



REFERNET LATVIA

**NATIONAL REFERNET REPORT ON PROGRESS IN THE
POLICY PRIORITY AREAS FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING IN LATVIA (2002-2008)**

Riga 2008



CEDEFOP

European Centre
for the Development
of Vocational Training

REFERNET

**AKADĒMISKĀS INFORMĀCIJAS CENTRS –
ReferNet Latvija**

Vaļņu iela 2
Rīga LV-1050
Telefons: +371 67 225 155
Fakss: +371 67 221 006
URL: <http://refernet.lv>
E-pasts: refernet@aic.lv

Ziņojumu sastādīja: *Baiba Ramiņa, Gunta Kinta*

Komentārus un nepieciešamo informāciju sagatavoja: *Aleksandra Joma, Gunārs Krusts, Agnese Uzare*

Ziņojums sagatavots CEDEFOP izveidotā ReferNet informācijas tīkla darbības ietvaros.

This report is one of a set of European country reports on VET policy development. It has been produced as a contribution to Cedefop's third policy report which reviews progress in VET towards the policy goals of the Copenhagen process. The opinions expressed in this national report are not necessarily those of Cedefop.

The preparation of this report has been co-financed by the European Community.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Priekšvārds</i>	5
<i>1. National Political and Socio-Economic Context</i>	6
1.1. National political/policy context.....	6
1.2. Socio-economic context.....	10
<i>2. Improving Access to and Equity in VET</i>	13
2.1. National policy context on improving access to and equity in VET.....	13
2.2. Increasing access to and attractiveness of VET.....	13
2.3. Improving equity for specific target groups.....	16
<i>3. Lifelong learning through VET</i>	18
3.1. National policy context on Lifelong learning through VET.....	18
3.2. Facilitating transfer between VET pathways.....	19
3.3. Improving guidance and counselling services and creating guidance structures.....	19
3.4. Validating (identifying, assessing and recognizing) skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning.....	21
<i>4. Improving Quality of VET</i>	24
4.1. National policy context on improving quality of VET.....	24
4.2. Improving quality in VET provision.....	24
4.3. Supporting the professional development of VET teachers and trainers and increasing the attractiveness and social status of the teaching and training professions.....	25
<i>5. Strengthening the Links between VET and the Labour Market</i>	29
5.1. National policy context on strengthening the links between VET and the labour market.....	29
5.2. Involving companies/sectoral organisations/social partners in VET provision to make it more responsive to labour market needs.....	30
5.3. Integrating learning with working.....	33
5.4. Integrating skill and competence needs of the labour market into VET provision..	34
<i>6. Governance and Funding</i>	36
6.1. National policy context on VET governance and funding.....	36
6.2. Changes made to administrative/institutional structures.....	36
6.3. Changes made to funding arrangements for VET.....	40
6.4. Promoting partnerships in VET policy making.....	42
<i>7. EU Tools and Geographic Mobility within VET</i>	43
7.1. National policy context to introduction and dissemination of EU tools: EQF, ECVET and Europass and the promotion of geographical mobility within VET (maximum 300 words).....	43
7.2. Promoting the comparability of qualifications between different national, regional or sectoral contexts and their future compatibility with EQF.....	43

7.3. Promote the transfer and accumulation of qualifications between different national, regional or sectoral contexts and facilitating the future implementation of ECVET44	
7.4. Promoting Europass and ensuring synergy with EQF and ECVET	44
7.5. Promoting geographical mobility of learners within VET	45
8. <i>Development of VET Statistics</i>	46
8.1. Progress made on national VET statistics since 2002	46
9. <i>VET beyond 2010</i>	48
9.1. What VET issues do you believe should be on the national and on the EU policy agenda post 2010 and why?	48
9.2. How could these issues be addressed through national and EU policy and/or targets?	48
10. <i>Bibliographical References and Sources</i>	50
10.1. Sources, references and websites.....	50
10.2. List of Acronyms	52

PRIEKŠVārds

Ziņojums par profesionālās izglītības politikas attīstību tika veidots ReferNet Latvija 2008.gada darbības programmas ietvaros kā viena no darbības aktivitātēm. Šis ir pirmais šāda veida ziņojums. Vadoties pēc CEDEFOP (Eiropas profesionālās izglītības attīstības centrs) vadlīnijām, politikas ziņojumu par situāciju savā valstī veidojušas visas 27 ReferNet informācijas tīkla dalībvalstis.

