

A bridge to the future
European policy for vocational education
and training 2002-10



This report is one of a set of European country reports on VET policy development prepared within Cedefop's ReferNet network. ReferNet is a European network of national networks providing information and analysis on national VET to Cedefop and disseminating information on European VET and Cedefop work to stakeholders in the EU Member States, Norway and Iceland. The report has been produced by ReferNet Latvia as a contribution to Cedefop's fourth policy report which reviews progress in VET towards the policy goals of the Copenhagen process. The opinions expressed in this national report are not necessarily those of Cedefop.

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PREFACE

This report was prepared in terms of ReferNet Latvia work programme of 2010 as one of the activities. The structure of the report is based on Cedefop guidelines and templates. The Policy Reports concerning the national developments have been prepared by all 29 ReferNet network member states.

ReferNet network contributions will be used as one of the source to review the progress towards commonly agreed objectives and priority areas set up in the Copenhagen Declaration and the subsequent Maastricht/Helsinki/Bordeaux communiqués. Cedefop will summarize these in the 2010 VET Policy report to be presented at the informal ministerial meeting at the end of 2010 in Belgium. The preliminary findings of the analysis will also feed into the work of the European Commission and the Bruges working group preparing the 2010 communiqué on cooperation in vocational education beyond 2010 and other related policy documents.

The progress from 2002 to the beginning of 2010 in vocational education policy has been reviewed in this report.

The topics are outlined in relevant political context, as well as using particular examples of good practice. There are the following topics included in the report:

- Socioeconomic challenges for future VET policy development
- Economic crisis – VET policies as recovery measures
- Impact and implications of the joint work on European principles and tools
- Strengthening links between VET and the labour market
- Addressing equity, social inclusion and active citizenship
- Quality, excellence and attractiveness of VET
- Enhancing creativity and innovation
- Financing VET
- Progress in modernising European VET systems in the Copenhagen process and priorities for future cooperation

When preparing this report ReferNet Latvia consulted with the following institutions: the Ministry of Education and Science Republic of Latvia, the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers, the Latvian Adult Education Association, the Employers' Confederation of Latvia, the State Education Development Agency, Latvian Eurydice Unit, the Career Methodology and Client Service Unit of the State Employment Agency etc.

THEME 1: SOCIOECONOMIC CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE VET POLICY DEVELOPMENT

1.1 Impact of globalisation on VET

Globalisation has opened more opportunities for information exchange, cross-border cooperation and mobility. Since 1998, geographic mobility in vocational education has been promoted in terms of the Leonardo da Vinci programme, which implementation is supervised by the State Education Development Agency. The international migration of qualified work force has been fostered by the recognition of professional qualifications; the procedure is stipulated by the *Law on the Recognition of Regulated Professions and Professional Qualification* (2001). For more information see Theme 3.

The Leonardo da Vinci programme and other individual projects include mutual cooperation between vocational schools in Latvia and in other countries, which activities involve students' and teachers' mobility, study visits and experience exchange.

Examples of response initiatives

There are no particular examples regarding globalisation in vocational education.

1.2 Impact of technological progress on VET

One of most significant issue is the slow adaptation of education system to labour market progress. Although employers participate in designing and updating occupational standards, the educational planning requires time and when curricula are implemented, the content appears to be outdated (see Theme 4).

Furthermore, due to the limited financial resources schools cannot be provided with modern equipment currently used in enterprises. Partly this is solved through students' practical training in enterprises.

The adaptation of education system also depends on teachers' qualification and expertise in the field. Since 2004, according to the Vocational Education Law (1999) vocational teachers, apart from professional qualification, have to possess a pedagogical qualification, which might have discouraged some experienced specialists without teacher qualification to work in schools. Meanwhile, there could be situation when teachers (with pedagogic qualification) did not have thorough practical experience with modern equipment and technologies. Therefore, promoting vocational teacher qualification and further education has been set as direction in several policy documents and projects, e.g. ESF National Programme project Development of further teacher education methodological network and provision. See Theme 6 for further information regarding teachers.

In 2008, the Cabinet Regulations on the activity *Modernisation of Education Facilities and Improvement of Infrastructure for Implementing Vocational Education Programmes* of Action Programme Infrastructure and Services was adopted (latest amendments in December 2009). The Activity supports the following measures:

- Modernisation of equipment, facilities and technologies (including purchase), as well as provision of necessary information technologies at least in one vocational secondary or vocational education programme within 14 priority areas such as mechanics and metal working; chemistry technologies and biotechnology; production of food industry technology and ware; construction and civil engineering; and veterinary science.

- Reconstruction and renovation of vocational school buildings, premises and infrastructure or construction of new buildings.
- Modernisation of library and at least two natural science classrooms (mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology or IT).
- Adaptation of vocational education establishments for needs of individuals with functional disorders.

The measures are implemented (until 2013) through projects submitted for the call by vocational education establishments. The Regulations imparts the idea of vocational school differentiation by stating various statuses of vocational education establishments, e.g. competence centre, affiliate of vocational education establishment, vocational education establishment with specialisation. The school differentiation is one of the action directions included the concept *Raising attractiveness of vocational education and involvement of social partners within vocational education quality assurance* (September 2009) and the succeeding *Guidelines for Optimisation of Vocational Education Establishments Network for 2010-2015* (2010). See example in 1.3 and Theme 6.

Examples of response initiatives

Modernisation and Raising Prestige of Vocational Education System (2007-2013)

1. Outline of the policy/ measure:

(a) Rationale:

Since majority of students select general upper-secondary education (63.9% in 2008/2009), in comparison proportion of vocational secondary education students was 36.1%, some steps had to be taken in order to promote attractiveness of vocational education. Students and their parents prefer general education because it ensures greater possibility to proceed within higher education, which thereafter, provides wider opportunities within the labour market. Meanwhile, bulk of students entering vocational education possesses poor general knowledge and low learning motivation. In vocational secondary education programmes are less hours in general education subjects than in general education programmes, which are the reason why vocational education students show poorer results in the final central exams allowing to enter within higher education.

Therefore, in the *Education Development Guidelines for 2007-2013* as one of further action priorities modernisation of vocational education was set.

(b) Objectives/measurable targets:

The overwhelming aim is to update vocational education system and raise its prestige to attract more students. As measurable targets may be mentioned: 1) percentage of dropouts among 1st year students does not exceed 10% (in 2005/2006, 16.4% of vocational students was expelled, while in 2008/2009 – 15.5%). 2) Rate of vocational graduates among unemployed in total does not run over 4% (in 2008 the unemployment rate of vocational upper-secondary education graduates was 32.7%). 3) 100% of vocational students have done practice training in workplaces. 4) 10 complete sets of education programmes and examination content have been developed. 5) 10 methodological material sets have been developed for education programme acquisition. 6) Rate of vocational students has increased by 6% (of basic education graduates in total per year). 7) The National Tripartite Sub-council for co-operation in VET and employment and Regional Tripartite Sub-councils functions actively.

(c) Target groups:

The main target group is secondary vocational education students.

(d) Status of implementation:

The activity is planned to introduce during the period 2007-2013.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

(a) Level of operation is national.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger policy approach?

The *Modernisation and Raising Prestige of Vocational Education System* is implemented along with other priorities reflected in the *Education Development Guidelines for 2007-2013*, which outline main action directions in education for the planning period of six years.

(c) Key actors involved:

In the activity related with student attraction to vocational education vocational schools together with national and local authorities are involved. The occupational standards are to be developed in closer cooperation with the social partners and employers. For approving occupational standards until July 2009 the former Vocational Education Administration was responsible, the function was assigned to the State Education Content Agency, which also is an institution under the direction of the Ministry of Education and Science. The National Tripartite Sub-Council for co-operation in Vocational Education and Employment and Regional Tripartite Sub-Councils solve issues related with vocational education.

3. Evaluation:

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact:

The planned outcomes correspond to set objectives. The planned outcomes are: 1) Students having poor knowledge in general subjects are provided with additional classes. 2) Career guidance along with 1st year student adaptation activities are carried out to decrease dropouts. 3) New or updated vocational education programmes are implemented. 4) Employers are engaged within development of education content and more closely in working out the occupational standards. 5) A fund is established for supporting employers for them to involve in implementation of vocational education programmes. 6) In-service practices are provided in all the regions. 7) State funding is increased for purchasing books and study materials within vocational education establishments.

(b) Indicators of success:

The scope of activities may be considered to be successful if measurable targets are reached. However, the path of implementation cannot be evaluated objectively yet.

(c) Integration of outcomes into larger policies:

This measure belongs to main national education planning document the *National Education Development Guidelines for 2007-2013*; therefore, it is implemented in relation with other steps regarding ongoing socioeconomic trends and processes.

4. Conclusions:

(a) Obstacles encountered; measures (planned) to overcome them.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

Since the measure is not completed, it cannot be evaluated thoroughly. Yet one of obstacles encountered may be global and national economical regression, which has to be addressed in line with other issues.

5. Source, legend:

The National Education Development Guidelines for 2007-2013 (2006). The Ministry of Education and Science.

1.3 Impact of demographic change and international migration on VET

The reducing number of students is one of the most crucial challenges not only in vocational education, but in the entire education system. The number of inhabitants continues to decrease gradually (from 2,345,768 in 2002 to 2,261,294 in 2009) due to migration and ageing (15.5% in

2002; 17.1% in 2009 of inhabitants was above age 65). The most of population lives in urban area (67.8%), of which 57.8% lives in Riga and its district (Central Statistic Bureau of Latvia, 2010). The majority of social and economic facilities are concentrated in Riga and in big cities, therefore, availability of education and other services in rural regions should be particularly promoted. According to the *Concept of Education Development for 2002-2005* (2002), already in mid-nineties optimisation of school network was set as an objective and continued in following planning periods. Optimisation of schools regards to proportion between numbers of students and teachers, number of students in class and education quality. Thus, number of vocational schools from 121 in 1999/2000 decreased to 92 in 2008/2009. Especially topical the issue became in the conditions of economic recession; the particular example of measure is outlined below.

Inland migration is not as great, as migration to other states, which shows increasing tendency, i.e. in 2002 migration balance of all inhabitants was -0.08%, while in 2008 -0.11%. The most popular destination countries are Russia, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Ukraine, and the USA, while the most immigrants are from Russia, Great Britain, Lithuania, Germany and Belarus. Since the migration rate is comparatively low, specific policy measures are not arranged for vocational education. The urban/rural ratio in the total number of population has not changed during last 5 years (68% of population lives in urban area, 32% – in rural regions). The main inhabitant migration stream may be observed from rural regions to Riga. In order to decrease socio-economic differences among regions and decrease students' migration to schools in the capital city, ERAF funding is distributed to vocational education establishments according to number of basic school graduates within the region. Region development plans as well as human resource forecasts cannot be worked out properly due to the obstacles raised in the process of national administrative territorial reform. The territorial reform legally was completed by the end of 2008.

The increase of adult participation in vocational education occurs through the education opportunities for the unemployed. This aspect has gained more importance due to the current economical situation (see Theme 2).

Example of response initiatives

<p>Guidelines for Optimisation of Vocational Education Establishments Network (2010-2015)</p>
<p>1. Outline of the policy/ measure:</p>
<p>(a) Rationale: Number of students due to negative demographic indicators has decreased for last years, e.g. since 2002/2003 number of vocational students has fallen by 16.6% in 2008/2009. According to the Central Statistics Bureau data, in 2015 within age group 15-19 there will be 93,788 inhabitants, which is 40% less than in 2009. Meanwhile, the number of teachers tends to decrease more slowly, i.e. by 13.6% between 2002 and 2008. In course of previous school network optimisation number of vocational schools has also decreased: from 121 in 1999/2000 to 92 in 2008/2009. These statistics and limited financial resources urged the Ministry of Education and Science in the <i>Informative Report on Procedure of Education System Structural Reform and Planned Measures for Its Implementation</i> setting objective to design the <i>Guidelines for Optimisation of Vocational Education Establishments Network for 2010-2015</i> (January 2010, which would foster education quality and effective financial management.</p>
<p>(b) Objectives/measurable targets: The overwhelming aim of the Guidelines is to provide further implementation of vocational education system structural reforms by optimising number of vocational schools and their location in regions and by differentiating vocational schools; to form modern technical facilities and equipment of vocational education; to foster more effective use of all range of resources,</p>

thus, promoting quality and availability of vocational education.

Main results of the measure include education quality, availability and cost-effectiveness, which may be characterised with the following indicators:

- Differentiated, relevant to demographic tendencies, resource-effective network of vocational schools will be developed;
- Balanced offer (at national and regional level) of vocational education programmes will be provided with the aim to supply labour market with sufficient number of specialists and to ensure that education offer complies with employability structure;
- During the optimisation process of vocational schools the cooperation principle between state institutions, local governments and sectoral organisations will be followed in order to provide flexible and effective use of all range resources and ability to respond quickly to the changes within labour market demand.

The optimisation imparts the reduction of number of vocational schools (from 59 in 2009/2010 to 30 schools under direction of the Ministry of Education and Science in 2015), at the same time modernisation of schools. Furthermore, to provide specialists for labour market, the ratio between the number of general and vocation students is planned to balance to 50:50 (at present the ratio is around 64:36). These 30 schools will be differentiated by their functions and management. Five types of schools are planned to form:

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

(c) Target groups:

The target groups include vocational schools, i.e. administration and students.

(d) Status of implementation:

The activities of the Guidelines are planned to implement during the period 2010-2015. Gradually, but not longer than in the period of 6 years management of vocational schools will be assigned to the local governments on ground of voluntary principle and in accordance with funding procedure stipulated by the Cabinet of Ministers.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

(a) Level of operation is national and regional.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger policy approach?

The Guidelines were designed and are implemented in line with priorities and activities outlined in other policy planning documents, e.g. the concept *Raising attractiveness of vocational education and involvement of social partners within vocational education quality assurance* (September 2009).

(c) Key actors involved:

The implementation of the Guidelines is supervised by the Ministry of Education and Science. In the activities other state bodies and local governments, as well as sectoral associations participate.

3. Evaluation:

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact:

The anticipated outcomes correspond to the set objectives described above, which emphasise the promotion of availability, cooperation and resource-effectiveness. However, the evaluation cannot be performed yet, since the introduction of the Guidelines has started only in 2010.

(b) Indicators of success:

The range of activities may be considered to be successful if measurable targets are reached and underpinning principles are observed.

(c) Integration of outcomes into larger policies:

These Guidelines were developed according to the *Action Plan for Implementing the Latvia's Economic Stabilisation and Growth Revival Programme* (2009), which comprises national policy concerning recovery from the economic recession (See Theme 2). The different statuses of vocational education establishments are outlined in the Cabinet Regulations on the *Activity Modernisation of Education Facilities and Improvement of Infrastructure for Implementing Vocational Education Programmes of Action Programme Infrastructure and Services* (2008, 2009), as well (see 1.2).

4. Conclusions:

(a) Obstacles encountered; measures (planned) to overcome them.

