
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

LATVIA

SYSTEM DESCRIPTION



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 - Professional bachelor (profesionālais bakalaurs) programme leading to EQF level 6, ISCED 655.
 - Second level higher professional education programme after secondary education (otrā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības programmas pēc vidējās izglītības) leading to EQF level 6 or 7, ISCED 655, 656 or 756.
 - Second level higher professional education programme after bachelor level studies (otrā līmeņa profesionālā augstākās izglītības programma pēc bakalaura līmeņa studijām) leading to EQF level 6 ISCED 657.
 - Professional master (profesionālais maģistrs) programme leading to EQF level 7, ISCED

757.

- References.

CHAPTER 1.

Summary of main elements and distinctive features of VET

Summary of main elements (1)

Vocational education and training (VET) in Latvia is offered at three (2) levels: lower secondary (part of the national 'basic' education; integrated primary and lower secondary); upper secondary (secondary); and tertiary (professional higher) education. It includes practical training (50% to 65% of curricula) at schools and enterprises. In 2015, an apprenticeship scheme (called 'work-based learning' nationally) was introduced with alternating study periods at school and in an enterprise. The scheme is available for all VET programmes at EQF levels 2 to 4. To acquire a VET qualification at these levels, all VET learners take a State qualification exam at the end of the programme.

Basic VET programmes (one to three years, ISCED 254) lead to qualifications at EQF level 2 and involve around 1% of the VET population (2018/19 data). Learners must be at least 15 years old to enrol. Those without completed basic education are admitted to 3-year programmes (ISCED 254) that include a compulsory basic general education course.

At upper secondary level, VET enrolls 42% of all learners in:

- 3-year programmes (ISCED 353) leading to a qualification at EQF level 3 and involving 2% of VET learners. To enrol in higher education, graduates should attend an additional 1-year follow-up programme;
- 4-year programmes (ISCED 354) leading to a secondary VET qualification at EQF level 4 and involving 67% of VET learners. Graduation from the programme requires both the VET qualification and success in four State exams in general subjects, giving access to higher education;
- 1- to 2-year programmes (ISCED 351 and 453) leading to a qualification at EQF levels 3 and 4. These programmes are designed for 17 to 29 year-olds with or without completed upper secondary education. They involve 30% of VET learners and focus on vocational skills, so they are shorter.

Professional higher education programmes are provided at two levels:

- first-level college (short cycle) programmes (two to three years; ISCED 554, EQF 5) targeted mainly at the labour market, though graduates can continue their studies in second-level professional higher education;
- second-level higher education programmes (two to six years) (ISCED 655, 656, 657, 756 and 757, EQF 6 and 7) leading to a professional qualification and either professional bachelor or master degree or a professional higher education diploma.

Formal continuing VET (CVET) programmes enable adults with education/work experience to obtain a State-recognised professional qualification in 480 to 1 280 hours, depending on the

field of study. Shorter professional development programmes (at least 160 hours) enable learners to acquire or upgrade their professional knowledge and skills regardless of their age, education and professional background but do not lead to a qualification.

Craftsmanship (not part of apprenticeships) exists on a small scale, separate from the rest of the

education system.

The Ministry of Education and Science is the main body responsible for the VET legal framework, governance, funding and content. Social dialogue and strategic cooperation are arranged through the national Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment. Twelve sectoral expert councils ensure that VET provision is in line with labour market needs; they participate in developing sectoral qualifications frameworks, occupational standards, qualifications requirements, education and training programmes and quality assessment procedures. Since 2015, collegial advisory bodies, including representatives from employers, local governments and the supervising ministry – conventions – have been established at each VET school contributing to strategic development and cooperation with the labour market.

Distinctive features (3)

Initial VET is centralised and highly regulated by the State. Most vocational schools are owned and run by the State; half have the status of vocational education competence centres, receiving substantial investments in infrastructure and equipment with the support of EU funds since 2007. In addition to provision of vocational programmes, they validate non-formal and informal learning and offer lifelong learning and continuing teacher training.

Comprehensive reforms of VET content – the introduction of modular vocational education programmes, new occupational standards and sectoral qualifications frameworks – increase the responsiveness of VET to labour market needs and support the use of learning outcomes.

CVET providers are mainly private. IVET providers are increasing their educational offer for adults.

Most vocational education learners are at upper secondary level. This share has increased in recent years.

VET provides learning opportunities for early leavers from education and training. With more investment in infrastructure and the development of new programmes, VET attractiveness is increasing.

A validation system for professional competences acquired outside formal education has been available since 2011, allowing direct acquisition of professional qualifications at EQF levels 2 to 4. Procedures for assessment and criteria for validation of prior learning were set up for higher education in 2012.

[3] Based on Cedefop (2021). *Spotlight on VET – 2020 compilation: vocational education and training systems in Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office.
<http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/667443>

CHAPTER 2.

Main challenges and policy responses

Reforming VET and adult learning are national policy priorities. Recent reforms aim at:

- promoting VET quality;
- ensuring its relevance to labour market needs;
- efficient use of resources to raise VET attractiveness.

Policy strives for a balanced (equal) distribution of students choosing VET and general education after completing basic education. It also aims to more than double adult participation in learning from the current 6.6% (2020).

In order to improve the responsiveness of VET to labour market needs, modularisation of programmes is being implemented. Content for modular programmes is being developed and gradually introduced.

Limited access to guidance and counselling for young people, and the need to put in place ECVET and EQAVET principles for better quality and permeability, are challenges that require aligning stakeholder opinions and extensive promotion. Other challenges include motivating employers to cooperate with VET providers, for example, by offering training at the workplace and promoting continuing training for employees.

In order to address these challenges, the education development plan (Future skills for the future society 2021-27) was submitted for consultation in October 2020. The priorities for VET include developing the education offer according to labour market needs, modern, digital, and green VET schools, competent educators, international cooperation and involvement of employers in VET (4) .

[4] Based on Cedefop (2021). *Spotlight on VET – 2020 compilation: vocational education and training systems in Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. <http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/667443>

CHAPTER 3.

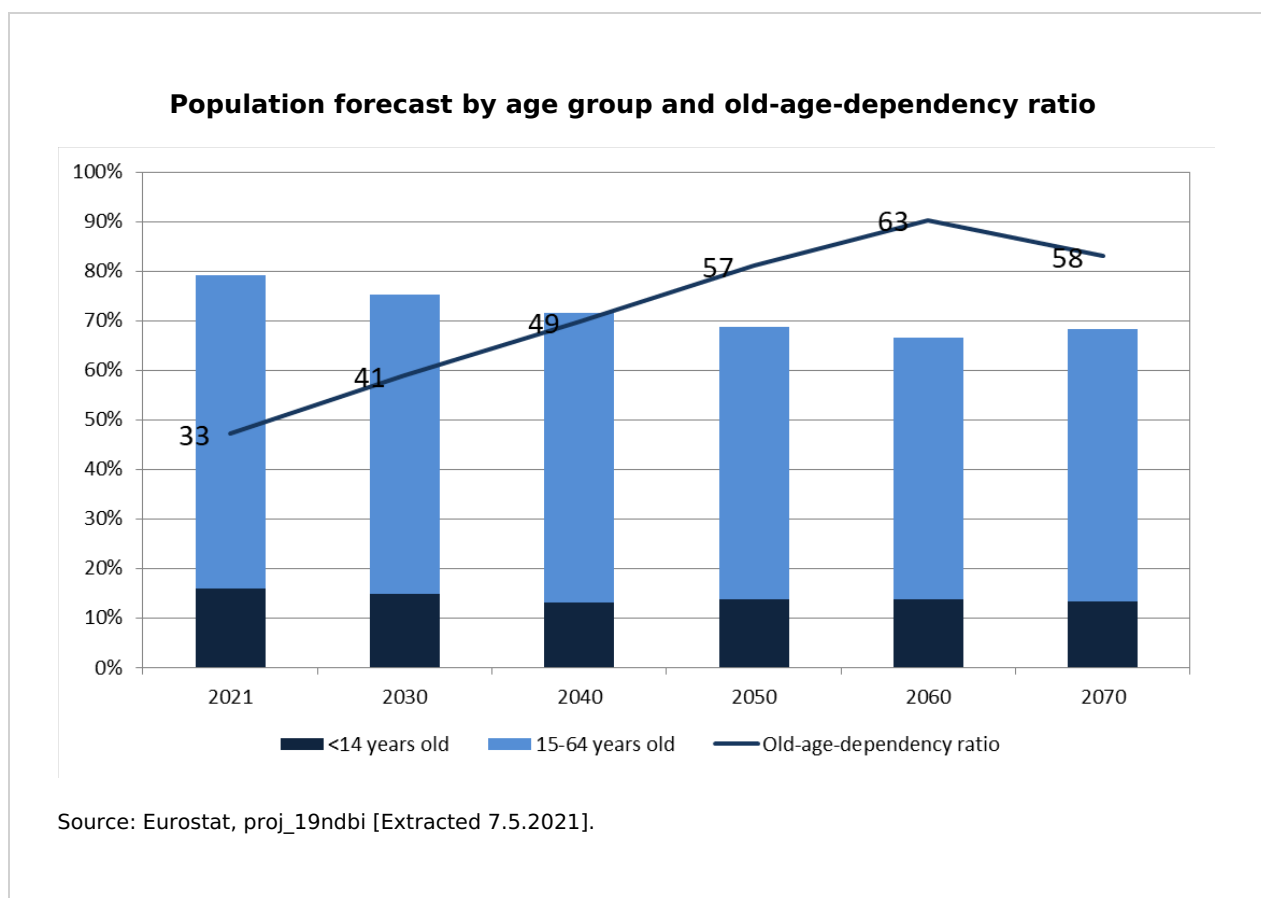
External factors influencing VET

3.1 Demographics

Population in 2020: 1 907 675 (5) . It decreased by 3.9% since 2015 due to negative natural growth and emigration of people in search of employment abroad (6) .

As in many other EU countries, the population is ageing.

The old-age-dependency ratio is expected to increase from 33 in 2021 to 58 in 2070 (7) .



Demographic changes have an impact on vocational education and have led to rearrangement of the vocational education institutions network: the number of State VET schools has reduced significantly.

To increase the quality and efficiency of vocational education, many small providers were merged into regional vocational education competence centres offering a wide range of qualifications and other services. Several providers were merged by local governments into integrated general and vocational education institutions.

3.2 Economics

Most companies are micro and small-sized.

Main economic sectors are trade, accommodation and catering, social services, manufacturing, transport/logistics, construction.

Since 2016, export growth has slowed, leading to slower growth in tradable sectors. Growth has continued in all sectors except construction. Internal market-oriented sectors make a larger contribution to growth in trade and commercial services. With the increase in State budget expenditures, the volumes of public services increased.

Domestic demand-oriented industries contributed the most to GDP growth in recent years. Since 2010, when GDP fell to its lowest level in a decade, it has grown by an average of 3.3% per year and now exceeds pre-crisis levels. In 2019, Latvia continued to grow, but economic growth had slowed to a more moderate level. Trade in public services had the largest impact on growth. In turn, in 2020 the COVID-19 crisis has led to a fall in GDP.

