

# spotlight on VET

# LATVIA

## VET in Latvia

The Latvian vocational education system comprises three levels of vocational education: basic vocational education (lower secondary level); secondary vocational education (upper secondary and post-secondary level) and professional higher education (tertiary level). Education programmes are mainly school-based, with practical training periods at schools and enterprises. To acquire a professional qualification, students have to take a State qualification exam at the end of the education programme. A pilot project (2013) with a dual VET system component (work-based learning) started in several VET schools.

Vocational basic education programmes (one to two years) lead to a certificate of vocational basic education. Pupils are admitted without consideration of their previous education but not earlier than in the year in which they turn 15. Those without basic education are admitted to three-year vocational education programmes that include a compulsory general basic education course.

At upper secondary level, there are:

- vocational education programmes;
- secondary vocational education programmes for students who have completed basic education;
- post-secondary vocational education programmes mostly for students with secondary education.

Vocational education programmes (three years) lead to a certificate of vocational education that does not give the right to enter higher education. Students, who want to continue studies at a higher education level, may additionally attend a one-year intermediate course in general secondary education.

Vocational secondary education programmes (four years) lead to a diploma of secondary vocational education. Students take four State examinations; if successful, they are awarded a certificate, which together with a diploma of secondary vocational education gives them the right to enrol in higher education.

Post-secondary vocational education programmes (one or two years) are only for acquiring professional knowledge and skills; therefore, duration of the programmes is shorter.

Higher professional education programmes lead to a professional bachelor or master degree and

professional qualification. They are also divided into two levels:

- first-level higher professional education (college) programmes;
- second-level higher professional education programmes.

College programmes (two to three years) are targeted mainly at the labour market, yet graduates can continue their studies in second-level higher professional education programmes.

Higher professional education programmes last four to six years, at least four years after secondary education and at least two years after completing college education.

Continuing (adult) education programmes belong to basic, secondary and higher education stages.

There are two formal types of continuing education:

- vocational continuing education;
- professional improvement.

Vocational continuing education (at least 480 to 960 hours) enables adults with previous education and work experience to obtain State-recognised professional qualifications.

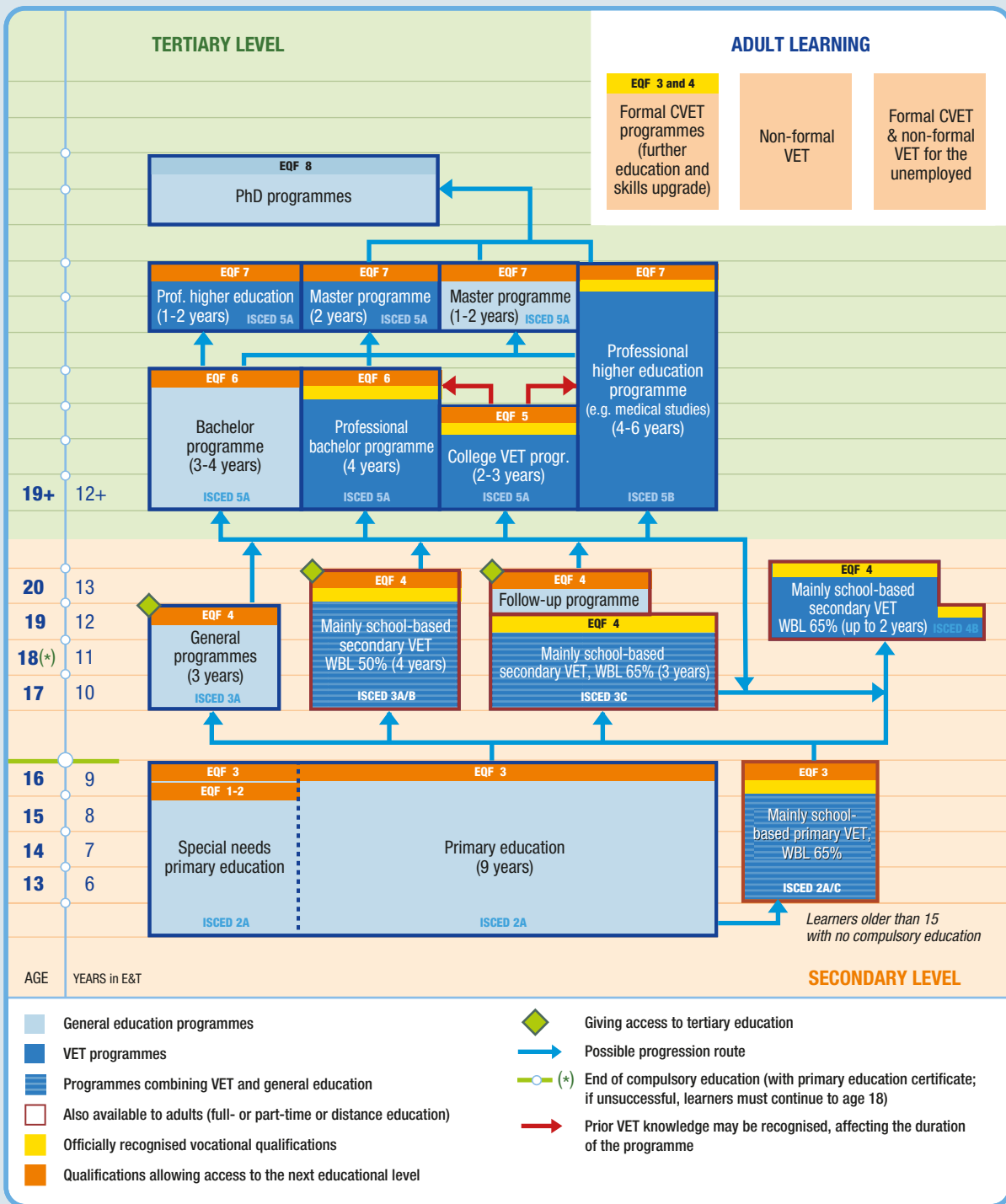
Professional improvement programmes (at least 160 hours) enable people to acquire professional knowledge and skills regardless of their age and previous education or professional qualification.

