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# Table of contents

Table of contents........................................................................................................................................2  
List of figures and tables .............................................................................................................................4  

## CHAPTER 1.  External factors influencing VET in Latvia .................................5  
1.1. Demographics.................................................................................................................................5  
1.2. Economic background.....................................................................................................................5  
1.3. Labour market.................................................................................................................................7  
1.4. Employment policies relevant to VET .........................................................................................9  
1.5. Regulation of access to occupations/professions ........................................................................11  

## CHAPTER 2.  Providing VET in a lifelong learning perspective .....................12  
2.1. VET in Latvia’s education system.................................................................................................12  
2.2. Government-regulated VET provision .......................................................................................13  
2.2.1. VET pathways ..........................................................................................................................14  
2.2.2. Apprenticeships.........................................................................................................................21  
2.2.3. Work-based learning ...............................................................................................................22  
2.2.4. VET provision for special target groups .............................................................................23  
2.2.5. VET governance.......................................................................................................................25  
2.2.6. Financing...................................................................................................................................27  
2.2.7. Teachers and trainers...............................................................................................................30  
2.2.8. Implementation of the NQF......................................................................................................31  
2.2.9. Increasing efficiency and quality of vocational education....................................................33  
2.3. Other forms of training ..................................................................................................................34  
2.3.1. Sectoral education programmes...............................................................................................34  
2.3.2. Workplace learning..................................................................................................................34  
2.3.3. Funding mechanisms ...............................................................................................................35  

## CHAPTER 3.  Shaping VET qualifications .......................................................37  
3.1. Anticipation of labour market needs .........................................................................................37  
3.2. Designing qualifications...............................................................................................................38  
3.3. Labour market relevance of VET ...............................................................................................39  
3.4. Quality assurance in VET.............................................................................................................40  
3.5. Validation of non-formal and informal learning .......................................................................41  
3.6. Cooperation with stakeholders .................................................................................................42  

## CHAPTER 4.  Promoting participation in VET ..............................................43  
4.1. Incentives for learners, education providers and enterprises ...............................................43
4.2. Guidance and counselling .............................................45
List of abbreviations ..........................................................48
List of references...............................................................49
   Websites ........................................................................56
Annex 1. Glossary ..................................................................57
Annex 2. VET at basic and secondary levels .........................64
Annex 3. Professional education at tertiary level ....................66
List of figures and tables

Figures
1. VET financing per student (Ministry of Education and Science schools), 2011-15 (EUR) .................................................................................................................................................. 7
2. Employment rate by age group and highest level of education attained in 2015 (%) ........................................................................................................................................................................... 8
3. Unemployment rate by age group and highest level of education attained, 2013-15 (%) ........................................................................................................................................................................................................ 9
4. VET in Latvia’s education system .............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................. 12
5. Share of students in VET programmes (excluding higher education) in 2014/15 ...................................................................................................................................................................................................... 16
6. Participation of adults (25-64 year-olds) in lifelong learning, 2010-15 (%) ........................................................................................................................................................................................................ 19

Tables
1. GDP growth and employment by sector, 2013-15 (%) ................................................................................................................. 6
2. Students by field of study in VET schools, 2013-15 (%) .................................................................................................................................................................................................. 17
3. Classification of continuing vocational education programmes ........................................................................................................... 18
4. Participation in education (25-64 year-olds) of employed, unemployed and inactive people in 2014 (%) ........................................................................................................................................................................................................ 21
5. Sources of vocational education funding .......................................................................................................................................................... 28
6. Formal vocational education qualifications and EQF/NQF levels ............................................................................................................. 32
CHAPTER 1.
External factors influencing VET

1.1. Demographics

Latvia has a population of 1 986 096 inhabitants (2015) and a territory of 64 573 km$^2$. The population has decreased in the past two decades due to a negative natural increase and emigration of people in search of employment abroad.

While proportions of people of pensionable age increased from 20.2% in 2010 to 23.0% at the beginning of 2015, the working age population has decreased from 64.2% to 62.0%. At the same period the share of the population under working age has slightly increased – (from 14.2% to 15.0%).

Most people reside in urban areas (67.9%), of which 47.5% in the capital. The urban/rural ratio has not changed significantly since 2009, but an inland migration from rural areas to Riga continues. Most social and economic facilities are concentrated in the cities and there is limited availability of education and other services in rural areas.

1.2. Economic background

During the economic crisis GDP decreased by 25%. Since end-2009, growth resumed. From 2011 to 2013, the economy expanded rapidly – on average by 4.4% per year. It is among the fastest growths in the EU. Due to an unfavourable external market environment (low demand in some trading partner countries), GDP growth in recent years was slower than expected: 2.4% in 2014 and 2.7% in 2015.

In 2015, domestic and international demand for goods and services strongly influenced economic growth. Manufacturing (4.3%), agriculture/forestry (5%) and trade (4%) sectors contributed most to it (Table 1).
Table 1. GDP growth and employment by sector, 2013-15 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>GDP growth</th>
<th>Employment in sectors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other industry</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>-3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public services</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other commercial services</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From 2013 to 2015, most employees worked in the service and trade sectors. The share of employees in manufacturing was approximately 13%.

The slowdown of growth in the last two years was determined by the trends in the external environment – slower growth in the EU than expected, as well as weakening of the economic situation in Russia. In 2015, domestic demand, which was by 3.5% higher in the first three quarters than in the corresponding period a year ago, contributed more to the growth. At the same time, export volumes increased by 2.2%. In 2015, metalworking and wood processing industries had the most significant positive impact. Good growth rates were recorded in accommodation and food services sector, in information and communication, as well as in trade and commercial services.

In 2015, State budget expenditure for education was the second highest (17.1%), following social security (31.3%) (Ministry of Economics, 2015). However, according to Eurostat data, the education budget has decreased from 6.7% of GDP in 2009 to 5.9% in 2014.

The budget for vocational education (¹) institutions under responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science (Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija) increased from EUR 54.07 million in 2011 to EUR 67.62 million in 2016 (Saeima, 2015).

State funding for both vocational and general education is allocated based on numbers of students. In general education this rule applies only to teacher salaries. For vocational education, the amount per student (Figure 1) is approved by the government (Cabinet of Ministers, 2007) and covers vocational education staff salaries, student allowances, work placements (including accident

(¹) In this report VET is referred to as ‘vocational education’ (in Latvian: ‘profesionālā izglītība’). It includes periods of practical learning in schools and enterprises. The term ‘training’ is not commonly used in the national context.
insurance) costs, maintenance of dormitories and expenditure for culture and sports.

Figure 1. VET financing per student (Ministry of Education and Science schools), 2011-15 (EUR)

Source: Ministry of Education and Science.

Figure 1 demonstrates that since 2011 the Ministry of Education and Science has increased per-student financing in vocational education by 61%. In addition, other resources (including EU funds) have been allocated to development of the VET system. For example, EUR 163.6 million were invested in modernisation of equipment and infrastructure (2009-15 project) (Cabinet of Ministers, 2008b; 2013a). Schools also use their own revenues to finance their activities.

1.3. Labour market

The labour market is regulated by the Labour Law (Saeima, 2001a), legislation on supporting unemployed and job-seekers (Saeima, 2002), and the Unemployment Insurance Law (Saeima, 1999b).

Development of employment policy is a responsibility of the Ministry of Welfare (Labklājības ministrija). The shift from short-term active labour market policy measures to combat consequences of the crisis to traditional measures is part of its recent strategy. Inclusive employment policy guidelines 2014-20 (Cabinet of Ministers, 2015a) foresee more learning opportunities and activities to help the unemployed and job-seekers start up their own businesses. Education policy priorities, formulated by the Ministry of Education and Science in the education development guidelines 2014-20 (Saeima, 2014) also foresee close cooperation with the employment sector.
In 2015, the employment rate of the 15 to 64 age group was 68.1%. It is above the EU-28 average of 65.6%. More males were in employment (69.9%) than females (66.4%) although the gender gap at national level of 3.5 percentage points was three times lower than the EU-28 average (10.4 percentage points).

Figure 2. **Employment rate by age group and highest level of education attained in 2015 (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISCED 5-8</th>
<th>EU-28</th>
<th>25-49 years</th>
<th>50-64 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LV</td>
<td>72.1%</td>
<td>60.2%</td>
<td>80.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-28</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>60.2%</td>
<td>77.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISCED 3-4</td>
<td>LV</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-28</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
<td>77.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISCED 0-2</td>
<td>LV</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-28</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>64.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Level of education is an important factor that influences employment (Figure 2). The employment rate of people who attained ISCED levels 5 to 8 is higher than in EU-28 in all age groups, being the highest – 88.4% (86.7% in EU-28) for 25 to 49 year-olds. In contrast, young people (15 to 24) with low levels of education (ISCED 0-2) have the lowest employment rate (13.4%; 18.1% in EU-28).

The share of unemployed people aged 15 to 64 of the total economically active population has more than doubled during the economic crisis from 7.8% in 2008 to 19.0% in 2010. It then gradually decreased to 12.1% in 2013. The current average unemployment rate in EU-28 is lower than in Latvia, but has the opposite (growing) trend.
The unemployment rate also depends on educational attainment (Figure 3). In 2015, the lowest unemployment rate (4.4%; 3.7% in EU-28) was among people (aged 50 to 64) with higher levels of education (ISCED 5-8). The unemployment of young people (aged 15 to 24) with a low level of education (ISCED 0-2) is high, although it decreased from 39.1% in 2013 to 21.9% in 2015.

According to the public employment service (State Employment Agency, *Nodarbinītābas valsts aģentūra*, NVA), the registered unemployment increased due to the economic crisis from 6% in 2007 to 17.3% in 2010 and decreased to 8.7% in 2015. The share of young people (aged 15 to 24) in total numbers of registered unemployed has gradually decreased from 14.3% in 2010 to 8.3% in 2015.

Women use NVA services more (53.4% in 2015) than men (46.6%). Regional distribution of registered unemployment has remained relatively stable over time. The Riga region has the lowest rate (5.4%) – more than three times lower than the eastern region Latgale (18.5%) where unemployment is traditionally higher.

Young VET graduates are better placed in the labour market. In 2015, there were fewer 15 to 24 year-old jobless VET graduates (28.2% of total registered unemployment in the age group) than unemployed VET graduates in total (37.3%).