Valstu ziņojumi tiks izmantoti kā viens no galvenajiem avotiem, lai atskatītos uz Kopenhāgenas procesa (2002) laikā sasniegto saskaņā ar Helsinku komunikē (2006) norādījumiem. CEDEFOP sagatavos politikas attīstības analīzi, kura tiks prezentēta ministru sanāksmē 2008.gada 26. novembrī Francijas prezidentūras laikā. Apkopoto politikas ziņojumu CEDEFOP plāno publicēt 2009.gada sākumā.

Ziņojumā aprakstīts profesionālās izglītības politikas progress laika posmā no 2002.gada līdz 2008.gada maijam.

Ziņojumā jautājumi ir attēloti attiecīgā politiskā kontekstā, kā arī izmantojot konkrētu pasākumu piemērus. Tādējādi ziņojumā aplūkoti sekojošie temati:

- Nacionālais sociālkulturālais un ekonomiskais konteksts
- Profesionālās izglītības pieejamības un vienlīdzības uzlabošana
- Mūžizglītība profesionālajā izglītībā
- Profesionālās izglītības kvalitātes uzlabošana
- Saiknes starp profesionālo izglītību un darba tirgu stiprināšana
- Pārvalde un finansēšana
- ES instrumentu pielietošana
- Statistikas attīstība
- Profesionālā izglītība pēc 2010.gada

Pētījuma laikā kā pētnieciskās metodes tika izmantota informatīvo materiālu, oficiālo dokumentu, statistikas datu apkopošana un analīze.

Politikas ziņojuma sastādītājas konsultējās ar pārstāvjiem no šādām organizācijām: LR Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija, Latvijas Izglītības un zinātnes darbinieku arodbiedrība, Latvijas Pieaugušo izglītības apvienība, Latvijas Darba devēju konfederācija, Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra, IZM Profesionālās izglītības administrācija, Eurydice tīkla Latvijas nodaļa, Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūras Karjeras pakalpojumu departaments, Nacionālais Europass centrs u.c.

1. NATIONAL POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

1.1. National political/policy context

The Latvian Parliament determines the main priorities and principles of educational policy and approves new legislation. The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) and its subordinating institutions implement educational policy. Trade unions, employers' and other public organisations within the scope of their competence promote the development of vocational education.

The education policy is outlined in the following Latvian documents: long-term conceptual document *The growth model of Latvia: People First, Long-term Economic Development Strategy*, *Joint Economic Strategy*, *Development Guidelines of Sustainable Development of Latvia*, *Guidelines for Policy Planning*, *Latvian National Action Plan for Employment*, *Guidelines of Sport Policy for years 2004–2009* and *Regional Development Guidelines*. The Latvian education policy has been worked according to the guidelines set by the European policy mainstreams such as the Lisbon Strategy, Bologna Process, European Commission Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, UNESCO programme *Education for All*, European Commission work programme *Education and Training 2010*, European initiative *i2010 – European Information Society for Growth and Employment*, EU Basic Strategy regarding gender equality.

Vocational education policy is stated in several planning documents. The *Guidelines for the Development of Education for the period of 2007-2013* (2006) have been designed by the MoES. The Guidelines determine the aims for the education system development for the next five years as well as the directions for their implementation, also setting the results of work and policy as well as the indicators of achieving these aims.

National Lisbon Programme of Latvia for 2005-2008 (2005) was developed aiming to promote national growth and employment. The Programme reflects the most essential problems for Latvia to achieve the Lisbon strategy goals, indicating the main lines of action and activities to solve these problems, as well as performance indicators for achieving the goals.

To implement the Lisbon Programme in Latvia, the *National Development Plan* (2006, NDP) for the period 2007-2013 was worked out. The aim of the document was to facilitate a balanced and sustainable development of the country, as well as to ensure an increase in Latvia's competitiveness.

