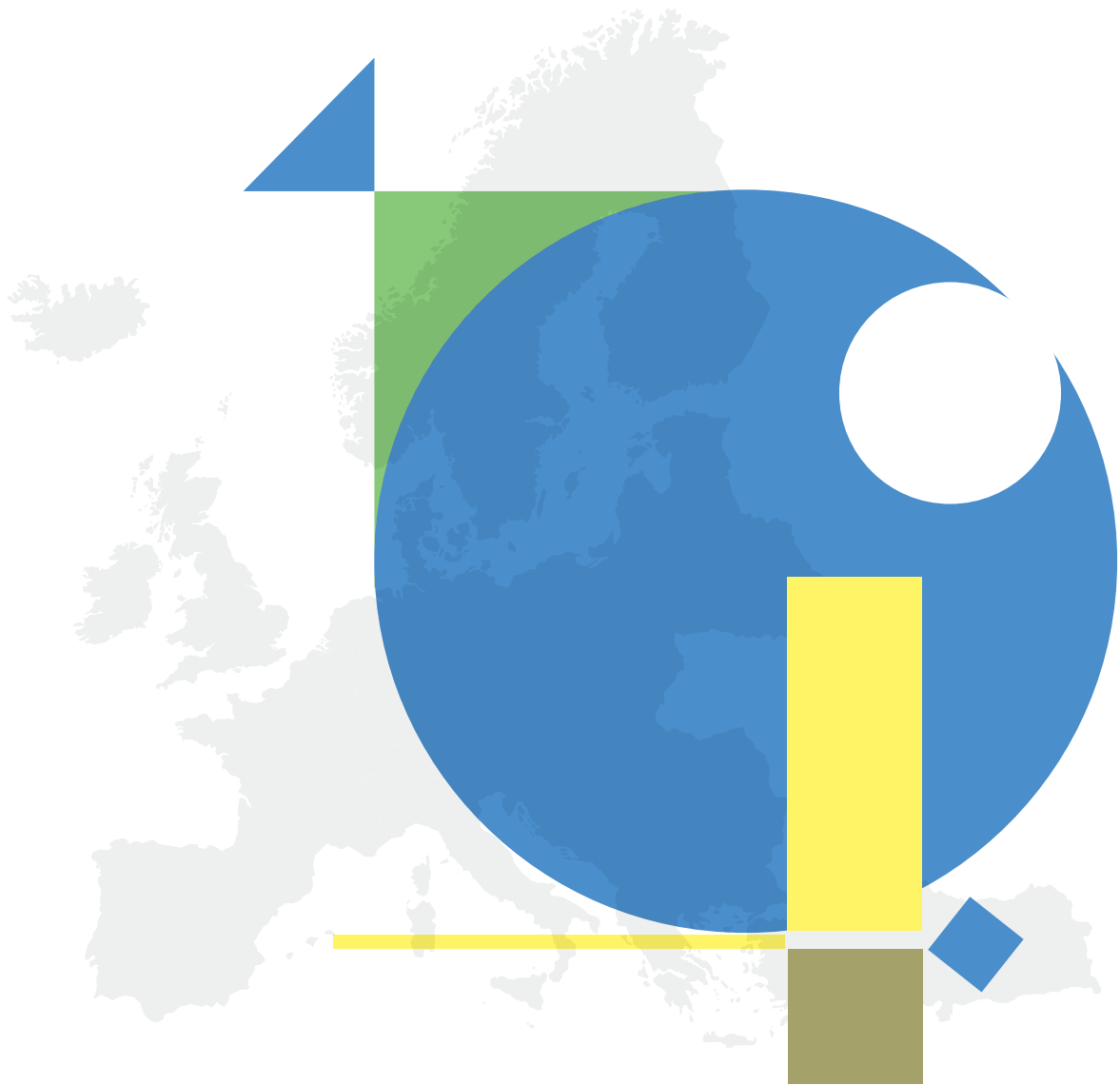




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EUROPEAN INVENTORY OF NQFs 2020

