



Developments in vocational education and training policy in 2015–17

LATVIA



Cedefop monitoring and analysis of VET policies

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policy in 2015-17**

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Aspects of vocational education and training context in 2015

At the beginning of the reporting period, the proportion of upper secondary students enrolled in vocational education and training (VET) programmes in Latvia was below the EU average: 39.6% in 2014 compared to 48% in the EU (Cedefop, 2017a, p.81); 40% in 2015 compared to 47% in the EU ⁽¹⁾. All upper secondary initial VET students were following work-based programmes: 100% in 2014, against 34% in the EU (Table 1). Adult participation in lifelong learning was low at 5.7% in 2015 compared to 10.7% in the EU (Table 1).

In 2015, Latvia was in the process of reform to increase the attractiveness of initial vocational education and training (IVET) and involve companies in providing practical training placements (European Commission, 2015, p.7-8; European Commission, 2016, p.7). In preceding years, attempts had been made to set up incentives for companies to provide work-based learning opportunities. Work-based learning was piloted in 2013; in 2014 the *WBL-Balt* project was launched (National authorities for apprenticeships: implementing work based learning in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia). Support to work-based learning and craftsmanship education was reaffirmed in the 2014 education development guidelines for 2014-20 and the 2014-20 *Growth and employment* programme. In 2015, amendments to the vocational education law came into force, affirming the role of employers and sector expert councils in VET governance, programme and examination design, and organising work-based learning. An action plan for adult learning was also in preparation.

⁽¹⁾ Eurostat, data 2015.

Table 1. Framework data: score on VET indicators in Latvia and in the EU: 2010, last available year and recent trend

Indicator label	2010		Last available year			Recent trend (per year)		
	LV	f EU	f Yr	LV	f EU	Range	LV	EU
Access, attractiveness and flexibility								
IVET students as % of all upper secondary students	A	A	'14 39.6 b	48.0 ^b _{E1}		'13-'14	0.6	-0.9
IVET work-based students as % of all upper secondary IVET	A	A	'14 100.0 b	34.0 ^b _{E2}		'13-'14	0.0	0.1
IVET students with direct access to tertiary education as % of all upper secondary IVET			'14 87.4	69.2 ^{E3}		'13-'14	-0.9	-1.4
Employees participating in CVT courses (%)	24.0	38.0 e	'10 24.0	38.0 e				
Employees participating in on-the-job training (%)	21.0	20.0 e	'10 21.0	20.0 e				
Adults in lifelong learning (%)	5.4		'15 5.7	10.7 b		'13-'15	↘ -0.5	→ 0.0
Enterprises providing training (%)	40.0	66.0 e	'10 40.0	66.0 e				
Female IVET students as % of all female upper secondary students	A	A	'14 33.1 b	42.7 ^b _{E1}		'13-'14	0.9	-1.0
Employees of small firms participating in CVT courses (%)	14.0	25.0 e	'10 14.0	25.0 e				
Young VET graduates in further education and training (%)			'15 27.3 b	33.0 b		'14-'15	8.0	-0.3
Older adults in lifelong learning (%)	2.3	5.3	'15 3.2	6.9		'10-'15	↗ 0.1	↗ 0.4
Low-educated adults in lifelong learning (%)	u		'15 2.4 C	4.3 ^b _C		'13-'15	↘ -0.1	↘ -0.1
Unemployed adults in lifelong learning (%)	6.7		'15 5.3	9.5 b		'13-'15	↘ -1.2	↘ -0.4
Individuals who wanted to participate in training but did not (%)	12.8 B	9.5 ^e _B	'11 12.8	9.5 e				
Job-related non-formal education and training (%)	81.1 B	80.2 ^e _B	'11 81.1	80.2 e				
Skill development and labour market relevance								
IVET public expenditure (% of GDP)			'13 0.28 b	0.56 ^b _{E4}		'12-'13	0.00	-0.03
IVET public expenditure per student (1000 PPS units)			'13 3.2 b	6.4 ^b _{E5}		'12-'13	-1.1	0.0
Enterprise expenditure on CVT courses as % of total labour cost	0.4	0.8 e	'10 0.4	0.8 e				
Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET			'14 1.4 b	1.0 ^b _{E6}		'13-'14	0.5	0.0
STEM graduates from upper secondary IVET (% of total)	A	A	'14 35.8 b	30.0 ^b _{E7}		'13-'14	-6.2	-0.4
Short-cycle VET graduates as % of first time tertiary education graduates			'14 27.3	9.3 ^{E8}		'13-'14	2.5	0.4
Innovative enterprises with supportive training practices (%)	35.7	41.5 ^{E9}	'12 25.4	41.6 ^{E9}		'10-'12	-5.2	0.0
Employment rate for IVET graduates (20- to 34-year-olds)			'15 81.2 b	77.2 b		'14-'15	3.2	0.3
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over general stream)			'15 3.9 b	5.3 b		'14-'15	-0.2	-1.0