Meanwhile, the *National Strategic Reference Framework of Latvia 2007-2013* (2007) lays down a common strategy for the obtaining of the EU Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund resources, and provides coordination between the funds and the operational programmes

The Declaration of the Intended Activities of the Cabinet of Ministers led by Ivars Godmanis (2007) among other outlines vocational education policy priorities.

Vocational education is included as one of the priorities for the period 2007-2013, in particular improving vocational education quality and modernisation of its content and facilities. However, as priorities of MoES for 2008 are mentioned: increase of teachers' salaries; effective exploration of ESF activities concerning science, sports education, and support of education for persons with special needs and boarding-schools.

Since 2002 there has been number of reforms linked to the process of joining the European Union. *The Programme for the development of vocational education for 2003-2005* (2003) was adopted with aim to develop the vocational education system to meet the demands of the market economy, encourage employability, meet EU human resource development

statements, and promote an EU competitive labour force. As the main priorities or directions of the Programme may be listed:

- **Quality of vocational education** which comprised further education of vocational teachers, quality assurance of vocational education according to labour market demands.
- **Availability of vocational education** which particularly focused on persons with incomplete basic education, with insufficient marks in certificate on basic education, graduates of special schools having special needs, and prisoners.
- **Management of vocational education system and effectiveness of education expenditures** which was directed to promote unity within vocational education system administration and effective utilisation of financial and material resources.

A number of other strategic documents have been adopted promoting lifelong learning and human resource development, including improving VET opportunities, for example, the annual National employment plans.

Policy priorities

Policy planning documents listed before determine the vocational education policies summarised in the table below.

	Policy priority	Main causes and reasons	Policy approach
1.	Develop continuous education system for vocational education teachers	New demands concerning teacher qualification (since 2000 vocational teachers along with education in particular speciality need to have pedagogical education)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement ESF project <i>Development of Further Teacher Education Network</i>, e.g. introduction of 5 level teacher qualification categories • The Cabinet <i>Regulations on Demands for Necessary Education and Professional Qualification to Teachers</i> (2000), which set unified demands for teacher qualifications • The Cabinet <i>Regulations on Procedure on vocational education teachers acquiring education and developing professional competence</i> (2005) set unified procedure for vocational teachers' education and professional development.
2.	Improve access to vocational education	Basic education graduates having poor results in their certificates; graduates not acquiring basic education certificate are not allowed to proceed education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide vocational education for persons with incomplete basic education and with special needs • EQUAL project <i>Fostering Employability of People with Disabilities</i> aiming to enlarge access to vocational education both in numbers of education programmes and for people with various kinds of disabilities
3.	Improve management and	Lack of funding – despite of increase in education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a unified vocational education system with an efficient use of financial

	effectiveness of expenditure	costs and funding, state financing for vocational education decreases annually. In 2004 it was 0.46% of GDP (0.5% in the previous year); decrease in number of students	and material resources, e.g. school management is reorganised under direction of one ministry (in 2005 41 vocational education institutions were resigned to the MoES) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimise school network by providing optimal number of student in groups and student transport by the local authorities, and by closing small schools (in 2002 there were 124 vocational education schools, in 2006 – 92) • The Cabinet <i>Regulations on the expenditures minimum per one student for implementing vocational education programmes</i> (2004, 2007), which was introduced in schools in 2004.
4.	Improve education availability at all levels, reduce the number of students who do not graduate or do not achieve a professional qualification	Decrease in number of students (from 2002 to 2006 number of vocational students has decreased by 13.1%), great number of dropouts (in 2006 round 12%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce vocational education programmes with pedagogical correction to involve young people with special needs (EU funding EUR 0.14 million) • Apply educational services to socially excluded population groups (dormitories, scholarships for vocational education students) • Since 2006, state support to agriculture students (scholarships) financed by the Ministry of Agriculture
5.	Improve flexibility of the education system to adapt to the changing labour market demands and increase the role of social partners	Slow adaptation of vocational education system to labour market demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply long-term forecasts of the labour market, e.g. in the Ministry of Welfare project <i>Labour market researches</i> (2005-2007) 13 themes were explored, total expenditures for this project were EUR 3,36 million (75% was ESF funding and 25% – the state funding) • At present, the Ministry of Economics has prepared and submitted to the Government project on labour market forecasting until 2013 • Modernise material and technical provision of vocational education establishments (total state and EU funding EUR 7.97 millions) • Promote modernisation of practical training system, adequate knowledge, skills and abilities acquisition in economic sectors important to regions in the context of the PHARE 2003 <i>National Programme Economic and social cohesion measures in Latvia</i> (the

