
TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN A CHANGING WORLD

Building up competences for
inclusive, green and digitalised
vocational education and training

LATVIA



Teachers and trainers in a changing world

Latvia

Building up competences for inclusive, green and digitalised vocational education and training (VET)



Ministry of
Education and Science
Republic of Latvia



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CHAPTER 1. Introduction

In the last five years, several initiatives and measures were introduced to improve the quality of teachers' education, make it more flexible, able to quickly respond to the labour market demands and adapt to technological developments by providing appropriate continuing education and professional development options. The implemented measures were in compliance with the Education Development Guidelines 2014-20 (Ministry of Education, 2014) that envisaged measures to increase the qualification of the teaching staff – as part of the overall VET reform in order to raise the quality and attractiveness of VET in Latvia (Ministry of Education, 2014). A particular emphasis was placed on the lifelong learning competences – ICT, entrepreneurship, languages, financial literacy, leadership skills creativity, skills for working with learners with different abilities and skills, as well as regarding the capacity to collaborate with the labour market representatives.

The Guidelines 2014-20 highlighted the challenges as well, such as the non-competitive remuneration and motivation system for teachers, the ageing teaching staff, the relatively low interest in continuous professional development (hereafter: CPD), as well as the limited capacity to deal with emerging issues and new requirements in relation to the labour market needs.

The comprehensive VET curricula reform implemented with support from the European Social Funds greatly contributed to the quality and competence development of VET teachers and trainers. The planned activities within specific objective 'Improvement of the sectoral qualification system for the development of vocational education and quality assurance' (SO) 852 (National Centre of Education, 2016a) allowed teachers' involvement in the development of new learning outcomes based modular VET curricula, whereas the Operational Programme 'Growth and Employment' within specific objective 'Effective management of vocational education institutions and improvement of staff competence' (SO)853 (National Centre for Education, 2016b) was specifically targeted at the CPD for teachers and trainers from schools and companies. These activities allowed more targeted and relevant CPD for teachers and trainers, aligned with the developments within the overall VET curricula reform, thus increasing teachers and trainers' interest in professional development.

The ICT competence of teachers and trainers remains a challenge. However, this competence was greatly facilitated by the COVID-19 crisis. In 2020, the ability to work with technologies and to provide education and training in ICT environment grew at unprecedented speed and embraced practically all teaching staff.

During 2015-20, substantive measures were taken to improve the system for teachers' remuneration and motivation. Increase in salaries was ensured and a system created for a continuous raising of teachers' remuneration (Cabinet of Ministers, 2016a).

Even though official evaluation on the results of the implementation of Guidelines 2014-20 is not yet available, relevant data indicate that considerable improvements can be observed regarding the quality of the teaching and training personnel.

CHAPTER 2. Types of teaching and training professionals

2.1. Main types

National qualifications profiles and occupational standards describe qualification level, employment, responsibilities and tasks, specific factors that characterise the work environment, particular requirements for work tasks, necessary skills and knowledge.

In 2020, a new Teacher's Occupational Standard in compliance with the labour market needs was published.

- (a) there are four categories of teaching professionals in vocational education: vocational education teachers of vocational of IVET programmes – provide both theory and practical learning in school workshops and can work in initial and continuing vocational education at primary and secondary education level;
- (b) general education teachers of general education part of IVET programme,
- (c) supervisors of practical placements (from education institutions or enterprises) who accompany learners during regular or qualification practice;
- (d) tutors – representatives from enterprises who work directly with learners during in-company periods of WBL.

2.2. VET schools

There is no definition for IVET for Latvia; however, the term is being used in legislation. VET schools that deliver IVET are state (founded by the Cabinet of Ministers), municipal (founded by local municipalities) or private.

VET schools which are delivering IVET:

- (a) Vocational primary school – an educational institution that implements vocational primary education programmes of the LQF/EQF 2nd level;
- (b) Trade (vocational) school – an educational institution that implements vocational education programmes of the LQF/EQF 3rd level and lower secondary education;
- (c) Vocational secondary school – an educational institution that implements vocational secondary education programmes of the LQF/EQF 4th level;
- (d) Technical school- an educational institution which has been granted the status of a vocational education competence centre and that implements vocational secondary education programmes of the LQF/EQF 4th level;

- (e) College - an educational institution that implements LQF/EQF 5th level (college education) VET programmes. In addition, some colleges implement the LQF/EQF 4th level VET programmes.

2.3. Teaching and training professionals by type of VET school

The types of teaching and training professionals within a school do not vary depending on the type of VET school. Until the approval of Amendments in VET Law, there is not the opportunity for young people who have dropped out to be enrolled in second chance schools.