There is rather high level of opposition against closure of vocational schools expressed both by education establishments themselves and society. The argument is that schools often serve as social and cultural centres in rural areas, and the infrastructure is not developed sufficiently to arrange transport for students to reorganised schools, which frequently are located at long distance from their home. Therefore, there is a risk that part of students from the closed or reorganised schools may drop out of the education system.

The other issue is teachers and school administration, which become unemployed due to the structural reforms.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

Since the measure is not completed, it cannot be evaluated thoroughly.

5. Source, legend:

Guidelines for Optimisation of Vocational Education Establishments Network for 2010-2015 (2010). The Ministry of Education and Science.

The data base of Central Statistics Bureau of Latvia. Available at: <http://www.csb.gov.lv/csp/content/?cat=355>.

1.4 Impact of greening of economy on VET

There is not a separate environmental policy for vocational sector. Since mid1990 environmental education has been included in the school curricula, as well as environmental science Olympiads have been arranged for students. During the period 2001-2005, the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe has implemented various environmental education projects, e.g. the project *Schools for sustainable development in the Baltic States* (2001-2003) with a long-term objective to promote sustainable development in Latvia by integrating education for sustainable development within education programmes and leisure education activities.

In 2002, the *Strategy for Sustainable Development in Latvia* was adapted by the Cabinet of Ministers. The Strategy aimed to define the national directions for sustainable development through outlining identifying problems and providing possible solutions. According to the *National Report on Implementing Sustainable Development (Latvijas Republikas nacionālais pārskats par ilgtspējīgas attīstības īstenošanu, 2007)*, in the next planning period emphasis will be put on raising awareness of society, forming personal attitude and responsibility towards environment.

Legal basis for environment issues is provided by the Environmental Protection Law (*Vides aizsardzības likums, 2006, 2010*), which defines such terms as education for sustainable development and environment education. Environmental education includes issues concerning environment and its protection; students master skills and competences for solving environment protection problems, as well as develop responsible attitude and motivation to make reasoned decisions. The paragraph of the Law on environmental education states that:

1. In the core content of subject or course standard according to specific features of particular subject issues on environmental education and education for sustainable development are included harmonising and ensuring succession within various education levels.
2. Within core part of higher education institutions and colleges study programmes course on environment protection is included.
3. Within all teacher study programmes of higher education institutions and colleges course on sustainable development is included.

The Law stipulates the operation of Environmental Science and Education Council (*Vides zinātnes un izglītības padome*), which was established in 2004 and which is a coordinative and consulting intersectoral institution. It provides recommendations in the field of environmental science and education and education for sustainable development, and promotes cooperation among institutions related to the environmental and sustainability issues. The Council consists of representatives from the Ministry of Environment and other relevant ministries, higher education institutions and colleges, and it is funded by the Ministry of Environment.

Examples of response initiatives

There are no particular examples of initiatives to cope with the effects of climate change on vocational education.

1.5 Other challenges for VET

There are no other major challenges in vocational education; the main issues are covered in other sections.

THEME 2: ECONOMIC CRISIS – VET POLICIES AS RECOVERY MEASURES

2.1 Initiatives for recovery

The national priorities and measures for recovering from the recession are outlined in the *Latvia's Economic Stabilisation and Growth Revival Programme* (2008), which is supported by the *Action Plan for Implementing the Latvia's Economic Stabilisation and Growth Revival Programme* (February 2009). According to the Plan, the Ministry of Education and Science:

- Prepared *Informative Report on Planned Structural Changes within Education Sector, Their Implementation and Anticipated Benefits* (April 2009) considering the recommendations of the World Bank.
- Prepared *Informative Report on Revision of Vocational Education Programmes of First to Third Professional Qualification Level* (July 2009) with the aim to assess the correspondence of the provided vocational education programmes to the labour market long- and short-term needs, as well to state, in which occupation the graduates are at most in risk to become unemployed in the course of labour market changes.
- Designed concept *Raising attractiveness of vocational education and involvement of social partners within vocational education quality assurance* (adopted in September 2009), which should serve as a basis for the new Vocational Education Law. See Theme 6.
- Developed the *Guidelines for Optimisation of Vocational Education Establishments Network for 2010-2015* (adopted in January 2010) to promote cost-effectiveness and availability of vocational education (see Theme 1, example in 1.3).
- Reviewed and prepared amendments in the Programme for the *Implementation of the Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013 in the period of 2008-2010*, which were adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers in December 2009.
- Prepared amendments to the Vocational Education Law regarding recognition of non-formal and informal learning, which are not adopted yet.

The main action directions of the structural education reforms proposed by the Ministry of Education and Science are the following:

- Improving efficiency and effectiveness of vocational education funding and delivery;
- Transferring key education service delivery decision-making to local governments to improve flexibility and responsiveness to local needs;
- Strengthening evaluation, regulation and accountability in the education system.

The Ministry has initiated to introduce the principle “money follows student” (previously funding was allocated to school). This principle is expected promote school competitiveness by diversifying education offer according to students’ abilities and needs, and to provide equal and transparent allocation of funds to each students, while facilitating effective use of education funding, arranging school network; thus, forming optimal school network and raising quality and cost-effectiveness. Since September 2009, funding allocated for general education teacher payment to local governments depends on number of students in particular administrative territory. This principle allows comparing expenses per student in general and vocational education, i.e. average expenditures per student in state vocational schools are lower than for basic school pupils. The difference resulted from insufficient funding for vocational education and linear reduction of 2009 budgeted. Therefore, the Ministry recommended reforming funding system by introducing united funding regulations both for general and vocational education: funding for general and basic schools is allocated to local governments, while vocational schools are financed by state. Reform includes merge funding for education in a single subsidy

for local governments to be able to address education issues in general and to manage school network.

In terms of school network optimisation nine vocational schools were reorganised in 2009. Further optimisation will include assigning state vocational schools under the supervision of local governments and consolidation with general education establishments, thus offering various education programmes in one building. Moreover, 12 vocational schools are planned to be reorganized as “competence centres”, which would provide education and recognise qualifications both for vocational education students and adults.

The quality and offer of vocational education programmes are expected to be reinforced. The cooperation with and responsibility of local governments and employers concerning vocational education quality and availability are planned to reinforce. The following steps have been taken or are planned:

- Amendments in the procedure of licensing and accreditation vocational education programmes have been developed.
- The cost and offer of education programmes were evaluated in order to develop an education programme system based on modules and to establish 14 regional competence centres in cooperation with professional associations and employers. At present, programmes based on modules are developed.
- By May 2010, differentiation of basic education for grades 7-9 is planned to be introduced to provide both general education programmes and vocational orientated programmes.

Since the unemployment rate has increased significantly (from 7.5% in 2008 to 13.0% in December 2009), the State Employment Agency in 2009 initiated the new employability services, which are supported by ESF and EU and which promote inclusion of the unemployed within labour market and education. Some of the activities are described in more details in the section of examples.

Examples of response initiatives

Vocational training for employees on work stoppage using the coupon-system (2009)
1. Outline of the policy/ measure:
<p>(a) Rationale: In last years the unemployment rate has doubled: from 6.0% in 2007 to 13.0% at the end of 2009. However, the increase of rate is expected to continue because of falling business and industry activities. The data of the Central Statistics Bureau indicate that the GDP in 2009 has on average has decreased by 18.8% comparing to 2008. In order to preserve work places in enterprises experiencing low operation level, the State Employment Agency (<i>Nodarbinatibas valsts agentura</i>, SEA) has launched new employability activities. The Agency, which, apart other functions, organises training for the unemployed people by procuring it from licensed education providers, works on national and regional basis and has 28 regional offices.</p> <p>(b) Objectives/measurable targets: The measure aims to provide support for employees facing the risk of unemployment by ensuring opportunities to participate within professional continuous education or professional development programmes; as well as to maintain skills and working capacities during the work stoppage in the relevant field of professional activity.</p> <p>In terms of activity an employee may select relevant professional development programme or professional continuous education programme and receive a coupon issued by the State Employment Agency. The choice of educational establishment and programme (except those initially participating at the tender issued by the Agency) relies on the employee. The value of coupon (EUR 425-710) varies with the selected education programme and the maximum</p>

duration of the training is 6 months; the learners receive grant – EUR 100 per month.

To be able to participate, the employee has to have a part-time employment, i.e. their work time is reduced to 22 hours and 36 hours or even 13 hours a week. To be eligible to participate, the employee has to be employed more than 6 months at the current work place; and work time has been reduced at least one month prior application. When applying, the candidate has to submit a written employer's statement regarding the employee's work time reduction and necessity of training.

(c) Target groups:

The target groups are employees of entrepreneurs and self-employed persons except individuals employed by State and municipal enterprises. The activity is foreseen for at least 11,000 employees facing unemployment risk.

(d) Status of implementation:

The activity was commenced in September 2009.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

(a) Level of operation is national and regional.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger policy approach?

The measure is implemented in line with other activities of the State Employment Agencies in terms of the ESF project *Vocational training for persons facing unemployment risk (Profesionālā apmācība bezdarba riskam pakļautām personām)*.

(c) Key actors involved:

The measure is introduced by the State Employment Agency (and its 28 regional offices) in cooperation with educational establishments.

3. Evaluation:

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact:

The anticipated outcomes include maintenance and update of skills and competences for individuals facing unemployment risk due to low economic activity of employer. The impact of the measure cannot be evaluated yet.

(b) Indicators of success:

The indicator of success may be fulfilment of set objectives.

(c) Integration of outcomes into larger policies:

The measure was introduced in terms of employment policy implemented by the Ministry of Welfare. The *Action Plan for Implementing the Latvia's Economic Stabilisation and Growth Revival Programme* (2009) comprising national policy on recovery from the economic recession included objective to implement active employment measures in 2009.

4. Conclusions:

(a) Obstacles encountered; measures (planned) to overcome them.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

Since the measure is not completed, it cannot be evaluated thoroughly.

5. Source, legend:

State Employment Agency, official website: <http://www.nva.lv/index.php>.

The data base of Central Statistics Bureau of Latvia. Available at: <http://www.csb.gov.lv/csp/content/?cat=355>.

Higher professional education vouchers for the unemployed (2009)

1. Outline of the policy/ measure:

(a) Rationale:

In last years the unemployment rate has doubled: from 6.0% in 2007 to 13.0% at the end of 2009. Speaking about the education level of the unemployed, statistics indicate that rate of the unemployed with higher education tends to increase: from 9.2% of the unemployed totally in 2002 to 14.1% in 2008. More detailed data analysis reveals that rate in 2008 vary greatly with gender, i.e. 7.6% of the unemployed males and 22.1% of the unemployed females had higher education. Meanwhile, the rate of unemployed with vocational education has decreased: from 36.4% in 2002 to 32.7% in 2008. In order to promote the education level of the unemployed, the State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinatibas valsts agentura*, SEA) has launched new employability activities. The Agency, which, apart other functions, organises training for the unemployed people by procuring it from accredited education providers, works on national and regional basis and has 28 regional offices.

(b) Objectives/measurable targets:

The aim of the measures is to provide an opportunity for the unemployed with initially gained or uncompleted higher education to acquire higher professional qualification or change qualification in terms of the first or second level professional higher educational programme. After completion the unemployed are awarded with relevant diploma according to the legislation. The Law of Higher Education Institutions (*Augstskolu likums*, 1995) and the Vocational Education Law (*Profesionalas izglitibas likums*, 1999) stipulate a 2-level professional higher education – the first level (2-3 years) leading to professional qualification Level 4 (ISCED 5B) and second level (ISCED 5A) leading to qualification level 5 (4-6 years).

The first or second level professional higher education programme (duration cannot exceed 18 months) is selected by the employee cooperating with the Agency career consultant. To facilitate the candidate's choice, an informative list with educational institutions and educational programmes is provided. Thereafter, the Agency regional office issues a voucher with the planned validity term (one month), which has to be submitted to the chosen educational institution. The educational institution performs the assessment of the candidate's prior education before accepting them for the studies.

The voucher system is applied for the payment of the studies (maximum training voucher value is EUR 1420 to be used for one educational programme). The voucher serves as a guarantee that the Agency will reimburse the candidate's education to educational institution. In case when the study fee is higher, the additional expenses are covered by the candidate on basis of mutual with the educational institution. The unemployed participating in the measure receive grant – EUR 100 per month.

(c) Target groups:

The target group for this measure is the unemployed. The priority in competition for the vouchers is ensured for the unemployed who at the moment of application meet at least one of the following criteria:

- At least three years after the graduation have not started to work in the field of their formal education or have started to work in the field of their formal education, but the work relations have been terminated;
- Comply with the legal definition of a long-term unemployed, i.e. they are unemployed for longer than one year in the register of the Agency.

First level professional higher education programmes can be attended by the unemployed, who, firstly, have had started the chosen first level professional higher educational programme, but for some reason had dropped out studies at least one year before the engaging in this measure.

And, secondly, until the completion of programme and obtaining the diploma there is less than 18 months.

For the second level professional higher education programmes applications are accepted from the unemployed, who, first, have the relevant previous education for second level professional educational programme. Second, the candidates have had started the selected second level professional educational programme, but had discontinued their studies for some reason at least one year before the engaging in this measure.

(d) Status of implementation:

The first deadline for application to study in 2009/2010 spring term was during 16.11.-18.12.2009. The next timelines for application will be pronounced later.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

(a) Level of operation is national and regional.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger policy approach?

The measure is implemented in line with other activities of the State Employment Agency, particularly in terms of the ESF project *Training of the Unemployed and Job Seekers in Latvia 2 (Bezdarbnieku un darba meklētāju apmācība Latvijā – 2)* implemented during the period of 2009-2013.

(c) Key actors involved:

The measure is introduced by the State Employment Agency (and its 28 regional offices) in cooperation with higher educational establishments.

3. Evaluation:

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact:

When participating in the measure the unemployed may upgrade their formal qualification, which raises their competitiveness in the labour market and may promote their self-esteem. On the whole the impact of the measure cannot be evaluated yet.

(b) Indicators of success:

The indicator of success will be fulfilment of set objectives and the potential decrease of the unemployment rate.

(c) Integration of outcomes into larger policies:

The measure was introduced in terms of employment policy implemented by the Ministry of Welfare. To implement the activity legal amendments had to be carried out initially. Thus, the measure is implemented in line with the following laws and regulations:

- Law on the Support for the Unemployed and Job Seekers (May 2002);
- Regulations regarding the *Procedures for Organising and Financing of Active Employment Measures and Preventative Measures for Unemployment Reduction and Principles for Selection of Implementing Bodies of Measures* (March 2008);
- *Regulations on the Grant for the Unemployed during Vocational Education, Re-qualification and Upgrading Qualification and during Acquisition of Non-formal or Informal Education* (March 2009);
- The Law of Higher Education Institutions (1995);
- Cabinet Regulations *Procedure on Commencing Studies within Later Stages of Studies* (November 2004).

4. Conclusions:

(a) Obstacles encountered; measures (planned) to overcome them.

