



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training



EN



# Country report

# Latvia

2016 update to the European inventory  
on validation of non-formal and informal learning

Author: Agnese Rusakova

## Acknowledgements

This country update was produced by Agnese Rusakova, as part of the 2016 update to the European inventory on validation, a project managed by ICF (lead consultants: Jo Hawley, Ilona Murphy and Manuel Souto-Otero) under the supervision of a Steering Committee formed by Cedefop (Ernesto Villalba, Hanne Christensen, and Jens Bjornavold), the European Commission (Koen Nomden, Lieve Van den Brande, Martina Ni Cheallaigh, Corinna Liersch and Anna Nikowska) and the ETF (Anna Kahlson and Eduarda Castel-Branco). The report has benefitted from feedback from the European qualifications framework advisory group (EQF AG) members for Latvia as well as other national-level quality assurance (QA) contacts with expertise in validation.

Work was carried out under Cedefop's service contract No 2014- 0182/AO/ECVL/JB-EVGAR/2016-Validation-Inventory/014/14.

### Disclaimer:

The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission, Cedefop, the ETF, the ICF, the EQF AG members or the other QA contacts. Neither the European Commission nor any person/organisation acting on behalf of the Commission is responsible for the use which might be made of any information contained in this publication. The publication has neither been edited nor proof-read by Cedefop's editing service.

# 1 Introduction and Evaluation

## 1.1 Abstract

In 2011 the national system of validation was set up through the specific creation of a legislative framework. Since then more than 2 800 individuals have acquired professional qualifications after completing the process of competence assessment. The validation process is best described as an adaptive system of multiple frameworks covering different sectors. The evaluation of validation activities is embedded within the regular quality assurance systems of each sector in order to make the process reliable and credible. The validation of prior learning and experience is based on learning outcomes/level descriptors that form the NQF levels. These are grouped into sets that are compliant with the agreed Occupational Standards which are equivalent to qualifications obtained through formal education programmes. The system anticipates that public funding will be available for maintaining the infrastructure necessary for the validation process; the users themselves covering the costs of participating in the validation process.

## 1.2 Main changes since the 2014 update

The Government of the Republic of Latvia, led by the Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma 2014-2016, continued the development of activities within the validation of non-formal and informal learning. These activities were undertaken in line with the action measure 'Development of Competencies', and especially action lines [283], [286], [290-297] of the mid-term policy planning document - National Development Plan of Latvia 2014-2020.

The Report on the Implementation of the State Action Plan published at the end of 2015 states that the government has ensured the further development of the assessment procedures of the professional competences acquired through non-formal learning. The Report also states that the validation of non-formal and informal learning has to be continued by the next government, led by Maris Kucinskis as of February 2016 (as part of the succession principle).

Following the setting up in 2011 of the national system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in general education and vocational and higher education, more than 2 800 individuals have acquired professional qualifications as a result of undergoing the process of competence assessment. Even though the number of awarded qualifications differs from year to year, the general trend is for the numbers to increase. Thus the number of awarded qualifications in 2011 was 35, in 2012 - 401, in 2013 - 833, in 2014 - 643 and in 2015 - 939. The fluctuation in numbers is due to various governmental activities that promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning in general and specifically aimed at different professions. Currently the validation of prior learning can be undertaken in more than 100 vocational qualifications.

The national system for validating non-formal and informal learning is best described as multiple frameworks covering different sectors. The validation of prior learning and experience is based on learning outcomes/level descriptors that form the NQF levels. The system aims to provide diplomas or to decrease the time necessary for higher education studies in order to certify knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

Previously, validation had a sectoral focus due to the lack of a national system of validation. Now, the national system has been developed and the legislative framework for validation in general education and vocational and higher education has been prepared. Currently, the main activities concern further adjustments to the system. The respective regulations of Cabinet ministers stipulate the procedure for validation in general education and vocational and higher education.

As mentioned in previous update reports, the vocational sector was given priority due to the economic crisis in Latvia and the need for measures that would promote employability.

Validation in the higher education sector is decentralised. Validation in general education and vocational education is also decentralised, but to a lesser extent, with the State Education Quality Service delegating responsibility for vocational validation to educational institutions and examination centres. The Law on Institutions of Higher Education delegates the responsibility for recognising prior learning to higher education institutions.

The 'Methodology of Validating Non-formal Learning and Assessing Skills'<sup>1</sup> which was developed in 2007 as one of the prerequisites for successful implementation of the validation system in Latvia also bestowed the necessary prior agreement of social partners upon a trustworthy coordinating institution. The higher degree of centralization of validation in general education and vocational education is particularly beneficial. This is because it has more transparent control over the process at national scale and easier data accumulation and data mining (for the sake of future policy evaluation) at national level. This issue is related to the large number of players at general and vocational education level, and is in line with the declared political priority of the vocational sector. A well defined responsible stakeholder in the case of general and vocational education – the State Education Quality Service - evaluates the institutions before approving them to carry out validation. This process means that society trusts the validation outcomes. Autonomous higher education institutions are fewer in number and therefore their activities are more visible and trusted in line with their existing high reputation in society. It is anticipated that the acceptance of the Latvian external higher education quality assessing agency into the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) will extend trust. It is also legally possible that higher education institutions in Latvia will be able to choose any agency from EQAR to perform accreditation which will further extend trust.

The State Education Quality Service is one of the most visible national institutions actively involved in coordinating good practice, and creating national principles to promote consistency within validation. Another important player in the field is the Academic Information Centre (Latvian ENIC/NARIC, Latvian national coordination point for EQF, National Europass Centre and Refernet), which recently has also taken over the function of external higher education quality assurance in Latvia.

Thus the State Education Quality Service as a member of the ESF project 'Development of sectoral qualifications system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education' (2010-2015) implemented one of the aims of the project: to ensure the validation of professional knowledge, skills, and competences acquired through non-formal learning of 80 individuals. This pilot validation activity not only promoted the possibility of recognition of prior learning in society, but through an evaluation survey, also served as the basis for the collection of good practice and detection of the most common pitfalls in the recently established framework. The pilot allowed the development of the recommendations for educational institutions and examination centres: 'Assessment of Professional Competences Acquired through Non-formal and Informal Education System'<sup>2</sup>, published recently in 2015. The recommendations are developed in order to facilitate a common understanding of the quality assurance principles in validating the professional competencies of participating stakeholders as well as provide better understanding of the involved parties' rights and responsibilities.

<sup>1</sup> "Methodology of Validating Non-formal Learning and Assessing Skills", 2008 (Latvian: Neformālās izglītības atzīšanas un prasmju novērtēšanas metodika)

[http://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/metmat/06\\_neformala%20izglitiba.pdf](http://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/metmat/06_neformala%20izglitiba.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Assessment of Professional Competences Acquired through Non-formal and Informal Education System, 2015 (Latvian: Ārpus formālās izglītības sistēmas apgūtās profesionālās kompetences novērtēšana), [http://www.ikvd.gov.lv/assets/files/pub/metodiskie/09\\_IKVD\\_RPUS\\_FORM\\_IZGL.pdf](http://www.ikvd.gov.lv/assets/files/pub/metodiskie/09_IKVD_RPUS_FORM_IZGL.pdf)

The Academic Information Centre is an active member of the RPL network and collects and disseminates evidence gathered at an international level. Workshops of national importance on both the subject and its associated issues are organised on a regular basis by the Academic Information Centre. The Bologna Process report 2012 stated that Latvia is among the countries where the prior learning recognition procedures at the national level have been developed but the actual implementation of the procedures at the grass-roots level in higher education is not demonstrably applied<sup>3</sup>. To address this issue the Academic Information Centre is currently involved in a project<sup>4</sup>.

Also the State Education Quality Service runs regular hands-on seminars for stakeholders taking part in the validation process.

