

Implementing provisions for apprenticeships / work-based learning

POLICY DEVELOPMENT	PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE	 LATVIA
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Timeline

2015 Approved/Agreed	2016 Implementation	2017 Implementation
2018 Implementation	2019 Implementation	2020 Implementation
2021 Implementation	2022 Implementation	2023 Implementation
2024 Implementation	2025 Implementation	

ID number 37652

Background

Latvia has been long in the process of increasing the attractiveness of initial VET by involving companies in providing more practical training. An apprenticeship scheme – nationally called ‘work-based learning’ – was piloted as of 2013. It coincided with the growing need to ensure better education and training compliance with the labour market needs.

Objectives

To introduce apprenticeships in formal VET and promote sustainable collaboration mechanisms for apprenticeship/ WBL implementation.

Description

Work-based learning approaches have been developed and implemented through a complex of interventions financed by the State budget, European Social fund, Erasmus+ and other EU programmes.

The Erasmus+ project ‘National authorities for apprenticeships: Implementing work-based learning in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia (WBL-Balt), the Baltic alliance for apprenticeships (BAfA)’ was launched in June 2015 to develop and promote conceptual approaches for WBL, as well as ensure exchange of experience among the Baltic countries.

Following the amendments to the Vocational Education Law in 2015, a legal framework for apprenticeship (nationally referred to as ‘work-based learning’) has been put in place. Within this framework, learners first enrol in an education programme and then at the training company follow their individual learning plans.

Apprenticeship aimed to allow learners following theoretical and practical part of VET programme in a school and, along with this, participate in both theoretical and practical

training in a company. The in-company part amounts to at least 25% (50-70% in short-cycle VET programmes) of the entire learning time. An agreement needs to be signed between the vocational school, the student and the training company. The law introduced apprenticeship as part of the formal VET programmes leading to qualifications linked to the national qualifications framework (NQF). It also introduced collegial advisory bodies (Convents), composed of the head of institution and representatives of ministry, local government and employers at each vocational education institution; their role was ensuring cooperation with local businesses, relevance to labour market needs and practice placements in enterprises. The 2015 law also outlined the role of sectoral expert councils in coordinating and promoting cooperation between vocational education institutions and social partners.

In July 2016, the implementing regulations for the 2015 amendments to the Vocational Education Law introducing apprenticeship and defining the roles of sectoral expert councils and enterprises were approved. Two relevant regulations were adopted: Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation of 15 July 2016 No 484 Procedures for organisation and implementation of work-based learning (Regulation No 484) and Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation of 15 July 2016 No 485 Procedure for the development of sector expert councils, their tasks and coordination of activities.

To promote the introduction of WBL, the government also approved an ESF project.

The regulations stipulate that the sectoral expert councils promote and evaluate the implementation of apprenticeship, and encourage cooperation between vocational schools and enterprises. The apprenticeship contract between a learner, vocational education institution and enterprise is concluded for no less than one semester. Enterprises pay wages or scholarships to students and provide them with in-company trainers. The enterprise submits to the vocational education institution an assessment of how the student has mastered the individual apprenticeship plan. In turn, the education institution, in light of this assessment, carries out an assessment of the student's knowledge, skills and competences. According to the regulations, in-company trainers are requested to have a master of crafts certificate, vocational education or at least three years of relevant work experience, and teaching competence evidenced by teacher qualification or completed teaching competence development course.

According to the regulation No 484 and its amendments, since January 2019, in-company trainers involved in providing apprenticeship must have: a master of crafts qualification; vocational education or at least three years of relevant work experience; and completed either a 72-hour teaching competence development course (on Practical pedagogy for implementing work-based learning or on Basics of pedagogical activities in music, dance and art) or a special 32-hour teaching competence development course on Practical pedagogy ABC for work-based learning for in-company trainers of apprenticeships. One reason to provide also the special 32-hour course is the argument raised by the Latvian Employers' Confederation and sectoral expert councils that the requirement of 72-hour teaching course is an obstacle for 50% companies to conclude cooperation agreements.

Based on the above, work-based learning has been implemented, testing the proposed approaches primarily with the support of the EU structural funds project that comprises measures to incentivise all the involved key stakeholders – the companies, the VET institutions and the learners. Employer and employee organisations participated in partnership projects promoting the development of the apprenticeship system in Latvia.

Parallel to this several targeted EU collaboration projects have been implemented by stakeholders to address specific aspects of WBL.

