



spotlight on VET

LATVIA

VET in Latvia

Vocational education and training (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. As VET is mainly school-based, the national term refers to ‘vocational education’ that includes practical training at schools and enterprises. To acquire a VET qualification at EQF levels 2 to 4, learners 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 2. 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:

- (a) three-year programmes (ISCED-P 353) lead to a VET certificate at EQF level 3 but do not give the right to enter higher education. Students who want to continue their studies at higher education level may attend one-year bridging programme;
- (b) four-year programmes (ISCED-P 354) lead to a secondary VET diploma (EQF level 4). At the end, students also take four State exams in general subjects; if successful, they are awarded a certificate of general secondary education giving access to higher education;
- (c) one- to two-year programmes (ISCED-P 354 and 453) leading to a certificate of vocational qualification at EQF levels 3 and 4 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:

- (a) first-level college programmes (two to three years) (ISCED-P 554, EQF 5) targeted mainly at the labour market, though graduates can continue their studies in second-level professional higher education;
- (b) second-level university programmes (four to six years) (ISCED-P 655, 656, 657, 756 and 757, EQF 6 and 7) lead to a professional qualification and professional bachelor or master degree, or a professional higher education qualification.

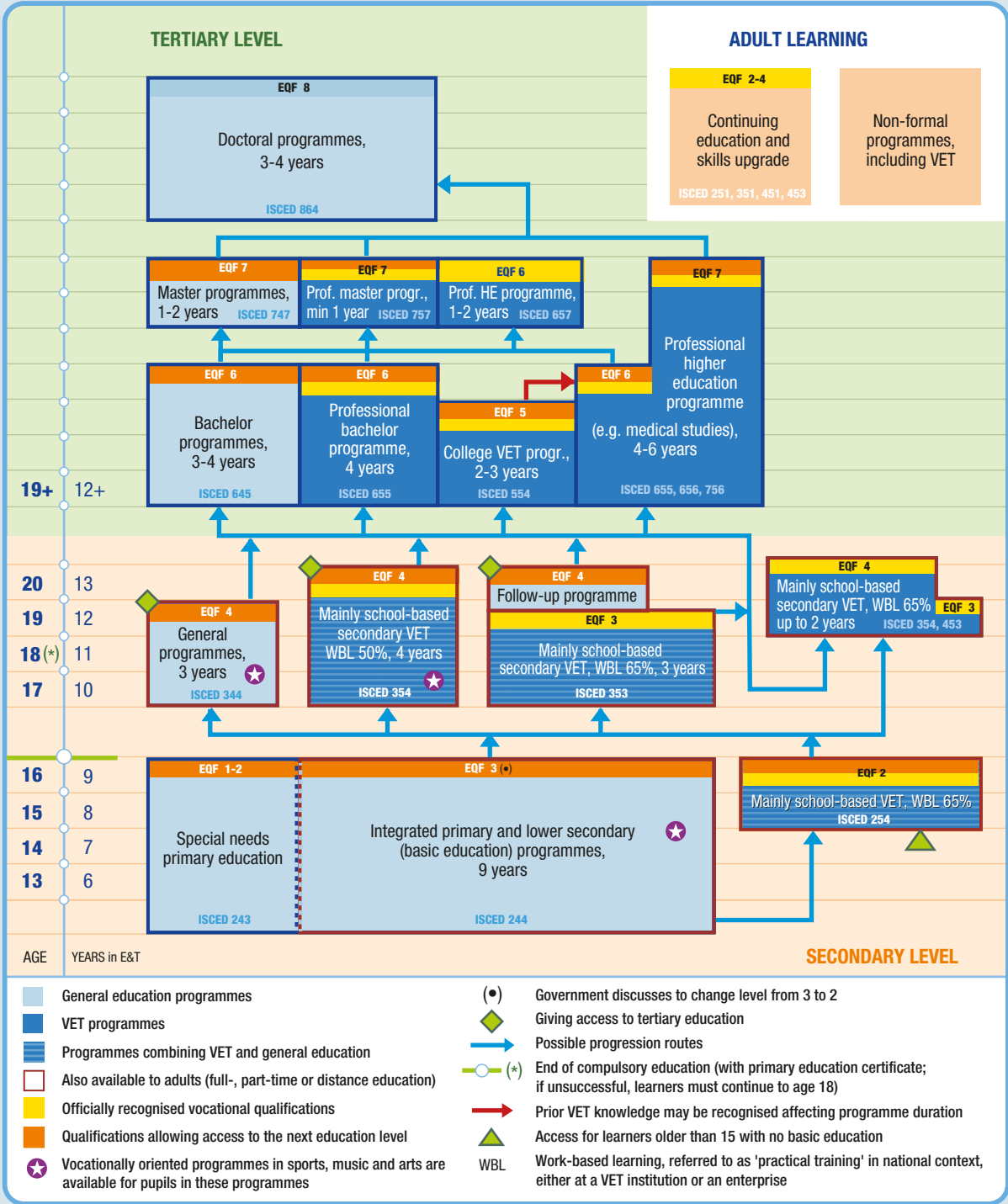
Formal continuing VET (CVET) programmes enable adults with education/work experience to obtain a State-recognised professional qualification in 480 to 1 280 hours, depending on the field of study. Shorter professional development programmes (at least 160 hours) enable learners to acquire professional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