The Latvian apprenticeship system exists on a small scale mainly in the crafts sector. It is implemented separately from other education sectors, and there are currently no pathways to formal education programmes.

The Ministry of Education is the main body responsible for vocational education – its legal framework, governance, funding and content. Thus, most vocational schools currently are State-owned and run. Partial transfer of VET schools to local government is foreseen by 2015.

Social dialogue and strategic cooperation is arranged through the National Tripartite Subcouncil for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment (2000), which was founded by bodies representing the State, employers and employees. At sectoral level, 12 sectoral expert councils (2011) ensure cooperation and information exchange.

# VET in the Latvian education and training system



NB: ISCED 1997 was used on the chart. Conversion to ISCED 2011 is ongoing.  
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Latvia.

## Distinctive features of VET

The Latvian formal vocational education system is generally centralised and programmes are school-based. Work-based VET projects have been implemented since 2013. Every education programme leads to a particular professional qualification. Initial vocational education establishments are mainly State-owned, while many continuing vocational education bodies and non-formal/informal education providers are private. The State Employment Agency plays an important role in adult continuing learning through arranging formal and non-formal/informal learning for the unemployed.

There is a wide offer of vocational education programmes representing almost every sector of the economy.

The most attended are secondary vocational education programmes (around 90% of all vocational education students). In recent years, offers of post-secondary vocational education programmes have improved, and the number of students has increased. However, compared to general secondary education, vocational education is less attractive – distribution of students is about 64:36 in favour of general secondary education. There are more male vocational students (60%) than female (40%).

The Latvian qualifications framework that includes formal education of basic, secondary and higher education levels was established in 2011, and referenced to the European qualifications framework (EQF).

The recognition of professional competences system that corresponds to the EQF levels 3-4 acquired outside formal education was established in 2011. At higher education level, procedures for assessment and recognition of learning outcomes obtained during previous education or professional experience, as well as criteria for recognition were set up in 2012.

## Challenges

According to EU 2020, structural changes in vocational education and introducing the lifelong learning principle are important policy directions. The reforms in Latvia aim at:

- promoting vocational education quality;
- ensuring its relevance to the labour market;
- ensuring efficient use of resources to raise attractiveness of vocational education.

As a result, the goal is to have an equal number of students choose vocational and general education, and triple the number of participants in adult learning.

At present, the vocational school network is optimised, and functions of schools are differentiated to reach individuals from various social and age groups. Current discussions include transfer of State vocational schools to local government, which would change funding flows and concentrate educational provision entirely in local government's jurisdiction.

To raise attractiveness of vocational education, several projects cofinanced by EU structural Funds are implemented. Projects focus on modernising vocational education infrastructure, promoting social partners' participation in education policy, implementing sectoral qualifications frameworks and drafting occupational standards for basic professions, improving types and programmes of vocational education (such as introducing a modular approach), and raising vocational education teachers' competences. The challenge is to ensure sustainability of reforms after the projects are concluded.

A significant challenge is to ensure access to guidance and counselling for young people. Another is to motivate employers to cooperate with vocational education establishments, for example by providing training places, and promote continuing education for their employees. In December 2012, Latvia signed a memorandum on cooperation in vocational education with Germany and five other EU countries, which among other priorities aims at strengthening work-based learning.

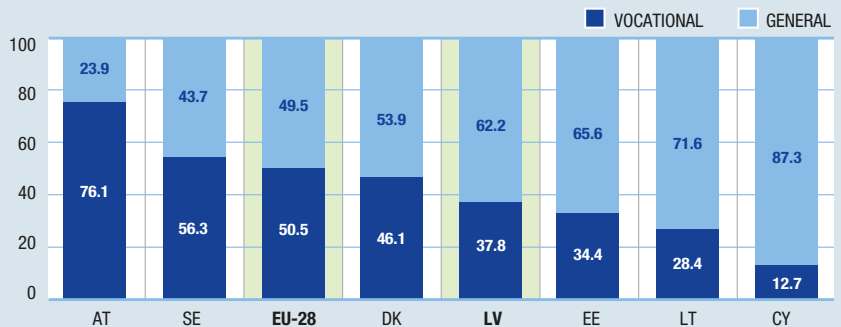
Another challenge is to introduce ECVET and EQAVET systems to promote quality and permeability of the education system. To address these challenges, a new vocational education law is being prepared.