There are no specific policies/projects/initiatives in Latvia targeted on the validation of skills for migrants/refugees. This is related to the small number of migrants/refugees in Latvia – at the moment it is neither financially viable nor practically feasible to create a separate, alternative access path to the validation system for this group. Therefore, the state funded language courses are helping migrants/refugees to gain access to the existing mainstream validation system.

There are no major obstacles to further developing the system. Key improvements which are already in train include a more structured career guidance system, implementation of graduate monitoring and the introduction of ECVET).

## 2 National perspective

### 2.1 Overarching approach to validation

Before January 2014 validation was regulated by the revised national Lifelong Learning Strategy, Guidelines for Lifelong Learning 2007-2013<sup>5</sup>, adopted on 23 February 2007. This policy document sets out the basis for developments prior to 2014.

The Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020<sup>6</sup>, valid from May 2014, define the main terms such as formal, non-formal and informal education and explain the general principles of education policy as a model of the lifelong learning system. Validation is seen as an important constituent, providing the system with the needed elasticity. These guidelines emphasise that validation measures will benefit human capital and increase employability. Validation is seen as an instrument for proving professional competence, and also for decreasing the time necessary for higher education studies.

Validation is seen as an integrative element necessary for successful development of the lifelong learning system in Latvia. Other important aspects include the promotion of non-formal adult education, development of NQF, provision of career consultations and further education measures for targeting social groups – unemployed people, youth, low skilled individuals (e.g. not finished basic education). Validation is seen as a tool for making the links and providing access to different forms and levels of education.

<sup>3</sup> The European Higher Education Area 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report, 2012, [http://www.ehea.info/uploads/\(1\)/bologna%20process%20implementation%20report.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/uploads/(1)/bologna%20process%20implementation%20report.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Recognition of Prior Learning, Nr.559264-EPP-1-2014-1-LV-EPPKA3-BOLOGNA (more information in Latvian: <http://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/eiropas-savieniba/erasmus-2014-2020/ieprieiks-iegutas-izglitibas-pielidzinasana>)

<sup>5</sup> Guidelines for Lifelong Learning 2007-2013, (Latvian: Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013.gadam) 23.02.2007, revised 09.12.2009, [http://izm.izm.gov.lv/upload\\_file/Izglitiba/Muzizglitiba/Pamatnostadnes.pdf](http://izm.izm.gov.lv/upload_file/Izglitiba/Muzizglitiba/Pamatnostadnes.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020, (Latvian: Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādnes 20162014..-2020.gadam) 22.05.2014, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=266406>

The basic principles of implementing a validation system of non-formal learning in Latvia are based on the draft of the European Guidelines for Validating Non-formal and Informal Learning.

The Law on Institutions of Higher Education and Vocational Education Law on Education state that anybody is able to validate independent learning by passing examinations run by any of the educational institutions providing a relevant study programme.

There are no laws in place recognising the exclusive rights of certain individuals to access validation initiatives. The exceptional status sometimes is ensured by means of publicly funded measures that are targeted at certain social groups such as unemployed people, young people, early school leavers. However, these measures are usually aimed at providing additional non-formal learning opportunities, not at validating existing knowledge. Another measure that is often used for promoting the employability of certain target groups is a skills audit, which is available as part of free career consultations provided by the State Employment Agency. It is expected that career advisors are informing their clients about the possibility of validating their prior learning.

Initially, the policy of validation in Latvia was formed during the period of economic downturn and therefore a political decision was taken that validation would be targeted primarily at individuals willing to receive vocational qualifications - official certificates. This would then support them to enter the labour market and allow further acquisition of competences, if a full qualification could not be awarded at the time.

The above methodology created a pathway (defined by procedures and assessment criteria) for validating vocational competences acquired in a non-formal way (as defined by the professional standards and without having to become part of the formal education system) but nevertheless obtaining a state-recognised vocational qualification document. The obtained certificate is identical to the one acquired through the formal learning pathway and does not contain any indication that the document has been obtained through the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

## 2.2 Validation in education and training

In the 'Procedure for the Evaluation of the Professional Competence Acquired Outside Formal Education System' the methodology for assessing non-formal learning and skills in the vocational qualification system has been defined for acquiring vocational qualifications from level 1-3<sup>7</sup>, without affecting the tertiary levels and regulated professions. The validation of qualification in tertiary levels are regulated by 'Procedure of Validating the Learning Outcomes Achieved through Prior Education or Professional Experience'. Validation at tertiary levels is achieved by using declarative methods and evidenced with documentation.

Thus the validation system of non-formal and informal learning can be divided into the following levels<sup>8</sup>:

1. assessment with the aim of awarding an elementary or general secondary education attesting document – a certificate that sets out the education level attained;
2. assessment with the aim of awarding a vocational qualification<sup>9</sup> that is identical to the qualification that can be obtained by studying through any vocational education programme;

<sup>7</sup> There are 5 vocational qualification levels in the Latvian system, levels 4 and 5 refer to the higher professional qualifications. See more: Vocational Education Law, June 10, 1999 (Latvian: Profesionālās izglītības likums) <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=20244>

<sup>8</sup> Website of the Ministry of Education of Science, Republic of Latvia, Recognition of Knowledge and Skills Acquired in Other than Formal Education (Latvian: Ārpus formālās izglītības sistēmas iegūto zināšanu un prasmju atzīšana), <http://izm.izm.gov.lv/nozares-politika/izglitiba/muzizglitiba/7261.html>

3. assessment within higher education with the aim of making the education process more flexible and accessible.

The 2011 public review by the Ministry of Education and Science concludes that the recognition of non-formal and informal education is obtainable in the field of general education. Accordingly, the Cabinet of Ministers issued in November 2015 Regulation no.591 regarding the 'Procedures for Enrolment of Students in and Discharge from General Educational Institutions and Special Pre-School Education Groups and the Mandatory Requirements for Moving Them up into the Next Grade'. This regulation states that the educational institution is allowed to accept a student as an external student (a person who develops the knowledge and skills as required by the state general educational standard and who passes the examinations for assessment or acquires the educational certificate).

In order to support the validation of non-formal and informal learning in vocational education, different measures have been put in place to adjust and structure the local system. Some new elements have been introduced e.g. the creation of a sectoral qualification system, implementation of a modular approach for acquiring a basic profession, review of the basic occupational standards and basic requirements of specialised qualifications, and development of the validation of skills acquired in areas other than formal learning.

On 10 June 2010, the Parliament approved amendments in the Vocational Education Law with Section (29.<sup>1</sup>) declaring the following: '(1) The assessment of vocational competence shall take into account the requirements of the respective Occupational Standard; (2) The accredited educational institutions and accredited examination centres can be delegated to perform the validation process of competence acquired through non-formal and informal learning; (3) The regulation on the validation process of competence acquired through non-formal and informal learning is defined by the Cabinet of 'Ministers'.

These amendments led to the issue of regulation No. 146 on the 'Procedure for the Evaluation of the Professional Competence Acquired Outside Formal Education System' (22 February 2011). The amendments also set out the competence of ensuring the validation of non-formal learning. The regulation prescribes the procedure for the validation of the professional competence acquired outside the formal education system, which conforms to the professional competence of the first, second or third level vocational qualification. However (EQF level 2-4) it does not apply to professions. The validation of professional competences is regulated by special regulatory enactments. According to the regulation, the professional competence shall be validated by an accredited educational institution or an examination centre, to which the State Education Quality Service has delegated the performance of this task.

The State Education Quality Service is an institution subordinate to the MoES. Currently, the State Education Quality Service has delegated this task to around 40<sup>10</sup> accredited educational institutions and examination centres. The first candidate for validation took the examination of assessing the professional competences acquired outside formal education in July 2011 and successfully acquired the vocational qualification of cook, as published in news media<sup>11</sup>. The professional competence is assessed according to the procedure defined by the regulation no.662 issued by Cabinet of Ministers on the Procedure of Vocational Qualification Examination in Accredited Vocational Education Programmes. There are no

<sup>9</sup> The tertiary level is comparatively autonomous in Latvia; includes both academic and professional higher education programmes. Here and further in the text the term "vocational qualification" is used to mean education at the secondary level.