### 1.4. Employment policies relevant to VET

One challenge outlined in the Latvian national reform programme for implementation of EU 2020 strategy (European Commission, 2011) is to combat
structural unemployment by ensuring better correspondence of qualifications and
technical skills to labour market needs. The major policies for combating structural
unemployment aim to:

(a) improve active labour market policy measures by a gradual shift from
combating consequences of crisis (such as subsidised employment) to
traditional active labour market policy measures (such as lifelong learning
opportunities for the unemployed and persons at risk of unemployment)
(Ministry of Welfare, 2011);

(b) reengage efficiently the economically inactive population into the labour
market and support regional mobility;

(c) promote efficiency of public employment services;

(d) reinforce the lifelong learning approach.

To promote employment, vocational schools are being more actively
engaged in implementation of respective policies. According to legislation on
supporting unemployed and job-seekers (Saeima, 2002), the Ministry of Welfare
in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science provide vocational
education, career guidance and requalification and professional development for
the unemployed and job-seekers. They also offer non-formal learning and
qualification courses for the (self-) employed at risk of unemployment. Both
ministries work on improving employment policy and support involvement of
unemployed/job-seekers/(self-)employed in learning through State and EU
cofinanced projects.

National policy for reducing unemployment is implemented by NVA – a
public agency supervised by the Ministry of Welfare. NVA cooperates with State
and local government institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and
other stakeholders. Policy is implemented in line with government procedures for
organising and financing active and preventive employment measures (Cabinet
of Ministers, 2011a).

Strategy for the shift from short-term to traditional active labour market policy
measures (Ministry of Welfare, 2011) introduced education vouchers and
practical experience of three VET programmes (three weeks each) for young
people to explore careers.

Education institutions that provide training for the unemployed are procured
by NVA. A list of occupations and skills in demand is annually approved by a
Ministry of Welfare commission including representatives from ministries (welfare,
economy and education), NVA, the Latvian Association of Local and Regional
Governments, the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, the Employers'
Confederation of Latvia and other institutions.
1.5. **Regulation of access to occupations/professions**

The Vocational Education Law (1999) states that content of vocational education is regulated by national vocational education standards depending on their level (vocational education standard, vocational secondary education standard and standard for first level of professional higher education), occupational standards or professional qualification requirements, sectoral qualifications structure descriptions and vocational education programmes (Saeima, 1999a).

Occupational standards define key requirements (including tasks, duties and knowledge, skills and competences) for VET qualifications (Cabinet of Ministers, 2016g).

The Law on Regulated Professions and Recognition of Professional Qualifications (Saeima, 2001b) and relevant government regulations stipulate special requirements for education programmes, recertification or evaluation of regulated professions to:

(a) ensure activities meet safety, health or other specific requirements;

(b) ensure staff have the qualifications required for specific occupations/professions;

(c) enable recognition of Latvian qualifications abroad and foreign qualifications in Latvia;

(d) promote free movement of individuals in the EU and members of the European Free Trade Association.

Regular recertification/evaluation is usually conducted by non-governmental certification centres in the relevant sector, such as Certification Centre of the Latvian Railwayman Society, Certification Commission of the Latvian Nurse Association. A total of 63 regulated professions, 161 specialities and 90 sub-specialities (2016) are currently covered by legislation (Cabinet of Ministers, 2006b). A list of regulated professions is available in the national database (http://www.aic.lv/regdip/?lang=2) hosted by the Academic Information Centre (Akadēmiskās informācijas centrs).
CHAPTER 2.
Providing VET in a lifelong learning perspective

2.1. VET in Latvia’s education system

Figure 4. VET in Latvia’s education system

NB: ISCED-P 2011.
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Latvia.
The main elements of Latvian education system are:
(a) pre-school education;
(b) integrated primary and lower secondary education (hereafter basic education);
(c) upper secondary education (hereafter secondary education);
(d) higher (tertiary) education.

Pre-school education for five to six year-old children is compulsory. It is followed by nine years of compulsory basic education and three years of non-compulsory secondary education. Basic education is mainly general, however, vocational education is offered in its later stages. Secondary education can be acquired through general or vocational programmes. Higher (tertiary) education includes both academic and professional study programmes.

The Latvian qualifications framework (LQF) has eight levels corresponding to the European qualifications framework (EQF) (see Section 2.2.8). Since 1999, VET comprises of the national professional qualification levels, which have been referenced to the LQF levels in 2015 through the amendments to the legislation (Saeima, 1999a). In this report both levels are indicated as in VET diplomas/certificates.

2.2. Government-regulated VET provision

Initial vocational education is highly regulated by the State. The education development guidelines 2014-20 (Saeima, 2014) set the policy priorities while the Vocational Education Law (Saeima, 1999a) provides legal regulations.

In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science presented a policy paper for raising attractiveness of vocational education and stimulation the active involvement of social partners (Cabinet of Ministers, 2009). It outlines solutions for key challenges in vocational education. Based on this paper, a European Social Fund (ESF) project to develop sectoral qualifications systems and raise efficiency and quality of vocational education (2010-15) was carried out. Its results are gradually incorporated in legislation. Further development of occupational standards, vocational education modular programmes and introducing of work-based learning are policy priorities for raising attractiveness of vocational education during 2016-20 and will be supported by ESF projects (Cabinet of Ministers, 2016c, 2016d).
2.2.1. VET pathways

2.2.1.1. Initial vocational education

Vocational education providers offer programmes in all study fields. The law (Saeima, 1999a) defines three levels of vocational education:

(a) basic vocational education;
(b) secondary vocational education;
(c) professional higher education:
   (i) first-level professional higher (college) education;
   (ii) second-level professional higher (university) education.

Vocational education and professional higher education programmes are mainly school-based, with practical learning periods at schools or enterprises.

Vocational education institutions can be public (State, local government) and private.

Students are admitted to public vocational schools according to annual enrolment plans. The Ministry of Education and Science collects, adjusts and transforms all school requests into enrolment plans with Sectoral Expert Councils. The plans are then endorsed by the National Tripartite Subcouncil for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment.

To prepare pupils for studies in vocational education programmes in arts, culture or sports, vocationally oriented education programmes are implemented concurrently with basic and secondary general education. They provide systematised knowledge and skills in the selected field, but do not lead to a professional qualification.

(a) Basic vocational education

Vocational education at lower secondary level is implemented via basic vocational education programmes (see Annex 2). Programmes are provided by vocational education institutions or special education institutions. Young people (at least 15 years old) can enrol in such programmes (ISCED-P 254) regardless of their previous education. They lead to a certificate of basic vocational education (*apliecība par profesionālo pamatizglītību*), with professional qualification of EQF level 2 (such as cook’s assistant) which allows progression to secondary level education. Early leavers without basic education are offered additional general basic education courses (nationally called ‘pedagogical correction’ (*pedagoģiskā korekcija*)) for improving their general basic knowledge and better integration into the education process. Vocational basic education programmes in the framework of special education are mainly designed for students with intellectual disability.
(b) Secondary vocational education

At secondary level, vocational education (arodizglītība) and vocational secondary education (profesionālā vidējā izglītība) programmes are available for students with a certificate of basic education (see Annex 2). Content of these education programmes is defined by the state vocational education standards (Cabinet of Ministers, 2000) and occupational standards (Cabinet of Ministers, 2010).

Vocational education programmes (arodizglītība) (ISCED-P 353) lead to a certificate of vocational education (atestāts par arodizglītību) with professional qualification of EQF level 3 (such as cook). These programmes do not give a right to enter higher (tertiary) education. For admission to higher education a one-year intermediate general secondary education ‘bridge programme’ must be followed.

Vocational secondary education programmes (ISCED-P 354) lead to a diploma of vocational secondary education (diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību) with professional qualification of EQF level 4 (such as car mechanic). Vocational secondary education students must also take State centralized exams in the following general study subjects: Latvian, mathematics, foreign language and one subject selected by the student. This provides students with a certificate of general secondary education (vispārējās vidējās izglītības sertifikāts) and the right to enter higher education.

Post-secondary education programmes (see Annex 2), in contrast to what their name suggests, in Latvia belong to secondary education level. They are designed primarily for 18 to 20 year-old general secondary school graduates to help them acquire vocational skills. Apart from their duration, characteristics of such programmes are the same as programmes at secondary level. Since 2014/15, these programmes have been offered to 17 to 29 year-old persons with basic or secondary education in the ‘youth guarantee initiative’ using ESF support.

To acquire a professional qualification (EQF level 2-4), VET students have to take a State qualification exam at the end of the education programme. The government defines how exam content is developed for basic and secondary education levels (Cabinet of Ministers, 2011c).

Institutions that provide vocational secondary education programmes and additionally act as regional methodological and further education centres and carry out validation of professional competences acquired outside formal education can obtain a status of ‘vocational education competence centre’ according to criteria established by the Cabinet of Ministers (2013b) (Daija, Z., Kinta, G., Ramina, B., 2014). Institutions with more than 500 students in regional centres (more than 800 in Riga) are gradually transformed into competence centres (see Sections 2.2.4 and 4.2).
More detailed information on shares of general education and vocational education, theory and practice as well as progression routes and labour market access is provided in Annex 2.

Figure 5. **Share of students in VET programmes (excluding higher education) in 2014/15**

Most vocational education is offered at secondary level. In 2014, most of approximately 30 000 VET learners were in secondary vocational education (Figure 5). As shown in Figure 5, basic vocational education is marginal.

Although the share of students in post-secondary vocational education programmes is still comparatively small, these programmes have become more popular – numbers of students in such programmes has doubled in the past four years. This is linked to growing youth unemployment as they offer labour-market-relevant skills in a short period of time.

From 2010 to 2014, there was a 16% decrease of VET students (excluding higher education). It is less than for general education (31% decrease).

Basic education graduates usually choose general secondary education (general 61%, 39% vocational). Attractiveness of vocational education has been set as one of the policy priorities for education (Cabinet of Ministers, 2009; Cabinet of Ministers, 2010a; Saeima, 2014).

In past years, distribution of vocational education students between fields of study has varied only slightly (Table 2). The most popular programmes are in
engineering, manufacturing and construction (36.5% in 2015), services (25.1%), and social sciences, business and law (13.0%).

Table 2. Students by field of study in VET schools, 2013-15 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of Study</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General education*</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities** and arts</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social sciences, business and law</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural sciences, mathematics and information technologies</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering, manufacturing and construction</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and welfare</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In addition to VET programmes, VET schools may offer general education programmes.
** For example, design programmes.