## Education and training in figures

### Learners in upper secondary education enrolled in vocational and general programmes

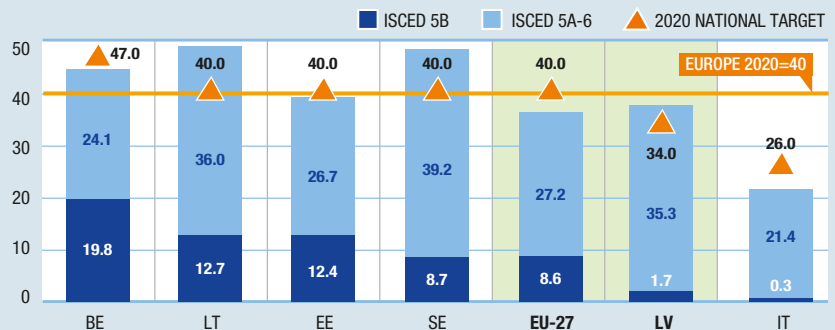
% of all students in upper secondary education, 2011



Source: Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 28.6.2013.

### Tertiary education by type

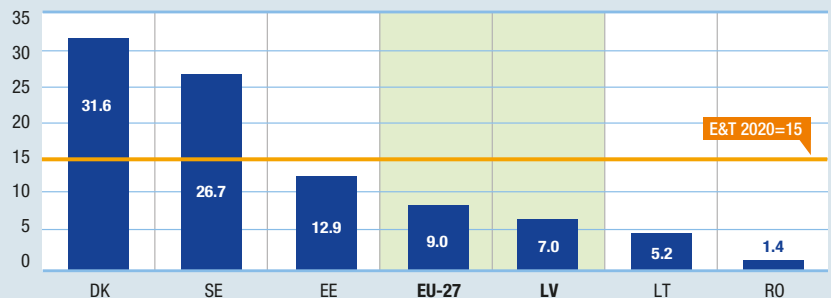
% of 30-34 year-olds with tertiary education by type, 2012



Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 8.7.2013.

### Lifelong learning

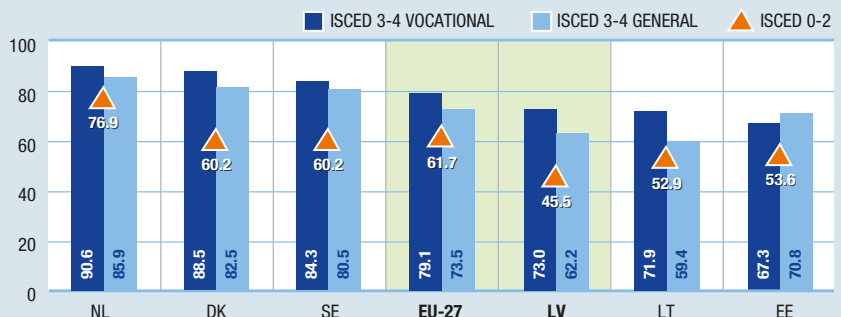
% of population aged 25-64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2012



Source: Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 3.7.2013.

### Employment rates by highest level of educational attainment

20-34 year-olds no longer in education by highest level of educational attainment, 2009



Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat, 2009 ad hoc module of the EU labour force survey, date of extraction 19.9.2012.



## Further information

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<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Latvia:Overview>
- Academic Information Centre et al. (2012). *Referencing the Latvian education system to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area: self-assessment report: second version*. Riga: AIC, Academic Information Centre.  
[http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/eqf/latvia\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/eqf/latvia_en.pdf)

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<a href="http://www.visc.gov.lv">www.visc.gov.lv</a>	National Centre for Education
<a href="http://www.ikvd.gov.lv">www.ikvd.gov.lv</a>	State Education Quality Service
<a href="http://www.viaa.gov.lv">www.viaa.gov.lv</a>	State Education Development Agency
<a href="http://www.lak.lv">www.lak.lv</a>	Latvian Chamber of Crafts
<a href="http://www.iddk.lv">www.iddk.lv</a>	Employers' Confederation of Latvia
<a href="http://www.lizda.lv">www.lizda.lv</a>	Education and Science Workers Trade Union
<a href="http://www.niid.lv">www.niid.lv</a>	National database on learning opportunities
<a href="http://www.csb.gov.lv">www.csb.gov.lv</a>	Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia
<a href="http://www.aic.lv">www.aic.lv</a>	Academic Information Centre
<a href="http://www.aiknc.lv">www.aiknc.lv</a>	Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre
<a href="http://www.km.gov.lv">www.km.gov.lv</a>	Ministry of Culture
<a href="http://www.em.gov.lv">www.em.gov.lv</a>	Ministry of Economics
<a href="http://www.lm.gov.lv">www.lm.gov.lv</a>	Ministry of Welfare
<a href="http://www.nva.gov.lv">www.nva.gov.lv</a>	State Employment Agency



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