CHAPTER 3. Teaching and training professionals in school-based settings

3.1. Legislation

Qualification and/or professional competence requirements for VET teachers are set by the Education Law (Saeima, 1998) and the Vocational Education Law (Saeima, 1999).

According to the Education Law (Saeima, 1998), to obtain the right to work as a teacher, a person must have pedagogical education or must be in the process of acquiring the pedagogical education. Regarding the vocational education sector, in addition, the Vocational Education Law (Saeima, 1999) determines that to have the right to work in vocational education institutions teachers must have appropriate professional education (qualification) and pedagogical education or be a learner of a pedagogical programme.

Particular requirements for teachers' education and qualification are specified by the Regulations on the Procedures for the Development of Education and Vocational Qualifications and Vocational Competences of Teachers (Cabinet of Ministers, 2018).

Education Development Guidelines (hereinafter, EDG) 2014-20 (Ministry of Education, 2014) form the political framework for the development of VET teacher teaching and training.

3.2. Qualification and competence requirements

The Cabinet Regulations No 569 'Requirements for teachers' education and professional qualifications and the procedure of the teachers' professional development' (Cabinet of Ministers, 2018a) state the qualification requirements for teachers.

VET schools are welcoming professionals from the labour market to get involved in the VET educational process, but teachers of general subjects rarely become VET teachers. Teachers of general subjects in VET schools have the same requirements as general secondary school teachers. There is no need for special training programmes for general subject teachers to start working in VET schools.

Requirements for a vocational education teacher:

- (a) higher education and higher pedagogical education or acquired CPD programme of at least 72 hours or two academic credit points in pedagogy within the higher education study programme;
- (b) EQF/LQF 4th level professional qualification and higher pedagogical education or acquired CPD programme of 72 hours or at least two academic credit points in pedagogy within the higher education study programme.

The requirements above regarding pedagogical education do not apply to VET teachers whose workload in a VET institution is less than 360 working hours per year.

A person who has acquired a part of the study programme related to the relevant subject or module in the amount of at least four credit points or 160 hours is also entitled to teach the study subject or module.

As a teacher can obtain a certificate for teaching another subject in at least 160, but mostly 240 hours long state funded CPD courses teachers take this opportunity to get a new teacher's certificate to teach another subject and not to lose their jobs.

3.3. Initial training programmes

In 2020, the new conceptual model of the new teacher initial education system envisaged two alternatives for obtaining a teacher's professional qualification:

- (a) for those applicants who choose to acquire the profession of a teacher after obtaining secondary education – a four-year bachelor study programme;
- (b) for those applicants having obtained higher education with a degree completing a programme in another field of study and wish to continue their education and acquire the profession of a teacher qualification – a one-year programme.

The uniqueness of the new second level vocational higher education one-year study programme for obtaining a professional qualification of a teacher after graduation in another field is justified by the form of its implementation – Work Based Learning (hereinafter, WBL studies), as well as cooperation between the non-governmental sector (*Iespējamā misija*) and academia (three universities: University of Latvia, Liepāja University and Daugavpils University). For applicants with a degree obtained in a programme of another field of study it is an opportunity to acquire pedagogical competence in WBL studies during one year under the guidance of highly qualified teaching staff (mentors). The new WBL study programme offers reasonable solutions to current and future challenges in the education system: the lack of teachers in Latvian educational institutions, the

change of the role of teachers in the context of the competence approach. The new WBL study programme is important for the Latvian economy, as it ensures faster entry of qualified teachers in schools and a special opportunity for professionals to change their careers and become teachers. The new principle of teacher training envisages that learners acquire pedagogy, methodology, didactics in the qualification year in study courses in the amount of 40 credit points, but in the year of induction continue to improve the competence of the teacher in practice.

The Cabinet Regulations No 332 'Regulations on the State vocational secondary education standard and the State vocational education standard' (Cabinet of Ministers, 2020) prescribe that the content of general educational subjects conforms to the content of general secondary education. Teachers of general subjects can work both in a general secondary school and in a VET school.

3.4. Requirements for continuous professional development

A teacher of general, vocational and interest education is responsible for the improvement of their professional competence. Professional competence is developed by completing professional competence development activities in total of 36 hours within the three years, and it is planned in cooperation with the head of the educational institution where the person carries out pedagogical activities. The Cabinet Regulations No 569 'Requirements for teachers' education and professional qualifications and the procedure of the teachers' professional development' (Cabinet of Ministers, 2018a) require compulsory developing of professional competence for all kinds of teachers.

At this point each teacher himself takes a decision on the field of professional competence – technical, pedagogical/didactic, transversal in which he carries out professional training.