From April 2017 to March 2019, the State Education Quality Service (IKVD) carried out the Erasmus+ project EQAVET for quality of skills' (QSkills) targeted at supporting quality assurance in work-based learning and the collection, compilation and analysis of data for EQAVET indicators 5 (employment of graduates) and 6 (using acquired skills in a workplace). In 2018, IKVD organised a roundtable discussion on examples of good practice for quality assurance in apprenticeship. The opportunities to assess the quality of apprenticeship and to develop quality criteria for such training were discussed. IKVD has developed Recommendations for quality assurance in apprenticeship-type schemes and an online tool for data collection and processing for EQAVET indicator 5 (employment of

graduates) and indicator 6 (using acquired skills in a workplace). The tool was piloted in the woodworking and tourism sectors. Regular courses were organised for sectoral experts participating in the accreditation of vocational education programmes.

The methodology for an evidence-based approach for quality evaluation in VET and the online survey tool were piloted in VET schools undergoing the process of accreditation.

2015 Approved/Agreed

The amendment of the VET law in 2015 introduced apprenticeships in formal VET; implementing provisions in the following years defined different aspects of apprenticeship provision and support mechanisms to foster VET cooperation between vocational education institutions and social partners.

The Baltic alliance for apprenticeships (BafA) was launched in June 2015.

2016 Implementation

Regulation by the Cabinet of Ministers stipulated the procedure for organising and implementing WBL (CM No 484).

Additional incentives to the involved stakeholders were implemented. The law on personal income tax was amended in November 2016 to introduce, as of January 2017, a tax exemption on apprenticeship scholarships not exceeding EUR 280 per month. In 2018, amendments in Cabinet of Ministers Regulations facilitated the involvement of entrepreneurs in apprenticeship-type schemes, by simplifying the procedures for providing personal protective equipment for students in vocational education institutions, as well as accident insurance for students.

2017 Implementation

In 2017, Ministry of Education and Science adopted guidelines on organising and implementing apprenticeship, including templates for apprenticeship individual plan and contract, recommended duration, and the breakdown of in-company training by semesters and type of vocational programme.

The legal framework for apprenticeship Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 15 July 2016 No 484 Procedures for organisation and implementation of work-based learning (Regulation No 484) was amended on 12 September 2017 to include changes to the education requirements for in-company trainers. The amendments stipulated that the requirements come into force from January 2019.

The September 2017 amendment postponed the requirement of teaching competence until 2019 and shortened the compulsory programme for the acquisition of teaching competence from 72 to 32 hours. One reason for the change is the argument raised by the Latvian Employers' Confederation and sectoral expert councils that the requirement of 72 hours of teaching course is an obstacle for 50% of companies to conclude cooperation agreements.

2018 Implementation

In October 2018, a simplified cost-calculating methodology for personal protective equipment, accident insurance and vaccination costs was approved.

2019 Implementation

In 2019, amendments to the regulation on WBL were initiated regarding two issues:

- (a) regulating the implementation of WBL also outside Latvia, in EU and EEA and Swiss confederation, including the implementation of WBL on ships;
- (b) revising the tasks and responsibilities of sector expert councils, based on the practical experience acquired since the adoption of the WBL regulation in June

2016.

The report was commissioned by the Cabinet of Ministers.

To analyse the results achieved to the end of 2018, the Ministry of Education and Science, in cooperation with the University of Latvia, carried out a survey among employers, VET students and VET providers regarding the implementation of work-based learning, and labour market skills. The results from the survey and the data obtained from the Employers Confederation of Latvia have been used by the Ministry of Education and Science for drafting a policy report to the government on the implementation of work-based learning in Latvia, adopted in April 2019. The report shows clear progress in the increased involvement of VET institutions, students and companies, as well as an increasing coverage of sectors of national economy.

In August 2019, changes were made regarding the cost methodologies, by increasing support to companies to have work-based learning tutors at the company, as well as increasing support to the education institution to ensure the necessary payments and the collection and storage of payment-supporting documents for the expenses of the learners involved in the project.

2020 Implementation

During the COVID-19 crisis, individual support was rendered to each apprentice. The possibilities for implementing the apprenticeship in a combined distance/face-to-face mode (where applicable) were analysed to ensure possibilities for graduate students to obtain adequate training obscured by the safety measures adopted by the government.

2021 Implementation

Flexible approaches were implemented to ensure practical training in enterprises, in line with a legal regulation on COVID-19 restrictions. Particular attention has been paid to graduate students, allowing them to acquire respective practical skills.

2022 Implementation

In 2022 and until February 2023, 43 education institutions had 558 VET programmes as WBL. By the end of 2022, more than 3 950 students have been involved in the WBL and 12 345 students in practical training in an enterprise. Six months after the acquisition of the qualification via WBL 69.15% of graduates have been employed.

