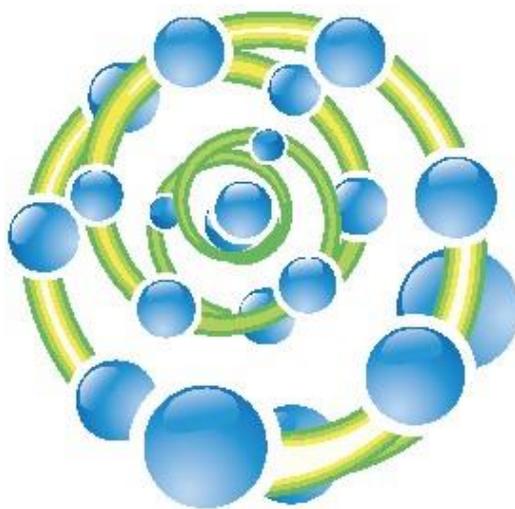


Apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes

Latvia



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A. Definitions and statistics / basic information

Latvia currently operates two apprenticeship / work-based learning schemes. The apprenticeship in Latvian crafts has longstanding traditions (since 1992), but pilot projects of work-based learning implementation in the Latvian vocational education system has started only in 2013. Consequently, there are two current definitions.

As defined in the Law on Crafts, 'craft apprentice' is a person who, in order to acquire the craft, has joined a crafts company or an educational institution and has signed a training contract (Supreme Council, 1993).

The term 'work-based learning' (WBL) indicates the new approach in vocational education. It means that the student acquires practical skills and knowledge primarily in a real working environment of the company, and only a relatively small part of the time (in most cases less than half) is accompanied by mastering theoretical knowledge in an educational institution (Ministry of Education and Science, 2014).

A.1. Apprenticeship in crafts

Apprenticeship in crafts is implemented through apprenticeship programmes, as well as through journeyman and master craftsman qualification exams. Latvian Chamber of Crafts has signed cooperation agreements with a number of vocational schools (during the last years it was signed with 11 vocational secondary schools and 4 private schools/crafts master workshops). Thus, the apprenticeship programmes include both school- and work-based learning for apprentice. It also allows other interested persons to become a crafts apprentice. Between the apprentice and master craftsmen/crafts company a bilateral contract is signed.

1. The number of issued journeyman qualification diplomas lately is reducing year by year. If the largest number of journeyman diplomas awarded was in 1998 (653 diplomas), then in 2008 only 162 apprentices received diplomas and in 2012 – only 72 apprentices.
2. Every person aged at least 15 years old can enrol as an apprentice, regardless his/her previous education (younger persons need permission from parents or tutor). Both candidates of journeymen and master craftsman have to be members of sectorial or territorial craft association of the Latvian Chamber of Crafts.
3. The crafts apprenticeship has been provided in 77 professions, mainly in such professions as ladies tailor, furniture carpenter, carpenter, hairdresser, cook and florist. In general, there are in total 172 occupations which can be considered as craftsmanship

(Cabinet of Ministers, 2009). The main sectors are: construction, metalworking and industrial machinery, woodworking, clothing, textiles and leather processing, food processing, health and body care, glass, paper, ceramics, musical instruments etc. Thus, apprenticeship in all of these professions can be provided. Apprenticeship qualifications do not provide access to regulated occupations.

4. If the Latvian Chamber of Crafts finds the apprentice for the master, the master of crafts or owner of the crafts company pays apprenticeship registration fee (EUR 7.11) to the Latvian Chamber of Crafts. If master and apprentice find each other on their own, apprentices registration is without a fee. The apprentice can receive salary (frequently from the apprenticeship second year) paid by the crafts master or the company during the apprenticeship, but it is not mandatory. Journeyman qualification exam, organised by Chamber, is conducted by a fee which is determined by the Presidium of Chamber and is paid by apprentice (EUR 14.23 for apprentices from cooperation schools, EUR 85.37 for other apprentices). There is no State funds granted to apprentice to take the exam. Qualification exam candidate have to be a member of sectorial or territorial crafts association and pay entry fee (EUR 7.11 apprentices from cooperation schools, EUR 14.23 other apprentices) and membership fee for year (EUR 8.54 apprentices from cooperation schools, EUR 17.07 other apprentices).
5. Apprenticeship in crafts is implemented separately from other education sectors, and is not included in formal education programme classification. It has no relevant ISCED level, not relevant NQF/EQF level (Cabinet of Ministers, 2008; Academic Information Centre, 2012). The crafts apprenticeship allows to obtain the journeyman qualification (*Amata zellā* diploms) and afterwards master craftsman qualification (*Amata meistara* diploms). With the apprenticeship qualifications it is not possible to continue education in the formal education system.
6. Both candidates of journeymen and master craftsman have to be members of the Chamber's sectorial or territorial craft association. The Latvian Chamber of Crafts does not collect data on employability of young people who completed the apprenticeship. However, as shown by verbal communication with representatives of the Chamber, completion rate reaches approximately 95%.

