



Latvia

**Overview of the
Vocational Education and Training System**

2008

eKnowVet – Thematic Overviews



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Abstract:

This is an overview of the VET system in Latvia. Information is presented according to the following themes:

1. General policy context - framework for the knowledge society
2. Policy development - objectives, frameworks, mechanisms, priorities
3. Institutional framework - provision of learning opportunities
4. Initial vocational education and training
5. Continuing vocational education and training for adults
6. Training VET teachers and trainers
7. Skills and competence development and innovative pedagogy
8. Accumulating, transferring and validating learning
9. Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment
10. Financing - investment in human resources
11. European and international dimensions, towards an open area of lifelong learning

This overview has been updated in 2008 and its reference year is 2007. The latest versions can be viewed from October 2009 onwards at:

http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_resources/NationalVet/Thematic/ where more detailed thematic information on the VET systems of the EU can also be found.

Keywords:

training system; training policy, initial training, continuing vocational training, training of trainers, skill development, vocational guidance, recognition of competences, validation of non formal learning; financing of training

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01 - GENERAL POLICY CONTEXT - FRAMEWORK FOR THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

0101 - POLITICAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL/ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Latvia is an independent democratic republic established in 1918. From 1940 to 1991, it was occupied by the Soviet army and was incorporated into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Latvia regained its independence in 1991.

Legislative power is held by the parliament (the *Saeima*), which consists of 100 representatives elected for a period of 4 years. It is elected through proportional representation by citizens aged 18 and older. The 9th *Saeima* was elected in October 2006.

The head of State is the President who is elected by the *Saeima* for 4 years. Executive authority rests on the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of Ministers. The *Saeima*, the Cabinet of Ministers and the Ministry of Education and Science are the main decision-making bodies for VET at national level. The Ministry implements a unified national policy and development strategy in education.

There are 26 districts in Latvia, which consist of 26 counties and 444 civil parishes with elected local governments. Out of 77 Latvian towns, 7 are under state jurisdiction.

0102 - POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Latvia covers 64 589 km² and has a population of 2.287 million people (beginning of 2007). Between 1989 and 2002 (2 census years) the population decreased by 12%, while decrease in population rates since the beginning of 2000 reached 4.2%.

The share of the population below working age is decreasing (18% in 2000; 14% in 2007). The proportion of the population of schooling age is expected to decrease further until at least 2015. Proportion of population aged 60 and above shows steady increase, i.e. difference in rates between 2000 and 2007 is 0.1% or 4.2 thousand inhabitants.

The proportion of economically active inhabitants in the population has increased due to an increase in the pension age (58.9% in 2000 and 65.3% in 2007). According to demographic forecasts, the economically active part of the population will remain constant till 2010. There will fall between 2010 and 2020 when a general ageing of the population is expected.

Table 1: Forecasts for population of Latvia by age group at the beginning of 2005–2025 (thousand persons)				
YEAR	TOTAL	0-19	20-59	60 +
2005	2 305.1 (100%)	526.3 (22.8%)	1 267.5 (54.9%)	511.3 (22.2%)
2010	2 239.6 (100%)	450.1 (20.1%)	1 282.2 (57.3%)	507.3 (22.7%)
2015	2 174.2 (100%)	421.2 (19.4 %)	1 243.2 (57.2%)	509.8 (23.5%)
2020	2 115.4 (100%)	440.1 (20.8%)	1 150.2 (54.4%)	525.2 (24.8%)
2025	2 068.1 (100%)	443.7 (21.5%)	1 079.9 (52.2%)	544.4 (26.3%)

Source: Demography 2007, Riga: CSB, 2007

0103 - ECONOMY AND LABOUR MARKET INDICATORS

In last years the Latvian economy has been growing more rapidly comparing to the EU average, particularly in 2005 and 2006 (by 10.6% and 11.9% accordingly). Between 2004 and 2006 gross domestic product (GDP) increased annually by 10.4% on average. GDP per citizen according to purchasing power standards has increased to 55.8% of the EU-27 average in 2006; total value of GDP in 2007 was EUR 19 385 916 984.

However, expenditures for education do not constitute a great part of the General government consolidated budget expenditures, i.e. EUR 6 309 944 499 in 2007, as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Expenditure directed to education from the state budget, in %				
	2004	2005	2006	2007
FROM THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET	16.3	17.2	16.7	19,8
FROM GDP	5.8	6.1	6.2	7,6

Source: Report on the economic development of Latvia. ME, Riga, July 2007; Report on the economic development of Latvia. ME, Riga, December 2007.

The long-term economic strategy is to achieve the level of standard of living of developed countries. To meet this aim, Latvia needs to reach the average GDP per capita of EU countries in the next 20-30 years.

The share of the economy of different economic sectors has slightly changed between 2000 and 2005. Construction, trade services, transport and communications have gone up faster than other economical sectors regarding both the value added and the number of employees.

YEAR	BY VALUE ADDED		BY NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES	
	2000	2006	2000	2006
PRIMARY SECTORS*	4.8	4.0	14.5	11.6
INDUSTRY	17.3	15.4	19.8	16.6
CONSTRUCTION	6.1	6.8	5.9	10.0
SERVICES	71.8	74.8	59.8	61.8

* Agriculture, hunting and forestry; fishing; mining and quarrying

Source: CSB, 2007

According to the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) of Latvia (*Latvijas Republikas Centrālā statistikas pārvalde*), in 2005 the share of the grey economy was 16-17% of GDP, and approximately half is related to unregistered employment. The majority of people employed unofficially work in building, trade and various services.

In total, 572,850 men and 545,150 women were employed in 2007.

RATE OF EMPLOYED POPULATION TO THE TOTAL POPULATION			
	TOTAL	MALES	FEMALES
TOTAL	62	67.7	57
AGE (YEARS)			
15 - 24	12.3	13.9	10.7
25 - 34	23.1	24.7	21.3
35 - 44	24.1	23.6	24.5
45 - 54	23.8	22.0	25.7
55 - 64	13.0	12.2	13.9
65 - 74	3.9	3.6	4.1

Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2008

An unemployment register has existed since 1992. The unemployment rate reached its highest level in 1998, reaching 9.2% (111.4 thousand inhabitants) but it has been decreasing gradually since 1999, reaching 6% in 2007. The total number of unemployed people in 2007 was 71,325 of which 35.4% were persons with vocational education.

The CSB data shows that the unemployment rate is still higher among men than women (6.4% and 5.6% respectively, in 2007). While women use the services of State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra*)

slightly more by every year (62% at the end of 2007); the rate of men using the services tends to decrease.

Table 4: Registered unemployed by gender (at the end of year 2007 in %)				
	2004	2005	2006	2007
MALES	41.0	40.1	39.1	38.0
FEMALES	59.0	59.9	60.9	62.0

Source: State Employment Agency, 2008

Registered unemployment differs in various areas: traditionally, the highest unemployment rate is registered in *Latgale*, the eastern part of Latvia - 9.4%, while in other regions the average unemployment rate was 5%. In Riga there was the lowest registered unemployment rate 3.1%, in December, 2007. Moreover, proportion of the employed in urban areas increases continuously, while in the countryside the rate decreases.

The other issue is unemployment of young people, which is one of the risk groups. The unemployment rate among young adults is comparatively high to the average (21% in 2000, 24% in 2007), and it is higher than the EU rate 18.5% in 2006 (Eurostat Yearbook 2008). According to CBS, the proportion of those seeking employment out of the total number of the economically active population aged 15-19 or 20-24 was 48.3% and 26.1%, respectively in 1996; 35.7% and 19.6%, respectively in 2000; and 26.3% and 10.3%, respectively in 2006. However, the majority of the unemployed in 2006 were at the age between 35-54 years.

The proportion of Latvians among the registered unemployed people slightly increased in 2007 by 54% (51.4% in 2004), whereas the proportion of non-Latvians has decreased since 1995. Nevertheless, in 2007 the proportion of Russians among the registered unemployed (31%) remained higher than their proportion in the population in general (28.3%).

In 2007, the unemployment rate was 12% among those with higher education (ISCED 5), in comparison to 28% among those with completed general upper-secondary education (ISCED 3A), 37% among those with vocational or upper-secondary vocational education (ISCED 3B + ISCED 4) and 18% among those who have completed basic education (ISCED 2).

0104 - EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF POPULATION

According to Eurostat data (Eurostat yearbook 2008), youth education attainment level generally has an increasing tendency, i.e. in 2001 – 71.7%, and in 2006 – 81%, which is higher than the average youth education attainment level in EU-27 (76.6% in 2001 and 77.8% in 2006). There are no particular political reasons for the increase of youth education attainment, however, more people are involved in education through programmes for unemployed, evening schools and pedagogical correction programmes (see 0303).

Table 1: Population aged 25 to 64, by highest level of education attained (2007)							
	TOTAL	PRE-PRIMARY, PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION (ISCED LEVELS 0-2)		UPPER SECONDARY AND POST-SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY EDUCATION (ISCED LEVELS 3-4)		TERTIARY EDUCATION (ISCED LEVELS 5-6)	
	TOTAL (1000)	TOTAL (1000)	%	TOTAL (1000)	%	TOTAL (1000)	%
EU27	268116	77 859	29	125 857	47	62 688	23
LV	1215	182	15	756	62	273	23

Source: Eurostat; EU Labour Force Survey; Date of extraction: 27/05/2008

In comparison with EU member states where 47% of the population have achieved ISCED level 3-4, 62% have achieved the same level in Latvia. Traditionally, there has been a premium (and increasing tendency) of people obtaining higher level education (74.4% of graduates from upper secondary school continued studies in 2007) because a higher education degree is considered to provide greater career prospects and bolster social status.

During the Soviet period, secondary school was compulsory, but since 1991 compulsory is basic level only.

Table 2: Percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training						
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
EU-27	17.1	16.6	15.9	15.5	15.2	14.8
LATVIA	19.5	18.1	15.6	11.9	19 (p)	16 (p)

(p) Provisional value

Source: Eurostat. EU Labour Force Survey. Date of extraction: 29 May 2008

02 - POLICY DEVELOPMENT - OBJECTIVES, FRAMEWORKS, MECHANISMS, PRIORITIES

0201 - OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

Vocational education has gone through four major stages of development since 1995:

1995/1998: the main goals for the development of vocational education were defined and determined by the Strategic Programme for the Development of Education 1998-2003 (*Izglītības attīstības stratēģiska programma*). During this time, Phare projects were of great importance.

1999/2001: the Vocational Education Law (*Profesionālas izglītības likums*), adopted in 1999 formed the juridical basis for vocational education (please see 0301). The Law regulates the forms of vocational education, the level of qualifications to be obtained and their requirements as well as the responsibility of the different VET structures. Phare projects assisted the implementation of the Law.

2002/2005: reforms continued linked to the process of joining the EU. The Education Development Concept for 2002-2005 was adopted, as was the Programme for the Development of Vocational Education for 2003-2005 with much more specific goals (improving quality in, and access to, VET and to promote efficient expenditure). A number of other strategic documents have been adopted promoting lifelong learning and human resource development, including improving VET opportunities, for example, the annual National employment plans. The overarching aim of the Education Development Concept was to carry out the necessary changes in the education system to enhance the building of a knowledge-based, democratic and socially integrated society that would increase economic competitiveness and simultaneously preserve and develop Latvian cultural values.

