

spotlight on VET LATVIA

VET in Latvia

VET in Latvia is offered at three (1) levels: integrated primary and lower secondary (called 'basic' nationally), upper secondary (secondary), and tertiary (professional higher education). VET is mainly school-based, hence the national term refers to 'vocational education' that includes practical training at schools and enterprises. To acquire a VET qualification, learners have to take a state qualification exam at the end of the programme.

Basic VET programmes (one to two years, ISCED-P 254) lead to qualifications at EQF level 3. Learners are admitted irrespective of their previous education but not earlier than in the year in which they turn 15. Those without completed basic education are admitted to three-year programmes that include a compulsory basic general education course.

At upper secondary level:

- three-year programmes (ISCED-P 353) lead to a certificate of vocational education but do not give the right to enter higher education. Students who want to continue their studies at higher education level may attend an additional one-year intermediate-level general education programme. Those without completed basic education are admitted to VET programmes that include a compulsory basic general education course;
- four-year programmes (ISCED-P 354) lead to a diploma of vocational secondary education. At the end, students also take four state general subject exams; if successful, they are awarded a certificate of general secondary education, which gives them the right to enrol in higher education;
- one- to two-year programmes that lead to a vocational qualification (ISCED-P 354 and 453) are designed for 17 to 29 year-olds with or without completed upper secondary education. The programmes focus on vocational skills only, so they are shorter.

Professional higher education programmes are provided at two levels:

- first-level college programmes (two to three years) (ISCED-P 554) targeted mainly at the labour market, though graduates can continue their studies in second-level professional higher education;
- second-level university programmes (four to six years) (ISCED-P 655, 656, 657, 756 and 757) lead to a professional qualification and professional bachelor, master or a so-called professional higher education degree.

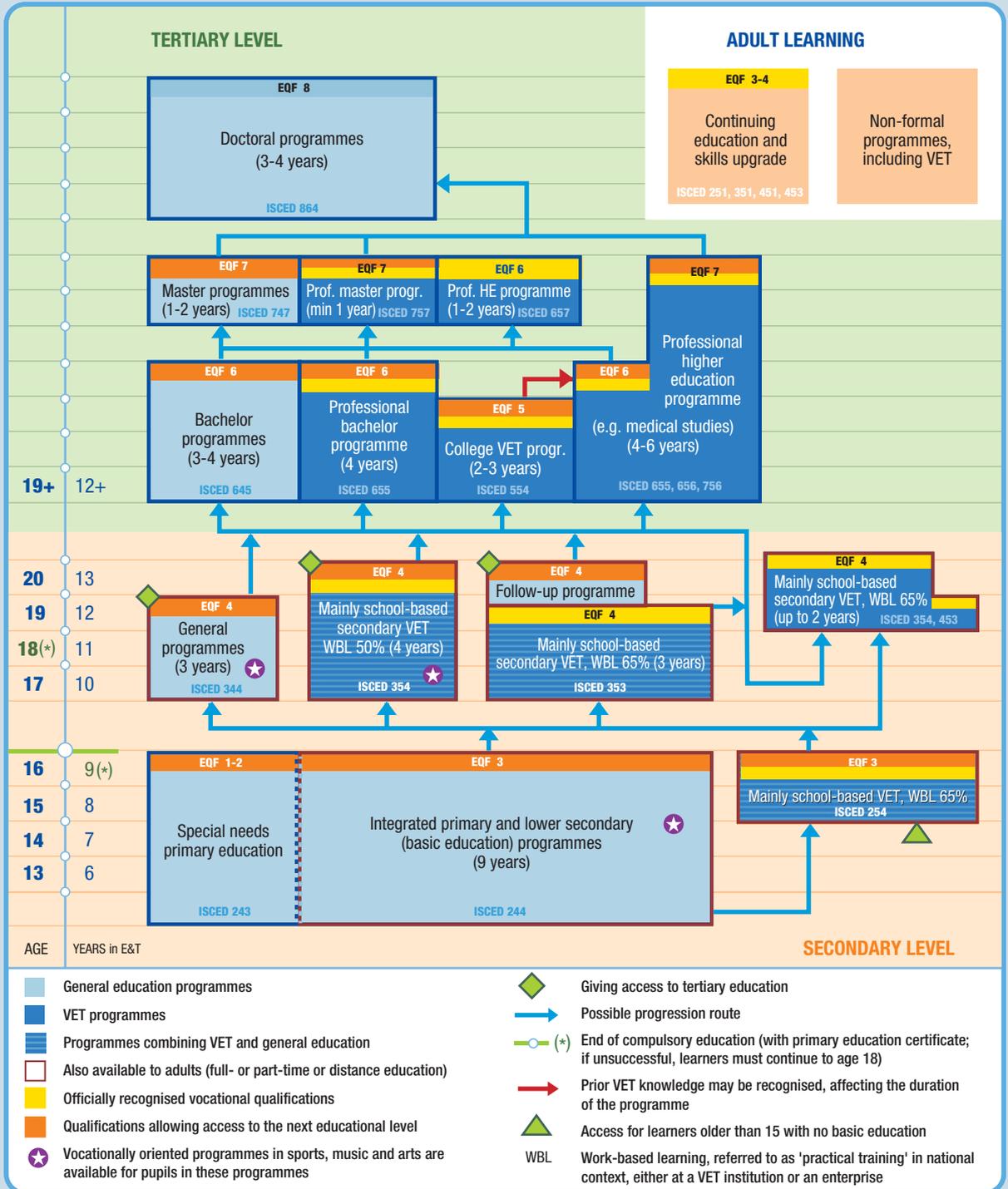
Formal CVET programmes enable adults with education/work experience to obtain a state-recognised professional qualification in 480 to 1 280 hours, depending on the field of study. Shorter professional development programmes (at least 160 hours) enable learners to acquire professional knowledge and skills regardless of their age, education and professional background but do not lead to a VET qualification.