The measure is launched recently; thus, the progress of its implementation cannot be discussed. However, one of the obstacles may be that candidates have to select the programmes by price, not by their preferences or needs, since they may not have funding for covering expenditure differences.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

Since the measure is not completed, it cannot be evaluated thoroughly.

5. Source, legend:

State Employment Agency, official website: <http://www.nva.lv/index.php>.

The data base of Central Statistics Bureau of Latvia. Available at: <http://www.csb.gov.lv/csp/content/?cat=355>.

THEME 3: IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE JOINT WORK ON EUROPEAN PRINCIPLES AND TOOLS

3.1 Impact of joint work on European principles and tools on national LLL policies and practices and VET developments

The national lifelong learning policy is greatly shaped by European principles and tools. The LLL policy for the next years is stipulated by the *Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013 (Mužizglitibas politikas pamatnostadnes 2007.–2013.gadam, 2007)* prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science. The Guidelines highlight three priorities to aspire for: first, the availability of lifelong learning for all social groups; second, qualitative education offer for adults providing sustainable competences for further socioeconomic and civic activities; and, third, forming legislative and administrative system involving various stakeholders. Speaking about the tools, the Europass documents have been implemented since 2005, while the process of setting NQF according to EQF, introducing ECVET and validation represents most topical current challenges.

In 2005, the National Europass centre (NEC) under the supervision of Academic Information Centre was established to carry out the coordination of the receiving of Europass documents and the promotion of the use of Europass, as well as to implement several support measures.

The Latvian NEC cooperates with employment services and recruitment agencies for posting Europass CV on their web pages. Interest on the Mobility documents has evidently increased: 62 Europass Mobility Passes were issued in 2005, while 626 Passes – in 2009. In 2009 in total 24 549 Europass documents were issued, of which 38.58% was Europass CV and 8.15% – Europass Language Passes.

Higher education institutions remain responsible for completing and issuing Diploma Supplement, which template since 2002 has been introduced in some and since 2004 is obligatory for all higher education institutions. In 2005, working group was established by the MoES for implementing the Certificate Supplement. Latvian NEC coordinated the working group to elaborate pilot Europass Certificate Supplement for five occupations – cook, hairdresser, arc welder, cabinet-maker, and electrician – in two versions taking into account Certificate Supplement guidelines and national legislation.

To promote the raise awareness, NEC constantly updates the national website (www.europass.lv), which is linked to the websites of the Latvian centres of Euroguidance, Eurodesk and EURES and serves as information tool for receiving queries from individual and education institutions (in 2005, 115 institutions applied for Mobility Passes). Furthermore, the NEC regularly publishes several informative brochures, conference leaflets to disseminate them directly to general, vocational and higher education institutions. NEC has organised informative seminars for limited audiences at secondary schools, local guidance centres and employment services.

The amendments in the *Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013* (December 2009) states that shift towards education offer based on learning outcomes oriented national framework has to be ensured. Since February 2008, the Academic Information Centre acts as a national EQF information coordination point (NCP) to promote introduction of the framework. In September 2009, work group involving various stakeholders was established to link the Latvian qualification system to the EQF and formulate level descriptors by spring 2011. For higher education the cycle descriptors have been developed in line with the Bologna Process and EQF by the Latvian Rectors' Council working group and adopted by the Higher Education Council.

The introduction policy of the framework within vocational system is also supported by the new concept *Raising attractiveness of vocational education and involvement of social partners within vocational education quality assurance* which was adopted in September 2009. See Theme 6.

The European Credit System for VET is planned to be introduced by the new Vocational Education Law. The working group has been formed to draft the law by December 2010.

The new concept *Raising attractiveness of vocational education and involvement of social partners within vocational education quality assurance* (adopted in September 2009) promotes the introduction of validating informal and non-formal learning. The Concept outlines possible procedure for the validation and recognition, as well as tasks and responsibilities of state, social partners and sectoral organisations within non-formal and informal education. According to the Concept the procedure of validation should comprise the following steps:

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

The introduction and maintenance of validation system are planned to be funded from the resources of ESF and state for period 2007-2013. It is planned that candidates will have to pay for validation. The institutions carrying out the validation are planned to be the competence centres, which are expected to be established according to several policy documents, e.g. *Informative Report on Planned Structural Changes within Education Sector, Their Implementation and Anticipated Benefits* (April 2009), and the *Guidelines for Optimisation of Vocational Education Establishments Network for 2010-2015* (January 2010). The Ministry of Education and Science has prepared amendments in Vocational Education Law regarding validation of non-formal/informal learning, which are not adapted yet, in order to provide legal basis for the validation of informal/non-formal learning.

Strengths and weaknesses of implementation of European tools and principles

The main strength of Europass is the rapid increase of its popularity during the recent years, which is indicated by statistics above. Therefore, conclusion may be drawn that implementation of Europass has been rather successful.

According to the observations of the career guidance specialists at the State Employment Agency, Europass CV is the most popular document from Europass documents. The Europass form, which is available at www.europass.lv, is actively used by career consultants of the State Employment Agency and representatives of EURES when working with clients.

Speaking about other European tools, since they do not function completely, their strengths and weaknesses may not be analysed thoroughly. However, an increasing interest from stakeholders may be observed regarding the opportunities these instruments underpin.

Examples of initiatives

There are no particular examples on this topic.

3.2 Promoting geographical mobility of learners/apprentices and teachers/trainers in VET

The implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme and its four sub-programmes (Leonardo, Erasmus, Comenius and Grundtvig) since January 2010 is supervised by the State Education Development Agency.

Geographic mobility of learners and teachers within vocational education at national level is promoted by the Leonardo da Vinci programme, in which Latvia has participated since 1998 and which implementation has been supervised by the State Education Development Agency. Increasing numbers of participants within activities organised in the terms of Programme show that mobility is an issue of large interest: mobility project competition increased by 18% in 2005 comparing to 2004, which were developed by state and local government institutions, state and private education establishments, trade unions, non-governmental organisations and enterprises.

In 2008, there were confirmed 38 preparatory visits, 102 mobility, 5 transfer of innovation and 5 partnership projects. In 2008, around 600 persons in total (vocational students and teachers, people in labour market, counselling specialists and other representatives of VET personnel) received grants and participated in the mobility projects. The total grant for the activities approved was EUR 2,220,000. In 2008, the agency supervised 414 projects, including Lifelong Learning Policy and Leonardo da Vinci II period. **[2009 statistics will be submitted later]**

In 2001, *Regulations on the Recognition of Regulated Professions and Professional Qualification* were adopted determining the procedure for the recognition of vocational qualifications in regulated professions obtained in foreign countries (not only in EU countries) which assisted in providing legal basis for supporting mobility. Therefore, no legal obstacles exist to the educational and professional mobility.

The mobility within higher education is provided by LLP sub-programme Erasmus (and Socrates until the end of 2006). The popularity of mobility has increased, i.e. in 2000 in total 10 HEI, while in 2009/2010 – 38 HEI and colleges participate. Until 2006/2007, the proportion ratio between flow of Latvian exchange students and other member states gradually equalised, i.e. in 2004/2005 there were four Latvian exchange students per one foreign exchange student, while in 2006/2007 – two Latvian students per one foreign student. Thereafter, number of outgoing Latvian students increased rapidly: from 807 in 2006/2007 to 1493 in 2008/2009, which may be explained with current economic situation.

School partnerships, individual teachers and student teachers mobility, projects for the professional improvement of school teaching personnel, as well as school education networks are supported by Comenius Programme, which before January 2010 was implemented by the former Academic Programme Agency until its functions were assigned to the State Education Development Agency due to educational government reorganisation. In 2009, 121 projects for school personnel professional improvement, 59 multilateral and 4 bilateral school partnerships, 9 schools for hosting Comenius assistants and 31 preparatory visits were confirmed, as well as 10 Comenius assistants' application were accepted.

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

The number of mobility and exchange project outside the EU programmes is rather limited and statistics are not gathered. Speaking about mobility outside the EU, there are individual grants for students (usually at higher education level) offered by hosting countries via the Ministry of Education and Science or relevant embassy or consulate. Since January 2010, the State Education Development Agency on behalf of the ministry manages grants offered by other

countries – Czech Republic, Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia), Greece, Estonia, Israel, China, Lithuania, Mexico, Germany (practical training in Bundestag) – on basis of bilateral agreements between governments and ministries about cooperation in education and science. With some countries there are no agreements but they also offer grants for higher education students: Switzerland, Denmark, Iceland (Icelandic language and culture studies), and Slovakia. According to the data of the State Education Development Agency, in 2009/2010 totally 157 students, social workers and teachers applied for scholarships in other countries both in and outside EU. It is difficult to gather statistics because there are differences in managing scholarships and terms of application for each country.

Examples of initiatives

There are no particular examples regarding geographic mobility in vocational education.

THEME 4: STRENGTHENING THE LINKS BETWEEN VET AND THE LABOUR MARKET

4.1 Identifying and anticipating skill needs

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

Information on skill needs is collected partly, but not systematically, at national level. A few sector analyses, e.g. in metalworking and engineering industry, and research in terms of individual projects, e.g. the ESF project *the Ministry of Welfare Studies* (2005–2007), were conducted in recent years to provide information to plan education and training provision. *The Ministry of Welfare Studies* (2005–2007) included 13 research topics concerning labour market and employability; the positive aspect of this project is that initiated studies of one of the largest scales and laid some foundation for further researches on skill needs. See example below.

According to the *Law on the Support for the Unemployed and Job Seekers* (May 2002), the State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts agentūra*) carries out short-term labour market forecasting. Twice a year, the State Employment Agency, which implements state policy on diminishing unemployment, carries out express employers' surveys to clarify planned changes in number of employees during the next half year, the reasons for these changes, as well as demanded and unclaimed occupations by employers. For an instance, the last survey (15.04.2009-15.05.2009), in which 2499 employers from all regions and both from public and private sectors participated, shows that number of employees has decreased in all fields, particularly in construction, trade, car and bike repair and manufacturing industry. The employers admitted that the most necessary additional skills for (potential) employees are state language skills and communication skills. For the first time employers indicated that important employees' additional skills are ability to work in changing conditions. The results of these surveys are applied to design and arrange training for the unemployed during the following half of year.

Regarding middle-term forecasts, in 2009 the Ministry of Economics prepared the *Informative Report on Forecasts for Compliance of Labour Force Demand and Offer in Middle-Term* (*Informatīvais ziņojums par prognozēm darbaspēka pieprasījuma un piedāvājuma atbilstībai vidējā termiņā*). In the report situation of the labour market is characterised, paying particular attention tendencies in 2008 and outlining middle-term labour market forecasts until 2015. The forecasts implied 15 economy sectors; basic, secondary and higher education levels; and 35 occupational groups. Comparing with 2008, the greatest decrease in numbers of employees is expected to be in public services, i.e. state administration, education and medicine; as well as evident decrease may appear in agriculture and trade. Meanwhile, transportation sector is expected to recover at fastest after the economic recession.

Twice a year (in June and December) the Ministry of Economics in the cooperation with the Central Statistical Bureau prepare and publish *Report on the Economic Development of Latvia*. The Report reveals both the developments of main economic and social indicators for the last half of the year, growth of national economy sectors and external economic environment, and government's economic policy for promotion of growth and employment, foreign trade policy, utilisation of the EU Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund, innovative policy and other economic reforms.

The strengths and weaknesses

Analysing strengths and weaknesses of skill needs forecasts in Latvia, the most significant drawback is the lack of national skill anticipation mechanisms functioning on regular basis.

Example of initiatives

The project The Ministry of Welfare Studies in the framework of ESF National Programme project Labour Market Studies (2005-2007)

1. Outline of the policy/ measure:

(a) Rationale:

There was a lack of systematic labour market research and forecasts of medium-term skills needs. Meanwhile, vocational education experience difficulties to adapt efficiently to changing economic demands. As a result, graduates do not possess knowledge, skills and competences required within labour market. Traditionally, skills needs were forecasted applying specific sector research and studies, which do not manage to provide general description of situation, and Reports on the Economic Development of Latvia prepared by the Ministry of Economics twice a year, evaluate the economic progress provide some economic development forecasts. These data are used by Ministry of Education and Science to analyse industrial development and to set policy priorities.

However, this research did not ensure middle and long-term forecasts of skill needs. To improve skill need forecasting and to explore economic trends and demands the ESF National Programme *Labour Market Studies* was launched.

(b) Objectives/measurable targets:

The researches were carried out in order to identify and to solve economic issues and to foster achievement of policy aims. In *Labour Market Studies* as a priority was set: the development of human resources and fostering employment. In the frameworks of *The Ministry of Welfare Studies* in total 13 themes were explored of which those more linked with vocational education are listed below.

Career development of post graduates – to clarify reasons why graduates did have work related to their profession, as well as the numbers of graduates continuing their education.

Vocational and higher education programmes and labour market demands – to study the procedure how the occupational standards are developed and to find out how the standards correspond to the Occupation Register; to clarify how many students enrol and finish their vocational studies (within 120 occupations); to state reasons influencing the choice of studies.

Occupational mobility – to study current situation of workforce occupational mobility and to state major reasons of the mobility; to give suggestions for improving the situation (on creating policy documents); and to develop recommendations for improving occupational mobility of education policy.

Geographical mobility – to study the inner and outer flow of workforce depending on the balance between demand and supply within labour market; to develop recommendations for arranging active and preventive events to foster employment in entire country, thereby decreasing regional differences.

Working conditions and risks – to study the sphere of work protection in enterprises and to develop recommendations for improving legal base of labour market, and for implementing social, economical, technical, preventive and organizational activities.

Unemployment and social exclusion – to find out the reasons and length of unemployment and social exclusion, through clarifying the role of low education level and giving suggestions to combat unemployment and social exclusion.

(c) Target groups:

The target groups are rather large due to various focuses of research: labour force in different sectors, graduates of vocational and higher education institutions, vocational and higher education institutions etc.

(d) Status of implementation:

The research was carried out between years 2005 and 2007.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

(a) Level of operation is regional and national.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger policy approach?

The project was part of the ESF National Programme *Labour Market Studies*. The other studies in the programme were managed by the State Employment Agency and the Ministry of Economics.

(c) Key actors involved:

These studies were administrated and arranged by the Ministry of Welfare.

3. Evaluation:

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact:

The studies helped to explore economic tendencies and state of labour market. For an instance, career and educational development of graduates was analysed, the procedure how the occupational standards are developed and their correspondence to labour market, reasons influencing the choice of studies have been studied, as well as occupational and geographical mobility of workforce. The research on working conditions and risks may be used for improving legal base of labour market, and for implementing social, economical, technical, preventive and organizational activities. The other study may assist in combating unemployment and social exclusion.

The reports were published; information on the projects was disseminated through the project website (not active anymore).

(b) Indicators of success:

The indicator of success would be if the data gathered in research were applied in further education long-term planning policy to ensure education compliance with economic and social demands. This project initiated labour market studies on large scale and set foundations for further researches on skill needs.

(c) Integration of outcomes into larger policies:

The studies were carried out in the context of other National Programmes and the outcomes may be integrated within further long-term policy planning.