			<p>state budget funding EUR 0.57 million and EU funding EUR 1.85 million)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed methodology for educating social partners to increase VET quality in the frameworks of ESF National Programme project <i>Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners</i> (2005-2007) • Since 2000, the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-committee for Vocational Education and Employment has promoted social dialogue; on regional level four Regional Councils were established in 2005 in the framework of ESF activities. • To improve flexibility, in 2007, through the Cabinet <i>Regulations on procedure of developing occupational standards occupational standards</i>, were integrated with Occupational Classifier, which increase their comparability
6.	Develop career education system in the context of lifelong learning	Disparity between the numbers of students in general and vocational education (accordingly, 59.2% and 8.1% in 2002-03 and 53.3% and 7.7% of learners in total in 2006-07), great number of dropouts (in 2002, 14.75% of students in total were excluded, in 2006 – 16.8%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked out and implemented study programme for career education consultants, e.g. ESF project KIPNIS, programme EQUAL project <i>Combating Causes of Occupational Segregation</i> • The State Education Development Agency supports implementation of careers education policy within education sector. The State Employment Agency centres provide individual career counselling.
7.	Provide and improve lifelong learning system	Rapid economy market change, inconvenient access to adult education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop lifelong learning strategy (<i>Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013</i>, EU funding EUR 1 million) • State Education Development Agency and Career Service Department of State Employment Agency cooperates to foster the development of guidance services in the context of lifelong learning.
8.	Legalisation of the acquired knowledge and skills acquired within informal/non-	Validation procedure of skills mastered within informal/non-formal education has not established	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed methodology for recognition of informal skills in the frameworks of ESF National Programme project <i>Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education</i>

	formal education, creation of Credit System for vocational education system		<i>and Involvement and Education of Social Partners</i> • According to <i>The Declaration of the Intended Activities of the Cabinet of Ministers led by Ivars Godmanis</i> (2007), introduction of ECVET is one of set directions
9.	Implement the EQF into Latvian vocational education system.	To promote vocational education transparency and mobility of students and teachers within EU system	Introduced 5 level professional qualification system in 1999. Now the Government has decided to introduce the NQF through new <i>Vocational Education Law</i> to improve comparability with the EQF levels.

1.2. Socio-economic context

The comparatively high inflation negatively affects the business environment, reducing competitiveness of the national economy, which may appear as one of obstacles to the introduction of the Euro in 2008. From 2001 to 2006 gross domestic product (GDP) increased annually of by 8.8% on average (10.6% in 2005 and 11.9% in 2006 - CBS). GDP per citizen according to purchasing power standards has increased to 52.3% of the EU average in 2006. Unfortunately, expenditures for education are not raised accordingly.

The number of inhabitants continues to decrease gradually (from 2,345,768 in 2002 to 2,281,305 in 2007) due to migration (-0.61% in 2002 and -0.58% in 2006 of total population) and ageing (15.95% in 2002; 17.09% in 2007 of inhabitants above age 65). The most of population lives in urban area (67.9%), of which 48% lives in Riga and its district (Central Statistic Bureau of Latvia, 2007). The majority of social and economic facilities are concentrated in Riga and in great cities, therefore, availability of education and other services in rural regions should be particularly promoted. In order to provide continued growth in the future as well, policy makers plan to promote transition from a labour-intensive economy to a knowledge-based economy.

However, inland migration is not as great, as migration to other states. The urban/rural ratio in the total number of population has not changed during last 5 years (68% of population lives in urban area, 32% – in rural regions). The main inhabitant migration stream may be observed from rural regions to Riga. In order to decrease socio-economic differences among regions and decrease students' migration to schools in the capital city, ERAF funding is distributed according to number of basic school graduates within the region. Region development plans as well as human resource forecasts cannot be worked out yet due to the obstacles raised in the process of national administrative territorial reform.