LATVIA

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LATVIA

European inventory of NQFs 2020

Introduction and context

In recent years Latvia has made important progress against education and training indicators. The early school leaving rate decreased to 8.7% in 2019. Participation in early childhood education and care (96.0% in 2018), the tertiary education attainment rate (45.7% in 2019) and the employment rate of recent graduates (84.1% in 2019) were above EU averages. The proportions of 15-year-olds with underachievement in mathematics and science were well below EU averages, and slightly below the EU average in reading, according to the Programme for international student assessment (PISA) 2018. Investment in education and training is relatively high (5.8% of GDP in 2018), with the highest proportion in primary and pre-primary education. Efforts continue to streamline the school network and redirect investment from maintenance of schools towards teaching and learning, linked to changes to teacher remuneration and education content reform. A new competence-based curriculum has been implemented gradually, to be completed by 2022/23; it started at pre-school level in 2019/20, and in grades 1, 4, 7 and 10 from 2020/21 (European Commission, 2020). A new system for monitoring education quality at all levels, including in vocational education and training (VET), is being developed. Starting with the 2019/20 school year, the five minority education models were replaced by three new models for basic education, specifying the proportion of teaching in Latvian, bilingually and/or in a minority language. Improvement plans for higher education aim to increase digitalisation and international cooperation, and to reduce the fragmentation of higher education programmes. As of 1 January 2019, higher education institutions can choose the quality assurance agency for their 'study directions' from the national agency, from the Academic Information Centre, or from any other agency from the European quality assurance register. The VET system reform is ongoing, with a focus on strengthening work-based learning and apprenticeships (European Commission, 2019). The employment rate of recent tertiary graduates is the highest in the EU (96.6% in 2019), in contrast to that of VET graduates (ISCED 3-4), which is among the lowest (65.6%). Total enrolment in upper secondary VET is relatively low (38.8% out of the total enrolment in upper secondary education in 2018). Amendments to the law on VET, introducing partial awards and flexible pathways, have been under public consultation since January 2020. Participation in adult learning remains below the EU average, at 7.4% in 2019, but progress has been made to identify and address challenges (European Commission, 2020).

The Latvian qualifications framework (LQF) was adopted in 2010 and has reached operational stage. It is an eight-level framework comprising all education levels (basic, secondary and higher education) and all types of education (general, vocational and academic education), as well as professional qualifications. Level descriptors are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence. Qualifications from formal education (VET, higher education and general education) were included in the first phase of implementation, which was concluded with the publication of the Latvian report on EQF referencing and self-certification to QF-EHEA in 2012. The second phase focused on aspects such as revision of LQF levels 1 to 4, broadening the scope of the framework to include professional qualifications at levels 2 to 4, increasing the quality of vocational education and training, and development of sectoral qualifications frameworks linked to the LQF. It resulted in the adoption of the updated EQF referencing report in 2019. Revision of a number of laws (Vocational education Law, Law on higher education institutions, and Education Law) and regulations consolidated the role of the framework as an important part of the Latvian education and training system. The legal basis of the LQF was amended in 2017 to adapt the framework to the current requirements of the labour and education sectors. A database of all Latvian qualifications included in the LQF was put in place in 2016 and is being further developed.

Policy objectives

The LQF has a communication and transparency function, with the general aim to provide an unbiased reference for the levels of educational and professional qualifications awarded by education and training institutions in Latvia, and their learning outcomes. The advantages of developing a comprehensive qualifications framework linked to the EQF were outlined in the first Latvian referencing report (AIC et al. 2012) and included: increased international comparability of Latvian qualifications for further study and employability; better understanding of the education process and its outcomes by learners and employers; wider possibilities for lifelong learning; and aiding the development of learning-outcomes-based education programmes. The LQF expands individuals' opportunities for mobility between countries and between institutions and education levels. It complements the parallel process of recognition of knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education (European Commission and Cedefop, 2018).

The development of a comprehensive LQF aims to:

- (a) increase transparency and consistency of qualifications;
- (b) develop a comprehensive NQF in line with the needs of lifelong learning;
- (c) strengthen the link between the labour market and education;

- (d) strengthen cooperation of those involved in the design and award of qualifications;
- (e) increase public understanding of national qualifications and help build links to the EQF.

The LQF is considered to have contributed to increased quality in the vocational education and training system; the existing five-level system of vocational qualifications has been referenced to the LQF ⁽¹⁾. A commitment to continued work on the development of the LQF was included in the 2014 Statement of the Parliament *On the approval of the education development guidelines for 2014-20* ⁽²⁾. The framework is referred to in the Education development guidelines for 2021-27 *Future skills for the future society* ⁽³⁾, thus being recognised as an important instrument in the education and training system.

Levels, learning outcomes, and qualifications

The LQF is an eight-level comprehensive framework which includes all levels and subsystems of formal education (general, initial and continuing VET, and higher education), as well as professional qualifications awarded through validation of non-formal and informal learning at LQF levels 2 to 4. Non-government regulated qualifications awarded outside the formal education and training system are not yet included. The pre-existing five levels of professional qualifications were levelled to LQF levels 2 to 7 following amendments to the Vocational education Law in 2015 ⁽⁴⁾.

