

# Work-based learning (WBL)

Darba vidē balstītas mācības

 Latvia

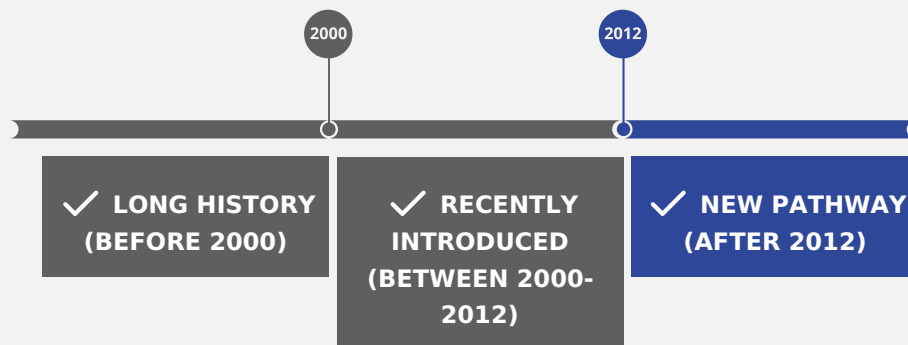
## Reference year 2023

### Content updates and contributors

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## ① SCHEME HISTORY

### Q1. When was the scheme introduced?



Work-based learning (apprenticeship) was introduced after 2012 and was formally adopted in 2015 (Vocational Education Act amendment). 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 (see Q2).

### Q2. How did the apprenticeship scheme originate?



✓ **TRADITIONAL CRAFTSMANSHIP (MASTER-APPRENTICE RELATION) TO PREPARE APPRENTICES FOR THE OCCUPATION**



✓ **SCHOOL-BASED VET TRACK BY INCLUDING MORE WORK-BASED LEARNING TO SUPPLY SKILLED WORKFORCE TO MATCH LABOUR MARKET NEEDS**



✓ **EX-NOVO**



✓ **OTHER**

Since 2012/2013 (before adopting the current legal framework) there had been discussions at various levels between the Latvian state and various co-operation partners (ministries of economy, employment and finance), social partners and employers' organisations) on the introduction of the WBL scheme in the formal Latvian VET system.

In 2013, the Ministry of Education and Science invited 6 VET institutions to consider participation in a WBL pilot project. In the academic years 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 a limited number of VET institutions took part in the implementation of the WBL pilot project. The results of the implementation of the WBL pilot project have served as a basis for further WBL developments in Latvia at a later stage.

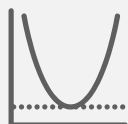
The legal basis for WBL as an apprenticeship scheme is in place since 2016 when regulation on the "Procedures for Organisation and Implementation of Work-based Learning" was adopted (Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation of No. 484 of 15 July 2016). (<http://likumi.lv/ta/id/283680-kartiba-kada-organizat-un-isteno-darba-vid...> ). See more in the Latvian country fiche.

## ② BENEFICIARIES

**Q3. Does the legal basis define the minimum and maximum age limits for enrolment of the target group of this scheme?**



✓ **MINIMUM AND  
MAXIMUM AGE  
LIMITS DEFINED**



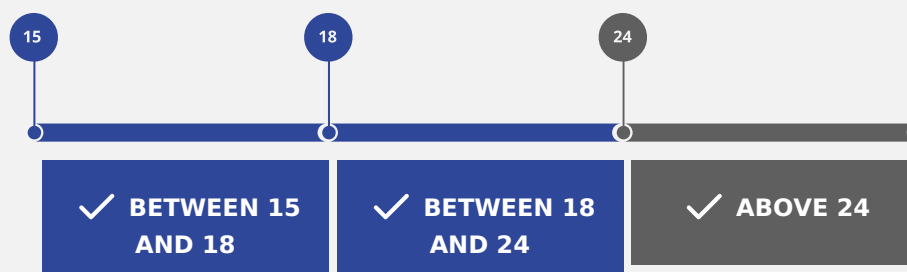
✓ **MINIMUM AGE  
LIMITS DEFINED  
ONLY**



✓ **OTHER**

The work-based learning scheme is offered as an alternative option to other existing school-based schemes. Enrolment age is related to these programmes, offered at NQF (analogous to EQF) levels 2-4 (upper secondary and post-secondary VET). In this context, there is no age limit set for the apprenticeship scheme per se, but the age limits for the corresponding VET programme apply.