<sup>10</sup> Data from Website of State Education Quality Service (Latvian: Izglītības kvalitātes valsts dienests) <http://www.ikvd.gov.lv/arpus-formala-izglitiba/>

<sup>11</sup> News Portal DELFI, "First Diploma for Non-formal Education is Acquired by Cook in Daugavpils" (Latvian: Pirmo diplomu par neformāli iegūtu izglītību saņem pavārs Daugavpilī) <http://www.delfi.lv/news/national/politics/pirmo-diplomu-par-neformali-iegutu-izglitibu-sanem-pavars-daugavpili.d?id=39831357>



limitations other than a minimum age of 18. It is believed that only individuals older than 18 can learn as external candidates because students must be able to organise their own learning process in order to meet the requirements of general primary education or general secondary education programme. This regulation does not relate to the vocational qualification examinations in the higher education sector, as well as several education programmes in regulated fields of study such as military defence.

To improve accessibility and flexibility in the higher education sector, in July 2011 the MoES drafted, and the Parliament adopted, amendments to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education. The amendments allow higher education institutions to assess the learning outcomes achieved in an individual's previous education or professional experience and, if they meet the programme requirements to recognise them and to give appropriate credit points for it. Regulations from Cabinet of Ministers define the procedure of validating the learning outcomes in higher education. Following the amendments to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, on 10 January 2012, regulation No. 36 on "Procedure of Validating the Learning Outcomes Achieved through Prior Education or Professional Experience" was issued by the Cabinet of Ministers. This regulation defines both criteria and procedure. The decision regarding the recognition of learning outcomes is taken by the Commission of Learning Outcomes Recognition established in the relevant higher education institution or college.

The basis for the assessment of professional competence are the professional competences as defined by the Occupational Standards<sup>12</sup>. The procedures foresee that the candidate for validation undergoes four stages of validation (identification, documentation, assessment, certification) for agreeing the extent to which his/her competence gained in a non-/informal way conforms to the professional competences as defined by the respective Occupational Standards. The four stages are taken in combination, only the application intensity of each element differs.

As already mentioned in the previous section, the policy of validation in Latvia was formed during the period of economic downturn and therefore the validation of vocational qualifications became the policy focus. The creation of the validation system was financially supported in order to achieve this objective. EU funding was used.

There is no specific policy in place that considers Open Educational Resources (OER) learning. There are still insufficient validation candidates who are aiming to validate the OER results to assert that validators have strategies or practices in place. It is anticipated that the validation of learning undertaken by means of OER will be approached on an individual basis, within the existing legislative framework.

## 2.3 Validation and the labour market

Latvia has a well developed network of career advisors. However, according to the Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020, the EU Council recommends Latvia to create an overarching, more structured career guidance system. The research, 'Career Development Support System Assessment in Latvia'<sup>13</sup> states that the career guidance in Latvia is not systematic, and there is no sufficient knowledge available on the link between education and the labour market. It is stated that these and other weaknesses of the existing career guidance system might impede the promotion of the validation process.

<sup>12</sup> Regulations Regarding the Classification of Occupations, Basic Tasks Corresponding to the Occupation, Basic Qualification Requirements and Procedures for the Use and Updating of the Classification of Occupations, adopted 18.05.2010. (in Latvian: Noteikumi par Profesiju klasifikatoru, profesijai atbilstošiem pamatuzdevumiem un kvalifikācijas pamatprasībām un Profesiju klasifikatora lietošanas un aktualizēšanas kārtību), <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=210806>

<sup>13</sup> Research "Career Development Support System Assessment in Latvia", I. Jaunzeme, 2014 (Latvian: Karjeras attīstības atbalsta sistēmas darbības izvērtējums Latvijā), [http://viaa.gov.lv/files/news/19710/petijums\\_emkapt\\_kaas\\_1\\_.pdf](http://viaa.gov.lv/files/news/19710/petijums_emkapt_kaas_1_.pdf)



Apart from more traditional career guidance events like 'Career Days' and professional skills competitions such as 'Constructing a Bridge from Spaghetti', another important measure that helps young people gain an insight into the skills necessary for a profession and that becomes more and more popular each year are the 'Shadowing Days'. Pupils are invited to spend a day with the professional of their choice at their workplace. Shadowing Days are organised at higher education level as well, where pupils may shadow a student of their choice and thus experience the studying of the subject of their choice. In the framework of 'Career Week', an interactive computer game called 'Try out the Profession' was launched as part of a popular social network in Latvia – more than 6 600 users have played the game so far.

In 2015, the Cabinet of Ministers accepted "Career education implementation plan for state and municipal general and vocational education institutions 2015-2020", which includes career education development guidelines. It is planned to develop career guidance implementation models, provide professional development for teachers – career consultants and other relevant specialists, in order to promote the availability of career guidance in general and vocational education institutions. There are different schemes to ensure the participation of social partners as stakeholders in the process of awarding qualifications including qualifications awarded through prior learning outcomes validation. Social partners as stakeholders (e.g. representatives from ministries and subsidiary agencies, representatives from employers' unions, chambers of trade and commerce) are involved in working groups designing the standards, and also participating in examinations awarding the qualification. Thus, for example, the regulation No.662 on 'Examination Procedure of Professional Qualification in Accredited Professional Education Programmes' (30 August 2011)) stipulates that the qualification examinations are run by the accredited vocational education institutions in cooperation with the National Centre for Education or Latvian National Centre for Culture and sectoral representatives. This regulation requires the participation of social and sectoral representatives in developing both the centralised examination programme and its contents. Moreover, according to the above mentioned regulation the examination commission should include people employed in the respective branch of the economy and have the necessary education level in consonance with the respective thematic field of the Latvian educational classification. In addition, the regulation stipulates that after concerted action with the chair of the qualification examination at the examination institution, the qualification examination or part of it can be monitored in observer status by representatives from the National Centre for Education, Ministry of Education and Science, State Education Quality Service, local-government, professional organisations, labour unions, associations and foundations.

The Latvian apprenticeship system exists on a small scale mainly in the craft sector in traditional professions which include builder, potter, lathe operator, carpenter. It is implemented quite separately from other education sectors. The Law on Crafts (*Par amatniecību*, 1993) stipulates the organisational basis for crafts, basic regulations for apprenticeship and the procedure for starting craftsman qualifications. The main organisation involved is the The Latvian Chamber of Crafts<sup>14</sup> (*Latvijas Amatniecības kamera*) which is a self-governing organisation. 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 a tutor). To apply for the examination of the journeyman, the candidate, who is not a student, has to attend educational courses on the history of crafts. To apply for the examination of the master craftsman, the candidate has to have eight years' work experience in the field. Both candidates of journeymen and master craftsman have to be members of the Chamber's sectoral or territorial craft association. Apprenticeship qualifications do not provide access to regulated professions nor do they give access to continue in the formal education system.

<sup>14</sup> Website of Latvian Chamber of Crafts (Latvian: Latvijas Amatniecības kamera) [www.lak.lv](http://www.lak.lv)

The vocational qualification acquired is recognised throughout Europe. This is considered a great benefit to the candidate. The awarding of qualifications started in 1994 soon after the Law on Craftsmanship was introduced in February 1993. The awards are funded through membership fees paid to the organisation of Vocational or Territorial craftsmen. The government does not provide funding for the Latvian Chamber of Crafts. The Latvian Chamber of Crafts is a non-profit association.

Many of the companies (usually the larger ones with employees of over 250<sup>15</sup>) have their own training centres e.g. Centre for Training and Recreation of Banks of Latvia, which issue non-formal education certificates that can be validated later.