LQF level descriptors are based on learning outcomes and are defined as knowledge (knowledge and comprehension), skills (ability to apply knowledge, communication and general skills) and competence (analysis, synthesis and assessment). Regulation No 322/2017 on the education classification of Latvia ⁽⁵⁾ introduced slight changes to the original level descriptors at levels 1 to 4 and at

⁽¹⁾ Order of the Cabinet of Ministers 629/2009 on the concept of enhancing the attractiveness of vocational education and the participation of social partners in the quality assurance of vocational education. <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=197894>

⁽²⁾ <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=266406>

⁽³⁾ Draft version (16.07.2020).
https://www.izm.gov.lv/images/IAP2027_projekta_versija_apspriesana_16072020.pdf

⁽⁴⁾ Amendments to the Vocational education Law in 2015 state how professional qualification levels are referenced to the LQF levels: level 1 of the professional qualification corresponds to the LQF level 2; level 2 corresponds to the LQF level 3; level 3 corresponds to the LQF level 4; level 4 corresponds to the LQF level 5; level 5 corresponds to the LQF levels 6 and 7.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=291524>

level 8, and to the initial levelling of qualifications ⁽⁶⁾. Discussions were held on the levelling of master craftsman and journeyman qualifications to the LQF; these qualifications are now included in the sectoral qualifications frameworks, which in turn are referenced to LQF levels. Sectoral expert councils formulate level descriptors of sectoral qualifications in the sectoral qualifications frameworks ⁽⁷⁾ and occupational standards and professional qualifications requirements ⁽⁸⁾ in line with LQF levels and level descriptors (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

There is growing emphasis on learning outcomes at policy and practice level. The development of the LQF led to increased awareness of learning outcomes among stakeholders and gave rise to discussions on the role of outcomes in education. This materialised in amendments to the Education Law in 2015, and in regulations on education content, the state examination system and on the licensing and accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes. Learning outcomes are widely used in higher education and for occupational standards.

Subject-based outcomes in general education have been defined in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Two new regulations on general basic and secondary education standards and study programmes ⁽⁹⁾ were adopted in 2018 and 2019 (in force since 2020) and contain updated learning outcomes in accordance with the new content of basic and general secondary education. However, AIC (2018b) reported that no significant changes in the implementation of a learning outcomes approach in general education have been observed following a comparison of Cabinet regulations in effect during the development of the LQF (2009 to 2011) and those currently in force. The ESF project *Competence-based approach in curriculum (2016-21)* promotes the shift to learning outcomes and aims at approving, in collaboration with 100 education institutions, a

⁽⁶⁾ Special basic education qualifications that were initially placed at LQF levels 1 and 2 are now at LQF level 1. Basic education qualifications initially placed at LQF level 3 are now at LQF level 2. The certificate of vocational education (*arodizglitība*) initially referenced to LQF level 4 is now at LQF level 3. Certificates of professional qualification (obtained in continuing VET) were included at LQF levels 2 to 4. In 2018, with amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions, a new qualification was introduced at LQF level 8 – professional doctor diploma in arts. For details, please see Annexes 1 and 3 of the updated Latvian referencing report (AIC, 2018b).

⁽⁷⁾ https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/nks_saraksts.shtml

⁽⁸⁾ https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/nks_stand_saraksts_mk_not_626.shtml

⁽⁹⁾ Regulation 747/2018 on the State basic education standard and basic education programme samples.

<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/303768-noteikumi-par-valsts-pamatizglitibas-standartu-un-pamatizglitibas-programmu-paraugiem>

Regulation 416/2019 on the State general secondary education standard and the general secondary education programme samples. <https://m.likumi.lv/ta/id/309597>

competence-based general education curriculum compliant with the description of the compulsory general education curriculum and its implementation at pre-school, basic and secondary education levels (AIC, 2018b).

A learning-outcomes-based approach has been implemented in VET since 2007 and reforms regarding the content of vocational education are ongoing. VET institutions must use learning-outcomes-oriented occupational standards (stipulating knowledge, skills and competences necessary to performing relevant professional activity) when developing new vocational education programmes or altering programmes which have already been accredited (Cedefop, 2016). In addition to occupational standards or requirements for professional qualifications and descriptors of the sectoral qualifications frameworks, the content of vocational education programmes is defined by the State vocational education standards specified by the relevant Cabinet regulations. The modularisation of vocational education is a policy priority. Development of modular vocational education programmes takes place within the ESF project *Improvement of sectoral qualifications system for the development of vocational education and quality assurance (2016-21)*, which aims at improving the content of vocational education, developing and updating occupational standards and requirements for professional qualifications in line with the LQF, and improving the content of professional qualification examinations (AIC, 2018b).

