

REFERENCE YEAR 2023

UNDERSTANDING OF APPRENTICESHIPS IN THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

Content updates and contributors

Version 2023 - Drafted by Ilze Buligina, Senior expert, Department of VET and adult education, Latvian Ministry of Education and Science - Member of [Cedefop Community of apprenticeship experts](#) for Latvia

Q1. Is there a stable legal basis for apprenticeships in your country?



In Latvia there are two schemes that are considered as apprenticeships in the national context:

- work-based learning as part of the vocational education and training (VET) system and
- traditional craftsmanship, regulated by a specific Law on Crafts, implemented separately from the formal VET system that is supervised by the Ministry of Education and Science.

a. the recently introduced 'Work-based learning' scheme (WBL, part of formal VET):

In Latvia the term 'work-based learning' is being used to describe an apprenticeship-type scheme complying to the main principles of apprenticeships. This relatively new scheme is an alternative way to obtain qualifications already offered through school-based VET at NQF/EQF levels 2-4. Work has started on the approaches to introduce work-based learning also in EQF level 5.

VET institutions are free to choose whether they will implement a VET programme in apprenticeship mode or not.

- In the "Education development guidelines for 2014-2020" (adopted in 2014), as well as in the "Education development guidelines for 2021-2027" (adopted in 2021) the development and implementation of modular approach in vocational education programmes and work-based learning is interpreted as an important development to increase the attractiveness and flexibility of vocational education.
- The Vocational Education Act, amended in 2015, introduced work-based learning as one of the forms of implementing formal VET. Further amendments of the Vocational

Education Act in 2022 formalised the term ‘work-based learning’, defining it as: ‘a component of a full-time education process in which the learning outcomes specified for the educational programme are achieved, in accordance with the education plan, alternately at the educational institution and with the employer. Work-based learning can include practical training’.

- The legal basis for WBL as an apprenticeship scheme is in place since 2016 when the regulation on the “Procedures for Organisation and Implementation of Work-based Learning was adopted - Cabinet of Ministers’ Regulation of No. 484 of 15 July 2016), <http://likumi.lv/ta/id/283680-kartiba-kada-organizet-un-isteno-darba-vid...> (Regulation No 484)
- On the same date the ESF 8.5.1 specific objective “To increase the number of qualified VET students through their participation in work-based learning or training practices at an enterprise” was adopted under the “Regulation on the implementation of the Operational Programme “Growth and Employment”, Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 483. of 15 July 2016, <http://likumi.lv/ta/id/283736-darbibas-programmas-izausme-un-nodarbina...>; (Regulation No 483) The Regulation No. 484 serves as an ‘umbrella’ regulation, whereas Regulation No 483 has been adopted to support the activities under 8.5.1 specific objective during its lifetime (determining certain incentives for the involved parties). The ESF project finished on 31 December 2023, and the results of its implementation are being analysed to create basis for further improvements of the work-based learning approaches in Latvia
- Currently a new collaboration project with the Swiss government is in the process of development. It concerns improved solutions for VET - in relation to the collaboration of the education and employment side in the development and implementation of the VET curriculum. Once the implementation of the project is started (provisionally in 2025), it may have impact on the current work-based learning scheme
- In June 2017, the “Guidelines on the Organisation and Implementation of WBL” were adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science to provide common principles and methodological support for the involved partners in the WBL implementation. With potentially revised approaches to work-based learning (apprenticeship) approaches in Latvia, also the Guidelines will be reviewed for the needed updates.

b. the traditional ‘Craftsmanship’ scheme (not part of formal VET):

Craft apprenticeships (craftsmanship) are implemented separately from formal VET and are not included in the educational programme classification (no relevant ISCED level).

- The Law on Craftsmanship (1993) stipulates the organisational basis for craftsmanship, its basic regulations and the procedure for stating craftsman qualifications. The content of craftsmanship is determined by the corresponding craft professional association and approved by the Council of the Chamber of Crafts. The normative regulation on craftsmanship and its detachment from the formal national education system has arisen from a long-term tradition in the crafts sector.
- Craft enterprises certified by the Latvian Chamber of Crafts or a territorial or branch craft association authorized by it have the right to accept crafts apprentices for training. The right to train crafts apprentices belongs to craftsmen or persons equivalent to them, who have a permit from the Latvian Chamber of Crafts. The Latvian Chamber of Crafts supervises training in craft enterprises.

As the scheme directly does not lead to formally recognised vocational qualifications (but a journeyman or Masters certificate instead), it does not meet Cedefop’s definition of apprenticeship and is not studied further through a dedicated scheme fiche on this database.

Q2. Is there an official definition of ‘apprenticeship’ or ‘apprentice’ in your country?



The Amendments of the Vocational Education Act of 2022 formalised the term ‘work-based learning’, defining it as: ‘a component of a full-time education process in which the learning outcomes specified for the educational programme are achieved, in accordance with the education plan, alternately at the educational institution and with the employer. Work-based learning can include practical training’.

The present WBL scheme represents an apprenticeship type scheme where the student acquires practical skills and knowledge primarily in a real working environment of the company – at least for 25% of the total duration (general education and practical training) of an initial VET programme.