2007/2013: the Guidelines for the Development of Education for the Period of 2007-2013 (*Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013.gadam*, 2006) worked out by the Ministry of Education and Science underpins current policy approaches.

Before preparing the Guidelines, a survey on education development during 2002-2005 was carried out to identify improvements and problems, such as pre-school education availability, poor quality of basic education, the low status of teacher profession, the mismatch of vocational and higher education to labour market demands etc. The identification of problems assisted in stating general policy priorities for 2007-2013.

The main objectives of the Guidelines among others are:

- to introduce and finance teacher assistant posts to provide support to pupils (Forms 1-6) with learning difficulties;

- to improve social conditions for vocational education students by increasing student scholarships in 2007-2010 to EUR 28 a month with a further increase in 2011-2013 to EUR 57;
- to provide additional support for those with low levels of education and training;
- to prepare a structural model for higher education programmes with additional available places;
- to provide continuous state investment for arranging and modernising education establishments;
- to increase the role of social partners in VET.

The Guidelines are implemented through the working strategy 2007-2009 of the Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*).

2007/2013: Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013 (*Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādnes 2007.–2013.gadam*) prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science and which outlines the vision for 2013 in terms of the needs of different target groups; mainstream development; policy aims and results indicators; and resources available. The main objectives are:

- to provide availability of lifelong learning to all people;
- to create qualitative education possibilities for adults;
- to harmonise laws and regulations and efficient resource administration;
- to develop a flexible lifelong learning administrative system;
- to develop lifelong learning action programmes for the state and the regions.

Furthermore, the Ministry implemented ESF National programme project 'Fostering the Implementation of Vocational Guidance Provision and Careers Education in the Educational Sector' (2005-2007) to improve the accessibility and quality of vocational guidance provision and careers education at providers.

MEETING EU POLICY GOALS

In keeping with an appeal at the March 2005 meeting of the European Council, Latvia has prepared the National Lisbon Programme for 2005/2008 (*Latvijas nacionāla Lisabonas programma 2005.-2008. gadam*), aimed at promoting national growth and employment. The Programme is a policy planning document which shows how Latvia will reach the Lisbon strategy goals on the basis of the Integrated Guidelines, approved by the European Council in July 2005. It envisages the following main tasks for improvement of education and skills in 2005-2008:

- strengthen co-operation between public administration institutions, education establishments and employers to adjust education and training supply with labour market needs;

- raise cost efficiency in all levels and forms of education;
- improve availability of education and reduce the number of students who do not graduate or do not achieve a professional qualification;
- increase the availability of lifelong learning and the motivation for people to learn;
- raise the overall level of technological skills and natural science knowledge, improve the professional orientation system and ensure the availability of professional orientation services for all the population in the context of lifelong learning.

At present (2008), a new Vocational Educational Law is under preparation, which among others is expected to stipulate the introduction of the European Credit System for VET within the national education system. It will introduce the system for validating skills and competences acquired through informal/non-formal education. Furthermore, a new Higher Education Law has been submitted to the Parliament for discussion; this law will outline the National Qualification Framework within Latvian higher education.

03 - INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK - PROVISION OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

0301 - LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Basically, the same laws and regulations provide legislative framework both for initial and continuous vocational education.

The Education Law (*Izglītības likums*, 1991, 1998, 2001) regulates the whole system of education including initial and continuous education, determines the rights and duties of the state, local governments, public organizations, professional associations, individuals, educational institutions, parents and students, as well as levels and types of education and types of educational institutions.

Vocational Education Law (*Profesionālās izglītības likums* 1999, 2001) sets out the principles for organising, implementing and awarding qualifications both for initial and continuous vocational education. It states the division of tasks and competences and the relationship between employers, teachers and students. For the first time, the Law recognises an active role for social partners in vocational education. It also states the different pathways for pursuing vocational education, the structure of programmes and the funding principles. The 2001 amendments introduced vocational continuing education for adults and provided for a training system which allows people, regardless of age and previous experience or qualifications, to acquire the knowledge and skills relevant to the demands of the labour market.

The enacting of laws is regulated through Regulations issued by the Cabinet of Ministers (*Ministru Kabineta Noteikumi*). One of latest documents (2007) is the Procedure for Developing Occupational Standards (*Profesiju standartu izstrādes kārtība*), prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science along with other institutions. The regulation outlines the procedure for developing standards and lists the duties of the involved institutions. The Vocational Education Administration (*Profesionālās izglītības administrācija, PIA*) supervises the development of occupational standards for vocational education programme levels 1, 2 and 3 and the Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for levels 4 and 5. Standard projects are written by a work group consisting of representatives of a particular interest organisation or trade union. The standards include:

- duties and tasks of a particular profession;
- professional skills, knowledge (mentioning the level), and competences
- necessary for accomplishing the tasks;
- place of the profession within the structure of the employment description.

The Vocational Education Law and other related laws and regulations such as the Procedure for Developing Occupational Standards (*Profesiju standartu izstrādes kārtība*, 2007), Regulations on the Procedure of the Centralized Professional Qualification Examinations (*Centralizēto profesionālās kvalifikācijas eksāmenu norises kārtība*, 2007), Procedure for Organising Practice Training (*Mācību prakses organizēšanas kārtība*, 2000), the Law on Employers' Organisations and their Unions (*Darba devēju organizāciju un to apvienību likums*, 1999) determine the role of social partners in VET development. Social partners draw up proposals for improving VET policy and planning and organise labour market research in cooperation with state and local government institutions. They are also involved in setting up occupational standards and VET educational programmes. At present (2008), a new Vocational Educational Law is under preparation, and a new Higher Education Law has been submitted to the Parliament for discussion.

According to the Law on Trade Unions (*Par arodbiedrībām*, 1991, 2005), all inhabitants have rights to form trade unions basing on occupational, sectoral, territorial etc. principles. These organisations are independent from employer, together they form the Free Trade Union, i.e. an umbrella organisation for trade unions, and in the name of their members conclude collective agreements concerning work and other social and economic issues. By 2006 there were 2 405 collective agreements concluded between member organisations of Free Trade Union and employers. The collective agreements are binding for both parties and include such points as payments, working hours and vocations, release from work, learning and qualification improvement possibilities, work conditions and security, social guarantees etc.

0302 - INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK: IVET

The Vocational Education Law (*Profesionālās izglītības likums*, 1999) determines the competence of those institutions responsible for the organization of VET.

The Cabinet of Ministers (*Ministru Kabinets*):

determines the state's political and strategic areas in VET; it funds VET providers according to criteria established by the Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*); it sets the framework for issuing state-recognised qualifications and determines the recognition of qualifications obtained in other countries.

The Ministry of Education and Science (*MoES*):

develops the framework regulations for VET and accredits providers. It also creates and updates the register of occupational standards and makes proposals about the allocation of funds from the state budget. It organises guidance and counselling services and researches skills demands of the labour market. It employs the heads of VET institutions under its supervision.

The Department of Vocational and Continuing Education (*Profesionālas izglītības un talakizglītības departaments*): is part of the Ministry of Education and Science and it develops state policy and strategy in VET. The department

guides, plans and coordinates VET development and supervises VET providers. It collaborates with employer institutions and trade unions and provides technical support for the work of National Tripartite Subcouncil for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment (*Profesionālās izglītības un nodarbinātības trīspusējās sadarbības apakšpadome*). It also assures that national policy meets EU demands and takes part in developing transnational agreements.

Vocational Education Administration (*Profesionālas izglītības administrācija*):

is under the Ministry of Education and Science and it organises the accreditation of VET providers and programmes. It participates in the development of occupational standards as well as the content and methodology for exams. It oversees the functioning of learning and examination centres and organises the professional development of VET teachers.

National Tripartite Subcouncil for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment (*Profesionālās izglītības un nodarbinātības trīspusējās sadarbības apakšpadome*) was funded in 2000 to promote dialogue between employers and employees on training and employment issues. The Subcouncil, which consists of the representatives from Ministries (Welfare, Economy, Finance, Justice, Agriculture, Education and Science, Regional Development and Local Government Affairs), the Association of Free Trade Unions and the Confederation of Employers, participates in the development of the occupational standards determining the curriculum and content of vocational education programmes.

TYPES AND STATUS OF INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

VET institutions are classified according to ownership:

- state VET institutions;
- local government VET institutions;
- private VET institutions.

VET is free for full-time students at institutions operated by the state or local governments. Students also receive a grant determined by the Cabinet of Ministers. The number of VET institutions operated by local governments and private parties is rather small, due to school optimisation reform; the number of schools has decreased (see Table 2).

Table 2: Vocational education and training institutions according to their status		
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION ACCORDING TO STATUS	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS, SCHOOL YEAR 1999/2000	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS, SCHOOL YEAR 2007/2008
STATE VOCATIONAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS	111 (91.8%)	81 (88%)
LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOCATIONAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS	5 (4.1%)	5 (5.4%)
PRIVATE VOCATIONAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS	5 (4.1%)	6 (6.5%)
TOTAL	121	92

Source: CSB, 2008

0303 - INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK: CVET

The same institutions (see 0302) share the responsibilities for organising CVET.

In 1993 the Latvian Adult Education Association (*Latvijas Pieaugušo izglītības apvienība, LPIA*) was founded to develop adult education and a lifelong learning system. It is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation, unifying providers of adult education in Latvia - both individuals and organizations. The aim of the Association is to foster development of adult education system and to participate within forming lifelong education policy, thereby, promoting values of civic, democratic and open society in Latvia. In 1995 the Association became a member organisation of European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA), while since 1997 the Association belongs to European Prison Education Association and European Adult Education Research Association (ESREA). The main objectives of the Latvian Adult Education Association are the following:

- To participate in the formation of lifelong education policy by promoting everyone's self-expression of personality and right to education during the entire life-time and a responsible attitude of humans towards nature and social environment on the local, national and global level;
- To teach the ability of co-existence by developing a tolerant attitude towards the different.

Between 1995-1996 throughout all the regions network of adult educational centres and co-ordinators was established by the local governments. In total there are 21 centres in districts and five in the cities. Usually there are 3-4 employees and 3-4 equipped classrooms in the centres, frequently the coordinators are volunteers.

04 - INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

0401 - BACKGROUND TO THE IVET SYSTEM AND DIAGRAM

THE LATVIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Education system comprises pre-school education (*pirmsskolas izglītība*), 9-year basic education (*pamatizglītība*), upper secondary education (*vidējā izglītība*) and higher education (*augstākā izglītība*).

- Pre-school education (ISCED 0) is for children aged 5-7 years and is provided by general education establishments or kindergartens as a part of compulsory basic education;
- Basic (primary and lower secondary) education (ISCED 1 and 2) lasts 9 years and is compulsory for children aged 7 and above. The National Basic Education Standard (*Valsts pamatizglītības standarts*) determines the curriculum and content of national examinations. Those who do not complete basic education by 16 should continue studying to complete the programme by the time they are 18. They can also choose VET programmes that allow them to obtain a first or second level professional qualification and to complete the obligatory basic educational programme (See section of the Latvian VET system below);
- 3-year vocational basic education programmes are provided in vocational schools for students without a certificate of basic education (after completion of at least 7 grades of basic education, but they must be at least 15 years old);
- Upper secondary education (ISCED 3) comprises two types of programmes: general secondary (*vispārējā vidējā izglītība*) and vocational secondary (*profesionālā vidējā izglītība*).
General secondary has 4 study fields: general; humanities and social sciences; mathematics, natural science and technical, and vocational (arts, music, business, and sports). There are a number of obligatory subjects (e.g. Latvian, two foreign languages, maths, computer science, etc.). Every programme includes obligatory and optional subjects relevant to the particular field of studies.