Each year the Ministry of Education offers teachers' CPD courses financed by the state budget. The list of courses is made following the current vacancies and teachers' competence needs analysis. The public procurement is announced each year. Teachers' CPD offering new qualification for teachers are provided by HEIs with pedagogical study programmes, which are 80-240 hours long. These CPD programmes are approved by the Ministry of Education. The teachers' CPDs for learning skills, knowledge and competences are provided by State Education Quality Service, National Centre for Education, education institutions – state gymnasiums, VET Competence Centres –, foundations, companies, agencies. The CPD courses for acquiring new skills, knowledge and competences are up to 36 hours long.

Teachers' paid CPD are offered, too.

3.5. Data on trainers in work-based settings

Data on the number of teachers and their qualifications/education levels are collected regularly. Every school year vocational schools submit information on teachers to the National System of education information (Ministry of Education) and the Central Statistics Bureau of Latvia (CSB) for further analysis. The Ministry of Education publishes these data on its [website](#).

Most VET teachers have a higher education degree (see Table 1). Since 2014/15, the number of vocational education teachers has decreased by 14%, with the number of learners having decreased by 10%. Since 2014/2015, the number of VET schools has decreased by 25%.

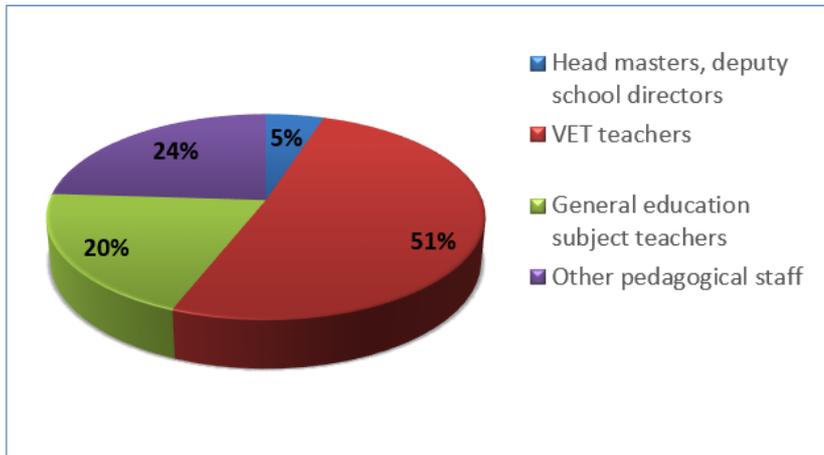
Table 1. Education level of vocational education teachers (employed full-time)

School year	Teachers	Teachers' education level						
		Secondary education				Higher education		
		Total	General secondary	Vocational secondary	Currently students	Total	Pedagogical	Phd
2014/15	2 796	177	17	160	53	2 596	1 855	23
2015/16	2 639	155	10	145	55	2 461	1 537	23
2016/17	2 563	150	10	140	46	2 396	1 758	17
2017/18	2 580	177	10	167	49	2 382	1 838	21
2018/19	2 320	147	n/a	n/a	68	2 148	n/a	25
2019/20	2 424	177	n/a	n/a	n/a	2 247	n/a	19

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 2021.

At VET schools, half of the staff (see Figure 1) are VET teachers. General secondary education also plays an important role in curricula of vocational secondary education, so 25% of staff is composed of general subject teachers.

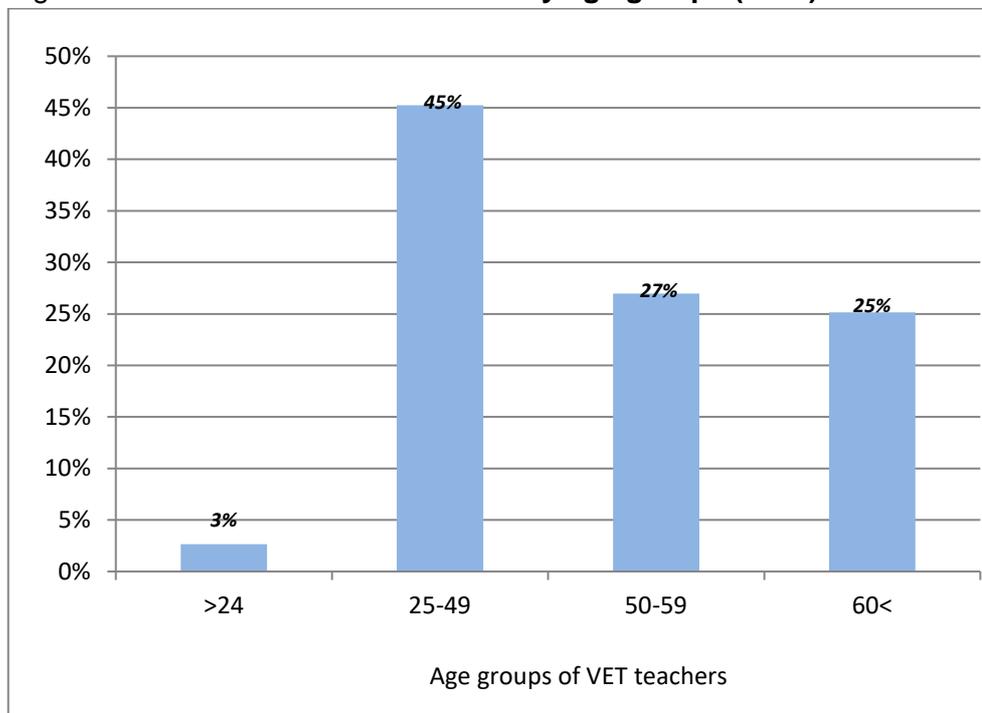
Figure 1. **Share of Teachers in Vocational secondary and basic education schools, % (2020)**



Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 2021.

Since 2015, pedagogical staff of VET schools have become a little younger (Figure 2). The number of teachers in the age group 21-49 has increased to 45% and the number of retirement-age teachers has decreased by 5%. However, more than half of teachers (52%) are in pre-retirement or retirement age.

Figure 2. **Share of VET teachers in % by age groups (2020)**



Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 2021.

CHAPTER 4. Training professionals in work-based settings

4.1. Definitions

In work-based settings, there are two main types of training professionals (roles): trainers from the VET institutions and tutors from the companies. The role of the trainer from the VET institution is typically implemented by a VET teacher with qualification requirements laid down by Regulation No 569. These teachers can act both as teachers of professional subject in school settings and as trainers or supervisors in work-based settings. The requirements for the tutors from the company are laid down by Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of 15 July 2016 No 484 'Procedures for Organising and Implementing Work-Based Learning' (Cabinet of Ministers, 2016b).

Training of learners in work-based settings is being performed via training practices (as an inherent part of any VET programme) and by WBL which is an apprenticeship type scheme. WBL programmes are being implemented by VET schools on voluntary basis (in parallel with school-based VET programmes). It requires additional planning and administrative input from the VET schools' administration and teaching/training staff. VET schools are encouraged by the education ministry to increase the volume of WBL programmes, especially in STEM sectors.

4.2. Legislation

EDG for 2014-20 (Saeima, 2014) foresaw that the provision of CPD of VET teachers, supervisors of practical placements and representatives of enterprises (involved in the work with learners during training practices and WBL) would be organised in close collaboration with employers, including their traineeships in enterprises. Also, the EDG for 2021-27 prioritise the quality of the training and CPD of teachers and trainers, pointing out the necessary relation to the labour market developments.

For WBL tutors (mentors) in companies – the requirements regarding the compulsory pedagogical competence are laid down in Regulation No 484 (Cabinet of Ministers, 2016b).

According to the Regulation No 484, the tutor in WBL in a company has to meet the requirements regarding their pedagogical competence and professional

experience. Regarding pedagogical competence: already formerly acquired certified pedagogical qualification (competence) counts as valid.

If the tutor does not have the needed pedagogical competence already, it has to be obtained by acquiring a specific targeted training course of at least 32 hours (Cabinet of Ministers, 2016). The programme of the training course is modular. The content of the course has been agreed at a national level and the provision is in interactive form as blended learning.

The 32 hours training programme for obtaining the compulsory pedagogical competence must correspond to the content determined by the Ministry of Education and monitored by the National Centre for Education to ensure a uniform national approach and retain high quality standards. An agreement was reached in 2016 by the Ministry of Education and its relevant agencies as to the content, its organisation and delivery for the training course. This provides for a uniform approach and quality of delivery. The VET provider has to prove that the offered programme complies with the set requirements – the Ministry of Education confirms the programme. The lifelong learning perspective is ensured – the training course is organised in four modules with a particular content. The course may be resumed after interruption with no need to repeat the acquired modules.

For developing pedagogical competence, a tutor can follow a CPD programme of 72 hours as well (the programme described in Chapter 3.2.), deepening their knowledge and understanding – as a full course from the very start or building on the acquired and validated 32 hours course. This is a free choice of a company tutor. However, it is compulsory to obtain a certificate of completing a 72-hour programme in order to become a hybrid teacher at school.