The qualifications framework for higher education is founded on the Bologna cycles and is integrated into the LQF; each qualification in the framework is described by its level, expected learning outcomes and workload in credit points⁽¹⁰⁾. The law on higher education institutions includes the term ‘learning outcomes’ and provides a brief definition of the term⁽¹¹⁾. The State standards for academic and professional higher education set acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences in line with EQF levels⁽¹²⁾. Learning outcomes are included in the

⁽¹⁰⁾ A national credit point system is in use in higher education, where the conversion to ECTS credit points is by multiplication by a factor of 1.5. There is no credit point system in VET, but several ECVET principles have been already introduced as part of VET reforms.

⁽¹¹⁾ Other documents focusing on learning outcomes in higher education include *The National concept of the development of higher education and higher education institutions in Latvia 2013-20* and *The Guidelines for education development for 2014-20*.

⁽¹²⁾ Regulation No 240 of the Cabinet of Ministers of 13 May 2014: *Regulations on State standard of academic education* (Latvian: *Noteikumi par valsts akadēmiskās izglītības standartu*). <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=266187>

Regulation No 512 of the Cabinet of Ministers of 26 August 2014: *Regulation on State standard of second level professional higher education* (Latvian: *Noteikumi par otrā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības valsts standartu*). <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=268761>

aims and content of study programmes, learning processes and assessment principles.

Since 2016, the learning outcomes of formal education qualifications have been available online ⁽¹³⁾. Knowledge, skills and competences are published in the database of occupational standards for VET qualifications and state education standards for general basic and secondary education, as well as in information provided by higher education institutions for higher education qualifications. In higher education, the learning outcomes for each study programme are published on the website of each higher education institution.

Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

LQF level descriptors and the compliance of education programmes with LQF/EQF levels were first defined by the Cabinet Regulation No 931 on the education classification of Latvia ⁽¹⁴⁾, in force since 2010. Following amendments to the Vocational education Law ⁽¹⁵⁾, the Law on higher education institutions ⁽¹⁶⁾, the Education Law in 2015 ⁽¹⁷⁾, and a number of regulations ⁽¹⁸⁾, the new Cabinet Regulation No 322 on the education classification of Latvia ⁽¹⁹⁾ came into force in

⁽¹³⁾ www.latvianqualifications.lv

⁽¹⁴⁾ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/219241-grozijumi-ministru-kabineta-2008-gada-2-decembranoteikumos-nr-990-noteikumi-par-latvijas-izglitiba-klasifikaciju>

⁽¹⁵⁾ <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=20244>

⁽¹⁶⁾ <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=37967>

⁽¹⁷⁾ <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=50759>

⁽¹⁸⁾ Regulation 202/2013 – Procedures by which State recognised education documents certifying higher education are issued. <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=256157/>

Regulation 240/2014 on the State standard of the academic education. <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=266187>

Regulation 512/2014 on the State standard of the second level professional higher education. <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=268761>

Regulation 633/2016 – Procedure of developing occupational standard, professional qualification requirements (if occupational standard for the profession is not approved) and sectoral qualifications framework. https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=285032&version_date=30.09.2016

Regulation 451/2005 amended in 2016 – Procedures by which State recognised documents certifying vocational education and professional qualifications and documents certifying acquisition of a part of an accredited vocational education programme are issued: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=111580>

Regulation 617/2018 on the state professional higher education standard for obtaining a doctor degree and the procedure for awarding a professional doctor degree in arts: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=111580>

⁽¹⁹⁾ <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=291524>

June 2017, redefining the descriptions of knowledge, skills and competences corresponding to the LQF levels and the conformity of the types of education programme with the LQF/EQF levels.

The Ministry of Education and Science has the leading role in developing and implementing the LQF. The Academic Information Centre has been the designated EQF national coordination point (NCP) since 2008 and has played a key role in coordinating the referencing process ⁽²⁰⁾, preparing and updating the referencing report, and communicating and disseminating information to all stakeholders. It also serves as the Latvian ENIC/NARIC and the Quality Agency for Higher Education of Latvia. It has the following tasks in relation to the LQF/EQF ⁽²¹⁾:

- (a) to reference existing national qualifications levels to the eight levels of the European qualifications framework;
- (b) to ensure that transparent methodology is used to reference the national qualifications levels to the EQF;
- (c) to provide access to information and guidance to stakeholders on how national qualifications relate to the EQF through the national qualifications frameworks or systems;
- (d) to promote the participation of stakeholders in the comparison and use of qualifications at the European level in accordance with national legislation and practice.