To receive the Certificate of Secondary Education (*Atestats par visparejo videjo izglitibu*), students should take at least 5 examinations in compulsory (maximum 4 exams) or optional study subjects. Provision is regulated by the state which determines its level, form and target groups. It also defines the strategic goals and main tasks of each programme; its obligatory content, basic principles and assessment.

- Tertiary education (ISCED 5): while there is a difference between academic and professional higher education, it is not institutionalised. Universities and other higher education institutions run both academic and

professional programmes, e.g. physiotherapist, lawyer, teacher, translator, marine mechanic etc. Academic higher education programmes (ISCED 5A) lead to a Bachelor's degree (Bakalaurs) and Master's degree (Maģistrs). The duration of Bachelor's programmes may be 3 or 4 years. A Master's degree is awarded after the second stage of academic education and requires at least 5 years of university studies;

- Postgraduate education (ISCED level 6). A Master's degree or the equivalent is required for admission to doctoral studies (Ph.D.) which last 3-4 full-time years.

THE LATVIAN VET SYSTEM

The IVET programmes are provided by vocational secondary schools and vocational schools. The Vocational Education Law (revised in 2001) stipulates that VET programmes are classified as follows:

- vocational basic education programmes lasts for 3 years and are foreseen for students without a certificate of basic education (after completion of at least 7 grades of basic education, but they must be at least 15 years old);
- vocational education programmes last for 2-3 years and graduates receive a Certificate of secondary education and qualification level 3 (see below);
- vocational secondary educational programmes take 4 years and are open to students who have completed compulsory basic education. Graduates receive a diploma and a Level 3 vocational qualification (see below);
- post secondary non-tertiary vocational education (ISCED 4) can be followed after graduating from general secondary schools. They are focused towards mastering purely professional skills and knowledge;
- first level professional higher education (college education) programmes. The Law of Higher Education Institutions (*Augstākās izglītības likums*) and the Vocational Education Law (*Profesionālās izglītības likums*) stipulate a 2-level professional higher education – the first level (2-3 years) leading to professional qualification Level 4 (ISCED 5B) and second level (ISCED 5B) leading to qualification level 5 (4-6 years). Having completed a programme, students are awarded with a professional qualification or a professional Bachelor's degree that can be followed by a further 1-2 years of professional Master's studies. The Master's degree of higher professional education is awarded if the total duration of studies is at least 5 years. There can also be short second level professional higher education study programmes (1-2 years), where the qualification is obtained on the basis of the previously acquired first level professional higher education or Bachelor's degree. In total the duration of professional qualification Level 5 study programmes is not less than 4 years after secondary education and not less than 2 years after college education;

- professional continuing education programmes enables adults with previous education and work experience to obtain professional qualifications;
- professional development educational programmes are for people regardless of their age and previous education or professional qualifications to master systematized professional knowledge and skills.

The Law defines five levels of professional qualifications:

- Level 1 (ISCED 2): theoretical and practical training that prepares students for performing simple tasks in a certain area of practical activity (assistant cook, carpenter etc.);
- Level 2 (ISCED 3): theoretical and practical background that allows the holder to perform qualified work independently (carpenter, hairdresser, cook, welder etc.);
- Level 3 (ISCED 3): advanced theoretical and professional background which enables the holder to fulfil certain tasks, including planning and organising work (various technicians, car mechanics, hotel service specialist etc.);
- Level 4 (ISCED 5): theoretical and practical background that enables the holder to perform complicated tasks as well as to organise and manage others in their work;
- Level 5 (ISCED 5): the highest qualification of a specialist in a field that enables the holder to plan and perform research and scientific work in the field.

Different vocational education programmes are developed and offered for all economic branches. The National Standard of vocational education (Valsts profesionālās izglītības standarts) and the Occupational Standards (Profesiju standarti) determine the curriculum and content of vocational education programmes.

At VET institutions, various educational programmes are offered. The following table shows the type of programme, their duration, previous education and possibilities to enrol at higher education institutions on completion.

PROGRAMME AND LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION TO BE OBTAINED	ISCED LEVEL	PREVIOUS EDUCATION	DURATION OF STUDIES (YEARS)	QUALIFICATION	POSSIBILITY TO ENROL AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS
VOCATIONAL SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMME - LEVEL 3	3A, 3B	9-year basic	4	Diploma of vocational secondary education	Yes
		vocational education	2		Yes
	4B	Secondary	2		Yes
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME- LEVEL 2	3C	Students must be at least 15 years old	3	Certificate on vocational education	No
		Students must be at least 15 years old	2		
	4B	Secondary	2	Certificate of qualification	Yes
		Secondary	1		
VOCATIONAL BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME (INCLUDING PEDAGOGICAL CORRECTION PROGRAMME*)- LEVEL 1	2A, 2C	Students must be at least 15 years old	1	Certificate of vocational education and certificate of vocational basic education	No

* pedagogical correction – programme for early school leavers and those with low level of basic knowledge and skills.

The main aim of the programme is to integrate youngsters back to education system and help them acquire simple professional skills.

Source: MoES

0402 - IVET AT LOWER SECONDARY LEVEL

Students are admitted onto VET programmes without consideration for their previous education but not earlier than in the year in which they turn 15. Those without basic education are admitted to VET programmes which include pedagogical correction (this is targeted at early school leavers and those with a low level of basic education – the aim of the programme is to integrate young people back into the education system).

Programme duration is 1-3 years and leads to a certificate of basic vocational education which certifies that the student has obtained a first level qualification (ISCED 2C). The proportion between theory and practice is 35:65 in the basic vocational education programmes, while between general and vocational subjects 60:40. This means that they have the theoretical and practical training to carry out simple tasks in certain fields, for example as a cook's or carpenter's assistant). In the school year 2007/2008, 771 students (0.39 % of basic education level students or 2% of vocational education students) participated in these programmes.

0403 - IVET AT UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION (SCHOOL-BASED AND ALTERNANCE)

In 2007/2008, 34 870 students (90.5% of vocational education students) participated in upper secondary vocational programmes.

Table 1: National classification of education (adopted in 2004)			
EDUCATION LEVEL AND TYPE	TYPE OF PROGRAMME	ISCED 97	
		EDUCATION LEVEL	CODE
SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION	Vocational education – part of vocational secondary education which does not give the right to continue studies at a higher education level. Duration 2-3 years	Upper secondary	3C
	Vocational secondary education which ensures professional qualification level 3 and give the right to continue studies at a higher education level. Duration 3-4 years.	Upper secondary	3A 3B
	Intermediate programme in general secondary education. Duration 1 year. Previous education–vocational education.	Upper secondary	3A 3B

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION - ISCED 3C

The Vocational Education Law stipulates that the duration of vocational training is 2-3 years for people who have completed basic education. Upon graduation a VET certificate is awarded attesting that the qualification corresponds to professional level 2 (theoretical and practical aptitude for carrying out qualified executive work independently, for example as carpenter, hairdresser, cook, seamstress, welder – ISCED 3C). Vocational training does not give the right to continue studies at a higher education institution, nevertheless for students, who want to continue, a 1-year intermediate course in general secondary education is available.

The content of vocational education study programmes leading to professional qualification level 2 (ISCED 3c) is divided into theory and practice 35:65 respectively and between general and vocational subjects 60:40. The practical training usually takes place at the schools and enterprises. Qualification practice training in enterprises for 3 years long programmes (i.e. at least 4230 hours) has volume of 840 hours, while for two years programme (i.e. at least 2840 hours) – 480 hours.

VOCATIONAL SECONDARY EDUCATION - ISCED 3A, 3B

Students who have completed general or vocational basic education (level 1–ISCED 2c) can be admitted to upper-secondary VET programmes which last for 3-4 years. Upon graduation, an upper secondary VET diploma is awarded, as well as a professional qualification level 3 (ISCED 3A, 3B). The diploma gives the rights to continue studies at a higher education institution. The structure of upper secondary VET programmes combine theory and practical training on a 50:50 basis and general and vocational subjects on a 60:40 basis.

COUNTRIES	TOTAL ISCED 3	VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ISCED 3		
		VOCATIONAL (%)	PRE-VOCATIONAL (%)	VOCATIONAL AND PRE-VOCATIONAL (%)
EU27	26036676	55.9	4.6	60.5
EU25	24597064	55.5	4.9	60.4
LV	109980	35.5	0.0	35.5

Source: Eurostat, UOE data collection; Date of data extraction: 26/05/2008

As shown, the general secondary education pathway is more popular than for vocational secondary education because general education has higher prestige and it ensures greater possibility to continue within higher education.

0404 - APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

An apprenticeship system exists on a small scale mainly in the crafts sector in traditional professions, e.g. builder, potter, lathe operator, carpenter, and it is regulated by the Law on Crafts (*Par amatniecību*, 1993). The Law stipulates the organisational basis for crafts, basic regulations for apprenticeship and the procedure for stating craftsman qualifications. The main organisation involved is the Chamber of Crafts which is a self-governing organisation.

Through the apprenticeship system it is possible to obtain the journeyman (*Amata zēļa diploms*) and master craft qualification (*Amata meistara diploms*). The journeyman examination comprises two parts: presentation of

qualification work and techniques used and theoretical knowledge. The master craftsman qualification is awarded after an examination.

Apprenticeship qualifications do not provide access to regulated professions nor do they give access to continue in the formal education and training system. There are no mechanisms in place for those, who dropped out from apprenticeship before completing training, to continue in another form.

Apprentices are admitted regardless of their previous education but not earlier than the year in which they turn 16 (unless they have permission from parents or tutor). Apprenticeship programmes are drafted by the corresponding craft professional association and approved by the Council of the Chamber of Crafts. Duration of the programmes depends on the particular craft association; therefore, a great variation exists. The curricula are not approved by the Vocational Education Administration as for IVET programmes, as these programmes are not part of formal IVET.

An apprenticeship is based on the Chamber of Crafts standard template contracts, concluded between apprentice and master. They determine the relative responsibilities of apprentices and their master. During the apprenticeship, an apprentice is regarded as a student; however, as the apprentice acquires more knowledge, skills and competences, they may receive some payment for individual projects. However, the payment procedure greatly depends on particular craft and individual agreements.

The Chamber of Crafts is planning to introduce several measures to increase interest about apprenticeship, they include: providing more information to VET schools and improving the network of craft masters who would be interested in training apprentices.

Apprenticeship training can be organised in two ways:

- the apprentice works with a crafts master and looks for theoretical training possibilities in vocational schools; or
- an apprentice is a student in a vocational school and during practical placement is working with a crafts master. After graduation, the student must pass the exam of journeyman in the Chamber of Crafts.

Theoretical training for masters and journeyman qualifications are offered also by the Chamber of Crafts.