4.3. Provisions for continuous professional development

For teachers' CPD in work-based settings the general framework described in Section 3.3. applies. However, the importance of company visits for developing teachers' competences were emphasised in the Guidelines 2014-20 its implementation plan. This plan includes the arrangement of CPD for vocational education teachers in work-based settings, particularly in the form of traineeships and study visits to enterprises. Schools can cooperate with individual enterprises, social partners, professional bodies, and chambers. The objective of traineeships in enterprises is to support the improvement of teachers' general competences (such as entrepreneurship, ICT) and professional competences, in cooperation with employers, in Latvia and abroad.

Within the ESF SAM (SO) 8.5.3. Effective management of vocational education institutions and improvement of staff competence project, during the 2014-20 planning period 35 in-company traineeships for vocational school teachers were organised, of which 21 were offered in Latvia (110 teachers participated) and 14 in other EU countries (74 teachers participated).

As a complementary measure, in 2017, the Lifelong Learning Centre of the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies implemented the CPD programme 'Teacher career counsellor' (160 hours) in cooperation with the Employers' Confederation of Latvia. The programme included study visits to companies in order to raise teachers' understanding of sectors.

4.4. Data on trainers in work-based settings

Data on the participants in the training programme 'Basic pedagogical competence 72 hours' with financing from the state budget. The participants typically were from industries. Total number in the period 2015-20 – 439

Year	Number of participants
2015	184
2016	103
2017	101
2018	35
2019	120
2020	80

Source: data provided by the Ministry of Education

Within the ESF SAM 35 in-company traineeships for vocational school teachers (SO) 8.5.3. project, 21 were offered in Latvia (110 teachers participated) and 14 in other EU countries (74 teachers participated).

In 2019, 252 teachers were on company visits, of which 199 teachers were in company visits in Latvia (divided in 22 groups) and 53 teachers abroad (divided in seven groups).

In 2020, 69 in-company traineeships for vocational school teachers and trainers were organised. 48 were offered in Latvia (455 teachers and trainers participated) and 21 in other EU countries (198 teachers and trainers participated). In total 653 participants took part in a 32-hour curriculum (Source: ESF SAM (SO) 8.5.3. project).

CHAPTER 5. Partnerships between schools and companies

5.1. Examples of practice

The social dialogue in Latvia at various levels, as well as the existing institutional and collaboration mechanisms for ensuring better education and employment side collaboration forms a solid basis for further developments in CPD of teachers and trainers. The involved parties are VET institutions, local and regional level actors, sector level actors, ministerial and social partner level representatives. The social dialogue refers to various aspects – the drafting of a legal framework, development of standards and curricula, compliance of the training with labour market demands, determining the priority areas, incentives to the involved parties, measures regarding graduate tracking.

By amendments to the VET Law in 2015 (Saeima, 2015), VET institutions Conventions and Sector Expert Councils were formally established. The tasks and responsibilities of Sector Expert Councils are laid down in Regulation No 485. The sector expert councils are supporting VET institutions in carrying out their role as sectoral methodological centres, promoting uniform high-quality approaches towards training across all sectors. The teachers and trainers are thoroughly involved in the development of occupational standards and (modular) training programmes, based on learning outcomes approach. The process is implemented in collaboration with sector experts nominated by the sector expert councils. The VET institutions Conventions – comprising representatives from local governments and employers, as well as other relevant local or regional stakeholders – have an advisory role as to the development of the VET institution in compliance with the local/regional development context.

The role and capacity of VET institutions Conventions and Sector Expert Councils is increasing in relation to education and employment collaboration procedures. The Ministry of Education has planned measures to support and optimise their work in the new planning period of 2021-27, based on lessons learnt.

The Tripartite Sub-Council for Co-operation on VET is an instrument allowing for an immediate reaction for identified problems or challenges, since all three sides of the social dialogue are represented, and they accountable to the Council. Any issue that is raised can be included in the Agenda of the Council meeting, and if necessary, included repeatedly – until the partners agree on a common beneficial solution. Above all – if the issue has a high-level policymaking context – the Employment Council discusses it among the three relevant ministers of education,

economy and welfare, thus allowing for solutions at a high policymaking level. This allows to conclude that the existing institutional mechanisms are well designed for addressing education and employment collaboration issues at all levels and on all relevant components (including teacher training and CPD), allowing for taking necessary decisions and following up the processes.

The social dialogue constitutes the overarching framework for the relevant policy measures in the training of workforce according to the labour market requirements and thus setting the background for the respective training of teachers and trainers.

