
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

VET (1) in Latvia comprises the following main features:

- VET attractiveness is increasing, especially for early leavers from education;
- 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;
- there are more females in post-secondary and higher VET;
- the share of early leavers from education and training has fallen substantially, in line with the national target;
- apprenticeship-type schemes have become more common and accessible;
- the introduction of modular vocational education programmes, new occupational standards, sectoral qualifications frameworks supports the use of learning outcomes.

Distinctive features (2)

Initial VET is centralised and highly regulated by the State. Most vocational schools are owned and run by the State; two-thirds have the status of vocational education competence centre and were modernised (infrastructure and equipment) with the support of EU funds in 2007-15. In addition to provision of vocational programmes, they validate non-formal and informal learning and offer lifelong learning and continuing teacher training.

CVET providers are mainly private.

Most vocational education learners (83%) are at upper secondary level. The distribution of students between general and vocational upper secondary education is 61:39 in favour of general education.

VET provides learning opportunities for young adults and early leavers from education. With more investment in infrastructure and the development/implementation of new programmes, VET attractiveness is increasing. More young people use ISCED-P 453 programmes for fast access to labour market than before. These programmes are jointly financed by the Youth guarantee and the European Social Fund.

The national qualifications framework was established in 2010 and referenced to the European qualifications framework (EQF) in 2011. It includes all formal qualifications.

A validation system for professional competences acquired outside formal education has existed 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.

[1] In the education system and policy of Latvia VET is referred to as 'vocational education' (in Latvian: *'profesionālā izglītība'*). The term 'training' is not commonly used in the national context.

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 vocational and general education after completing basic education, and for a threefold increase in adult participation in learning.

By 2015, several projects jointly financed by EU Structural Funds had raised VET attractiveness and quality. The projects covered modern infrastructure, equipment and programmes (introducing modules), social partner participation in designing and implementing education policy, introducing sectoral qualifications frameworks, drafting occupational standards for key professions, and raising VET teachers' competences. Modularisation of vocational education programmes has acquired a legal basis. Content for modular programmes is developed and they are gradually being implemented in vocational education. By 2019/20 all vocational education providers (State and private) have to ensure modular (if applicable) vocational education programmes according to the new occupational standards.

Since 2015, 'work-based learning' has been a form of VET implementation. It includes flexible curricula (according to occupation characteristics) and promotes sharing responsibilities of teaching and training between school and enterprises. Vocational education institutions develop the curricula and participate in ensuring the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and practical skills in workshops. Companies provide both theoretical and practical training in a real workplace environment and pay an allowance or a wage to students.

Ensuring access to guidance and counselling for young people, and putting in place ECVET and EQAVET systems for better quality and permeability, are challenges that need 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.

The 2014-20 education strategy addresses issues mentioned above and other challenges by continuing reforms (supported by EU funds) including introduction of new EU-level instruments.

Another challenge is to increase adult participation in learning by strengthening the role of the State in adult education. The implementation plan for a new adult education governance model (2016) supports a sustainable adult education system with shared responsibilities between stakeholders, including VET that provides programmes for adults.

Data from VET in Latvia Spotlight 2017 (3) , updated in May 2019

CHAPTER 3.

External factors influencing VET

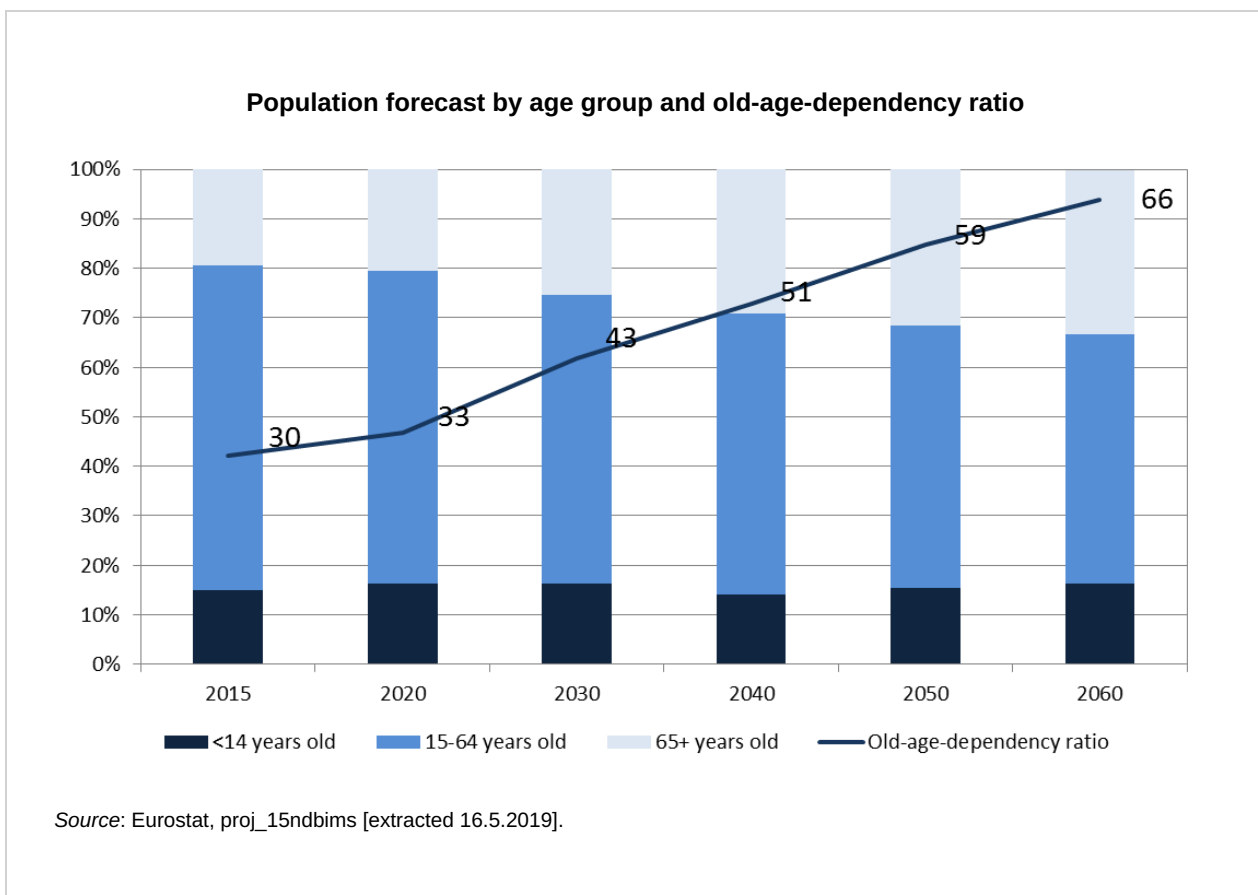
3.1 Demographics

Population in 2018: 1 934 379 (4)

It decreased by 4.4% since 2013 due to negative natural growth and emigration of people in search of employment abroad (5) .