Education/career choices of general secondary education graduates have not significantly changed since 2011. However, more graduates continue in higher education studies (from 58.3% in 2011 to 63.8% in 2014) or in vocational education (from 5.3% in 2011 to 7.3% in 2014). Now that fewer graduates from secondary education than before discontinue studies (from 36.4% in 2011 to 28.9% in 2014) is a positive trend.

(c) Professional higher education

Higher education programmes (see Annex 3) can be academic (lead to a degree) and professional (lead to a degree and/or professional qualification). More than two thirds of all higher education students study in professional study programmes. Professional higher education programmes allow continuous progression from EQF levels 5 to 7. Higher education institutions, including colleges (koledža) provide full-time, part-time and distance studies at all study levels. While universities provide a full range of professional programmes, colleges only offer first-level professional higher education programmes leading to qualifications of EQF level 5.

2.2.1.2. Continuing vocational education

Initial vocational education and continuing vocational education have the same legal and governance framework. Continuing VET (CVET) in Latvia can take a form of formal and non-formal education.

Similar to initial vocational education, students of continuing vocational education take a final qualification exam in accordance with procedures approved
by the government (Cabinet of Ministers, 2011c). Examinations are organised by the education provider in cooperation with National Centre for Education (Valsts izglītības satura centrs, VISC) to ensure that all graduates comply with the knowledge, skills and competences required for a profession. Social partners are involved in evaluating examination performance.

Continuing education is included in classification of the Latvian education system (Cabinet of Ministers, 2008c). Continuing education levels are referenced to the EQF and, since 2014, also to ISCED (Table 3).

Table 3. **Classification of continuing vocational education programmes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Education-</th>
<th>EQF level</th>
<th>Latvian professional qualification level</th>
<th>ISCED 2011-P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuing vocational education (480 hours)</td>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing vocational education after (non-) completed basic education (480 hours or more)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development after (non-) completed basic education</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing vocational education after completed secondary education (640 hours or more)</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>3 or 4</td>
<td>2 or 3</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development after completed secondary education</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Cabinet of Ministers, 2008c; Saeima, 1999a.*

Continuing vocational education programmes are similar to those offered in initial vocational education. Legally, they have to be at least 30% based on the State vocational education standards.

Continuing vocational education programmes enable adults with previous education/work experience to acquire a professional qualification (Saeima, 1999a). Programmes are always offered for a specific State-recognised qualification/profession:

(a) for students with vocational secondary or vocational education to acquire a professional qualification of EQF level 4 (Latvian professional qualification level 3, such as bookkeeper), minimum duration of the programme is 960-1 280 hours depending on the field;

(b) for those without a prior education requirement to acquire a professional qualification of EQF level 3 (Latvian professional qualification level 2), minimum duration of the programme is 480 or 640 hours depending on the relevant occupation standard;
(c) for those without a prior education requirement to acquire a professional qualification of EQF level 2 (Latvian professional qualification level 1) minimum duration of the programme is 480 hours.

(d) Professional development programmes (at least 160 hours) enable people regardless of their age and previous education or professional qualifications to master systematised professional knowledge and skills corresponding to requirements of the labour market. They do not lead to a qualification.

Non-formal education, in different courses, also eases development of various knowledge and skills. Such courses do not provide formal qualifications but they increase participation in lifelong learning, which in Latvia is below the EU average (Figure 6).

Figure 6. **Participation of adults (25-64 year-olds) in lifelong learning, 2010-15 (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>EU-28</th>
<th>LV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Participation in continuing vocational education has increased due to provision of courses for the unemployed arranged by NVA. Provision of tuition-fee (or reduced-fee) courses using ESF support has stimulated participation. However, the political ambition to increase lifelong learning participation to 12.5% in 2015 has not been reached.

Quality assurance is provided by means of licensing and accreditation of education (including vocational) programmes. A licence is permission to implement a particular programme that meets all requirements of State education and occupational standards. Providers must ensure proper infrastructure and
equipment, and if necessary, obtain an agreement from the relevant professional association. The licence is issued for an indefinite period.

Accreditation is the evaluation of the performance of the relevant education provider and/or the quality of implementation of the education programme. As a result of accreditation, education provider obtains a right for two to six years to issue a State-recognised qualification for a particular programme. In an accreditation process, quality of implementation of the relevant education programme is evaluated against criteria. For example, when accrediting vocational and general education programmes (EQF level 1-4), the following areas of criteria are assessed:

(a) content of education – education programmes implemented by institution;
(b) teaching and learning;
(c) learners’ achievements;
(d) support to learners;
(e) environment of institution;
(f) resources of institution;
(g) work organisation, management and quality assurance of institution (Cabinet of Ministers, 2010b).

All public continuing vocational education programmes (480 hours or more) and professional development programmes (160 hours or more) must be licensed and accredited by the State Education Quality Service (Izglītības kvalitātes valsts dienests, IKVD). Providers of professional development programmes (159 hours or less) must obtain a licence from local government. Public providers can offer non-formal learning programmes without a licence.

Vocational education providers can offer full-time, part-time and extramural studies. Distance learning is provided by private and State education institutions.

In Latvia as in the rest of the EU, people with lower education levels participate less in lifelong learning. According to Eurostat data, the participation rate in formal adult education of employed persons (aged 25 to 64) is close to the EU-28 average, while participation rates for the unemployed and the inactive population are lower (Table 4). Participation rates in non-formal education are only half that of the EU-28 average.
### Table 4. Participation in education (25-64 year-olds) of employed, unemployed and inactive people in 2014 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>Inactive population</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Non-formal</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Non-formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-28</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>;(u)</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Private education providers (education centres) implement continuing vocational education and non-formal education, and cooperate with the public employment service (NVA) that procures training for the unemployed through its network of 28 regional offices.

Since 2010, young people (aged 17 to 25) who have not taken part in subsidised training for two years may apply to participate in short (one to one-and-a-half year) vocational education programmes within the ESF project coordinated by State Education Development Agency (Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra, VIAA). Since 2012, also young people with a professional qualification, who are not (self-) employed, may enrol. Most programmes are secondary education programmes at EQF level 4 (Latvian professional qualification level 3). One-year programmes ensure mastering simple occupations of EQF level 3 (Latvian professional qualification level 2). Since 2014, these programmes have been available to young people (aged 17 to 29) in the youth guarantee framework (see Section 2.2.1.1).

#### 2.2.2. Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships in crafts have existed since 1992, but are provided in a rather small scale. As defined in the Law on Crafts (Supreme Council, 1993), a ‘craft apprentice’ is a person, who has joined a crafts company or an education institution and signed a training contract. Apprenticeships are implemented separately from programmes in other education sectors and are not included in the national education classification (no relevant ISCED or EQF level). Only the Law on Crafts stipulates norms for apprenticeships and procedures for awarding craftsman qualifications (Daija, Z.; Ramina, B.; Seikstule, I., 2014).

Apprenticeship qualifications neither provide access to regulated professions nor to the formal education system. Currently, there are no reintegration-in-education mechanisms in place for those who dropped out of apprenticeships before completing the programme.

An apprenticeship programme includes learning at workplace followed by a journeyman and master of crafts exams organised by the Chamber of Crafts. The chamber has signed cooperation agreements with several vocational schools that
provide theoretical knowledge. Thus, apprenticeship programmes include school- and enterprise-based learning. The proportion between school- and enterprise-based learning is not defined.

The chamber supervises training and registers craftsmen, journeymen and apprentices, crafts companies and crafts master workshops in its database. It also issues licences that give people a right to train apprentices, a right that craftsmen have by default.

Young people are admitted to apprenticeship programmes regardless of their previous education, but not earlier than the year in which they turn 16 (unless they have permission from a parent or guardian). Persons can become apprentices if they find a teaching-master. Apprentices have to attend an education course on crafts history provided by the chamber. Apprenticeship programmes are designed by the relevant professional association and approved by the council of the Chamber of Crafts. Duration of programmes is set by craft associations – on average three years. Apprentices can often receive remuneration from the second year of apprenticeship paid by the crafts master or the company.

Journeyman (amata zēļa diploms) and master of crafts (amata meistara diploms) qualifications can be obtained through apprenticeships. To obtain journeyman and master craftsman qualifications candidates have to be members of the chamber’s sectoral or regional craft association and pass the respective exams. The exam of journeyman qualification comprises a theoretical and a practical (presentation of a project) part. To take part in a master craftsman examination, journeyman candidates have to have eight years of work experience in the field. The theoretical two-month course for master craftsman candidates is offered by the chamber. A master craftsman with previously acquired relevant higher education is considered an academically educated master of crafts.

2.2.3. Work-based learning
To make vocational education more responsive to labour market needs, the Ministry of Education and Science has designed a new apprenticeship-type scheme (Daija, Z.; Ramina, B.; Seikstule, I., 2014; CEDEFOP, 2016). In English the more general term 'work-based learning' (darba vidē balstītas mācības) is used nationally when referring to this form of vocational education – a young person first becomes a student of vocational education institution and only thereafter negotiations are initiated about their potential learning at a company.

In 2013, six vocational education institutions started offering the new scheme as a pilot project in several vocational education programmes. This encompassed developing flexible curricula according to occupational
characteristics and sharing responsibilities of teaching (theory) and training (practice) between schools and enterprises. During the pilot project, vocational education institutions ensured acquisition of theoretical knowledge and, in general, improvement of curricula. Companies provided professional training in a real workplace environment and pay an allowance or a wage to students. However, at present theoretical learning is not limited only to vocational schools.

So far, the project has been implemented successfully and is appreciated both by students/teachers and employers. In 2014/15, numbers of schools that applied for participation in the work-based learning scheme increased four times, and numbers of enterprises – six times compared to 2013/14.

Introduction of the new scheme at system level has become a priority of education and employment policies for 2014-20 (Saeima, 2014). Amendments (April 2015) to the Vocational Education Law provide a legal basis for the new approach – ‘work-based learning’ is defined as one of the attainment forms of vocational education (Saïma, 1999a); therefore, procedure for organisation and implementation of work-based learning has been elaborated and approved (Cabinet of Ministers, 2016e).

Work-based learning is also one of the priorities in the international cooperation in the field of vocational education. The Ministry of Education and Science signed a memorandum on cooperation in VET in Europe (2012) and a declaration of intent with the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research on cooperation in VET (2013). The memorandum and declaration aim at supporting work based learning development. In 2014, the Ministry of Education and Science signed a ‘memorandum on cooperation in VET’ which set in motion a cooperation project on work-based learning between the Baltic States and Switzerland.

