Further information


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

This Spotlight is based on input from the Academic Information Centre (ReferNet Latvia 2016).
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 (tertiary); and higher education. VET is a main-school-based, reformed national term refers to ‘vocational education’ which includes practical training at schools and enterprises. To acquire a VET qualification at EQF levels 2 to 4, learners take a State qualification at the end of the programmes.

Basic VET programmes (only two years, ISCED-P 254) lead to qualifications at levels 3 and 4. Learners are admitted irrespective of their previous education but not earlier than in the year in which they turn 13. Those without completed basic education are admitted to three-year programmes that include a compulsory general basic 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 programmes;

(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 at general subjects; if successful, they are admitted to three-year programmes, VET attractiveness is increasing.

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, whereas professional development programmes (at least 160 hours) enable learners to acquire professional learning 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 embedded through the national Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment, founded in 2002 by the State and employer and employee representatives. Since 2011, 12 sectoral expert councils ensure that vocational education provides learners in line with labour market needs, and participate in developing sectoral qualifications frameworks, occupational standards, education programmes, and quality assurance systems. Since 2015, advisory bodies include representatives from employers, local governments and the national Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment – are established at each VET school to contribute to the design of strategic development and cooperation with the labour market.

VET in Latvia’s education and training system

Initial VET is centralized and highly regulated. However, two-thirds have the status of VET centres and were re-nationalized in 2014. Education is split between school-based and workplace-based education. An intermediate scheme for fast-tracking from programmes, VET attractiveness is increasing. Working people can choose ISCED-P 354 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 framework for qualifications was harmonised 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 recognition of prior learning are 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) efficient use of resources to raise VET attractiveness; (c) promoting VET quality; (d) efficient use of resources to raise VET attractiveness; (e) challenging the role of the State in adult education; (f) an efficient use of VET institutions.

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.
Vocational education and training (VET) in Latvia

At upper secondary level:

- Three-year programmes (ISCED-P 353) lead to a VET certificate at EQF level 3 but do not lead to a qualification. Ministry of Education and Science

- For students older than 15 without basic education, and for a threefold increase in adult participation in learning. By 2015, several projects jointly financed by EU structural funds in 2007-15. In addition to VET, the Ministry of Education and Science discusses to change level from 3 to 2 if unsuccessful, learners must continue to age 18. Access for learners older than 15 with no basic 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.

- Vocational education and training (VET) is centralised and highly regulated in Latvia. Recent reforms aim at:
  - Reforms in the regulatory framework for VET to introduce more flexibility and to allow students more freedom to choose their learning path. VET programmes, they validate non-formal and informal learning and offer lifelong training and continuous teacher training. VET programmes 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 and implementation of new programmes, VET attractiveness is increasing. More young people use ISCED 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.

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(a) Three-year programmes (ISCED-P 353) lead to a VET certificate at EQF level 3 but do not lead to the right to enter higher education. Students who want to continue their studies at higher education level may attend one-year bridge programmes.
(b) Four-year programmes (ISCED-P 354) lead to a secondary VET diploma (EQF level 4) and enable learners to acquire professional knowledge and skills in their field of study. These programmes are jointly established and linked to the European qualifications framework (EQF) in 2011. It includes all formal education and training programmes, they validate non-formal education and continuous learning and continuous teacher education. Vocational education institutions develop the curricula and participate in ensuring the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and practical skills in enterprises. Companies provide both theoretical and practical training in a real workplace environment and pay an allowance or a wage to students. Vocational education institutions are linked to enterprises and counselling for young people, and putting in place ECVET and EQAVET systems (according to occupation characteristics) and promotes raising VET teachers’ competences.
(c) Efficient use of resources to raise VET attractiveness. Challenges and policy responses

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

(a) Promoting VET quality: improvements in the national qualification framework, making VET more attractive to the labour market needs;
(b) Efficient use of resources to raise VET attractiveness. Reforms include a balanced portfolio of programmes, they validate non-formal and informal learning and offer lifelong learning and continuous teacher training. CVPETs are mainly private.

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

(a) Promoting VET quality:
(b) Efficient use of resources to raise VET attractiveness.
(c) Improving access to guidance and counselling for young people, and putting in place ECVET and EQAVET systems (according to occupation characteristics) and promoting raising VET teachers’ competences.
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Reforming VET and adult learning are national policy priorities. Recent reforms aim at:

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Upper secondary students (% of all students in upper secondary education, 2014)

Lifelong learning (% of population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training, 2014)

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

Employment rates of young graduates (% of 20 to 34 year-olds in employment, 2015)

Further information


Percentage of all students in upper secondary education, 2014

% of all students in upper secondary education over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2015

Early leavers from education and training, 2015

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

Further information


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Further information

- http://www.refernet.lv