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

The old-age dependency ratio is expected to increase from 30 in 2015 to 66 in 2060(6) .



Demographic changes have an impact on vocational education and have led to rearrangement of the vocational education institutions network: the number of State governed vocational schools has reduced from 58 in 2010 to 21 in 2018.

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.

The country has a multicultural community. At the beginning of 2018, 62.2% of the population were Latvians and 25.2% were ethnic Russians; 3.2% were Belarusians, 2.2% were Ukrainians, 2.1% were Poles and 5.1% other nationalities.

State vocational school programmes are in Latvian, while some private providers use Russian or both Latvian and Russian. By 2020 all providers will provide vocational programmes in Latvian only.

3.2 Economics

Most companies are micro and small-sized.

Main economic sectors:

- wood-processing;
- production of chemical products;
- electrical and optical equipment;
- manufacture of basic metals;
- machinery and equipment manufacturing;
- manufacture of transport and equipment.

Since 2010, the export of Latvian goods and services has grown very quickly, and it is the main driver of economic development.

Domestic demand-oriented industries contributed the most to GDP growth in recent years.

3.3 Labour market

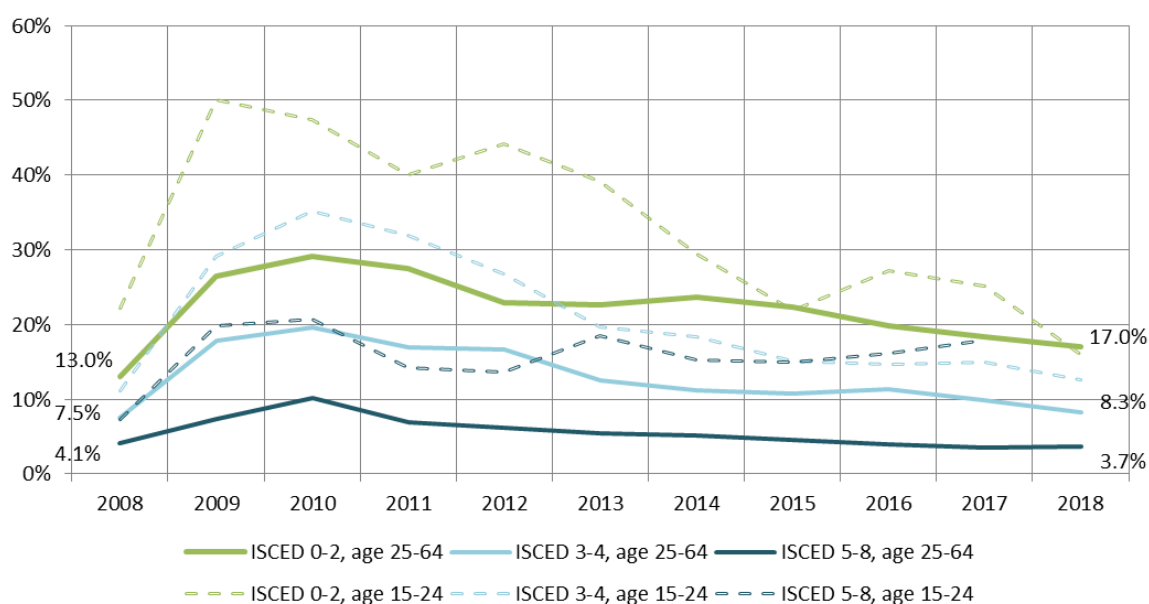
Requirements for non-regulated professions are determined by employers. The Law on Regulated Professions and Recognition of Professional Qualifications and relevant government regulations stipulate special requirements for education programmes, recertification or recognition of qualifications in regulated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

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

The labour market is generally considered flexible.

Total unemployment (7) in 2018: 7.1% (6.0% in EU28); it increased by 0.2 percentage points since 2008(8) .

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

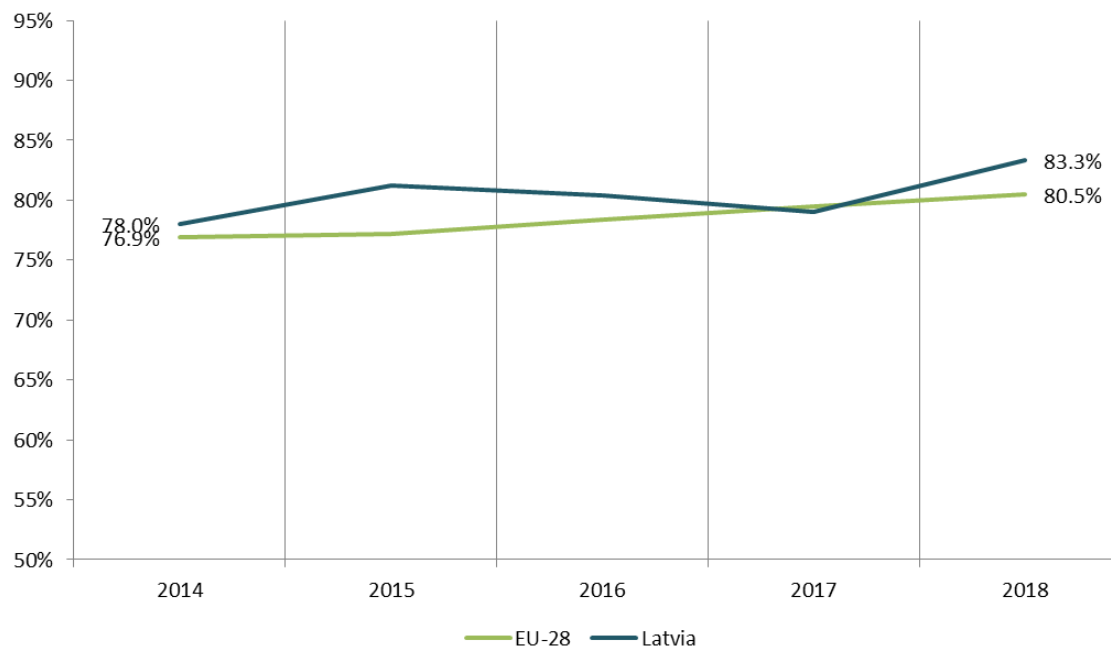


NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series; low reliability for ISCED 0-2 and 5-8, age 15-24.
 ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education. ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education. ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education.
 Source: Eurostat, Ifsa_urgaed [extracted 16.5.2019].

