school social activities receive higher allowance.

In 2009-13, advanced IVET students based on a performance merit had an opportunity to receive the ESF co-financed scholarships per month:

- during the first year of studies – EUR 14-29;
- during the second, third and fourth year of studies – EUR 29-71;
- 17-25 years old students of short programmes (1-1.5 years) without a professional qualification – up to EUR 100 (since 2012).

A scholarship has been a successful motivation tool for VET students according to their opinion. The MoES discusses replacement of ESF funding of scholarships with the state budget however, in 2014 ESF funding of scholarships will remain.

## 4.2 Guidance and counselling, structures and services

The MoES and MoW are overall responsible for career guidance and counselling. The present career development support system is in place since 2006. It was launched by the CoM approved MoW white paper on the improvement of the career guidance system (*Karjeras attīstības atbalsta sistēmas pilnveidošanas koncepcija*) developed in cooperation with MoES, MoE, Ministry of Regional Development, Association of Local Governments, 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 stakeholders in guidance and counselling at different levels.

In 2007, the national forum on guidance and counselling (*Karjeras attīstības atbalsta sistēmas sadarbības padome*) has been established. It gathers policy makers from the relevant ministries, guidance providers, social partners and users. The forum advises the necessary changes at national and local levels, thus, contributing to the development of guidance and counselling policy and system. It also cooperates with the Latvian delegation to the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN).

The Education Law (*Izglītības likums* 1998) stipulates that the local governments ensure the provision of guidance and counselling for children and young adults. The Vocational Education Law (*Profesionālās izglītības likums*, 1999) stipulates that the MoES organizes introduction of guidance and counselling in vocational education. This division is because the primary and secondary schools are under the management of local governments, while the MoES administers most vocational schools. According to the CoM 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 support in career education is the criteria for quality assessment of a school. The new CoM procedure for granting/revoking of the status of vocational education competence centre (*Profesionālās izglītības kompetences centra statusa piešķiršanas un anulēšanas kārtība*, 2013) foresee additional requirements for status seekers. Vocational education competence centres (in the relevant economic sectors) should provide support measures for career education to acquire career management skills and individual career consultations. This is a new step in promoting guidance and counselling in VET.

The VIAA represent Latvia in the Euroguidance Network (by MoES delegation). Financed by the MoES and the EU Lifelong Learning programme it supports implementation of career education policy within education sector and provides information on education opportunities in Latvia and other EU countries. Before the administrative territorial reform (2008) VIAA had cooperated with a coordinator responsible for guidance and counselling in each local education board. Since 2008, the number and functions of local education boards (or units, or education experts) has changed. 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.

The VIAA has been developing various information materials both to provide methodological support for career guidance practitioners working at schools and guidance materials for young people and adults. It has also been organising training seminars for career practitioners in schools and, since 2012, organises 'career week' events in big cities. The agency maintains and updates an education opportunities database ([www.niid.lv](http://www.niid.lv)) with information about general, vocational and

higher education providers and programmes, as well as information about informal/non-formal learning opportunities. In cooperation with the Academic Information Centre (*Akadēmiskās informācijas centrs*), VIAA maintains and updates website ([www.studyinlatvia.lv](http://www.studyinlatvia.lv)) for foreign students that comprises practical information about education programmes in foreign languages.

The NVA operates in accordance with the Labour Law (*Darba likums*, 2002), the Law on Social Security (*Par sociālo drošību*, 1995) and the Law on the Support for the Unemployed and Job Seekers (*Bezdarbnieku un darba meklētāju atbalsta likums*, 2002). The latter includes the NVA function to ensure free career consultations for the unemployed and job seekers. The agency is the only state institution providing career counselling. It provides career and ‘diagnostic’ (exploration of vocational aptitude) consultations, career planning, analysis of life and work values, exploration of personal and professional characteristics, preparing for work interview (writing CV and work applications); individual self-determination consultations – independent work with self-exploration methods and materials; group consultations – providing information on education and career development opportunities, labour market requirements and e-consultations; online career consultations, information about choice of occupation and work seeking issues through the NVA website ([www.nva.gov.lv](http://www.nva.gov.lv)).