Discussing the employability share within different economic sectors the number of people working at service industry has gone up faster, particularly in trade and communications, as well as in building sector, while employability within agriculture and industry has decreased.

The share of unemployment in 2006 was 6.8%; the number of work searchers in the same year has fallen by 23.2% since 2002. 34.7% of inhabitants (2007) are under or over working age (Central Statistic Bureau of Latvia, 2007). The share of the population below working age is decreasing (20.9% in 1995; 14.3 in 2006). The proportion of the population of schooling age is expected to decrease further until at least 2015.

As most crucial problems in the Latvian labour market may be mentioned:

- Regional differences in employment and unemployment, meaning there is a high unemployment rate in rural districts, while in Riga there is labour force shortage in certain sectors.
- Relatively high rate of undeclared employment in particular economy sectors (construction, manufacturing industry, agriculture and transport services).
- High risk of unemployment for young people, persons after child care leave, people with poor knowledge of Latvian and other socially excluded risk groups.
- Non-compliance of skills with labour market demands.

1.2.1. Examples of policy measures

FOSTERING EMPLOYMENT OF DIFFERENT SOCIAL GROUPS (2005-2008)

The rationale for taking this measure is rather high unemployment level among young people, as other socially excluded risk groups could be mentioned persons following leave for child-care, disabled persons, people with insufficient the Latvian language knowledge. The share of total unemployment has decreased almost by half, from 12% in 2002 till 6.8% in 2006, while the share of unemployed young people (at age of 15-24) has fallen from 20.8% in 2002 till 13.1% in 2006, due to fact that the share of the population below working age is decreasing (20.9% in 1995; 14.3 in 2006), as well. 34.7% of inhabitants (2007) are under or over working age (Central Statistic Bureau of Latvia, 2007). In 2002 employment rate of males (at age group 55-64) was 11.8% and females – 11.6%, while in 2006 the male employment rate (at age group 55-64) still was 11.8% and females – 13.5%. During the period 2002-2006 total female employment rate has been slightly lower than males' (difference is 1-2% per year), which is not statistically essential. However, proportionally number of females is greater than males' (accordingly 54% and 46% in 2002, and 53.9% and 46.1% in 2007) (Central Statistic Bureau of Latvia, 2007). Discrimination in the labour market may be characterised by a lower average payment for females than for males doing the same work; and society unawareness about the opportunities to complain on gender inequity.

The overwhelming objective of this measure is to promote employment and economic activity of inhabitants particularly of foresaid risk groups.

Target groups of particular measure are young people, job seekers, persons after child-care leave, and pre-pension age people.

Some of activities have been finished already; part of activities is still carried out. In order to promote employment among young people, practice places for unemployed young people were provided (2005-2008) with the total state and ESF financing up to EUR 3.6 million. Furthermore, employment measures for unemployed young people have been subsidized (training practice, working for an employer) applying the state funding to the amount of EUR 1.8 million; and work places for young people aged 15-18 years have been provided during summer holiday (2005-2006) with the state financing of EUR 1.4 million.

To support the inclusion of persons after child-care leave within the labour market, firstly, services related with kindergartens, game and development centres, and babysitters were developed (mostly local government financing). It is envisaged to promote the establishment of child day care centres in places of work (development of methodical recommendations) by creating a unified information system about babysitting services. Secondly, steps are taken to raise working motivation of persons after child-care leave and long-time unemployed (2006), having the state funding up to EUR 0.1 million. Thirdly, Ministry for Children and Family Affairs has arranged educating activities for society about sharing roles in the family emphasising the essential role of men in children care and raising in

the framework of the project *Man – similar and different* (EU financing in 2005-2006 was EUR 0.4 million).

Discussing the inclusion of pre-pension age people in the labour market, active employment measures, organised by the State Employment Agency (SEA), have been developed; thereby stimulating pre-pension age people's competitiveness and active engagement within the labour market. Career education services have been promoted in accordance with the needs of this target group in the context of lifelong learning.