4. Conclusions:

(a) Obstacles encountered; measures (planned) to overcome them.

These studies were one of the largest in recent years and cover rather wide group of society; thus, setting basis for further research. However, this was unique project without any underpinning dimension of regularity. Moreover, further research is quite limited due to reduced financial resources for science and research in situation of economical recession.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

Still system of regular skill needs forecasts at national and regional level has to be introduced.

5. Source, legend:

The Ministry of Welfare, official website: <http://lm.gov.lv/>.

4.2 Integrating skill needs of the labour market into VET provision

Since labour market research and forecasts of skills needs are limited, the link between education and labour market is ensured with other mechanisms, for example, by involving employers within education planning and students' practical training.

Employers have engaged in designing and providing expertise of occupational standards, as well as in the assessment of vocational education quality through participating in the accreditation commissions and vocational qualification examination commissions. Occupational standards define the tasks required within a particular vocation and determine the content for vocational qualifications. Every 5 years standards are assessed and updated by education providers, employers, students, government organisations, quality assurance agencies and external experts.

Developing methodology for working out occupational standards and vocational education programmes was one of the objectives for the project *Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners* (2005-2007), which generally aimed to strengthen cooperation between social partners and education providers, thereby, ensuring compliance of vocational education to demands of labour market.

In the frameworks of the National Programme activity *Promotion of Employment* the third priority *Development of Human Resources and Promotion of Employment* was implemented in open projects *Support to Conducting Labour Market Studies* (2005-2007), which were supervised by the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Economics and the State Employment Agency. The results of these studies may be used by policy-makers to set national guidelines for education content.

Examples of initiatives

There are no particular examples related to integration of skill needs of the labour market into vocational education provision.

4.3 Involving labour market actors in VET

Employers are involved in the development and reviewing of occupational standards, arranging work-place training for students, and in the process of final qualification examinations.

In 2000, the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-committee for Vocational Education and Employment was founded by representatives from Ministries, the Association of Free Trade Unions and the Confederation of Employers. The task of the Subcommittee is to promote cooperation between government, employers and employees on education and employment issues. The supply of vocational programmes correspondence to regional needs is assessed by four regional councils (founded in 2005), which have been established in the framework of ESF activities.

Tripartite sub-councils participate in the development of occupational standards by examining them and considering their correspondence to labour market. Occupational standards define the tasks required within a particular vocation and determine the content for vocational qualifications. Standards usually are updated and reviewed as necessary but not often than every 5th year by education providers, employers, students, government organisations, quality assurance agencies and external experts. Representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science and other ministries, the Latvian Union of Local Governments, the Employers Confederation, non-governmental field organizations, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Confederation of Free Trade Unions and vocational education providers take part in developing occupational standards.

According to the new concept *Raising attractiveness of vocational education and involvement of social partners within vocational education quality assurance* (September 2009), the functions of Sub-committee are planned to extend attributing its operation to human resources development and national employability policy in general including general, vocational and higher education; thus, the Sub-committee is expected to gain a new title – Tripartite Cooperation Sub-committee for Education and Employment. Meanwhile, the functions of regional councils are also expected to extend.

The concept includes plans to arrange Sectoral Expert Councils to foster cooperation between various associations for forming a common professional view and with education and employability policy-makers. The objective of the Sectoral Expert Councils is planned to be stipulate sector requirements for vocational education and to ensure cooperation between sectoral associations and education providers.

In general, the new concept is planned to promote the involvement of social partners within vocational education planning, implementation and quality assurance by introducing several structural reforms. See Theme 6.

The strengths and weaknesses

As strengths of involving social partners in vocational education, may be mentioned: founded cooperation structures between the government and social partners, implementation of ESF and ERAF national programmes ensuring the conformity of education quality according to the labour market requirements, introduction of a unified procedure for the examination process in initial vocational education and continuous vocational education. As the obstacles, appear: the lack of cooperation between vocational education providers and employers, and the lack of funding for strengthening the links between education and labour market sectors.

Examples of initiatives

<p>Tripartite Cooperation Sub-Committee for Vocational Education and Employment (since 2000)</p>

<p>1. Outline of the policy/ measure:</p>
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<p>(a) Rationale:</p>

<p>Vocational education programmes offered did not ensure that graduates obtain the knowledge, skills and competences necessary in particular occupation. Since the education system show tendency to adapt slowly to labour market demands, employers' involvement within development of education content had to be promoted.</p>

<p>(b) Objectives/measurable targets:</p>
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<p>In order to strengthen cooperation between the government, employer and employee organisations in planning and implementing national policy and strategy in vocational education and employment, the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-committee for Vocational Education and Employment was founded as a part of the National Tripartite Cooperation Council. The main functions of the sub-council are:</p>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review drafts of state development plans, concepts and normative acts concerning vocational education, human resource development and employment and draw up proposals for improvements; • To evaluate proposals and submit suggestions to state and non-government organisations dealing with vocational education and employment concerning vocational education funding and structure management, the organisation of vocational guidance and counselling, elaboration and update of educational programmes and occupational standards etc. • To coordinate the funding and activities of regional councils for cooperation between |
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vocational education and employment.

The supply of vocational programmes correspondence to regional needs is assessed by four regional councils, which have been established in 2005 in the framework of ESF activities.

Tripartite councils participate in the development of occupational standards by examining them and considering their correspondence to labour market. Occupational standards define the tasks required within a particular vocation and determine the content for vocational qualifications. Standards usually are updated and reviewed as necessary but not often than every 5th year.

(c) Target groups:

The target groups for the activities of Councils are vocational education providers.

(d) Status of implementation:

The Tripartite Sub-Committee functions since 2000, while Regional Councils were founded in 2005.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

(a) Level of operation is national and regional accordingly for the Tripartite Sub-Committee and the Regional Councils.

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger policy approach?

The Tripartite Cooperation Sub-committee for Vocational Education and Employment (2000) was founded as a part of the National Tripartite Cooperation Council (1993). Four Regional Councils take part in vocational education policy planning on regional level.

(c) Key actors involved:

The state and local government institutions, as well as Employers' Confederation of Latvia and Trade Unions take part in the activities of Sub-Committee.

3. Evaluation:

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact:

The Sub-committee reviews drafts of state or sector policy planning documents concerning vocational education, human resource development and employment and may provide proposals for alterations. The Sub-committee coordinates the activities of regional councils for cooperation between vocational education and employment and participates in the development of occupational standards.

(b) Indicators of success:

The dialogue between education providers and employers has been promoted. Since 2002, Sub-Committee has taken part in working out occupational standards which determine content of vocational education programmes.

(c) Integration of outcomes into larger policies:

The Sub-committee's activities are carried out in the context of national and regional education, economic and social policy.

4. Conclusions:

(a) Obstacles encountered; measures (planned) to overcome them.

At national level Tripartite sub-council functions rather efficiently, while on regional level one of obstacles is low motivation of social partners to participate in the activities of councils because the State does not provide any financial support. Employers are not interested in providing practice training places due to lack of the State funding, as well.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

Some legal framework should be developed or motivating mechanisms ensured by state to encourage the social partners involve more actively in cooperation with education establishments.

5. Source, legend:

The Confederation of Free Trade Unions, official website: <http://www.lbas.lv/>

The Employers' Confederation of Latvia, official website: <http://www.lddk.lv/index.php?lang=1>

The Ministry of Education and Science, official website: <http://www.izm.gov.lv/>

4.4 Promoting workplace learning

All vocational education programmes include practical learning at the schools and enterprises. For example, qualification practice training in enterprises for 3 years long programmes (i.e. at least 4230 hours) has volume of 840 hours, while for two years programme (i.e. at least 2840 hours) – 480 hours. The structure of vocational upper-secondary education programmes combines theory and practical training on a 50:50 basis. Vocational post-secondary programmes (mainly for general school graduates) lasting for at least 3120 hours (1-2 years) contain at least 480 of practice training. The higher professional study programmes also comprise practice training at enterprises, which may constitute 13-16% of the programme. Usually practical learning at enterprises is arranged by education providers together with particular enterprises.

An apprenticeship system exists on a small scale mainly in the crafts sector in traditional professions. The Crafts Law (*Par amatniecību*, 1993) regulates the organisation of craft education and issuing qualifications. The main organisation involved is the Chamber of Crafts which is a self-governing organisation for developing crafts and craftsmanship in Latvia. Through the apprenticeship system it is possible to obtain the journeyman and master craft qualification. The journeyman examination comprises two parts: presentation of qualification work and techniques used and theoretical knowledge. The master craftsman qualification is awarded after an examination. Apprenticeship qualifications do not provide access to regulated professions nor do they give access to continue in the formal education and training system.

For enterprises in Latvia arranging training for employees is a voluntary activity; mostly the training is arranged to help employees adapting to new workplace or acquiring new technologies and equipment. Enterprise management usually decide whether to provide training for their employees and the human resource and training departments would seek the most appropriate training depending on the size of the enterprise. Training courses would usually be funded by the enterprise although employees may have to contribute.

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

Legally training in the enterprises is addressed only in the Labour Law (2001, 2006). However, in most cases, training in enterprises depends on enterprise initiative and resources. The Labour Law (2001, 2006) stipulates that employee's position, who during the work time has been assigned to vocational training or qualification improvement, is guaranteed. The expenditures related to vocational training or qualification improvement are covered by the employer.

According to the data of the latest survey *Vocational Training in Enterprises*, conducted by the Central Statistics Bureau, education at workplace has decreased: in 1999 the in-service was organized in 53% of Latvian enterprises, while in 2005 – 36%. Thus, total number of employees participating in the in-service education also decreased: from 25% in 1999 to 15% in 2005. In-service training is regularly organized in 85% of large enterprises with the number of employees of 250 and more, which draw plans for personnel development and have established training centres and possess financial resources for educating employees, while in less than one third of small enterprises (10-49 employees) in-service education is ensured regularly.

In 2005, 29% of the total number of enterprises used courses organized by other enterprises/organizations, but 6.7% used vocational training organized in the own enterprise. While informal learning (training in the process of work, training using the change of work, etc) was provided by 27% of enterprises. Unfortunately, recent statistics on workplace learning is not available.

In the framework of the ESF National Programme *Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social*

Partners, the project with the same title has been implemented and results have been disseminated among stakeholders and professionals. The project included the development of the procedure for recognition of acquired skills within informal/non-formal education for adults. The new concept *Raising attractiveness of vocational education and involvement of social partners within vocational education quality assurance* (September 2009) is expected to promote the introduction of validating informal and non-formal learning. See Theme 3.

Examples of initiatives

There are no particular examples concerning promotion of workplace learning.

THEME 5: ADDRESSING EQUITY, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

5.1 Addressing equity in VET

In accordance with Education Law (1998), all inhabitants of Latvia have equal right to acquire education, regardless of their property or social status, race, nationality, gender, religious or political convictions, state of health, occupation or place of residence. The Ministry of Welfare develops and implements state policy regarding work and social protection, as well as providing equity for individuals with special needs and gender equality. In terms of the programme EQUAL Latvia (2005-2007) several measures were arranged to promote availability of education and foster employability of social risk groups, i.e. individuals with special needs, the unemployed and the imprisoned.

Ensuring equity in access to vocational education has been highlighted in range of policy planning documents. For an instance, one of priorities set in the *Vocational Education Development Programme for 2003-2005 (Profesionālās izglītības sistēmas attīstības programma 2003.-2005.gadam, 2003)* was availability of vocational education which particularly was focused on individuals with incomplete basic education, with insufficient marks in certificate on basic education, graduates of special schools having special needs, and prisoners. Also in the *National Education Development Guidelines for 2007-2013 (Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013.gadam, 2006)* increasing access to vocational education has been put as one of education policy objectives.

Speaking about vocational education in lifelong learning context, one of aims stipulated in the *Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013 (Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013.gadam, 2007)* is to provide availability of lifelong learning for all social groups.

Issues concerning gender equality on national level are addressed by the Ministry of Welfare. In cooperation with other state institutions, social organisations and sectoral experts, in 2003, the concept *For Implementing Gender Equality (Dzimumu līdztiesības īstenošanai)* was developed aiming to promote an efficient, integrated and coordinated solving of gender equality issues. Starting from 2004, the *Programmes for Implementing Gender Equality (Programmas dzimumu līdztiesības īstenošanai, 2005-2006, 2007-2010)* are developed and implemented. In programmes main directions for action and objectives for providing gender equality in particular planning period are included.

The strengths and weaknesses

As strength of promoting equity, political support may be named that appears within policy planning documents. Initial vocational education is provided for free, and in accordance with the Cabinet *Regulations on Scholarships (Noteikumiem par stipendijām, 2004, 2010)*, vocational students receive monthly scholarships (EUR 10-14). Furthermore, students' dormitories are ensured for vocational students.

Promotion of equity has the succeeding weaknesses: unequal access opportunities to vocational education in rural regions, insufficient funding, insufficient vocational education offer for adults. Traditionally the greatest part of basic (lower-secondary) school graduates select general upper-secondary education, in last five years proportion of students in vocational and general upper-secondary education sectors is rather stable, i.e. 36:64.

Examples of initiatives

There are no particular examples of addressing equity in vocational education.

Policy progress focused on improving equity for groups at risk

Early school-leavers

According to statistics, the rate of young people at age of 18-24, who have discontinued their education, is high – 18.6% (2008). Furthermore, data indicate that in 2008, the rate in rural regions was significantly higher (25.4%) than in towns and cities (15.1%). The *Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013 (Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013.gadam, 2007)* expect to decrease this rate by 14% by implementing range of activities, for example, by ensuring shift in education offer to learning outcomes based framework.

Low-skilled

To assist students with poor general knowledge or undergraduates of basic education, programmes with pedagogical correction are introduced in schools. When completing vocational education programmes with pedagogical correction, graduates are awarded with basic school certificate and first level professional qualification. The aim of pedagogical correction programmes is to re-integrate early school leavers and those with low level of basic knowledge and skills back to the education system and help them acquire simple professional skills. In general vocational basic (lower-secondary) programmes are not highly attended: in 2008/2009 in vocational lower-secondary education programmes 0.99% of students in lower-secondary education (grades 7-9). In 2008/2009, 21 vocational schools provided opportunity for young people with uncompleted basic education to learn in programmes pedagogical correction.

Learners with special needs

In order to promote the integration of children with special needs in education system, the terms of the *Education Development Concept for 2002-2005 (Izglītības attīstības koncepcijas 2002.-2005.gadam)* it was planned to provide particular study courses regarding work with people having special needs within teacher study programmes. The Concept proposed to increase availability of education establishments for children with special needs and to commence reorganization of special education institutions to integrative ones. As a result, number of students having physical or mental disorders has increased in regular schools. For example, in 2002/2003, 0.63% of all vocational education students had special needs, while in 2008/2009 – 0.99%. The number of education establishments being technically equipped for students with physical disorders has gone up. There are 7 general schools, 2 vocational schools and 2 university colleges equipped for students with physical disorders, 16 education establishments are partly facilitated.