3.3 Labour market

Requirements for non-regulated professions are determined by employers. The Law on Regulated Professions and Recognition of Professional Qualifications and relevant government regulations stipulate special requirements for education programmes, recertification or recognition of qualifications in regulated professions.

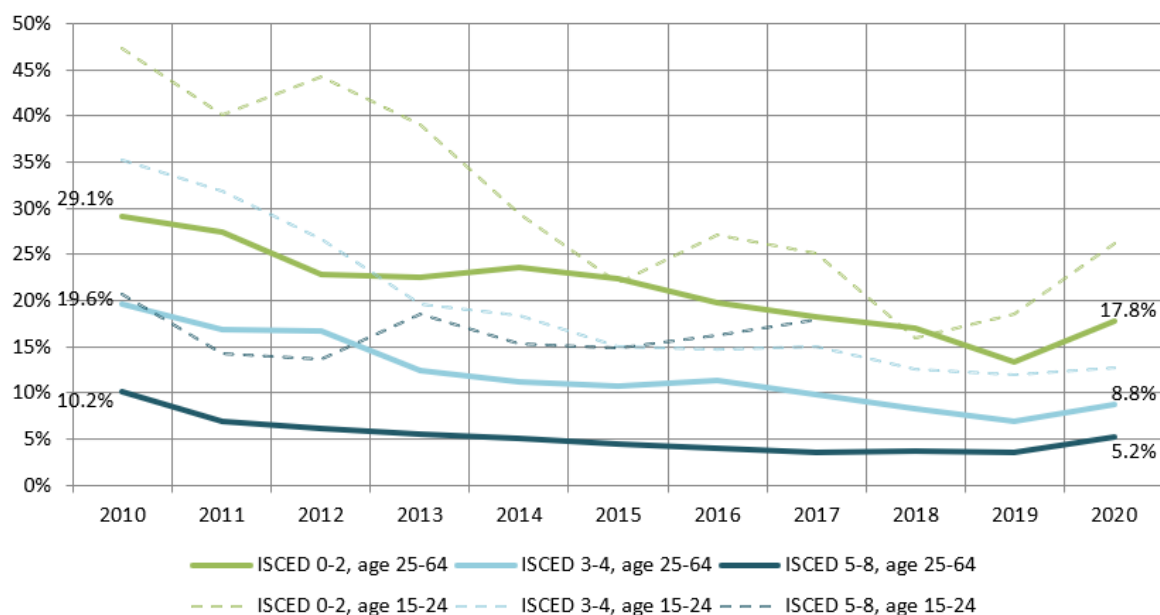
The number of regulated professions acquired in secondary vocational education is very limited.

The labour market is generally considered flexible.

Total unemployment (8) in 2020: 7.7% (6.2% in EU27); this fell by 1.3 percentage points since 2016 (9) .

Unemployment is distributed unevenly between those with low- and high-level qualifications. In 2020, the unemployment rates are higher for all ISCED levels than in 2018. There are stark differences between the different ISCED levels. The unemployment rate of people with low-level qualifications (ISCED 0-2) is twice as high as with medium-level qualifications (ISCED 3-4) and almost 3.5 times higher than for those with high-level qualifications (ISCED 5-8). It is also higher compared to the total unemployment rate in Latvia (7.7%).

Unemployment rate (aged 15-24 and 25-64) by education attainment level in 2008-18

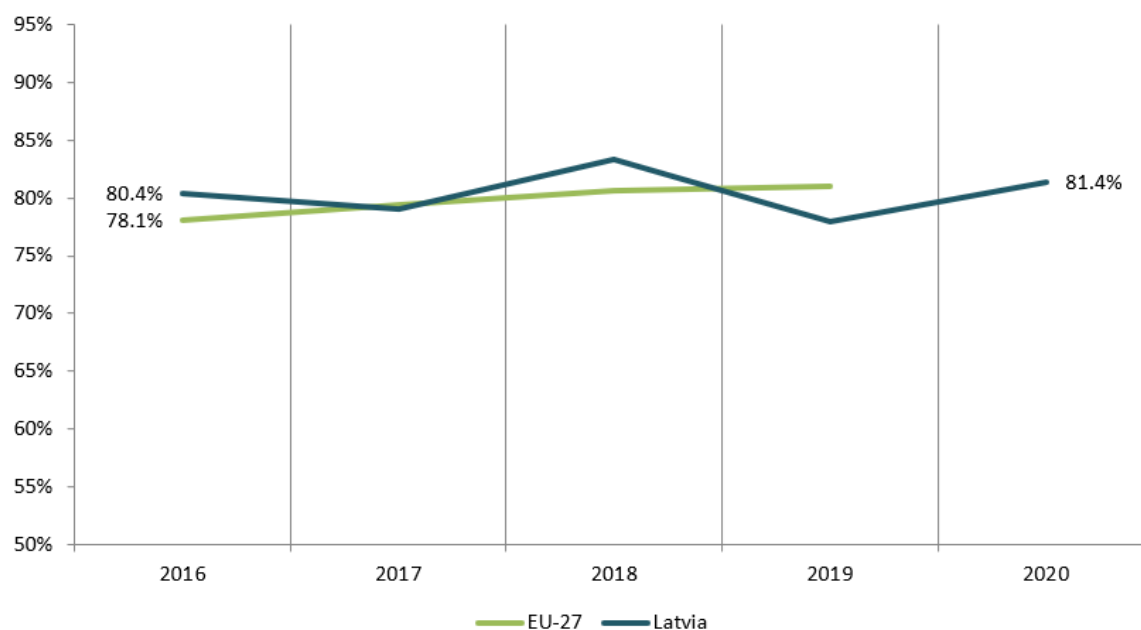


NB: data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series; low reliability for ISCED 0-2 and 5-8, age 15-24.
 ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education
 ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education
 ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education
 Source: Eurostat, Ifsa_urgaed [Extracted 6.5.2021].

In 2020, the employment rate of all ISCED level graduates (age 20-34) is 78.8%, an increase of 0.1% since 2016, when it was 78.7%

The increases in employment of 20 to 34-year-old VET graduates at ISCED levels 3 and 4 are fluctuating from year to year. The employment rate of VET graduates at ISCED level 3 and 4 has increased by 1% since 2016 when it was 80.4%

Employment rate of VET graduates (20 to 34 years old, ISCED levels 3 and 4)



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series.

ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education

Source: Eurostat, edat_ifse_24 [Extracted 6.5.2021].

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- [5] NB: Data for population as of 1 January; break in series. Eurostat table tps00001 [extracted 7.5.2021].
- [6] NB: Data for population as of 1 January; break in series. Eurostat table tps00001 [extracted 7.5.2021].
- [7] Old-age-dependency ratio is defined as the ratio between the number of persons aged 65 and more over the number of working-age persons (15-64). The value is expressed per 100 persons of working age (15-64).
- [8] Percentage of active population, 25 to 64 years old.
- [9] Eurostat table une_rt_a [extracted 7.5.2021.].

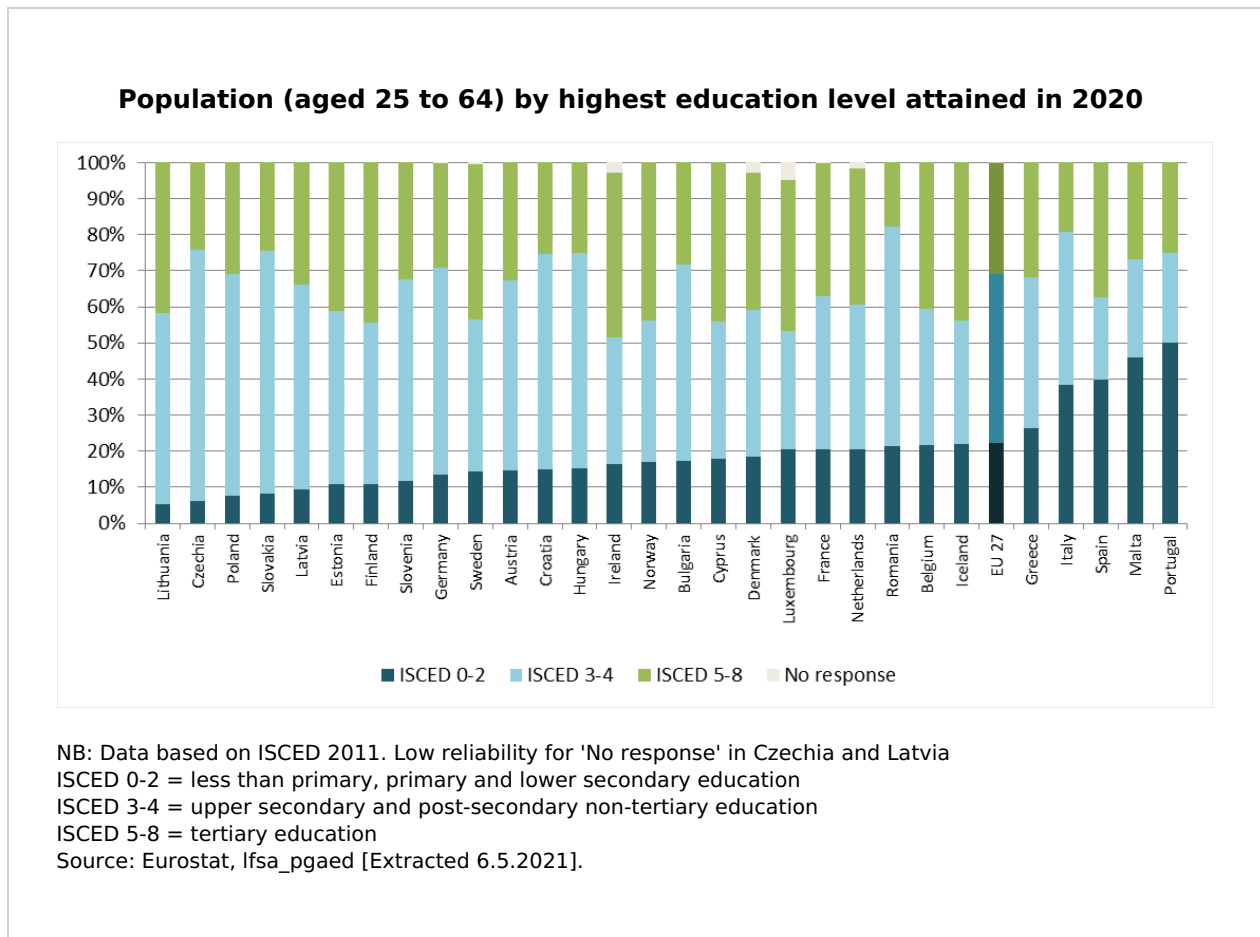
CHAPTER 4.

Education attainment

4.1 Share of high, medium and low level qualifications

Education attainment in Latvia is traditionally high. In 2020, the share of population aged 25 to 64 with upper secondary education including vocational education (ISCED levels 3 and 4) was 53.8%.

The share of people with tertiary education (37.8%) is higher than EU-27 average (32.2%). The share of those with less than primary, primary and lower secondary education is 8.3%.