0405 - OTHER YOUTH PROGRAMMES AND ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

There are no other youth programmes as alternative pathways except for the pedagogical correction programme. This is part of IVET system leading to the same education certificate and qualification but its main aim is to re-integrate early school leavers and those with low level of basic knowledge and skills back to the education system and help them acquire simple professional skills (please see 0401 and 0402).

0406 - VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT POST-SECONDARY (NON TERTIARY) LEVEL

It is possible to enrol in programmes of vocational training or post-secondary vocational training after completing general upper-secondary education. The main providers at post-secondary level are vocational secondary schools. Target groups of post-secondary non-tertiary IVET are general secondary school graduates at age of 18-20. Programmes last for 1-2 years and their main objective is to prepare their students for entering labour market. The programmes last at least 3,120 hours, of which training practice is at least for 480 hours. The proportion between theory and practice is the same as in vocational secondary education, i.e. 50:50, as well as division of theory in general and vocational subject, i.e. 60:40.

To gain a certificate of qualification, students must fulfil all the requirements of the educational standard, i.e. to receive a grade in all the subjects, practical studies and practical placement and pass a qualification examination. The qualification, which is awarded by education establishments, allows students to enrol in labour market.

In the school year 2007/2008, 7.5% (2 886) of students at VET institutions studied in such programmes.

0407 - VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AT TERTIARY LEVEL

The Vocational Education Law (1999) provides for higher professional programmes at two levels: college programmes (professional qualification level 4; ISCED 5) and higher professional education programmes (professional qualification level 5; ISCED 5). In accordance with the Law of Higher Education institutions, it is possible to obtain a mix of academic and professional qualifications:

- bachelor *bakalaur*s (either academic or professional);
- master *maģistrs* (either academic or professional);
- doctor *doktors* (scientific degree).

COLLEGE PROGRAMMES

In a number of vocational fields, there are college programmes which represent the first cycle of professional higher education. They lead to level 4 professional qualifications (ISCED 5).

First level higher professional education programmes are available at colleges (former institutions of post-secondary VET) and higher education institutions. Studies last for 2-3 years following completion of general or vocational secondary education. The 'Diploma of the first level higher professional education' (available since June 2000) is equal to level 4 (theoretical and practical training that enables holder to perform complicated tasks as well as

to organise and lead the work of other specialists). Programmes are available in engineering, computer science, business administration, nursing and law. Programmes can give credit towards further studies in the second cycle of professional higher education.

The content of first level higher professional education comprises study courses (comprising general subjects, humanities, social sciences as well as technical subjects), a practical placement and a thesis. The content of the study course and the practical placement is set out in occupational standards for some professions. The volume of programmes in credit points is 80-120 (1 Latvian credit point is equal to 40 student work hours and 1.5 ECTS), of which general courses constitute minimum 20 credits, courses in speciality – minimum 36 credits, training practice – minimum 16 credits, diploma paper – minimum 8 credits.

HIGHER PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

Second level higher professional education programmes (ISCED 5A) are provided by universities and other higher education institutions. Studies last 4-5 years after completing general or professional secondary education. The 'Diploma of Higher Professional Education' is equivalent to level 5 (highest specialist qualification which provides for practical performance as well as abilities to plan and perform research and scientific work). Content comprises (for professional bachelor programmes, professional master programmes, higher professional education programmes), study courses, a practical placement and a qualifying thesis. The content of the study course and the practical placement is set by the respective occupational standards for certain professions. The volume of professional bachelor programmes is at least 160 Latvian credits (1 Latvian credit =1.5 ECTS), of which general courses constitute minimum 20 credits, theoretical courses of speciality and IT courses – minimum 36 credits, courses of occupational speciality – minimum 60 credits, free choice courses – minimum 6 credits, training practice – minimum 26 credits, state examination (including diploma or bachelor paper) – minimum 12 credits.

There are numerous programmes according to existing occupations: lawyer, electricity engineer, teacher, head of enterprises, pharmacist etc.

05 - CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS

Strategies for adult education in Latvia was defined by the Concept of Adult Education of Latvia for 2002-2005 (*Pieaugušo izglītības koncepcija 2002.–2005.gadam*) and are outlined in the National Lisbon Programme for 2005-2008, as well as in the Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013 (*Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādnes 2007.–2013.gadam*) – please see 0201. Adult education should satisfy both the need for personal development and public needs. It should aim to fulfil individual needs and complement existing levels of education and training regardless of age and levels of previous education.

In the Guidelines as one of the results is formation of intersectoral institution, which task would be to plan demand and offer of adult education, to coordinate financing including involvement and implementation of investment projects. Promoting availability of lifelong learning to all the social groups belongs to the ground principles of the document. To ensure the availability, following objectives were stated:

- To create conditions for the development of educated people e.g. by working out new standards and programmes, improving cooperation between teachers, students, employers and society, implementing new training practice projects etc.;
- To secure flexible second chance opportunities;
- To strengthen establishment of education support structure by involving specialists and securing career education for all;
- To improve formal and informal/non-formal education offer for social risk groups;
- To arrange territorial availability of lifelong learning;
- To lessen gender inequality regarding lifelong education.

0501 - BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

There is a long tradition of adult continuing education in Latvia usually with evening courses for working adults who had not completed primary or secondary education. The Education Law (*Izglītības likums* 1998) stipulates that adult education should be individually chosen to encourage personal development and improve labour market competitiveness. Adults have the right to follow programmes throughout their whole life, regardless of formal levels of education. On completion, adults receive a certificate of completion from the provider.

The Vocational Education Law (*Profesionālās izglītības likums* 1999) regulates two formal types of continuing education: vocational continuing

education and professional improvement. Vocational continuing education enables adults with previous education and work experience to obtain professional qualifications. They are always concluded by a specific qualification for a specific profession acknowledged by the state. Professional improvement enables people regardless of their age and previous education or professional qualifications to master systematized professional knowledge and skills corresponding to the requirements of the labour market. They lead to a formal qualification.

Adult continuing education may be classified as follows:

- enterprise staff training;
- training for unemployed people (organised and funded by the State);
- adult education provided in centres of adult education, evening schools, etc. supported by local government;
- various training programmes and projects financed by international and local donor institutions and funds, carried out by the state, local government, nongovernmental and other organizations;
- individual continuing education financed by individuals themselves.

CVET PROVISION

CVET provision is diverse. The most popular courses are in social sciences, entrepreneurial activity, law, services, health and social care, foreign languages, liberal sciences and arts, as well as engineering sciences, production and building, and teacher education. There are a number of organisations involved in CVET and the network of providers includes: ministries; employers' organisations; trade unions; university continuing education departments and their distance learning centres, the school of state administration; local training centres; chambers of commerce, centres of adult education, State Employment Agency and other educational organisations and associations.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The Latvian CVET system has a number of strengths and weaknesses summarised below.

Strengths:

- there is a network of providers for CVET for all target groups;
- cooperation with social partners is formalised through: the Tripartite Subcouncil for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment (*Profesionālās izglītības un nodarbinātības trīspusējās sadarbības apakšpadome*) (see 0302);

- teachers have pedagogical education;
- a central examination system eases comparison of quality across the country;
- providers are involved in international projects;
- the Ministry of Education and Science plans and determines educational policy, as well as controls its implementation;
- Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013 (*Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādnes 2007.–2013.gadam*) were approved at the beginning of 2007.

Weaknesses:

- ongoing territorial reform complicates the provision of adult learning opportunities;
- state funding for adult education is not sufficient and provision is not available to all population groups;
- there is no adequate system of guidance to support training on a lifelong basis;
- there is no separate system of CVET for teachers and trainers;
- the networking capacity of the different CVET providers and other organisations is not sufficiently developed;
- there is no system in place to accredit informally acquired skills and competences;
- provision of CVET across Latvia is not consistent.

Some of these issues are being addressed in the Guidelines for Lifelong Learning (2007-2013) which outline the vision for 2013 in terms of the needs of different target groups; mainstream development; policy aims and results indicators; and resources available (please see 0201).

0502 - PUBLICLY PROMOTED CVET FOR ALL

There are three main types of publicly promoted CVET:

- adult education;
- vocational continuing education programmes (informal training);
- professional improvement programmes (leading to formal qualifications).

All publicly provided CVET programmes longer than 480 hours and professional improvement programmes longer than 160 hours must be accredited by the Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*). Applications must include information about how the programme will be funded, the target audience, the length of the programme, where it will be implemented, etc. Providers must also be certified by the Ministry of Education and Science. If professional improvement programmes are shorter than 160 hours, provider must acquire a license from their local government for implementing such programmes.

The accreditation system is based on standards determined in the Vocational Education Law (1999). The principle of accreditation ensures that programme content meets the required standards of publicly provided vocational education and occupational standards. It also assists in the transparency of training; thereby, fostering the ability to recognise Latvian qualifications in other countries.

ADULT EDUCATION

Adult education can be pursued in state owned, local government, private with state investment or private which include enterprise training centres and other educational establishments. There were 6 036 education programmes, e.g. languages, computers, accounting, in which 290 279 adults participated (2006, CBS).

General education programmes and parts of vocational training can be pursued part-time during the evenings.

Most programmes need to be accredited but publicly owned providers can offer informal training programmes without obtaining a license.

VOCATIONAL CONTINUING EDUCATION

Programmes are determined by occupational standards and providers are accredited by the Ministry of Education and Science in cooperation with the social partners through the Tripartite Subcouncil for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment (*Profesionālās izglītības un nodarbinātības trīspusējās sadarbības apakšpadome*). The accreditation process follows an evaluation of the quality of the provision on offer. Providers can only offer courses in programmes which have been licensed and programmes must meet both educational and occupational standards. The accreditation procedure both for providers and programmes is outlined in the Vocational Education Law (1999).

Participants completing a programme take a centrally determined examination which are organised by the Ministry of Education and Science. They aim to ensure that all the graduates, obtaining a certain profession, have identical knowledge, competencies and skills. Social partners are also involved in evaluating examination performance.

PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMMES

At the end of professional improvement programmes, an examination following centralised procedures and methodologies are taken, which are stipulated by the Cabinet Regulations 'Regulations on the Procedure of the Centralized Professional Qualification Examinations' (*Centralizēto profesionālās kvalifikācijas eksāmenu norises kārtība*, 2007). To issue a certificate of professional improvement, the programme must be at least 160 hours long.

0503 - TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE AND OTHERS VULNERABLE TO EXCLUSION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Training for unemployed people is organised by the State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts agentūra*, SEA) which procures training from accredited educational institutions. Three types of programmes are available:

- vocational continuing education (see also section 0502);
- professional improvement programmes (see also section 0502);
- adult education programmes (see also section 0502);
- other educational programmes.

They are available if the professional qualifications and/or work experience fall short of the requirements of a profession and the person cannot find work. They are also available when somebody has lost their professional skills. To participate in courses, unemployed people must be at least 18. As demand outstrips supply, motivation is also taken into account when choosing participants.

Training programmes for unemployed people are financed from the state budget. They can also be organised according to employer proposals who are seeking employees with certain skills; where this is the case the employer must provide a job for the trained person lasting at least 1 year.

Vocational training for unemployed people is organized by the State Employment Agency (SEA). The SEA does not carry out training: it procures it from licensed education and training providers through a tendering and contractual procedure. In 2005 the number of persons engaged in the training activities considerably increased. The module training programmes, e.g. computers, languages, office work, for acquiring basic skills demanded in labour market had been improved and the number of them went up by 21 (SEA, Report on work results 2005). In 2007, 7.3% of the registered unemployed people involved in SEA activities participated in vocational training or professional development programmes.