5.2. Cooperation between VET schools and companies

The VET institution is responsible for the overall results of the implementation of the WBL programme. Systemic and regular collaboration between the two sides – education and employment – is vital. The legislation (Cabinet of Ministers, 2016b) requires that at least 25% of the WBL programme has to be implemented at the enterprise. The key documents are: individual learning plan for learners; and a tripartite agreement between the school, the learner and the company. An additional bilateral agreement is concluded between the learner and the company – on wage in case of a job contract, or an agreement on the allowance (both types of remuneration are acceptable according to Regulation No. 484). The training supervisor from school typically is an appointed VET teacher. From the company the tutor is being appointed by the company management out of its employees. The training supervisor from the school collaborates closely with the company tutor to ensure that the individual learning plan of the student is being implemented accordingly. The supervisor advises, if necessary, the company tutor on the necessary administrative procedures, in relation to evaluation of the student, filling out the necessary documentation and other technical issues.

VET institutions are free to choose whether they will implement a VET programme in apprenticeship mode or in a school-based mode. VET programme standards apply regardless of its form of organisation or delivery (school-based or workplace-based/apprenticeship). Also, the qualification acquired is identical regardless of the form of delivery/acquisition. A WBL VET programme can be adapted from an existing school-based VET programme or a new one can be created, based on the same VET standard. The school has to report in the Education Information System (VIIS) that the programme has been adapted or created anew for the delivery in WBL mode. If the VET programme is adapted, it does not need to be licenced or accredited anew, since it concerns only the mode

of delivery. In case a new programme is being created for the WBL mode, the licencing and accreditation process is the same as for any other VET programme.

The programme (its mode of delivery) is adapted at school and company level to meet the needs of apprenticeships. The tripartite agreement sets general provisions and training related issues. The contract on remuneration is signed between the learner and the company. The type of agreement depends on the type of remuneration. A training plan is agreed between the school, the employer and the apprentice, and details issues related to the volume and content of workplace training, the type of alternation, etc. are included in the plan.

Sector expert councils play an important role as advisory bodies supporting the development of quality IVET programmes in line with the needs of the labour market. Sectoral expert councils operate on the basis of tripartite cooperation. Their members include representatives from employers' organisations, trade unions, ministries (the education, economics and welfare ministries), as well as other branch ministries, and the State Employment Agency. Sectoral associations are also relevant actors. These stakeholders have a role in the development of the actual content of the programme and the expected outcomes (through setting the standards, content of the examinations etc.).

Within the EU Erasmus+ project 'Testing New Approaches to Training VET and Workplace Tutors for Work Based Learning' (Ministry of Education, 2020b) (hereafter TTT4WBL project) the Baltic countries (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia) trained more than 800 WBL trainers and tutors (in Latvia more than 300 in the period 2019-2020) according to a common methodology – tandem training – where VET institutions and company trainers and tutors interactively learned together and developed a common understanding how WBL should be implemented jointly and in the best possible way. The three Baltic education ministries have agreed on a joint competence profile for the WBL tutor. This will potentially contribute also to the quality of WBL learner and trainer / tutor mobility in the Baltics.

The EU Erasmus+ project 'Individual Approach and Individual Learning Plan in WBL: Training for WBL Tutors (ILPWBL)' aims at developing the skills of VET teachers and WBL tutors in the use of individual approach and individual learning plans for learners. WBL tutors learn how to motivate and guide learners as individuals by taking into account their abilities, aptitudes, personality traits and carrier plans.

5.3. Hybrid teachers and trainers

The need for labour market compliance in the training of teachers and trainers is represented in the main policy planning documents: (Ministry of Education, 2014)

and Guidelines 2021-2027 (Ministry of Education, 2021). The term 'hybrid teachers' is not being used explicitly in the Latvian context, but it is a growing trend in practice. The Ministry of Education is encouraging VET institutions to explore opportunities to attract professionals from the industry to become teachers in VET institutions. If the person does not have the required pedagogical competence, then there is the possibility to follow a 72 hours training course (see Chapter 3.2.).

In June 2017, Guidelines on the Organisation and Implementation of WBL (Ministry of Education, 2017) were adopted in order to provide common principles and methodological support for the involved partners in the WBL implementation. Many schools are increasingly working on attracting hybrid teachers, seeing it as a possibility to raise the quality of the teaching / practical training staff, as well as a measure to attract new pedagogical staff to working in VET.

5.4. Data on cooperation and hybrid teachers

No statistical data are being collected regarding hybrid teachers. According to an unofficial survey performed by the Ministry of Education – there are currently more than 600 hybrid teachers working at VET institutions.