4.3 VET learners by level

Share of learners in VET by level in 2019

lower secondary

upper secondary

post-secondary

0.33% (decreased by 0.34 pp since 2015)

38.9%

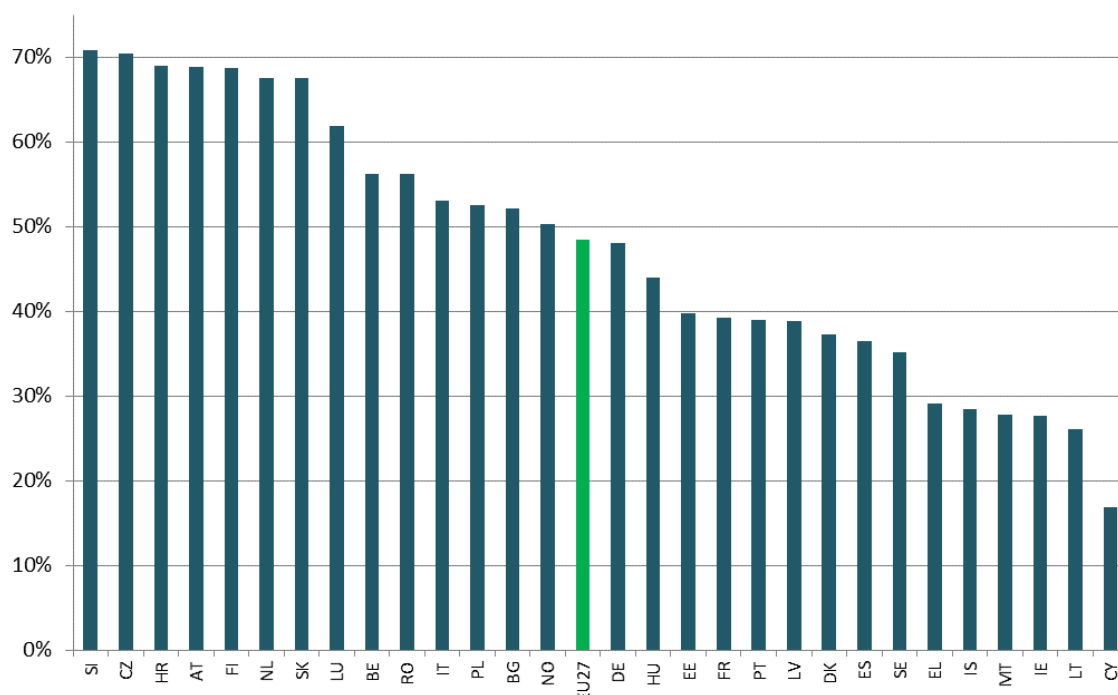
100%

NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enrs01, educ_uoe_enrs04 and educ_uoe_enrs07 [Extracted 6.5.2021]

Initial VET learners form 38.9% of total learners at upper-secondary level. The share is 0.9 pp lower than it was in 2015 (39.8%); also lower than the EU27 average,

Share of initial VET learners from total learners at upper-secondary level (ISCED level 3), 2019



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enrs04 [Extracted 6.5.2021].

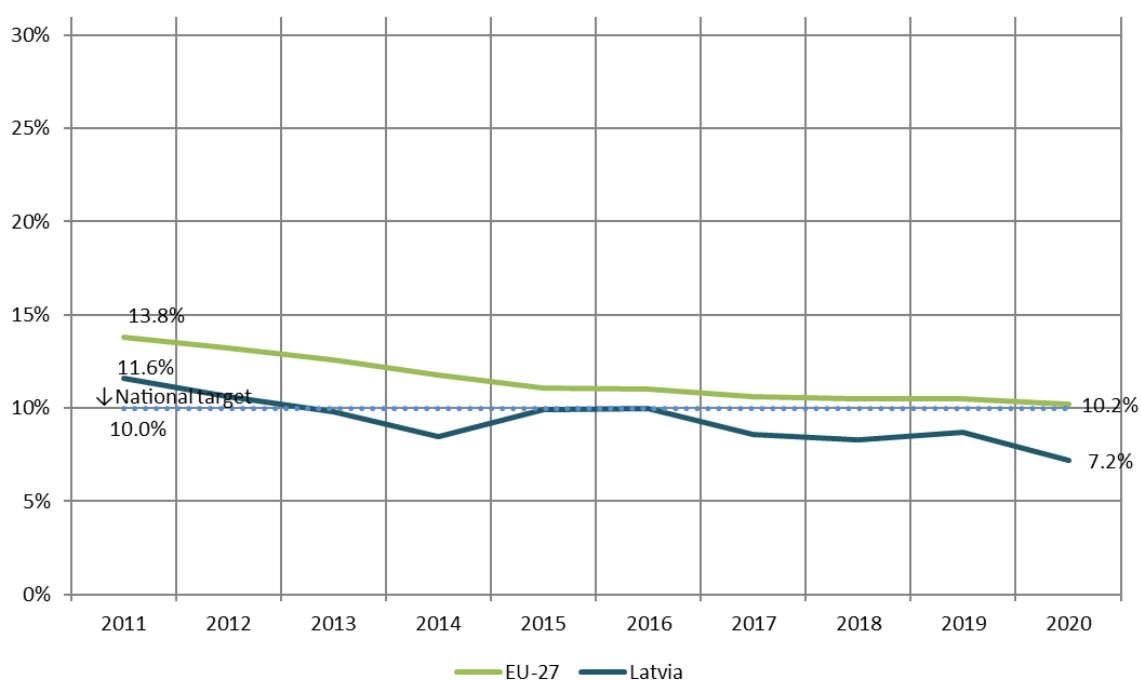
4.4 Female share

Traditionally, there are more males in VET (53.8% in upper-secondary education), except at post-secondary level (10) .

4.5 Early leavers from education and training

The share of early leavers from education and training has decreased from 8.3% in 2018 to 7.2% in 2020. It is below the national objective for 2020 of not more than 10% and the EU-27 average of 10.2%.

Early leavers from education and training in 2011-20



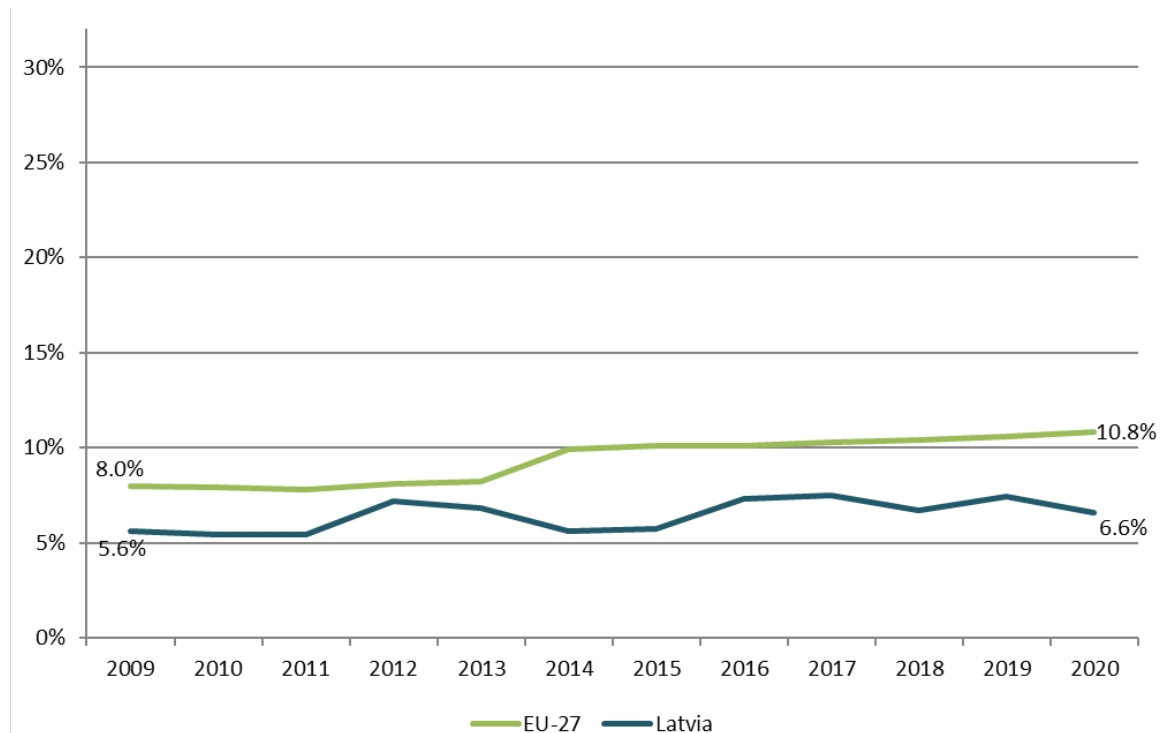
NB: Share of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training

Source: Eurostat, edat_ifse_14 [Extracted on 6.5.2021] and European Commission, <https://ec.europa.eu/info/2018-european-semester-national-reform-progra...> [accessed 14.11.2018].

4.6 Participation in lifelong learning

Lifelong learning offers training opportunities for adults, including early leavers from education.

Participation in lifelong learning in 2015-20



NB: Share of adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training
 Source: Eurostat, trng_ifse_01 [Extracted 6.5.2021].

Participation in lifelong learning in Latvia has decreased to 6.6% in 2020. It is still below the EU average and far below the national objective for 2020 (15%).

[10] Source: Eurostat tables educ_uoe_enrs01, educ_uoe_enrs04 and educ_uoe_enrs07 [accessed 7.5.2021].

CHAPTER 5.

VET within education and training system

The education system comprises:

- pre-school education (ISCED level 0);
- integrated primary and lower secondary education (ISCED levels 1 and 2) (hereafter, basic education);
- upper secondary education (ISCED levels 3 and 4) (hereafter, secondary education);
- higher (tertiary) education (ISCED levels 5, 6, 7 and 8).

Pre-school education for five to six-year-old children is compulsory.

Basic education is mainly general, it is compulsory, and lasts for nine years. Vocational education is mainly offered for learners with mental disabilities or without completed basic education.

Secondary education can be acquired through general education or vocational education programmes. It is non-compulsory. General education programmes last for three years and vocational education programmes – for four years (after completed basic education).

Higher (tertiary) education includes both academic and professional study programmes.

The Vocational Education Law (11) provides legal regulations and defines three VET levels:

- basic vocational education;
- secondary vocational education;
- higher professional education.

Vocational education programmes are mainly school-based, with practical learning periods at schools or enterprises. Since 2015, vocational education can also take the form of an apprenticeship type scheme (nationally called 'work-based learning') with flexible curricula implementation taking place alternately at school and enterprise. To acquire a professional qualification (at EQF levels 2 to 4), learners have to undergo qualification practice and take a State qualification exam at the end of the programme.

Basic vocational education

Basic vocational education programmes leading to EQF level 2 (ISCED 254).

These programmes last from one to three years and are part of formal education. The main target groups are learners with intellectual disability and early leavers from compulsory basic education. They lead to a certificate of basic vocational education with a professional qualification at EQF level 2 (such as cook's assistant, carpenter's assistant) and / or a certificate of basic general education.

Vocational education at secondary level

There are four types of secondary vocational education programmes.