Indicator label	2010		Last available year			Recent trend (per year)		
	LV	f EU	f	LV	f EU	Range	LV	EU
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over low-educated)			'15	18.9 b	23.7 b	'14-'15	▪ -2.9	▪ -0.1
Workers helped to improve their work by training (%)			'15	88.5	83.7			
Workers with skills matched to their duties (%)	47.2	55.2	'15	61.2	57.3	'10-'15	▪ 2.8	▪ 0.4
Overall transitions and labour market trends								
Early leavers from education and training (%)	12.9	13.9	'15	9.9 C	11.0 C	'10-'15	↘ -0.7	↘ -0.6
30-34 year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)	32.6	33.8	'15	41.3 C	38.7 C	'10-'15	↗ 1.7	↗ 1.0
NEET rate for 18- to 24-year-olds (%)	22.6	16.6	'15	13.8	15.8	'10-'15	↘ -1.7	↘ -0.1
Unemployment rate for 20- to 34-year-olds (%)	22.8	13.1	'15	10.6	12.9	'10-'15	↘ -2.4	↗ 0.1
Employment rate of recent graduates (%)	63.4	77.4	'15	78.8 C	76.9 C	'10-'15	↗ 2.8	↘ -0.2
Adults with lower level of educational attainment (%)	11.4	27.3	'15	9.9 C	23.5 C	'10-'15	↘ -0.4	↘ -0.8
Employment rate for 20- to 64-year-olds (%)	64.3	68.6	'15	72.5	70.0	'10-'15	↗ 1.6	↗ 0.3
Employment rate for 20- to 64-year-olds with lower level of educational attainment (%)	45.1	53.4	'15	53.2 C	52.6 C	'10-'15	↗ 1.4	↘ -0.2
Medium/high-qualified employment in 2020 (% of total)			'16	90.3 D	82.8 D			

(A) UOE back reconstruction of 2010 values based on ISCED 2011 not yet available.

(B) AES 2011, used as proxy for 2010 baseline.

(C) 2014 b flags in Eurostat online tables ignored on the basis of other relevant Eurostat metadata.

(D) Forecast made in 2016.

(E1) Based on 28 countries; partial information for NL.

(E2) Based on 25 countries (missing: ES, PL, RO); partial information for NL.

(E3) Based on 27 countries (missing: NL); partial information for EL, IT.

(E4) Based on 19 countries (missing: BE, DK, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, PT, SK).

(E5) Based on 21 countries (missing: DK, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, PT).

(E6) Partial information for NL.

(E7) Based on 25 countries (missing: IT, HR, UK).

(E8) Based on 23 countries (missing: BE, CY, FR, IE, UK).

(E9) Based on 22 countries (missing: DE, IE, EL, NL, SI, UK).

(b) Break after 2010, therefore baseline data not included.

(u) Eurostat: 'low reliability'.

(z) Eurostat: 'not applicable'.

(e) Eurostat: 'estimated'.

NB: EU refers to EU-28, unless otherwise specified. Arrows ↗ or ↘ signal a positive or negative trend based on more than two data points and of magnitude 0.1 per year or more. Trends based on more than two data points but of smaller magnitude are indicated by →; trends based on two points only are marked ▪. Trends are estimated by means of regression models.

Source: Cedefop, 2017a, p.81.

CHAPTER 1.

MTD 1 – All forms of work based learning with special attention to apprenticeships

Following the vocational education law amendments in 2015, work-based learning (*darbavidēbalstītas mācības*) is organised in the form of an apprenticeship-type scheme. In this, learners follow the theoretical and practical part of the programme in a vocational school and along with it receive both theoretical and practical training in a company. The in-company part amounts to at least 25% of the entire training time. An agreement is signed between the vocational school, the student and the enterprise. A collegial advisory body ('Convent', composed of the head of institution and representatives of ministry, local government and employers) is created at each VET institution to ensure cooperation with local businesses, closeness to labour market needs and practice placements in companies. Work-based learning is part of the formal education system and leads to qualifications linked to the national qualifications framework.

Apprenticeship refers to training outside of the formal education system and is organised in the craft sector. Any young person above 16 (or earlier only with permission from a parent or guardian) can enter a craft apprenticeship programme if they find a teaching-master. A training contract is signed. Programmes include school and enterprise-based learning, then learners take the journeyman and master of crafts exams organised by the Chamber of Crafts. Apprenticeships do not provide access to regulated professions and there are no pathways back to formal education for those who might drop out of an apprenticeship programme.

1.1. Policy priorities for 2016-20

For 2016-20, the country's priorities in this area, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, are to:

- (a) prepare conceptual approaches and a legal framework for work-based learning;
- (b) design and test approaches for the training of trainers in school and the workplace.

1.2. Main actions in 2015-17

1.2.1. Implementation of regulation on work-based learning

In July 2016, the implementing regulations were put in place for the 2015 amendments to the vocational education law introducing work-based learning and defining the roles of sector expert councils and enterprises. The regulations stipulate that sector expert councils promote and evaluate the implementation of work-based learning, and encourage cooperation between VET schools and enterprises. Enterprises pay wages or scholarships to students and provide them with mentors. As of January 2017, mentors must have a master of crafts certificate, vocational education or at least three years of relevant work experience, and teaching competence (teacher's professional qualification or completed teacher 72-hour professional competence-development course).

1.2.2. Tax incentive to attract learners to work-based learning

The law on personal income tax was amended in November 2016 to introduce, as of January 2017, tax exemption of work-based learning scholarships not exceeding EUR 280 per month ⁽²⁾.

1.2.3. Initiating social partner involvement

In March 2016, a regional discussion on *Labour market needs: the role of qualitative work placements and work-based learning* was organised ⁽³⁾ by the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia in cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. It focused on how to improve cooperation, between local governments, employers, trade unions and education institutions, on making training relevant to future labour market needs.

