

Spotlight on VET LATVIA

Vocational education
and training systems
in Europe

2023

VET in Latvia

Vocational education and training (VET) in Latvia is offered at three levels: lower secondary (part of the national 'basic' education; integrated primary and lower secondary); upper secondary (secondary); and tertiary (professional higher) education. It includes practical training (50% to 65% of curricula) at schools and enterprises. To acquire a professional qualification at these levels, all VET learners take a State qualification exam at the end of the programme. An apprenticeship scheme (called 'work-based learning' nationally) offers alternating study periods at school and in an enterprise. The scheme is available for all VET programmes at EQF levels 2 to 4.

Basic VET programmes (one to three years, ISCED 254) lead to qualifications at EQF level 2 and involve 0.4% of the VET learners (2022/23 data). Those without completed basic education are admitted to 3-year programmes (ISCED 254) that include a compulsory basic general education course.

The secondary level VET enrolls 42% of all learners in:

- 3-year programmes (ISCED 353) leading to a qualification at EQF level 3 and involving 5.8% of VET learners. To enrol in higher education, graduates should attend an additional 1-year follow-up programme;
- 4-year programmes (ISCED 354) leading to a secondary professional qualification at EQF level and involving 67% of VET learners. Graduation from the programme requires both the professional qualification and success in three State examinations in general subjects, giving access to higher education;
- 1- to 2-year programmes (ISCED 351 and 453) leading to a qualification at EQF levels 3 and 4. These programmes are designed for persons with or without completed secondary education. They involve 30% of VET learners and focus on vocational skills, so they are shorter.

Professional higher education programmes are provided at two levels:

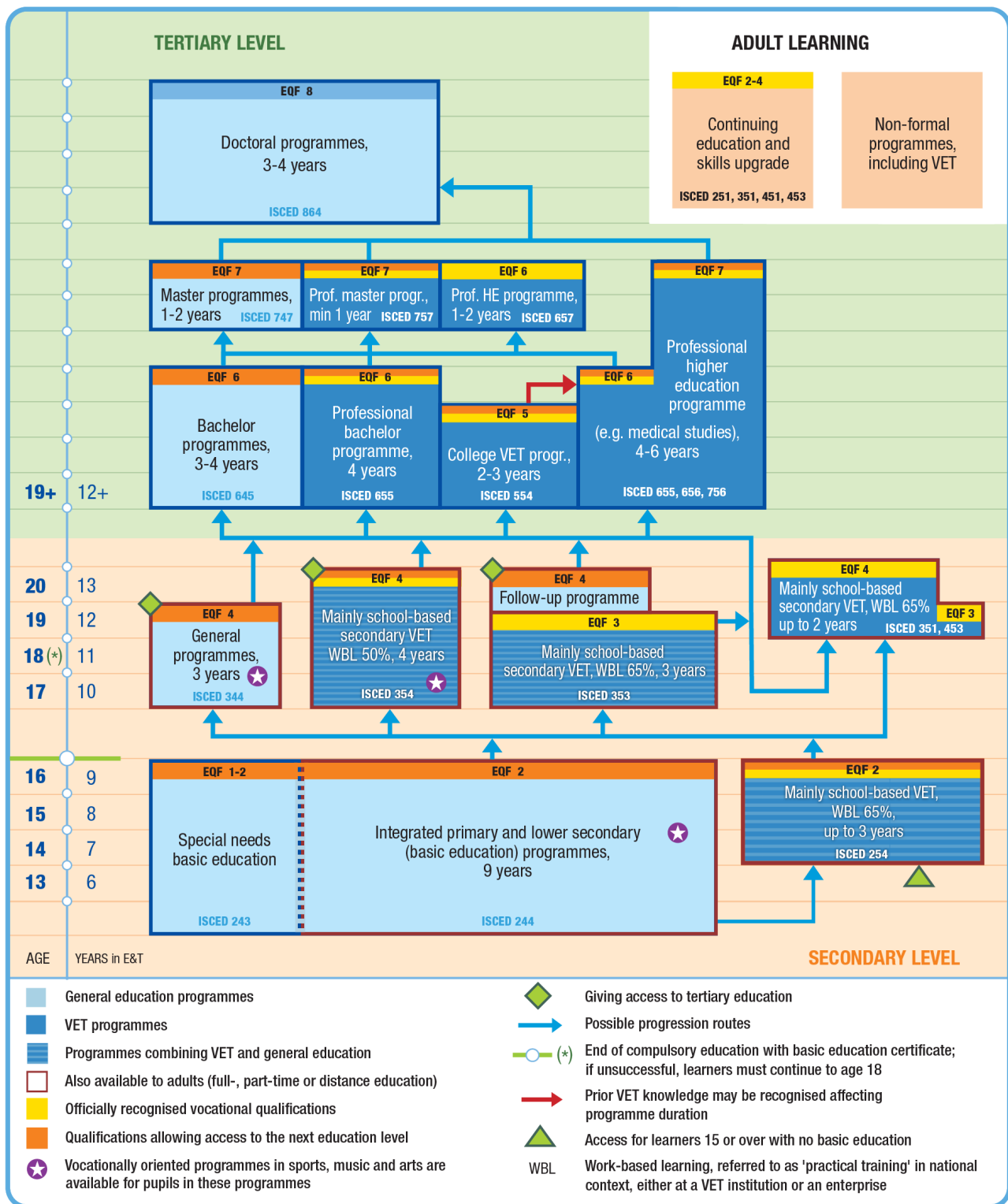
- college short cycle professional higher education programmes (two to three years; ISCED 554, EQF 5) targeted mainly at the labour market, though graduates can continue their studies in professional higher education programmes at EQF 6 and 7 levels).
- higher education programmes (two to six years) (ISCED 655, 656, 657, 756 and 757, EQF 6 and 7) leading to a professional qualification and either professional bachelor or master degree or a professional higher education diploma.