1) Lower secondary vocational education programmes (*arodizglītība*) leading to EQF level 3 (ISCED 353).

These programmes last for three years. They are part of formal education, and they target young people who are at least 15 years old and have completed basic general education or a basic vocational education programme. They include general subjects, but not sufficiently to allow access to higher education. To access higher education programmes, students must attend a 1-year bridging course and to get a certificate of secondary vocational education or secondary general education.

2) Secondary vocational education programmes leading to EQF level 4 (ISCED 354).

These programmes last for four years. They are part of formal education, and they target young people with completed basic education. They include general subjects; at the end of programme students take a professional qualification examination and four State centralised exams in general subjects. After completion of the programme, learners can enter the labour market or higher education.

3) 1-year vocational education programmes leading to EQF level 3 (ISCED 351 or 453).

These programmes last for one year. They are part of formal education and they target young people who are at least 17 years old and have completed general basic education. The programmes do not include general subjects. After completion of the programme learners can enter the labour market.

4) 1.5 to 3-year secondary vocational education programmes leading to EQF level 4 (ISCED 453).

These programmes last for one and a half to three years. They are part of formal education, and they target young people with secondary education. They do not include general subjects. After completion of the programme, learners can enter the labour market.

Higher professional education

Higher education programmes can be academic (lead to a degree) and professional (lead to a degree and/or professional qualification).

Adult learning programmes

There are two types of adult learning programmes:

1) Continuing vocational education

These programmes enable adults with previous education/work experience to acquire a professional qualification (12) in 480 to 1280 hours. Continuing vocational education and initial vocational education have the same legal and governance framework. Similar to initial vocational education, students of continuing vocational education take a final professional qualification exam in accordance with procedures approved by the government (13) .

2) Professional development programmes

These programmes (of at least 160 hours) enable people to master systematised professional knowledge and skills corresponding to labour market requirements. They do not have age, previous education, or professional qualification requirements. They do not lead to a formal qualification, but to a certificate of professional development education (*profesionālās pilnveides izglītības apliecība*) (14) .

Other forms of learning

Work-related knowledge, skills and competences can also be acquired through non-formal learning (short courses), or craftsmanship (apprenticeship programmes).

CHAPTER 6.

Apprenticeship

Vocational education programmes are mainly school-based, with practical learning periods at schools or enterprises. Since 2015, vocational education can also take the form of an apprenticeship-type scheme (nationally called 'work-based learning') with flexible curricula taking place alternately at school and enterprise. To acquire a qualification (at EQF levels 2 to 4), learners have to undergo qualification practice and take a State exam at the end of the programme.

Learn more about apprenticeships in the national context from the European database on apprenticeship schemes by Cedefop: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/apprenticeship-schemes/scheme-fiches>

CHAPTER 7.

VET governance

Most vocational education institutions are governed by the Ministry of Education and Science (85% of all VET learners), 10 VET schools by the Ministry of Culture and others are under the responsibility of the ministries of welfare, interior, agriculture, defence. There are 7 VET schools founded by local municipalities and 4 private VET schools in Latvia.

The vocational education system is governed by the following institutions:

- The Cabinet of Ministers (*Ministru kabinets*) defines policies and strategies for vocational education, State vocational education standards and sets procedures for the development of occupational standards, the organisation of work placements/apprenticeship-type scheme, and professional qualification exams. It regulates mandatory documents for vocational education provision, a list of mandatory occupational standards, activities of sectoral expert councils, licensing and accreditation procedure and the quality assurance of the examination centre. It sets the criteria for issuing State-recognised qualifications, and recognising foreign qualifications. It sets the price list for validation of informal and non-formal learning, it grants the status of 'vocational education competence centre' to providers, and it sets the procedure for distributing the State budget subsidies earmarked for provision of vocational education, teachers' salaries, and price lists for services in VET schools
- The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) (15) develops the framework regulations for vocational education. It proposes allocation of funds from the State budget and finances the vocational education providers it has established. The ministry also organises the implementation of career education, ensures validation of informal and non-formal learning, approves regulations and appoints heads of vocational education institutions under its responsibility. MoES approves VET school development strategies, carries out monitoring of VET schools, approves curricula of VET schools, provides methodological support, plans and implements teacher training.
- Other ministries (culture, welfare and interior) propose the allocation of funds for vocational schools under their responsibility, and organise continuing professional development for teachers. The ministries also organise continuing vocational education for adults, and professional development and training for the unemployed. They cooperate with MoES on designing occupational standards, ensuring quality assurance and other issues.
- The National Centre for Education (16) is under the supervision of MoES. It develops the content of basic, secondary and continuing vocational education, professional development and vocationally oriented education and interest education. It develops VET curricula and procedures for State exams and coordinates development of teaching and learning materials in line with the State vocational education standards. The centre also coordinates the development of occupational standards and the professional development of vocational education teachers.
- The State Education Quality Service (17) is under the supervision of MoES. It licenses general and vocational education programmes (at EQF level 1-4) and provides accreditation of VET schools and VET programmes. It also ensures quality assurance of vocational education (except professional higher), coordinates validation of learning outcomes of informal and non-formal learning (at EQF level 2-4); since 2013 it has coordinated the implementation of the common European quality assurance for VET (EQAVET) in Latvia.
- The State Education Development Agency (18) is under the supervision of MoES. It manages and monitors EU funds ex-post, it introduces EU education programmes, it supports the development of career education policy, arranges national-level professional skills competitions and ensures participation in international skills competitions.

- The Ministry of Welfare (19) develops labour market policies, including training interventions.
- The State Employment Agency (20) is under the supervision of the Ministry of Welfare. It implements labour market policies, including programmes for the unemployed, job seekers and employees at risk.
- Local governments participate in the implementation of vocational education by managing their own VET schools, including school curricula. They promote business development in their territory, cooperate with employer organisations and help students find work placements.

Social dialogue and strategic cooperation are arranged through the following institutions:

- the National Tripartite Subcouncil for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment (21) reviews policy proposals and drafts legal norms for vocational education, human resource development and employment; it evaluates and proposes changes in management, funding and implementation of vocational education; it endorses occupational standards; it endorses annual student enrolment plans prepared by sectoral expert councils.
- 12 sectoral expert councils (*Nozaru ekspertu padomes*) propose solutions for long-term human resources development in their respective sectors and ensure that vocational education provision is in line with labour market needs. This includes participation in development of sectoral qualifications frameworks (SQFs), occupational standards, education programmes, quality assessment procedures, work placements, and apprenticeship-type schemes, make proposals for VET curricula, nominate experts for accreditation of VET schools and curricula.
- collegial advisory bodies (conventions) exist in each vocational education institution. Employers or representatives of employers' organisations, representatives from local government, and representatives from supervising ministries form these conventions. They help shape the development strategy of the education institution, and they contribute to its cooperation with local enterprises, to ensure students' work placements outside school and apprenticeship-type scheme opportunities (22) .

[15] Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija.

[16] Valsts izglītības satura centrs (VISC).

[17] Izglītības kvalitātes valsts dienests (IKVD).

[18] Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra (VIAA).

[19] Labklājības ministrija (Ministry of Welfare).

[20] Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra (NVA).

[21] Profesionālās izglītības un nodarbinātības trīspusējās sadarbības apakšpadome. It was founded in 2000 by the ministries of welfare, economy, finance, justice, agriculture, education and science, regional development and local government affairs, the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia and the Employers' Confederation of Latvia.

CHAPTER 8.

VET financing mechanisms

According to Eurostat data, the education budget has increased from 5.8% of GDP in 2017 to 7.6% in 2021. The budget for vocational education institutions under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science increased from EUR 54.07 million in 2011 to EUR 76.9 million in 2020 (23) .

Other resources (including EU funds) have also been allocated to development of the vocational education system. From 2016 to 2023, EUR 89.07 million is being invested in the modernisation of equipment and infrastructure. Schools also use their own revenues to finance their activities.

Procedures for financing vocational education are stipulated by the Education and Vocational Education laws (24) . Education institutions are financed from the State budget, local government budget or private funding according to their ownership. State budget allocations for vocational education programmes are calculated per student.

Salaries of teachers in State and local government education institutions (including pre-schools) are paid from the State budget. Local governments may supplement salaries of teachers. For private schools implementing accredited basic, secondary and higher education programmes the State can also finance salaries of teachers.

The government covers fixed and non-fixed costs (25) :

- allowances (scholarships);
- student residence maintenance;
- rehabilitation and catering services for students with special needs;
- culture education and sports activities;
- practical training in enterprises;
- accident insurance for practical training in enterprises;
- salary of employees (wages and employer's State social insurance contributions).

In higher education, the State covers fees for a certain number of negotiated study places for students with good grades. Local governments may charge a fee in municipal sports and music vocational schools. Education institutions may simultaneously implement education programmes funded from different sources.

CHAPTER 9.

Teachers and trainers

9.1 VET teacher types

There are four categories of teaching professionals in vocational education:

- vocational education teachers of VET programmes: these provide both theory and practice and can work in initial and continuing vocational education at basic and secondary education levels;
- general education teachers for the general education part of IVET programme;
- supervisors of practical placements from education institutions who accompany students during in-company practice;
- tutors: representatives from enterprises who teach students during in-company periods of WBL.

Since 2014/15 the number of vocational education teachers has decreased by 14%. There were 2424 teachers in VET schools in 2019/20 (26) .

9.2 Continuing professional development of teachers/trainers

Teachers of general and vocational education are responsible for the improvement of their professional competences. Professional competence is developed by completing 36 hours of training within three years, and it is planned in cooperation with the head of the education institution where the person carries out pedagogical activities.

Education institutions register teachers' continuing professional development in the database of the State Education Information System (hosted by the Ministry of Education and Science).

[26] Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija

CHAPTER 10.

Shaping VET qualifications

10.1 Anticipating skill needs

Responsibility for providing labour market forecasts rests with the Ministry of Economics (27) , which updates reports every other year and the State Employment Agency that updates reports annually (28) .

In May 2019, the work on the study Possibilities for creating a system of early restructuring of the labour market and linking medium and long-term labour market forecasts to policy, commissioned by the Ministry of Economics (MoE), was completed.

Within the framework of the study, proposals were developed in the context of the implementation of the Early restructuring system (DTAPS). The DTAPS organisational model was developed, a complex scheme representing all the involved parties. The model envisages introducing a new role of the DTAPS decision-making coordinator so that a system involving so many parties with different roles and responsibilities works in a coherent and organised way.

In March 2020, the work on the 2020 employer survey was completed. In November 2020, the work on the 2021 employer survey was commenced.

The Ministry of Economics produces annual medium- and long-term forecasts. It set up an advisory council for labour market forecasting (29) , i.e. a platform for dialogue between representatives of the State, employers, employees and local governments.

The annual report with medium- and long-term labour market forecasts (30) includes an overview of labour supply and demand, and education areas, levels and progression routes of the labour force (including vocational education). The Ministry of Education and Science uses the data as well as annual proposals of sectoral expert councils to plan vocational education provision, including numbers of potential students and types of programmes.