1.2.4. Baltic Alliance for Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning (BAfA)

The alliance was launched in June 2015 as a common framework for joint cooperation between the three Baltic countries. It aims to share experience in implementing VET reforms introducing work-based learning and apprenticeships, and to promote examples of good practice. A study was carried out which noted the difficulties faced with work-based learning (confusing regulations, uncertainties about wage issues) and employer needs (in terms of tax incentives and targeted funding). From December 2016 to February 2017, a campaign took

⁽²⁾ *Likums Par iedzīvotāju ienākumnodokli*, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=56880>

⁽³⁾ *Labour market needs: the role of quality practices and work-based learning*, 18 March 2016: <http://www.lbas.lv/news/1213>

place to inform on work-based learning opportunities. Actions for enhanced cooperation among Baltic employers on implementing work-based learning are being prepared ⁽⁴⁾.

1.2.5. ESF projects

In 2016, the Employers' Confederation of Latvia started a national level ESF project (2016-23) on vocational education student involvement in work-based learning and work placements. Enterprises, vocational schools and students will receive financial support under the project ⁽⁵⁾.

Since 2016, the National Centre for Education is operating a national scale ESF project (2016-21) on developing methods, learning aids and materials for learning outcomes assessment in work-based learning ⁽⁶⁾.

1.2.6. 2015-18 Erasmus+ project *New models in work-based learning*

The Employers' Confederation of Latvia and the National Centre for Education are participating in this project. It aims to review work-based learning schemes, providing information on the needs and demands of businesses (especially SMEs) and on regional development strategies, and to issue recommendations and guidelines. 2016 activities included a SWOT analysis of Latvian work-based learning system ⁽⁷⁾, an insight into the Finnish work-based learning model, and a seminar on work-based learning models in Bulgaria, Germany, Latvia, Slovenia and Finland.

1.2.7. The 2014-17 Erasmus+ strategic partnership project *VET for employment*

The project is carried out by the Employers' Confederation in cooperation with the Free Trade Union Confederation ⁽⁸⁾. Its objective is to develop systemic tools for quality work placements in line with labour market needs. In 2016, work placements in mechanical engineering and metal processing were piloted. Also, in cooperation with the youth career portal *Prakse.lv*, 19 higher and secondary

⁽⁴⁾

http://izm.gov.lv/images/Erasmus/darba_vide_balstisu_macibu_istenosana/Continuati_on_of_activities_within_BAfA.pdf

⁽⁵⁾ <http://www.lddk.lv/projekts/sam-8-5-1-palielinat-kvalificetu-profesionalas-izglibas-iestazu-audzeknu-skaitu-pec-to-dalibas-darba-vide-balstisu-macibas-vai-macibu-prakse-uznemuma-istenosanas-noteikumi/>

⁽⁶⁾ http://visc.gov.lv/visc/projekti/esf_852.shtml

⁽⁷⁾ http://www.lddk.lv/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/swotreport_latvia.pdf

⁽⁸⁾ <http://en.lddk.lv/projekts/vet-for-employment/>

VET schools developed career e-platforms where employers can post work placements and job vacancies.

CHAPTER 2.

MTD 2 – Quality assurance mechanisms in line with EQAVET and continuous information and feedback loops to IVET and CVET ⁽⁹⁾

Since 2013, the State Education Quality Service (SEQS) has been assigned as the quality assurance national reference point (QANRP). A national approach for quality assurance in IVET and CVET is in place, aligned to the European quality assurance in VET (EQAVET). The quality of VET is ensured through the accreditation of VET institutions and programmes, carried out by the Accreditation Experts' Commission every six years. As a follow-up, education institutions are required to submit to the SEQS an annual self-assessment report on their progress in implementing the recommendations issued. The SEQS has issued guidelines to help VET providers strengthen their culture of self-assessment and quality assurance.

Training needs are assessed through cooperation with sector expert councils which inform the government of sectoral training needs and review plans for VET entrants into government-funded vocational education programmes as well as the number of traineeship places in each sector.

⁽⁹⁾ Sources:

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop):

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en>

ReferNet: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/networks/refernet>

Priorities reported by Directors General for vocational training for the 2016-20 period;

EQAVET (2016 Secretariat survey, website, newsletters): <http://www.eqavet.eu>

2016 compendium of EQAVET NRP *Erasmus+* funding

Council recommendations on the 2016 national reform programmes:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-semester/2016/#>

Education and training monitor 2016 country reports:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/et-monitor_en

2.1. Quality assurance mechanisms in line with EQAVET

For 2016-20, the country's priorities in this matter, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, are to promote and raise awareness of quality assurance issues, and implement complex quality assurance approaches.