#### Q4. What is the average age of learners in practice?



The apprenticeship (WBL) scheme can be offered as an option in initial (IVET) or continuing (CVET).

The traditional age of the initial VET programmes at the NQF levels 2-4 is between 15-18.

At the same time, from the planning and administration point of view, the work-based learning option is easier to be organised by VET institutions at post-secondary level (CVET).

Especially those schools that are not too experienced with WBL approaches choose to implement CVET WBL programmes, as there is no need to plan subjects of general secondary education.

#### Q5. How many learners are enrolled in this scheme?

Around 4,500 learners have been enrolled in the scheme. The results are derived from the implementation of the ESF funded project on the implementation of WBL.

#### Q6. What is the share of apprentices enrolled in this scheme in relation to all VET students for the corresponding educational level(s)?



✓ MORE THAN  
60% OF VET  
LEARNERS



✓ BETWEEN 30%-  
60% OF VET  
LEARNERS



✓ BETWEEN 10%  
AND 30% OF VET  
LEARNERS



✓ LESS THAN  
10% OF VET  
LEARNERS

4,500 learners are enrolled in the WBL scheme, with around 27,000 learners in the VET system in total (16% of total VET students approximately).

### 3 QUALIFICATIONS

**Q7. Are the qualifications included in the National Qualification Framework (NQF)?**



✓ YES



NQF

✓ NO



NQF

✓ THERE IS NO  
NQF

NQF 2, 3, 4

Following the 2022 Amendments to the VET Law, VET institutions (*technikums*) have the right to implement CVET programs at EQF level 5, consequently also in WBL mode. Therefore, EQF level 5 is possible in these cases.

**Q8. Is the scheme included in the ISCED 2011 mapping?**



✓ YES

✓ NO

The WBL scheme per se is not included, but it is offered as an alternative to school-based VET programmes at ISCED levels 254, 353, 351, 454

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/latvia>

### Q9. Are the qualifications offered only through apprenticeships?



✓ QUALIFICATIONS CAN ONLY BE OBTAINED THROUGH THIS APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME

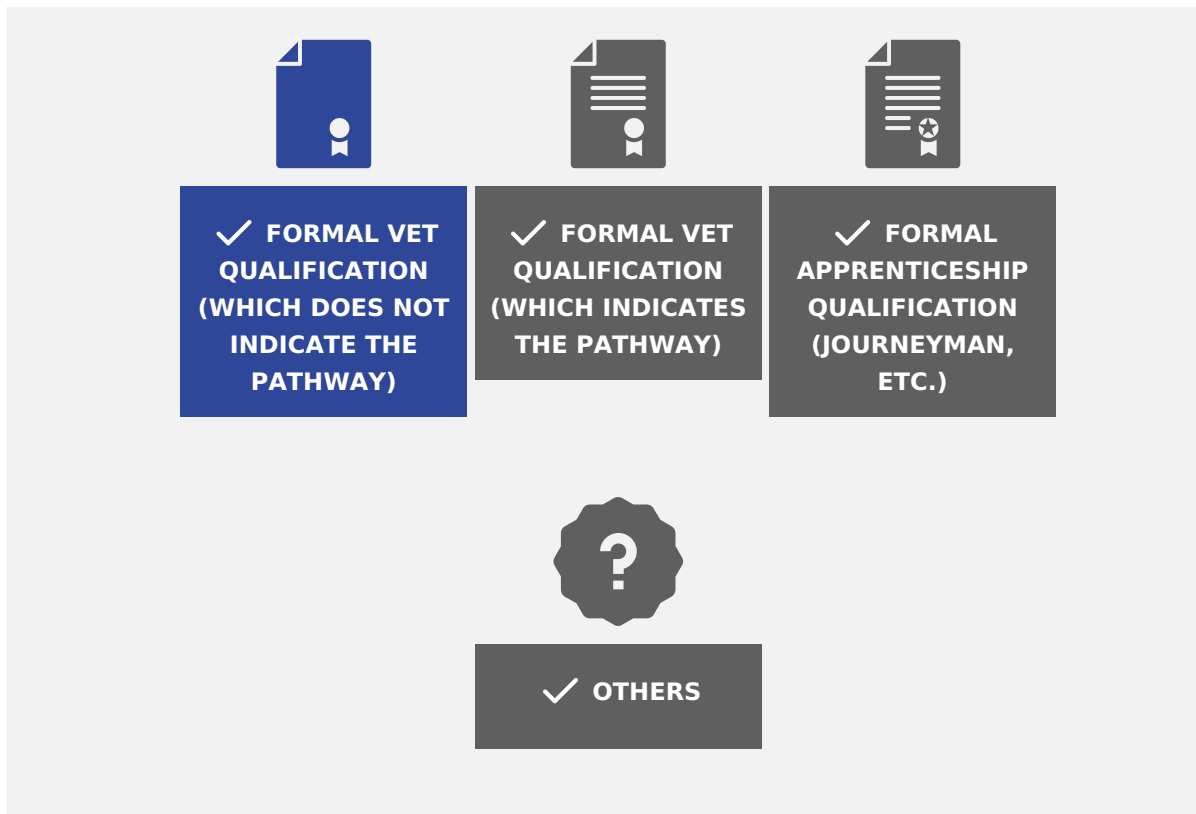
✓ THE SAME QUALIFICATIONS CAN BE ACHIEVED ALSO THROUGH OTHER SCHEMES (I.E. SCHOOL-BASED VET)