In short cycle (continuing) VET programmes (after secondary education), the share of training implemented at the workplace represents around 70% of the total volume of the programme, since the student does not have to acquire the general education subjects that are needed in the IVET programmes.

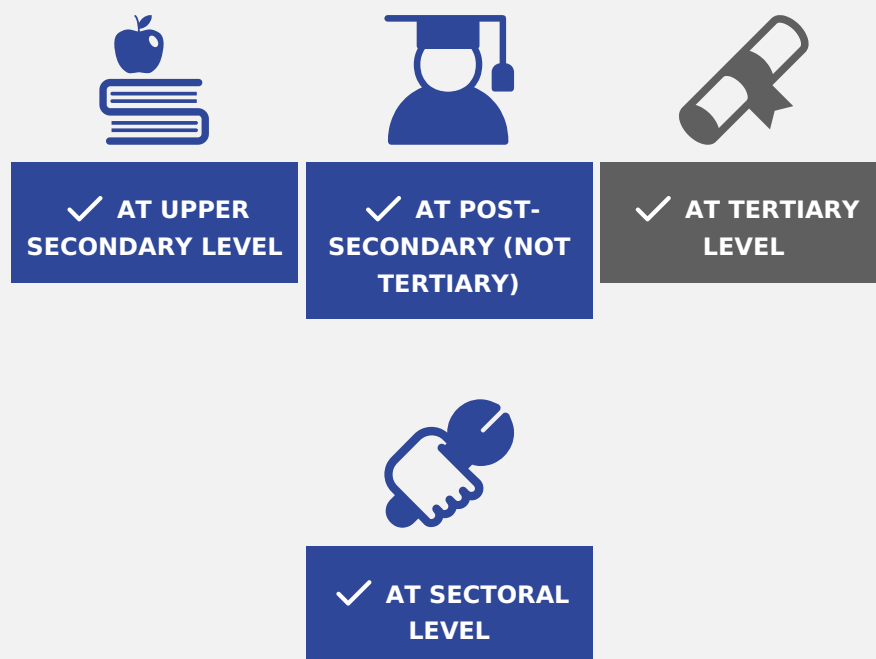
The term ‘apprentice’ (in Latvian – *mācekļis*) is not used for VET students in the WBL scheme, since the term is part of the craftsmanship scheme regulated by a different legal framework and formally not part of the VET system (see below).

b. Craftsmanship scheme

As defined in the Law on Crafts, ‘craft apprentice’ is a person who, in order to acquire the craft, has joined a crafts company or an educational institution and has signed a training contract[1].

[1] <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=63052>

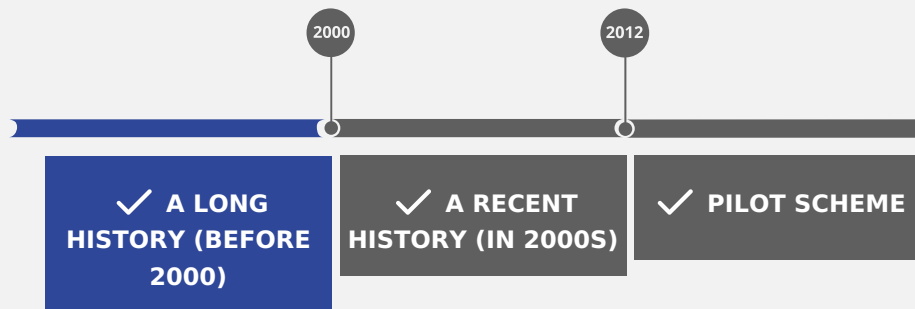
Q3. At which level do apprenticeship schemes exist in your country?



a. The work-based learning scheme as an alternative way to get qualifications is offered at NQF/EQF levels 2-4. This means it is offered at both upper-secondary and post-secondary level. It can be offered as an initial (IVET) or continuing (CVET) option. Work has started on the approaches to introduce work-based learning also in EQF level 5. VET institutions are free to choose whether they will implement a VET programme in apprenticeship mode or not.

b. Craftsmanship programmes lead to journeyman and master craftsman diplomas after the relevant exams. They are included in the sectoral qualifications frameworks that are referenced to LQF (SQfs being subsystems of LQF, using the same descriptors)

Q4. How well-established are apprenticeship schemes in your country?



The work-based learning scheme was introduced formally in 2015 (Vocational Education Act amendment) with a detailed stipulation of organisation and implementation procedure and stakeholder rights and responsibilities by the Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers adopted in 2016. After being piloted in a limited number of VET institutions in 2013/14 onwards, it was then mainstreamed and developed with a stable legal basis.

Craftsmenships have a long-standing tradition in Latvia. The current craftsmen system acquired its legal basis with the adoption of the Law on Craftsmanship in 1993 (<http://likumi.lv/ta/id/63052-par-amatniecibu>).

Q5. Relevant information that is essential to understanding the specificity of apprenticeships in the country.

Drafting the 2016 regulation on WBL has proven to be challenging as there were different opinions among ministries and stakeholders, especially on the remuneration of apprenticeships (it took time for employer organisations and companies to accept the new responsibilities in VET programme implementation, and to paying remuneration).