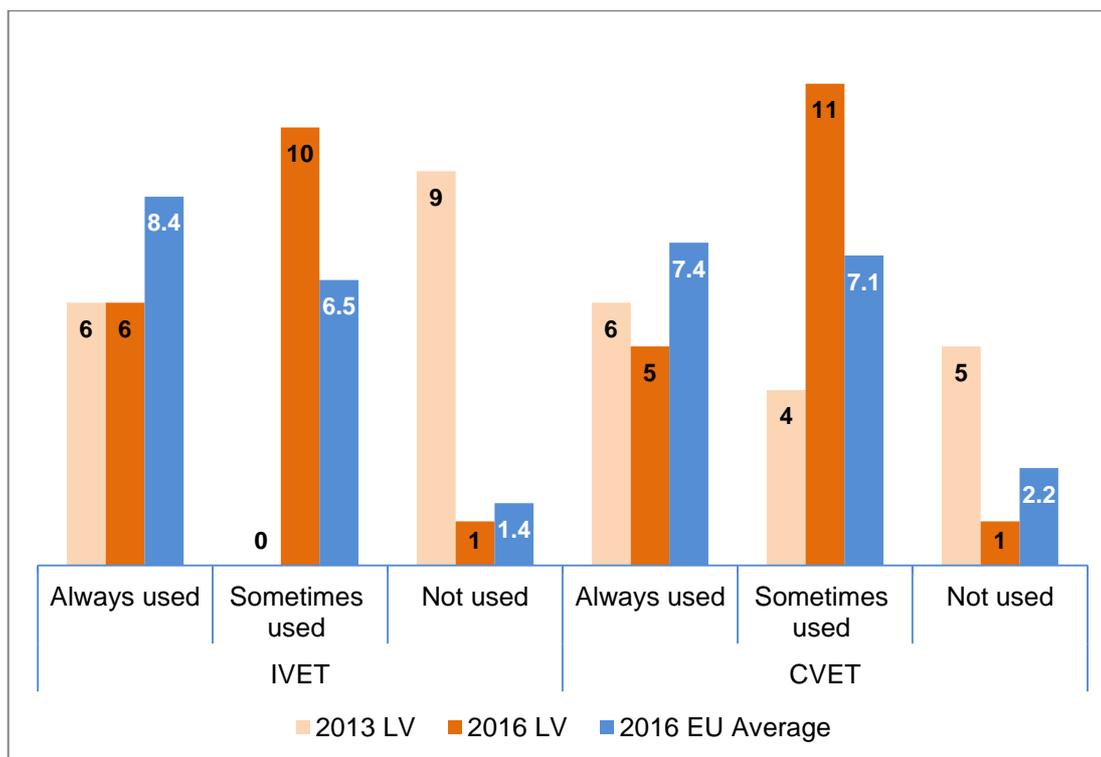
The national approach to quality assurance was revised in 2016 and the outcomes of the review have been made publicly available. As a result of this revision, the Cabinet of Ministers approved new regulations on the procedures for accrediting educational institutions and examination centres, evaluating heads of schools, and adopting general and vocational education programmes. The revision also supports the increased use of EQAVET indicators ⁽¹⁰⁾.

From December 2016 to December 2021, the National Centre for Education is running an ESF project to elaborate a sectoral qualifications system for vocational education and quality assurance based on learning outcomes. The project includes the development of occupational standards, vocational education content, modular vocational education programmes, teaching/learning aids and assessment methods.

Systematic use of EQAVET indicators to monitor VET development in Latvia was below the EU average both in IVET and CVET in 2013 and 2016 (Figure 1). When also considering non-systematic use, an overall increase can be seen in 2016 compared to 2013. Only the EQAVET indicator on the success rate of disadvantaged groups is reported not to be used in 2016 both in IVET and CVET.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Including those relating to teachers participating in further training; participation rate in VET programmes; completion rate in VET programmes; graduate employment; utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace; and percentage of participants in VET classified as disadvantaged groups.

Figure 1. Use of EQAVET indicators



NB: Of the 17 indicators suggested by the 2009 EQAVET recommendation, six were 'always used' in IVET in 2013 and 2016 in Latvia compared to 8.4 in the EU on average in 2016.

In 2013, no reply was provided for the use of two indicators both in IVET and CVET.

EU average was calculated based on available information for 31 out of 35 VET systems.

Source: Cedefop calculations based on EQAVET Secretarial Surveys for 2013 and 2016 data.

2.2. Continuous information and feedback loops in IVET

The country's priorities in this matter for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, are to:

- put in place governance mechanisms involving sectors and employers;
- ensure quality of operation through the use of sector expert councils and Convents.

In July 2016, the Minister for Economics, the Minister for Education and science, and the Minister for Welfare established the Council on Employment, aiming to improve coordination between education and employment policies, and support the involvement of employers in education development and delivery.

In December 2016, the Ministry of Education and Science submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers a draft legislative amendment stipulating that sector expert councils should give an opinion on vocational education programme compliance

with labour market needs; this should apply whenever the profession is not included in the classification of professions or has no approved occupational standard or professional qualification requirements. Regulations are under discussion.

From August 2016 to December 2021, the State Employment Agency, in cooperation with the Ministry of Economics, will be carrying out a national level ESF project *Development of labour market forecasting system*. The aim is to inform policy-making, taking into account economic needs. The system will provide information on skills and professions in the short, medium and long term, as well as information on learning opportunities. Active labour market policy measures will be evaluated and the offer of vocational education programmes will be based on the outcomes of skills forecasts.

In 2016-17, the State Education Quality Service is using *Erasmus+* funds to develop and test questionnaires addressed to employers, representatives of sectors and local governments, in-company trainers, students and graduates on the use of acquired skills at the workplace and on the demand for vocational education programmes in the labour market. The piloting of questionnaires has provided information on improving VET school cooperation with in-company trainers.