In the framework of international projects cooperation with teacher education providers has been improved and teacher students are provided with study courses which fostered novice teachers' competences for working with students having special needs. Due to strengthening cooperation between special schools and vocational schools, functionality of groups for students with mental disorders has improved. Six special education establishments have gained status of special education centre which fostered integration of persons with special needs within general education system. In cooperation with the Ministry of Welfare, the Centres of Suitability are founded in all the regions for persons with special needs. Within the ESF project the *Development of Support Centres for Providing Vocational Rehabilitation Services for Persons with Special Needs (Atbalsta punktu izveide profesionālās rehabilitācijas pasākumu nodrošināšanai invalīdiem Latvijā, 2005-2008)* 8 Centres of Suitability have been founded at vocational establishments in the all regions of Latvia. The State Social Integration Agency serves as coordinating body. In the Centres of Suitability provide the rehabilitation services. People having special needs are offered to obtain suitable vocational education programmes through different forms of acquisition (full-time, part-time, distance learning).

Still issue concerning the transportation for students with special needs to/back from school has to be solved. The number of education establishments equipped persons having physical disorders is comparatively small due to limited financial resources.

Long-term unemployed

Education for the unemployed is provided by the State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra*), which is under the Ministry of Welfare and which implements state employability policy. See Theme 2.

Imprisoned

The aims, directions and objectives of education policy for imprisoned are stipulated by the *Guidelines for the Imprisoned Education Policy for 2006-2012 (Ieslodzīto izglītības politikas pamatnostādnes 2006.-2012.gadam, 2006, improved in 2009)*. According to the Guidelines, among the imprisoned there is high rate of individuals having a low general education level, and demand for education exceeds offer.

To facilitate social integration in the terms of the programme EQUAL Latvia (2005-2007) project *New Solutions for Fostering Employability for Former Prisoners (Jauni risinājumi bijušo ieslodzīto nodarbinātības veicināšanai)* additional general education and vocational education programmes have been designed for the implementation in the places of imprisonment (232 imprisoned participated in the piloting/implementation of the programmes). The data collected in the study during the project show that in 2004 in education activities in nine prisons approximately 7.5% imprisoned were involved.

In order to facilitate the inclusion of imprisoned at age of 18-25 with a low education level within education system, the ESF National Programme project *Developing, Piloting and Implementing Pedagogical Correction Programmes for Imprisoned (Ieslodzīto pedagoģiskās korekcijas programmu izstrāde, aprobācija un īstenošana, October 2006 to August 2008)* was carried out by the Latvian Prison Administration (*Ieslodzījuma vietu pārvalde*), which is under the Ministry of Justice. In terms of the project methodological aids were designed, 13 education programmes were developed and piloted, training for teachers and prisons personnel arranged. In cooperation with seven schools in 2007/2008 education programmes were piloted and implemented; in course of the study year in total 253 imprisoned from 8 prisons participated (including individuals who are older than 25). For implementing the project 17 classrooms, 3 classrooms for practical training were accommodated and equipped; for all prisons study books were purchased and their libraries were improved.

In 2009, the Latvian Prison Administration started to implement ERAF project *Development of Vocational Education Infrastructure and Modernisation of Learning Equipment in Prisons (Profesionālās izglītības infrastruktūras attīstība un mācību aprīkojuma modernizācija ieslodzījuma vietās, 2009-2011)*. In the project it is planned to perform renovation of rooms intended for implementing vocational education programmes, modernisation of learning equipment, as well as to carry out work safety measures. Eight prisons of 12 participate in this project.

Examples of initiatives for each specific target group

There are no particular examples of addressing equity in vocational education for specific target groups.

5.2 Support services for groups at risk

Education courses and support for the unemployed is provided by the State Employment Agency (1991), which is under the direction of the Ministry of Welfare. See Theme 2.

In 2004, by uniting College RRC and State health centre “Jaundubulti”, the State Social Integration Agency was established, which functions imparts professional and social rehabilitation. For the Agency 8 support points are formed in order to promote availability of services for individuals in regions. The support points implement professional suitability tests,

professional improvement and further education programmes, provide specialists' consultations, as well as perform survey of practical training places.

Until September 2007, the guidance and counselling services were provided by Professional Career Counselling State Agency (PCCSA), when due to reorganisation it was incorporated within the State Employment Agency (SEA). According to the current legislation, SEA is responsible for provision of guidance and counselling for all individuals irrespective of their social status (the employed, the unemployed, students from age 15) at 28 regional offices across the country. During the last years different National and ESF funded programmes and projects are being implemented to support capacity building of institutions responsible for labour market and gender equality policies and support information dissemination and increasing public awareness.

In 2005, the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia launched the ESF National Programme project *Fostering the Implementation of Vocational Guidance Provision and Careers Education in the Educational Sector (Atbalsts profesionālās orientācijas un karjeras izglītības ieviešanai izglītības sistēmā)*, in which guidance activities were carried out at schools. This project fostered introduction of initial and further education for guidance counsellors, as well as designing methodological and informative aids. In the frameworks of the project in 2006 professional master level study programme was licensed and implemented in five HEI.

The strengths and weaknesses

One of the obstacles for integrating individuals with special needs in education system is lack of support system for special education; thus, it is not possible to provide students having special needs with methodological consultations at regular schools.

Examples of initiatives

See examples in section 2.1 about the new employability services.

5.3 Active citizenship

Education Law (*Izglītības likums*, 1998) and education standards impart general aims concerning development of an individual for life within democratic state and society of Latvia.

According to the Education Law (1998), head of an educational institution has duty to ensure the formation of a self-governing body for the school if it is proposed by students, teachers or the students' parents. A school's self-governing body is a collegial institution, which in basic or secondary education establishments consists of representatives of the founders, students, personnel and students' parents. The self-governing bodies of basic or secondary schools draw up proposals for development of the educational establishment; ensure cooperation between school and the students' parents; as well as submit proposals to the head of school regarding the work organisation, the budget distribution and the implementation of educational programmes. Meanwhile, the Law of Higher Education Institutions (1995) and other laws determine the activity of HEI self-governments.

There are students' councils established in vocational schools, which function in line with school regulations. The students' councils operate as an intermediary institution between students and school administration, represent interests of students and participate in arranging leisure activities. The Education Law (1998) stipulates that students have rights to participate in social activities.

HEI students' councils are united in the Latvian Students Association (*Latvijas Studentu apvienība*), which represents all students' interests on national and international level. The operation of the Association is determined by the Law of Higher Education Institutions (1995). According to the Law, the Latvian Students Association is a collegial association of student

self-governments. The Association provides opinions regarding draft laws and regulations that impact students' interests; nominates student representatives to the Higher Education Council and other institutions; ensures the representation of Latvian students abroad; and within scope of its competence, solve other issues concerning students' interests. The Latvian Students Association has the right to receive information from the State and local government institutions and to participate in activities impacting studies, and the rights and interests of students. Recently the Association has actively engaged in discussions on higher education funding and structural reforms. In December 2009, the Association and the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers organised a protest demonstration, in which more than five thousands people participated and in which they demanded the demission of the minister of education and science.

Trade Union of Education and Science Workers (1991) is the largest trade union in Latvia that protects social, economical and professional rights and interests of more than 56 thousands persons involved in the field of education and science.

During the last years the social activity of teachers has increased. In 2008, the foundation Latvian Teachers' Congress (*Latvijas Skolotāju kongress*) was established with mission to provide purposeful development of Latvian pedagogical traditions, while fostering succeeding education quality for forming a new culture for thinking and creative activities in society. Annually the foundation arranges Latvian Teachers' Congress, which should help to change the content or forms of education emphasising the raise of inhabitants' self-confidence and self-expression. In 2009, the Congress *Education for Latvian Society (Izglītība un audzināšana Latvijas sabiedrībai)* decided to establish association for teachers; thus, re-establishing the Latvian National Teacher Union (*Latvijas Nacionālo Skolotāju savienība*) closed in 1939. The aim of the Union is to unite and facilitate teachers' activities in Latvia on basis of ethical and nationally cultural aspects, protecting members' professional, economical, social interests and occupational prestige.

The Cabinet Regulations on State Standard in Basic Education and on the Standards of Basic Education Courses (*Noteikumi par valsts standartu pamatizglītībā un pamatizglītības mācību priekšmetu standartiem*, 2006) stipulate that in grade 9 students have to master civil sciences. In this course topics regarding processes in society, its structure and government, as well as life in society and ability to take decisions are discussed.

The strengths and weaknesses

The strengths of civil life are that students' councils are established and out-of-school activities are arranged in all schools. The weakness is that the vocational education students' self-governing bodies are less noticeable in society comparing to HEI students' organisations.

Examples of initiatives

There are no particular examples concerning active citizenship.

THEME 6: QUALITY, EXCELLENCE AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF VET

6.1 Improving the quality of VET

Vocational education quality is one of policy priorities, which is reflected in several policy planning documents. For a typical instance, the sub-activity of the *Vocational Education Development Programme for 2003-2005 (Profesionālās izglītības sistēmas attīstības programmā 2003.-2005. gadam)* called Vocational Education Quality there were two directions: further education of vocational teachers, and ensuring vocational education quality in compliance with labour market demands. The directions mentioned have been included in the succeeding education policy planning documents, as well.

One of important aspects to improve quality of vocational education is to strengthen more intensively relations between education and labour market, which has been highlighted within two education policy planning documents in a row: the *Education Development Concept for 2002-2005* (2002) and the *National Education Development Guidelines for 2007-2013* (2006). More detailed description of relations between education and labour market see in Theme 4. The vocational education quality and cooperation with the social partners was the focus of the ESF National Programme project *Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners*, which products, methodology materials, have been dissimilated to stakeholders, policy makers and professionals.

In September 2009, the new concept *Raising attractiveness of vocational education and involvement of social partners within vocational education quality assurance (Profesionālās izglītības pievilcības paaugstināšana un sociālo partneru līdzdalība profesionālās izglītības kvalitātes nodrošināšanā)* was adapted. In the Concept main challenges in vocational education are outlined and possible solutions are provided. This document is a significant step in policy development because problem solutions included refer to generally new directions for vocational education development, which involve large changes in the national vocational education system and legal framework. As the major challenges and directions for action, were named: the low prestige of vocational education and insufficient capacity and cooperation between institutions engaged in education policy implementation and employers. The Concept comprises the following steps for solving these issues:

- To improve types and programmes of education;
- To form national qualification framework;
- To differentiate vocational education establishments (see the example in 2.1)
- To balance acquisition conditions for general and vocational secondary (upper-secondary) education;
- To strengthen participation of social partners and professional organisation within development and implementation of state education policy at national, regional and sectoral level;
- To stipulate the participation and responsibility of state institutions, social partners and professional organisations in formal and informal/non-formal education.

The process of implementing planned changes and the consequences may not be evaluated yet. However, the Concept is expected to contribute greatly to the development of a new Vocational Education Law.

Discussing the development of unified national school quality evaluation system, in the frameworks of the *Education Development Concept for 2002-2005* (2002) in 2005 school education quality evaluation system was established for general education. The objective of accreditation is to ensure that programme content meets the required standards of publicly

provided vocational education and occupational standards because the accreditation process follows an evaluation of the quality of the provision on offer. Providers of any stage (IVET, CVET) can only offer programmes which have been licensed and programmes must meet both educational and occupational standards. Private education institutions may implement informal education programmes without obtaining a license. However only through graduating accredited programme a student may obtain state-recognized documents certifying their vocational qualifications. The accreditation also assists in promoting both national and international transparency of education.

National vocational education quality control is ensured through education programme and establishment accreditation, which is outlined in the Cabinet Regulations Procedure of accrediting vocational education programmes, education establishments and examination centres and certifying heads of vocational education establishments (2005, 2007) in accordance with the standards determined in the Vocational Education Law (1999). Before 2005 the procedure was outlined within the Cabinet Regulations Procedure of accrediting vocational education programmes, education establishments and examination centres (2002). Vocational Education Administration among other functions organises licensing and accreditation of vocational education programmes, organises accreditation of vocational education institutions and examination centres.

According to the Cabinet Regulations *Procedure of accrediting vocational education programmes, education establishments and examination centres and certifying heads of vocational education establishments (Kārtība, kādā akreditē profesionālās izglītības programmas, izglītības iestādes un eksaminācijas centrus un atestē profesionālās izglītības iestāžu vadītājus, 2005, 2007)* until July 2009 arranging accreditation of vocational education providers was responsibility of the former Vocational Education Administration. After the date, functions of organising accreditation for vocational education programmes, education establishments and examination centres are assigned to the State Service for Education Quality (former State Inspectorate for Education). In July 2009, also the Cabinet Regulations were amended; thus, at present the process of accreditation is stipulated by the Cabinet Regulations *Procedure of accrediting vocational education programmes, education establishments and examination centres (Kārtība, kādā akreditē profesionālās izglītības programmas, izglītības iestādes un eksaminācijas centrus)* in line with the standards determined in the Vocational Education Law (1999).

Under the circumstances of economical recession, the procedure for accrediting education programmes is simplified, i.e. the number of experts in the commission in course of the accreditation is differentiated depending on numbers of students and education programmes; possibility to prolong the accreditation period for education establishment for two more years on basis of accreditation commission's proposal or in case when a school founder has decided to renovate, reorganise or liquidate the establishment; and the accreditation expenditures are diminished for local governments. Also the new vocational education Concept is expected to introduce several major alterations within procedure of accreditation for education establishments and programmes.

Examples of initiatives to implement EQARF

The working group has only initiated activity regarding the European quality assurance reference framework (EQARF), and no particular measures are arranged to introduce the framework.

6.2 Promoting excellence in VET

In order to promote attractiveness and popularity of vocational education, professional skills contests for vocational education students in various sectors – car-mechanics, woodworks,

cooking and guest service, business planning and construction – are arranged both at national and regional level. Until July 2009, the contests at national level were organised by the former Vocational Education Administration, when this function was overtaken by the State Education Content Centre in course of state education government reorganisation. Number of the contests is held repeatedly, for instance, the contest for students of woodworking sector called *Chair (Krēsls)* will be arranged for the 18th time in 2010. One of the largest contests is the *Young Professional (Jaunais Profesionālis)*, which since 2008 is arranged during international education exhibition *School* and in which selection of national team for the international competition *EuroSkills*. According to the data of the Ministry of Education and Science, in the contest of 2009 including separate competitions in construction, mechatronics, welding and cooking sectors in total 104 students from 33 schools participated.

Since 2001, another national event for vocational education students is the Craftsmen Festival (*Amatnieku svētki*), which aims to foster young people's interest about occupations through songs and music, dances, profession presentations, and to evaluate school artistic group performances. The Festival is organised by the Ministry of Education and Science and State Youth Initiative Centre (*Valsts jaunatnes iniciatīvu centrs*) in cooperation with education providers. The Craftsmen Festival is held in several rounds – in schools and regions – and totally 2327 students from 70 education establishments participated in 2009.