Apprenticeship exists on a small scale mainly in the crafts sector. It is separate from other education programmes and there are currently no pathways to formal education.

The Ministry of Education and Science is the main body responsible for VET's legal framework, governance, funding and content. Social dialogue and strategic cooperation are arranged through the National Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment, which was founded in 2000 by the State and representatives of employers and employees. Since 2011, 12 sectoral expert councils have ensured cooperation and information exchange.

(1) Arts, culture and sports programmes (referred to as 'vocationally-oriented education programmes' nationally) are also implemented concurrently with basic and secondary general education, but they do not lead to a vocational qualification.

VET in Latvia's education and training system



Distinctive features of VET

Initial VET is centralised and highly regulated by the state. Most VET schools are state-owned and -run. Continuous VET providers are mainly private.

Most VET students (85%) study at upper secondary level. The distribution of students between general and vocational upper secondary education is 61:39 in favour of general education.

VET provides extensive learning opportunities for early leavers from education. With more investment in infrastructure and the development/implementation of new programmes, VET attractiveness is increasing. More young people use ISCED-P 453 programmes for fast access to the labour market than before. These programmes are cofinanced by EU funds.

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

The public employment service plays an important role in adult education by arranging formal and non-formal education for the unemployed.

A validation system for professional competences acquired outside formal education has existed since 2011, allowing direct acquisition of VET qualifications at EQF level 3-4. Procedures for assessment and recognition of learning outcomes acquired during previous education or professional experience, and criteria for recognition, were set up for higher education in 2012.

Challenges and policy responses

Reforming VET and adult learning are national policy priorities. Recent reforms aim at:

- promoting VET quality;
- ensuring its relevance to labour market needs;
- efficient use of resources to raise VET attractiveness.

The VET school network is currently optimised to cater for the needs of individuals from various social and age groups. Activities also include partial transfer of state VET schools to local governments by 2016. The State will continue to run vocational education competence centres that, in addition to VET programmes, provide teaching methodology, continuous teacher training and validation of non-formal learning.

Several projects cofinanced by EU structural funds aim to raise attractiveness of vocational education. They focus on modernising infrastructure, equipment and programmes, promoting social partner participation in designing and implementing education policy, introducing sectoral qualifications frameworks, drafting occupational standards for key professions, and raising VET teacher competences. The challenge is to ensure reforms are sustainable after the projects end.

Policy also strives for a balanced (equal) distribution of students choosing vocational and general education after completing basic education, and for a threefold increase in adult participation in learning.

To make the VET system more responsive to labour market needs, the Ministry of Education and Science has designed a new apprenticeship-type scheme called 'work-based learning', introduced in 2013 in six vocational education institutions. The scheme includes flexible curricula (according to occupation characteristics) and promotes sharing responsibilities of teaching (theory) and training (practice) between school and enterprises. Vocational education institutions ensure the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and develop the curricula. Companies provide professional training in a real workplace environment and pay an allowance or a wage to students.