The 'work-based learning' scheme is an alternative way to obtain qualifications already offered through school-based VET at NQF/EQF levels 2-4.

It is the decision of the administration of the particular VET institution which IVET and CVET programmes will be offered in this mode (usually parallel to the offered school-based mode). Given the ongoing modularisation of VET programmes, more individualised approaches have been made possible, e.g. students can choose to follow a particular programme in a school-based or work-based mode.

In order to adjust an existing VET programme to the WBL mode or create a new WBL programme, certain time/ human/ financial resources have to be invested. Thus, the number and type of the offered WBL programmes depends on the ability/ capacity/ possibilities of VET institutions to adapt and offer programmes in such format. The Ministry of Education and Science is encouraging schools to set up programmes (existing or new) in WBL mode.

### Q10. Which is the type of qualification obtained through the apprenticeship scheme?



**Q11. Does the scheme provide direct access to higher education?**



Work-based learning (apprenticeship) programmes can provide direct access to higher education depending on the level of the corresponding VET programme in which they operate.

A level-3 VET programme does not lead to higher education in any format regardless of whether it is offered as a school-based programme or apprenticeship (WBL), but leads to level 4 options which in turn lead to higher education.

A level-4 programme leads to higher education, whether is offered through the school-based or the apprenticeship option (WBL scheme).

**Q12. What is the typical duration of the apprenticeship programme?**

The scheme is analogous to and directed at the same learning outcomes as its corresponding school-based VET programme.

The overall duration is the same as in the corresponding school-based VET programme. The difference is the amount of the time (and part of the programme) mastered in company (no less than 25%).

In IVET, the scheme lasts typically 3 or 4 years.

In CVET (adults), 1.5 to 2 years.

## 4 GOVERNANCE

**Q13. Is there any organization at the national level with roles in co-ordinating the scheme?**

YES  NO

The Employers Confederation of Latvia, implementing a national level ESF project on the implementation of work-based learning.




The project ended on 31 December 2023. One of its aims was promote the WBL approaches as such, test them, take more employers on board.

After 2023 a new phase has started towards mainstreaming the scheme, with no financial support of employers.


The potential approaches to be followed (in development still) focus more on coordination aspects, since the stakeholders have already become familiar with the scheme as such.

The role of VET institutions under the coordination of the National Centre for Education is expected to increase

**Q14. What is the role of chambers, employers' and employees' representatives, sectoral councils (if existent), in shaping apprenticeship content, as per regulation?**

ROLE IN DESIGNING QUALIFICATION  ROLE IN DESIGNING CURRICULA  OTHER



NO ROLE

The work done since 2013 regarding the introduction of apprenticeships in the VET

system indicates to the existence of strong social dialogue in Latvia at various levels – VET institution, local and regional level, sector level, ministerial and social partner level. The social dialogue refers to various aspects - the drafting of legal framework, development of standards and curriculum, compliance to labour market demands, determining the priority areas, incentives to the involved parties and now increasingly also to graduate tracking.

Sector expert councils play an important role as advisory bodies supporting the development of quality IVET programmes in line with the needs of the labour market. Sectoral expert councils operate on the basis of tripartite cooperation. Their members include representatives from employers' organisations, trade unions, ministries (the education, economics and welfare ministries), as well as other branch ministries, and the State Employment Agency.