Unemployment is distributed unevenly between those with low- and high-level qualifications. The gap has increased during the crisis and has been steady since then. In 2018, there are stark differences between the different ISCED levels. The unemployment rate of people with medium-level qualifications, including most VET graduates (ISCED levels 3 and 4), is almost three times higher than that of people with high-level qualifications (ISCED 5-8), and almost double that of the pre-crisis years. It is also higher compared to the total unemployment rate (9) in Latvia (7.1%).

The employment rate of 20 to 34 year-old VET graduates increased from 78.0% in 2014 to 83.3% in 2018(10)

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_lfse_24 [extracted 16.5.2019].

The increase in employment of 20 to 34 year-old VET graduates at ISCED levels 3 and 4 in 2014-18 (+5.3 pp) was similar to the increase in employment of all 20 to 34 year-old graduates (+5.5 pp) in the same period in Latvia (11) .

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- [4] NB: Data for population as of 1 January; break in series. Eurostat table tps00001 [extracted 16.5.2019].
 - [5] NB: Data for population as of 1 January; break in series. Eurostat table tps00001 [extracted 16.5.2019].
 - [6] 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).
 - [7] Percentage of active population, 25 to 74 years old.
 - [8] Eurostat table une_rt_a [extracted 20.5.2019].
 - [9] Percentage of active population, 25 to 74 years old.
 - [10] Eurostat table edat_lfse_24 [extracted 16.5.2019].
 - [11] NB: Breaks in time series. Eurostat table edat_lfse_24 [extracted 16.5.2019].

CHAPTER 4.

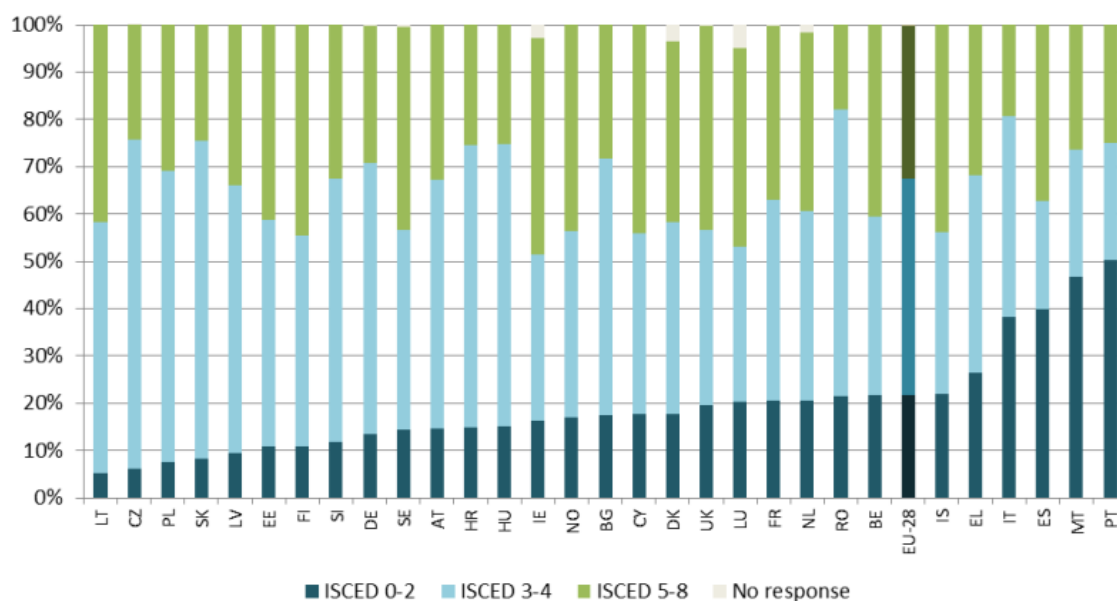
Education attainment

4.1 Share of high, medium and low level qualifications

Education attainment in Latvia is traditionally high. In 2018, the share of population aged 25 to 64 with upper secondary education including vocational education (ISCED levels 3 and 4) was 56.7%.

The share of people with tertiary education (33.9%) is higher than EU-28 average (32.2%). The share of those with low or without a qualification is the fifth lowest in the EU, following Lithuania, Czechia, Poland and Slovakia.

Population (aged 25 to 64) by highest education level attained in 2018



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011. Low reliability for 'No response' in Czechia, Iceland, Latvia, and Poland.

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_pgaed [extracted 16.5.2019].