The new *Guidelines for Optimisation of Vocational Education Establishments Network for 2010-2015 (Profesionālās izglītības iestāžu tīkla optimizācijas pamatnostādnes 2010.-2015.gadam*, January 2010) impart reorganisation of vocational school network; as a result 15 competence centres are planned to establish by 2015. According to the Guidelines, vocational education competence centre is vocational school, which has relevant material facilities for acquiring qualification within all basic occupations of sector; and which task is to provide methodological support for acquiring the qualifications for other vocational schools, and to serve as a place for mastering latest technologies both for the youth and adults. In future centres are expected to fulfil functions of examination centres including for recognising non-formal and informal learning. See the example in the section 2.1.

Examples of the initiatives

There are no particular examples concerning the facilitation of excellence in vocational education.

6.3 Higher level qualifications in VET

At higher education level there are academic and professional study programmes which are provided by universities or other HEI. After graduation of professional higher study programme professional qualification level 5 (ISCED 5) is awarded, as well as a professional bachelor's degree if the length of full-time study programme is at least four years.

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

In line with the Law of Higher Education Institutions (1995) and the Vocational Education Law (1999) there is another division of higher education level programmes: the first level professional higher education or college education and the second level professional higher education or university education.

Within the first level professional higher education programmes occupations of complex level are mastered, for example, bank officers, lawyer assistants, technologists. The programme duration is 2-3 years after secondary education; they belong to non-university type programmes.

Graduates are awarded with professional qualification level 4, which allows performing professional activities in the occupation or continuing studies in relevant higher education programme.

In the second level professional higher education programmes together with professional qualification level 5, professional bachelor's degree is awarded. These programmes belong to the university type higher education programmes. There are also so-called *short* second level professional higher education study programmes (1-2 years), in which on the basis of the previously acquired first level professional higher education or academic bachelor's degree, students are exempted from certain parts of the study programme.

Total study length to acquire professional qualification level 5 is not shorter than four years after secondary education and not shorter than two years after college education.

Examples of higher level qualifications introduced

There is numerous higher level qualifications corresponding to the occupational standards, e.g. teacher, computer designer, mechatronics engineer, social worker etc.

6.4 Improving horizontal and vertical permeability of education and training systems

Different paths to master vocational education are stipulated by Vocational Education Law (1999, 2001). The amendments of 2001 introduced vocational continuous education for adults providing opportunity to acquire a certain level professional qualifications.

To assist students with poor general knowledge or undergraduates of basic education, programmes with pedagogical correction were designed and introduced in schools. In these programmes pupils acquire professional qualification level 1 and basic education (lower-secondary). See section 5.1.

Legally equal access to higher education programmes is ensured both for general and vocational secondary education graduates. The Cabinet *Regulations on the Content and Procedure of Central Examinations (Noteikumiem par centralizēto eksāmenu saturu un norises kārtību, 2006)* stipulate that central state examinations are taken by all secondary education students. Since 2004, entrance competitions in HEI are based on the results of central state exams. In reality vocational education students are less competitive in the HEI entrance competitions because vocational students tend to achieve lower results in central exams comparing to general education students. This may be explained by the fact that in vocational secondary education programmes fewer hours are devoted for general subjects (in which the central state exams are arranged) than in general secondary education programmes; thus, vocational students have to prepare for the same exams in shorter period of time.

Vocational education is implemented through entire programmes; therefore, the possibilities to change programmes are limited, which may be considered as one of the greatest obstacles for a flexible education. Transition from vocational education to general education programme is possible but is not observed frequently in practice.

Examples of the initiatives

There are no particular examples on improving horizontal and vertical permeability of education system.

6.5 Teachers and trainers

Improving the provision of teacher education and further teacher education in number of policy planning documents is discussed in the context with facilitating education quality. For example,

one of the main action points in the *Education Development Concept for 2002-2005* (2002) was promoting education and the professional development system for teachers aiming to ensure the quality of vocational education according to social and economic needs. The *Vocational Education Development Programme for 2003-2005* (2003) also explored teacher education development in the terms of the priority *Quality of Vocational Education*.

There is no separated education system or particular State policy for vocational education teachers. Until the Vocational Education Law (1999) was passed, the greatest part of vocational education teachers were specialists in the vocation, quite few had a pedagogical qualification. The amendments adapted in 2004 of the Cabinet *Regulations on Demands for Necessary Education and Professional Qualification to Teachers (Noteikumi par prasībām pedagogiem nepieciešamajai izglītībai un profesionālajai kvalifikācijai, 2000)* stated all full-time teachers working at school have to possess pedagogic qualification. Regarding the regulations demands for vocational education teachers' education and professional qualification are summarised in the table below.

Basic education (lower-secondary) level	vocational upper-secondary education or master crafts level qualification awarded by the Latvian Chamber of Crafts and teacher education
Secondary education (upper-secondary) level	professional higher education and teacher education <i>or</i> higher education acquired through programmes 1) which lead to professional qualification in the relevant field if teacher practical training is included in the programme or teacher work experience is six years, or the course of pedagogy or psychology is mastered; or 2) which lead to master's or doctor's degree in pedagogy or relevant field
	vocational upper-secondary education or master crafts level qualification awarded by the Latvian Chamber of Crafts and higher teacher education (in vocational education programmes or relevant subjects and practical training of vocational secondary education programmes – teacher education)

In 2002, Vocational Teacher Occupational Standard was approved and accordingly with the Standard in four universities the first level professional higher education programmes Vocational Education Teacher were introduced. The Cabinet *Regulations Procedures on the Acquisition of Education and Professional Improvement of Vocational Education Teachers (Profesionālās izglītības pedagogu izglītības ieguves un profesionālās pilnveides kārtība, 2005)* outline the procedures how vocational teachers acquire education and participate in professional improvement programmes.

During the period of 2006-2008, the Ministry of Education and Science coordinated the implementation of the ESF National Programme *Development of Further Teacher Education Network project Development of Further Teacher Education Methodological Network and Provision (Pedagogu tālākizglītības metodiskā tīkla nodrošinājuma izveide)*; the Programme aimed to ensure professional improvement opportunities for teachers according to the needs of education system and every teacher. In April 2008, in terms of the mentioned ESF National Programme one of the pilot project activities was piloted introducing 5 level teacher qualification category system. See the example below.

Within EQUAL project vocational in-service training programme for teachers working with persons with special needs has been worked out by the State Social Integration Agency.

An essential problem is teacher ageing: in 2000/2001, 11.5% of vocational education teachers were older than 60 years, in 2008/2009 – 14.4%. Meanwhile, the ratio of novice teachers decreases: in 2000/2001, 14.8% of vocational education teachers were younger than 30 years, in

2008/2009 – 6.5%. One of reasons why young people do not choose teacher profession is low payment. Most of teachers are females, which fosters gender segregation in Latvian society. The number of vocational teachers tends to decrease, i.e. from 2002/2003 to 2008/2009 the ratio of vocational teachers fell by 13.6%, part of teachers retired and other part – became unemployed due to reorganisation of school network.

In order to help teachers that due to the optimisation of education system have appeared in new work conditions at school or are at risk losing their job at education establishment, in 2009 the sub-activity of the ESF National Programme *Promotion of Teacher Competitiveness in Conditions of Education System Optimisation (Pedagogu konkurētspējas veicināšana izglītības sistēmas optimizācijas apstākļos.)* was introduced. Supporting measures comprise career guidance for teachers in cooperation with the State Employment Agency, arranging courses for teacher professional improvement or re-qualification. While participating in the courses, teachers receive monthly scholarships. It is planned also to introduce and continue to develop evaluation system of teachers to facilitate teachers' working at schools career progress and an efficient practice of teacher professional improvement. For implementing the foresaid activities, the results of the ESF National Programme project *Development of Further Teacher Education Methodological Network and Provision (2006-2008)* are applied.

Example of the initiatives

Development of Further Teacher Education Network (2006-2008)
1. Outline of the policy/ measure:
<p>(a) Rationale:</p> <p>Teacher aging and their lack raises question concerning provision of opportunities for further teacher education, also about necessity of motivating support system for teachers. As obstacles to a successful further teacher education, may be named the lack of unified approach and system of further teacher education management, as well as lack of state funding. As a result, teacher ability to participate within professional improvement and further education programmes is limited; the situation has become more critical in the current economical situation.</p> <p>Therefore, the former State Agency for Quality Assessment in General Education implemented the ESF National Programme <i>Development of Further Teacher Education Network</i> project <i>Development of Further Teacher Education Methodological Network and Provision</i> on the basis of the trilateral agreement concluded in 2006 among the Ministry of Education and Science (1st level mediator institution of ESF), State Agency for Education Development (2nd level mediator institution of ESF) and the Agency. The total funding of the project was EUR 1,138,297 of which 75% is ESF funding.</p> <p>Since July 2009, professional improvement both for vocational and general education teachers is coordinated and provided by State Education Content Centre (<i>Valsts izglītības satūra centrs</i>), before the date further education for vocational education teachers was coordinated by the former Vocational Education Administration.</p> <p>(b) Objectives/measurable targets:</p> <p>The general aim of the project was to improve the quality of education by creating the preconditions for the development of teachers' further education methodological network; thereby, ensuring the professional development of teachers corresponding to a purposeful and coordinated development of education system and the needs of an individual teacher. The specific aim of the project was to create the methodological, human resource and institutional basis for teachers' in-service education.</p> <p>To attain the aims of the project, the work was carried out in four key activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the system of the teachers' continuous education content modules; • Development of the criteria and methodology for assessing the content of teachers'

further education;

- Development of the system for organization and monitoring of the quality of the content of teachers' further education;
- Development of recommendations for the teachers' career development model according to the developed system of teachers' further education.

(c) Target groups:

The target group is teachers working at initial education institutions.

(d) Status of implementation:

In April 2008, the approbation of teachers' career development model was concluded in which 1408 teachers from 192 schools voluntary participated. In August 2008, an informative seminar and presentation of designed products was arranged.

2. Policy/measure operation and delivery:

(a) Level of operation

During the project implementation four working groups in compliance with the planned activities were established, local and foreign consultants and experts were invited to participate in these activities. To formulate recommendations, the current situation in Latvia and the European Union countries concerning teachers' further education was studied. According to set activities the system of the teachers' further education content modules, the criteria and methodology for assessing the content of teachers' further education, the system for organization and monitoring of the quality of the content of teachers' further education were developed and the recommendations for the teachers' career development model was worked out, then piloted and evaluated by experts, and improved accordingly. Therefore, informative and instructional seminars, discussions and public debates have been organized; and the project website has been formed [not active at present].

(b) Is it an isolated policy/measure or part of a larger policy approach?

Since the project was part of ESF National Programme, it was implemented in lines with other activities taking into account social and economic tendencies impacting employability both in Latvia and Europe at that time.

(c) Key actors involved:

The project was implemented and managed by the former State Agency for Quality Assessment in General Education, which used to organise processes of national general education quality assurance (licensing and accreditation of schools and education programmes).

3. Evaluation:

(a) Assessment of effectiveness, efficiency or impact:

The outcomes of the project comprised three independent studies, 90 further education teachers were provided with particular education; 2000 teachers got acquainted with the methods of teachers' further education; the preconditions for establishing the territorial methodological support units will be created, the handbook *Development of Further Teacher Education Methodological Network and Provision* and the learning guide *Teachers' Career Development Model* was developed and published.

(b) Indicators of success:

The results of project are applied for introducing and implementing other measures and initiatives, for instance, the sub-activity of the ESF National Programme *Promotion of Teacher Competitiveness in Conditions of Education System Optimisation* (2009).

(c) Integration of outcomes into larger policies:

The project was part of ESF National Programme and was implemented in accordance with other activities taking into account social and economic tendencies in education and employability both in Latvia and Europe.

4. Conclusions:

(a) Obstacles encountered; measures (planned) to overcome them.

(b) What issues remain to be addressed?

The project is completed; still its products have to be implemented in actual education process. Certainly the introduction is impacted by current economic situation; the limited financial resources are an evident obstacle.

5. Source, legend:

The Ministry of Education and Science, official website: <http://www.izm.gov.lv/>.

THEME 7: ENHANCING CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

7.1 Creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in VET

One of directions set in the strategic document *National Development Plan for 2007-2013 (Nacionālais attīstības plāns 2007.-2013.gadam, 2006)*, which is a contribution to the implementation of the Lisbon Programme, is Educated and creative person. In terms of this direction quality and availability of education offer is emphasised, thus, ensuring the formation of educated and knowledge-based society.

During the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009, a range of activities has been organised, e.g. exhibitions, discussions, conferences, competitions for scientists and students. The implementation of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation in Latvia was coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Science.

One of the events was an exposition of teacher designed methodological aids, called *Experience (Pieredze)*, which was arranged by the former Vocational Education Administration for ninth time. The exposition aimed to foster quality of teaching and learning in vocational education in order to provide students with opportunity to acquire necessary professional competences relevant to occupation standards. The event is held in two rounds – in education establishments where the commission approved by the school evaluated the submitted works, and in Vocational Education Administration. For the last exposition (second round in 2009) the topic of designed aids was work-based training in enterprises and/or practical training in schools. In the second round there were 89 works submitted from 38 education establishments; the submissions were evaluated by the representatives of employers and social partners.

Vocational education students' creativity appears in various professional proficiency competitions. See section 6.2.

In 2008, the Education Innovation Fund commenced to function actively; the Fund was a public foundation and which aimed to facilitate education development in the state in line with state policy and strategy by providing financial support to innovation projects and allocating lifelong grants for excellent education workers. During the process of education government reorganisation in July 2009, the Fund was joined with the State Education Development Agency. One of the major tasks for the Fund was to organise calls for projects in humanities, sciences, social science and culture education science by involving, accumulating, supervising and dividing financial resources for project implementation. Supported projects fostered the introduction of the latest discoveries and technologies in education process; development and improvement of education programmes and teaching aids, and innovations in pedagogy; as well as development of international creative relations. In 2008, in the first project competition from 388 applications 14 projects were approved; the total funding for these projects was EUR 269 852.

To improve equipment, facilities and technologies in vocational education establishments, in 2008, the supplement activity *Modernisation of Education Facilities and Improvement of Infrastructure for Implementing Vocational Education Programmes (Mācību aprīkojuma modernizācija un infrastruktūras uzlabošana profesionālās izglītības programmā īstenošanai)* for the action programme *Infrastructure and Services* was initiated. See section 1.2.

The strengths and weaknesses

As an obstacle for promoting creativity and innovations appears the lack of united and specific education policy measures related to this issue within designing education programmes, assessing students' achievements and introducing teaching methods.

Examples of the initiatives

There are no particular examples on promoting creativity and innovations in vocational education.

7.2 Improving quality of teaching

When dealing issues related to learning quality improvement, education policy documents focus on teacher education and qualification improvement measures. For example, the sub-activity *Quality of Vocational Education* in terms of the *Vocational Education Development Programme for 2003-2005 (Profesionālās izglītības sistēmas attīstības programma 2003.-2005. gadam, 2003)* included development of further education of vocational teachers, and ensuring vocational education quality in compliance with labour market demands. See sections 6.1 and 6.5.