The running of the NQF/EQF NCP is supported by financial resources from the European Commission Erasmus+ grant, as well as joint financing by the Ministry of Education and Science. The joint financing of the activities of the Latvian NCP is included in the agreement with the Ministry of Education and Science, and the NCP submits quarterly reports to the Ministry. The human resources available depend on financial resources and planned activities. One to two project experts are involved as permanent full-time workers, and one coordinator, one project manager, one secretary and one senior accountant are involved as permanent part-time workers (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

The Latvian NCP ensures that all relevant parties (policy-makers, students, employer organisations, quality assurance agencies, education institutions and other relevant institutions depending on the topic) are involved in discussions, events and research activities (e.g. preparing the updated referencing report, one-

⁽²⁰⁾ The initial referencing process (2009-11) was supervised by the referencing working group, comprised of the main stakeholders: ministerial representatives, national agencies, employer organisations, trade unions, student organisations and education quality assurance agencies. The group was also involved in the consultation on the Bologna process and the self-assessment report (2011-12).

⁽²¹⁾ <http://www.nki-latvija.lv/en/par-nkp>

off validation reports, etc.). Since 2008, this has been part of the communication strategy of the NCP (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

As a result of the project *Development of sectoral qualification system and increasing efficiency and quality of vocational education* (2010-15), 12 sectoral expert councils were established for the main economic sectors. They include representatives of sectoral employers' organisations, trade unions, the Ministry of Education and Science and other relevant ministries. Their main tasks include developing occupational standards, defining the content of vocational qualifications and vocational examinations requirements and enrolment of students in vocational education programmes. (European Commission and Cedefop, 2018).

Quality assurance is specified at different levels in the education system: at policy, programme and institutional level. In general education and vocational education, quality assessment is carried out by the State Education Quality Service. The Council of Higher Education (*Augstākās izglītības padome*) is responsible for quality assurance in higher education institutions. Since 2015 study programmes and study directions have been licensed and accredited by the Academic Information Centre – Quality Agency for Higher Education (AIKA) in line with amendments to the law on higher education institutions ⁽²²⁾ and Cabinet regulations. Since 2018, AIKA ⁽²³⁾ has been a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and has been included in the European quality assurance register for higher education (EQAR).

Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways ⁽²⁴⁾

The system for validating non-formal and informal learning in Latvia was developed between 2007 and 2016 and consists of multiple frameworks covering different

⁽²²⁾ Parliament of the Republic of Latvia (2015). *Law on higher education institutions [Augstskolu likums]*. LR Saeima 2.11.1995. <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=37967> [accessed 18.1.2019].

⁽²³⁾ The Academic Information Centre (Latvian ENIC/NARIC, Latvian national coordination point for EQF, National Europass centre and ReferNet) has also taken over the function of external higher education quality assurance in Latvia.

⁽²⁴⁾ This section draws mainly on input from the 2018 update to the *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning* (Ieleja, 2019)) and from the *Implementation of Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes in Latvia Self-Assessment Report* (Academic Information Centre, 2018a).

sectors and levels of education and training. Validation practices have three main aims:

- (a) assessment for awarding a general basic or secondary education certificate that sets out the education level attained (for 'external students');
- (b) assessment for awarding a certificate of professional qualification at levels 2 to 4;
- (c) assessment within higher education with the aim of awarding credit for specific modules in order to increase access and flexibility.

In VET, since 2010, the Vocational education Law stipulates that assessment of vocational competence takes into account the requirements of the respective occupational standard and that validation of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning can be carried out by accredited educational institutions and accredited examination centres delegated by the State Education Quality Service. The procedure for validating competences obtained outside formal education and training for acquisition of professional qualifications at LQF levels 2 to 4 was legally defined in 2011 ⁽²⁵⁾. These regulations do not apply to regulated professions. By 2018, more than 40 accredited educational institutions and examination centres were delegated responsibility for validation, with around 3 000 persons having undergone the procedure; the only requirement to access the procedure is to be a minimum 18 years old (Ieleja, 2019).