2.2.4. VET provision for special target groups

Unemployed people receive support to acquire new or improve existing professional skills. Vocational education and (re)qualification is one of the active labour market policy measures provided by NVA. In 2015, 3.5% of the registered unemployed were involved in continuing vocational education programmes (which lead to a professional qualification) or professional development programmes (which do not lead to a professional qualification) and 15% were involved in non-formal education. In addition to free education, these unemployed receive a monthly allowance of EUR 100.

According to legislation on supporting unemployed and job-seekers (Saeima, 2002), the most vulnerable groups among them are:
(a) young job-seekers (aged 15 to 24);
(b) pre-retirement age (aged 55 to 64) individuals;
(c) long-term (>1 year) unemployed;
(d) individuals returning to the labour market after parental leave (six months);
(e) individuals with disabilities;
(f) individuals caring for a family member;
(g) former convicts and former drug addicts.

Involving vulnerable groups in measures supporting active employment (including vocational education and (re)qualification) to foster labour market inclusion is a strategic objective of NVA.

Young people with special needs constitute another vulnerable target group. Development centres (special boarding schools in municipalities) provide special general basic education programmes and vocational basic education programmes for learners with mental impairments leading to qualifications of EQF level 2 (Latvian professional qualification level 1). The Social Integration State Agency (Sociālās integrācijas valsts aģentūra) implements national social integration policy for persons with special needs by providing a wide range of vocational education programmes (at levels of basic and secondary vocational education, first-level professional higher education, and continuing vocational education) and social rehabilitation services. The Alsviki territorial unit of Smiltene Technical School (under the Ministry of Education and Science) implements programmes for young disabled people.

Since 2011, the government has been specifically addressing the need to help young prison inmates acquire key competences and a professional qualification. Since 2014, VIAA has been organising vocational programmes for inmates (aged 15 to 29) through an ESF project (2).

Young people not in education, employment, or training (NEETs) is a target group which receives learning and employment support in the youth guarantee framework (Ministry of Welfare, 2015). The initiative includes expanding active employment measures provided by NVA, implementing short initial vocational education programmes (one to one-and-a-half year) for young people (aged 17 to 29) administered by VIAA (see Section 2.2.1.1) and activation of NEETs (aged 15 to 29) in the local governments provided by Agency for International Programs for Youth (Jaunatnes starptautisko programmu aģentūra).

(2) ‘Implementation of the initial vocational education programmes for young people within the youth guarantee’ (Sākotnējās profesionālās izglītības programmu īstenošana garantijas jauniešiem ietvaros).
2.2.5. VET governance

Most vocational education providers are governed by the State. The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for most of these. Others are under responsibility of the Ministries of Culture, Welfare and the Interior. There are also vocational education schools established (or taken over from the State) by local government and private ones.

The VET system is governed by the following State institutions:

(a) Cabinet of Ministers (Ministru kabinets) defines policies and strategies for vocational education and sets procedures for development of occupational standards, organisation of work placements/work-based learning, qualification requirements and professional qualification exams. It also regulates activities of Sectoral Expert Councils, examination centre quality assurance, sets the criteria for issuing State-recognised qualifications and recognising foreign qualifications, grants the status of ‘competence centre’ to providers, as well as sets the procedure for the distributing the State budget earmarked subsidies for teachers’ salaries;

(b) Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) develops the framework regulations for vocational education. The ministry proposes allocation of funds from the State budget and finances the vocational education providers it has established. The ministry also organises implementation of career education, approves regulations and appoints heads of vocational education institutions under its responsibility;

(c) other ministries (Ministries of Culture, Welfare and of Interior) develop proposals for allocation of funds for financing vocational education schools under their responsibility and organise continuing professional development for teachers. The ministries also organise continuing vocational education for adults and professional development and training for the unemployed. They cooperate with the Ministry of Education and Science on designing occupational standards, ensuring education quality and other issues;

(d) National Centre for Education (Valsts izglītības satura centrs, VISC) under the supervision of MoES develops content of basic, secondary and continuing vocational education, professional development and vocationally oriented education. It develops the content and procedures for State exams and coordinates development of study materials in line with the State vocational education standards. The centre also coordinates professional development of vocational teachers;

(e) State Education Quality Service (Izglītības kvalitātes valsts dienests, IKVD) under the supervision of MoES licenses general and vocational education programmes (EQF level 1-4). It also evaluates quality of
vocational (except professional higher) education, coordinates validation of professional competences acquired outside formal education, and since 2013 has coordinated implementation of the common European quality assurance for VET (EQAVET) in Latvia;

(f) State Education Development Agency (Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra, VIAA) under the supervision of MoES promotes development and implementation of education policy (including continuing education) by acting as the liaison body involved in management and ex post monitoring of EU funds, introducing EU programmes, supporting development of career education policy, providing national-level professional skills competitions and ensuring participation in international competitions;

(g) Ministry of Welfare is responsible for labour market policy development, including training interventions;

(h) State Employment Agency (Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra, NVA) under the supervision of Ministry of Welfare implements labour market policy, including programmes for the unemployed;

(i) local government participates in the implementation of vocational education by managing their own schools. They promote business development in their territory, cooperate with employer organisations and help students finding work placements.

(j) Social dialogue and strategic cooperation is arranged (at institutional level) through: the National Tripartite Subcouncil for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment (Profesionālās izglītības un nodarbinātības trīspusējās sadarbības apakšpadome), founded in 2000 by the ministries (Welfare, Economy, Finance, Justice, Agriculture, Education and Science, Regional Development and Local Government Affairs), the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, and the Employers' Confederation of Latvia. The tasks of the subcouncil are to:

i. review policy proposals and draft legal norms for vocational education, human resource development and employment;

ii. evaluate and propose changes in management, funding and implementation of vocational education to State NGOs;

iii. endorse occupational standards;

iv. endorse annual student enrolment plans prepared by Sectoral Expert Councils.

(k) 12 Sectoral Expert Councils (Nozaru ekspertu padomes), founded in 2011. Their main functions are to propose solutions for long-term human resources development in their respective sectors and to ensure that vocational education provision is in line with labour market needs. This
includes participation in development of sectoral qualifications structures, occupational standards, education programmes, quality assessment procedures, work-based learning, etc. Councils prepare and submit vocational education enrolment plans to the Ministry of Education and Science. Representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Economics, Employers’ Confederation and Free Trade Union Confederation are also involved in the councils. Representatives from the Ministry of Welfare and NVA can also participate in council meetings. In 2015, the Councils’ role and functions were included in the Vocational Education Law (Saeima, 1999a). In 2016, new regulations stipulating functions of Councils were approved by the Cabinet of Ministers (Cabinet of Ministers, 2016f).

Collegial advisory bodies – Conventions – established at each vocational education institution since 2015. Employers or representatives of employers' organisations, as well as the representatives from local government and supervising ministry are involved in the Conventions to make proposals in relation to the development strategy of education institution, as well as contribute to its cooperation with the local enterprises in order to ensure students’ work placements outside school and work-based learning opportunities (Saeima, 1999a).

The establishing legal framework for employers’ participation in developing vocational education (Cedefop, 2015) is result of recent policy initiatives.

2.2.6. Financing

Procedures for financing vocational education are stipulated by the Education and Vocational Education Laws (Saeima, 1998; 1999a).

Education institutions are financed from the State budget, local government budget or private funding according to ownership (Table 5). State budget allocations for vocational education programmes are calculated per student.
### Sources of vocational education funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Teacher salary</th>
<th>Fixed expenses (*)</th>
<th>Non-fixed expenses (***)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>SB</td>
<td>SB</td>
<td>SB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government</td>
<td>SB</td>
<td>LGB or SB</td>
<td>LGB or SB (except teacher salary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>PF/SB</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>PF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SB: State budget; LGB: local government budget; PF: private funding.

* Missions, services, energy and water, learning aid, equipment.

** Scholarships, maintenance of dormitories, rehabilitation, catering, practice placements, insurance, culture education and sports, salary (except teacher salary).

Source: ReferNet Latvia.

Salaries of teachers in State and local government education institutions (including pre-schools) are paid from the State budget. Local governments may supplement salaries of VET teachers. For private schools implementing accredited basic, secondary and higher education programmes the State can also finance salaries of teachers.

A majority of vocational schools are State-owned and -run; therefore, the national budget is vocational education’s main source of funding. Local governments and private entities may also provide subsidies. Education institutions (both vocational and general) may receive additional funding from donations and paid services, to be used for purchasing learning aids and equipment, student grants, and (partially) to cover fees. An additional source of financing vocational education is tuition fees. Services of State and local government schools that implement pre-school, basic and secondary education are free of charge; private schools may charge students a fee.

There are fixed and non-fixed costs (Cabinet of Ministers, 2007) covered by the government, for example:

- (a) allowances (scholarships);
- (b) student residence maintenance;
- (c) rehabilitation and catering services for students with special needs;
- (d) culture education and sports activities;
- (e) practical training in enterprises;
- (f) accident insurance for practical training in enterprises.

In higher education, the State covers fees for a certain number of negotiated study places for students with good grades. Students with lower achievements or willing to enrol in a non-subsidised field of study (with a surplus of students/graduates) may be charged a tuition fee. Local governments may charge a fee in municipal sports and music vocational education schools.
Education institutions may simultaneously implement education programmes funded from different sources (Figure ).

According to the Education Law (Saeima, 1998) adult education may be financed from State and local government budgets, employers' resources, students' fees, donations and other sources. Some local governments allocate a fixed percentage to adult education from their budget. Important sources of funding are EU, Norwegian and Swiss financial assistance instruments, including Structural Funds and Erasmus+ (former lifelong learning programme 2007-13) that have helped create more learning opportunities for adults through various projects.

National data collection on financing continuing vocational education was discontinued in 2005. Information is available only on financing from the State budget, ESF and partly from local government. Statistics on employers’ and individual contributions are not regularly collected. According to data collected by the Ministry of Education and Science (2013), in 2012, local governments invested approximately EUR 2.25 million in adult non-formal education for 63,000 adults compared to EUR 1.29 million and 29,000 adults in 2009. Support varies by region and local government. Local governments have developed additional support instruments:

(a) funding or co-funding local education institutions (adult education centres, folk schools, culture centres, general education establishments) that offer adult non-formal learning;

(b) providing infrastructure or discounts on renting facilities for providers of adult non-formal education;
(c) co-financing EU and other projects that focus on implementation and development of adult non-formal education;
(d) offering subsidies to NGOs to ensure availability of education services for adults.