Subject teachers have established unions or associations of their field, e.g. maths, music, English, in order to promote experience exchange and to generate new ideas in teaching. Education quality improvement to facilitate new culture of thinking and new forms of creative work in society is the focus of the Latvian Teacher Congress (*Latvijas Skolotāju kongress*) established in 2008. The tradition to organise Latvian teachers' congresses in which teachers discuss the most topical education and culture issues was initiated already in 19th century.

To improve quality of teaching, exposition of teaching aids designed by teachers have been arranged by the former Vocational Education Administration. See section 7.1

The strengths and weaknesses

The weakness is that there is no special state policy activities developed concerning innovative pedagogy.

Examples of the initiatives

There are no particular examples on improving quality of teaching.

7.3 Innovation-friendly institutions

Since 1997 the project *Latvian Education Informatization System* has been implemented. During the project informatization framework for education content, government, informative service, infrastructure has been developed, as well as training for users at various levels (schools, education governments and the Ministry of Education and Science) has been arranged. The activities of this project were supported by the *Education Development Concept for 2002-2005 (Izglītības attīstības koncepcija 2002.-2005.gadam, 2002)*. In terms of action direction Provision of Education System Informatization, it was planned to continue providing schools with computers, as well as to establish and improve Internet connections during the planning period. It was planned to develop use of IT for teaching and learning, and for designing methodological aids; as well as to continue teacher training for using IT and involving IT in acquisition of particular subject.

Regarding the *National Education Development Guidelines for 2007-2013 (Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013.gadam, 2006)*, it is planned to continue informatization of education providers and Internet connection provision. As benchmarks are stated 8.33 students per one computer and providing 100% of schools with Internet connection. The tasks for further actions of the Guidelines impart development and coordination of the *Implementation Programme for Latvian Education Informatization System*; this functions has been carried out by the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government (*Reģionālās attīstības un pašvaldību lietu ministrija*) since June 2009, when it was overtaken from the former the

Secretariat of Special Assignments Minister for Electronic Government Affairs (*Īpašu uzdevumu ministra elektroniskās pārvaldes lietās sekretariāts*).

Statistics indicate that number of computers and Internet connections in vocational education establishments has increased and on average exceeds the benchmark related to number of computers set in the Guidelines. In 2002/2003 per one computer there were 12.6 vocational students, per one computer for learning – 16.6 students; per one computer with Internet connection – 26.5 students. In 2008/2009 per one computer there were 7.4 students, per one computer for learning – 10 students; per one computer with Internet connection – 11.7 students.

14 competence centres that are expected to be established in the terms of the *Guidelines for Optimisation of Vocational Education Establishments Network for 2010-2015 (Profesionālās izglītības iestāžu tīkla optimizācijas pamatnostādnes 2010.-2015.gadam*, January 2010) may contribute to introduction of innovation within learning and teaching process. Vocational education competence centre will be vocational school, which has relevant material facilities for acquiring qualification within all basic occupations of sector; and which task is to provide methodological support for acquiring the qualifications for other vocational schools, and to serve as a place for mastering latest technologies both for the youth and adults, as well as to fulfil functions of examination centres including for recognising non-formal and informal learning. See the example in the section 2.1.

Examples of the initiatives

There are no particular examples regarding making vocational education providers more innovation-friendly.

7.4 Encouraging partnership

Since 2005, policy issues on creative industries including the promotion of cooperation between education and labour market are treated by the Ministry of Culture. During this planning period action directions regarding the development of creative industries are imparted in number of national policy planning documents, e.g. *National Development Plan for 2007-2013* (2006), the *National Culture Policy Guidelines for 2006-2015 (Valsts kultūrpolicies vadlīnijas 2006.-2015.gadam*, 2006).

In the direction *Technological Education and Flexibility of Enterprises* of the *National Development Plan for 2007-2013* (2006) it is planned to facilitate the development of creative industries. In order to promote the development of creative industries, the following tasks to solve are stated:

1. to develop the culture of creative business in society and to raise awareness about peculiarities, structure and potential of creative industries in Latvia;
2. to form positive environment and institutional support for young creative professionals to commence business and to develop a competitive creative industry, as well as its recognition as equal to other economy sectors;
3. to develop an active public and private partnership for commercializing the creative potential;
4. to facilitate timely introduction of future technologies in making products of the creative sectors;
5. to promote two-way inter-sectoral cooperation between Latvia and other states;
6. to form cluster of the creative industries involving sufficient number of SME, schools and state institutions to ensure constant functioning of the cluster, as well as developing long-term strategy of sector.

Reports on implementation of the Plan in 2008 and 2009 are not available yet, but according to the report on 2007, the achievement of the set aims will be delayed to the end of planning period, and it is necessary to improve developed guidelines and programmes for implementation.

In the *National Culture Policy Guidelines for 2006-2015 (Valsts kultūrpolitikas vadlīnijas 2006.-2015.gadam, 2006)* developed by the Ministry of Culture developing creative industries has been determined as one of the middle-term priorities. The Guidelines outline existing challenges: in Latvia creative industries are not defined as a perspective state development sector; as well as for commencing creative industry business relevant support schemes are not formed. The methodology for collecting creative industry statistics and monitoring is not developed; therefore, it is not possible to carry out quantitative and qualitative research in this field. There is lack of coordination and cooperation between creative industries and culture tourism stakeholders (state, local governments, public and private sector), as well as cooperation potential inside the sector is not used.

One of the directions in the Guidelines imparts developing inter-disciplinary education and further education programmes to assist individuals becoming competitive specialists in culture and creative industry sectors. The inter-disciplinary education programmes, which would be oriented in several sectors, are able to create cooperation bridges between completely different fields; thus, ensuring greater opportunities in present labour market. In Latvia the inter-disciplinary programmes are provided not only in culture and creative industries, but also in natural sciences, sciences and medicine, e.g. the programme *Medicine engineering and physics* in the Riga Technical University.

The creativity of students is greatly promoted by music and art schools, which are under the direction the Ministry of Culture and local government. Under the direction of the Ministry of Culture there are 14 vocational secondary schools providing vocational upper-secondary education programmes and vocationally oriented education programmes in music (774 students), art (1 269 students) and choreography (32 students). Two schools under the direction of local governments provide vocational upper-secondary education programmes and vocationally oriented education programmes in art. Furthermore, under the Ministry of Culture there are four accredited HEI – Latvia Culture College, Latvian Academy of Culture, Art Academy of Latvia, Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music. There are 145 education establishments under the local governments with vocational orientation in music and art, of which 63 are music schools, 36 art schools, 45 music and art schools; and in which there are 20 799 students.

Examples of the initiatives

There are no particular examples about promoting creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in partnership.

THEME 8: FINANCING VET

8.1 Improving efficiency, equity, levels of VET funding

Initial vocational education mainly is financed by the State; therefore, vocational education funding greatly is impacted by changes in social and economical situation.

The Education Development Concept for 2002-2005 (Izglītības attīstības koncepcija 2002.-2005.gadam, 2002) planned to ensure normative observation concerning minimal expenditure of programmes in vocational education and to promote long-term cooperation between ministries and universities. One of the objectives was to equalize expenditures among similar programmes and commence transformation process from minimal expenditure to optimal expenditure level. However, funding for vocational education has decreased from 0.61 to 0.51 of GDP due to the lack of resources. The problem is that evaluation of study programmes and equalization of funding is delayed due to slow transformation to normative funding system.

One of three sub-programmes of the *Vocational Education Development Programme for 2003-2005 (Profesionālās izglītības sistēmas attīstības programma 2003.-2005.gadam, 2003)* was *Management of vocational education system and effectiveness of education expenditures* which was carried out to promote unity within vocational education system administration and effective use of financial and material resources. This sub-programme corresponded to the foresaid directions set in the *Education Development Concept for 2002-2005 (2002)*.

The Vocational Education Law (1999) regarding the Education Law and other laws and regulations determine the procedure of financing vocational education establishments. Funding of the vocational education is managed by several ministries:

The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) – works out proposals, and makes inquiry to demand funds from the state budget in already established procedures; and from received funds ministry finances vocational schools, under its direction and its supporting institutions.

Other ministries – work out proposals, and make inquiry to demand funds from the state budget in already established procedures; from received funds ministries finance vocational educational institutions under their direction and their supporting institutions; and in the collaboration with the MoES, other state institutions, and local authorities organize continuing education for vocational education teachers at institutions under their direction.

In the frameworks of the *Education Development Concept for 2002-2005 (2002)*, schools under the authority of the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture since July 2004 were resigned to the MoES, which assisted in simplifying vocational education management and in promoting an effective use of finances and material resources in vocational education.

Vocation schools according to their ownership are financed from State budget, local government budget or private sources. The main financing is from state budget, because the number of students in local government and private schools is comparatively small. Furthermore, in accordance with Vocational education Law (1999), accredited local governments' and private vocational education establishments may apply for state funding for implementing vocational further education, vocational improvement and vocationally oriented education programmes. The statistical data for school year 2008/2009 show that in the vocational schools of local governments there were 2.9 % of total vocational education students, while in private schools – 3.4%, i.e. 93.7% of students attended state schools. Funding of private vocational education institutions constitutes of foreign countries' financing, revenue from tuitions fees, which is the most general funding source, and other sources.

The economic recession has greatly impacted the amount of funding for vocational education, which has been reduced since 2008, particular decrease was in 2009. Total budget for vocational education establishments in 2009 was EUR 68 225 643, which was 20.9% less than in 2008. The reduction of funding had negative effect on the ability of vocational schools to perform their functions.

Regarding the Cabinet *Regulations on the expenditures minimum per one student for implementing vocational education programmes (Noteikumiem par profesionālās izglītības programmu īstenošanas izmaksu minimumu uz vienu izglītojamo, 2007)*, yearly costs for one vocational education student should be EUR 547.81, yet in 2009 the amount of state funding was EUR 274.61. The difference is partly covered by schools from their own income, but due to the limited resources education establishments are not able to pay for public facilities, e.g. heating, and thus their payment debts increase evidently. The calculations of MoES show that average state actual expenditures for vocational students are smaller than for basic education pupils. Therefore, the ministry in its *Informative Report on Procedure of Education System Structural Reform and Planned Measures for Its Implementation (Informatīvajā ziņojumā par izglītības sistēmas strukturālās reformas norisi un plānotajiem pasākumiem tās tālākai īstenošanai, September 2009)* recommended to change funding system by introducing united procedure for financing in general and vocational education and allocating (to local governments) united subsidy for education.

Vocational education students, whose learning is funded by state, receive monthly scholarship. Its amount and receiving procedure is stipulated by the Cabinet *Regulations on Scholarships (Noteikumi par stipendijām, 1995, 2002, 2004, 2010)*. During the period of 2002-2007, the average amount of stipends increased, i.e. from EUR 12.8 to EUR 28.5 per month. While later amendments in the Regulations stated the decrease of amount, and in 2010 the average amount of scholarship reached EUR 10-14 per month.

The Ministry of Education and Science has initiated to introduce the principle “money follows student” (previously funding was allocated to school), meaning that funding allocated by state follows children to their local government. Since September 2009, funding allocated for general education teacher payment to local governments is calculated regarding this principle, i.e. teacher payment depends on number of students in particular administrative territory. See section 2.1.

The *Guidelines for Optimisation of Vocational Education Establishments Network for 2010-2015*, approved in January 2010, comprise changes in funding arrangements and reorganisation of school network. In the course of reorganisation, part of vocational schools is planned to reassign to the local governments, thus, changing the procedure of funding. See example in section 1.3.

Tertiary education students can apply for study loan. Allocation of study loans from the state budget was established in 1999 and the contracts with students were made from July 2000. Since September 2001, study loans are allocated from funds of credit institutions with the State guarantee. Tertiary education students may receive two different study loans: to cover study programme expenses and for personal expenses during studies. According to the Law of Higher Education Institutions (1995), students studying in accredited first level professional higher education programmes may receive student loan from the state budget or credit institution with the warranty from the government. The procedure of the allocation, repayment, and clearance of the loan are defined by the Cabinet regulations.

According to data provided by the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB), annual state budget expenditure on adult education institutions have been slowly increasing after cut in 2002. There are several sources of funding for adult education: participant’s fees, employers’ investment, investment of non-governmental organizations, payments from local governments and state budgets. The important increase of funding in 2005 is related with growth of financing to the State Employment Agency through implementation of Structural Funds projects. 2007 CSB

survey about adult education indicates that average individual's costs for participating in adult education (formal and informal/non-formal) was EUR 351.5, in formal adult education – EUR 397, and in informal/non-formal education – EUR 54. In this survey data on adult education funding is not gathered.

Due to the amendments of 2002 in the *Law On Unemployment Insurance (Par apdrošināšanu bezdarba gadījumam, 1999)* financing for active labour market measures became limited (in particular education measures), when a threshold of not more than 10% of the special employment budget to be spent for active measures was introduced. This led to sharp reduction of resources for vocational training and retraining of unemployed. Education activities for the unemployed are arranged by the State Employment Agency in cooperation with education providers. In 2008, according to data of the Agency, EUR 8749.10 thousands were spent for active employment measures including training, which is twice as much comparing to 2007.

Examples of the initiatives

There are no particular examples regarding funding arrangements.

8.2 Use of Lifelong Learning Programme funds

Since January 2010, funding of entire Lifelong Learning Programme projects is managed by the State Education Development Agency (SEDA), before the date this function was divided between SEDA (Leonardo da Vinci) and Academic Programme Agency (Comenius, Erasmus, Grundtvig and Transversal Programme).

According to the SEDA data, in 2008 available funding for implementing Leonardo da Vinci projects was EUR 2 845 744 including funding of EUR 1 553 999 received from EC. In total funding allocated to the institutions managing projects was EUR 2 235 322, i.e. 47.2% of the sum was transferred to state budget institutions and 52.8% – to other organisations implementing projects

Mobility projects embrace various fields – architecture, children protection, construction, computer systems, education, carpentry, arts, social work and food production. Partnership projects include such sectors as career guidance and counselling in vocational education; strengthening cooperation between vocational education establishments and employers; recognition of vocational informal/non-formal education; compliance of vocational education to labour market requirements; education for vocational education teachers; ensuring quality of vocational qualification; as well as providing transparency of vocational education system. Innovation transfer projects focus on improving vocational education quality and facilitating its attractiveness by introducing innovations within vocational education methods, education content, teaching and learning aids, and work forms etc.

The strengths and weaknesses

One of the drawbacks, which simultaneously are strength of the Programme, is that demand for funding greatly exceeds offer; therefore, it is possible to select the most qualitative projects from the submitted. Organisations managing mobility projects and the project participants take part in quality award competition *Wings (Spārni)* arranged by SADE; in the competition of 2008, projects implemented during 2005-2006 participated.

Popularity of the Leonardo da Vinci Programme indicates that the Programme has a significant meaning in vocational education.

Examples of the initiatives

There are no particular examples about use of Lifelong Learning Programme funds.

8.3 Use of other EU funds

The implementation of EU funds is supervised by the State Education Development Agency. During the present planning period, *National Strategic Reference Framework of Latvia 2007-2013 (Valsts stratēģiskais ietvardokuments 2007.-2013.gadam, 2007)* lays down a common strategy for the obtaining of the EU Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund resources, and provides coordination between the funds and the operational programmes.