### 2.3.1 Skills audits

The State Employment Agency<sup>16</sup> is the main public provider of career consultation and employment services. The services are free of charge. The agency can assist with the following: the choice of profession, organisations which provide training for the relevant profession, key characteristics and skills required, how to audit professional skills on return to the job market, how to take account of any individual health problems, methods of exploring professional interests, skills and qualities, and planning professional development. There are several kinds of services available:

- Individual career consultation - professional suitability; advice on how to search for an alternative profession whilst taking into account such factors as education and health; assessment of a client's personality as well as features of the profession; preparation for job interview and the requirements of the job market; and assistance in the writing of CV and covering letter. The consultation includes advice about the educational system of Latvia and study opportunities, and information about professional descriptions and professional standards.
- Individual career diagnosis consultation which covers an assessment of the dispositions and competencies in specific professions in comparison to client attributes.
- Individual self-determination career consultation such as self-assessment to determine professional suitability.
- Group career consultation through a lecture on educational and career opportunities or alternatively a diagnostic lecture on the assessment of an individual's skills and motivation before taking part in active employment measures
- Electronic support including website information about careers, choice of a profession and jobseeking.

The recommendations for educational institutions and examination centres, 'Assessment of Professional Competences Acquired through Non-formal and Informal Education System' (2015), that were drafted on the basis of the experience accumulated during the pilot validations, emphasise the significance of the skills audit. Validation candidates often lack the necessary knowledge on skill requirements of the respective occupational standard as well as being inadequately informed on the contents of the programmes offered by the formal education providers. Therefore, competent advisors are essential in order to ensure that the identification stage through the self-conducted skills audit is executed in an effective and correct manner. Advisors can include careers advisors or the advisor from the qualification awarding institution. The existing system, where consultations are available free of charge for the identification stage is considered favorable since this reduces the cost of the validation process for the individual. Thus in vocational education, according to

<sup>15</sup> Results of the research: "Application of E-training in Companies of Latvia" (Latvian: Pētījuma „E-apmācību lietošana Latvijas uzņēmumos” rezultāti) <http://www.novitus.lv/e-learning-definition.php>

<sup>16</sup> Website of State Employment Agency (Latvian: Nodarbinātības Valsts Aģentūra), subordinated to Ministry of Welfare, [www.nva.gov.lv](http://www.nva.gov.lv)

regulation No. 146 on ‘Procedure for the Evaluation of the Professional Competence Acquired Outside Formal Education System’, prior to submitting documents, the institution for the validation of professional competence shall, free of charge, provide consultations to the candidate regarding the requirements of the relevant professional standard and the process of the vocational qualification examination.

## 2.4 Validation and the third sector

Usually non-profit organisations, especially youth organisations, are active as stakeholders in the different government working groups which are developing legal frameworks.

The private sector is becoming more involved in non-formal learning in Latvia. Stakeholders such as employers, trade unions, and students are involved in forming education policy through their representation in bodies such as the Higher Education Council. The Vocational Education and Employment Tripartite Cooperation Sub council (employers and trade unions) is actively involved in updating and developing Occupational Standards. Social partners actively engage in forming the legal framework, for example representatives of the Employers’ Confederation of Latvia and the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia were in the working group that established the draft amendments of the Vocational Education Law.

As a further example, the working group referencing the LQF to the EQF (Self-assessment report on the Referencing of the Latvian Education System to the EQF and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area, 2011) included representatives of the Latvian Chamber of Crafts, Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments, Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees, Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre, Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, Employers’ Confederation of Latvia, Latvian Students Union, Higher Education Council, Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Education and Science, Academic Information Centre, National Centre for Education, Association of Colleges in Latvia, Latvian Rectors’ Council.

In 2015, 221 497 Europass CV documents have been completed online by Latvian citizens. Latvian is not among the top 15 countries of residence for Europass CVs and Language Passports completed online during 2015.

The Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020, set an objective of increasing the number of organisations using Youthpass certificate for validating skills gained through non-formal education, as well as the number of young people participating in non-formal education. Thus the numbers are expected to grow by 50/750 in 2017 and 100/1 500 in 2020.

## 3 Links to national qualification systems

In October 2010, as a result of referencing the National Qualifications Framework to the EQF, an eight-level Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) was established. The level descriptors are based on learning outcomes, and formal education qualifications are linked to these levels. The level descriptors were developed with reference to national education and occupational standards, as well as the EQF level descriptors. These level descriptors are included in the regulation and are based on learning outcomes that are expressed in three dimensions:

- Knowledge (knowledge and comprehension)
- Skills (ability to apply knowledge, skills of communication and general skills)
- Competence (analysis, synthesis and assessment)

The new LQF, similarly to the EQF, consists of eight reference levels and includes all stages (basic, secondary and higher education) and types (general, vocational, academic and professional) of education<sup>17</sup>).

On 16 April 2013, the Cabinet of Ministers issued Regulation No.202 on the “Procedure of Issuing State-recognised Higher Education Certifying Documents”. This regulation updates the content of the higher education Diploma Supplement corresponding to the results of referencing the national education system in Latvia to the EQF. Under provisions of the regulation, the Diploma Supplement has to indicate the level of qualification according to the vocational qualification level of Latvia, European/Latvian Qualifications Framework level or the EHEA Qualifications Framework level.

Amendments to two relevant laws related to the qualification framework - the Law on Education (18 June 2015) and Law on VET (23 April 2015) were adopted. The Law on Education defines the Latvian Qualification Framework, characterises levels and highlights learning outcomes. The Law on VET states the correspondence of the levels of professional qualifications to the levels of the Latvian Qualification Framework and starting from 1 January 2017, all state recognised professional education documents should include an appropriate level of the Latvian Qualification Framework.

The learning outcomes that are to be related to level descriptors are basically fulfilling the role of exchange currency for validating prior learning and experience. There is no overarching validation institution that can validate experience in all the QF levels at once. Educational institutions in the respective sector of education are delegated the role of validator and the ministry acts as the supreme and final supervisor of the process in the country.

The national strategy for validation does not relate to basic levels of education, but only levels 3 and up of the EQF. According to the national system of education, the acquisition of basic education, or the continuation of acquisition of basic education until reaching the age of 18, is mandatory (Education Law, 1998).

### **Credit systems**

The national qualifications framework or qualifications system and its qualifications are based on learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where these exist, to credit point systems (Summary of the self-assessment report on the Referencing of the Latvian Education System to the EQF and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area, 2012).

One credit point in Latvia is defined as one-week of full time study. The scheduled amount of full-time study for one academic year is worth 40 credits. Recalculating in European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) points, the amount of Latvian credit points has to be multiplied by 1.5.

## **4 Standards**

The standards that are used for validation and for the assessment - are the same – so called Occupational standards.

Regulations on ‘Procedure for the Evaluation of the Professional Competence Acquired Outside Formal Education System (Regulation no. 146), stipulate the procedure on how the professional competence that corresponds to the Latvian professional qualification level 1-3, i.e. the LQF level 3-4 obtained outside formal education is assessed.

<sup>17</sup> More information on the Website of the National Coordination Point for referencing the Latvian Qualifications Framework to the European Qualifications Framework (Latvian: Nacionālais Kontaktpunkts): [www.nki-latvija.lv](http://www.nki-latvija.lv).

For higher education (LQF level five-eight), the Cabinet of Ministers on 10 January 2012 approved regulation No. 36 on 'Procedure of Validating the Learning Outcomes Achieved through Prior Education or Professional Experience' issued in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995, corresponding amendments in force since 1 August 2011). This regulation determines the procedure for the assessment and recognition of learning outcomes (for higher education level) obtained during the previous education (meaning non-formal and informal learning) or professional experience, as well as criteria for recognition.