To inform and educate society about gender equality in the labour market, the strategy of informing society about gender equality issues (2005-2007) has been developed and implemented, with total state and ESF financing up to EUR 1 million. Furthermore, studies about gender equality in the labour market (2005-2006) have been conducted using total state and ESF funding to the amount of EUR 0.1 million.

The activities in the framework of support to promotion of employment are carried out at national level since it is part of the Ministry of Welfare policy. One of the Ministry of Welfare activity priorities is fostering employment of Latvian population. Also the Ministry for Children and Family Affairs within its scope of activities was involved in fostering inclusion of people after child-care leave.

Since activities are arranged at national level by two ministries and institutions under their direction, the influence of measures is evident for large social groups. The activities carried out mostly have long-term consequences which may be reflected only partly through statistical data.

The unemployment rate decreases annually (see statistics in section 1.2), while share of economically active population increases, for example, for young people (age group 15-24) in 2002 employment rate was 12.6% for males and 9% for females, while in 2006 – 13.9% for males and 9.6% for females.

The project is part of ESF National Programme and is implemented in the context with other measures taking into account current social and economic trends impacting employability both in Latvia and Europe.

The activities are still in progress; therefore, complete conclusions cannot be drawn. One of the obstacles was certain activity availability to large society and slow path of implementation.

2. IMPROVING ACCESS TO AND EQUITY IN VET

2.1. National policy context on improving access to and equity in VET

Majority of learners select general initial education (65.2% in 2002, 64% in 2006), in comparison proportion of vocational education students was 31.4% in 2002 and 30.4% in 2006. One of the main reasons for preference of general education is a greater possibility to proceed within higher education or colleges. Majority of students entering vocational education possess poor general knowledge and low learning motivation; furthermore, the students come from low-income families or socially inimical environment. In vocational secondary education programs are less classes in general education subjects than in general education programs. Consequently, vocational education students show poorer results in final exams which allow entering within higher education. According to the Cabinet Regulations, both general education students and vocational secondary education students obligatory take the same centralized examinations. In 2006/07, 23.65% of initial education population studied in higher education institutions or colleges (20.7% in 2002/03, Central Statistic Bureau of Latvia, 2007). However, the proportion of secondary education students continuously goes down. 64% of basic education graduates studied within general secondary education (2006), while in vocational secondary – 30.4% (2006).

Ensuring the development of legislation of vocational education is working out a conception of new *Vocational Education Law*. It is expected changes in the structure of vocational education.

In the frameworks of the programme EQUAL Latvia (2005-2007) several activities were carried out to improve access to education and increase employability of socially excluded groups, e.g. people with special needs, the unemployed, and prisoners.

2.2. Increasing access to and attractiveness of VET

2.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

As mentioned in the Section 1.1., one of priorities listed in the *Programme for the development of vocational education for 2003-2005* (2003) was fostering the availability of vocational education which particularly focused on persons with incomplete basic education, with insufficient marks in certificate on basic education, graduates of special schools having special needs, and prisoners.

Increasing access to vocational education has been put as one of education policy objectives according to *the National Education Development Guidelines for 2007-2013*. Therefore, in schools activities of career education are implemented, as well as gradually education programmes with pedagogical correction are introduced to assist students with poor general knowledge or undergraduates of basic education.

In 2008 the Cabinet Regulations on action programme *Human Resources and Employability* complement sub-activity *Fostering Attractiveness of Initial Vocational Education* was announced. The Cabinet Regulations will outline procedure for implementing action programmes, as well as criteria for ESF project applications and responsibilities of the project actors. The overwhelming aim of the sub-activity is to improve attractiveness of vocational education programmes for youth to increase number of students acquiring vocational qualifications. The results of this activity may be stated later.

Within the framework of the activity *Fostering Attractiveness of Initial Vocational Education* the stipend fund has been established for successful students at vocational education establishments studying in the programs of engineering and technologies, architecture and building. Furthermore, to improve the social conditions of the vocational education students, their scholarships in average have been increased. In the period between 2007 and 2013 it is planned to spend more than EUR 14.2 million from ESF funding for purpose scholarships to vocational education students who show good results in studies and examinations.

The ESF project *Support to Introduction of Career Education within Education System* has been commenced to implement. In regions proportionally the number of vocational education students corresponds to the number of graduates in particular region.