The State Employment Agency carries out short-term labour market forecasts and has created a corresponding online tool (31) . It also conducts employer express surveys once a year to anticipate changes in the structure of the labour force. The surveys aim at clarifying reasons for changes in demand and supply for occupations. Their results are used to adjust the education offer for the unemployed.

In 2016-21, the State Employment Agency (NVA), in cooperation with the Ministry of Economics, carried out a national level ESF project Development of labour market forecasting system (2016-21). The aim is to inform policy-making, taking into account economic needs. The system provides information on skills and professions in the short, medium and long term, as well as information on learning opportunities. Active labour market policy is being evaluated, and the offer of vocational education programmes is based on the outcomes of skills forecasts. In 2017, discussions took place on the issue of supplementing the quantitative forecasts with qualitative forward-looking scenarios, along with further involving in the process sectoral expert councils, education institutions and regional forums for more precise identification of labour market needs at regional level. In 2018, a study was carried out on the possibilities of improving the labour market forecasting system. Proposals have been made regarding the data to be used, exploring ways of integrating data from different registers into the forecast model. A table for matching education and occupation for medium- and long-term labour market forecasting has been developed. Lists of skills relevant to the occupations have been developed for short-term forecasting. The responsibilities of stakeholders and principles of cooperation have been

formulated. Guidelines have been developed for career advisers and education providers for interpretation and practical use of medium- and long-term labour market forecasts. Recommendations were issued.

The Central Statistical Bureau (32) conducts a labour force survey four times per year and collects data on education levels, employment by type of economic activity and occupation. Data on higher education institutions' and vocational education provider graduates is collected by the institutions themselves and submitted to the Ministry of Education and Science and to the Central Statistical Bureau for further analysis and publication.

See also Cedefop's skills forecast (33) and European skills index (34) .

10.2 Designing qualifications

Since April 2018, 15 sectoral qualifications frameworks reflect an agreement between educators and employers on qualifications required by the labour market (35) . The sectoral qualifications frameworks serve as guidelines for developing occupational standards and implementing vocational education programmes, including modules leading to specialisations.

Vocational education programmes are designed in line with the State education and occupational standards or qualification requirements (if the occupation does not have a standard), and sectoral qualifications frameworks.

The content of vocational education programmes is defined by State vocational education standards (36) . The standards include strategic aims, basic principles, mandatory content, ratio of theory and practice and evaluation procedures. Vocational education providers also ensure that specific skills and competences required in the occupational standards/professional qualification requirements are included in the programmes they offer.

Occupational standards and professional qualification requirements are elaborated by designated working groups comprising representatives of ministries, local governments, employers, employees, chamber of commerce and industry, NGOs and vocational education providers. The standards are endorsed by the National Tripartite Subcouncil for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment. They are reviewed at least once every five years (37) .

Since 2007, occupational standards have to include necessary professional competences, skills, and knowledge to perform professional activities. There are 240 occupational standards and professional qualification requirements for all professional qualifications in 15 sectoral qualifications frameworks.

The modular approach for vocational education programmes (38) includes use of learning outcomes, relevant teaching / learning methods and indicators of achievement. In 2017, the amendments to the Vocational Education Law (39) set the legal framework for the modularisation of vocational education programmes. Modules are defined as parts of professional qualifications and are based on learning outcomes as an assessed and approved set of knowledge, skills and competences. Modular vocational education programmes lead to qualifications at EQF levels 2-4 and their professional content consists of a set of modules. After completing one or several modules recognisable in the labour market, but not proving acquisition of a qualification, vocational schools will have to issue a new type of certificate indicating the programme, module(s), achieved learning outcomes and their assessment. In 2017, modules have been included in the State vocational education standards (40) .

The 332/2020 Regulations on State Vocational Education Standard define objectives, tasks, structure of vocational education curricula, parts of curricula, percentages of parts of curricula,

Qualification exams (41) that consist of theoretical and practical parts are designed in line with both occupational and State vocational education standards. Representatives from relevant sectoral organisations participate in the examination process.

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- [27] Ekonomikas ministrija.
- [28] Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra (NVA).
- [29] Darba tirgus prognozēšanas konsultatīvā padome.
- [31] <https://cvvp.nva.gov.lv/#/pub/pakalpojumi/prognozes/>
- [32] Centrālā statistikas pārvalde (CSB).
- [33] <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/skills-forecast>
- [34] <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/european-skills-index>

CHAPTER 11.

Quality assurance

The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for policies and strategies to ensure accessibility and quality of education.

Quality is assured through:

- elaboration of education policy;
- registration and accreditation of education providers;
- licensing and accreditation of education programmes;
- supervising the education process.

The further development of the quality monitoring system is among the priorities of vocational education policy. A principle of accreditation ensures that each programme's content meets required standards of vocational education provided by public (State and local government) and private institutions (42) . It also increases the transparency of education provision and fosters recognition of Latvian qualifications abroad.

The State Education Quality Service (43) organises licensing and accreditation of vocational education programmes, and accreditation of vocational education providers and examination centres (44) of State, local government and private entities. A licence is a permission to implement a particular programme that meets all requirements of State vocational education and occupational standards or professional qualification requirements. Providers must ensure proper infrastructure and equipment and, if necessary, obtain an agreement from the relevant professional association. The State Education Quality Service issues a licence for an indefinite period and register the licensed VET programmes in the State Education Information System.

Accreditation is the evaluation of the performance of the relevant education provider and/or the quality of implementation of the education programme. As a result of accreditation, an education provider obtains a right for two to six years to issue a State recognised qualification for a particular programme. During the accreditation process, the quality of the implementation of an education programme is evaluated against criteria aligned to EQAVET. For example, when accrediting vocational education programmes (EQF levels 2-4), the following areas of criteria are assessed:

- content of education – education programmes implemented by institution;
- teaching and learning;
- learners' achievements;
- support to learners;
- environment of institution;
- resources of institution;
- work organisation, management and quality assurance of institution.

All public continuing vocational education programmes (480 hours or more) and professional development programmes (160 hours or more) must be licensed and accredited by the State Education Quality Service. Providers of professional development programmes (159 hours or less) must obtain a licence from local government. Public providers can offer non-formal learning programmes without a licence.

During the licensing or accreditation process, the State Education Quality Service hires external experts and representatives of sectoral NGOs and employers to evaluate programme compliance with State education standards, occupational standards or professional qualification

requirements and other regulations. All experts have specific knowledge of the accreditation process. They have to have special training of 8 hours to get the accreditor's certificate to participate in the accreditation process.

The National Centre for Education (45) ensures/coordinates the development of content for vocational education (except higher education) in compliance with the State vocational education standards, occupational standards and professional qualification requirements. It also ensures development and implementation of uniform content for vocational education State examinations, coordinates development of teaching/learning aids complying with State general and vocational education standards, and coordinates teachers' professional development.

The Higher Education Council (46) is responsible for quality assurance of higher (including professional) education. The council takes decisions on accreditation of higher education institutions in general and submits them to the Ministry of Education and Science for approval.

Since 2012, study fields (including all programmes of the same field) undergo joint quality assurance. From 2015, quality assurance of higher education institutions/colleges and study fields, and licensing of study programmes is organised by Higher Education Quality Agency (47) , a department within the Academic Information Centre (48) .

The Academic Information Centre develops and complies with the methodologies and procedures for external quality assessment of higher education institutions/colleges and study fields in line with the standards and guidelines developed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (49) . The decision on the accreditation of the study field is taken by the study accreditation committee.

The Academic Information Centre maintains the register of study fields, a public portal (50) that includes information on higher education programmes and quality assurance of institutions and study fields.

[43] Izglītības kvalitātes valsts dienests (IKVD).

[44] Examination centre is an accredited commercial company or association in arranging professional qualification exams, which does not implement education programmes.

[45] Valsts izglītības satura centrs (VISC).

[46] Augstākās izglītības padome.

[47] Augstākās izglītības kvalitātes aģentūra (AIKA).

[48] Akadēmiskās informācijas centrs (AIC).

[49] ENQA

[50] <https://www.aika.lv/>

CHAPTER 12.

Validation of prior learning

A system for validation of prior learning (EQF levels 2-4) was launched in 2011 after amendments to the Vocational Education Law (51) . Accredited education providers and examination centres with a permit from the State Education Quality Service (52) carry out the validation process according to government regulations (53) .

The validation procedure includes the following steps:

- submission of application;
- consultation (free of charge) on requirements of relevant occupational standard or professional qualification requirements and the exam procedure;
- professional qualification exam (for a fee);
- certification of professional qualification.

Since 2017, ESF support has been used to compensate the cost of the qualification exam both for the unemployed and employed. After successfully passing the exam, a certificate of a professional qualification (EQF level 2-4) is issued according to government regulations (54) . The qualification gives access to labour market.

The validation procedure and criteria for higher education were approved in 2012, following amendments of 2011 to the Law on Higher Education Institutions (55) . Knowledge, skills and competences acquired in previous learning may be validated according to learning outcomes of the study course or module (for regulated professions only in a theoretical course or module). Learning outcomes acquired through professional experience may only be recognised in a practical course or module of the study programme (56) .

An overview of the development and implementation of the system for validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (EQF levels 2-7) is provided in the report *Implementation of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in Latvia* prepared by the Academic Information Centre in 2018.

[52] Izglītības kvalitātes valsts dienests (IKVD).

CHAPTER 13.

Incentives for learners

National policy priorities include increasing the attractiveness of initial vocational education and reduction of early leaving from education.

The education development guidelines 2014-20 (57) foresee preventive and compensatory actions, including:

- promoting youth involvement in leisure and extracurricular activities that increase interest in practical areas and support skills development;
- providing scholarships for vocational education students;
- conducting a study on reasons for leaving education early;
- implementing initial vocational education programmes in the Youth guarantee initiative framework;
- identifying young NEETs and involving them in education.

Monthly scholarships

Unlike general education students, vocational education students receive monthly scholarships according to government regulations on scholarships (58) . Students in public vocational education programmes receive a State scholarship of between EUR 15 and 150 per month depending on performance. Orphans/children without parental care (not in care institutions or foster families) and best performers in studies or school social activities receive a higher scholarship.

Scholarships and tax incentives for students of short programmes

17 to 29-year-old students of short programmes in the youth guarantee initiative may receive ESF part-financed scholarship per month up to EUR 70-115.

Tax incentives for individuals are also available and regulated by the Law on Personal Income Tax (59) . The Law was amended to introduce, as of January 2017, a tax exemption for apprenticeship scholarships not exceeding EUR 280 per month.

Reduction of taxable income

Individuals may request the State Revenue Service (60) to reduce their taxable income by the amount of their education (and medical) expenses up to a maximum of EUR 600 per year (increased in 2018), including expenses paid for brothers/sisters/children under 24 years of age (61) . The revenue service is also responsible for monitoring the use of tax incentives. Recent statistics, however, do not include all claims, as expenses may be claimed up to three years after they have been incurred.

For taxation purposes 'education' is understood as participation in:

- accredited education programmes (including higher and vocational education);
- EU/European economic area occupational learning;
- skills or qualification development;
- interest education for children under 18 years of age.

Study loans for tertiary education

Tertiary (including professional) education students can apply for two types of study loan to cover tuition fees and costs of living. Loans are offered by selected banks (or other credit

institutions) and are guaranteed by the State (62) .