## 5 Organisations and institutions involved in validation arrangements and its coordination

According to the statutes of the Ministry of Education and Science (Regulation No. 528), it is this body that develops the state education standards, organises the development of Occupational Standards corresponding to the fourth and fifth professional qualification levels, and maintains and updates the register of Occupational Standards. Ministry of Education and Science coordinates the activities of institutions involved in implementing the vocational education and awarding Professional qualification, as well as promoting the development of adult non formal education. It also coordinates the recognition of professional qualification in regulated professions and accredits the higher education programmes.

The State Education Quality Service (founded in 2009) is an institution of direct administration under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Science<sup>18</sup>.

Both of the above mentioned institutions are responsible at national level for their activities that are prescribed by normative acts. There is no player at the regional and local level with responsibility. The general education and higher education institutions, vocational educational institutions or examination centres act at the social partner and provider levels.

### General Education

Regulation no. 591 regarding the 'Procedures for Enrolment of Students in and Discharge from General Educational Institutions and Special Pre-School Education Groups and the Mandatory Requirements for Moving Them up into the Next 'Grade' (6 November 2015) states that the educational institution is allowed to accept a student as an external student.

The State Education Quality Service monitors the quality at the general education level. The evaluation and review is done within the accreditation cycle.

### Vocational Education

In vocational education, according to regulation No. 146 on "Procedure for the Evaluation of the Professional Competence Acquired Outside Formal Education System" (adopted as of 22 February 2011) the candidate for validation of professional competence submits an application to the respective accredited educational institution or an examination centre, to which the State Education Quality Service has delegated the performance of this task. The professional competence is validated during an examination of vocational qualification.

If none of the institutions is eligible to perform the validation of the professional competence in the vocational qualification selected by the candidate, the candidate submits the application to the State Education Quality Service with a request to organise a validation of professional competence in this qualification. Within a month the State Education Quality Service has to take a decision on organising the validation process of the professional competence of the particular candidate. This has to be done in accordance with the procedure for the process of vocational qualification examinations in accredited vocational

<sup>18</sup> Information on State Education Quality Service [www.ikvd.gov.lv], Ministry of Education and Science, Republic of Latvia, website, <http://izm.gov.lv/lv/ministrija/struktura/padotibas-iestades>

education programmes, specified in regulatory enactments, and the candidate then has to be informed.

Prior to submitting the documents, the institution for the validation of professional competence shall, free of charge, provide consultations to the candidate regarding the requirements of the relevant profession standard and the process of the vocational qualification examination.

The institution for the validation of professional competence organises and implements a vocational qualification examination in accordance with the procedure for the course of vocational qualification examinations in accredited vocational education programmes, as specified in regulatory enactments. The institution ensures, that the candidate can become assessed in the relevant educational programme at the nearest vocational qualification examination.

Upon a written request of the candidate, the institution for the validation of professional competence has to organise and implement a vocational qualification examination in accordance with the procedure for the course of vocational qualification examinations in accredited vocational education programmes, specified in regulatory enactments within two months after receipt of the application.

To the candidate who, in the vocational qualification examination, has received a validation not lower than 5 (in 10 scale grading system) – satisfactory, the institution for the validation of professional competence shall issue a document certifying the State recognised first, second or third level vocational qualification. (EQF level 2-4).

The candidate may contest the validation received in the vocational qualification examination by making a submission to the head of the institution for the validation of professional competence within a month from the day when the decision of the examination commission entered into effect. A decision of the head of the institution for the validation of professional competence may be appealed to a court in accordance with the procedure prescribed by the Administrative Procedure Law.

There are no prescribed requirements on the prior level of education of the candidate for validation. The only requirement is that the person should be at least 18 years of age.

The State Education Quality Service monitors quality at the vocational education level (except higher professional education). The evaluation and review is done within the accreditation cycle. Information on accreditation of the institution and the programmes, as well as expert recommendations (made during peer review of external accreditation process) are taken into account when considering the application for delegation of conducting the validation (Internal regulation No.6 of the State Education Quality Service, 'Procedure of Delegating The Conducting of Validation of Vocational Qualification Acquired Outside Formal Education System').

### Higher Education

The person submits an application for validation of prior learning (meaning non-formal and informal learning) and experience to the respective higher education institution or college. The application contains information on:

- acquired prior learning or experiential learning outcomes,
- the arguments about how the prior learning outcomes conform to the requirements of the corresponding content of the programme or part of it,
- the objective of the validation application,
- name of the institution and educational programme (or part of it),
- the way in which and period of acquiring professional experience that led to acquiring the prior learning outcomes,



- the period during which the learning outcomes were acquired,
- the identification of the study programme within which the prior learning and prior experiential learning outcomes should be validated

The person has to attach the documentation certifying the above mentioned facts of acquiring prior learning and prior experiential learning outcomes, which can be attached in electronic form if the requirements of electronic document completion are met correctly. Within a month the commission makes a decision.

According to the Law on Higher Education Institutions (issued by Parliament in 1995, amendments in force since 1 August 2011) the individual may challenge the decision of the commission by submitting a claim to the rector of the higher education institution or the director of the college. A decision of the head of the institution may be the subject of appeal to a court in accordance with the procedure prescribed by the Administrative Procedure Law.

In case the commission lacks some information necessary for meeting an objective and comprehensive decision on either approving or declining the application for validation, then the commission may request additional information, correspondingly extending the deadline for decision making.

In cases of a positive decision, the person has to pass the examination necessary for recognising the prior learning outcomes within the study programme or the respective module.

In order to validate the learning outcomes, the following requirements have to be met:

- at least one credit point can be awarded for the obtained learning outcomes,
- the prior education allows admitting the person for studies in the respective study programme (this means one cannot be granted access based on validation; Latvia is among the countries not granting access through RPL, but only credits towards the degree<sup>19</sup>),
- the person shows corresponding knowledge, skills and competences necessary for awarding the respective credit points,
- the submitted documents contain clear, unambiguous and complete information on the obtained learning outcomes.

Regulation No.36 on 'Procedure of Validating the Learning Outcomes Achieved through Prior Education or Professional Experience' (10 January 2012) makes further distinction in higher education between prerequisites for the validation of learning outcomes and validation of experience.

Prior experiential learning can be validated within the part of the programme that is intended for the internship, and the learning outcomes have to be achieved within the same professional sphere that corresponds to the educational thematic field of the study programme. The prior experiential learning can be validated also within the course or module that anticipates achieving professional knowledge, skills and competence (the above mentioned regulation concerns only the fourth and fifth level vocational qualification, but not the regulated professions).

According to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (issued by Parliament in 1995, amendments in force since 1 August 2011), the prior experiential learning can be validated in both academic and professional programmes, but only for 30% of total credit points. The

---

<sup>19</sup> This restriction relates to quality assurance rules, especially in cases, when the relevant accumulated prior learning and experience of the candidate covers different sectors of formal education. Due to the different quality assurance system players in the different sectors of education, the higher education institutions are administratively not accredited to validate knowledge towards e.g. a vocational education degree.



validated learning outcomes are certified by certificates issued by the higher education institution or college that has conducted the validation procedure. The individuals may accumulate certified study and use it later towards the degree by awarding credit points for it.

One credit point may be awarded for the prior learning or prior experiential learning outcomes if outcomes are obtained within the period of at least one week (40 academic hours).

The prior learning or prior experiential learning outcomes cannot be listed as and replace the passing of the final examination, state examination, or winding-up examination (qualification examination or promotional work) of the respective study programme.

## 6 Information, advice and guidance

### 6.1 Awareness-raising and recruitment

There is no major research conducted on the recruitment channels in Latvia. The basic dissemination channels are the monitoring organisations such as MoES, State Education Quality Service, organisations involved internationally in associated activities such as Academic Information Centre (Latvian Enic/Naric), Europass, institutions responsible for validation procedures, institutions directly working with the main target groups such as State Employment Service, and last but not least word-of-mouth of successful validation users.

### 6.2 Information, advice and guidance

There is no particular body dedicated to promoting validation activities. There are a number of institutions involved in providing information, advice and guidance, but they do so as part of everyday activities.