Formal CVET programmes enable adults with education/work experience to obtain a State-recognised professional qualification EQF levels 2 to 8. Shorter professional development education programmes don't lead to a qualification but provide the upskilling opportunities.

Craftsmanship (not part of apprenticeships) exists on a small scale, separate from the rest of the education system.

The Ministry of Education and Science is the main body responsible for the VET legal framework, governance, funding and curricula. Social dialogue and strategic cooperation are arranged through the national Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in VET and Employment. Fourteen [sectoral expert councils ensure that VET provision is in line with labour market needs](#); they participate in developing sectoral qualification frameworks, occupational standards, qualifications requirements, curricula and quality assessment procedures. Since 2015, collegial advisory bodies, including representatives from employers, local governments and the supervising ministry - conventions - have been established at each VET school contributing to strategic development and cooperation with the labour market.

VET in Latvia's education and training system



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop, & Latvian Ministry of Education and Science. (2023). Vocational education and training in Europe – Latvia: system description. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2024). Vocational education and training in Europe: VET in Europe database – detailed VET system descriptions [Database]. www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/latvia-u3

Distinctive features of VET

Initial VET (IVET) is centralised and highly regulated by the State. There are 54 VET schools. Most of them are run by the State; half are technical schools. In addition to providing VET programmes, they validate non-formal and informal learning and offer lifelong learning and continuing teacher training.

Comprehensive reforms of VET curricula increase the responsiveness of VET to labour market needs and support the use of learning outcomes. They cover modular programmes, sectoral qualifications frameworks, occupational standards and national level curricula.

CVET providers are often private. However, IVET providers are increasing their education offer for adults.

Most VET learners are at upper secondary level. This share has increased in recent years.

VET provides learning opportunities for early leavers from education and training. With more investment in infrastructure and the development of new curricula, VET attractiveness is increasing.

A validation system for professional competences acquired outside formal education has been available since 2011, allowing direct acquisition of professional qualifications at EQF levels 2 to 4. Procedures for assessment and criteria for validation of prior learning were set up for higher education in 2012.

Challenges and policy responses

Reforming VET and adult learning are national policy priorities. Recent reforms aim at [promoting VET quality](#), ensuring its relevance to labour market needs, and efficient use of resources to raise VET attractiveness.

Policy strives for a balanced (equal) distribution of students choosing VET and general education after completing basic education. It also aims to more than double adult participation in learning from the current 6.9% (2022).