2.2.7. Teachers and trainers
The term ‘trainer’ is not used in vocational education. Teachers provide both theory and practical learning at school. Every vocational education teacher can work in initial and continuing vocational education at basic and secondary education levels.

Vocational education teachers:
(a) implement education programmes according to the State vocational education standards and occupational standards and foster creativity and independence of learners;
(b) develop syllabi (to be approved by heads of vocational education institutions);
(c) apply new ideas, technologies and methods in the learning process;
(d) assess knowledge and skills of learners.

In 2014, new government regulations set requirements for initial education and professional qualification of teachers and introduced a procedure for improving their professional competences (Cabinet of Ministers, 2014c). Teachers without pedagogical qualification are required to attend a pedagogical course offered by a higher education institution (72 hours). In addition, teachers are required to undertake at least 36 hours of continuing professional development every three years.

Teachers of vocational subjects must have a minimum of either:
(a) tertiary education in a relevant field (such as engineering) complemented by a pedagogical course (72 hours);
(b) vocational secondary education (or master of crafts) level qualification complemented by a pedagogical course (72 hours).

The requirement for a pedagogical course does not apply to supervisors of practical training with less than 240 teaching hours per year.

Teachers of general subjects in vocational education must have a minimum of either:
(a) tertiary education in pedagogy/education and a teaching qualification in the particular subject;
(b) tertiary education in the relevant field of science and either a teaching qualification in a particular subject (may be in the process of completion) or a pedagogical course (72 hours).
Most vocational education teachers have attained higher education (Figure 8). With the decrease of vocational education institutions since 2010/11, number of vocational education teachers has decreased by 12%. At the same time, the share of teachers with tertiary education increased from 91% to 93%. (For more information see: Daija, Z.; Kinta, G.; Ramina, B., 2016).

Requirements for higher education lecturers/professors, including college teachers' education and qualifications are stipulated in the Law on Higher Education Institutions (Saeima, 1995).

2.2.8. Implementation of the NQF

The NQF was referenced to the EQF in 2011. It consists of eight levels. Achievement of learning outcomes is formulated as an objective of education in State standards of academic (Cabinet of Ministers, 2014a) and second-level professional higher education programmes (Cabinet of Ministers, 2014b). Knowledge, skills and attitudes are also integrated into the State general and vocational education standards. Occupational standards outline knowledge, skills and competences necessary for implementing particular professional activities.

The framework comprises formal basic, secondary and higher education (general/academic and vocational/professional) (Saeima, 1998; Academic Information Centre and Ministry of Education and Science, 2012).

In 2010, NQF level descriptors were included in Cabinet of Ministers regulations on classification of Latvian education (Cabinet of Ministers, 2008c with amendments in 2010 and 2014). NQF descriptors are based on learning outcomes.

Similar to the EQF, they are expressed as:
(a) knowledge (knowledge and comprehension);
(b) skills (ability to apply knowledge, communication, general skills);
(c) competence (analysis, synthesis and assessment).

The 2015 amendments to the Vocational Education Law (Saeima, 1999a) have linked Latvian professional qualification levels to the relevant NQF levels.

Table 6 demonstrates placement of formal vocational education qualifications in the NQF. Vocational education qualifications are referenced from EQF level 2-7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NQF/ EQF level</th>
<th>Latvian vocational education documents (qualifications)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Certificate of vocational basic education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Certificate of vocational education (without rights to enter higher education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Diploma of vocational secondary education (with rights to enter higher education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Diploma of first level professional higher education (first level professional higher (college) education; length of full-time studies two to three years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Professional bachelor diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diploma of professional higher education, diploma of higher professional qualification (second level professional higher education, length of full-time studies – at least four years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Professional master diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diploma of professional higher education, diploma of higher education, diploma of higher professional qualification (second level professional higher education, total length of full-time studies – at least five years).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Saeima, 1999a.

In higher education, Cabinet of Ministers regulations (Cabinet of Ministers, 2013c) stipulate that diploma supplements should include NQF/EQF or European higher education area (EHEA) framework level. All NQF/EQF levels should also be reflected in a diagram of the Latvian higher education system that is part of the diploma supplement.

In line with amendments to the Vocational Education Law (Saeima, 1999a) and to the corresponding regulations (Cabinet of Ministers, 2005) State vocational education and professional qualification certificates should include the relevant NQF level by 2017.

In 2008, the Academic Information Centre (Akadēmiskās informācijas centrs) that supervises Latvian representation in the ENIC/NARIC network,
Europass and ReferNet, was appointed as the national coordination point for the EQF. It organised the national consultation process and promoted establishment of the framework. Due to complexity of reforms required to adopt the framework, a decision to do the referencing in two consequent steps was taken:

(a) 2009-11: establishment of the NQF, referencing the formal Latvian education system to the EQF for lifelong learning and the qualifications framework in EHEA;

(b) 2013-16: review of the self-assessment report based on the amendments to the Education Law (in 2015) and Vocational Education Law (in 2015), Higher Education Law (expected) and results of projects, such as the ESF project ‘Developing the sectoral qualifications system and increasing efficiency and quality of vocational education’ (2010-15).

2.2.9. Increasing efficiency and quality of vocational education

As a reaction to the negative demographic trend that has a negative impact on vocational education students, and to limited financial resources, the Ministry of Education and Science implemented guidelines to optimise the VET provider network in 2010-15 (Cabinet of Ministers, 2010a). The guidelines endorsed further structural reforms to reduce numbers of vocational schools under responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science – from 59 to 30 by 2015 – and modernise the network by clearly defining school type and jurisdiction and, if necessary, by merging schools (Cedefop, 2014; Daija, Z.; Kinta, G.; Ramiņa, B., 2014). In 2016, there were 23 vocational education schools (vocational secondary education schools (profesionālā vidusskola) or technical schools (tehnikums), which provide different types of vocational education programmes) and 8 colleges (which also provide vocational secondary education programmes).

In 2009, the Cabinet of Ministers launched a strategy to make vocational education more attractive and involve social partners more actively (Cabinet of Ministers, 2009). It also supports improvement of vocational education programmes. Some results are already visible. In 2012-13, 14 sectoral qualifications frameworks were created with ESF support based on a survey of representatives of different economic sectors (Cedefop, 2013a).

A new modular structure for vocational education programmes has been started (Cedefop, 2013b). This approach includes use of learning outcomes, relevant teaching/learning methods and indicators of achievement. VISC has developed methodological recommendations for designing modular vocational education programmes (VISC, 2013) and has developed modular programmes...
for acquisition of 58 key qualifications in 14 sectors (3) as well as 32 templates of evaluating learning outcomes in relation to the new modular approach. In the education development guidelines 2014-20 (Saeima, 2014), applying the modular approach is seen as a main driver for increasing VET attractiveness. In 2016, Cabinet of Ministers Regulations were approved to continue development and introduction of modular approach (Cabinet of Ministers, 2016c).

Since 2014, VIAA coordinates actions of four national experts nominated by MoES to promote the European credit system for VET (ECVET) and ease its implementation in Latvia.

2.3. **Other forms of training**

Work-related knowledge, skills and competences can also be acquired through non-formal education or short professional development courses. They are provided by vocational education institutions, university continuing education departments and their local/distance learning centres, chambers of commerce, adult education centres, associations and private providers.

2.3.1. **Sectoral education programmes**

Education providers that offer programmes for regulated professions or professions with special certification requirements may also provide non-formal education. For example, the Latvian Medical Doctors’ Association offers non-formal education courses for doctors preparing for (re)certification.

Seminars and courses for upskilling teachers are organised by VISC. The centre uses ESF co-financing for continuing professional development of teachers, heads of schools and librarians.

Sectoral associations also use ESF to promote competitiveness of companies through learning. Projects are implemented in partnerships. Most learning focuses on computing, engineering sciences and technologies, production, design, creative industries, natural sciences, mathematics and statistics.

2.3.2. **Workplace learning**

Enterprises are not obliged to upskill their employees. However, the Labour Law (Saeima, 2001a) states that employers should bear the costs of (vocational) education initiated by them. In most cases, employees’ learning depends on their

employers’ initiative and available resources. Job rotation within the organisation is also used as a means of training.

Enterprise-provided learning that assists employees in adapting to new tasks to guarantee/improve their careers is a type of non-formal education. It provides an opportunity to acquire new skills and competences. Education providers (education centres in large enterprises or external (adult) education centres) can provide study programmes in accordance with enterprise needs. Teachers can be employed by an education provider or may be directly contracted by employers to provide courses. It is usually the providers’ responsibility to design their own education programmes. For certain regulated professions, other bodies may be consulted to ensure that relevant occupational standards are met. Quality of provision is not monitored otherwise.

A study (2015) of 14 economic sectors (1) analysed provision of initial vocational education and continuing education in sectors. Results indicate that part of the skills needs in sectors in terms of specific occupations is not provided by vocational schools; therefore, large enterprises ensure work-based learning for their employees at the enterprise. For example, the learning centre of the biggest heating service company in Riga has trained its employees since 1999. In cooperation with other sectoral enterprises once per month the learning centre also provides training for employees from other enterprises.

Another example is the natural gas provider which prefers to employ individuals without specific prior knowledge for elementary occupations and ensures necessary learning in its own education centre and through work under guidance of a mentor. Generally, these learning activities focus on specific technical skills, such as performing dangerous work. According to the study, large enterprises consider that the best way for their employees to obtain necessary skills is through in-house work-based learning. Meanwhile, many medium and small enterprises cannot provide such learning opportunities. Most enterprises (although mainly large) are ready to finance upskilling of their employees.

2.3.3. Funding mechanisms
Support tools for employees’ involvement in the learning are quite limited. The employers and employees’ own resources, and public financial resources are used for adult education. In recent years, there is an increasing trend in the use of EU and other foreign financial instruments and private funds to finance various

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projects, which are implemented within the framework of continuing vocational education, non-formal learning programmes and other adult education programs.

National statistics on expenditure on education by enterprises are not collected. The tax system does not encourage employers to invest in learning. Only large, stable enterprises may afford a learning budget. These enterprises usually have a human resource development strategy. Smaller enterprises tend to invest less in employees’ education as other priorities, such as their survival on the market, dominate.