The MoES is the supervising organisation for the system of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

The accredited education institutions are involved in providing guidance before and during the validation process.

The State Education Quality Service provides guidance before the validation process and mainly for vocational education.

The State Employment Agency provides information and guidance before and after validation.

The Academic Information Centre<sup>20</sup> (Latvian Enic/Naric) has been actively involved in Latvia in distributing the information on the validation. The Academic Information Centre is the member of the vocational education information network ReferNet established by Cedefop. The centre also hosts National Europass activities, and is the Latvian coordination point for referencing the LQF to the EQF(NCP). The Academic Information Centre deals with information before and after validation.

A newly established, higher education external quality assurance agency operates under the umbrella of the Academic Information Centre. Activities are organised in line with European Standards and Guidelines. Quality assurance procedures and also the recognition of prior learning safeguards the monitoring of quality as stated in ESG 1.4.paragraph.

<sup>20</sup> Website of the Academic Information Centre (Latvian: Akadēmiskās informācijas centrs) <http://www.aic.lv>

### 6.3 Measures to enhance the awareness of validation initiatives and practices amongst guidance practitioners

The State Education Quality Service organises regular workshops and knowledge exchange for the institutions carrying out validation in the VET sector. For institutions in the higher education sector, workshops are organised by a variety of institutions, including most often MoES and the Academic Information Centre.

Thus currently both MoES and the Academic Information Centre are members in a project aimed at developing recognition of prior learning in higher education in Latvia, which states enhancing the awareness of validation initiatives and examining practices by guidance practitioners among the main objectives of the project<sup>21</sup>.

## 7 Validation practitioners

### 7.1 Profile of validation practitioners

They are mainly teachers at the institution in question, but they can also be other stakeholders depending on the legal examination requirements for acquiring the specific vocational qualification (e.g. employers or ministry representatives required to participate in the examination commission).

### 7.2 Qualification requirements

The qualification requirements for validation practitioners are the same as for the standard teachers/academic staff – a sufficient qualification that can be proven factually and often is regulated through respective normative acts.

There is no obligatory extra training that the validation practitioners have to complete in order to acquire the right to conduct the validation procedure.

### 7.3 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

The State Education Quality Service organises regular workshops for the institutions carrying out validation in the VET sector. The training is not compulsory. Workshops are organised for organisations in the higher education sector by a variety of institutions, including most often MoES and the Academic Information Centre.

## 8 Quality assurance

The legal framework for validation has been established in each of the formal education sectors. There is no umbrella stand-alone quality assurance framework for validation as such available, but the evaluation of validation activities has been embedded within the regular quality assurance systems of each sector.

The MoES is the responsible body for quality within the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

The validation process in the country is stipulated by the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers, as well as internal normative acts of the respective accredited education institutions and accredited examination centres.

<sup>21</sup> Recognition of Prior Learning, Nr.559264-EPP-1-2014-1-LV-EPPKA3-BOLOGNA (more information in Latvian: <http://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/eiropas-savieniba/erasmus-2014-2020/ieprieks-iegutas-izglibas-pielidzinasa>)

The act of validation is based upon passing the same type of examination procedure as the regular student would do, including the presence of external stakeholders in the examination commission as stipulated by the respective regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers.

The State Education Quality Service deals with accreditation information on the programme, institution or the centre, qualifications of personnel and available resources, information about implementing the recommendations of the accreditation expert commission report.

The State Education Quality Service is also the EQAVET coordination point in Latvia and as such implements EQAVET and monitors the implementation of the common vocational education quality assessment indicators for ensuring the quality of vocational education in Latvia.

The Quality Agency for Higher Education follows the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance and as such also the Standard 1.4, which covers the recognition of prior learning.

The State Education Quality Service organises regular workshops in order to provide support and guidance to the accredited education institutions and accredited examination centres that have been delegated the task of validating competences.

The accredited education institutions and accredited examination centres have to keep records and register cases of the provision of the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The external quality assurance procedures include written annual self-assessment reports. These reports are seen as part of quality checks of all institutional activities by external experts (as part of peer review) within the re-accreditation process of the education institutions (both general, vocational and higher) and examination centres and regular quality monitoring measures by supervising bodies (e.g. review on implementation activities of recommendations given by experts).

The qualification requirements for validation practitioners are the same as for the standard examiners – a sufficient qualification that can be proven factually and which is often regulated.

## 9 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

### 9.1 Funding

In general the system anticipates that public funding is available for upholding the infrastructure necessary for the validation process and then the users cover the costs of undergoing validation. There is no funding specifically allocated to validation other than funding allocated for maintaining the participating institutions, e.g. the State Education Quality Service or the public educational institutions, where the validation supporting activities are one of the many functions that the institution has to provide. Support for the validation process is expected to be provided in the EU funding programming period 2014–2020 in the framework of the specific objective “8.4.1. To develop professional competence of employees and to reduce labour market disproportions” project, which will be launched in 2016 (Source: “Adult education governance model implementation plan for 2016-2020, p.35). Within this project, support will be provided for the improvement of adult’s professional qualifications and competences, including career consulting services, support mechanisms for engagement of people into adult education and by providing support for the validation of skills and competences acquired outside formal education (total indicative financing – EUR 27 million, including the ESF financing of EUR 23 million). In general the system anticipates that the individual user covers the fees associated with individual validation cases. However, target oriented funding streams or also private funds (e.g. employer, labour union) may be used to exempt some individuals or target groups (e.g. unemployed people) from covering costs. Such shared funding is considered more sustainable.

## 9.2 Distribution of costs

In the vocational education sector, regulation No. 791<sup>22</sup> on 'Price-list of Paid Services of Vocational Education Institutions and Examination Centres' (10 September 2013) defines the price for conducting the validation. Price differs according to the thematic field of education and the group of programmes. In a similar way to defining the tuition fee for studies, fields of education like health care and engineering are more expensive to validate than others. The price requested for validation differs also depending on the number of individuals passing the qualification examination. The cheapest per capita price is for a group of 12 people (this is also the amount requested as a fee where the candidate for validation passes the qualification examination together with other students at the educational institution or examination centre). Thus the cheapest per capita price ranges from EUR 43 in 'Commercial Sciences and Administration' up to EUR 74.30 in 'Health care – Nursing', if the validation is conducted for at least 12 individuals, or from EUR 192.75 in 'Civil and military defence – protection of persons and property' to as much as EUR 404.37 in the most expensive validation of vocational education in 'Civil and military defence – firemen', if the validation is individual.

In the higher education sector, regulations stipulate that a fee can be requested from the candidate for conducting the validation of prior learning outcomes. The fee is defined according to the regulations of the higher education institution or college.

## 9.3 Evidence of benefits to individuals

The evidence of benefits to individuals has been visible to society through publications of success stories in different media. Some benefits of individuals are published in regional newspapers under the initiative of validation institutions as self-promoting activities. In this case there is information on the websites of validation institutions.

Several success stories/best practice examples have been identified and published on the Internet. For example, the final stage of the ESF project, 'Development of sectoral qualifications system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education' (2010-2015), a video was made with a story about a professional gardener and car mechanic who acquired professional competence through their workplace<sup>23</sup>.

## 9.4 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes

### 9.4.1 Validation trends

According to the data from the State Education Quality Service (vocational qualifications level 1-3) for the period 2011-2014 (Assessment of Professional Competences Acquired through Non-formal and Informal Education System, 2015) there were 402 individuals taking part in validation in 2012, 833 individuals in 2013 and 599 individuals in 2014. In general the trend shows that validation is becoming more and more popular. In both 2012 and 2013, 20 different vocational qualifications were awarded through the validation process. In 2014, there were 25 vocational qualifications. Out of a total of more than 100 vocational qualifications that can be awarded currently through the validation process in Latvia, at least one qualification was awarded in 41 vocational qualifications during the period 2012 -2014.