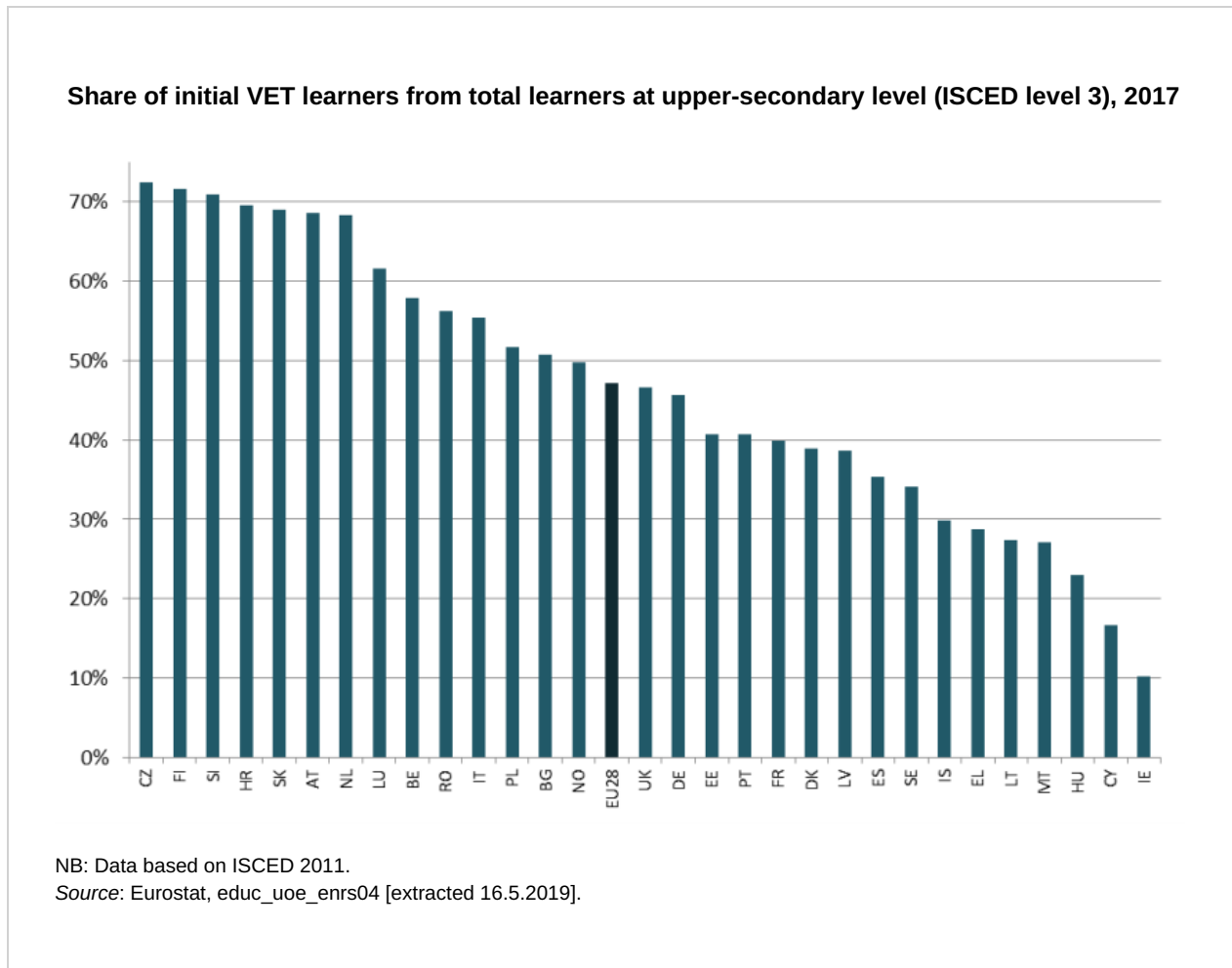
4.3 VET learners by level

Share of learners in VET by level in 2017

lower secondary	upper secondary	post-secondary
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0.6%	38.6%	100%
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Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enrs01, educ_uoe_enrs04 and educ_uoe_enrs07 [extracted 16.5.2019].



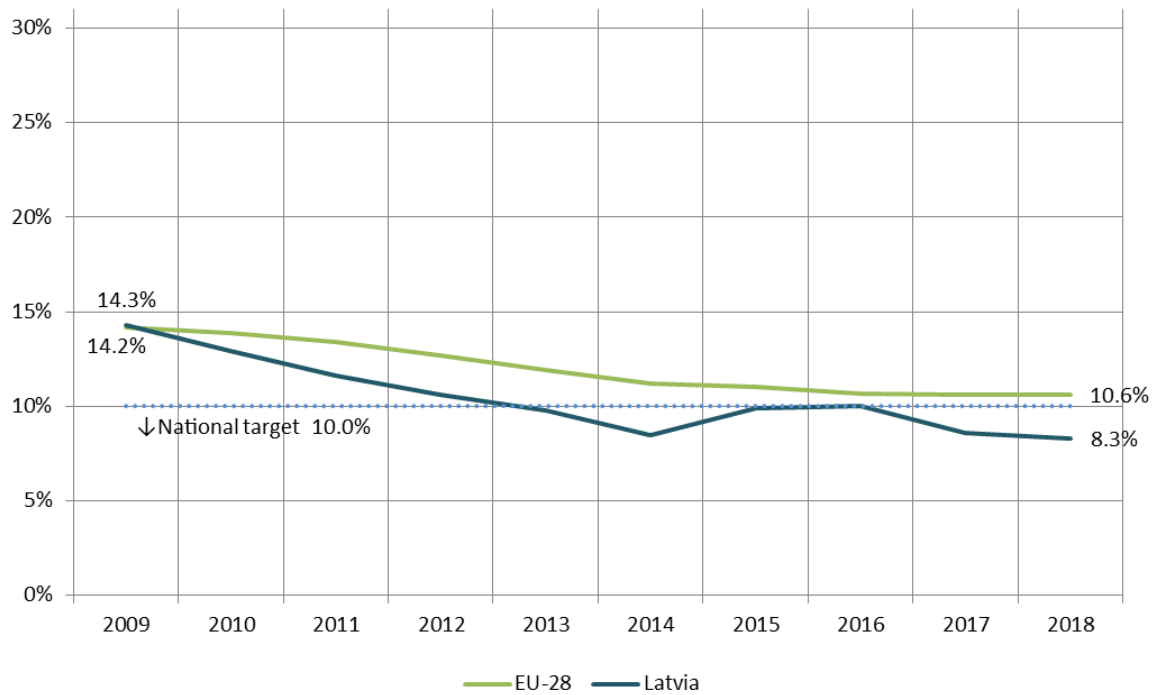
4.4 Female share

Traditionally, there are more males in VET (58.8% in upper-secondary education), except at post-secondary level (12) .

4.5 Early leavers from education and training

The share of early leavers from education and training has decreased from 14.3% in 2009 to 8.3% in 2018. It is below the national objective for 2020 of not more than 10% and the EU-28 average of 10.6%.