National public agencies support skills development projects cofinanced by EU funds. The Investment and Development Agency (Latvijas Investīciju un attīstības aģentūra) coordinates implementation of human resources development projects in which enterprises are highly interested. The NVA coordinates learning activities for the unemployed (including those at risk of unemployment). According to the recent plan for implementation of adult education (Cabinet of Ministers, 2016a), VIAA will coordinate learning activities for employees.
CHAPTER 3.
Shaping VET qualifications

3.1. **Anticipation of labour market needs**

Responsibility for providing labour market forecasts rests with the Ministry of Economics (Ekonomikas ministrija) and NVA.

The Ministry of Economics produces medium- and long-term forecasts. It set up an advisory council for labour market forecasting (Darba tirgus prognozēšanas konsultatīvā padome) – a platform for dialogue between representatives of the State, employers, employees and local governments.

The medium-term labour market forecasts published by the Ministry of Economics are a basis for discussions in the council:

(a) report on economic development (two per year) with forecasts and reflection about past developments (Ministry of Economics, 2015a);

(b) report with medium- and long-term labour market forecasts (Ministry of Economics, 2015b).

The reports include an overview of labour supply and demand, and educational areas, levels and progression routes (including vocational education) of the labour force. The data are used by the Ministry of Education and Science to plan VET provision.

The instruments for labour market forecasting are based on the 2007 dynamic optimisation model. Its structure is based on a system-dynamic approach of the labour market equilibrium concept. The model takes into account ageing and professional mobility of the labour force. Labour force demand by sector is determined by economic scenarios of future growth and changes in productivity. Demand by occupation is derived from labour force demand and expected changes in the occupational structure of sectors. Demand for education is characterised by skills or the educational level required to perform a job. Labour market forecasts are based on international classification systems adapted to the situation in Latvia; thus, national forecasts are internationally comparable.

According to a report on labour market medium- and long-term forecasts (Ministry of Economics, 2015b), almost two thirds of the increase in labour force demand until 2020 will be in three sectors: manufacturing industry, trade and business services. Demand will decrease in traditional sectors such as agriculture. As a result, demand for highly qualified specialists (with higher and vocational secondary education) will increase rapidly. Engineering, production
(mainly electric and electronic engineering, mechanical engineering, wood processing and food processing sectors) and construction, natural sciences and information technologies, services (hotel and restaurant services, property management and individual care) as well as agriculture sectors are expected to have an undersupply of labour force. In the long term, supply of equipment and machine operators, qualified workers and crafts profession workers will significantly fall short of demand if the education structure remains unchanged. A similar situation will also emerge in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries’ sectors and in sectors with many employees close to pensionable age. In almost all sectors, especially after 2020, demand for low-skilled labour will decrease.

The NVA carries out short-term labour market forecasts and has created corresponding online tool (5). It also conducts employers’ express surveys once a year to anticipate changes in structure of the labour force. The surveys aim at clarifying reasons for changes in demand and supply for occupations. Their results are used to adjust the education offer for the unemployed.

The Central Statistical Bureau (Centrālā statistikas pārvalde) (CSB) conducts a labour force survey four times per year and collects data on education levels, employment by type of economic activity and occupation.

Data on higher education institutions’ and vocational education providers’ graduates are collected by the institutions themselves and submitted to the Ministry of Education and Science and to the CSB for further analysis and publication. According to the amendments (2011) to the respective legislation (Saeima, 1995), higher education institutions have to ensure that information about graduates’ employment is collected and analysed. Various aspects of graduates’ professional activities are also explored in the labour force and professions survey and other small-scale studies conducted by the CSB.

Sectoral Expert Councils and Conventions of vocational schools provide feedback to vocational education at sectoral and regional levels respectively (Saeima, 1999a).

3.2. Designing qualifications

Vocational education programmes are designed in line with the State education and occupational standards.

Content of vocational education programmes is defined by State vocational education standards (Cabinet of Ministers, 2000). The standards include strategic

aims, basic principles, mandatory content, ratio of theory and practice and evaluation procedures. Vocational education providers also ensure that specific skills and competences required in the occupational standards are included in the programmes they offer (see Section 2.2.4).

Occupational standards were elaborated by designated working groups comprising representatives of ministries, local governments, employers, employees, chamber of commerce and industry, NGOs and vocational education providers. The standards were endorsed by the National Tripartite Subcouncil for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment, and reviewed at least once every five years (Cabinet of Ministers, 2016g).

Qualification exams (Cabinet of Ministers, 2011c) that consist of theoretical and practical parts are designed in line with both occupational and State vocational education standards. Representatives from relevant sectoral organisations participate in the examination process.

3.3. Labour market relevance of VET

To ensure labour market relevance of vocational education two instruments are used: limiting or expanding provision of education in quantitative terms, and improving its quality.

The Ministry of Education and Science uses annual proposals of 12 Sectoral Expert Councils and medium- and long-term forecasts of labour force demand and supply as sources to plan vocational education supply (provision plans, including numbers of potential students and types of programmes).

In addition, work to improve quality of vocational education programmes is ongoing. Since 2007, occupational standards have to include professional competence, namely necessary skills, knowledge and responsibility in certain work situations. Standards should be reviewed and updated regularly. In 2010-15, key occupational standards in 14 sectors were aligned with recent labour market needs and this process will be continued in 2016-20 using ESF support.

To respond to high youth unemployment, vocational education standards were amended to introduce short vocational education programmes for 17 to 29 year-olds (one to one-and-a-half year). Previously such programmes lasted two years. Implementation of short programmes is supported by an ESF project in the youth guarantee initiative framework and coordinated by VIAA. Within the project, specialists in 66 different occupations were trained by mid-2014. Programmes were agreed with sectoral organisations and the National Tripartite Subcouncil for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment.
3.4. Quality assurance in VET

The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for policies and strategies to ensure accessibility and quality of education. Ministry of Education and Science institutions (including vocational schools) ensure the quality agreed in policy documents and legislation.

Quality is assured through:

(a) elaboration of education policy;
(b) registration and accreditation of education providers;
(c) licensing and accreditation of education programmes;
(d) supervising the educational process.

The further development of quality monitoring system is among the priorities of vocational education policy. A principle of accreditation ensures each programme’s content meets required standards of vocational education provided by public (State, local government) and private institutions (Cabinet of Ministers, 2010b). It also increases transparency of education provision and fosters recognition of Latvian qualifications abroad. IKVD among other functions organises licensing and accreditation of vocational education programmes, and accreditation of vocational education providers and examination centres (6) of State, local government and private entities.

Only accredited local governments and private vocational education institutions may apply for State funding for continuing vocational education, professional development and vocationally oriented education programmes. In 2010, IKVD joined the EQAVET working group working towards a better quality assessment system for vocational education. It coordinates implementation of the EQAVET recommendation and introduction of common quality assurance indicators in vocational education at national level since 2013 (Cabinet of Ministers, 2013d) (see Sections 2.2.4 and 3.6). In 2016, IKVD continues implementation of the EQAVET recommendations within the framework of the Erasmus+ programme project. During the licensing or accreditation process, IKVD hires external experts and representatives of sectoral NGOs and employers to evaluate the programmes’ compliance with State education standards, occupational standards and other regulations. All experts have specific knowledge of the accreditation process.

(6) Examination centre is an accredited commercial company or association in arranging professional qualification exams, but which does not implement education programmes (Saeima, 1999).
VISC ensures development of content for vocational education (except higher education) in compliance with State vocational education standards (see Section 2.2.5). It also ensures development and implementation of a uniform content of vocational education State examinations, coordinates development of study aids complying with general and vocational education standards, and coordinates teachers’ professional development.

The Higher Education Council (Augstākās izglītības padome) is responsible for quality assurance of higher (including professional) education. The council takes decisions on accreditation of higher education institutions and submits them to the Ministry of Education and Science for approval. In 2011-13, the council implemented an ESF project that evaluated most of higher education including higher professional programmes. National and international experts evaluated 860 study programmes in 28 study fields, and provided suggestions for improvements. Results were used for accreditation of higher education programmes.

Since 2012, study fields that include all programmes of the same field undergo joint quality assurance. Since July 2015, quality assurance of higher education institutions/colleges and study fields, and licensing of study programmes (Cabinet of Ministers, 2015b, 2015c) is organised by the Academic Information Centre (Akadēmiskās informācijas centrs).

Academic Information Centre maintains a register of study fields – a public portal (7) that includes information on higher education programmes and quality assurance of institutions and study fields. In 2016, the centre has launched an ESF project ‘Support for fulfilling requirements of EQAR agency’.

3.5. Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Development of a system for validation of skills and competences acquired through non-formal/informal learning was a policy objective of the lifelong learning strategy 2007-13 (Cabinet of Ministers, 2008a).

Validation of professional competences acquired outside formal education was launched in 2011 after amendments to the Vocational Education Law (Saeima, 1999a). Accredited education providers and examination centres with an IKVD permit carry out the validation process. The validation procedure for EQF levels 2-4 qualifications (Latvian professional qualification levels 1-3) is described in government regulations (Cabinet of Ministers, 2011b).

The validation procedure includes the following steps:
(a) submission of application;
(b) professional qualification exam;
(c) certification of professional qualification.

Validation is offered for a fee. Vocational education providers that assess professional competence must inform/advise candidates (free of charge) about requirements of occupational standards and the exam procedure. Once applicants have passed the exam, they receive a certificate of a professional qualification according to Cabinet of Ministers regulations (Cabinet of Ministers, 2011c).

For higher education, government regulations that determine the validation procedure and criteria (Cabinet of Ministers, 2012) were approved following amendments of 2011 to the Law on Higher Education Institutions (Saeima, 1995). Learning outcomes acquired through professional experience may only be recognised in a study programme. Thus, learning outcomes have to be acquired in a profession relevant to a field in a study programme.

3.6. Cooperation with stakeholders

The recent VET system reform was based on successful cooperation between State institutions and social partners. Since 2015, the functions of Sectoral Expert Councils and Conventions (a new type of advisory body involving employers, at each vocational school) are set by legislation (Saeima, 1999a). Sectoral Expert Councils gained a decisive role in aligning vocational education to needs of the economy. As a result of the survey on vocational education needs in 14 sectors a framework of sectoral professional qualifications and respective descriptions were developed. Occupational standards continue to be developed and updated for key professions and qualifications.