### 9.4.2 Validation users

The first candidate benefiting from validation in vocational education took the examination of assessing professional competences acquired outside the formal education system and

<sup>22</sup> Latvian: Profesionālās izglītības iestāžu un eksaminācijas centru sniegto maksas pakalpojumu cenrādis.

Internet: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=259780>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pghDZdg7Ko8>

successfully had his competences validated in July 2011. Since then the number of successful candidates has risen considerably.

Higher education institutions are organising procedures and establishing recognition committees. HEI (e.g. Banking college, University of Latvia, Riga Technical University) already have several recognition cases.

An analysis of the data from the State Education Quality Service (vocational qualifications level 1-3) for the period 2011-2014 (Assessment of Professional Competences Acquired through Non-formal and Informal Education System, 2015), shows the most popular fields for validation are Entrepreneurship/Management/Administration with 576 successful candidates, Construction with 461 individuals followed by Metalworking (359), Energy industry (98), Tourism and beauty services (86), Transport and logistics (31), Alimentary and agricultural sector (16), Forestry (13), IT (7), Textile industry (2).

The distribution by age shows a similar trend every year – the main group of validation candidates in Latvia is 36-50 years old, followed by approximately the same level of interest from candidates in age groups 26-35 and 50 and above.

State regulations requiring respective vocational qualification levels for conducting professional activities, or applying for project funding, is one of the major motivational factors among the applicants for undergoing validation.

In 2014-2015 employees of the State Education Quality Service conducted a survey of 53 candidates in order to draw conclusions on the quality of the professional competence assessment process. The survey showed that the main motivational factor for undergoing the validation process rested with the employer who required a vocational qualification document, followed by the individual's own motivation and decision in favour of one.

#### 9.4.3 Validation and migrants / refugees and other disadvantaged groups

Latvia has only a small number of migrants/refugees. The government provides this group of people with local language courses which are free of charge. Migrants and refugees are expected to use the mainstream validation system.

Careers advisers of the State Employment Agency are expected to inform unemployed people on the options available to them to validate their professional competence.

## 10 Validation methods

No countrywide research has been conducted on the validation methods used by different players.

In vocational education (EQF level 2-4) national legislation expects a qualification examination to fulfil the task of the evaluation of competences.

In higher education the 'Procedure of Validating the Learning Outcomes Achieved through Prior Education or Professional Experience'<sup>24</sup> anticipates that the specific conditions of the procedure for recognising the study results achieved in previous education or professional experience shall be included in the by-law approved by the senate of the institution of higher education or the college council. The candidate, helped by an advisor (usually an interview method), conducts the identification step of the validation, during which the obtained professional skills/non-formal study results are identified and crosschecked with the qualification in question. The portfolio of documents (some of them are defined by the

<sup>24</sup> Regulation no. 36 "Procedure of Validating the Learning Outcomes Achieved through Prior Education or Professional Experience", adopted by Cabinet of Ministers on 10 January 2012 (Latvian: Iepriekšējā izglītībā vai profesionālajā pieredzē sasniegtu studiju rezultātu atzīšanas noteikumi) <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=242653>

procedure of the Cabinet of Ministers and some may be additionally requested by the higher education institution) is submitted to the commission that may require additional proof, such as, for example, sitting an examination. The examination may include a variety of methods, depending on the qualification in question.

In January 2016 the Ministry of Education and Science organised an HEI survey on their involvement in the validation process and methods used. Among the tools used for assessing candidates for recognition of prior learning, the HEIs mention (among other things) Europass, Youthpass, and Diploma Supplement. The Ministry of Education and Science has commenced the development of guidelines with respect to the validation of non formal and informal learning for HEI.

## 11 References

### 11.1 References

#### Laws, Normative Acts

1. Guidelines for Lifelong Learning 2007-2013, (Latvian: Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013.gadam) 23.02.2007, revised 09.12.2009, [likumi.lv/doc.php?id=153578](http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=153578)
2. Regulation no. 591 "Regarding the Procedures for Enrolment of Students in and Discharge from General Educational Institutions and Special Pre-School Education Groups and the Mandatory Requirements for Moving Them up into the Next Grade", adopted by Cabinet of Ministers on November 6, 2015, (Latvian: Noteikumi par kārtību, kādā izglītojamie tiek uzņemti vispārējās izglītības iestādēs un atskaitīti no tām, un obligātajām prasībām pārcelšanai uz nākamo klasi) <http://likumi.lv/ta/id/277597-kartiba-kada-izglitojamie-tiek-uznemti-visparejas-izglitiba-iestades-un-specialajas-pirmsskolas-izglitiba-grupas>
3. Vocational Education Law, adopted by Parliament on 10 June 1999, (Latvian: Profesionālās izglītības likums) <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=20244>
4. Amendments in the Vocational Education Law adopted by Parliament on 10.06.2010 (Latvian: Grozījumi Profesionālās izglītības likumā) <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=212500>
5. Regulation no. 146 "Procedure for the Evaluation of the Professional Competence Acquired Outside Formal Education System", adopted by Cabinet of Ministers on 22 February 2011 (Latvian: Kārtība, kādā novērtē ārpus formālās izglītības sistēmas apgūto profesionālo kompetenci) <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=226788>
6. Regulation no. 662 "Procedure of Vocational Qualifications Examination in Accredited Vocational Education Programmes", adopted by Cabinet of Ministers on August 30, 2011 (Latvian: Profesionālās kvalifikācijas eksāmenu norises kārtība akreditētās profesionālās izglītības programmās) <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=235206>
7. Law on Institutions of Higher Education, adopted by Parliament 2 November 1995, revised 15 December 2011 (Latvian: Augstskolu likums) <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=37967>
8. Regulation no. 36 "Procedure of Validating the Learning Outcomes Achieved through Prior Education or Professional Experience", adopted by Cabinet of Ministers on January 10, 2012 (Latvian: Iepriekšējā izglītībā vai profesionālajā pieredzē sasniegtu studiju rezultātu atzīšanas noteikumi) <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=242653>
9. Regulation No. 202 of Cabinet of Ministers 16 April 2013, "Procedure of Issuing State-recognized Higher Education Certifying Documents", (Latvian: Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinošus dokumentus) <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=256157/>