Early leavers from education and training in 2009-18

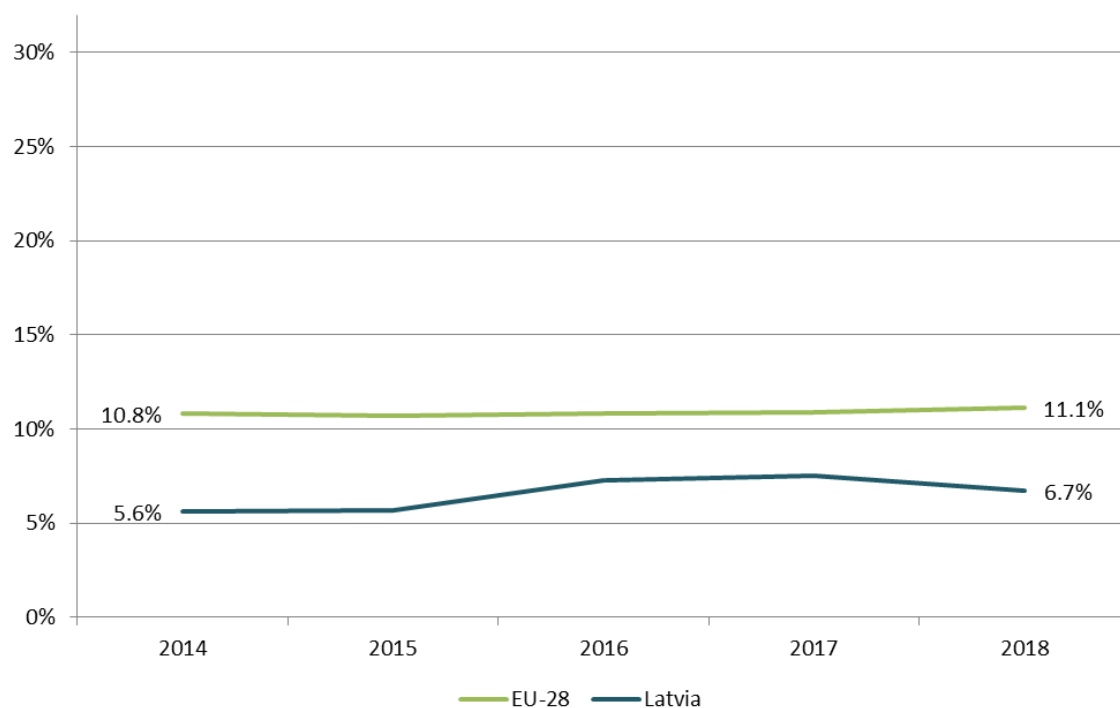


NB: Share of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training.
 Source: Eurostat, edat_lfse_14 [extracted 16.5.2019] and European Commission: https://ec.europa.eu/info/2018-european-semester-national-reform-programmes-and-stability-convergence-programmes_en [accessed 14.11.2018].

4.6 Participation in lifelong learning

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

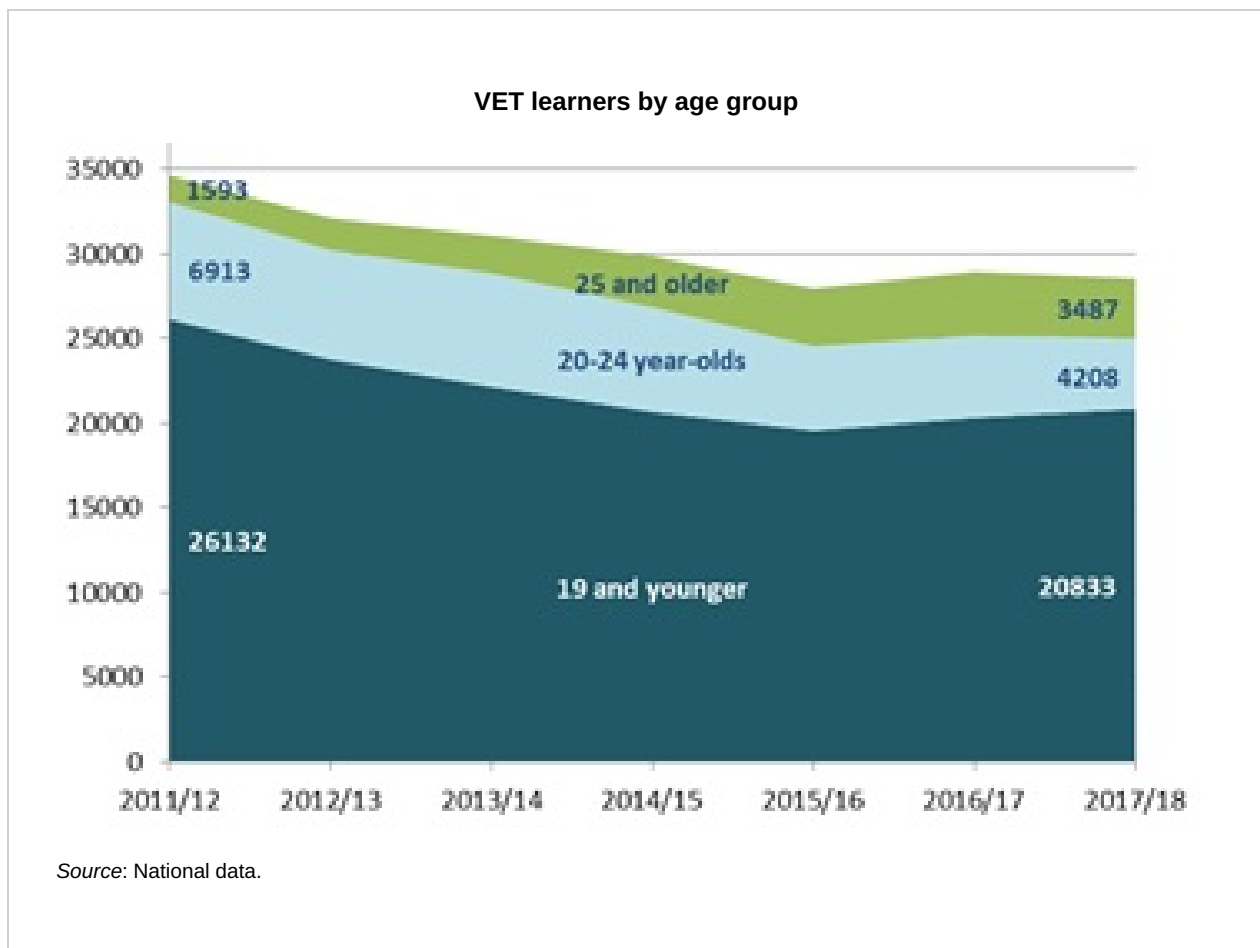
Participation in lifelong learning in 2014-18



NB: Share of adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training.
Source: Eurostat, trng_lfse_01 [extracted on 16.5.2019]

Participation in lifelong learning in Latvia has increased from 5.6% in 2014 to 6.7% in 2018. It is still below the EU average and far below the national objective (15%) for 2020.

4.7 VET learners by age



The share of adults (aged 25 and above) in vocational education has doubled since 2011/12 and reached 12% of the total VET population in 2017/18. This reflects changing labour market needs and the variety of education opportunities for people aged 25+, supported by ESF funds.

[12] Source: Eurostat tables educ_uoe_enrs01, educ_uoe_enrs04 and educ_uoe_enrs07 [accessed 18.2.2019].

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 or vocational programmes. It is non-compulsory. General programmes last for three years and vocational programmes for four years (after completed basic education).

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

The Vocational Education Law (13) provides legal regulations and defines three VET levels:

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

Vocational education at secondary level

There are four types of secondary vocational education programme.

1) Vocational education programmes (*arodizgltība*) 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 and have completed basic education. They include general subjects, but not sufficiently to allow

access to higher education. To access higher education programmes, students must attend a one-year bridging course.

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 four State centralised exams in general subjects. After completion of the programme, learners can enter the labour market or higher education.