Development of a modular approach to content of vocational education programmes and qualification exams, as well as work-based learning was also carried out in close cooperation with stakeholders. Implementation of EQAVET and joint vocational education quality assurance indicators takes place in cooperation with social partners. In 2013-14, the EQAVET coordinator (IKVD) organised a discussion cycle on quality assurance issues involving Sectoral Expert Councils, Ministry of Education and Science and other stakeholders. IKVD has compiled views of stakeholders and is incorporating EQAVET quality criteria and indicators into the Latvian vocational education quality assurance system.
CHAPTER 4.
Promoting participation in VET

4.1. Incentives for learners, education providers and enterprises

Attractiveness of initial vocational education and reduction of early leaving from education are national policy priorities.

The education development guidelines 2014-20 (Saeima, 2014) foresee preventive and compensatory actions, including:

(a) promoting youth involvement in leisure and extracurricular activities that increase the interest in the practical areas and facilitates skills development;
(b) providing scholarships for vocational education students;
(c) conducting a study on reasons for leaving education early;
(d) implementing initial vocational education programmes in the youth guarantee initiative framework;
(e) identifying young NEETs and involving them in education.

Unlike general education students, vocational education students receive a monthly allowance according to government regulations on scholarships (Cabinet of Ministers, 2004). Students in public vocational education programmes receive an allowance from a ‘scholarship fund’ of the vocational education provider. The allowance amounts to between EUR 10 and 150 per month. Orphans/children without parental care (not in care institutions or foster families) and best performers in studies or school social activities receive a higher allowance.

Seventeen to 29 year-old students of short programmes in the youth guarantee initiative have an opportunity to receive ESF cofinanced scholarships per month up to EUR 70-115.

In 2009-15, best-performing initial vocational education students had received ESF cofinanced monthly scholarship from EUR 14 to 71. According to vocational education students themselves, allowances and scholarships have been a successful motivation tool. In 2015, the Ministry of Education and Science replaced the ESF project-based funding with State funding and doubled the amount (from EUR 71 to 150 per month).

Developing the adult education system is a challenge for the Ministry of Education and Science and other stakeholders. In 2013-14, the ministry has organised six interagency forums discussing the 2014-20 adult education policy
initiatives and a new national adult education cooperation model. The project was financially supported by the European Commission.

The implementation plan of Adult education governance model for 2016-20 (Cabinet of Ministers, 2016a) foresees creating cohesive and sustainable adult education system, shared and specific responsibilities, interaction of sectoral policies and improving adult education access and quality. The plan encourages employers’ active cooperation with vocational education institutions and eases employees’ participation in continuing education by introducing incentives. The plan also addresses the current lack of statistics on the non-formal adult education sector and learning taking place at enterprises.

Tax incentives for individuals are also available and regulated by Law on Personal Income Tax (Saeima, 1993).

Individuals may request the State Revenue Service (Valsts ieņēmumu dienests) to reduce their taxable income by amounts of their education (and medical) expenses up to a maximum of EUR 215 per year, including expenses paid for brothers/sisters/children under 24 years of age (Cabinet of Ministers, 2001). The revenue service is also responsible for monitoring use of tax incentives. Recent statistics, however, do not include all claims, as expenses may be claimed up to three years after they have been incurred.

For taxation purposes ‘education’ is understood as participation in:

(a) state-accredited education programmes (including higher and vocational education);
(b) EU/European economic area occupational learning;
(c) skills or qualification development.

Tertiary (including professional) education students can apply for two types of study loans to cover tuition fees and costs of living. Loans are offered by selected banks (or other credit institutions) and are State-guaranteed.

According to the Vocational Education Law (Saeima, 1999a), students in accredited first-level professional higher education programmes are entitled to both types of loans. The procedure regulating allocation, repayment and clearance of the loan is defined in the Law on Higher Education Institutions (Saeima, 1995).

Since 2014, the government has discussed possibilities to introduce labour tax exemptions for employers who offer training placements (Ministry of Education and Science, 2014). However, particular decisions or measures have not yet been taken.
4.2. **Guidance and counselling**

The Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Welfare are responsible for career guidance and counselling. The Education Law (Saeima, 1998) stipulates that local governments are responsible for provision of career education for children and youth. Since 2013, the law establishes students’ right to receive career guidance and counselling; outlines responsibilities of heads of education institutions for ensuring access to career development services and defines the respective terminology. The Vocational Education Law (Saeima, 1999a) determines responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science for introducing guidance and counselling in vocational education.

The present career development support system has been in place since 2006. It was launched by a Ministry of Welfare policy paper on improving career guidance (Cabinet of Ministers, 2006a) developed in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Economics, the former Ministry of Regional Development, the Association of Local Governments, social partner organisations and guidance practitioners. The paper covers all aspects of lifelong guidance including the mechanisms to ensure better cooperation and coordination between key stakeholders at different levels.

In 2007, the national guidance and counselling forum (*Karjeras attīstības atbalsta sistēmas sadarbības padome*) was established. It gathers policy-makers from the relevant ministries, guidance providers, social partners and users. The forum proposes changes at national and local levels, thus, contributing to development of guidance and counselling policy and system. It also cooperates with the Latvian delegation to the European lifelong guidance policy network.

According to government regulations (Cabinet of Ministers, 2010b) offering support in career education is one of the criteria for assessing quality in schools. The regulations (Cabinet of Ministers, 2013b) foresee additional requirements for vocational education providers who seek to be recognised as vocational education competence centres. These competence centres in relevant economic sectors should provide individual career counselling and support measures for career education to help students acquire career management skills.

VIAA represents Latvia in the Euroguidance network by Ministry of Education and Science delegation. Financed by the Ministry of Education and Science and the EU Erasmus+ programme it supports implementation of career education policy within the education sector and provides information on education opportunities in Latvia and other EU countries.

The agency develops information materials to provide methodological support for career guidance practitioners working at schools and guidance materials for young people and adults. VIAA also organises seminars for
practitioners and, since 2012, organises a ‘career week’ in big cities. The agency maintains and updates an education opportunities database (⁸) with information about general, vocational and higher education providers and programmes, as well as information about non-formal learning opportunities. VIAA also offers a website (⁹) which informs about the world of work.

The development of career education and widening access to individual career services in a lifelong learning context is one of policy priorities set by the education development guidelines 2014-20 (Saeima, 2014) and will be implemented with support from public and EU funds (Cabinet of Ministers, 2016b).

According to the Support Law for Unemployed Persons and Persons Seeking Employment (Saeima, 2002), NVA's functions imparts ensuring free career advice for the unemployed, job-seekers or other persons and developing career counselling methods and career guidance information.

The agency provides:
(a) individual career consultations;
(b) group career consultations;
(c) online self-assessment;
(d) support in job searching (preparing for work interviews, writing CVs and job applications);
(e) other services.

Client needs inform choices of counselling methods used. The first meeting is devoted to clarifying aims of the consultation and selecting the most appropriate working method, which may be focused on exploring professional interests, vocational aptitude, or exploring clients' knowledge, skills/competences and values. If need be, psychological support is ensured (client resource assessment to show their strengths for a successful future life planning) terms.

The NVA web portal www.nva.gov.lv section ‘Career services’ (10) informs about job searching and career decision making, it includes descriptions of occupations, education opportunities, self-assessment tests.

According to the Law on Higher Education Institutions (Saeima, 1995), students have a right to receive information on issues regarding their studies and potential careers. Higher education institutions have designated career centres that provide information on education and career opportunities.

In the private and NGO sectors, provision of guidance services is underdeveloped, but there are some promising initiatives. An example is the youth consultation web portal (11) (since 2008), which is considered the largest in Latvia informing on career and education issues.

## List of abbreviations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSB</td>
<td>Centrālā statistikas pārvalde [Central Statistical Bureau]</td>
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<td>CVET</td>
<td>continuing VET</td>
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<td>ECTS</td>
<td>European credit transfer and accumulation system</td>
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<td>ECVET</td>
<td>European credit system for VET</td>
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<td>EHEA</td>
<td>European higher education area</td>
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<td>EQAVET</td>
<td>European quality assurance in VET</td>
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<td>EQF</td>
<td>European qualifications framework</td>
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<td>ESF</td>
<td>European Social Fund</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>gross domestic product</td>
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<td>IKVD</td>
<td>Izglītības kvalitātes valsts dienests [State Education Quality Service]</td>
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<td>ISCED</td>
<td>international standard classification of education</td>
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<td>IT</td>
<td>information technology</td>
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<td>NEET</td>
<td>young people not in education, employment or training</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-governmental organisation</td>
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<td>NQF</td>
<td>national qualifications framework</td>
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<td>NVA</td>
<td>Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra [State Employment Agency]</td>
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<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>vocational education and training</td>
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<td>VIAA</td>
<td>Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra [State Education Development Agency]</td>
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<td>VISC</td>
<td>Valsts izglītības saturs centrs [National Centre for Education]</td>
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Cabinet of Ministers (2016d). *Darbības programmas ‘Izaugsme un nodarbinātība’ 8.5.2. specifiskā atbalsta mērķa ‘Nodrošināt profesionālās izglītības atbilstību Eiropas kvalifikācijas ietvarstruktūrai’ īstenošanas noteikumi* [Regulations on the implementation of Operational Programme’s ‘Growth and Employment’ Specific objective No.8.5.2. ‘To ensure the compliance of vocational education to the European Qualifications Framework’]. Regulation No 262.