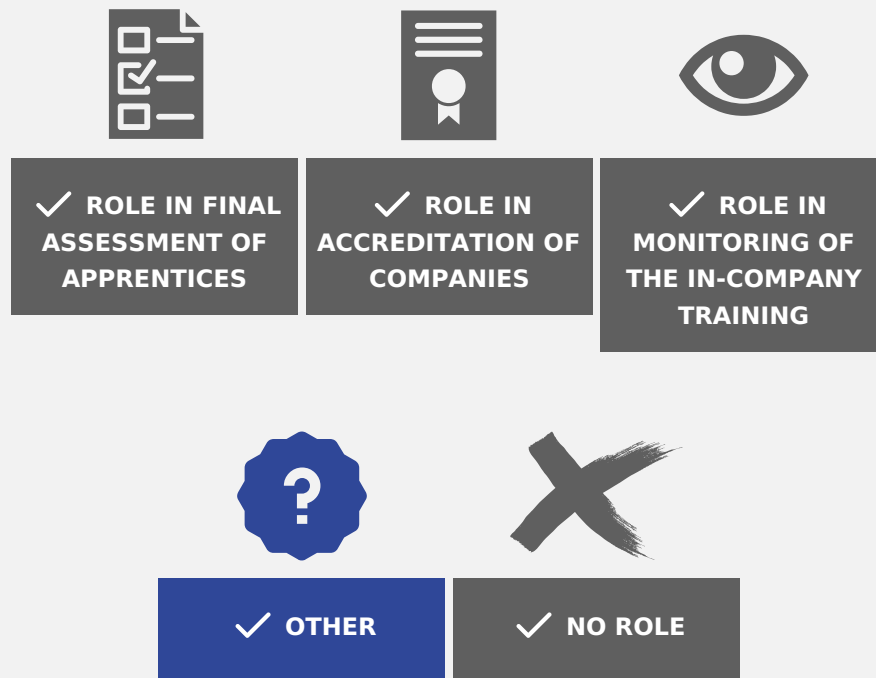
Sectoral associations are also relevant actors.

These stakeholders have a role in the development of the actual content of the programme and the expected outcomes (through setting the standards, content of the examinations etc.)

VET institutions (Competences centres) as stipulated by VET Law have established advisory bodies (Conventions) where local or regional employers are represented (among other stakeholders) to better coordinate the local/ regional and national priorities for better education and employment/ labour marker compliance.

The role of VET institutions Conventions and Sector Expert Councils is growing – since their establishment by amendments to the VET Law in 2015.

#### Q15. What is the role of chambers, employers' and employees' representatives in implementing the apprenticeship scheme, as per regulation?



Their role is related to defining the rights and responsibilities of the involved parties.

VET institutions (Competences centres) as stipulated by VET Law have established advisory bodies (Conventions) where local or regional employers are represented (among other stakeholders) to better coordinate the local/ regional and national priorities for better education and employment/ labour marker compliance. Information exchange within the conventions allows for better informed decision-making by the VET institution, also regarding the offer of apprenticeship programmes in cooperation with local employers.

According to the Amendments to the VET Law of 2022 (based on the proposal from the Employers confederation of Latvia as a social partner) the Sector Expert Councils will not be obliged any more to provide opinion on the suitability of a company for the implementation of WBL.

(In the past, the sector expert councils had the right to express their opinion on the company potentially implementing WBL if their opinion was required, as usually the schools selected reliable and suitable companies for the learners).

#### **Q16. What are the main roles of key state actors?**

The Ministry of Education and Science supervises the formal VET system, within which the WBL scheme is offered as an alternative VET pathway.

Among other responsibilities, the Ministry of Education and Science adopts the “Guidelines on the Organisation and Implementation of WBL” to provide common principles and methodological support for the involved partners in the implementation of the WBL scheme.

The standards, programme content and examination content (regardless of the mode of delivery) are being developed by the National Centre for Education in collaboration with relevant stakeholders (see Q14).

All relevant data on the revised apprenticeship programme and its students are being introduced into the State education information system (VIIS), so that the process can be monitored and necessary data for analysis obtained.

VET institutions have the autonomy to decide whether they will implement a VET programme in the apprenticeship (WBL) mode or in a school-based mode. If they chose the WBL mode, they have the responsibility to adapt the VET programme accordingly, allowing for the necessary alteration periods between the school and the company.

## 5 TRAINING AT THE WORKPLACE

#### **Q17. Is it compulsory to alternate training between two learning venues (school and company)?**



Training takes place both at school and during the time spent at the company.