3) One-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 and have completed general basic education. They do not include general subjects. After completion of the programme, learners can enter the labour market.

4) One and a half to three-year vocational secondary 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.

Professional higher 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 programme:

1) Continuing vocational education

These programmes enable adults with previous education/work experience to acquire a professional qualification (14) 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 qualification exam in accordance with procedures approved by the government (15) .

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*) (16) .

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 providers are governed by the Ministry of Education and Science. Others are under the responsibility of the ministries of culture, welfare and interior. There are also vocational education institutions established (or taken over from the State) by local government and private ones.

The vocational education system is governed by the following institutions:

- The Cabinet of Ministers (*Ministru kabinets*) defines policies and strategies for vocational education 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, 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 teachers' salaries.

- The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) (17) 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.
- 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 (18) is under the supervision of MoES. It develops the content of basic, secondary and continuing vocational education, professional development and vocationally oriented education. It develops the content and procedures for State exams and coordinates development of study materials in line with the State vocational education standards. The centre also coordinates the development of occupational standards and the professional development of vocational teachers.
- The State Education Quality Service (19) is under the supervision of MoES. It licenses general and vocational education programmes (at EQF level 1-4). It also ensures quality assurance of vocational education (except professional higher), coordinates validation 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 (20) is under the supervision of MoES. It manages and monitors EU funds ex-post, it introduces EU programmes, it supports the development of career education policy, arranges national-level professional skills competitions and ensures participation in international competitions.
- The Ministry of Welfare (21) develops labour market policies, including training interventions.
- The State Employment Agency (22) is under the supervision of the Ministry of Welfare. It implements labour market policies, including programmes for the unemployed.
- Local governments participate in the implementation of vocational education by managing their own schools. 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 (23) 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;
- 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 (24) .

[17] Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija

[18] Valsts izglītības satura centrs (VISC).

[19] Izglītības kvalitātes valsts dienests (IKVD).

[20] Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra (VIAA).

[21] Labklājības ministrija (Ministry of Welfare).

[22] Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra (NVA).

[23] 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 decreased from 6.7% of GDP in 2009 to 5.5% in 2016, with a slight increase to 5.8% in 2017 (25) . 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 70.36 million in 2018 (26) .

Other resources (including EU funds) have also been allocated to development of the vocational education system. For example, during 2009 to 2015, EUR 163.6 million was invested in the modernisation of equipment and infrastructure. For the same objective, EUR 89.07 million is being invested over 2016 to 2023. Schools also use their own revenues to finance their activities.

Procedures for financing vocational education are stipulated by the Education and Vocational Education Laws (27) . 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 (28) :

- 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.

According to the Education Law (29) , adult education may be financed from the State and local government budgets, employers' resources, students' fees, donations and other sources. Some local governments allocate a fixed percentage to adult education from their budget.

Important sources of funding are EU, Norwegian, and Swiss financial assistance instruments, including Structural Funds and Erasmus+ that have helped by creating more learning opportunities for adults through various projects.

CHAPTER 9.

Teachers and trainers

9.1 VET teacher types

In vocational education there are:

- general subject teachers
- vocational teachers

The term 'trainer' is not used in Latvian vocational education. Teachers provide both theory and practical learning at school. Every vocational education teacher can work in initial and continuing vocational education at basic and secondary education levels.

General subject teachers must have a minimum of either:

- tertiary education in education and a teaching qualification in the particular subject, or master/doctor degree in education;
- tertiary education in the relevant field and either a teaching qualification in a particular subject (may be in the process of completing) or working under the supervision of a teacher-mentor for no longer than one year at one school (until 2022).

Vocational teachers must have a professional qualification minimum of either tertiary education in a relevant field (such as engineering) or may be in the process of completing studies (have acquired at least 240 hours), vocational secondary education (EQF level 4), or master of crafts qualification.

Their professional qualification must be complemented by teaching competences acquired in:

- tertiary teacher education;
- a teaching-competence development course (72 hours offered by a higher education institution);
- courses in pedagogy of at least 80 hours in their tertiary education programme.

The requirement for teaching competences does not apply to vocational subject teachers with fewer than 360 teaching hours per year.

Vocational education teachers:

- implement education programmes according to State vocational education standards, and occupational standards and foster creativity and independence of learners;
- develop syllabi (to be approved by heads of vocational education institutions);
- apply new ideas, technologies and methods in the learning process;
- assess knowledge and skills of learners.

In-company trainers involved in providing an apprenticeship-type scheme must have (as of January 2019) a master of crafts qualification, vocational education or at least three years of relevant work experience. They must also have acquired a 72-hour teaching competence-development course (for teaching in schools) or a special 32-hour teaching competence-development course for in-company trainers of apprenticeships (30) .

With the decrease in vocational education institutions since 2010/11, the number of vocational education teachers has decreased by 12%. At the same time, the share of teachers with tertiary education increased from 91% to 93% (31) .

9.2 Continuing professional development of teachers/trainers

The regulations on teachers' education and professional competences development (32) , adopted in 2014, determine that vocational education teachers should regularly improve their competence through continuing professional development.

Teachers are required to undertake at least 36 hours of continuing professional development every three years. Education institutions register teachers' continuing professional development in the database of the State Education Information System (hosted by the Ministry of Education and Science).

The Cabinet Regulations (33) set the framework of two types of competence development programme:

- 72-hour programmes which award a certificate in pedagogy, teacher career consultant certificate or right to implement a vocational education subject module.
- 160-hour programmes which award a teacher's certificate for another subject.

Professional competence development of vocational education teachers is mainly provided by the National Centre for Education (34) , which is subordinated to the Ministry of Education and Science.

There is no evidence on the attractiveness of teaching as an occupation; however, ageing of teachers is observed.

[25] Eurostat table gov_10a_exp. Last update: 16.5.2018.

[31] For more information see: Daija, Z.; Kinta, G.; Ramina, B. (2019). *Supporting teachers and trainers for successful reforms and quality of vocational education and training: mapping their professional development in the EU – Latvia*. Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series.
http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2016/ReferNet_LV_TT.pdf

[34] Valsts izglītības satura centrs (VISC).

CHAPTER 10.

Shaping VET qualifications

10.1 Anticipating skill needs

Responsibility for providing labour market forecasts rests with the Ministry of Economics(35) , which updates reports every other year and the State Employment Agency that updates reports annually (36) .