The Erasmus+ ExcellWBL project was completed in 2022. It has identified and collected examples and experiences of outstanding workplace tutors, motivated companies, effective cooperation mechanisms; boosted the reputation and attractiveness of WBL through praising and awarding persons, organisations and approaches which can serve as role models; produced material of examples which can be used in training WBL tutors from companies and VET schools and in training of VET managers; promoted partnerships between VET schools and enterprises in the Baltic Sea region.

In February 2022, the international conference of the ExcellWBL project 'Baltic examples of excellence in WBL: tutors, companies, networks' took place at Ogre technical vocational school. Partners from Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Germany participated in the conference, presenting the developments of WBL policy and examples of good practice.

2023 Implementation

The implementation of the ESF project 'Participation of vocational education students in work-based learning and training practices in companies' (No.851) was completed in December 2023. The project involved 4 150 companies, 40 VET institutions and 4 804 VET students (from 27 600 in the country). 80.45% of the students 6 months after

finishing the WBL programme had a job.

In the planning period 2021-27 limited funds were made available by the government to support WBL, and the policy decision was taken in Latvia to concentrate the allocated resources and use them on systemic improvements. Within the framework of the ESF project 'Development of the system of professional qualifications for ensuring the quality of education' proposals were being developed for the improvement of the existing WBL (apprenticeship) model. The aim was to develop sustainable systemic coordination mechanism for the improvement of the labour market relevant content of VET through long-term cooperation schemes of VET institutions with sectors. The strengthened coordination shall contribute to better identification of the needed skills in the labour market and introducing these skills in the educational content, especially to ensure sustainability, digital and green economy approaches. The new national level developments were being planned based on the analysis performed by the National Centre for Education - on the lessons learnt so far from the implementation of the existing WBL model.

2024 Implementation

In addition to the ESF project 'Development of the system of professional qualifications for ensuring the quality of education', two new pilot initiatives were under development in 2024.

The education ministry identified that new and more flexible approaches in WBL need to be tested and introduced, especially for the post-secondary and adult target groups. The first project has been developed in collaboration with, and with the support from the Swiss government. Its implementation was in initial phase in 2024. Parallel to the existing school-based WBL approaches in IVET in Latvia, the Swiss government supported testing shorter and more flexible dual-type approaches for upskilling purposes and fast integration into the labour market. The target group included IVET students but also post-secondary and adult learners.

The education ministry has also identified that enhanced sectorial ownership by the sector expert councils (SECs) was needed. This included strengthening their capacity through a collaboration project between the Latvian and German education ministries, with the financial support from the German government. It was being anticipated that increased commitment on the SECs part with more personalised and individualised approaches regarding WBL can attract more students to each individual sector. The joint project intended to support the capacity of SECs also in identifying criteria for evaluating the company suitability for WBL. Another issue to be worked on is support to SECs in forecasts at local and regional level regarding the need for specialists and skills in the labour market in particular sectors. This needs additional skills and input, since the local needs may differ from national level forecasts significantly. The project was intended as a support and non-financial incentive for sectors to develop their capacity in developing human capital for the sector requirements, allowing employers to view WBL as a less bureaucratic process and encourage them to involve more students for WBL. Part of this was also the recently introduced electronic documentation for student record and envisaging more support from the National Centre for Education as the responsible national body for curriculum development.

2025 Implementation

In October 2025, a kick-off conference for the joint Swiss-Latvian project took place within the programme supported by the Swiss government. This marked the start of a project testing new approaches to work-based learning. This included developing and testing digital learning tools, piloting a qualification examination model in a few sectors, and training new vocational education teachers.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Science

- Employers' Confederation of Latvia (LDDK)
- Free Trade Union Confederation
- Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices

Education professionals

Trainers

Entities providing VET

Companies
VET providers (all kinds)

Other stakeholders

Social partners (employer organisations and trade unions)

Thematic categories

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

Systematic approaches to and opportunities for initial and continuous professional development of school leaders, teachers and trainers

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation of 15 July 2016 No 484 Procedures for organisation and implementation of work-based learning](#)

[Cabinet Regulation No 485, adopted 15 July 2016 - Procedures for establishment, operation, and coordination of activities of sectoral expert councils](#)

[Cabinet Regulation on increasing the number of VET students participating in work-based](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

VET internationalisation and Baltic collaboration

In 2014, the Erasmus+ project National authorities for apprenticeships: Implementing work-based learning in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia (WBL-Balt)' was launched, led by the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science.

 LATVIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

“ ... ” Cite as

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/37652>