2.3. Continuous information and feedback loops in CVET

For 2016-20, the country's priorities in this matter, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, are to:

- (a) put in place governance mechanisms involving sectors and employers;
- (b) ensure quality of operation through the use of sector expert councils and convents.

In May 2016, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the 2016-20 implementation plan of the adult education governance model. According to this plan, the Management Board of Adult Education (which includes representatives from relevant ministries, social partner organisations and regional governments) will define learning areas according to economic trends and labour market short-, medium- and long-term forecasts.

In August 2016, the State Employment Agency approved the strategy for cooperation with employers for 2017-19, targeted at strengthening the agency's capacity to monitor labour market needs better.

CHAPTER 3.

MTD 3 – Access to VET and qualifications for all through more flexible/permeable systems, guidance and validation of non-formal and informal learning

3.1. Policy priorities for 2016-20

For 2016-20, the country's priorities in this area, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, are two-fold:

- (a) for young people:
 - (i) modularisation of programmes;
 - (ii) revision of sector qualification framework;
- (b) for adults:
 - (i) broadening access to various target groups;
 - (ii) critical review of the situation to identify and address gaps.

3.2. Main actions taken in 2015-17

3.2.1. Adoption of the 2015-17 implementation plan for the 2014 education development guidelines for 2014-20

The implementation plan was adopted in June 2015. It provides directions for improving access to education, preventing early school leaving from general education and VET, especially for young people subject to social exclusion. Measures include scholarships in IVET; *Youth guarantee* scheme providing opportunity for young people to acquire a professional qualification in a short time (1-1.5 years) IVET programmes; implementation of career education; promoting validation of non-formal and informal learning for young people by introducing *Youthpass* nationwide.

3.2.2. Guidance

Within the framework of the 2014-17 *Erasmus+* project *VET for employment* (Section 1.2.7), 19 VET and higher education institutions developed e-career

platforms where employers can advertise work placements and jobs offers for students ⁽¹¹⁾.

In May 2015, the inclusive employment guidelines for 2015-20, prepared by the Ministry of Welfare, were adopted, including the aim 'to increase the intensity of use of career services in the career planning process' for adults.

In December 2015, the Government adopted the implementation plan of career education in the State and local government general and vocational education institutions for 2015-20 ⁽¹²⁾. Within this framework, the State Education Development Agency (SEDA) launched a national ESF project *Career support in general and vocational education schools 2016-20* to ensure accessibility of career education in all general education and VET schools. More than 600 career teachers/specialists will be trained. Production of new informative and methodological materials is planned. In parallel, within the framework of *Euroguidance*, SEDA implemented in 2016-17 a range of guidance-related activities including training teachers in career guidance skills and organising a career week comprising about 4500 events.

In 2016, *Virtual career days* ⁽¹³⁾ were organised simultaneously in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, offering information about enterprises, and the opportunity to contact employers on-line.

In January 2017, the public employment service started the ESF 2017-22 *Support for longer working life* project ⁽¹⁴⁾. The project aims to support prolonging the working capacity and employment of older workers. Activities include career counselling and the training of career counsellors for work with older persons.

3.2.3. Permeability and flexibility

Modular programmes are being introduced in VET. In May 2016, amendments to the regulations on the procedure for developing VET programmes were adopted. These amendments entrust vocational education competence centres (VECC) with the task of approving newly developed modular VET programmes as of the 2016/17 academic year. In June 2017, more than 28 programmes were undergoing approval. The implementation of the approved modular VET programmes is to take place as of the 2017/18 academic year.

⁽¹¹⁾ <http://www.iddk.lv/notikums/izstradatas-karjeras-e-platformas-19-izglitibas-iestadem/>

⁽¹²⁾ <http://likumi.lv/ta/id/278999-par-karjeras-izglitibas-istenosanas-planu-valsts-un-pasvaldibu-visparejas-un-profesionalas-izglitibas-iestades-2015-2020>

⁽¹³⁾ www.karjerasdianas.lv

⁽¹⁴⁾ <http://nva.gov.lv/index.php?cid=2&mid=511&txt=4645>

3.2.4. Transparency, recognition, validation

3.2.4.1. National qualifications framework ⁽¹⁵⁾

The development of a Latvian qualifications framework (LQF) started in 2009. Coordination of the referencing process was carried out by the Academic Information Centre. The LQF, comprising only qualifications from formal education, was established and referenced to the European qualifications framework (EQF) and the qualifications frameworks in the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) in 2011. The 23 April 2015 amendments to the vocational education law stated the link between professional qualification levels and the LQF levels. The 18 June 2015 amendments to the education law stated the general regulation of the LQF. As a result, a comprehensive eight-level classification LQF, based on learning outcomes and encompassing general education, VET, higher education as well as professional qualifications, is in place. In September 2016, new Cabinet regulations called for developing professional standards in line with the LQF levels ⁽¹⁶⁾. Regulations supporting use of the learning outcomes approach while developing occupational standards, vocational education contents and assessment methods have been in force since May 2016 ⁽¹⁷⁾.