The 2022 amendments of the Vocational Education Act 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.’

A significant aspect on the WBL scheme organisation is that parts of the theoretical training can take place in the company, not only at school.

#### **Q18. Is the in-company training defined as minimum share of the**

## apprenticeship scheme duration?



✓ YES,  
EQUIVALENT OR  
MORE THAN 50%  
OF SCHEME  
DURATION



✓ YES, BETWEEN  
20% AND 50% OF  
THE SCHEME  
DURATION



✓ YES, LESS  
THAN 20% OF THE  
SCHEME DURATION



✓ NO, NO  
MINIMUM SHARE IS  
COMPULSORY

In IVET, the share of in-company training is at least 25% of the total programme duration.

In short-cycle CVET programmes (after secondary education) the share of training implemented at the workplace represents around 70% of the total volume of the programme.

## Q19. Is there a distinction between the training time and working time for the period spent at workplace, as per regulation?



✓ YES, THE  
LEGAL FRAMEWORK  
MAKES THIS  
DISTINCTION



✓ NO, THE LEGAL  
FRAMEWORK  
MAKES NO  
DISTINCTION

There is no particular distinction made. It is considered that practical learning and work goes hand in hand. Remuneration-wise, the payment depends upon the actual input by the student and tends to increase with growing ability and competence to perform.

## Q20. What is the form of alternation of training between workplace (company)

## and school?



✓ **EVERY WEEK INCLUDES BOTH VENUES**



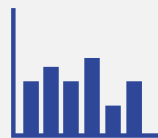
✓ **ONE OR MORE WEEKS (LESS THAN 1 MONTH) SPENT AT SCHOOL FOLLOWED BY ONE OR MORE WEEKS AT WORKPLACE**



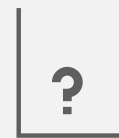
✓ **ONE OR MORE MONTHS (LESS THAN 1 YEAR) SPENT AT SCHOOL FOLLOWED BY ONE OR MORE MONTHS AT WORKPLACE**



✓ **A LONGER PERIOD (1-2 YEARS) SPENT AT SCHOOL FOLLOWED BY A LONGER PERIOD SPENT TRAINING AT WORKPLACE**



✓ **VARIOUS - DEPENDS ON AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND THE COMPANY**



✓ **OTHER**



✓ **NOT SPECIFIED**

Depending on the programme type and the tripartite agreement between the school, the learner and the company. This is clearly stated in the Individual learning plan.

**Q21. What is the basis for the training offered?**



✓ THE SCHEME IS IMPLEMENTED VIA A SPECIFIC APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME



✓ THE SCHEME IS IMPLEMENTED ON THE BASIS OF THE SCHOOL-BASED VET PROGRAMME



✓ THE SCHEME IS IMPLEMENTED BASED ON THE VET STANDARDS (VALID GENERALLY FOR ALL VET SCHEMES)



✓ OTHER

VET institutions are free to choose whether they will implement a VET programme in apprenticeship mode or in a school-based mode.

VET programme standards apply regardless of the form of organisation or delivery (school-based or workplace based / apprenticeship). Also, the qualification is the same. An apprenticeship (WBL) programme can be either adapted from an existing school-based VET programme or a new can be created, based on the same VET standard. The school has to report in the Education Information System (VIIS) that the programme has been adapted or created anew for the delivery in WBL mode. If the VET programme is adapted, it does not need to be licenced or accredited anew, since it concerns only the mode of delivery. In case a new programme is being created for the WBL mode, the licencing and accreditation process is the same as for any other VET programme.

**Q22. Is the company hosting apprentices required by regulation to follow a training plan at the workplace?**



✓ YES, THE TRAINING PLAN IS BASED ON THE NATIONAL/SECTORAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE IN-COMPANY TRAINING



✓ YES, THE TRAINING PLAN IS AGREED AT THE LEVEL OF SCHOOL AND COMPANY



✓ NO, IS NOT REQUIRED FORMALLY

VET standards that are developed for the corresponding VET programmes are applied to the 'work-based learning' scheme (common standard for school-based VET and the apprenticeship option).

A training plan is agreed between the school, the employer and the apprentice, and details issues related to the volume and content of workplace training, the type of alternation etc.

**Q23. What are the requirements on companies to provide placements, as per regulation?**



Health and safety at the workplace is an important requirement.