Procedures for assessment and criteria for recognition of prior learning at LQF levels 5 to 7 were set up for higher education in 2012; the 2012 regulations were replaced in 2018 ⁽²⁶⁾. The validation process in higher education is largely decentralised, with education institutions provided with rights to conduct validation. The decision regarding the recognition of learning outcomes is taken by the Commission of Learning Outcomes Recognition established in the higher education institution or college. As in VET, the basis for assessment are the professional competences as defined in occupational standards. The procedure consists of the four stages of validation (identification, documentation, assessment, certification). There is no centralised collection of data on the

⁽²⁵⁾ Regulation No 146 of the Cabinet of Ministers of 22 February 2011: *Procedure for the validation of professional competences acquired outside of formal education system*. <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/226788>

⁽²⁶⁾ Regulation No 36/2012 of the Cabinet of Ministers: *Regulations regarding the validation of learning outcomes achieved in previous learning or professional experience*, replaced by Regulations No 505/2018 of the Cabinet of Ministers: *Regulations for validation of competences acquired outside formal education or during professional experience and learning outcomes achieved in previous education*. <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/301013-arpus-formalas-izglitibas-apguto-vai-profesionalaja-pieredze-iegutokompetencu-un-iepriekseja-izglitiba-sasniegtu>

validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes carried out by higher education institutions or colleges.

Validation arrangements are closely linked to the LQF through the use of learning outcomes. Validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is not carried out at LQF levels 1 and 8, for the validation of a full qualification in regulated professions, and for full general education qualifications. Obtaining a full qualification through validation is possible for professional qualifications at LQF levels 2 to 4, and the certificate obtained does not specify whether it was acquired through attendance at an education and training programme or through validation.

Recent measures for upskilling and increased employability are supported through a range of EU-funded projects, mostly started in 2017 and lasting five years. They have a strong emphasis on validation as part of the proposed solutions ⁽²⁷⁾ and target groups at risk of unemployment (persons with unfinished education, with an education level at EQF 3 or less, disabled persons, persons older than 50 years of age, refugees, NEET youth, long-term unemployed).

The main activities on the agenda concern further adjustments to the system and nationwide measures aimed at promoting the availability and accessibility of validation among candidates.

NQF implementation and impact

The LQF is now operational. Its development and implementation was carried out in two stages: the first stage (2009-11) involved inclusion of formal qualifications in the LQF and referencing to the EQF; further development and revision took place in a second stage, and resulted in the adoption of the updated EQF referencing report in 2019. The framework is firmly embedded in legislation governing the Latvian education and training system. The Education Law of 1998 was amended in 2015 and includes the definition of the LQF and its general characteristics, reaffirming the LQF as a comprehensive eight-level framework open to all levels and types of formal education (general, vocational and academic education), as well as professional qualifications. The Cabinet of Ministers Regulation 322 on the education classification of Latvia came into force in June 2017, determining the descriptions of knowledge, skills and competences and defining the LQF levels and the conformity of types of education programme with the LQF/EQF levels.

Several large European Social Fund projects have supported LQF implementation. Strong emphasis has been placed on increasing the quality of vocational education in line with labour market needs and with the EQF. Strides

⁽²⁷⁾ Activities include assessment of human resource potential and support measures such as career consultations, skills audit and validation of non-formal and informal learning

have been made in modularisation of VET programmes and developing a system for sectoral qualifications linked to the LQF. 15 sectoral qualification frameworks/structures were approved by 2018, specifying occupations, specialisations and levels of qualifications, and forming a basis for the development of VET programmes (European Commission, 2019). New occupational standards are being developed and LQF level descriptions have been used as a tool to understand both the education side and the needs of the labour market (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

The Latvian qualifications database (LQD) ⁽²⁸⁾ was set up in 2016, enhancing the visibility and transparency of Latvian qualifications. It includes over 2 000 formal (State-accredited) qualifications included in the LQF. The LQD contains a general description of qualifications, including: LQF/EQF level, ISCED 2013, awarding body, title of the qualification, learning outcomes, previous education, diploma and diploma supplement examples. Learning outcomes are described either as a bulk text that does not distinguish between knowledge, skills and competences but includes all of them (usually for academic higher education and general basic and secondary education) or are differentiated as knowledge, skills and competences (usually for VET and professional higher education qualifications). Most of the content of the LQD is available in both Latvian and English.

Since 2013, it has been compulsory to indicate the LQF/EQF level on diploma supplements in higher education ⁽²⁹⁾. Levels are also indicated on more than 150 Europass certificate supplements (available in Latvian) ⁽³⁰⁾. From 1 January 2017, LQF levels have been indicated on vocational education certificates and diplomas (both in initial and continuing VET). No decision has been taken on including LQF and EQF levels on certificates in general education.