Within the national program of ESF *Development of a united procedure for the improvement of quality of vocational education and involvement and education of social partners* is worked out and approbated project with the same title. For adults within the project procedure for recognition of the acquired skills apart from the formal education (non formal education) is worked out. See more on recognition of non-formal skills in 3.4.

2.2.2. Examples of policy measures

ESF ACTION PROGRAMME SUB-ACTIVITY 1.2. EDUCATION AND SKILLS (2007)

Education and Skills (2007) is sub-activity of ESF activity programme *Human Resources and Employability*. The sub-activity would assist to solve issues connected with vocational education, such as many vocational education students' low level of general and professional skills, disproportion between the numbers of students in general and vocational education, slow adjustment of vocational education system to demands of labour market, teacher ageing and lack of new specialists etc.

The measure will be implemented with the financial support of ESF (maximum 85% of activity budget). Still implementation of strategy should be viewed in the context of general state development policy and activities introduced through other ESF and ERAF action programmes (*Business and Innovations, Infrastructure and Services*), through measures introduced separately from Funds support.

The direction Education and Skills comprises the following priorities: Development of vocational education and general skills; and Development of lifelong learning improvement of institution involved in education and lifelong learning functionality and cooperation. The first item focuses on development of vocational education system, quality and compliance improvement through supporting implementation quality and implementation of initial vocational education programmes. The second priority is devoted to the development of lifelong learning though fostering the progress of professional improvement and examination centres, supporting career education and guidance development, and providing education availability for socially excluded groups.

The sub-activity according to priorities has several objectives, of which related with attractiveness and access to vocational education are enumerated. The first aim is to improve of national qualification system by doing economic sector researches, developing or improving occupational standards for all vocational education qualification levels, improving vocational education standards, programmes and examinations for levels 1-3, develop recognition of informal skills and skills acquired during work life, as well as increase social partners' capacity within vocational education.

The another objective set is to improve initial vocational education and further education teachers and in-service practice supervisors competence, proved update of skills

particularly in the relation with the updated vocational education content, innovations and knowledge-based economy, as well as improve vocational education teacher education.

The third objective is to improve implementation quality of initial vocational education programmes including increase of participation within secondary vocational education, and provide balanced acquisition of competences and skills for future working life and education.

The fourth objective is to sustain attractiveness of initial vocational education by improving vocational education programmes, thereby, increasing numbers of students acquiring vocational education and qualification.

Target groups of this activity scope are employers, institutions related to vocational education and employability, state administration involved in vocational education, vocational education teachers and academic staff within higher education establishments, as well as vocational education students.

The activities are planned to start implementing at the end of 2008 and at the beginning of 2009. The application of projects and their evaluation has not started yet. The level of activity is national.

The implementation of strategy should be viewed in the context of general state development policy and activities introduced through other ESF and ERAF action programmes (*Business and Innovations, Infrastructure and Services*), through measures introduced separately from Funds support.

The measure is carried out in the context of general state policies for socioeconomic development.

The implementation and evaluation and obstacles to overcome may not be evaluated yet since the document was introduced only in 2007.

MODERNISATION AND RAISING PRESTIGE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM (2007-2013)

Since majority of students select general initial education (64% in 2006), in comparison proportion of vocational education students was 30.4% in 2006, some steps are to be taken in order to promote attractiveness of vocational education. Students and their parents prefer general education because it ensures greater possibility to proceed within higher education and provides wider opportunities within the labour market. Meanwhile, bulk of students entering vocational education possesses poor general knowledge and low learning motivation. In vocational secondary education programs are less classes in general education subjects than in general education programs, which are the reason why vocational education students show poorer results in the final central exams allowing to enter within higher education.

Therefore, in the *Guidelines for the Development of Education for the Period of 2007-2013* as one of further action priorities modernisation of vocational education has been set.