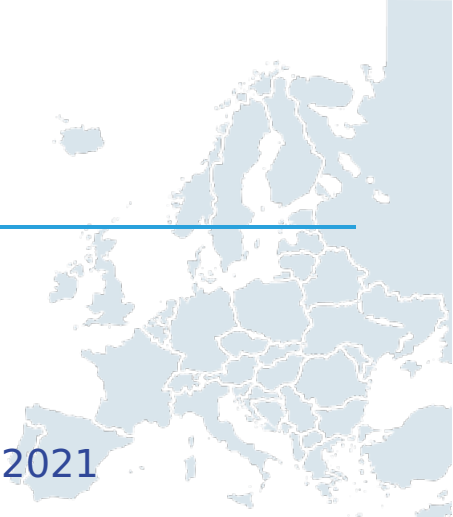
To improve the responsiveness of VET to labour market needs, modularisation of programmes is being implemented and modular VET programmes are being gradually introduced.

Limited access to guidance and counselling for young people, and the need to put in place EQAVET principles for better quality and permeability, are challenges that require aligning stakeholder opinions and extensive promotion. Other challenges include motivating employers to cooperate with VET providers, for example, by offering training at the workplace and promoting continuing training for employees.

An [education strategy helps addressing these challenges](#) (Future skills for the future society 2021-27). The priorities for VET include developing the education offer according to labour market needs, modern, digital, and green VET schools, competent educators, international cooperation and involvement of employers in VET.

Since 2023, VET graduates receive two graduation certificates: a certificate or a diploma proving completion of a VET programme and a professional qualification certificate. Professional qualification certificates are digital. Learners successful in all general school subjects, professional modules and practice, but failing professional qualification examination, can receive a certificate or diploma of lower-level qualification. It is also possible to acquire a certificate of partial qualification and a module certificate.

VET providers may decide on individual learning plans for learners, promoting flexibility and an individual approach in VET. This helps to get early leavers and those with low-level and outdated qualifications and skills back into learning.