Financial support for apprenticeships

The Employers' Confederation of Latvia started a national level ESF project (2017-23) on vocational education students' involvement in apprenticeship and work placements. Enterprises, vocational schools and students receive financial support for the project.

[60] Valsts ieņēmumu dienests.

CHAPTER 14.

Incentives for enterprises to boost their participation in VET provision

Financial support for apprenticeships

The Employers' Confederation of Latvia started a national level ESF project (2017-23) on vocational education student involvement in apprenticeship and work placements. Enterprises, vocational schools and students receive financial support while part of the project.

The main incentives for companies to provide apprenticeships are:

- opportunity to prepare the employees they need in a timely manner;
- to create a positive image of the company in society;
- to receive financing from the ESF project in this process;
- an opportunity to pay a student motivational apprenticeship scholarship without paying taxes.

The project is a good support tool to provide additional funding for an employer who trains a student. It provides work safety tools, the opportunity to cover student insurance from the project funds, and purchase a mandatory health check; the project has also provided funding to cover travel costs for learner to get to the company where apprenticeship takes place.

CHAPTER 15.

Guidance and counselling

The Education Law (63) stipulates local governments' responsibility for provision of career education for children and the young; students' right to receive career guidance and counselling; and responsibilities of heads of education institutions for ensuring access to career development services. The Vocational Education Law (64) determines the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science for introducing guidance and counselling in vocational education.

The present career development support system has been in place since 2006. It was launched by the Ministry of Welfare policy paper on improving career guidance (65) . The paper covers all aspects of lifelong guidance including the mechanisms to ensure better cooperation and coordination between key stakeholders at different levels. The development of career education and widening access to individual career services in a lifelong learning context has been one of the policy priorities set by the education development guidelines 2014-20.

In 2007, the national guidance and counselling forum (*Karjeras attīstības atbalsta sistēmas sadarbības padome*) was established. This gathers policy-makers from the relevant ministries, guidance providers, social partners and users. The forum proposes changes at national and local levels, contributing to development of guidance and counselling policy and system. It also cooperates with the Latvian delegation to the European lifelong guidance policy network.

The provision of career education is one of the criteria for assessing quality in general and vocational education schools (66) . Vocational education competence centres should provide individual career counselling and support measures for career education to help students acquire career management skills (67) .

The State Education Development Agency (VIAA) represents Latvia in the Euroguidance network and supports implementation of career education policy within the education sector.

The agency develops methodological materials for career guidance practitioners working at schools and guidance materials for young people and adults. VIAA also organises seminars for practitioners, since 2012, including a 'career week' in big cities for young people that offers visits to enterprises and meetings with representatives of different occupations; it organises participation of young professionals in international level competitions – EuroSkills and WordSkills – in which Latvian teams have competed successfully since 2010 and 2011 respectively, and, since 2017, has organised SkillsLatvia, the largest national professional skills competition for vocational education learners. The agency also maintains and updates an education opportunities database (68) with information about general, vocational and higher education providers and programmes, as well as about non-formal learning opportunities. VIAA also offers a website (69) with information about the world of work.

According to the Support Law for Unemployed Persons and Persons Seeking Employment (Saeima, 2002), the State Employment Agency's (NVA) functions include ensuring free career advice for the unemployed, job-seekers or other persons and developing career counselling methods and career guidance information.

NVA provides group and individual career consultations. Counselling methods depend on the client's needs. The first meeting in an individual career consultation is devoted to clarifying the aims of the consultation and selecting the most appropriate working method, which may be focused on exploring professional interests, vocational aptitude, or exploring clients' knowledge, skills/competences and values. If need be, psychological support is offered, in the form of a client resource assessment to show their strengths for a successful future life planning. The NVA web

portal www.nva.gov.lv section Career services (70) has information on job searching and career decision making, with descriptions of occupations, education opportunities, and self-assessment tests.

According to the Law on Higher Education Institutions (71) , students have a right to receive information on issues regarding their studies and potential careers. Higher education institutions have designated career centres that provide information on education and career opportunities.

In the private and NGO sectors, provision of guidance services is underdeveloped, but there are some promising initiatives. An example is the youth consultation web portal (72) (since 2008), which is considered the largest in Latvia covering career and education issues.

Please also see:

- guidance and outreach Latvia national report (73) ;
- Cedefop's labour market intelligence toolkit (74) .
- Cedefop's inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices (75)

[68] See www.niid.lv [accessed 11.10.2021].

[69] See www.profesijupasaule.lv[accessed 11.10.2021].

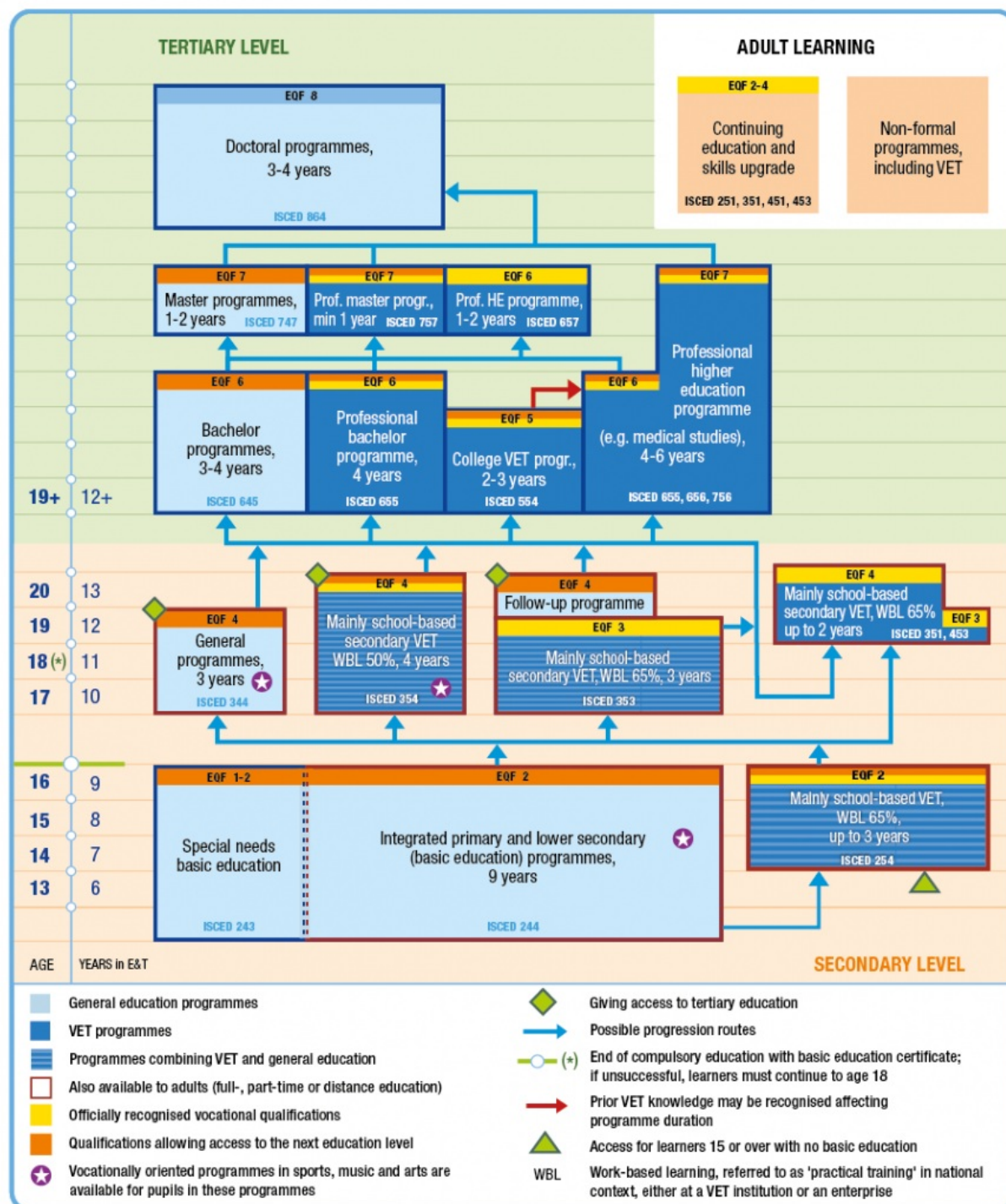
[70] See Karjeras pakalpojumi: <http://www.nva.gov.lv/karjera> [accessed 11.10.2021.].

[72] See www.prakse.lv [accessed 11.10.2021].

[73] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/events-and-projects/networks/refernet/thematic-perspectives/guidance-outreach>

[74] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/toolkits/resources-guidance/toolkit/where-can-you-find-more-information-in-your-country-and-elsewhere>

Vocational education and training system chart



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Latvia, 2022.

VET Programme Types

EQF 2
Mainly school-based VET, WBL 65%, up to 3 years ISCED 254

Basic vocational education (profesionālā pamatizglītība) programmes leading to EQF level 2, ISCED 254

EQF level	2	ISCED-P 2011 level	254
Usual entry grade	8	Usual completion grade	9
Usual entry age	15+	Usual completion age	16+
Length of a programme (years)	1-3		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	Is it continuing VET?	✗
Is it offered free of charge?	✓	Is it available for adults?	✓

ECVET or other credits Not applicable

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)

- school-based learning
- workshops at school

Main providers Special education institutions/development centres or vocational education institutions

Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies $\geq 65\%$

Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)

- workshops at schools
- in-company training

Main target groups	The main target groups are learners with intellectual disability and early leavers from compulsory basic education.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	There are no minimum entry requirements, but learners must be at least 15 years old to enrol.
Assessment of learning outcomes	<p>Learners need to pass a professional qualification examination and qualification practice. The professional qualification examination (76) includes both theoretical and practical parts, designed in line with both occupational and State vocational education standards and organised according to government regulations. Representatives from relevant sectoral organisations participate in the examination process.</p> <p>A learner who fails a qualification examination is entitled to take a second examination in the following academic year, but must covering the costs.</p>
Diplomas/certificates provided	Certificate of basic vocational education (<i>apliecība par profesionālo pamatizglītību</i>), with professional qualification at EQF level 2.
Examples of qualifications	Construction worker, carpenter's assistant
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	<p>Graduates can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enter the labour market • progress to secondary level (vocational) education
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	✗
General education subjects	✓
Key competences	✓
Application of learning outcomes approach	✓
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	Information not available

[76] Cabinet of Ministers (2011c). *Profesionālās kvalifikācijas eksāmenu norises kārtība akreditētās profesionālās izglītības programmās* [Procedure of professional qualification examinations in accredited vocational education programmes]. Regulation No 662 (last amended 18.12.2012, No 918). <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=235206>

EQF 3
Mainly
School-based secondary VET,
WBL 65%,
3 years
ISCED 353

Vocational education (arodizglītība) programmes leading to EQF level 3, ISCED 353

EQF level	3	ISCED-P 2011 level	353
Usual entry grade	10	Usual completion grade	12
Usual entry age	16	Usual completion age	19
Length of a programme (years)	3		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	Is it continuing VET?	✗
Is it offered free of charge?	✓	Is it available for adults?	✓

ECVET or other credits Not applicable

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)

Vocational education programmes are mainly school-based, with practical learning periods at schools or enterprises. Since 2015, vocational education can also take the form of an apprenticeship-type scheme (nationally called 'work-based learning') with flexible curricula taking place alternately at school and enterprise.