The LQF is used by education and training institutions in formulating learning outcomes for study programmes, and by quality assurance bodies in the licensing and accreditation of study programmes. It is taken into account by the Latvian ENIQ/NARIC in the recognition of foreign qualifications, while employers are starting to use LQF levels in vacancy descriptions. In order to disseminate the EQF

⁽²⁸⁾ www.latvijaskvalifikacijas.lv; www.latvianqualifications.lv; www.lkd.lv; www.lqd.lv

⁽²⁹⁾ Regulation No 202 of the Cabinet of Ministers of 16 April 2013: Procedures by which State-recognised education documents certifying higher education are issued (Latvian: Kārtība, kādā izsniedz valsts atzītus augstāko izglītību apliecinājošus dokumentus). <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=256157/>

⁽³⁰⁾ https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/nks_europass_saraksts.shtml

to wider audiences, the NCP ensures that every year there are at least one or two translations of international publications on EQF-related topics into Latvian ⁽³¹⁾

The EQF NCP has conducted a number of studies to support LQF implementation. Most recently, a study on the *Role of the LQF in education and on the labour market* ⁽³²⁾ aims to examine the use, visibility and impact of the LQF among various target groups (education providers, employers, workers and jobseekers and the general public). The results suggest that the LQF is well known and understood among education and training providers, and that visibility needs to be improved among the general public, employers, workers and jobseekers ⁽³³⁾. There is also regional variation in levels of awareness of the LQF, and a seminar in the least-reached region, Vidzeme, was organised by the NCP in autumn 2020 in response to this. Once finalised, study results will be evaluated and may be used in planning further activities by the NCP.

Previous studies include two evaluations analysing the changes in the Latvian education and training system in the context of the introduction of the LQF: in 2013 ⁽³⁴⁾ and 2016 respectively ⁽³⁵⁾; the 2013 study resulted in proposed and adopted changes to regulations regarding LQF levels 1 to 4. The study *International qualifications in Latvia* ⁽³⁶⁾ was conducted in 2014 to describe existing

⁽³¹⁾ Published on the [NCP website](#). The following have been translated into Latvian since 2018:

Kato, S.; Galán-Muros, V.; Weko, T. (2020). *The emergence of alternative credentials*. OECD Education working paper No 216.

Beverley, O. (2019). *Making micro-credentials work for learners, employers and providers*. Melbourne: Deakin University.

Cedefop; ETF; Unesco (2019). *The global inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks*. Luxembourg: Publications Office.

Cedefop (2019). *Overview of national qualifications framework developments in Europe, 2019*. Luxembourg: Publications Office.

Cedefop (2019). *Qualifications frameworks in Europe: 2018 developments*. Cedefop briefing note, May 2019.

⁽³²⁾ The research methods used include: desk research, survey and semi-structured interviews.

⁽³³⁾ The results (in English) will be available in spring 2021.

⁽³⁴⁾ Academic Information Centre/Latvian NCP (2013). *Referencing of the Latvian education system to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area: situation assessment*.

http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/LQF_evaluation_of_situation_2013.pdf.

⁽³⁵⁾ Academic Information Centre/Latvian NCP (2016). *Referencing of the Latvian education system to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area: situation assessment 2016*. http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/LKI_attistiba_situacijas_izvertejums_2016.gada.pdf

⁽³⁶⁾ http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/International-qualifications-in-Latvia_EN.pdf

practice with regard to international qualifications in Latvia and their possible inclusion in the LQF; a crucial aspect highlighted was the need for introducing and using learning outcomes to facilitate the relevant assessment of international qualifications. Another study was conducted in 2015-16: *Terminology in the context of Latvian qualifications framework and European qualifications framework* ⁽³⁷⁾. Proposed terminology and definitions were discussed in a seminar with education and language experts and submitted to the Ministry of Education and the Terminology Commission of the Latvian Academy of Sciences. Results of these studies informed the preparation of the updated EQF referencing report in 2018 (AIC, 2018b).

Referencing to the EQF

The LQF was referenced to the EQF and self-certified to the qualifications framework for the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) in October 2011; the referencing report was published in 2012 (AIC et al., 2012). An updated referencing report was presented and adopted in the EQF advisory group in 2019 (AIC, 2018b). It was informed by the results of several evaluation studies and covers developments in the Latvian education and training system and changes in laws and regulations since the initial referencing exercise.

Important lessons and future plans

The eight-level comprehensive Latvian national qualifications framework has reached an operational stage. It currently includes qualifications awarded in the formal education and training system, in general, vocational and higher education, as well as professional qualifications. Qualifications awarded outside the formal/regulated system are not yet included in the LQF. A future area of work is related to the opening up of the framework to qualifications obtained through non-formal and informal learning, master craftsman qualifications, micro-credentials and international qualifications (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

The LQF is being regularly reviewed and adapted in response to changes in the Latvian education and training system and developments at European level. It has been reported that by 2018 the terminology and principles introduced with the LQF have become an integral part of education reforms (AIC, 2018b). LQF developments have been informed by a number of studies ⁽³⁸⁾ and supported by

⁽³⁷⁾ http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Terminologijas_zinojums_2016.pdf

⁽³⁸⁾ For details, please see section on *NQF implementation and impact*.

close cooperation and exchange of views among stakeholders and national authorities. Events organised by the Latvian NCP serve as a platform for discussion on EQF/LQF-related topics and current developments, such as. on lifelong learning, validation of non-formal and informal learning, learning outcomes, qualifications and micro-credentials; they are well attended and information exchange is perceived as intensive. An impact study on the role of LQF in education and on the labour market is under way, with final results expected to become available by the end of 2020 (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020). This evidence-based and consensus-seeking approach has been among the success factors of LQF implementation so far.