On 5 April 2016, the Government adopted amendments to the procedures by which state recognised education documents certifying vocational education and professional qualification are issued. Starting from January 2017, vocational education documents will include reference to LQF levels ⁽¹⁸⁾.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Cedefop, 2017b.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Regulation No 633 of Cabinet of Ministers 27 September 2016, Procedure of elaborating occupational standards, requirements of professional qualification (if there is no approved occupational standard) and sectoral qualification structure, (Latvian: *Profesijas standarta, profesionālās kvalifikācijas prasību (ja profesijai neapstiprina profesijas standartu) un nozares kvalifikāciju struktūras izstrādes kārtība*) <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=285032>

⁽¹⁷⁾ Regulations on the implementation of operational programme growth and employment specific objective No 8.5.2 'To ensure the compliance of vocational education to the European qualifications framework' (in force since May 2016).

⁽¹⁸⁾ <http://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=111580>

3.2.4.2. *ECVET* ⁽¹⁹⁾

A national team of ECVET experts (the European credit system for vocational education and training) is in place. In 2016, analyses of 14 sectors qualifications, learning outcomes and occupational standards were carried out through an ESF-funded project. The aim was to identify equivalences and how to work towards allocating credits.

3.2.4.3. *Validation* ⁽²⁰⁾

The 2007-13 lifelong learning strategy included measures for validation of occupational competences acquired outside formal education. Legislation for the validation of learning outcomes has been in place for VET since 2011 and for higher education since 2012 ⁽²¹⁾. Validation of prior learning can be undertaken in more than one hundred vocational qualifications and is based on learning outcomes/level descriptors from the LQF levels. An assessment report on the professional competences acquired through non-formal and informal education ⁽²²⁾ was published in 2015, including methodological recommendations for educational institutions and examination centres. Also, in February 2017, an amendment to the *Procedures for organising and financing active employment measures* ⁽²³⁾ was adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers, aiming to compensate the cost of the qualification exam for validation of non-formal and informal learning.

3.2.5. Training, reskilling and upskilling vulnerable groups, jobseekers and employees

3.2.5.1. *Reskilling people with disabilities*

In February 2017, the Cabinet of Ministers approved new procedures by which a person receives state-funded professional rehabilitation services and professional suitability determination services ⁽²⁴⁾. Since then, professional rehabilitation is provided by the Social Integration State Agency. Each

⁽¹⁹⁾ Source: the ECVET Users' Group Members

⁽²⁰⁾ Cedefop, 2017b; Cedefop et al., 2017.

⁽²¹⁾ In November 2016, the Ministry of Education and Science prepared draft amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions to specify the conditions for validation of non-formal and informal learning in higher education.

⁽²³⁾ <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=225425>

⁽²⁴⁾ <http://tap.mk.gov.lv/lv/mk/tap/?pid=40395371&mode=mk&date=2017-02-21>

programme participant is trained for a new profession determined according to the type and level of functional disorders and the previous education and professional qualification of the person.

3.2.5.2. *SEDA ESF-funded project for the training of persons in employment*

For 2017-22, SEDA is carrying out a national ESF project on improving the professional competence of the employed ⁽²⁵⁾ in cooperation with local governments; it addresses the employed aged 25+. Activities include professional continuing education, professional development and non-formal education.

3.2.5.3. *ESF-funded project for the training jobseekers*

During 2015-21, the public employment service is carrying out a national ESF project on support for the education of the unemployed ⁽²⁶⁾. Activities include retraining and improvement of professional qualifications and skills in line with changing labour market requirements.

3.2.6. Promoting VET participation through increased attractiveness

In January 2016, regulations on scholarships ⁽²⁷⁾ were amended to increase the amount of higher maximum of one-time scholarship and of increased monthly scholarship for good success from EUR 71 to EUR 150.

⁽²⁵⁾ http://viaa.gov.lv/lat/es_fondu_projekti/pieauguso_izglitiba/par_projektu/

⁽²⁶⁾ <http://nva.gov.lv/index.php?cid=2&mid=511&txt=4149>

⁽²⁷⁾ <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=93004>

CHAPTER 4.

MTD 4 – Key competences in both IVET and CVET

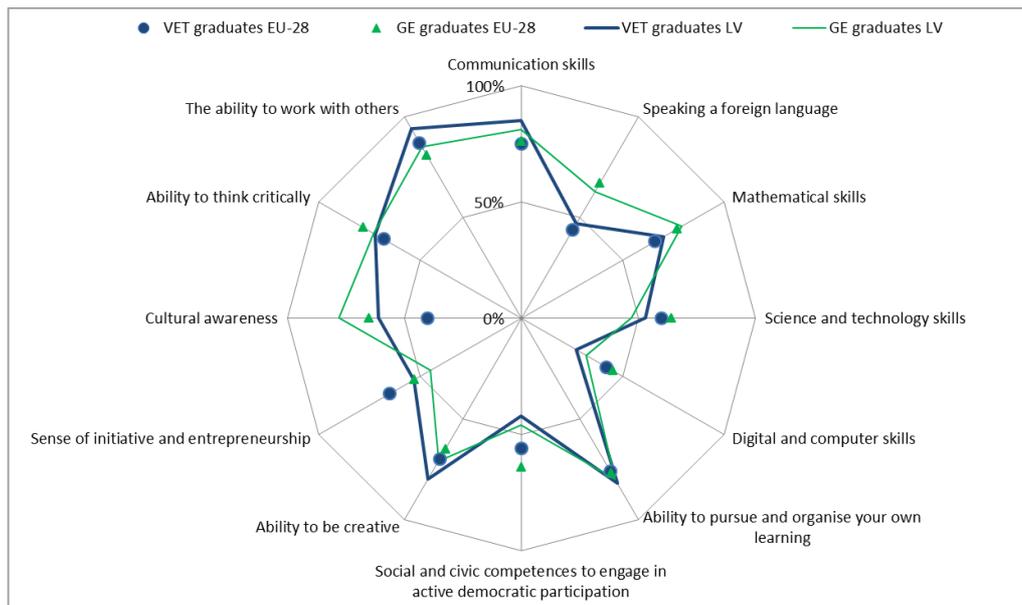
Compared with general education graduates, those who completed VET programmes feel they have stronger (ranged by priority):