The counselling methods are selected according to the needs of the clients. The first consultation is devoted to clarifying the aims of the visit and selecting the most appropriate working method, which may be focused on exploring professional interests, vocational aptitude, exploring clients’ knowledge, skills and competences, values (by using relevant methodology or tests). If need be, a psychological support is ensured in form of a structured conversation for discussing possible solutions. The NVA web portal “Career Services” (*Karjeras pakalpojumi*) provides information about education establishments, self-assessment tests, descriptions of occupations, as well as opportunity to receive e-consultations.

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

With some exceptions, in the private and NGO sector, the provision of guidance services is underdeveloped, except for the Youth Consultations web portal [www.prakse.lv](http://www.prakse.lv) (since 2008), which is considered to be the largest in Latvia providing information on career and education development issues.

### 4.3 Current key challenges

The current changing of the ownership of the state vocational education providers to the local governments requires altering the financing mechanisms. This reform was proposed by the MoES in the CoM guidelines for optimisation of VET network for 2010-15 (*Profesionālās izglītības iestāžu tīkla optimizācijas pamatnostādnes 2010.-2015.gadam*, 2010).

Another challenge is to ensure access to guidance and counselling for young people. On the one hand, while in the economic recession the NVA has shifted focus of providing career consultations for school students to the unemployed. This makes vital the re-establishment of career counsellors in schools. On the other hand, career guidance and counselling activities for people in education (development of career guidance and counselling within education system,

and ensuring access to career guidance and counselling for young people, development of vocationally oriented education) have been postponed due to limited resources available.

## Annex 1

## Initial vocational education at basic and secondary level (mainly school-based)

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 pedagogical correction)	Vocational secondary education programmes, labour market
vocational education programme	1) general or vocational basic education 2) without basic education, but not younger than 15 y.o	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, labour market
vocational secondary education programme	general or vocational basic education	primary sector and utilities, manufacturing, construction, distribution and transport, business and other services, non-marketed services	3A, 3B	60:40	50:50	3-4 years, 2 years after vocational programme	higher education programmes labour market
inter-mediate programme in general secondary education	vocational education programme	---	3A, 3B	100:0	---	1 year	higher education programmes
vocational education programme	general secondary education	primary sector and utilities, manufacturing, construction, distribution and transport, business and other services, non-marketed services	4B	60:40	35:65	1 year (2 years in programmes licensed before 2009)	Labour market

## Annex 2

## Professional education at tertiary level (mainly school-based)

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
short cycle study programmes	first level professional higher education or academic bachelor's degree	primary sector and utilities, manufacturing, construction, distribution and transport, business and other services, non-marketed services	ISCED 5A professional qualification level 5 EQF level 6	Total 40 Latvian CP (1 Latvian credit =1.5 ECTS), of which: - 4 CP theoretical courses in the branch - 26 CP work based learning - 10 CP state exam (including final thesis)		1-2 years Total duration of HE studies – 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

## Annex 3

# Definitions

### **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 vocations 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

### **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.

### **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.

## Acronyms and abbreviations

AIC	Academic Information Centre <i>Akadēmiskās informācijas centrs</i>
CoM	Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia <i>Latvijas Republikas Ministru kabinets</i>
CP	Credit points <i>kredītpunkti</i>
CSB	Central Statistical Bureau of the Republic of Latvia <i>Centrālās statistikas pārvalde</i>
EQF	European Qualifications Framework <i>Eiropas kvalifikāciju ietvarstruktūra</i>
ESF	European Social Fund <i>Eiropas Sociālais fonds</i>
LQF	Latvian Qualifications Framework <i>Latvijas kvalifikāciju ietvarstruktūra</i>
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science <i>Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija</i>
MoW	Ministry of Welfare <i>Labklājības ministrija</i>
NCP	National Coordination Point <i>Nacionālais koordinācijas punkts</i>
NVA	State Employment Agency <i>Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra</i>
VIAA	State Education Development Agency <i>Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra</i>
IKVD	State Education Quality Service <i>Izglītības kvalitātes valsts dienests</i>

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<a href="http://www.lak.lv">www.lak.lv</a>	Latvian Chamber of Crafts
<a href="http://www.iddk.lv">www.iddk.lv</a>	Employers' Confederation of Latvia
<a href="http://www.lizda.lv">www.lizda.lv</a>	Education and Science Workers Trade Union
<a href="http://www.lm.gov.lv">www.lm.gov.lv</a>	Ministry of Welfare
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