The LQF is considered to be one of the major driving forces for promoting the use of learning outcomes at all levels and in all types of education in Latvia, with influence on the content of programmes, standards and qualification requirements, on the quality assurance system, and on validation of non-formal and informal learning. LQF/EQF levels and level descriptors are frequently used in the development of occupational standards, sectoral qualifications frameworks and curricula in higher education. The LQF/EQF were used to update and create new State education standards for general basic and secondary education (in force as of September 1, 2020). The transparency and comparability of Latvian qualifications is further supported through the Latvian Qualifications Database which currently includes over 2 000 qualifications awarded in formal education (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

Current challenges include: the inclusion of LQF levels on general education certificates – there is ongoing discussion and work in this regard and in communicating the LQF to the general public. Providing understandable information on the role and importance of the LQF is considered a challenging task.

The Covid-19 crisis has partly influenced the dialogue on LQF implementation among stakeholders and institutions, as it has not been possible to organise large events. In 2020, the Latvian NCP revised its activity plan to ensure communication with the relevant parties in different ways (e.g. online meetings and discussions, digital dissemination activities) (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

Main sources of information

- The Academic Information Centre is the Latvian EQF-NCP:
<http://www.nki-latvija.lv/en/>
- Latvian qualifications database: <https://www.latvijaskvalifikācijas.lv/en/>
- AIC et al. (2012). *Referencing of 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.*
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- AIC (2018). *Referencing the Latvian qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and the qualifications framework for European higher education area – Updated self-assessment report.*
<https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf>

Latvian qualifications framework (LQF)

LQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Doctor diploma (<i>doktora diploms</i>)	8
7	Professional doctor diploma in arts (<i>profesionālā doktora diploms mākslās</i>)	7
7	Master diploma (<i>maģistra diploms</i>)	7
7	Professional Master diploma (<i>profesionālā maģistra diploms</i>)	7
7	Diploma of professional higher education and Diploma of higher professional qualification (<i>profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms and augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms</i>)	7
6	Bachelor diploma (<i>bakalaura diploms</i>)	6
6	Professional Bachelor diploma (<i>profesionālā bakalaura diploms</i>)	6
6	Diploma of professional higher education and Diploma of higher professional qualification (<i>profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms and augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms</i>)	6
5	Diploma of first level professional higher education (<i>pirmā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms</i>)	5
4	Certificate of general secondary education (<i>atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību</i>)	4
4	Diploma of vocational secondary education (<i>diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību</i>)	4
4	Certificate of professional qualification (at secondary education level) (<i>profesionālās kvalifikācijas apliecība (vidējās izglītības pakāpē)</i>)	4

LQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
3	Certificate of vocational education <i>(atestāts par arodizglītību)</i> Certificate of professional qualification (at vocational education <i>(arodizglītība)</i> level) <i>(profesionālās kvalifikācijas apliecība (arodizglītības pakāpē))</i>	3
2	Certificate of general basic education (9 years) <i>(apliecība par vispārējo pamatizglītību)</i> Certificate of vocational basic education <i>(apliecība par profesionālo pamatizglītību)</i> Certificate of professional qualification (at basic education level) <i>(profesionālās kvalifikācijas apliecība (pamatizglītības pakāpē))</i>	2
1	Certificate of general basic education <i>(apliecība par vispārējo pamatizglītību)</i> (special education programmes for learners with (severe) mental development disorders or multiple severe developmental disorders)	1

Source: Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No 322/2017: Regulations on the education classification of Latvia. Annex 1. <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524-noteikumi-par-latvijas-izglitiba-klasifikaciju>
 AIC (2018b). <https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf>
 Latvian qualifications database (2020). <https://www.latvijaskvalifikacijas.lv/en/>

Acronyms

AIC	Academic Information Centre
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ESF	European Social Fund
EQAR	European quality assurance register in higher education
EQF	European qualifications framework
LQF	Latvian qualifications framework
NQF	national qualifications framework
NCP	national coordination point
VET	vocational education and training

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