CHAPTER 6. National and EU-funded projects and initiatives

6.1. Digital skills for remote and blended teaching

The COVID-19 crisis has forced to find alternatives to face-to-face teaching and learning. The SO 8.5.3 project (described in Chapter 3) responded instantly to the needs of VET teachers and trainers offering courses on using online platforms and different digital tools in the learning process. During 2020, 68 different courses were organised to strengthen VET teachers' digital competence using MS Office 365, creating interactive learning materials, online presentations, using video tools, etc. The project also offered various trainings on development of soft skills and courses with the emphasis on psycho-emotional support for teachers giving very practical tools and strategies to help them to overcome burnout, dealing effectively with the challenges in the new education environment.

Both teachers and trainers highly valued knowledge and skills gained in the training and in their feedback expressed an interest in similar activities and events in the future.

With the introduction of remote learning due to Covid-19 in 2020, teachers' digital skills became a priority and a large variety of state-funded courses were offered to general secondary and VET teachers (Ministry of Education, 2020c). The offer included:

- (a) 'Improving teachers' digital skills in the e-environment on learning management and the use of integrated cloud services' (36 hours);
- (b) 'Use of innovative teaching methods and educational technologies for the improvement of modern learning process in the digital environment' (36 hours);
- (c) 'Improving teachers' digital literacy for the use of educational technologies in the provision of pre-school curriculum' (12 hours);
- (d) 'Improving teachers' digital literacy for the use of educational technologies in the provision of elementary school curriculum' (12 hours);
- (e) 'Improving teachers' digital skills for the use of educational technologies in a teaching subject': 12 hours courses for teachers of Mathematics, Latvian language, ICT, Engineering and Design and Technologies, Physics, Chemistry and Biology, Natural sciences and Geography, Social Sciences and History, Foreign languages.

In addition, a digital curriculum platform www.soma.lv was developed by the education company 'Lielvārds'. The platform offers a wide range of learning resources to support teachers when teaching remotely.

Lastly, Soma.lv provides access to teaching materials from pre-school to 12th year, which in the distance learning process allows teachers to provide sequential learning of the subject in the form of links, using school management systems.

6.2. Green skills for sustainability

In 2020, new curricula 'Green Skills' (National Centre for Education, 2020) were designed and included in all VET modular programmes (IVET and CVET). The objective of the programme is to promote the learner's ability to perform their professional activities in accordance with the sustainable development of the environment, resource-saving and energy-efficiency to make environmentally friendly and green decisions on a daily basis. The programme's task is to develop the learner's skills, so that they are able to:

- (a) explain the most important criteria for sustainable development for a specific situation;
- (b) link the idea of sustainable development with the rational use of natural resources;
- (c) assess the impact of human economic activities on biological diversity;
- (d) analyse information on efficient use of energy resources;
- (e) sort waste in accordance with the basic principles of environmentally friendly management.

Teachers' CPD courses have been organised to acquire skills for teaching green skills for sustainability.

6.3. Preventing early leaving from VET

The State Education Quality Service (IKVD) is responsible for the implementation of the European Social Fund Project No 8.3.4.0/16/l/001 'Support to reduce early school leaving' ('PUMPURS') to reduce the number of learners dropping out. The project implementation time is 2017 to 2022. Altogether more than 80% of local municipalities are involved with 665 general and vocational education institutions.

The project promotes the development of a system of sustainable cooperation between the municipalities, educational institutions, teachers, support staff and parents or representatives of learners in order to identify learners at risk of early leaving in a timely manner and provide them with personalised support.

Teachers are given the opportunity to professionally improve and strengthen their skills in working with learners. Methodological tools have been developed within the project, as well as a unified database to ensure regular exchange of information at the level of the state, local government and educational institution about the preventive measures taken and their results for learners who have been identified as being at risk of dropping out. It also provides comprehensive statistics and allows for long-term evaluation of the effectiveness of measures.

The project also supports initiatives of youth NGOs to raise the issue of early school leaving among young people themselves, to address learners with the help of peers and to involve them in activities. The activities focus on early diagnosis and solutions to problems.

Through local governments, individual support is provided to learners who could drop out of school due to lack of financial resources, for example, expenses for transport, meals, service hotels, etc. are reimbursed. However, the main focus of the project is not the provision of short-term financial assistance, but the creation of a sustainable comprehensive mechanism that creates a supportive and inclusive environment for each learner.

Target groups of the project are:

- (a) learners of general education schools from 5th to 12th year,
- (b) 1st to 4th year learners of vocational education institutions (also learners in general education institutions that implement vocational education programmes).