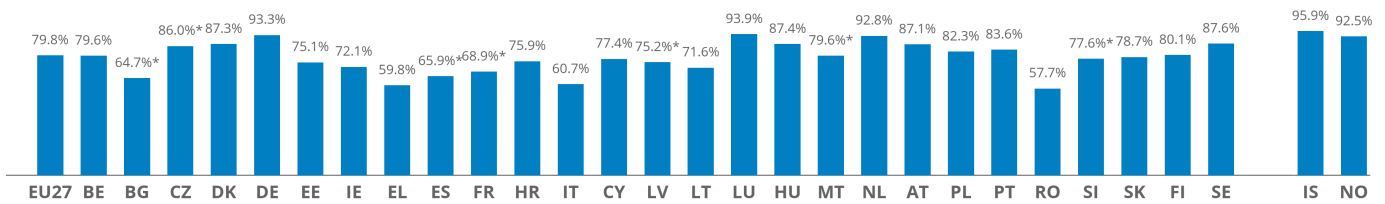


Education and training in figures

IVET students as % of all upper secondary students, 2021

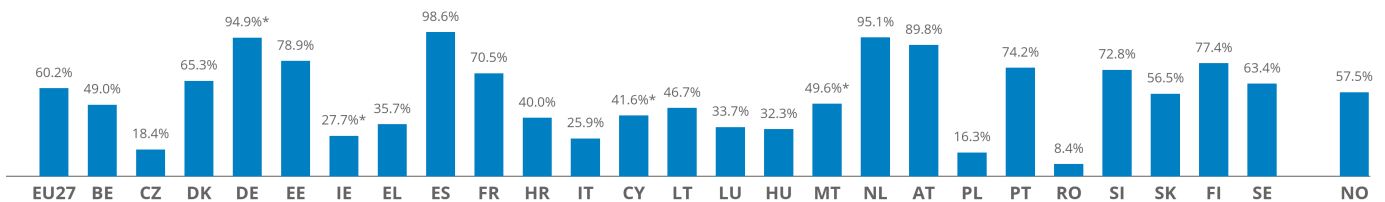


Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) (%), 2022



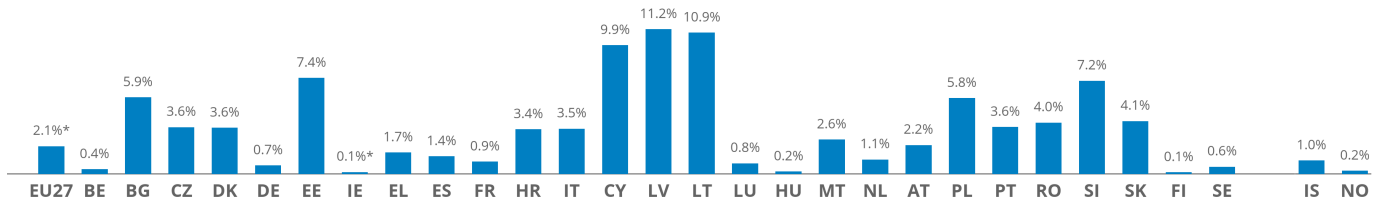
Notes: Bulgaria, Latvia, Malta and Slovenia: (u) low reliability, Czechia: (b) break in time series, Spain and France: (d) definition differs

Recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) with a work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education and training (%), 2022



Notes: Germany, Ireland and Cyprus: (u) low reliability

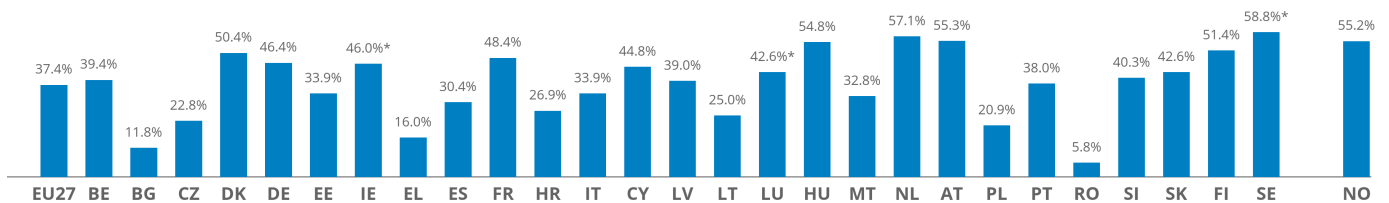
IVET learners who benefitted from a learning mobility abroad (%), 2021



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Notes: EU27: (d) definition differs (V) Cedefop estimate, Ireland: (d) definition differs, Croatia, Cyprus, Netherlands and Slovenia: (z) not applicable

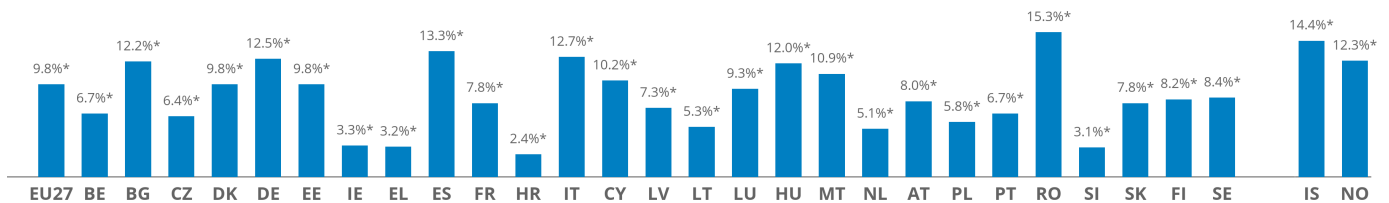
Adults (25-64 year-olds) with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%), 2016



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Notes: All values: (b) break in time series

Early leavers from education and training (%), 2021



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Notes: EU27, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway: (b) break in time series, Croatia and Slovenia: (b) break in time series (u) low reliability

Source: [Cedefop's Key indicators on VET](#)



Further information

- Cedefop (2022). *Country description: Latvia*
- Cedefop and ReferNet (2023). *Timeline of VET policies: Latvia*
- European Commission (2023). *Education and training monitor: Latvia*
- Eurydice (2024). *National education systems: Latvia*
- OECD (2023), *Latvia in Education at a Glance 2023: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris

https://www.izm.gov.lv/en	Ministry of Education and Science
https://www.viaa.gov.lv/en	State Education Development Agency
https://www.visc.gov.lv/en	National Centre for Education

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