The company trainer (tutor) has to have certain pedagogical competence. It is recommended that up to 6 apprentices are trained with the same trainer.

**Q24. What are the formal requirements regarding workplace trainers/mentors/tutors? What is their profile?**

The company trainer has to have certain pedagogical competence. Their profile has been stipulated by the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No 484 of 2016 – as to the requirements for professional and pedagogical competence. According to Regulation No 484, the company trainer (tutor) has to meet requirements regarding his pedagogical competence and professional experience.

(a) Regarding pedagogical competence is first demonstrated by, having acquired a certified pedagogical qualification (competence) .

If the trainer/tutor does not already have the required pedagogical competence, this has to be obtained through a specific targeted training course of at least 32 hours. The programme of the training course is modular. The content of the course has been agreed at a national level and the provision is in interactive form as blended learning. The 32 hours training programme for obtaining the compulsory pedagogical competence has to correspond to the content determined by the Education ministry and monitored by the National Centre for Education – to ensure a uniform national approach and retain high quality standards. An agreement was reached in 2016 by the education ministry and its relevant agencies as to the content, its organisation and delivery for the training course. This provides for a uniform approach and quality of delivery. The VET provider has to prove that the offered programme complies with the set requirements – the Education ministry confirms the programme. The lifelong learning perspective is ensured – the training course is organised in four modules with a particular content. The course may be resumed after interruption with no need to repeat the acquired modules.

(b) Regarding professional education in the sector or experience, the WBL trainer has to meet at least one of the following requirements: 1) the person has professional education in the sector; 2) the person has at least three years of work experience in the industry.

WBL trainers can follow a CPD programme of 72 hours as well, deepening their knowledge and understanding – as a full course from the very start or building on the acquired and validated 32 hours course. This is a free choice of a company tutor. However, it is compulsory to obtain a certificate of completing a 72-hours programme in order to become a hybrid teacher at school.

**Q25. Are there any sanctions on companies that do not provide training to apprentices at the workplace?**



✓ YES

✓ NO

## ⑥ CONTRACT AND COMPENSATION

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**Q26. What is the status of the learner?**



✓ ONLY STUDENT



✓ ONLY EMPLOYEE



✓ APPRENTICE IS A SPECIFIC STATUS (STUDENT AND EMPLOYEE COMBINED)



✓ OTHER

Apprentice is a student (learner).

**Q27. Is there any written arrangement between the learner and company, required as per regulation?**



✓ YES



✓ NO

The contract on remuneration is signed between the learner and the company.

Prior to signing the contract between the company and the learner, a tripartite Agreement is signed by the school, the company and the student (learner), which sets general provisions and training related issues.

**Q28. What is the nature of the written arrangement?**



✓ APPRENTICESHIP AGREEMENTS ARE AN ORDINARY EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT



✓ APPRENTICESHIP AGREEMENTS ARE A SPECIFIC TYPE OF CONTRACT



✓ ANOTHER TYPE OF FORMAL AGREEMENT, NOT A CONTRACT

The type of agreement depends on the type of remuneration. It can take the form of an ordinary work contract where wage is paid to the apprentice, or of an agreement in the case an allowance is paid (exempt from income tax up to a certain level). (see Q30)

**Q29. Where is the contract or the formal agreement registered?**



✓ AT THE SCHOOL



✓ AT THE MINISTRY OF EMPLOYMENT



✓ AT THE CHAMBERS



✓ AT THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION



✓ OTHER

The tripartite Agreement on general provisions is registered at school. The work contract is being registered according to the Labour Law, as it concerns payment.

**Q30. Do apprentices receive a wage or allowance?**



✓ YES, ALL APPRENTICES RECEIVE A WAGE (TAXABLE INCOME)



✓ YES, ALL APPRENTICES RECEIVE AN ALLOWANCE (NOT A FORM OF TAXABLE INCOME)



✓ APPRENTICES RECEIVE A REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES



✓ NO FORM OF COMPENSATION IS FORESEEN BY LAW

Remuneration to apprentices is compulsory. It can take the form of wage under an ordinary work contract, or of an allowance (exempt from citizens income tax up to a certain level) (see also Q28). The company can pay either wage or allowance, but not the one on top of the other.

The allowance was introduced as an option in 2016 as a compromise to social partners who claimed that employers were not inclined to deal with unexperienced trainees and pay them wages with full set of taxes and benefits to be paid. Thus, the compromise was to introduce both types of payment – leaving it to the employer which mode of payment to choose in each particular case (Wage with full set of taxes or allowance with no tax at all).