A.2. Work-based learning pilot projects

On September 1, 2013 the Ministry of Education and Science launched pilot projects of work-based learning (WBL) to implement elements of dual education system that provides flexible

curriculum regarding specifics of relevant profession, in six vocational education schools (Ministry of Education and Science, 2014). The aim of the projects is to approve WBL approach and to identify the legal and conceptual issues that need to be solved before introducing WBL at the education system level. WBL means that theoretical studies in vocational school are combined with work at a company. A trilateral contract is signed among the educational institution, student and employer.

1. 148 young people participate in pilot projects.
2. The pilot schools have individualized approach in WBL implementation in both vocational secondary programmes that are offered for students after general basic education (programmes duration 4 years) as well as programmes – for students after general secondary education (programmes duration from 1 to 1,5 years).
3. sectors/occupations covered: manufacturing and services: metalworking (welder), mechanical engineering technician, electrical technician, electronics technician, mechatronic systems technician, carpenter, furniture carpenter, bread and flour confectionery specialist, catering services specialist, print designer, offset printer, printing production technician, wood product manufacturing technician, mechanic, textile manufacturing technology and product manufacturing, numerical control machine tools adjuster.
4. So far the WBL implementation is organised within the frame of currently available public funding, no other additional funding is allocated for this purpose. The enterprises which were voluntary involved and are still in the projects, already have had previously established cooperation with vocational schools in providing places for qualification practice for students. Employers usually pay wages to students (under contract) or scholarship from their own funds. The regulatory framework for students' monetary compensation is not yet developed, but it is expected in the near future. It is also planned to attract EU funds for WBL implementation.
5. The graduates of WBL programmes will receive formal qualification that will correspond to the Latvian Qualifications Framework / European Qualifications Framework level 4.

6. Students were enrolled in projects according to criteria that were set by the companies. The outcomes of WBL projects cannot be defined yet since the projects are still in process.

B. Specific features of the above schemes/programmes in Latvia in relation to the following policy challenges identified at the EU level

B.1. Support for companies, in particular SMEs, offering company placements

Craft apprenticeship is largely focused on opportunity to develop the crafts in small and micro-businesses. According to the Latvian Republic Concept of crafts education (Ministry of Education, 1992) the aim of crafts education is to prepare (theoretically and practical) highly qualified professionals for tailor performance and services and to provide the necessary knowledge on craft business formation and management.

The Ministry of Education and Science and vocational schools were able to initiate WBL projects in collaboration with rather big companies, especially with those which already had cooperation with vocational schools and which had close cooperation with Germany. In these companies apprenticeship approach is well known and understood. Small and medium companies were not ready to be involved in WBL pilot projects since they were more focused on short-term goals and their survival rather than long-term commitment with an educational institution and students that can be a valuable contribution to the company's future. It should be noted that in Latvia approximately 98% of the total number of companies are small and micro enterprises. This means that during the implementation of the WBL Ministry of Education and Science should pay special attention to these companies and will need to build financial support schemes for companies involved in WBL.

B.2. Enhance programme attractiveness and career guidance

At present the Latvian Chamber of Crafts turns little attention to the promotion of crafts apprenticeship. However, in the nearest future it is planned to expand the information activities in schools to attract students to apply for crafts apprenticeship. Though in order to increase crafts apprenticeship status the main challenge is how to include crafts qualifications in the Latvian Qualification Framework and reference them to the formal qualifications. In 2014, the Ministry of Education and Science has started discussions on these topics.

In the Education development guidelines for 2014-2020 (Saeima, 2014) WBL is interpreted as one of the solutions to increase the attractiveness of vocational education. It should be considered as important step, since so far the main activities that focused on increasing attractiveness of vocational education were the infrastructure modernization and scholarships allocation to successful students. Therefore, to really make vocational education more attractive to young people and their parents, it is necessary to change thinking from short-term (e.g.,

scholarship, learning environment) to long-term benefits (employability). The WBL pilot project was received positively. It was implemented very successfully and was appreciated both by students and employers. It will be necessary through the career information to highlight the benefits of WBL, to promote WBL in the mass media, to create an informative campaigns etc. In 2013, Ministry of Education and Science has begun to publish information about the WBL projects and in the result the interest from schools and students has increased. The summary on the outcomes of WBL projects, information on graduates employment and future opportunities will clearly raise the prestige of vocational education.