The Ministry of Economics produces annual medium- and long-term forecasts. It set up an advisory council for labour market forecasting (37) , 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 (38) 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 (39) . 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, the State Employment Agency, in cooperation with the Ministry of Economics, started a national level ESF project Development of labour market forecasting system (2016-21). The system will provide information on skills and professions in the short-, medium- and long-term, as well as information on learning opportunities. Active labour market policy measures will be evaluated and the offer of vocational education programmes will be based on the outcomes of skills forecasts. Currently, work is under way to develop guidelines for the interpretation and practical use of medium and long-term job forecasts. The guidelines' main target audience is career advisors and education providers, and their development is based on the needs of forecasting users.

The Central Statistical Bureau (40) 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 (41) and European skills index (42)

10.2 Designing qualifications

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(43) . 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 (44) .

Since 2007, occupational standards have to include necessary professional competences, skills, and knowledge to perform professional activities. In 2010-15, key occupational standards in 14 sectors were aligned with recent labour market needs and this process is continuing in 2016-21 using ESF support.

In April 2018, 15 sectoral qualifications frameworks were officially approved, marking an agreement between educators and employers on qualifications required by labour market (45) . The sectoral qualifications frameworks serve as guidelines for developing occupational standards and implementing vocational education programmes, including modules leading to specialisations.

The new modular approach for vocational education programmes (46) includes use of learning outcomes, relevant teaching/learning methods and indicators of achievement. In 2017, the amendments to the Vocational Education Law (47) 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 (48) .

Qualification exams (49) 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.

[35] Ekonomikas ministrija.

[36] Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra (NVA).

[37] Darba tirgus prognozēšanas konsultatīvā padome.

[39] <https://cvvp.nva.gov.lv/#/pub/pakalpojumi/prognozes/>

[40] Centrālā statistikas pārvalde (CSB).

[41] <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-visualisations/skills-forecast>

[42] <https://skillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/en/indicators/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, local government) and private institutions (50). It also increases the transparency of education provision, and fosters recognition of Latvian qualifications abroad.

The State Education Quality Service (51) organises licensing and accreditation of vocational education programmes, and accreditation of vocational education providers and examination centres (52) of State, local government and private entities. A licence is a permission to implement a particular programme that meets all requirements of State 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.

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.

The National Centre for Education (53) ensures the development of content for vocational education (except higher education) in compliance with the State vocational education standards. 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 (54) 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 (55) , a department within the Academic Information Centre (56) .

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 (57) . 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(58) that includes information on higher education programmes and quality assurance of institutions and study fields.

[51] Izglītības kvalitātes valsts dienests (IKVD).

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

[53] Valsts izglītības satura centrs (VISC).

[54] Augstākās izglītības padome.

[55] Augstākās izglītības kvalitātes aģentūra (AIKA).

[56] Akadēmiskās informācijas centrs (AIC).

[57] ENQA

[58] <http://svr.aic.lv/Form.aspx?id=contacts>

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 (59) . Accredited education providers and examination centres with a permit from the State Education Quality Service (60) carry out the validation process according to government regulations (61) .

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 (62) . 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 (63) . 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 (64) .

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.

[60] 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 (65) 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 (66) . Students in public vocational education programmes receive a State scholarship of between EUR 10 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(67) . 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 (68) 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 (69) . 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 (70) .

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.

[68] 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 employee 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 (71) 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 (72) 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 a Ministry of Welfare policy paper on improving career guidance (73) . 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 is also one of policy priorities set by the education development guidelines 2014-20 (74) and is implemented with support from public and EU funds.

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 (75) . Vocational education competence centres should provide individual career counselling and support measures for career education to help students acquire career management skills (76) .

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 (77) with information about general, vocational and higher education providers and programmes, as well as about non-formal learning opportunities. VIAA also offers a website (78) 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 (79) 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(80) , 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 (81) (since 2008), which is considered the largest in Latvia covering career and education issues.

Please also see:

- guidance and outreach Latvia national report (82) ;
- Cedefop's labour market intelligence toolkit (83) .

[77] See www.niid.lv [accessed 17.8.2018].

[78] See www.profesijupasaule.lv [accessed 17.8.2018].

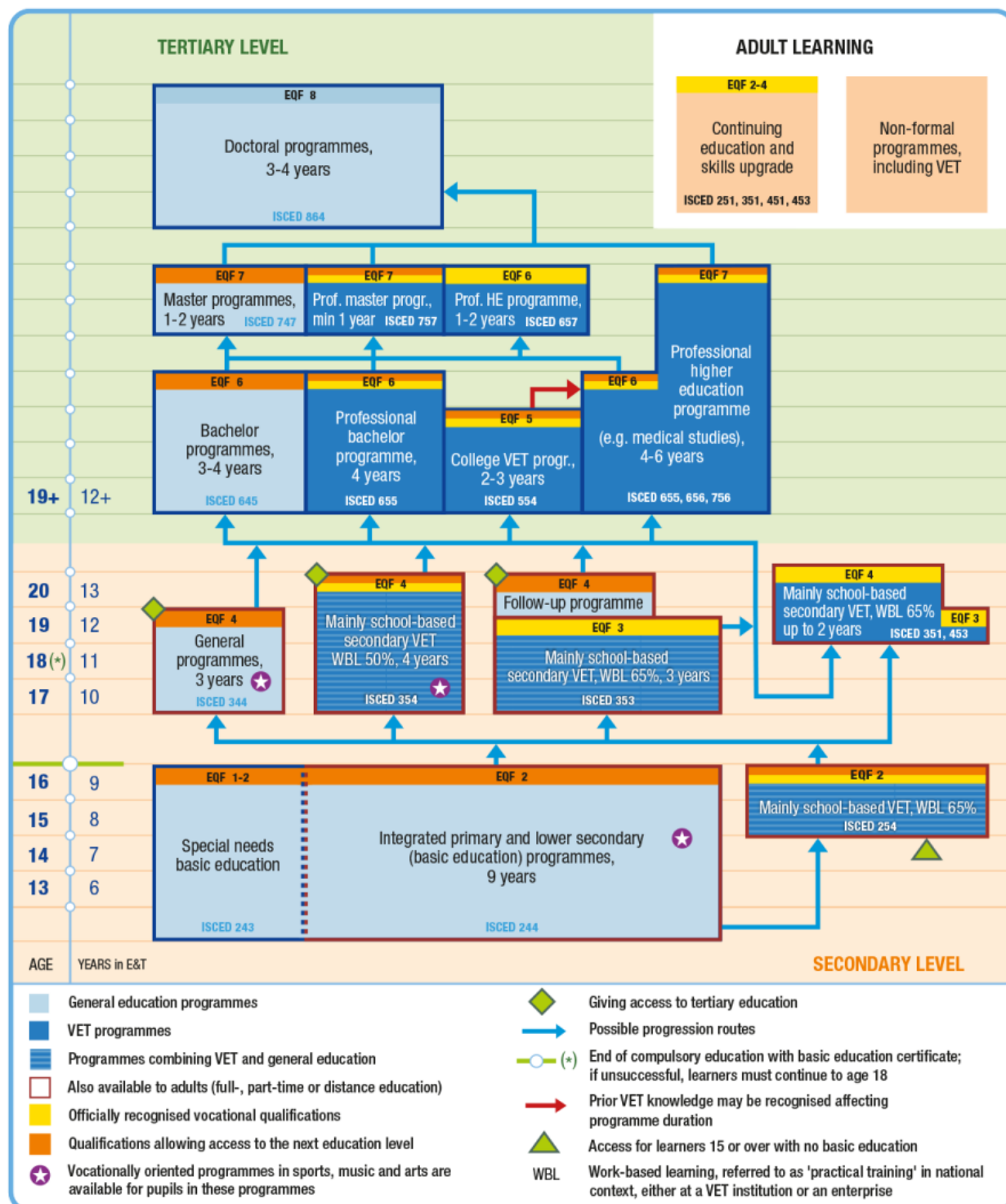
[79] See Karjeras pakalpojumi: <http://www.nva.gov.lv/karjera> [accessed 18.7.2018].