The SEA is organised on a regional basis as are their training programmes. Providers are responsible for programme quality. The SEA examines the following in procuring training:

- material and technical requirements for implementing educational programmes;
- teachers comply to the education and professional qualification requirements of the training programmes;
- ability to meet the course and programme schedules and keep appropriate records.

The SEA should follow up on the training provision on a monthly basis and a statement is prepared indicating the performance of individual trainees.

TRAINING FOR OTHERS AT RISK OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

There are several groups at risk of social exclusion: young jobseekers aged 15-24; those of pre-retirement age (aged 55-64), those with low skills and a low level of education; disabled people; long-term unemployed (seeking work for more than 12 months); women returners; ex-prisoners and ex-drug addicts.

Young people are an especially important target group given that their rate of unemployment in 2006 was 12.2% (Eurostat, 2008), which is considerably higher than in other age groups, although lower compared to the EU-27 mean of 17.2%. Special attention is given to young people with low educational achievement, those who have been expelled and young offenders.

Generally, people with low educational achievement are also an important target group (in 2007, 18% of all jobseekers had only basic level education). At the end of 2007, 17.7% of registered unemployed have been unemployed for longer than a year.

ESF SPONSORED TRAINING PROVISION

In 2005, 42 educational institutions provided vocational training for unemployed people. They offered 83 training programmes. Most of this training is funded from the EU Structural Funds through the European Social Fund (ESF) project 'Training and Continuing education of the Unemployed' which started in October 2004. The objective is to provide vocational training in skills required on the labour market for both adults and young people who have obtained an educational level necessary to master a profession. In 2007 in the project 1379 unemployed were engaged, of which 19.2% were aged 15-25 years. After the completed training courses, e.g. foreign languages, computers, accounting, 93.5% unemployed got a job.

Another ESF project was the 'Providing Training for Social Exclusion Risk Groups, Including Information and Communication Support to Disabled Persons' (2004- June 2007). This promoted the integration of unemployed people at risk of exclusion by improving their professional qualifications and their competitiveness on the labour market. 312 unemployed participated in 2007, of which 24% were unemployed disabled people; 20% – long-term

unemployed people; 20.5% – young unemployed people (aged 15-25 years) with only basic education or less; 29% – unemployed after maternity/paternity leave, and 4.8% – ex-prisoners. Total funding of ESF projects was EUR 101 599 153 during the period 2004-2008.

In the framework of the ESF project 'Training and Continuing education of the Unemployed' during the period 2008-2010, the registered unemployed are offered to acquire vocational training, professional qualification improvement or change qualification. For people with basic education programmes of qualification level 2 (480-640 hours) are provided, the unemployed with secondary education – programmes of qualification level 3 (960 hours) (description of qualification levels see 0303). Professional improvement programmes do not include acquirement of qualification and lasts 160-320 hours.

0504 - CVET AT THE INITIATIVE OF ENTERPRISES OR SOCIAL PARTNERS

Enterprise provided training can assist employees to adapt to new tasks or to re-qualify to improve their career chances. For enterprises in Latvia participation in training is a voluntary activity and they tend to be more concerned with providing training to ensure their employees can adapt to new workplace demands and provide courses on-site or outside of the enterprise usually at private providers. The number of providers has been increasing, especially in the cities, to meet the training demands of enterprises.

Training is available to learn a completely new skill or to add certain competences (e.g. teamwork skills). Every training provider produces a study programme of different courses. Trainers may be employed by a training provider or may be contracted to provide a certain course directly by the employer. It is usually at the discretion of the provider to design their own training programmes but for certain regulated professions other bodies may be consulted to ensure that any occupational standards are met. The quality of provision is not otherwise monitored.

Enterprise management usually take the decision to provide training for their employees and the human resource and training departments would seek the most appropriate training depending on the size of the enterprise. Training courses would usually be funded by the enterprise although employees may have to contribute.

Enterprises tend to provide training through external or internal courses. Other means such as job rotation within the organisation may also be used. Study groups and participation in conferences can also constitute training provision.

REGULATION OF ENTERPRISE TRAINING

While enterprise provision of training is voluntary, some training issues are regulated with a number of Articles of the Labour Code related to training:

- Article 191 stipulates that employers must create the necessary conditions for employees to participate in education and training through combining work and study. This must be included in collective agreements, which are concluded between trade unions in the name of their members and employer concerning work and other social and economic issues; (see 0301)
- Article 192 stipulates that theoretical studies and practical training, if employees are trained on site, have to be organized during working hours or after working hours in accordance with legislation, collective agreement or labour contract according to the mutual agreement of the contractual parties;
- Article 193 stipulates that upon completion of training, employees are assigned a category or job title which reflects their specialty and qualification in accordance with the terms of the collective agreement or by mutual agreement of the contractual parties;
- Article 201 stipulates the employers must facilitate employee participation in all kinds of education and training.

Employers can grant study leave for employees to pursue studies while at work – this may be paid or unpaid depending on their employment contract or collective agreement. For State examinations, study leave must be granted for a minimum of 20 days for employees with minimum salary. In some regulated professions, e.g. doctors, nurses, training is compulsory.

Decisions on enterprise training are taken with the cooperation of the social partners. In 2000, the Tripartite Cooperation Subcouncil for Vocational Education and Employment (*Profesionālās izglītības un nodarbinātības trīspusējās sadarbības apakšpadome*) was organized with representatives from Ministries (Welfare, Economy, Finance, Justice, Agriculture, Education and Science, Regional Development and Local Government Affairs), the Association of Free Trade Unions and the Confederation of Employers. The task of the Subcommittee is to promote dialogue between employers and employees on training and employment issues.

In terms of provision, compared to other enterprises in the EU, Latvian enterprises follow the trend that the larger the enterprise the more likely it is that training will be available.

Table 1: Training enterprises as % of all enterprises, by size class (2005 vs. 1999)								
	SIZE CLASS (NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES)							
	TOTAL (%)		10 TO 49 (%)		50 TO 249 (%)		250 OR MORE (%)	
GEO	CVTS3	CVTS2	CVTS3	CVTS2	CVTS3	CVTS2	CVTS3	CVTS2
EU27	60	:	55	:	78	:	91	:
EU25	61	61	56	56	80	80	92	95
LV	36	53	31	49	56	70	76	91

Note: Cyprus, Malta, Slovakia and Iceland were not covered by CVTS2; Iceland was not covered by CVTS 3 either.

Source: Eurostat; Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS2, 1999 and CVTS3, 2005). Cited: 23/06/2008

0505 - CVET AT THE INITIATIVE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

There is little information on the amount of training undertaken at individual initiative in Latvia. Some universities have Continuing Education Departments which provide training for individuals. Other training options include self-education through informal study using media, audio and video cassettes, as well as computer learning. In frameworks of project (2006-2008) libraries have been equipped with computers and free wireless Internet which provides more opportunities for self-studies. There is a number of education centres, typically centres established by local governments, providing range of study courses, e.g. languages, computers, accounting.

As mentioned in 0504, employers can grant study leave for employees to pursue studies while at work – this may be paid or unpaid depending on their employment contract or collective agreement. For State examinations, study leave must be granted for a minimum of 20 days for employees with minimum salary. In some regulated professions, e.g. doctors, nurses, training is compulsory.

06 - TRAINING VET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

0601 - TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN VET

The VET system contains vocational education teachers which are both teachers and trainers. They provide a range of programmes: vocational basic education; vocational upper secondary education; and professional development and continuing education.

The work of the vocational education teacher is linked to:

- Implementation of education programmes according to national vocational education standards and occupational standards. Subject curricula are developed by teachers and are approved by the director of the education institution; (See 0703)
- Evaluation and analysis of the knowledge and skills of students acquired during the learning process;
- Development of creative attitudes and independence in learners;
- Search for and application of new ideas, technologies, and methods.

IVET TEACHERS

Vocational secondary programmes comprise general subjects, professional subjects, practical training and work placements. Teachers in the VET system are, therefore, teachers of general subjects or of a vocational subject. Practical training is taught by vocational subject VET teachers.

CVET TEACHERS

VET teachers for continuing education programmes (CVET) are not specially noted within vocational education terminology. They have the same requirements as VET teachers.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE FOR VET TEACHERS

Since amendments in the Vocational Education Law were implemented in January 2004, all VET teachers are now required to gain a teacher qualification. Since 2004, all VET teachers must be in one of the following situations:

- have a vocational qualification and teacher education;
- have a vocational qualification and participating in teacher education;
- have a higher teacher qualification or an academic degree and a teacher qualification.

According to the Education Law, the Ministry of Education and Science is the institution responsible for co-ordinating training and continuing education of teachers. Improving teacher training and professional development system was one of the main action points in the White Paper on the Development of Education in 2002-2005 developed by the Ministry of Education and Science and aimed at ensuring the quality of vocational training according to the needs of society and the economy.

The Vocational Education Development Programme 2003-2005 (please see 0201) is still the only document completely devoted to the issues related to the VET development. The sub-programme 'the quality of vocational education' included improvement of vocational school teacher education and the further education system, as well as improving teacher payment system and foster implementation of requirements concerning teacher qualification set in the laws and regulations (see above). There were following activities related to further teacher education: to promote correspondence of further teacher education to education content through updating continuous vocational teacher education programme example, to control correspondence of teacher study programmes to changing education content and methodology.

Regulations have gone further since 2005. The Cabinet Regulations the Procedure for VET Teacher Education and Professional Development (*Profesionālās izglītības pedagogu izglītības ieguves un profesionālās pilnveides kārtība*) were issued to stipulate procedure of acquiring different qualifications required for VET teachers who provide basic vocational education, lower and upper secondary vocational education and continuing vocational and professional development programmes, as well as procedure for teacher professional improvement. (See 0602).

0602 - TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN IVET

The Law identifies only one type of teacher and trainer in all kinds of VET: VET teacher. VET teachers can be categorised according to the level of programme taught: basic vocational and upper secondary vocational, although they can teach both levels if they have the appropriate education. All VET teachers can teach both IVET and CVET at basic and upper secondary level in educational establishments.

Table 1: VET teachers according education obtained

S C H O O L Y E A R S	NUMBER OF TEACHERS		EDUCATION LEVEL								
			BASIC	SECONDARY					HIGHER		
	TOTAL	WOMEN		TOTAL	INCL. GENERAL SECONDARY	INCL. SECONDARY VOCATIONAL	INCL. THOSE WITH PEDAGOGICAL EDUCATION	TOTAL	INCL. HIGHER PEDAGOGICAL	INCL. OTHER TYPE PEDAGOGICAL (>320H)	PHD
2000/ 2001	5 439	3 607	5	1 226	228	998	283	4 208	2 384	584	59
2002/ 2003	5 693	3 869	3	1 110	172	938	337	4 580	2 789	712	80
2004/ 2005	4 775	3 373	-	842	88	754	465	3 933	2 674	1 027	48
2005/ 2006	5028	3758	-	721	60	661	473	4307	3041	1164	59
2006/ 2007	4824	3413	-	590	70	520	304	4234	2867	734	50

Source: Educational Institutions in Latvia at the beginning of the school year 2006/2007. Riga: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2007

The Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 347 (October 2000, last amendments 2006) 'Regulations on Demands for Necessary Teacher Education and Professional Qualifications' (*Noteikumi par prasībām pedagogiem nepieciešamajai izglītībai un profesionalajai kvalifikācijai*) describe the following requirements:

- the vocational qualification requirements to be met by VET teachers;
- the training programmes which should be followed to qualify to work as a VET teacher.