The learning form of this programme type is contact studies which can also be implemented as an apprenticeship-type scheme.

Main providers Vocational schools

Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies $\geq 65\%$

Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)

- workshops at school
- in-company training

Main target groups	The main target group is young people after completion of basic education.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Entry requirements are 15 years and basic education.
Assessment of learning outcomes	<p>Learners need to pass a professional qualification examination and qualification practice. The professional qualification examination (77) includes both theoretical and practical parts, designed in line with both occupational and State vocational education standards and organised according to the government regulations. Representatives from relevant sectoral organisations participate in the examination process.</p> <p>A learner who fails a qualification examination is entitled to take a second examination in the following academic year but must cover the costs.</p>
Diplomas/certificates provided	Certificate of vocational education (<i>atestāts par arodizglītību</i>) with professional qualification at EQF level 3
Examples of qualifications	Cook's assistant, carpenter, gardener
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	<p>Graduates can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enter vocational secondary education; • enter the labour market. <p>For admission to higher education, a 1-year intermediate general secondary education 'bridge programme' must be followed.</p>
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	
General education subjects	 The share of theory is 60%.
Key competences	
Application of learning outcomes approach	 The content of these education programmes, which are elaborated by providers, is defined by the State vocational education standards (78) and occupational standards (79) (80) and is based on learning outcomes.
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	Information not available

- [77] Cabinet of Ministers (2011c). *Profesionālās kvalifikācijas eksāmenu norises kārtība akreditētās profesionālās izglītības programmās* [Procedure of professional qualification examinations in accredited vocational education programmes]. Regulation No 662 (last amended 18.12.2012, No 918). <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=235206>
- [78] Cabinet of Ministers (2020). *Noteikumi par valsts profesionālās vidējās izglītības standartu un valsts arodizglītības standartu* [Regulations on the State vocational secondary education standard and the State vocational education standard]. Regulation No 332 2.6.2020. <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/315146-noteikumi-par-valsts-profesionalas-videjas-izglitibas-standartu-un-valsts-arodizglitibas-standartu>
- [79] Since 2016, in parallel to the occupational standards, Cabinet Regulations stipulate qualifications requirements and sectoral qualifications framework (SQF) descriptions. In further text, the term 'occupational standards' includes all the mentioned documents.
- [80] Cabinet of Ministers (2016). *Profesijas standarta, profesionālās kvalifikācijas prasību (ja profesijai neapstiprina profesijas standartu) un nozares kvalifikāciju struktūras izstrādes kārtība* [Procedure for the development of occupational standard, professional qualification requirements (if occupational standard is not approved for an occupation) and sectoral qualifications framework]. Regulation No 633. <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=285032>

EQF 4
Mainly school-based secondary VET
WBL 50%, 4 years
ISCED 354

Vocational secondary education (profesionālā vidējā izglītība) programmes leading to EQF level 4, ISCED 354

EQF level	4	ISCED-P 2011 level	354
Usual entry grade	10	Usual completion grade	12+
Usual entry age	16	Usual completion age	20
Length of a programme (years)	4		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	Is it continuing VET?	✗
Is it offered free of charge?	✓	Is it available for adults?	✓

ECVET or other credits Not applicable

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance) Vocational education programmes are mainly school-based, with practical learning periods at schools or enterprises. Since 2015, vocational education can also take the form of an apprenticeship-type scheme (nationally called 'work-based learning') with flexible curricula taking place alternately at school and enterprise.




Main providers The main providers are vocational schools and some colleges.

Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies $\geq 50\%$

Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)

- workshops at schools
- in-company training

Main target groups The main target group is young people after completing basic education.

Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Entry requirements are basic education.
Assessment of learning outcomes	<p>To complete a vocational education programme, learners need to pass a final professional qualification examination and qualification practice. The professional qualification examination (81) includes both theoretical and practical parts, designed in line with both occupational and State vocational education standards and organised according to government regulations. Representatives from relevant sectoral organisations participate in the examination process.</p> <p>Vocational secondary education students must also take State centralised exams in the following general study subjects: Latvian, mathematics, foreign language and one subject selected by the student.</p> <p>A learner who fails a qualification examination is entitled to take a second examination in the following academic year but must cover the costs.</p>
Diplomas/certificates provided	<p>Vocational secondary education programmes lead to a diploma of vocational secondary education (<i>diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību</i>) with professional qualification at EQF level 4.</p> <p>The State centralised exams in four general subjects provide students with a certificate of general secondary education (<i>vispārējās vidējās izglītības sertifikāts</i>) and the right to enter higher education.</p>
Examples of qualifications	Car mechanic, electronic technician, mechanical engineering technician
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	<p>Graduates can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enter the labour market • continue in higher education after passing the State centralised exams in general study subjects
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	
General education subjects	 The share of theory is 60%.
Key competences	 Key competences are acquired according to the State education standard.

Application of learning outcomes approach



The content of these programmes, which are elaborated by providers, is defined by the State vocational education standards (82) , occupational standards (83) , and is based on learning outcomes.

Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners

Information not available

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- [81] Cabinet of Ministers (2011c). *Profesionālās kvalifikācijas eksāmenu norises kārtība akreditētās profesionālās izglītības programmās* [Procedure of professional qualification examinations in accredited vocational education programmes]. Regulation No 662 (last amended 18.12.2012, No 918). <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=235206>
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EQF 3
Mainly school-based VET, WBL 65% up to 2 years ISCED 351,453

1-year vocational education (viengadīgā arodizglītība) programmes leading to EQF level 3, ISCED 351 or 453

EQF level	3	ISCED-P 2011 level	351 or 453
Usual entry grade	10+	Usual completion grade	11+
Usual entry age	17+	Usual completion age	18+
Length of a programme (years)	1		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	Is it continuing VET?	✗
Is it offered free of charge?	✓	Is it available for adults?	✓

ECVET or other credits Not applicable

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)

Vocational education programmes are mainly school-based, with practical learning periods at schools or enterprises. Since 2015, vocational education can also take the form of an apprenticeship-type scheme (nationally called 'work-based learning') with flexible curricula taking place alternately at school and enterprise.

At the end of the learning process there is at least 560 hours of qualification practice, followed by a final qualification examination.





The learning form of this programme type is mainly contact studies which can also be implemented as an apprenticeship-type scheme; however, some programmes are offered in part-time form.

Main providers

The main providers are vocational schools.

Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies

>=65%

Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workshops at schools • in-company training
Main target groups	The main target group is young people. Since 2014/15, these programmes have been offered to 17 to 29-year-olds with basic or secondary education in the Youth guarantee initiative using ESF support.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Entry requirements are age 17 and basic education (for programmes of ISCED 351) or secondary education (for programmes of ISCED 453 (84)).
Assessment of learning outcomes	<p>At the end of the programme learners must pass a final professional qualification examination.</p> <p>If a learner fails a qualification examination, they are entitled to take a second examination in the following academic year but must cover the costs.</p>
Diplomas/certificates provided	Certificate of professional qualification (<i>profesionālās kvalifikācijas apliecība</i>) (EQF level 3)
Examples of qualifications	Carer, carpenter, gardener
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Graduates can enter the labour market
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	 <p>It is possible to acquire a certificate of professional qualification (EQF level 3) through validation of prior learning.</p>
General education subjects	
Key competences	
Application of learning outcomes approach	 <p>The content of these programmes, which are elaborated by providers, is defined by the State vocational education standards (85) , occupational standards (86) , and is based on learning outcomes.</p>
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	Information not available

- [84] In Latvia, post-secondary education programmes, in contrast to what their name suggests, belong to secondary education level.
- [85] Cabinet of Ministers (2020). Noteikumi par valsts profesionālās vidējās izglītības standartu un valsts arodizglītības standartu [*Regulations on the State vocational secondary education standard and the State vocational education standard*]. Regulation No 332 2.6.2020 <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/315146-noteikumi-par-valsts-profesionalas-videjas-izglitibas-standartu-un-valsts-arodizglitibas-standartu>
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EQF 4

Mainly

school-based VET,

WBL 65%

up to 2 years

ISCED 351, 453

1.5 to 3-year vocational secondary education after general secondary education (profesionālā vidējā izglītība pēc vispārējās vidējās izglītības) programmes leading to EQF level 4, ISCED 453

EQF level	4	ISCED-P 2011 level	453
Usual entry grade	12	Usual completion grade	12+
Usual entry age	19	Usual completion age	20+
Length of a programme (years)	1.5-3		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	Is it continuing VET?	✗
Is it offered free of charge?	✓	Is it available for adults?	✓
	Since 2014/15, these programmes have been offered in the Youth guarantee initiative using ESF support.		




ECVET or other credits Not applicable

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)

Vocational education programmes are mainly school-based, with practical learning periods at schools or enterprises. Since 2015, vocational education can also take the form of an apprenticeship-type scheme (nationally called 'work-based learning') with flexible curricula taking place alternately at school and enterprise.

At the end of the learning process there is at least 560 hours of qualification practice, which is followed by a qualification examination.

The learning form of this programme type is mainly contact studies which can be implemented also as an apprenticeship-type scheme. However, several programmes are offered in part-time or distance learning form.





Main providers	The main providers are vocational schools.
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	>=50%
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workshops at schools • in-company training
Main target groups	The main target group is young people. Since 2014/15, programmes mainly of one and a half years have been offered to 17 to 29-year-olds with secondary education in the Youth guarantee initiative using ESF support.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Entry requirement is secondary education
Assessment of learning outcomes	<p>Learners need to pass a final professional qualification examination.</p> <p>If a learner fails a qualification examination, they are entitled to take a second examination in the following academic year but must cover the costs.</p>
Diplomas/certificates provided	Short vocational secondary education programmes (ISCED-P 453) lead to a diploma of vocational secondary education (<i>diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību</i>) with professional qualification at EQF level 4.
Examples of qualifications	Car mechanic, book-keeper, dental technician
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Graduates can enter the labour market
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	
General education subjects	
Key competences	Information not available
Application of learning outcomes approach	 <p>The content of these programmes, which are elaborated by providers, is defined by the State vocational education standards (87) , occupational standards (88) , and is based on learning outcomes.</p>

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- [87] Cabinet of Ministers (2020). *Noteikumi par valsts profesionālās vidējās izglītības standartu un valsts arodizglītības standartu* [Regulations on the State vocational secondary education standard and the State vocational education standard]. Regulation No 332 2.6.2021 <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/315146-noteikumi-par-valsts-profesionalas-videjas-izglitibas-standartu-un-valsts-arodizglitibas-standartu>
- [88] Cabinet of Ministers (2016). *Profesijas standarta, profesionālās kvalifikācijas prasību (ja profesijai neapstiprina profesijas standartu) un nozares kvalifikāciju struktūras izstrādes kārtība* [Procedure for the development of occupational standard, professional qualification requirements (if occupational standard is not approved for an occupation) and sectoral qualifications framework]. Regulation No 633. <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=285032>