Apprenticeship exists on a small scale, mainly in the crafts sector. It is separate from the rest of the education system and there are 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, founded in 2000 by the State and employer and employee representatives. Since 2011, 12 sectoral expert councils ensure that vocational education provision is in line with labour market needs, and participate in developing sectoral qualifications frameworks, occupational standards, education programmes and quality assessment procedures. Since 2015, collegial advisory bodies including representatives from employers, local governments and the supervising ministry – conventions – are established at each VET school to contribute to schools’ strategic development and cooperation with the labour market.

⁽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 do not lead to a vocational qualification.

VET in Latvia's education and training system



NB: ISCED-P 2011.
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Latvia.

Distinctive features of VET

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

Most VET students (83%) 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 jointly financed by the Youth guarantee and the European Social Fund.

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

A validation system for professional competences acquired outside formal education has existed since 2011, allowing direct acquisition of VET qualifications at EQF levels 2 to 4. Procedures for assessment and criteria for recognition of prior learning 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:

- (a) promoting VET quality;
- (b) ensuring its relevance to labour market needs;
- (c) efficient use of resources to raise VET attractiveness.

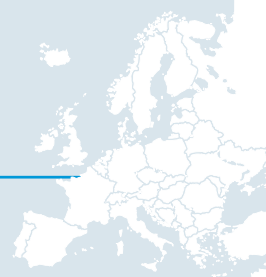
Policy strives for a balanced (equal) distribution of students choosing vocational and general education after completing basic education, and for a threefold increase in adult participation in learning.

By 2015, several projects jointly financed by EU Structural Funds have raised VET's attractiveness and quality. They have covered modern infrastructure, equipment and programmes (introducing modules), social partner participation in designing and implementing education policy, introducing sectoral qualifications frameworks, drafting occupational standards for key professions, and raising VET teachers' competences. Modular programmes are to be piloted to gather more evidence for policy makers. Since 2015, 'work-based learning' has gained legal basis as one form of VET implementation. The scheme includes flexible curricula (according to occupation characteristics) and promotes sharing responsibilities of teaching and training between school and enterprises. Vocational education institutions develop the curricula and participate in ensuring the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and practical skills in workshops. Companies provide both theoretical and practical training in a real workplace environment and pay an allowance or a wage to students.

Ensuring access to guidance and counselling for young people, and putting in place ECVET and EQAVET systems for better quality and permeability, are challenges that need aligning stakeholder opinions and extensive promotion. Other challenges include motivating employers to cooperate with VET providers, for example by offering training at the workplace and promoting continuing training for employees.

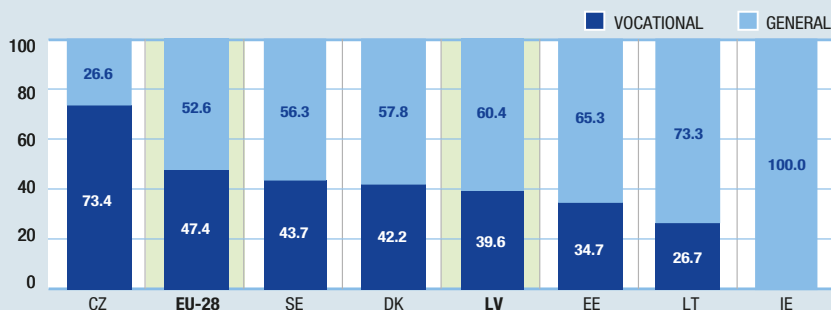
The 2014-20 education strategy addresses issues mentioned above and other challenges by continuing reforms (supported by EU funds) including introduction of new EU-level instruments.