- (a) ability to be creative;
- (b) ability to work with others;
- (c) sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;

and weaker:

- (a) foreign language speaking;
- (b) cultural awareness;
- (c) mathematical skills (Figure 2).

Figure 2. **Self-evaluation of acquired skills in general education and VET**



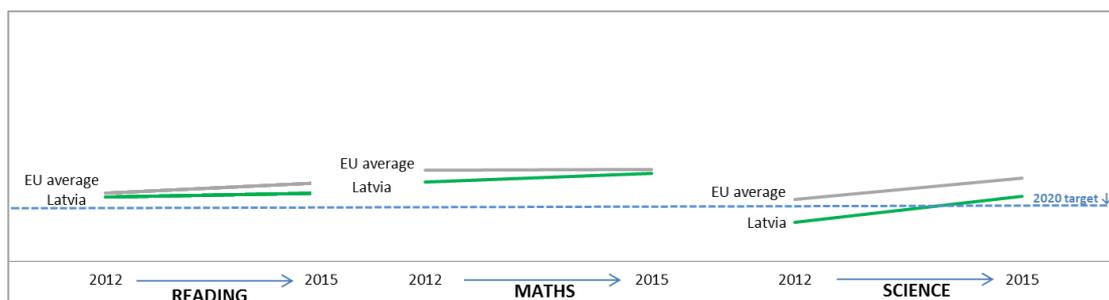
NB: GE stands for general education.

Respondents who attended upper secondary education. Interviewees were asked in summer 2016 about their overall experience in upper secondary education. Aggregated data do not take account of different types and sectors of VET and age groups of respondents.

Source: Cedefop, 2017c.

The context of key competences in 2015 was mainly characterised by an increasing share of young low achievers in reading, maths and science compared with 2012 (Figure 3). However, the share of low achievers in Latvia is lower than the EU average, where the trend is similar.

Figure 3. **Share of 15 year-olds with low achievement in reading, maths and science**



NB: Low achievement means failing Level 2 on the PISA scale.

Source: OECD (PISA 2012 and 2015)

As VET enrolls 40 % of all upper secondary learners in the country ⁽²⁸⁾, this trend is likely to be reflected in the key competences trained for in VET programmes. It is happening against a background where, although VET development is a priority for the government, acquisition of key competences in VET is a challenge. Key competences are mainly promoted through a minority of general subjects. VET learners are often not motivated to acquire these subjects and are more interested in vocational skills. Since 2010, modules comprising key competences are being designed and integrated into vocational subjects. The level of acquisition of key competences can be assessed through centralised examinations ⁽²⁹⁾.

4.1. Key competences in initial VET

The country's priorities in this area for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, are to introduce module-based VET programmes and revise the sectoral qualifications framework. This will be a major reform and will involve extra funding and the social partners.

⁽²⁸⁾ Calculated from Eurostat table educ_uae_enrs04; 2015 data.

⁽²⁹⁾ For more information on key competences in VET see Daija et al. (2016).

Since 2015, legislation has allowed learners to choose between nationally organised centralised state exams and recognised international language exams.

In early 2016, national VET standards were amended to promote the acquisition of competences in maths, science and technology, communication in foreign languages, and social and civic competences. Compulsory general subjects in all VET programmes have been complemented by natural sciences, second foreign language and literature.

In December 2016, an ESF-funded project *Lifelong learning competences* was launched to develop modular VET programmes comprising key competences: initiative and entrepreneurship, security of society and person, information and communication technologies, social and civic competences, and language and culture awareness and expression.

4.2. Key competences in continuing VET

In May 2015, the inclusive employment guidelines for 2015-20, prepared by the Ministry of Welfare, were adopted. They provide for acquisition of qualifications and key competences by jobseekers in line with labour market needs.

Developing the key competences of the unemployed is also part of the ESF project *Support to the education of the unemployed (2015-21)* implemented by the public employment service (EUR 91.9 million, including EUR 2.2 million private and EUR 11.6 million State budget shared financing) (also see Section 3.2.5.3).

CHAPTER 5.

MTD 5 – Systematic initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors

In the Latvian vocational education system, teachers are both teachers and trainers, covering a range of education programmes: vocational basic education; vocational secondary education; and professional development and continuing vocational education. There is a single initial education programme (provided by the Latvian University of Agriculture) that prepares students to teach in vocational education institutions. The requirements for becoming a VET teacher were last revised in 2014. Teachers of vocational subjects must have a minimum of either tertiary education in a relevant field complemented by a pedagogical course (at least 72 hours), or vocational secondary education level qualification (or a master of crafts certificate) complemented by a pedagogical course (at least 72 hours). Teachers need to undertake at least 36 hours of continuing professional development (CPD) every three years. CPD is usually offered by the National Centre for Education.