EQF 5
College VET programme 2-3 years ISCED 554

**First level higher professional education (college education)
(pirmā līmeņa profesionālā augstākā izglītība (koledžas izglītība))
programme leading to EQF level 5, ISCED 554**





EQF level	5	ISCED-P 2011 level	554
Usual entry grade	12+	Usual completion grade	12+
Usual entry age	19+	Usual completion age	21+
Length of a programme (years)	2 to 3		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	Is it continuing VET?	✗
Is it offered free of charge?	✓ A certain number of study places in many programmes are financed by the State.	Is it available for adults?	✓
ECVET or other credits	120-180 ECTS credit points. Since 2004, Latvia has had a well-established national credit point system. One Latvian credit point corresponds to the workload of 1 week's full-time studies (40 points per academic year). Recalculating in ECTS credits, the amount of Latvian credit points has to be multiplied by 1.5.		
Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	Higher education institutions, including colleges (<i>koledža</i>) provide full-time, part-time and distance studies at all levels.		
Main providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher education institutions (including universities, university colleges, academies, institutes) Colleges 		
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	30%		

Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practical training at school • in-company practice
Main target groups	Programmes are available for young people and also for adults.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Entry requirement is secondary education.
Assessment of learning outcomes	<p>Learners need to pass a final qualification examination which also includes defence of a qualification paper.</p> <p>If a learner fails a qualification examination, they are entitled to take a second examination in the following academic year but must cover the costs.</p>
Diplomas/certificates provided	First level professional higher education diploma (<i>pirmā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms</i>) at EQF level 5.
Examples of qualifications	Accountant, insurance specialist, fitness trainer.
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • labour market • professional higher education studies (graduates may have shorter duration of further studies at EQF level 6 if they continue in the same field)
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	 <p>Learning outcomes are validated based on knowledge, skills, and competences acquired in previous learning or professional experience, as well as learning outcomes achieved in previous learning, with the expected learning outcomes in the respective college study programme by awarding the respective amount of credits.</p>
General education subjects	 <p>general education subjects take up at least 17% of the curriculum.</p>
Key competences	 <p>The compulsory content includes a module for the development of professional competences in entrepreneurship.</p>
Application of learning outcomes approach	
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	Information not available

EQF 6
Professional bachelor programme, 4 years ISCED 655

Professional bachelor (profesionālais bakalaura) programme leading to EQF level 6, ISCED 655







EQF level	6	ISCED-P 2011 level	655
Usual entry grade	12+	Usual completion grade	12+
Usual entry age	19+	Usual completion age	23+
Length of a programme (years)	Minimum 4		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	Is it continuing VET?	✗
Is it offered free of charge?	✓ A certain number of study places in many programmes are financed by the State.	Is it available for adults?	✓
ECVET or other credits	At least 240 ECTS credit points. Since 2004, Latvia has had a well-established national credit point system. One Latvian credit point corresponds to the workload of 1 week's full-time studies (40 points per academic year). Recalculating in ECTS credits, the amount of Latvian credit points has to be multiplied by 1.5.		
Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	Higher education institutions provide full-time, part-time and distance studies at all levels.		
Main providers	Higher education institutions (including universities, university colleges, academies, institutes)		
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	>=12.5%		

Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practical training at higher education institution • in-company practice
Main target groups	Programmes are available for young people and also for adults.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Entry requirement is secondary education.
Assessment of learning outcomes	Learners need to pass a State examination and defend a final thesis. Study programmes are learning-outcomes based.
Diplomas/certificates provided	Professional Bachelor's diploma (<i>profesionālā bakalaura diploms</i>)
Examples of qualifications	Lawyer, social worker, civil engineer.
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • labour market • second level professional higher education studies • master studies
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	 <p>Learning outcomes are validated based on the knowledge, skills, and competences acquired in previous learning or professional experience, as well as learning outcomes achieved in previous learning, with the learning outcomes to be achieved in the respective study programme of the higher education institution by awarding the respective amount of credits.</p>
General education subjects	 <p>general education subjects take up 17% of the curriculum</p>
Key competences	 <p>Compulsory content includes humanitarian and social sciences study courses, including courses that develop social, communicative and organisational skills, as well as information technology courses. The study courses must include a module for the development of professional competence in entrepreneurship.</p>
Application of learning outcomes approach	

Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	Information not available
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EQF 6 or 7
Professional higher education programme (e.g. medical studies), 4-6 years ISCED 655, 656, 756



Second level higher professional education programme after secondary education (otrā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības programmas pēc vidējās izglītības) leading to EQF level 6 or 7, ISCED 655, 656 or 756



EQF level	6 or 7	ISCED-P 2011 level	655, 656 or 756
Usual entry grade	12+	Usual completion grade	12+
Usual entry age	23-25+	Usual completion age	27+
Length of a programme (years)	4 for ISCED 655, more than 4 for ISCED 656, 5 minimum for ISCED 756		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?		Is it part of formal education and training system?	
Is it initial VET?		Is it continuing VET?	
Is it offered free of charge?	 A certain number of study places in many programmes are financed by the State.		
Is it available for adults?			

ECVET or other credits 240-360 ECTS credit points.

Since 2004, Latvia has had a well-established national credit point system. One Latvian credit point corresponds to the workload of 1 week's full-time studies (40 points per academic year). Recalculating in ECTS credits, the amount of Latvian credit points has to be multiplied by 1.5.

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance) Higher education institutions provide full-time, part-time and distance studies at all levels.

Main providers	Higher education institutions (including universities, university colleges, academies, institutes)
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	>=12.5%
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practical training at higher education institution • in-company practice
Main target groups	Programmes are available for young people and also for adults.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	<p>Entry requirement is secondary education for ISCED 655, 656 and 756.</p> <p>Entry requirement can be first level professional higher education (college programme) for ISCED 655.</p>
Assessment of learning outcomes	Learners need to pass a State examination and defend a final thesis. Study programmes are based on learning outcomes.
Diplomas/certificates provided	Professional higher education diploma, diploma of higher professional qualification (<i>profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms, augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms</i>) (at least four years of full-time studies for EQF level 6 and at least five years of full time studies for EQF level 7)
Examples of qualifications	Cardiac surgeon, dietitian, occupational health physician
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • labour market • master programmes for ISCED 655 and 656 • doctoral programmes for ISCED 756
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	 <p>Learning outcomes are validated based on the knowledge, skills, and competences acquired in previous learning or professional experience, as well as learning outcomes achieved in previous learning, with the learning outcomes to be achieved in the respective study programme of the higher education institution by awarding the respective amount of credits.</p>
General education subjects	 <p>General education subjects take up 12.5% of the curriculum</p>

Key competences	 <p>Compulsory content includes humanitarian and social sciences study courses, including courses that develop social, communicative and organisational skills, as well as information technology courses. The study courses must include a module for the development of professional competence in entrepreneurship (if it was not acquired in lower level study courses).</p>
Application of learning outcomes approach	
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	Information not available

EQF 6

Professional





Higher education programme,

1-2 years

ISCED 657

Second level higher professional education programme after bachelor level studies (otrā līmeņa profesionālā augstākās izglītības programma pēc bakalaura līmeņa studijām) leading to EQF level 6 ISCED 657

EQF level	6	ISCED-P 2011 level	657
Usual entry grade	12+	Usual completion grade	12+
Usual entry age	23+	Usual completion age	24+
Length of a programme (years)	1 to 2		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	Is it continuing VET?	✗
Is it offered free of charge?	✓ A certain number of study places in many programmes are financed by the State.	Is it available for adults?	✓
ECVET or other credits	60-120 ECTS credit points. Since 2004, Latvia has had a well-established national credit point system. One Latvian credit point corresponds to the workload of 1 week's full-time studies (40 points per academic year). Recalculating in ECTS credits, the amount of Latvian credit points has to be multiplied by 1.5.		
Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	Higher education institutions provide full-time, part-time and distance studies at all levels.		
Main providers	Higher education institutions (including universities, university colleges, academies, institutes).		
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	=50%		

Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practical training at higher education institution • in-company practice
Main target groups	Programmes are available for young people and also for adults.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Entry requirement is a bachelor degree or professional bachelor degree, second level higher professional education (after secondary education)
Assessment of learning outcomes	Learners need to pass a State examination and defend a final thesis. Study programmes are based on learning outcomes.
Diplomas/certificates provided	Professional higher education diploma, diploma of higher professional qualification (<i>profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms, augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms</i>)
Examples of qualifications	Fire safety and civil protection engineer, translator, lawyer
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Graduates can enter the labour market
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	 <p>Learning outcomes are validated based on the knowledge, skills, and competences acquired in previous learning or professional experience, as well as learning outcomes achieved in previous learning, with the learning outcomes to be achieved in the respective study programme of the higher education institution by awarding the respective amount of credits.</p>
General education subjects	
Key competences	 <p>Compulsory content includes humanitarian and social sciences study courses, including courses that develop social, communicative and organisational skills, as well as information technology courses. The study courses must include a module for the development of professional competence in entrepreneurship (if it was not acquired in lower level study courses).</p>
Application of learning outcomes approach	
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	Information not available

EQF 7
Professional master programme
min 1 year
ISCED 757

Professional master (profesionālais maģistrs) programme leading to EQF level 7, ISCED 757

EQF level	7	ISCED-P 2011 level	757
Usual entry grade	12+	Usual completion grade	12+
Usual entry age	22+	Usual completion age	23+
Length of a programme (years)	Minimum 1		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	Is it continuing VET?	✗
Is it offered free of charge?	✓	Is it available for adults?	✓

A certain number of study places in many programmes are financed by the State.

ECVET or other credits 60 to 120 ECTS, depending on the previous education and field.

Since 2004, Latvia has had a well-established national credit point system. One Latvian credit point corresponds to the workload of 1 week's full-time studies (40 points per academic year). Recalculating in ECTS credits, the amount of Latvian credit points has to be multiplied by 1.5.

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance) Higher education institutions provide full-time, part-time and distance studies at all levels.

Main providers Higher education institutions (including universities, university colleges, academies, institutes)

Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies 65%

Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practical training at higher education institution • in-company practice
Main target groups	Programmes are available for young people and also for adults.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Entry requirement is a bachelor's degree or professional bachelor's degree, second level higher professional education (after secondary education)
Assessment of learning outcomes	Learners need to pass a State examination and defend a final thesis. Study programmes are based on learning outcomes.
Diplomas/certificates provided	Professional master's diploma (<i>profesionālā maģistra diploms</i>)
Examples of qualifications	Economist, electrical engineer, quality manager
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	<p>Graduates can enter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • labour market • doctoral studies
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	<p>✓</p> <p>Learning outcomes are validated based on the knowledge, skills, and competences acquired in previous learning or professional experience, as well as learning outcomes achieved in previous learning, with the learning outcomes to be achieved in the respective study programme of the higher education institution by awarding the respective amount of credits.</p>
General education subjects	✗
Key competences	<p>✓</p> <p>Compulsory content must include study courses which develop professional competences in entrepreneurship (if it was not acquired in lower level study courses).</p>
Application of learning outcomes approach	✓
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	Information not available

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