Education for VET teachers is organised in higher education establishments. To apply, prospective students must have acquired either secondary vocational or general education diploma. There are two types of programme depending whether the teacher is training to be a general subject teacher in a VET school or a teacher of a specific vocation. Programmes for general subject teachers are the same whether the teacher will teach in the general education or VET system. Students study a higher teacher education and achieve a teacher qualification.

Professional education programmes are available in different occupational sectors to become a VET teacher. Graduates obtain a professional qualification or scientific degree in the branch. If the graduate would like to work in VET school, they should continue in a teacher education programme (for no less than 320 hours) at a higher education institution, adult continuing education centre or other training institution.

For those without a teacher qualification, who would like to work in VET schools as a VET teacher, there is a special programme (Vocational education teachers' professional improvement programme lasting no less than 320 hours) designed according to the occupational standard for VET teachers (2002). To apply, prospective students must have a secondary vocational or a higher professional education level. A combination of secondary education and a master of crafts qualification are also accepted.

The assessment is implemented through regular tests, exams, seminars, presentation, practical works, home assignments, at the end of studies students have to pass qualification exam, write and present diploma paper (evaluation in 10 grade scale, 10 – with distinction (*izcili*), 1 – very, very weak (*loti, loti vaji*)).

IN-SERVICE, CONTINUING TRAINING FOR VET TEACHERS

All teaching staff (VET teachers, school director, deputy directors, methodologists, interest education teachers, social pedagogue, librarian etc.) should participate in further training to improve their professional qualification every third year. Different continuing education programmes, courses, seminars, projects and other teacher tools could be used as long as they are not less than 36 contact hours in total. The Education Law states that a teacher is responsible for their professional development. Teachers have the right to use 30 calendar days every third year for professional development as a paid training leave. It is the responsibility of the director of a VET school to monitor their staff development.

Various organisations provide continuing training for VET teachers including school boards, municipalities, professional associations, the Vocational Education Administration, learning and examination centres, universities and higher education institutions, as well as continuing vocational training centres.

0603 - TYPES OF TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN CVET

There is only one type of occupation regulated by law which is a vocational education teacher. There are no differences between vocational education teachers in the IVET or CVET system, and teachers for continuing education programmes (CVET) are not specially noted within vocational education terminology. They have the same requirements as other vocational education teachers (see section 0602 Types of teacher and trainer in IVET).

VET teachers in VET schools provide both IVET and CVET courses, and there is no distinction regarding their education requirements. In enterprises

in-company teachers and trainers could be involved in local training, nevertheless, there is no regulation on their education requirements. Those involved in apprenticeship training should have a craftsman qualification (see 0404).

PRE-SERVICE TRAINING FOR CVET TEACHERS

The pre-service training is the same for all vocational education teachers. Professional training programmes are available in different occupational sectors within the higher education system. Graduates obtain a professional qualification or scientific degree in the branch. If the graduate would like to work in VET school, they should continue in a basic teacher programme (no less than 320 hours) at a higher education institution, adult continuing education centre or other training institution.

The training content and curricula are the same for all VET teachers: all must follow a higher education study programme in the appropriate field at a higher level (ISCED 5A). The assessment and quality monitoring structure is also the same.

IN-SERVICE, CONTINUING TRAINING FOR VET TEACHERS

All teaching staff (VET teachers, school director, deputy directors, methodologists, interest education teachers, social pedagogues, librarian, etc.) should participate in further training to improve their professional qualification every 3 years. Different continuing education programmes, courses, seminars, projects and other teaching aids could be used as long as they are not less than 36 contact hours in total. The Law on Education states that a teacher is responsible for their professional development. Teachers have the right to use 30 calendar days every third year for professional development as paid training leave. It is the responsibility of the headmaster of a VET school to monitor their staff development.

Various organisations provide continuing training for VET teachers including school boards, municipalities, professional associations, the Vocational Education Administration, learning and examination centres, universities and higher education institutions, as well as continuing vocational training centres.

07 - SKILLS AND COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGY

0701 - MECHANISMS FOR THE ANTICIPATION OF SKILL NEEDS

Skills needs are taken into account in vocational qualifications through the definition of occupational standards for different professions. Standards are developed by representatives of educational institutions and social partners through working groups organized by the Ministry of Education and Science. Occupational standards are confirmed by the National Tripartite Subcouncil for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment (*Profesionālās izglītības un nodarbinātības trišpusējās sadarbības apakšpadome*) and by the Minister of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*).

Occupational standards comprise a description of specific tasks and employee duties as well as the abilities and skills necessary to carry out those tasks. Standards also determine to which level of professional qualification each specific profession corresponds. When developing educational programmes, educational institutions have to ensure the acquisition of all the abilities, skills and knowledge mentioned in the occupational standards. By August 2008, 413 occupation standards had been drafted and approved, of which 47 were added to standard register in 2007, e.g. specialist of interior design, marin mechanic, operator on information input etc.

Information on skill needs is collected partly, but not systematically, at national level. A few sector analyses (e.g. in ICT and the construction industries with Phare support) and research into the changing labour market were conducted in recent years to provide information to plan education and training provision. In some regions or sectors employers' surveys are conducted by employment services to identify short-term annual needs. These surveys show less demand for people with low-level qualifications and an increasing demand for qualified workers and craftsmen, equipment and machine operators, and multi-professional skills.

0702 - BRIDGING PATHWAYS AND NEW EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

With the adoption of the Vocational Education Law in 1999, the system of vocational qualifications was created. The qualifications are closely related to general upper-secondary education and higher education. The introduction of centralized final examinations for vocational upper-secondary graduates, through the Cabinet Regulations 'Regulations on Procedure and Content of Central Examinations' (*Noteikumi par centralizēto eksāmenu saturu un norises kārtību*, 2006), ensures that everyone who obtains vocational upper-secondary education follows the same examinations and opportunities to enrol at higher education institutions as for general upper-secondary education.

If a college has an agreement with higher education institution, college graduates may continue their studies in the HEI already from the third study year. This is not stipulated in current laws and regulations but the pathway is grounded on mutual agreements between education institutions.

Theoretically there are possibilities to transfer between vocational and general education, however, this is not popular because, firstly, person loses time spent in the first learning setting – there is no credit point transfer system. Secondly, transfer from general to vocational education is impossible since general education students have not mastered vocational subjects. Theoretically it is easier to transfer from vocational to general education, although usually vocational students have comparatively low results in general subjects.

0703 - RENEWAL OF CURRICULA

VET curricula are developed by the education establishments (based on guidelines developed by Vocational Education Administration (*Profesionālās izglītības administrācija, PIA*) (see 0302) and based on two different standards:

- National vocational education standards are developed by the Ministry of Education and Science and adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers. Standards determine strategic objectives of education programmes, compulsory contents of education, basic principles and the assessment procedure in accordance with the level of education. The standards determine the relation of theory to practice, the general subjects versus professional ones and the distribution of general subjects;
- Occupational standards determine basic requirements of vocational qualifications, as well as specific demands for performing the tasks in a given profession. The standard is developed based on a common agreement among employers, trade unions and national and local government as well as institutions involved in vocational education and employment.

The guidelines provide a general overview of curricula writing methodology in line with laws and regulations (see 0301). As mentioned above, the content is stated by standards, while particular teaching methods according to the aims and objectives of education programme are selected by teacher.

Vocational education programme defines:

- objectives of the VET programme;
- content of the VET programme;
- implementation plan for the VET programme;
- enrolment requirements;
- financial, personnel and material resources necessary for implementing the programme.

Compulsory subjects in all VET programmes include Latvian, foreign language, computer science, history, and business foundations. VET programmes are evaluated by the Vocational Education Administration. The evaluation of programmes is carried after their development or renewal by the education institution, i.e. education programmes depending on expert evaluation are accredited either for 2 or 6 years. In 2007 the Administration performed evaluation of 1 179 vocational programmes and harmonisation of 588.

08 - ACCUMULATING, TRANSFERRING AND VALIDATING LEARNING

0801 - ACCUMULATING, ACCREDITING AND VALIDATING FORMAL LEARNING

There are no provisions to transfer qualification from IVET to HE. However, to entry in higher education, according to the Cabinet Regulations 'Regulations on Procedure and Content of Central Examinations' (*Noteikumi par centralizēto eksāmenu saturu un norises kārtību*, 2006) both vocational and general secondary education students have to pass centrally organised state examinations in general subject to acquire certificate of general secondary education, which serves as enrolment document to higher education. (see 0702)

If a person wishes to change education institutions, they are provided with grade report, which they submit to the other education institution. The head of school decides in which form/year the candidate may continue their education. However, the transfer between general and vocational education is rather rare because, firstly, person may lose time spent in the first learning setting – there is no credit point transfer system on basic and secondary level. Secondly, transfer from general to vocational education is impossible since general education students have not mastered vocational subjects. Theoretically it is easier to transfer from vocational to general education, although usually vocational students have comparatively low results in general subjects and, thereby, cannot fulfil entry requirements.

Validation processes are regulated by the Cabinet Regulations No. 451 'Procedure for issuing documents that certify the acquisition of vocational education and professional qualifications and certify the acquisition of part of an accredited vocational education programme' (2005). This stipulates that state-recognized documents certifying vocational qualifications are awarded for the completion of an accredited programme. Qualifications are issued by the training provider and give access to labour market.

To gain a qualification, students must fulfil all the requirements of the educational standard, i.e. to receive a grade in all the subjects, practical studies and practical placement and pass a qualification examination with a grade no lower than 5 'satisfactory'.

The Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers 'Regulations on professional qualifications that are acquired by passing centralized professional qualification examinations' (2000) stipulate that, in the majority of cases, to obtain a third level professional qualification, a student has to take centralized professional qualification examinations. The content of exams is developed by the Vocational Education Administration under the Ministry of Education and Science with the assistance of the social partners who are usually heads of the examination commission. Students usually take the exams at learning and examination centres; thereby, ensuring that everyone who obtains a qualification is tested and evaluated using the same methods.

Graduates receiving a state-recognized document certifying a vocational qualification may work in the profession. If the profession is regulated (e.g. construction technician, physiotherapist, seaman), the qualification holder may work only under the supervision of a certified specialist. To obtain independent practice rights, it is necessary to work under supervision of a certified specialist for 2-5 years and then to receive a certificate issued by the relevant competent institution (usually a professional association). The certification exam developed by trade unions usually tests the applicant's capabilities to apply their abilities and skills in practice.

0802 - ACCUMULATING, ACCREDITING AND VALIDATING NON-FORMAL/INFORMAL LEARNING

There is no legislation regulating the recognition of non-formal education. Each educational institution that provides non-formal educational programmes determines the conditions for issuing certificates. Employers determine whether this document of non-formal education is sufficient to occupy a certain position, or not. Trade unions organizing continuing education of employees choose themselves which non-formal educational programmes are recognized.