10. Education Law, adopted by Parliament as of 29 October 1998 (Latvian: Izglītības likums) <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=50759>
11. Regulation No. 528 „Statutes of the Ministry of Education and Science”, adopted by Cabinet of Ministers on September 16, 2003 (Latvian: Izglītības un zinātnes ministrijas nolikums) <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=79100>
12. Information on State Education Quality Service [www.ikvd.gov.lv], Ministry of Education and Science, Republic of Latvia, website, <http://izm.gov.lv/lv/ministrija/struktura/padotibas-iestades>
13. Internal regulation No.6 of the State Education Quality Service “Procedure for Delegating The Conduct of Validation of Vocational Qualification Acquired Outside Formal Education System”, adopted as of April 10, 2012, (Latvian: iekšējie noteikumi Nr.6 „Ārpus formālās izglītības sistēmas apgūtās profesionālās kompetences novērtēšanas uzdevuma deleģēšanas kārtība”) [http://www.ikvd.gov.lv/assets/files/deleg\\_lig/10.04.2012.leksejie\\_noteikumi\\_Nr.6.pdf](http://www.ikvd.gov.lv/assets/files/deleg_lig/10.04.2012.leksejie_noteikumi_Nr.6.pdf)
14. Law on Craftsmanship, adopted as of February 2 1993, revised 28 May 2008 (Latvian: “Par amatniecību”) <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=63052&from=off>
15. Regulation No. 791 „Price-list of Paid Services of Vocational Education Institutions and Examination Centres” adopted by Cabinet of Ministers as of September 10, 2013 (Latvian: „Profesionālās izglītības iestāžu un eksaminācijas centru sniegto maksas pakalpojumu cenrādis”) <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=259780>
16. Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020, (Latvian: Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādnes 2016.-2020.gadam) 22.05.2014, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=266406>
17. Regulations Regarding the Classification of Occupations, Basic Tasks Corresponding to the Occupation, Basic Qualification Requirements and Procedures for the Use and Updating of the Classification of Occupations, adopted 18.05.2010. (Latvian: Noteikumi par Profesiju klasifikatoru, profesijai atbilstošiem pamatuzdevumiem un kvalifikācijas pamatprasībām un Profesiju klasifikatora lietošanas un aktualizēšanas kārtību), <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=210806>
18. Law on the Regulated Professions and the Recognition of Professional Qualifications (in Latvian: Par reglamentētajām profesijām un profesionālās kvalifikācijas atzīšanu), valid as of 20.07.2001., <http://likumi.lv/ta/id/26021-par-reglamentetajam-profesijam-un-profesionalas-kvalifikācijas-atzisanu>
19. National Development Plan of Latvia 2014-2020, adopted 20.12.2012, (Latvian: Latvijas Nacionālais attīstības plans 2014.-2020. gadam), [http://www.pkc.gov.lv/images/NAP2020%20dokumenti/20121220\\_NAP2020\\_apstiprinats\\_Saeima.pdf](http://www.pkc.gov.lv/images/NAP2020%20dokumenti/20121220_NAP2020_apstiprinats_Saeima.pdf)
20. Career education implementation plan for state and municipal general and vocational education institutions 2015-2020, adopted 30.12.2015. (Latvian: Karjeras izglītības īstenošanas plāns valsts un pašvaldību vispārējās un profesionālās izglītības iestādēs 2015.-2020.gadam), <http://likumi.lv/ta/id/278999-par-karjeras-izglitibas-istenosanas-planu-valsts-un-pasvaldibu-visparejas-un-profesionalas-izglitibas-iestades-2015-2020>
21. Adult education governance model implementation plan for 2016-2020. <http://tap.mk.gov.lv/lv/mk/tap/?pid=40362626&mode=mk&date=2016-05-03>

### Websites and publications

22. Website of the Ministry of Education of Science, Republic of Latvia, Recognition of Knowledge and Skills Acquired in Other than Formal Education (Latvian: Ārpus formālās izglītības sistēmas iegūto zināšanu un prasmju atzīšana), <http://izm.gov.lv/lv/aktualitates/828-seminars-arpus-formalas-izglitibas-sistemas-apgutas->



- profesionālas-kompetences-novērtēšana?highlight=WyJcdTAxMDFycHVzliwiZm9ybVx1MDEwMWxcdTAxMDFzliwiXHUwMTAxcnB1cyBmb3JtXHUwMTAxbF1MDEwMXMiXQ==
23. The Public Review of The Ministry of Education and Science, Republic of Latvia, 2011 (Latvian: Latvijas Republikas Izglītības un zinātnes ministrijas Publiskais pārskats par 2011. gadu) <http://izm.gov.lv/lv/publikacijas-un-statistika/publiskie-gada-parskati>
  24. European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning, 2009, [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information\\_resources/Bookshop/publication\\_details.asp?pub\\_id=553](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_resources/Bookshop/publication_details.asp?pub_id=553)
  25. Website of State Education Quality Service (Latvian: Izglītības kvalitātes valsts dienests) <http://www.ikvd.gov.lv/arpus-formala-izglitiba/>
  26. News Portal DELFI, „First Diploma for Non-formal Education is Acquired by Cook in Daugavpils” (Latvian: Pirmo diplomu par neformāli iegūtu izglītību saņem pavārs Daugavpilī) <http://www.delfi.lv/news/national/politics/pirmo-diplomu-par-neformali-iegutu-izglitiba-sanem-pavars-daugavpili.d?id=39831357>
  27. Website of State Employment Agency (Latvian: Nodarbinātības Valsts Aģentūra), subordinated to Ministry of Welfare, [www.nva.gov.lv](http://www.nva.gov.lv)
  28. Website of the National Coordination Point for referencing the Latvian Qualifications Framework to the European Qualifications Framework (Latvian: Nacionālais Kontaktpunkts): [www.nki-latvija.lv](http://www.nki-latvija.lv).
  29. Self-assessment report on the Referencing of the Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area, 2011, prepared by the Academic Information Centre in cooperation with the Lifelong Learning Development Division of the Policy Coordination Department of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia <http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Latvijas%20zinojums%201.versija%202011.pdf>
  30. Summary of the self-assessment report on the Referencing of the Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area, August 2012, prepared by the Academic Information Centre in cooperation with the Lifelong Learning Development Division of the Policy Coordination Department of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia [http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Latvia-report\\_summary\\_AUG-2012.pdf](http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Latvia-report_summary_AUG-2012.pdf)
  31. Website of Latvian Chamber of Crafts (Latvian: Latvijas Amatniecības kamera) [www.lak.lv](http://www.lak.lv)
  32. Results of the research: “Application of E-training in Companies of Latvia” (Latvian: Pētījuma „E-apmācību lietošana Latvijas uzņēmumos” rezultāti) <http://www.novitus.lv/e-learning-definition.php>
  33. Website of the Academic Information Centre (Latvian: Akadēmiskās informācijas centrs) <http://www.aic.lv>
  34. “Methodology for Validating Non-formal Learning and Assessing Skills”, 2008 (Latvian: Neformālās izglītības atzīšanas un prasmju novērtēšanas metodika) [http://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/metmat/06\\_neformala%20izglitiba.pdf](http://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/metmat/06_neformala%20izglitiba.pdf)
  35. Assessment of Professional Competences Acquired through Non-formal and Informal Education System, 2015 (in Latvian: Ārpus formālās izglītības sistēmas apgūtās profesionālās kompetences novērtēšana), [http://www.ikvd.gov.lv/assets/files/pub/metodiskie/09\\_IKVD\\_RPUS\\_FORM\\_IZGL.pdf](http://www.ikvd.gov.lv/assets/files/pub/metodiskie/09_IKVD_RPUS_FORM_IZGL.pdf)

36. Research “Career Development Support System Assessment in Latvia”, I. Jaunzeme, 2014 (Latvian: Karjeras attīstības atbalsta sistēmas darbības izvērtējums Latvijā), [http://viaa.gov.lv/files/news/19710/petijums\\_emkapt\\_kaas\\_1\\_.pdf](http://viaa.gov.lv/files/news/19710/petijums_emkapt_kaas_1_.pdf)

## 11.2 Sources

2014:

- Latvian Rectors’ Conference / Faculty of Education at the University of Latvia
- Academic Information Centre (Latvian Enic/Naric)
- Ministry of Education and Science
- National Europass Centre, Academic Information Centre

2016:

- Latvian Rectors Council
- Higher Education Evaluation Agency, Academic Information Centre
- Quality Assurance Department, State Education Quality Service



## Country report Latvia

2016 update to the European inventory on  
validation of non-formal and informal learning

The 2012 Council recommendation on validation encourages Member States to put in place national arrangements for validation by 2018. These arrangements will enable individuals to increase the visibility and value of their knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside formal education and training: at work, at home or in voluntary activities.

This country report is one of 36 that, together with a synthesis report and thematic reports, constitute the European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning. The inventory is a regularly updated overview of validation practices and arrangements in all Member States, EFTA countries and Turkey. It is a reference point for information on validation in Europe. It is organised around the principles defined in the 2012 Council Recommendation that were further elaborated in the European guidelines for validation. This is its sixth update (2004, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2014 and 2016).



**CEDEFOP**

European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training

---

Europe 123, 570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea), GREECE  
PO Box 22427, 551 02 Thessaloniki, GREECE  
Tel. +30 2310490111, Fax +30 2310490020, Email: [info@cedefop.europa.eu](mailto:info@cedefop.europa.eu)

---

[visit our portal www.cedefop.europa.eu](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu)

---