Ensuring access to guidance and counselling for young people, and putting in place ECVET and EQAVET systems for better quality and permeability, are important challenges. Other challenges include motivating employers to cooperate with VET providers, for example by offering training at the work place and promoting continuous education for employees.

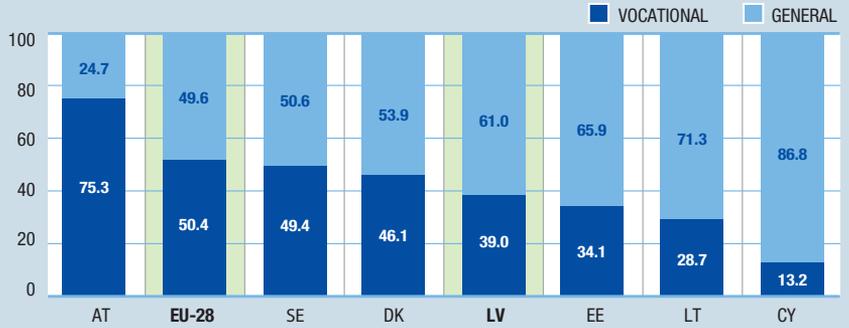
In 2014, Parliament approved a new education strategy for 2014-20 to address these and other challenges.



Education and training in figures

Learners in upper secondary education enrolled in vocational and general programmes

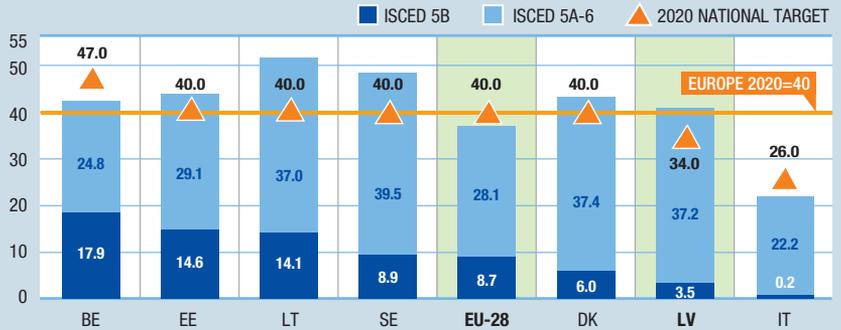
% of all students in upper secondary education, 2012



Source: Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 30.5.2014.

Tertiary education by type

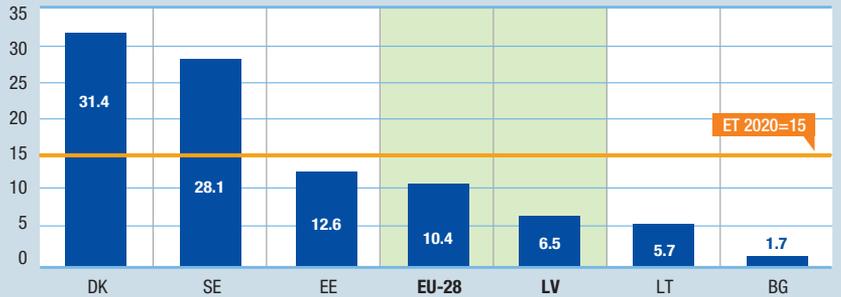
% of 30-34 year-olds with tertiary education by type, 2013



Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 19.5.2014.

Lifelong learning

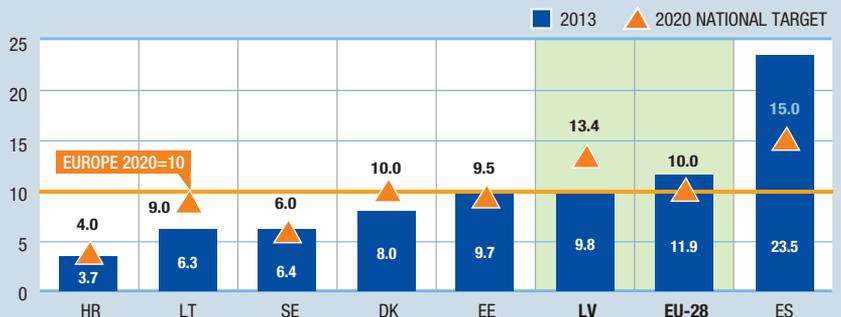
% of population aged 25-64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2013



Source: Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 19.5.2014.

Early leavers from education and training

% of early leavers from education and training, 2013



Source: Eurostat labour force survey, date of extraction 19.5.2014.



Further information

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

This spotlight is based on input from ReferNet Latvia.



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