Employers can also choose and determine which non-formal educational programmes to recognize. Larger enterprises have staff training plans where it is stated which non-formal educational programmes the particular specialist must attend.

Non-formal education is not recognized in formal education. The Vocational Education Administration (*Profesionālās izglītības administrācija*) in the frameworks of the ESF National Program project Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners (2005-2007) supervised the development of the first methodology for recognition of informal and non-formal education in Latvia. The recognition will be carried out taking into account knowledge, skills and competences described in occupational standards for qualification levels 1-3 (see 0401) and for unregulated professions. Experts suggest two variants for procedure of recognition, in one case a candidate has to pass qualification exam, in other case there is an interview and qualification examination.

However, to implement the methodology, a legal base and institutional should be developed. The new Vocational Education Law, which is still under preparation, is expected to outline the procedure of evaluation and recognition non-formal/informal education.

0803 - IMPACT OF EU POLICY COOPERATION

Since 2005 Latvian National Europass Centre, as a part of the Academic Information Centre, has been established to supervise the implementation of Europass programme. The demand for the Mobility documents has increased: 62 Europass Mobility Passes were issued in 2005, while in 2007– 196 passes

were issued to persons with the mobility experience in the Leonardo da Vinci, Erasmus and Comenius programmes and with the wish to obtain one.

Linking the Latvian professional qualification system to EQF has started. On higher education level the system has been set already; legally it will be introduced with the new Higher Education Law, which is submitted to the Parliament for discussion. In vocational education NQF will be integrated through the new concept of Vocational Education Law.

At present (2008), a new Vocational Education Law is being worked out; this Law is expected to stipulate introduction of the European Credit System for VET within national education system.

0804 - FACILITATING EU MOBILITY

Geographic mobility since 1998 has been fostered in the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci programme. The implementation of the Leonardo da Vinci programme is supervised by the State Education Development Agency. In 2007 a successful start was given to 60 preparatory visit projects. 166 mobility, innovation of transfer, preparatory visit projects were confirmed in 2007. In 2007, in total 660 persons (VET students and teachers, people in labour market, counselling specialists and other representatives of VET personnel) received grants and participated in the mobility projects. 93 mobility projects for 2008 have been confirmed with a total funding of EUR 1 130 000. In 2007 the agency has supervised 374 projects, including Lifelong Learning Policy and Leonardo da Vinci II period.

The recognition of academic and professional diplomas acquired abroad is the responsibility of the Academic Information Centre (*Akadēmiskās informācijas centrs, AIC*). The AIC evaluates, according to the Education Law, the level of a qualification acquired abroad compared to the Latvian educational system and issues its statement. This statement together with the educational document is submitted to the education provider or employer. The AIC's diploma evaluation is free of charge.

The final decision on recognition is made by:

- the Ministry of Education and Science – to continue studies at primary or secondary education level;
- Higher education institution – to continue studies at higher education level;
- employer – to work in the non-regulated professions.

The academic recognition in Latvia is organized in line with Lisbon Convention, ratified in 1999. The Law on Higher Education Establishments, 1995, (article 84; 85) states the recognition of foreign credentials and study periods. Latvia uses the national credit point system where 1 Latvian credit point = 1.5 ECTS. Since 2004 all higher education providers issue diploma supplements for all graduates to provide better transparency of qualifications.

According to Law on Higher Education Establishments (*Augstskolu likums*, 1995), recognition of study period acquired abroad is carried out by the *HEI*, in which studies are continued. The *HEI* states:

- To which study programme study period corresponds;
- In what way student may continue their studies in the programme;
- If necessary, state additional requirements to be fulfilled in order to continue studies within particular programme.

The Academic Information Centre, according to the Law on Regulated Professions and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications, (2002) is an information institution for regulated professions. The recognition decision for regulated professions is taken by competent bodies according to the Cabinet Regulations. The recognition of foreign qualifications is necessary to be allowed to work within a profession in Latvia.

To implement EU directives regarding recognition on professional qualifications, the Law on Regulated Professions and Recognition of Professional Qualifications (*Par reglamentētajām profesijām un profesionālās kvalifikācijas atzīšanu*) was adopted in June, 2001. The Law comprises Part A: Regulated professions in the Republic of Latvia (July 2001); and part B: Recognition procedure of professional qualifications of foreign citizens (January 2003). By entering EU, the recognition procedure set in the regulations was altered in line with EU guidelines provided in the Directive No. 2005/36/EC.

The Law on Regulated Professions and Recognition of Professional Qualifications (*Par reglamentētajām profesijām un profesionālās kvalifikācijas atzīšanu*) and the Cabinet regulation No 337 of August, 2002 list the regulated professions in Latvia. The Law is followed by all necessary amendments and regulations of the Cabinet to be in line with new developments.

09 - GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING FOR LEARNING, CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT

0901 - STRATEGY AND PROVISION

The Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija, IZM*)(see 0302), and the Ministry of Welfare (*Labklājības ministrija*) are responsible for career guidance and counselling.

The Ministry of Welfare's policy until September 2007 was realised by the Professional Career Counselling State Agency (*Profesionālās karjeras izvēles valsts aģentūra, PKIVA*), when the organisation according to the Support to Introduction of Career Education within Education System (2006) was incorporated into the State Employment Agency as Career Service Department. The Agency operates in accordance with the Labour Law (2002), the Law on Social Security (adopted in May 1995) and the Law on the Support for the Unemployed and Job Seekers (adopted in May 2002), which states:

Measures for reducing unemployment include guidance and counselling and consulting services, which are offered to those wishing to pursue education or who are working or wish to participate in remunerated work; the aim is to promote the competitiveness of these people in the labour market and to offer help in the choice of a professional career.

Clients of the Career Service Department receive the following services:

- individual and group consultations on career and educational choices and professional suitability;
- individual consultations on employment related questions;
- workshops for young people and adults on career development and questions on seeking employment;
- consultations on educational opportunities in Latvia and abroad.

PKIVA was created in 1987; in 2006 it had 5 regional information counselling centres and 19 district consultation rooms in the all regions.

The Education Law (*Izglītības likums* 1998) stipulates that district local governments ensure the provision of guidance and counselling for children and young adults while the Vocational Education Law (*Profesionālās izglītības likums* 1999) stipulates that the Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija, IZM*), organizes guidance and counselling for unemployed people and for labour market research. In 2000 the Ministry of Education and Science through the State Education Development Agency (*Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra, VIAA*) as a part of Euroguidance Network created the National Resource Centre for Vocational Guidance (*Profesionālās orientācijas informācijas centrs, POIC*), which provided information on vocational education in Latvia and other EU countries. Since 2007 the Centre has been reorganised into the Career Support Department of

the Agency. The Department, has no regional or local offices and is partly financed by the Ministry and partly by the EU Leonardo da Vinci programme. It collaborates with similar organisations in Europe, together forming the Euroguidance Network.

In 2005 the Ministry of Education and Science launched and the State Education Development Agency implemented the ESF project 'Fostering the Implementation of Vocational Guidance Provision and Careers Education Programmes within the Educational Sector' (2005-2008) to improve the accessibility and quality of vocational guidance provision and careers education at providers. This project fostered the implementation of initial and continuing training of guidance practitioners, developing training materials and information resources. Main activities include:

- professional upgrading of guidance practitioners, which consists of development of basic and specialised courses for teachers and sequent training of guidance practitioners/teachers (3,700 teachers in 2006 and 1 525 teachers in 2008);
- development, testing and piloting methodological materials (student resource books and facilitator/teacher kits) for general education (Grades 7-9, Grades 10-12) and for vocational education schools and informative materials (educational data base, e-catalogues, self-assessment e-tests) to be used for careers education purposes, and teacher education to learn using the materials;
- development of a national qualification framework and a 2-year study programme for guidance counsellor, and academic personnel education to implement the study programme.

As a result, several informative materials about education and career opportunities have been published; in 2006 professional master education programme for career counsellors has been licensed and started to implement in 5 higher education institutions. Furthermore, in 2007 an informative online data base about education opportunities (www.niid.lv) has been launched.

In schools activities of career education are implemented, schools cooperate with local guidance centres, some schools have career consultants. However, in majority of cases the career education is responsibility of class teacher, therefore, development of methodological materials was rather helpful.

0902 - TARGET GROUPS AND MODES OF DELIVERY

The Career Service Department of State Employment Agency offers career counselling for all: young people about to choose a career; adults – whether employed, unemployed or returning to the labour market; disabled people; parents; and educators. The Department offers not only individual but group consultations and seminars. The total number of people who used the services of the Agency in 2006 is 53 463 (*PKIVA 2006 work overview - Riga, 2007*).

Various counselling methods are used including: individual consultation in questions on education, profession choices and career planning; group consultations for determining the optimal vocational field; consultation on educational possibilities; consultation on the content of a profession; determining the professionally important qualities, skills, individual characteristics, etc.; workshops - for young adults 'You and your career'; workshops - for job seekers 'How to find a job'; consultations in improving methods for job search and CV-writing.

The State Education Development Agency supports implementation of careers education policy within education sector. The State Employment Agency centres throughout the country provide individual career counselling.

0903 - GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PERSONNEL

The Career Service Department (*Karjeras pakalpojumu departaments*) of the State Employment Agency includes Career Information Unit and Career Service Methodology Unit, as well as 24 district consultation rooms in the all regions (2008). The total number of employees in the Department is 15, while 58 specialists are working as career counsellors and/or psychologists. The requirement for working in the Department is higher education in psychology (academic or vocational) but higher teacher education is also acceptable.

There are seven employees in the Career Support Department of the State Education Development Agency, of which two form the Project Implementation Unit.

The ESF project 'Fostering the Implementation of Vocational Guidance Provision and Careers Education in the Educational Sector' (2005-2008) is implemented by the State Education Development Agency (*Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra*) to improve the accessibility and quality of vocational guidance provision and careers education of providers (see 0901). This project operates within the framework of lifelong learning by fostering the implementation of initial and continuing training of guidance practitioners, developing training materials and information resources.

10 - FINANCING - INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

1001 - BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONCERNING FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRAINING

As in many other countries, primary funding aims are to increase cost-effectiveness. The largest share of the funding is intended for higher education. Funding allocated to education increase from year to year, e.g. state subsidies for VET from 2003 to 2007 have increased by 71%, but actual amounts due to the inflation and other factors remain insufficient.

In order to implement priorities determined in the Guidelines for the Development of Education for the period of 2007-2013 (2006) and to compensate raising costs, amendments in the Cabinet 'Regulations on the expenditures minimum per one student for implementing vocational education programmes' (*Noteikumi par profesionālās izglītības programmu īstenošanas izmaksu minimumu uz vienu izglītojamo*, 2004, 2007) were introduced. Expenditures per student in IVET was EUR 1 262 (2005) and EUR 1 241 (2004) according to Ministry of Education and Science data, which is still lower than the EU average.

1002 - FUNDING FOR INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Initial vocational education and training (IVET) is financed according to the Law of Education (*Izglītības likums*), Law of Vocational Education (*Profesionālās izglītības likums*), and Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers (*Ministru Kabineta Noteikumi*).

Subsidies come from the state general budget, local government and private sources. State subsidies are determined by the Cabinet in conformity with the numbers of students and the related per capita costs. Providers bid for funding every year. Once the state budget is confirmed, schools receive funding and spend it to realise their educational programmes according to legislation.