B.3. National governance, regulatory framework and social partners' involvement

The main organisation involved in implementation of crafts apprenticeship is the Latvian Chamber of Crafts which is a self-governing organisation. The Law on Crafts (Supreme Council, 1993) stipulates the organisational basis for craftsmanship, basic regulations for apprenticeship and the procedure for stating craftsman qualifications. Apprenticeship is implemented through apprenticeship education and training, as well as journeyman qualification exam, and afterwards master craftsman qualification exam and certification. If crafts apprenticeship is implemented in collaboration with vocational school, it includes both school- and work-based learning for apprentices. The content of apprenticeship is determined by the corresponding craft professional association and approved by the Council of the Chamber of Crafts. Duration of the apprenticeship (an average of 3 years) is determined by the particular craft association; therefore, a great variation exists. If apprenticeship is implemented individually, the candidate has to attend education course on crafts history in order to apply for the examination of the journeyman. To apply for the examination of the master craftsman, the candidate has to have eight years work experience in the particular field. The theoretical courses for master craftsman candidates usually last for two months and are offered by the Chamber.

WBL in vocational education is a fundamentally new approach to the Latvian education policy. Although, according to vocational education standards (Cabinet of Ministers, 2000) 50%-65% of programmes consist of practice, nevertheless the practice is considered as both practical and laboratory work in general and vocational education subjects, also in practical training and qualification practice. According to a survey, the practical and laboratory work (in 98% of cases) are taking place at educational institution, practical training (in 73% of cases) is also taking place at educational institution, while qualification practice (in 94% of cases) is the only one which is organized in enterprises (Ministry of Education and Science, 2014). WBL projects include alternance between work-place in enterprise and theoretical studies in vocational school. The Ministry of Education and Science initiated WBL projects in close cooperation with other

ministries and social partners. The experience of other countries, mainly Germany, is being considered to raise the competitiveness of the workforce training. Local governments are becoming a major partner of the Ministry of Education and Science in the processes of planning and providing vocational education in the context of regional economic development. The main partners are: Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Economics, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Finances, Employers' Confederation of Latvia, Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, local governments and their units (Boards of education etc.), Sectoral Expert Councils and associations. Enterprises and vocational education schools, are also involved in the WBL implementation. During 2013, the Ministry of Education and Science organised different events (study visits, seminars, discussions, and conferences) to get to know Germany's and other countries' best practices, to summarize partners' opinions and developed proposals for a regulatory framework for WBL. Other ministries participated in the exploration of the best practices of WBL or engaged in discussions on WBL implementation issues included in specific recommendations for EU Member States and the programming of EU funds. Employers' Confederation of Latvia, Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sectoral Expert Councils and Sectoral Associations participated in the negotiations with the German partners, also provided support and advice on the appropriate industries involvement in the WBL implementation. Employers were involved in both organisation and content/curricula development of WBL.

The Cabinet of Ministers has confirmed the cooperation between Latvia and Germany in WBL implementation (Cabinet of Ministers, 2012). In December 11, 2012 the *Memorandum on cooperation in vocational education and training in Europe* was signed by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. In July 8, 2013 the declaration of intent between Ministry of Education and Science and Federal Ministry of Education and Research of the Federal Republic of Germany was signed on cooperation in the field of introducing work-based learning in vocational education and training. Federal Ministry of Education and Research of the Federal Republic of Germany provides funding for a position at German-Baltic Chamber of Commerce in Latvia for three years with an aim to support implementation of Latvian dual education and training elements. In October 8-11, 2013 the Steering Committee for Latvia-Germany cooperation in vocational education was established. Sectoral and employers' organisations advise Ministry of Education and Science on enterprises' involvement in the WBL implementation. For implementation of WBL in Latvia it is essential that vocational schools provide education for those sectors whose companies are located in the same region. Therefore, educational institutions have to be in close co-operation with local governments in planning economic

development of the area. Ministry of Education and Science's survey shows that local governments and their Boards of Education approve WBL implementation in the vocational schools that are under their supervision (Ministry of Education and Science, 2014).

Educational institutions involved in the WBL pilot projects have already provided the Ministry of Education and Science with their vision of the key issues in relation to industries, educational institutions, students and the necessary changes that should be included in the existing legislation, e.g. the optimal student number in groups, when implementing WBL programmes special qualifications practice is unnecessary etc. WBL implementation in the education system level, of course, will require changes to a number of laws and regulations that will emerge when analysing the results of the projects. In August 2014, the government has already approved amendments to the Vocational education law to increase employers participation in vocational schools' management - to plan the strategic directions of school according the labour market needs. WBL is included as one of the forms of vocational education. The development of relevant regulations has been recently started. After the first year of WBL project employers' organizations evaluated WBL as the right direction to develop VET. The introduction of WBL has become one of the priorities in education and employment policies for 2014-2020 (Ministry of Education and Science, 2014).