At the beginning of each semester, the teacher creates an individual support plan for each learner involved in the project, the risks of dropping out of school are assessed and the necessary support measures are provided to reduce the risks. These measures include:

- (a) consultations/consultative support of teachers and support staff (teacher, psychologist, social pedagogue, teacher's assistant, special education teacher, sign language interpreter, assistant, occupational therapist);
- (b) public transport ticket refunds;
- (c) reimbursement of accommodation expenses;
- (d) reimbursement of catering expenses;
- (e) reimbursements for the purchase of individual teaching aids;
- (f) reimbursement of expenses for the purchase of individual consumer goods;
- (g) compensation for special transport expenses;
- (h) opportunity to get involved in Youth NGO projects in municipalities.

Teachers are offered:

- (a) the opportunity and resources to work individually with learners who need it;
- (b) improvement of professional competence;
- (c) seminars;
- (d) supervision;
- (e) workshops;
- (f) conferences;
- (g) methodological support tools;
- (h) a system for identifying and preventing the risks of early school leaving.

CHAPTER 7. National surveys of teaching and training populations

In 2018, the Informative Report “Proposals for Ensuring Conceptually New Competence-Based Education Requirements for Teacher Education in Latvia” was performed by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with University of Latvia and the foundation ‘Iespējamā misija’ (Cabinet of Ministers, 2018b). In the Proposals for Further actions (Part 5 of the Report), it was proposed to implement the restart of teacher education programmes, raising the prestige of the teacher profession, strengthening the institution of teacher mentors, continuing to implement the teacher professional development strategy and providing support for the development of initial teachers’ education. The need for the development and implementation of the new Work-based study programme was substantiated in the education policy planning documents, as well as in the resulting already performed and still planned activities.

In 2020, Informative Report ‘Work-based study programme for teacher training: implementation and development’ was put forward by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with University of Latvia and the foundation ‘Iespējamā misija’ (Cabinet of Ministers, 2020). The Report provides information on the necessary measures to approbate the work-based second level professional higher education study programme for teachers’ professional qualifications after completing studies in another field and to pilot a high-quality implementation mechanism as well as to assess the sustainability of its funding.

Results of the activity included in the measures:

- (a) licensed and accredited renewed teacher education study programmes in all higher education institutions that prepare teachers;
- (b) updated regulations prepared and submitted for consideration to the Cabinet of Ministers;
- (c) proposals prepared and submitted for consideration to the Cabinet regarding the provision of state budget financing in accordance with the real costs of the implementation of the study programme and the provision of increased targeted scholarships for learners;
- (d) an action plan for attracting STEM teachers.

CHAPTER 8. Conclusions

The recent reforms in the Latvian vocational education system were carried out in close collaboration with sectors, employers, higher education institutions and NGOs. Their role in the provision of quality vocational education and training is growing and is being strengthened by legislation. Alongside with the state budget funded activities, a major input for implementing systemic approaches to the CPD of teaching personnel and representatives from enterprises is provided by the European Social Fund supported projects. Innovative approaches are being piloted by projects within other EU funded programs, such as Erasmus+, Interreg and others. Methodological materials and learning aids have been developed, including e-solutions for almost all categories of teaching professionals in vocational education institutions and enterprises.

During 2015-20, several relevant legal acts were revised and developed in order to update the CPD of VET professionals of all categories.

The shift to working in ICT environment has been implemented as a planned systemic approach and was greatly facilitated by the circumstances of the Covid 19 crisis.

Future plans for teachers' professional development focus on WBL in teacher's initial training.

The new challenges regarding the training and CPD of teachers and trainers are represented in the Education development guidelines 2021-27 (Guidelines 2021-2027) (Cabinet of Ministers, 2021). The identified challenges and action to be taken to address the policy goals within the new planning period of 2021-27 are:

- (a) how to train and attract highly qualified, competent and excellence-oriented teachers and academic staff;
- (b) how to strengthen their motivation for work and professional development;
- (c) how to ensure purposeful, accessible and high-quality improvement and development of professional competence of teachers and academic staff.

The guidelines pay particular attention to further development of skills identified as crucial also during the 2014-20 period – ICT skills, labour market responsiveness and, in the future increasingly, the green skills of the teaching and training staff. These competences will be at the core of the future policy developments regarding the training and CPD of teachers and trainers.

List of abbreviations

CPD	Continuous professional development
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IKVD	The State Education Quality Service
ILPWBL	Individual Approach and Individual Learning Plan in WBL: Training for Work-based Learning Tutors
LQF	Latvian Qualifications Framework
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
NGO	Non-governmental organisations
TTT4WB	Testing New Approaches to Training VET and Workplace Tutors for Work-Based Learning'
VET	Vocational education and training
VIIS	Education Information System
WBL	Work-based learning

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