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



Education and training in figures

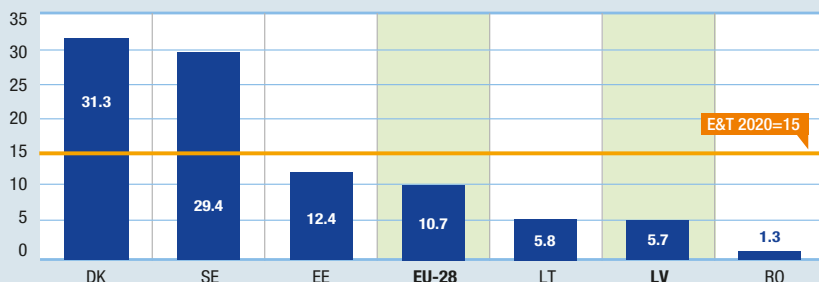
Upper secondary students (ISCED 2011 level 3) enrolled in vocational and general programmes
% of all students in upper secondary education, 2014



NB: 47.4% is the provisional weighted EU average for 2014 based on available country data (27 countries). In Ireland, it is possible to proceed to apprenticeship training following completion of lower secondary education (ISCED 2), but most learners continue to complete upper secondary education, which is general, rather than vocational, in nature.

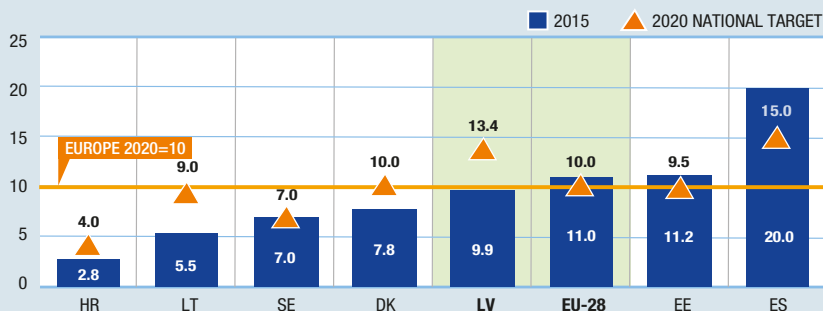
Source: Cedefop calculations, based on Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 6.12.16.

Lifelong learning
% of population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2015



Source: Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 6.12.16.

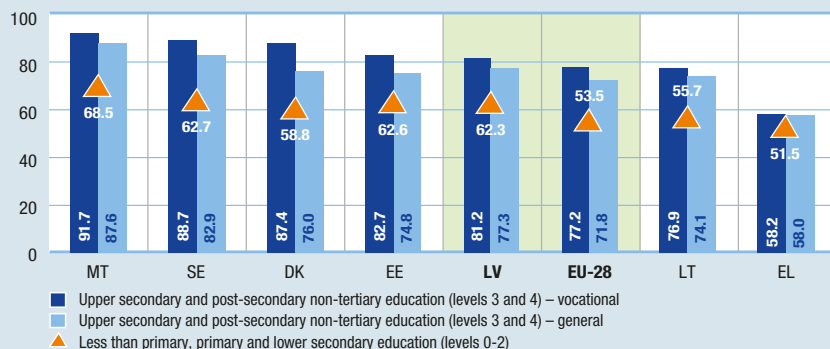
Early leavers from education and training
% of early leavers from education and training, 2015



NB: Definition for national target differs in LT, SE, DK and ES.

Source: Eurostat labour force survey, date of extraction 6.12.16.

Employment rates of young graduates
% of 20 to 34 year-olds no longer in education and training, 2015



■ Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4) – vocational

■ Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4) – general

▲ Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2)

Source: Eurostat, EU labour force survey, date of extraction 14.10.16.



Further information

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www.visc.gov.lv	National Centre for Education
www.ikvd.gov.lv	State Education Quality Service
www.viaa.gov.lv	State Education Development Agency
www.lak.lv	Latvian Chamber of Crafts
www.lddk.lv	Employers' Confederation of Latvia
www.lizda.lv	Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science
www.niid.lv	national database on learning opportunities
www.csb.gov.lv	Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia
www.aic.lv	Academic Information Centre
www.nqf-latvia.lv	national coordination point for EQF
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 the Academic Information Centre (ReferNet Latvia 2016).



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