B.4. Quality assurance

Quality assurance in crafts apprenticeship is based on craftsmanship legal acts. The Law On Crafts (Supreme Council, 1993) states that the right to implement a craft apprenticeship hold crafts companies which are certified by Latvian Chamber of Crafts or authorized by crafts territorial or sectoral association. The right to train apprentices holds a craftsman or person who has the Latvian Chamber of Crafts permission. Training supervision in crafts companies is carried out by the Latvian Chamber of Crafts. The Chamber's nominated master checks how the apprentice has prepared his journeyman qualification work, and writes the supervision report on how the apprentice meets the requirements to be allowed to pass the qualification examination. Latvian Chamber of Crafts registers craftsmen, journeymen and apprentices, crafts companies and crafts master workshops.

WBL projects are implemented in vocational schools and programmes according to Latvian vocational education quality assurance policy and procedures (Cedefop ReferNet Latvia, 2012; Academic Information Centre, 2012). Almost all schools involved have the status of vocational education competence centre, which means that these schools meet increased requirements (e.g. students' academic success, career management, cooperation with employers and other

criteria). WBL projects were launched in parallel with the current reform of the vocational education content that is being implemented in the frame of the European Social Fund project 'Development of a sectorial qualifications system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education' (2010-2015). As a result of this reform (to be implemented by 2020) vocational education will be able to adjust quickly and to be responsive to the labour market changes. It is foreseen in the Education development guidelines for 2014-2020 (Saeima, 2014). One of the components of the reform is introduction of modular principle in vocational education. The module should be as part of qualification content that is based on learning outcomes and can be measured and expressed in credits. The modular principle will provide an opportunity to acquire professional content in the work environment. Such approach will facilitate the implementation of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) and the principles of the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) in Latvia.

C. Main strengths and weaknesses of the above schemes/programmes in Latvia

Crafts apprenticeship system's strengths are the following: tradition of apprenticeship that has been cultivated for decades, individual approach to each apprentice, established system of quality assurance and control in craftsmanship. Latvian Chamber of Crafts willingness to cooperate and share experience with the Ministry of Education and Science in WBL implementation can be also considered as strength.

As crafts apprenticeship system's weaknesses can be considered the outdated normative regulation and crafts apprenticeship's detachment from the national formal education system that has arisen from long-term unwillingness of vocational education system to accept crafts apprenticeship as a part of vocational education. Crafts apprenticeship is not included in national qualification framework. Other weaknesses are: small amount of apprentices in comparison with students' number in vocational education, social vulnerability of apprentices and lack of regular information campaigns to increase attractiveness of crafts apprenticeship.

WBL projects' main strength is the fact that educational processes are becoming inextricably linked with the world of work. Also as a strength can be considered cooperation with German partners in identification of good practices, close cooperation with social partners, local governments, interest from companies and vocational schools, voluntary principle and individual approach in implementation of projects that will allow to find out the best models of WBL for Latvian situation, WBL organic integration in the current vocational education reform.

At the beginning WBL projects' greatest weakness in Latvian context was entrepreneurs' lack of interest. For many Latvian companies the most vital is company's survival which is the reason why the motivation that apprentices in future can become valuable employees is currently not working with small enterprises. It can be changed only when vocational education philosophy and entrepreneurs' mind set will change. Already after the first year of the WBL project and its positive results, entrepreneurs' interest has increased. In study year 2014/2015, the number of schools that applied for participation in the WBL projects has increased four times, and the number of enterprises six times. The government also has started to think about initiatives to attract enterprises to participate in WBL. In August 2014, the government has instructed the relevant ministries to present a model for the implementation of such initiatives till October 2014. Currently there are no common regulations and procedures in Latvia, for example, on financial rewards, insurance policy and liability insurance for students involved in WBL.

There is also no training for employees of enterprise who would work directly with apprentices. But it is intended that all these problems will be addressed. Education development guidelines for 2014-2020 (Saeima, 2014) include action directions with various activities for the development of WBL including financial support from public and EU funds.

D. Conclusions

In Latvia currently there are two apprenticeship / work-based learning schemes. The one is crafts apprenticeship – having long lasting traditions but implemented separately from formal vocational education. The other scheme, that has been recently started, is work-based learning projects in vocational education. Its' aim is to discover the optimal Latvian WBL model and to clarify the further courses of action and the necessary changes in regulatory framework. The major reforms taking place in Latvian vocational education can be seen as favourable to the implementation of WBL. But overall it is a very big challenge for the Ministry of Education and Science, employers and vocational schools. As one of the biggest challenges is the need to change entrepreneurs' attitude towards vocational education and WBL in it. However, alongside the challenges there is also a great chance to consolidate both efforts and experience of the above mentioned schemes. If the education system succeeds to achieve it, then apprenticeship in Latvia will have a future.

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