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Ministry of Culture: www.km.gov.lv
Ministry of Economics: www.em.gov.lv
Ministry of Welfare: www.lm.gov.lv
NVA: www.nva.gov.lv
Annex 1.
Glossary

<p>| <strong>Apprenticeship (mācekliiba)</strong> | In the Latvian context, the term is similar to the international definition: systematic, long-term training alternating periods in a school or training centre and at the workplace; the apprentice is contractually linked to an employer and may receive remuneration. The employer assumes responsibility for providing the apprentice with training leading to a specific occupation according to education programmes developed by the Chamber of Crafts and the Ministry of Education and Science. Apprenticeships are implemented separately from programmes in other education sectors and are not included in the education programme classification (no relevant ISCED level). |
| <strong>Competence (kompetence)</strong> | Regarding the national framework, the term is expressed as ability to carry out analysis, synthesis and assessment. In the Vocational Education Law (Saeima, 1999a as amended in July 2010) only 'professional competence' is defined: necessary skills, knowledge and responsibility in work situations. However, the definition used in context of the European Qualifications Framework could be applied: the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. In context of the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy. |
| <strong>CVET (profesionālā tālākizglītība)</strong> | A special kind of vocational education which provides an opportunity for adults with previous education and professional experience to acquire a professional qualification at a specific level (Saeima, 1999a). Thereby, the term is interpreted similarly to the international definition, namely, CVET can be broadly defined as professional or vocational development through education and training undertaken typically after one has completed initial vocational education. It is provided and undertaken on initiative of public authorities, social partners, sectors, enterprises, individuals as well as a range of voluntary and community organisations. |
| <strong>Tertiary or higher education (ISCED 5-7, augstākā izglītība)</strong> | An education level, which is acquired after secondary education, in science or art (Saeima, 1998). |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Formal learning</strong> <em>(formālā izglītība)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Includes basic education, secondary education and higher education (Saeima, 1998).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>General education</strong> <em>(vispārējā izglītība)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education mainly designed to lead participants to a deeper understanding of a subject or group of subjects, especially, but not necessarily, with a view to preparing participants for further education at the same or a higher level. These programmes, which do not specialise in particular areas, are typically school-based. After successful completion participants are not provided with a labour-market-relevant qualification. However, the term ‘general education’ is mostly used to refer to secondary education, while the term ‘academic education’ is used for higher education level programmes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Initial VET</strong> <em>(sākotnējā profesionālā izglītība)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formally organised vocational education, mostly at secondary education level, which is similar to the international definition, namely, education undertaken after full-time compulsory education (mainly nine years basic education) to promote acquisition of the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to enter an occupation. Management and legal basis of initial vocational education are not separated from continuing vocational education. Most vocational education is implemented through school-based programmes, which include practical learning periods at school and enterprise; in Latvia initial vocational education is referred to as ‘vocational education’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Lower secondary education</strong> <em>(ISCED 2, pamatizglītības otrs posms)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Division of lower and upper secondary education is not used in Latvia; therefore, this stage of education belongs to basic education and is called the second stage of basic school (grades seven to nine) including both general and vocational education programmes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Non-formal learning</strong> <em>(neformālā izglītība)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational activities in conformity with interests and demand organised outside formal education (Saeima, 1998).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Occupation</strong> <em>(profesija)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>See ‘profession’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Post-secondary (non-tertiary) education</strong> <em>(ISCED 4, pēcvidējā izglītība)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One to three-year programmes are categorised nationally as secondary. These programmes provide professional knowledge and skills only. Education process and assessment are organised similar to other secondary education programmes. Students are usually older than those in secondary education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Profession (profesija)**

A type of occupation of a natural person in fields of production of goods, distribution or services, as well as education, culture and art which require certain preparedness (Saeima, 1999a).

**Qualification (kvalifikācija)**

A formal outcome of an assessment and recognition process, i.e., documentary confirmed assessment which is obtained when a competent body determines that a person has achieved learning outcomes according to the pre-established standards.

**Skills (prasmes)**

The Latvian definition is similar to the international one (12), namely, ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems.

**Upper secondary education (ISCED 3, vidējā izglītība)**

Division of lower and upper secondary education is not used in Latvia; upper secondary education refers to ‘secondary education’ after nine years basic school; it lasts three to four years and includes both general and vocational education programmes.

**Work-based learning scheme (darba vidē balstītas mācības)**

It is an apprenticeship type scheme applied since 2013 in the Latvian vocational education. According to the Vocational Education Law (Saeima, 1999a), ‘work-based learning’ is one of the attainment forms of vocational education – students acquire both the theoretical and practical aspects alternately at a vocational education institution and enterprise. In contrast to apprenticeship, the scheme provides qualifications referenced to NQF and are part of the formal education system.

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(12) In the EQF, skills are described as cognitive (use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).
## Annex 2.
### VET at basic and secondary levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Admission requirements</th>
<th>Main economic sectors</th>
<th>ISCED 2011 and EQF level</th>
<th>General: vocational subjects (%)</th>
<th>Theory: practice (%)</th>
<th>Average duration</th>
<th>Access (horizontal/vertical) to other pathways</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocational basic education programme (including 'pedagogical correction' programme)</td>
<td>(a) Basic education</td>
<td>Primary sector, manufacturing, construction; business and other services</td>
<td>P/A 254 Latvian professional qualification level 1, EQF 2</td>
<td>60:40</td>
<td>35:65</td>
<td>One to three years</td>
<td>Vocational secondary education programmes, labour market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Without basic education, but not younger than 15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational education programme</td>
<td>General or vocational basic education</td>
<td>Primary sector and utilities, manufacturing, construction, distribution and transport, business and other services, non-marketed services</td>
<td>P/A 353 Latvian professional qualification level 2, EQF 3</td>
<td>60:40</td>
<td>35:65</td>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>Vocational secondary education, inter-mEDIATE general education programme, labour market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate general secondary education &quot;bridge programme&quot;</td>
<td>Vocational education programme, three years after basic education</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>P/A 344 EQF 4</td>
<td>100:0</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>One year</td>
<td>Higher education programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational education programme</td>
<td>General or vocational basic education</td>
<td>Primary sector and utilities, manufacturing, construction, distribution and transport, business and other services, non-marketed services</td>
<td>P 351, A 254 Latvian professional qualification level 2, EQF 3</td>
<td>0:100</td>
<td>35:65</td>
<td>One year</td>
<td>Vocational secondary education, labour market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational education programme (including pedagogical correction programme)</td>
<td>Without basic education, but not younger than 15</td>
<td>Primary sector and utilities, manufacturing, construction, distribution and transport, business and other services, non-marketed services</td>
<td>P/A 254 Latvian professional qualification</td>
<td>60:40</td>
<td>35:65</td>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>Vocational secondary education, labour market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational secondary education programme</td>
<td>General or vocational basic education, vocational education</td>
<td>P/A 354 Latvian professional qualification level 3, EQF 3</td>
<td>60:40</td>
<td>50:50</td>
<td>Four years, two years after VET programme</td>
<td>Higher education programmes, labour market</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational education programme (post-secondary education)</td>
<td>General or vocational basic or secondary education</td>
<td>P/A 453 Latvian professional qualification level 2, EQF 3</td>
<td>0:100</td>
<td>35:65</td>
<td>One year</td>
<td>Labour market</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational secondary education programme (post-secondary education)</td>
<td>General or vocational basic or secondary education</td>
<td>P/A 453 Latvian professional qualification level 3, EQF 4</td>
<td>0:100</td>
<td>30:70</td>
<td>One-and-a-half to three years</td>
<td>Labour market</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*) Practice – practical and laboratory work in study subjects (mainly at school), practical learning (mainly at school) and qualification practice (mainly in enterprise).

Source: ReferNet Latvia.
### Professional education at tertiary level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Admission requirements</th>
<th>Main economic sectors</th>
<th>Corresponding level of study</th>
<th>Academic: professional subjects ($)</th>
<th>Class-based learning: practice ($)</th>
<th>Average duration of studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-level higher professional education programme (college programme)</td>
<td>Secondary education</td>
<td>Primary sector and utilities, manufacturing, construction, distribution and transport, business and other services</td>
<td>ISCED P 554/A 550 Latvian professional qualification level 4 EQF level 5</td>
<td>36:64</td>
<td>70:30</td>
<td>Two to three years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second-level higher professional education programme (university programme)</td>
<td>Secondary education or first- or second-level higher professional education, or bachelor degree</td>
<td>Secondary education</td>
<td>ISCED 6 to 7 (see below) Latvian professional qualification level 5 EQF levels 6 to 7</td>
<td>17:83</td>
<td>70:30</td>
<td>Four to five years, at least four years after secondary education and not shorter than two years after college education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### University programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Admission requirements</th>
<th>Main economic sectors</th>
<th>Corresponding level of study</th>
<th>Content of study programmes (*)</th>
<th>Average duration of studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Second-level higher professional education programme | First-level professional higher education (college programme) | Primary sector and utilities, manufacturing, construction, distribution and transport, business and other services | ISCED P 655/A 650 Latvian professional qualification level 5 EQF level 6 | Total 40 Latvian CP (1 Latvian credit =1.5 European credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS), of which:
(a) 4 CP theoretical courses in the branch;
(b) 26 CP practice;
(c) 10 CP State exam (including final thesis). | One to two years |
<p>| Professional | Secondary | ISCED P 655/A | Total at least 160 Latvian CP, of which: | | Minimum four years |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Programme</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Non-marketed Services</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor or professional higher education programme</td>
<td>education</td>
<td>650 Latvian professional qualification level 5 EQF level 6</td>
<td>At least four years</td>
<td>(a) minimum 20 CP general courses; (b) minimum 36 CP theoretical courses of speciality and information technology (IT) courses; (c) minimum 60 CP courses of occupational speciality; (d) minimum 6 CP free choice courses; (e) minimum 20 CP practice; (f) minimum 12 CP State exam (including final thesis).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second-level higher professional education programme</td>
<td>Academic or professional bachelor degree, second-level higher professional education</td>
<td>ISCED P 657/A 650 Latvian professional qualification level 5 EQF level 6</td>
<td>At least one year</td>
<td>Total at least 40 Latvian CP, of which: (a) minimum 4 CP theoretical courses of speciality; (b) minimum 20 CP practice; (c) minimum 10 CP State exam (including final thesis).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second-level higher professional education programme</td>
<td>General or vocational secondary education</td>
<td>ISCED P 756/A 750 Latvian professional qualification level 5 EQF level 7</td>
<td>At least five years</td>
<td>Total at least 160 Latvian CP, of which: (a) minimum 20 CP general courses; (b) minimum 36 CP theoretical courses of speciality and IT courses; (c) minimum 60 CP courses of occupational speciality; (d) minimum 6 CP free choice courses; (e) minimum 20 CP practice; (f) minimum 12 CP State exam (including final thesis).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional master programme</td>
<td>Academic or professional bachelor degree, second-level higher professional education</td>
<td>ISCEDP 757/A 750 Latvian professional qualification level 5 EQF level 7</td>
<td>At least one year</td>
<td>Total at least 40 Latvian CP, of which: (a) minimum 5 CP courses of recent achievements in sector's theory and practice; (b) minimum 3 CP courses of research, creativity, design and management; (c) minimum 26 CP practice (for academic bachelor graduates); (d) minimum 6 CP practice (for professional bachelor/programmes graduates); (e) 20 CP State exam (including final thesis).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*) CP: credit points (kredītpunkti).

Source: ReferNet Latvia.