### Q31. How is the apprentice wage (taxable income) set?



✓ BY LAW (APPLYING FOR ALL)



✓ BY CROSS-SECTORAL COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS AT NATIONAL OR LOCAL LEVEL



✓ BY SECTORAL COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS AT NATIONAL OR LOCAL LEVEL



✓ BY FIRM-LEVEL COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS OR INDIVIDUAL AGREEMENTS BETWEEN APPRENTICE AND COMPANY

✓ OTHER

Individual agreement.

## 7 FINANCING AND INCENTIVES

**Q32. Who covers the cost of the wage or allowance of the apprentice?**



✓ EMPLOYERS

✓ STATE

✓ OTHER

Employers pay apprentices a wage or allowance.

The remuneration is ensured by the company and is compulsory. The company is free to cover other expenses as well.

State/ESF support was possible under certain frameworks (see Q33, Q34).

**Q33. What are the sources of financing of the direct costs for the in-company training part of the apprenticeship scheme?**



✓ SINGLE EMPLOYERS HOSTING APPRENTICES



✓ TRAINING FUNDS



✓ STATE



✓ OTHER

The remuneration is ensured by the company and is compulsory. The company is free to cover other expenses as well. Remuneration can take the form of a wage (taxable) or an allowance (non-taxable) (see more in Q31).

State budget and ESF funding were major sources of financing overall apprenticeship costs (see also Q33). From 2024, a limited amount of ESF funding will be available, primarily targeted at coordination procedures, with no direct support to employers.

Apart from the wage/ allowance also the individual labour protection means and the civil liability insurance of the learner have to be ensured during the implementation of the individual plan in accordance with the training contract.

The general provision for ensuring learners' insurance is included in the Regulations by the Cabinet of Ministers

Currently new regulations on student insurance are under development, and their adoption is due in the first half of 2024.

**Q34. Are there any financial incentives for companies that offer apprenticeship places?**



✓ YES, SUBSIDIES



✓ YES, TAX DEDUCTIONS



✓ YES, OTHER INCENTIVES



✓ NO FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

Any stakeholder can join the WBL scheme under the umbrella Regulation No 484 that stipulates its general provision (See Latvian country fiche). When operating under umbrella regulation No 484, there is no ESF support, and the employer does not receive any direct support from the state for covering the apprentice wage or allowance. Until December 31, 2023, an ESF project offered additional incentive for employers under the Supplementary Regulation No.483. The employer was entitled to a monthly lump sum of 270 euro per student. It was up to the employer how to spend this - either as a salary to the trainers, or for wages/allowances to the apprentices, as it is a compulsory criterion (payment to the apprentice). The ESF supported scheme was meant to promote and advertise the new WBL scheme among the stakeholders, especially employers.

From 2024, a limited amount of ESF funding will be available, primarily targeted at coordination procedures, with no direct support to employers.

As an incentive for employers, since 2016 it is possible for them to choose to pay apprentices either wages (taxable, full set of wages apply) or allowances (non-taxable) (see more in Q31).

According to Law on Citizens Income Tax, Article 9, paragraph 81) - scholarships up to 280 euros per month, paid to a learner in accordance with the procedure specified by the Cabinet for organizing and implementing work-based learning are not taxed:  
<https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=56880>;

**Q35. Does the wage or allowance of the apprentice cover both the time spent at school and in the company?**



✓ YES



✓ NO, IT COVERS ONLY THE TIME SPENT IN THE COMPANY

**Q36. Are there any incentives for learners?**



✓ YES, GRANTS  
PAID TO LEARNERS  
TO TOP UP THEIR  
REMUNERATION



✓ YES, GRANTS  
PAID TO LEARNERS  
RELATED TO OTHER  
COSTS (TRAVEL,  
FOOD ETC.)



✓ YES,  
RECOGNITION OF  
PRIOR LEARNING /  
FAST-TRACK  
OPPORTUNITIES



✓ YES, GUIDANCE  
OR LEARNER  
SUPPORT



✓ YES, OTHER  
TYPES OF  
INCENTIVES



✓ NO

The learner in WBL has the right to require the school to ensure transport and accommodation (cost coverage) if it is needed for the implementation of the WBL programme.

The learner has the right for health insurance as well, which falls under the responsibility of the VET provider (school).

Civil insurance is the responsibility of the company.