As the majority of VET schools are state-owned and run, the national budget is the main source of funding. The overall budget for VET was EUR 79 908 839 in 2007 (EUR 46 401 181 in 2005) comprising 89.9% of subsidies from the state general budget (EUR 71 873 633) and 9.7% of their own income (paid services provided by VET institutions, amounting to EUR 7 781 107). In order to implement priorities determined in the Guidelines for the Development of Education for the period of 2007-2013 (2006) and to compensate raising costs, amendments in the Cabinet 'Regulations on the expenditures minimum per one student for implementing vocational education programmes' (2004, 2007) were introduced.

Table 1: Expenses per student for IVET from State budget					
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
EXPENSES TOTAL (EUR)	1 025	1 129	1 168	1 242	1 262
SALARIES (EUR) (TEACHERS, SUPERVISORS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION)	457	521	570	622	682
OTHER ORDINARY EXPENSES (EUR) (MISSIONS, PAYMENTS FOR SERVICES, ENERGY AND WATER, MODERNISATION OF TEACHING AIDS, MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, STIPEND AND COMPENSATION OF TRANSPORT EXPENSES, MAINTENANCE OF STUDENT HOSTELS, EXPENSES FOR ORPHANS, EXPENSES FOR CULTURAL EDUCATION AND SPORT)	396	441	431	451	529
CAPITAL INVESTMENTS (EUR) (IMPROVEMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE)	27	30	21	22	51

Source: the Ministry of Education and Science

In 2005, 42% of funds allocated to VET schools were for recurrent costs and just 4% towards capital investment. Staff costs account for the greatest part of the current expenditure (54%).

1003 - FUNDING FOR CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, AND ADULT LEARNING

There is no precise data on total investment in CVET. While funding from the state budget can be assessed, other sources are not so easy.

PUBLICLY PROVIDED CVET: ADULT EDUCATION

According to data from the Central Statistical Bureau (*Latvijas Republikas Centraļā statistikas parvalde, CSP*), annual state budget expenditure on adult education institutions has decreased. There are several sources of funding for adult education: participant's fees, employer investment, investment of non-governmental organisations, payments from local governments and state budgets. The rise in 2005 is related to an increase in funding for the State Employment Agency due to implementation of structural funds projects.

Table 1: Funding of adult education institutions (including funding for the education and re-qualification of the unemployed and officer training), thousand EUR, %

		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
TOTAL ANNUAL FUNDING	EUR	15 124 .36	18 479 .37	15 030 .17	16 495 .87	21 184 .97	34 320.1
OF WHICH:							
FROM THE STATE BUDGET	EUR	7892 47.9%	6778 44.8%	7839 42.4%	4361 29%	5018 30.4%	420019.8%
FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGETS	EUR	560 3.4%	592 3.9%	648 3.5%	636 4.5%	416 2.5%	859 4%
PARTICIPANTS' FEE	EUR	3747 22.7%	3784 25%	3270 17.7%	3842 25.5%	4601 27.9%	7777 35.3%
FEES PAID BY ENTERPRISES AND ORGANISATIONS FOR TRAINING THEIR EMPLOYEES	EUR	4037 24.5%	3674 24.3%	3981.5 21.5%	4714 31.3%	5685 34.4%	7581 35.7%
OTHER SOURCES	EUR	228	297	2741	1426	776	1068

Source: CSB data, 2005, 2006

State funding for adult education (including some training for unemployed people) has decreased by 28% between 2000 and 2005. Some local governments allocate a fixed percentage from the budget to adult education.

CVET IN ENTERPRISES

According to CSB data (2006), in 2005 enterprises allocated EUR 7 581 thousands for training their employees, which is 35.7% of total funding for adult education.

The tax system does not promote employer investment in training. Only approximately 4% of enterprises have a training budget and vocational training is mainly available only in large, stable enterprises. These enterprises usually have enough funds as well as a human resource development strategy; some also have their own training centres.

Table 2: Cost of CVT courses as % of total labour cost (all enterprises), (2005 vs. 1999)

	SIZE CLASS (NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES)							
	TOTAL (%)		10 TO 49 (%)		50 TO 249 (%)		250 OR MORE (%)	
GEO	CVTS3	CVTS2	CVTS3	CVTS2	CVTS3	CVTS2	CVTS3	CVTS2
EU27	1.6	:	1.1	:	1.4	:	1.9	:
EU25	1.6	2.3	1.1	1.5	1.4	2.4	1.9	2.5
LV	0.8	1.1	0.3	1.3	0.8	0.8	1.2	1.3

Source: Eurostat; 2nd and 3rd continuing vocational training survey in enterprises (CVTS2 and CVTS 3).

Note: Total costs: direct costs, labour costs of participants and balance of contributions to national or regional training funds and receipts from national or other funding arrangements.

Cyprus, Malta, Slovakia and Iceland were not covered by CVTS2; Iceland was not covered by CVTS 3 either.

Smaller enterprises tend to invest less in training. They tend to have other priorities in terms of their survival within the market.

1004 - FUNDING FOR TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE AND OTHER GROUPS EXCLUDED FROM THE LABOUR MARKET

Although education funding constitutes a considerable share of GDP, expenditure on training for unemployed people is low. In 2002 it was 0.0305% of GDP and in 2004 - 0.0162%. Active employment measures are financed from the social insurance budget but they constitute less than 10% of funding.

Table 1: Trends of expenses in CVET for unemployed (EUR)

EXPENSES	2002	2003	2004
GDP	8 130 000	9 031 420	10 513 429
EXPENSES IN CVET FOR UNEMPLOYED	2 485 281	1 968 501	1 704 670
OVERALL SPENDING ON CVET FOR UNEMPLOYED AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP	0.0305%	0.021%	0.0162%
EXPENSES FOR THE TRAINING PER UNEMPLOYED PERSON	437	383	404

Source: CSB data, 2005

The main institution for implementing labour market policy and programmes for unemployed people is the State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra*) which is a public corporation under the Ministry of Welfare. It remains a governmental organisation funded by the state but operates

independently. It is financed from the State base budget, income from the provision of services, gifts and donations, as well as from other resources in accordance with regulations.

With the new Law to Support Unemployed people and Jobseekers, the range of clients of the State Employment Agency has been broadened; nevertheless, the funding has not been increased. Expenses in CVET for unemployed were EUR 1 704 670 in 2004 and EUR 9 222 005 in 2005, for the latter figure including funds from ESF.

1005 - PERSPECTIVES AND ISSUES: FROM FUNDING TO INVESTING IN HUMAN RESOURCES

The National Lisbon Programme of Latvia for 2005-2008 (*Latvijas nacionālā Lisabonas programma 2005.-2008.gadam*), is geared towards promoting growth and employment. The measures planned to expand and improve investment in human capital (guideline 23) are:

- To improve the capacity of the education and training system and students to adapt to changing labour market requirements, through balancing the number of students in general and vocational education programmes taking into account the results of long-term forecasts of the labour market;
- To improve availability of education at all levels and to reduce the number of students expelled from educational establishments;
- To increase the availability of higher education and improve its conformity with labour market needs.

Other measures funded within the programme under different guidelines but related to financing include:

- Implementing a procedure to regularly analyse the use of government resources and to assess the volume and results of the resources used (under guideline 24);
- Financing grants for students and staff to participate in mobility programmes (Socrates and Erasmus);
- Investing more in the provision of guidance and counselling services;
- Ensuring easier access to training for socially excluded groups (e.g. through investing more in distance learning provision as well as investing in more rehabilitation programmes).

The National Strategic Reference Framework of Latvia 2007-2013 (*Valsts stratēģiskais ietvardokuments 2007.-2013.gadam, 2007*) issued by the Ministry of Finance lays down a common strategy for the obtaining the EU Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund resources, and provides coordination between the funds and the operational programmes. Regarding education

and science, the document includes two priorities implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science:

- Higher education and science, i.e. modernisation of HEI and professional improvement of academic personnel, adapting qualifications to the demands of labour market;
- Education and skills, i.e. greater investment in vocational and general education to promote education quality, fostering availability of lifelong learning, strengthening the capacity of education and lifelong learning providers.

The Reference Framework includes the following ESF and ERAF programmes implemented by the Ministry of Welfare:

- ESF Support to employability, i.e. providing training for the unemployed, improving legislation of work security, introducing local employability plans, promoting gender equality in the labour market etc;
- ESF Support to social inclusion, i.e. support to risk groups, social services in regions, etc;
- ERAF Support to social infrastructure, i.e. professional rehabilitation infrastructure, organising delivery of new technical aids to branch offices, improving infrastructure of labour market institutions, etc.

11 - EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS, TOWARDS AN OPEN AREA OF LIFELONG LEARNING

1101 - NATIONAL STRATEGIES RELATED TO POLICY PRIORITIES, PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES AT EU LEVEL

According to the National Lisbon Programme for 2005-2008 (*Latvijas nacionālā Lisabonas programma 2005.-2008.gadam*), the system of vocational education must ensure that the knowledge and skills acquired in Latvia and abroad are comparable and that graduates of VET in Latvia have the opportunity to continue their education abroad and compete on the international labour market.

The priority tasks for the government include:

- continue improving educational programmes in accordance with labour market needs;
- improve the quality assessment system;
- continue wage reform and increase teaching staff to maintain current levels, as well as to encourage further education opportunities for teachers including in international educational activities;
- increase opportunities for student mobility to improve education and acquisition of particular professions;
- ensure co-operation between science, higher education and business, which would ensure a faster transfer of innovations into production;
- ensure high-quality comprehensive services of vocational guidance and counselling;
- apply services of the State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra, NVA*) and the Social Integration Centre to various population groups with special educational needs.

A lifelong learning system that would provide opportunities for the population to adapt a changing labour market should be created. Therefore, at the beginning of 2007, the Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*) prepared the Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013 (*Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādnes 2007.–2013.gadam*) which outlines the vision for 2013 in terms of the needs of different target groups; mainstream development; policy aims and results indicators; and resources available.

No cooperation agreements with other countries exist in the field of VET.

1102 - IMPACT OF EUROPEANISATION/INTERNATIONALISATION ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Latvia has taken part in the Leonardo da Vinci programme since 1998.

According to the State Education Development Agency (*Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra*), which supervises the implementation of the Leonardo da Vinci programme, in 2007 a successful start was given to 60 preparatory visit projects. 166 mobility, innovation of transfer, preparatory visit projects were confirmed. The projects were developed by state and local government institutions, state and private education establishments, trade unions, non-governmental organisations and enterprises. In 2007, in total 660 persons (VET students and teachers, people in labour market, counselling specialists and other representatives of VET personnel) received grants and participated in the mobility projects.

93 mobility projects for 2008 have been confirmed with a total funding of EUR 1 130 000. In 2007 the agency has supervised 374 projects, including Lifelong Learning Policy and Leonardo da Vinci II period.

Latvian people can and do participate in vocational education and training abroad. In 2001 a law 'On the recognition of regulated professions and professional qualification' was adopted determining the procedure for the recognition of vocational qualifications in regulated professions obtained in foreign countries (not only in EU countries).

1103 - AUTHORS, SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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www.izmpic.gov.lv Vocational Education Administration (*Profesionālās izglītības administrācija*)

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