The current VET reform has direct impact on teachers and their work, particularly in terms of developing their professional competences in cooperation with enterprises.

5.1. Initial training for teaching / training staff in VET schools

For 2016-20, the country's priority in this area, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, is modernisation of training programmes.

In July 2016, a new model was adopted for calculating teachers' wages. It takes into account the workload, extra duties, excellence, and, in the case of VET teachers, an additional payment of up to 20% of monthly salary.

5.2. Continuing professional development for teaching / training staff in VET schools

The country's priority in this area for the 2016-20, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, is modernisation of training programmes.

The implementation plan for 2015-17 of the education development guidelines for 2014-20 includes arranging continuing professional development (CPD) of VET teachers in work-based settings in cooperation with employers, particularly in the form of traineeships and study visits to enterprises. Schools can cooperate with individual enterprises, social partners, professional bodies, and chambers.

On 30 December 2015, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted the career education implementation plan for State and municipal general and vocational education institutions for 2015-20. The plan sets up opportunities for improving the professional competence of teachers, including VET teachers.

Regulations on the implementation of the operational programme (OP) *Growth and employment* were adopted in May 2016. An objective of the programme is to support the improvement of teachers' general competences (such as entrepreneurship, ICT) and professional competences in cooperation with employers. Traineeships in enterprises in Latvia and abroad will be one of the most important forms of training for vocational education teachers.

In compliance with the specific objective of the *Growth and employment* programme that aims at providing effective management of vocational education institutions and professional competence development of the staff involved, the National Centre for Education has launched a national level project on effective management of vocational education institutions and improvement of personnel competence to operate from November 2016 to December 2022 ⁽³⁰⁾. In December 2016, the first seminar for representatives from vocational schools and cooperation partners was held.

5.3. Continuing professional development for trainers and mentors in enterprises

For 2016-20, the country's priority in this area, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, is developing training programmes.

⁽³⁰⁾ http://visc.gov.lv/visc/projekti/esf_853.shtml

The implementation plan for 2015-17 of the education development guidelines for 2014-20, adopted in June 2015, provides for CPD for VET mentors in work-based settings to be arranged in cooperation with employers.

The Employers' Confederation of Latvia was involved in the 2015-17 *Erasmus+* project *Developing apprenticeship: in-company trainer training and apprenticeship promotion*. An objective of the project was to design an in-company trainer training programme model, aiming to equip in-company trainers with knowledge enabling them to train apprentices in the most effective way to help businesses recruit qualified workers. A survey of 30 enterprises ⁽³¹⁾ was carried out on in-company trainer qualifications, use of training in the workplace, and needs of enterprises regarding employee training.

The Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (leading partner) in cooperation with partners from Estonia, Finland and Germany, has started a 2016-18 *Erasmus+* strategic partnership project on the learning outcomes approach and ECVET principles for assessment and validation of work-based learning and apprenticeships: *Training programme and OER for VET and enterprise tutors*. A training programme will be developed and training common to tutors from VET schools and enterprises will be provided.

⁽³¹⁾ http://www.iddk.lv/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/questionnaire-summary-form_latvia_eng.pdf

Conclusion

Since 2015, Latvia has taken diversified actions to develop work-based learning and apprenticeships, aiming to build on Baltic and international cooperation. Steps have been taken to reinforce quality assurance mechanisms in VET along with data collection systems and feedback loops to inform the VET development strategy and keep close to labour market needs. Initiatives were also taken to make VET and qualifications further accessible to all through a range of guidance-oriented projects, stepping up modularisation in VET programmes, implementing a comprehensive national qualifications framework, and supporting the retraining of groups in need. Measures were taken to support the development of key competences in VET and adult learning. Financial incentives and opportunities for the continuous professional development of VET teachers and trainers were put in place, with constant reference to cooperation with employers.

The actions carried out show that the main lines of the Riga Conclusions and the country's policy priorities for 2016-20 are being addressed. Information currently available to Cedefop suggests that some issues could be worth further consideration: initiatives to support entrepreneurship education, further expanding the use of EQAVET indicators in monitoring VET development, and initial training of in-company trainers and mentors. There may also be value in setting out clearer priorities for key competences in CVET for the remaining period to 2020.

List of abbreviations

BAfA	Baltic Alliance for Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning
CPD	continuing professional development
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
DGVT	Director General for vocational education and training
ECVET	European credit system for vocational education and training
EQAVET	European quality assurance in vocational education and training
EQF	European qualifications framework
ESF	European Social Fund
Eurostat	statistical office of the European Union
GDP	gross domestic product
GE	general education
IVET	initial vocational education and training
LQF	Latvian qualifications framework
NCP	national coordination point
NQF	national qualifications framework
NEET	not in education, employment, or training
OP	operational programme
PISA	programme for international student assessment
PPS	purchasing power standards
QANRP	quality assurance national reference point
QF-EHEA	qualifications frameworks in the European higher education area
QNQR	national framework of regional qualifications
SEDA	State Education Development Agency
SEQS	State Education Quality Service
STEM	science, technology, engineering and math programmes
T-TEP	technical education programme
UOE	UNESCO OECD Eurostat
VECC	vocational education competence centres
VET	vocational education and training
WBL	work-based learning

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