During 2004-2006, the following programmes in vocational education were implemented with the support of ESF:

- Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners (2005-2007) – the aim was strengthen cooperation between education and labour sectors by facilitating the compliance of education to labour market needs. The programme objectives were accomplished; designed products were distributed to the social partners. Total programme costs were EUR 875 301.
- Fostering the Implementation of Vocational Guidance Provision and Careers Education in the Educational Sector (2005-2008) – total costs EUR 1 736 496. See section 5.2.
- Development of Further Teacher Education Network (2006-2008) – total costs EUR 1 460 576. See the example in section 6.5.

During the period of 2004-2006, the programme *Renovation of Vocational Education Establishments and Modernisation of Education Equipment (Profesionālās izglītības iestāžu renovācija un mācību aprīkojuma modernizācija, 2004-2008)* was implemented with the support of ERAF. In terms of the programme 28 vocational education establishments implemented 31 projects across Latvia; total programme costs were EUR 3 727 945.

At present economical recession situation, a range of structural reforms are expected to be introduced in education sectors. The contribution of EU funds has a significant role in the implementation of these reforms within the planning period 2007-2013. Together with the planned changes in education, the EU fund activities are reviewed, restructured and their funding is redistributed in order to provide additional support for more important fields.

Regarding the *Informative Report on Procedure of Education System Structural Reform and Planned Measures for Its Implementation* (September 2009) prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science, for attaining strategic aims of vocational education development, the ESF support was provided to:

1. The arrangement of vocational education establishment network: the ministry has prepared amendments, which would stipulate that remainder of funding quota available for the regions is allocated to give additional support for implementing functions of regional competence centres.
2. The support for promoting attractiveness of vocational education (the project was initiated in March 2009) – the aim is to improve the attractiveness of initial vocational education programmes for young people to increase ratio of vocational education students. In terms of sub-activity vocational education students are provided with scholarships; total public funding of sub-activity is EUR 36 284 253 (it is planned to increase funding and enlarge the circle of organisations applicable for support).
3. The improvement of vocational education quality:
 - Sub-activity *Support to the Quality Improvement and Implementation of Initial Vocational Education Programmes* – the aim is to facilitate the ability of education system to prepare workforce according to the region development needs and for progressing towards knowledge-based economy; total public funding is EUR 11 664 706; projects are expected to be initiated at the end of 2009 or at the beginning of 2010.

- Sub-activity *Raising Competence of Teachers Involved in Vocational Education* – the sub-activity comprises provision of opportunity for vocational education teachers to have work-based training in enterprises. Total public funding of sub-activity is EUR 10 588 235; projects are expected to be initiated in 2010.
- Sub-activity *Development of Sectoral Qualification System and Restructuralization of Vocational Education* – the aim is to improve vocational education quality and efficiency regarding the sectoral economic needs by introducing structural alterations in vocational education system, by developing sectoral qualification system, by carrying out sectoral research, by developing or improving occupational standards and basic requirements for professional qualification, as well as developing validation of informal/non-formal learning. Total public funding of sub-activity is EUR 4 268 615; the sub-activity is expected to be initiated in 2010.

Due to the limited resources, in April 2009 the Cabinet of Ministers decided to postpone the implementation of several activities by removing funding from the activities. At present the implementation of succeeding activities has been postponed:

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

The support of ERAF for vocational education in the planning period is allocated to the following activities:

- *Modernisation of Education Facilities and Improvement of Infrastructure for Implementing Vocational Education Programmes* – the aim is to improve infrastructure supporting the implementation of vocational education programmes to promote education quality and compliance with labour market requirements; total funding is EUR 83 823 528; the deadline for project submission is prolonged until March 2010. See section 1.2.
- *Improvement of Vocational Education Infrastructure and Modernisation of Education Facilities in Prisons* – the aim is to provide opportunities for prisoners to obtain vocational qualifications in prisons; total funding EUR 3 294 418. See section 5.1.

In either planning period, the EU funds programmes emphasise the promotion of vocational education quality by strengthening link between education and labour market, modernising learning facilities, as well as facilitating teacher further education. The EU funds programmes are developed in line with policy priorities set in planning documents, for example, the *Education Development Concept for 2002-2005* (2002), the *Education Development Guidelines for 2007-2013* (2006).

Examples of the initiatives

There are no particular examples concerning use of EU funds.

8.4 Improving VET governance

In Latvia there is united administrative structure for both initial and continuous vocational education; therefore, in this section initial and continuous education will not be differentiated. Within education governance reorganisation measures of large scale have been introduced in last years to optimise expenditures of State administration in current economic situation. In summer 2009, state agencies were reorganised and their functions were reviewed. At the end of 2008, the Department of Vocational and Continuing Education, which used to develop state policy and strategy in vocational education, was united with the General Education Department. The functions of the former Department were assigned to the Vocational Education Unit of the new Department of Vocational and General Education. In June 2009, the process of

reorganising the Vocational Education Administration (1994), which implemented state vocational education policy, was commenced and the functions of Administration were divided between the newly established State Service for Education Quality (June 2009) and State Education Content Centre (July 2009).

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

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

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

The Department of Vocational and General Education of the MoES and its **Vocational Education Unit** develop state policy and strategy in vocational education. The Unit guides, plans and coordinates vocational education development and supervises vocational education providers. It collaborates with employer organisations and trade unions and provides technical support for the work of the National Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment. The Tripartite Sub-council was founded in 2000 to ensure coordinated action and policy in vocational education between the government, employers and education providers (see example in 4.3). The Unit also assures that national policy meets EU demands and takes part in developing international agreements.

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

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

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

Since 2002, continued reforms have been carried out linked to the process of joining the EU. The *Education Development Concept for 2002-2005* (2002) has been implemented, as well as the *Vocational Education Development Programme for 2003-2005* (2003), was adopted with aim to develop the vocational education system to meet the demands of the market economy, encourage employability, meet EU human resource development statements, and promote an EU competitive labour force. One of three directions of the Programme was *Management of vocational education system and effectiveness of education expenditures* which was carried out to promote unity within vocational education system administration and effective utilisation of financial and material resources.

Although the problem had already been recognized in the mid-nineties, vocational education establishments remained under the direction of several ministries, i.e. the MoES, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as the Ministry of Defence. All these ministries acted independently, allocated financial resources, planned and set up their own institutional networks, organised curricula development groups, set up quality monitoring mechanisms and dealt with student enrolment issues. Obtaining consistent information on education and training and unified decision making proved quite a challenge. Therefore, overlaps and irrational use of financial and human resources appeared.

Regarding the Cabinet decision, which followed *the Education Development Concept for 2002-2005* (2002), since July 2004 vocational education institutions or vocational colleges under the authority of the Ministry of Welfare (1), the Ministry of Health (6) and the Ministry of Agriculture (34) were resigned to the jurisdiction of the MoES. The reorganisation promoted simplification of vocational education management and an effective use of finances and material resources in vocational education. Due to school optimisation process, the number of state schools has decreased since 1995 (from 133 schools to 92 schools in 2008/2009).

The *Guidelines for Optimisation of Vocational Education Establishments Network for 2010-2015* adapted in January 2010 are expected to introduce evident changes in school network and governance. The Guidelines comprise decentralisation tendencies because it is planned to reassign part of vocational school to the local governments. See example in 1.3.

Examples of the initiatives

There are no particular examples about improving vocational education governance. Regarding reorganisation of school network see example in 1.3.

THEME 9: PROGRESS IN MODERNISING EUROPEAN VET SYSTEMS IN THE COPENHAGEN PROCESS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE COOPERATION

9.1 Impact of European cooperation in VET on development of national VET policies

The education policy, which is comprised in the main planning document the *Education Development Guidelines for 2007-2013* (2006), is developed according to the guidelines set by the European policy mainstreams such as the Lisbon Strategy, Bologna Process, *European Commission Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, UNESCO programme *Education for All*, European Commission work programme *Education and Training 2010*, *European initiative i2010 – European Information Society for Growth and Employment*, EU Basic Strategy regarding gender equality.

Since 2002, when preparing for joining the European Union, number of reforms has been introduced in education policy. The *Education Development Concept for 2002-2005* (2002) has been implemented, as well as the *Vocational Education Development Programme for 2003-2005* (2003), was adopted with aim to develop the vocational education system to meet the demands of the market economy, encourage employability, meet EU human resource development statements, and promote an EU competitive labour force.

The directions stated in the Lisbon Strategy were supported by the *National Lisbon Programme of Latvia for 2005-2008* (2005). The Programme reflects the most essential problems for Latvia to achieve the Lisbon strategy goals, indicating the main lines of action and activities to solve these problems, as well as performance indicators for achieving the goals. To implement the Lisbon Programme in Latvia, the *National Development Plan for 2007-2013* (2006) was worked out. The aim of the document is to facilitate a balanced and sustainable development of the country, as well as to ensure an increase in Latvia's competitiveness.

On basis of the Lisbon Strategy and the *National Lisbon Programme of Latvia for 2005-2008* (2005), emphasising the meaning of lifelong learning in present economy development, at the beginning of 2007 the *Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013* were adopted. Furthermore, December 2009 amendments in the implementation programme (2008-2010) of the Guidelines stipulates that in education offer shift towards learning outcomes based framework should be provided.

Examples of initiatives

There are no particular examples regarding the impact of European cooperation in vocational education.

National legal or/and regulatory changes within the Copenhagen process

Cross-country cooperation within vocational education

In 2001, the *Regulations on the Recognition of Regulated Professions and Professional Qualification* were adopted determining the procedure for the recognition of vocational qualifications in regulated professions obtained in foreign countries (not only in EU countries); thus, promoting the mobility of work force.

In order to set the NQF in vocational education, to introduce the European credit system for VET (ECVET), as well as the European quality assurance reference framework (EQARF) (EQARF), it is necessary to perform alterations in laws and regulations. At present, the work

group is developing a new Vocational Education Law, which is expected to provide legal basis for introducing ECVET.

The attraction and quality of vocational education

In 2005, the system for the accreditation of education programmes and establishments was formed by adopting the Cabinet Regulations *Procedure of accrediting vocational education programmes, education establishments and examination centres and certifying heads of vocational education establishments (Kārtība, kādā akreditē profesionālās izglītības programmas, izglītības iestādes un eksaminācijas centrus un atestē profesionālās izglītības iestāžu vadītājus, 2005, 2007)*. In July 2009, new Cabinet Regulations *Procedure of accrediting vocational education programmes, education establishments and examination centres (Kārtība, kādā akreditē profesionālās izglītības programmas, izglītības iestādes un eksaminācijas centrus)* were issued to stipulate the process of accreditation according to the standards determined in the Vocational Education Law (1999).

To ensure access to higher education for vocational secondary education graduates, both general and vocational secondary education students have to take central state examinations, which content and procedure is stated by the Cabinet Regulations *on the Content and Procedure of Central Examinations (Noteikumiem par centralizēto eksāmenu saturu un norises kārtību, 2006)*. Since 2004, entrance competitions in HEI are based on the results of central state exams regarding Cabinet Regulations *on Requirements, Criteria and Procedure of Accepting to Study Programmes (Noteikumiem par prasībām, kritērijiem un kārtību uzņemšanai studiju programmās, 2006)*.

The issues related to education quality and attraction are discussed in number of policy planning documents, the last one is the concept *Raising attractiveness of vocational education and involvement of social partners within vocational education quality assurance* (September 2009). The problem solutions included in the Concept refer to generally new directions for vocational education development involving large changes in the national vocational education system and legal framework, e.g. introducing NQF and validating informal/non-formal learning.

Linking vocational education and labour market

Strengthening the cooperation between education and labour market is highlighted as one of the directions for action in several policy planning documents: *Education Development Guidelines for 2007-2013* (2006); the concept *Raising attractiveness of vocational education and involvement of social partners within vocational education quality assurance* (September 2009).

The Cabinet regulations the *Procedure of Developing Occupational Standards (Profesiju standartu izstrādes kārtība* (2007, 2009) stipulate that employers' organisations and trade unions participate in the process of occupational standard design. Regarding occupational standards education establishments develop education programmes, as well as content of centralised qualification examinations. In accordance with the Cabinet Regulations the *Procedure of Centralised Vocational Qualification Examinations (Centralizēto profesionālās kvalifikācijas eksāmenu norises kārtība, 2007)*, representatives of labour market are included in the exam commission.

The Vocational Education Law (1999) determines that vocational education programmes comprise also practical training in enterprises. The Crafts Law (*Par amatniecību, 1993*) regulates the organisation of craft education and issuing qualifications.

9.2 Governance, cooperation and ownership of the different actors in the Copenhagen process at European level

The national vocational education students' team participates in the *EuroSkills*, usually selection of national team is arranged in terms of the students' contest *Young Professional (Jaunais Profesionālis)*.

The representative of the Ministry of Education and Science took part in the *peer learning* activity on validation of non-formal and informal learning, which was held in 2009 in Prague. During the activity Latvia submitted report on state policy development in the field of the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

9.3 External dimension of European cooperation in VET

Significant activity in developing cooperation outside EU is not observed. Latvia has set several bilateral inter-governmental agreements countries, which do not belong to the EU. These agreements promoting general cooperation in education (not particularly in vocational education), in culture or sports; they comprise experience exchange and mobility. Latvian government has cooperation agreements with the following states:

- Azerbaijan – in the field of youth and sports
- Egypt – in education and science
- India – understanding memorandum on cooperation in the fields of culture, art, education, science, mass media and sports
- Croatia – in science, technology and higher education
- Israel – in education, culture and science
- China – 1) in culture and education; 2) agreement on cooperation in science and technology
- Mexico – in education, culture and sports
- Moldova – in the fields of education, culture, youth and sports
- Mongolia – in culture, education and science
- Turkey – in education, science, sports and culture
- Ukraine – in education, science and culture
- Uzbekistan – agreement on cooperation in science and technology
- Vietnam – in culture and science

Mainly the mobility provided in terms of these agreements refers to higher education level. Regarding student mobility see section 3.2.

One of the obstacles for external cooperation is lack of Latvian embassies or consulates in the countries outside EU. Furthermore, the issues related to visas in some countries are rather complicated, which negatively influence student and teacher mobility to/from and cooperation with these states.

Examples of initiatives

There are no particular examples regarding the external dimension of European cooperation in vocational education.

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Baiba Ramina, head of Academic Information Centre

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

10.3 List of acronyms

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

- CSB – Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (*Centrālās statistikas pārvalde*)
- MoES – The Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*)
- MoW – Ministry of Welfare (*Labklājības ministrija*)
- NEC – Latvian National Europass Centre (*Latvijas Nacionālais Europass centrs*)
- PIA – Vocational Education Administration (*Profesionālās izglītības administrācija*)
- PCCSA – Professional Career Counselling State Agency (*Profesionālās karjeras izvēles valsts aģentūra*)
- SEA – State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra*)
- VIAA – State Education Development Agency (*Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra*)