[81] See www.prakse.lv [accessed 18.7.2018].

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

[83] <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, 2019.

VET Programme Types

EQF 2
Mainly
school-based VET,
WBL 65%
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

>=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	Learners need to pass a professional qualification examination and qualification practice. The professional qualification examination (84) 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. A learner who fails a qualification examination is entitled to take a second examination in the following academic year, but must covering the costs.
Diplomas/certificates provided	Certificate of basic vocational education (<i>aplēcība par profesionālo pamatizglītību</i>), with professional qualification at EQF level 2.
Examples of qualifications	Cook's assistant, carpenter's assistant
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Graduates can: • 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	1% (85)

[84] 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>

[85] 2017

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 >=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	Learners need to pass a professional qualification examination and qualification practice. The professional qualification examination (86) 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. A learner who fails a qualification examination is entitled to take a second examination in the following academic year but must cover the costs.
Diplomas/certificates provided	Certificate of vocational education (<i>ātestāts par arodizglītību</i>) with professional qualification at EQF level 3
Examples of qualifications	Cook, carpenter, gardener
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Graduates can: • enter vocational secondary education • enter the labour market For admission to higher education, a one-year intermediate general secondary education 'bridge programme' must be followed.
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 (87) and occupational standards (88) (89) and is based on learning outcomes.
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	5% (90)

[86] 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>

- [87] Cabinet of Ministers (2000). *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 211 (last amended 19.9.2017, No 564). <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=8533>
- [88] 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.
- [89] 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>
- [90] 2017

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	>=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	To complete a vocational education programme, learners need to pass a final professional qualification examination and qualification practice. The professional qualification examination (91) 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. 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. A learner who fails a qualification examination is entitled to take a second examination in the following academic year but must cover the costs.
Diplomas/certificates provided	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. 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.
Examples of qualifications	Car mechanic, electronic technician, mechanical engineering technician
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Graduates can: • 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 (92) , occupational standards (93) , and is based on learning outcomes.
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	71% (94)

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>

- [92] Cabinet of Ministers (2000). *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 211 (last amended 19.9.2017, No 564). <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=8533>
- [93] 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>
- [94] 2017

EQF 3

Mainly
school-based VET,
WBL 65%
up to 2 years
ISCED 351,453

One 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 $\geq 65\%$

Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	- workshops at schools - in-company training
Main target groups	The main target 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 (95) ^{95]}).
Assessment of learning outcomes	At the end of the programme learners must pass a final professional qualification examination. 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.
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	 It is possible to acquire a certificate of professional qualification (EQF level 3) through validation of prior learning.
General education subjects	
Key competences	
Application of learning outcomes approach	 The content of these programmes, which are elaborated by providers, is defined by the State vocational education standards (96) , occupational standards (97) , and is based on learning outcomes.
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	9% (98)

[95] In Latvia, post-secondary education programmes, in contrast to what their name suggests, belong to secondary education level.

- [96] Cabinet of Ministers (2000). 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 211 (last amended 19.9.2017, No 564). <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=8533>
- [97] 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>
- [98] 2017

EQF 4

Mainly

school-based VET,

WBL 65%

up to 2 years

ISCED 351, 453

One and a half to three-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)	- 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	Learners need to pass a final professional qualification examination. 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.
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	✓ The content of these programmes, which are elaborated by providers, is defined by the State vocational education standards (99) , occupational standards (100) , and is based on learning outcomes.
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	14% (101)

- [99] Cabinet of Ministers (2000). *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 211 (last amended 19.9.2017, No 564). <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=8533>
- [100] 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>
- [101] 2017

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?	✓	Is it available for adults?	✓
a certain number of study places in many programmes are financed by the State.			
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 one week 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	- 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)	• 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	Learners need to pass a final qualification examination which also includes defence of a qualification paper. 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.
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	• 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	 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.
General education subjects	 General education subjects take up at least 17% of the curriculum.
Key competences	 The compulsory content includes a module for the development of professional competences in entrepreneurship.
Application of learning outcomes approach	
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	13% learners of all higher education study programmes.

EQF 6
Professional bachelor programme, 4 years ISCED 655

Professional bachelor (profesionālais bakalaurs) 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 one week 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)	• 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	• labour market • second level professional higher education studies • master studies
Destination of graduates	information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	 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.
General education subjects	 general education subjects take up 17% of the curriculum
Key competences	 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.
Application of learning outcomes approach	
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	34% learners of all higher education study programmes (academic and professional) including ISCED 655 and 657.

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 one week 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)	• 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 for ISCED 655, 656 and 756. Entry requirement can be first level professional higher education (college programme) for ISCED 655.
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	• 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	 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.
General education subjects	 general education subjects take up 12.5% of the curriculum
Key competences	 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).
Application of learning outcomes approach	

Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	7% learners of all higher education study programmes.
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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?	✓	Is it available for adults?	✓
a certain number of study places in many programmes are financed by the State.			
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 one week 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)	• 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	 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.
General education subjects	
Key competences	 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).
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 one week 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)	• 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	Graduates can enter: • labour market • doctoral studies
Destination of graduates	information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	 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.
General education subjects	
Key competences	 Compulsory content must include study courses which develop professional competences in entrepreneurship (if it was not acquired in lower level study courses).
Application of learning outcomes approach	
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	13% learners of all higher education study programmes (academic and professional).

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