The overwhelming aim is to update vocational education system and raise its prestige to attract more students. As measurable targets may be mentioned, percentage of dropouts among 1st year students does not exceed 10% (in 2006 of students in total were excluded 16.8%). Rate of vocational graduates among unemployed in total does not run over 4% (in 2006 the unemployment rate of secondary vocational education graduates was 31.7%). 100% of vocational students have done practice training in workplaces. 10 complete sets of education programmes and examination content have been developed. 10 methodological material sets have been developed for education programme acquisition. By 6 % rate of vocational students has increased (of basic education graduates in total per year). The National Tripartite Sub-council for co-operation in VET and employment and Regional Tripartite Sub-councils functions actively.

The main target group is secondary vocational education students. The activity is planned to introduce during the period 2007-2013 on national level.

The Modernisation and raising prestige of vocational education system is implemented along with other priorities reflected in the *Guidelines for the Development of Education for the Period of 2007-2013*, which outline main action directions in education for the next six years.

In the activity related with student attraction to vocational education vocational schools together with national and local authorities are involved. The occupational standards are to be developed in closer cooperation with the social partners and employers. For approving occupational standards the Vocational Education Administration, an institution under the direction of MoES, is responsible. The National Tripartite Sub-Council for co-operation in Vocational Education and Employment and Regional Tripartite Sub-Councils solve issues related with vocational education.

The planned outcomes correspond to set objectives. Students having poor knowledge in general subjects are provided with additional classes. Career guidance along with 1st year student adaptation activities are carried out to decrease dropouts. New or updated vocational education programmes are implemented. Employers are engaged within development of study content and more closely in working out the occupational standards. A fund is established for supporting employers for them to involve in implementation of vocational education programmes. In-service practices are provided in all the regions. Finally, state funding is increased for purchasing books and study materials within vocational education establishments.

The scope of activities may be considered to be successful if measurable targets are reached. However, the path of implementation cannot be evaluated objectively yet.

This measure belongs to main education planning document *Guidelines for the Development of Education for the Period of 2007-2013*, therefore, it is implemented in relation with other steps regarding ongoing socioeconomic trends and processes.

2.3. Improving equity for specific target groups

2.3.1. Policy progress since 2002 (maximum 500 words)

In order to increase access to education for all target groups, the *Education Development Concept for 2002-2005* set objectives to work out study programmes of study model type for all education levels both for full time and part time studies, as well as for distant learning.

To foster integration of persons with special needs in education system, it was planned to provide particular study courses within teacher study programmes. The Concept proposed to increase availability of education establishments for children with special needs and to commence reorganization of special education institutions to integrative ones. As a result, number of students having physical and mental disorders has increased in general schools, i.e. 0.40% of total student number in general schools in 2001/02 and 0.55% – in 2006/07. The number of education establishments being technically equipped for students with physical disorders has gone up. There are 7 general schools, 2 vocational schools and 2 university colleges equipped for students with physical disorders, 16 education establishments are partly facilitated. In the framework of international projects cooperation with teacher education providers has been improved and teacher students are provided with study courses which fostered novice teachers' competences for working with students having special needs. Due to strengthening cooperation between special schools and vocational schools, functionality of groups for students with mental disorders has improved. 6 special education establishments have gained status of special education centre which fosters integration of persons with special

needs within general education system. In cooperation with the Ministry of Welfare, the Centres of Suitability are founded in all the regions for persons with special needs. Within the ESF project the *Development of Support Centres for Providing Vocational Rehabilitation Services for Persons with Special Needs* (2005-2008) 8 Centres of Suitability have been founded at vocational establishments in the all regions of Latvia and State Social Integration Agency serves as coordinating body. In the Centres of Suitability persons with special needs are invited to use the rehabilitation services. The staff is qualified for the work with people having special needs, who are offered to obtain suitable vocational education programmes by different forms of acquisition (full-time, part-time, distance learning).

Since there is not formed special education support system in Latvia, methodological consultations cannot be provided for learners with special needs integrated in general schools, their parents and teachers. To foster inclusive education, it is necessary to establish National Special Education centre and to improve competence of pedagogical medicine commission.

In the frameworks of the programme EQUAL Latvia (2005-2007) several activities were carried out to improve access to education and increase employability of socially excluded groups, e.g. people with special needs, prisoners. For a typical instance, to promote social inclusion, additional general education and vocational education programmes have been designed for the implementation in the places of imprisonment in the frameworks of the programme EQUAL Latvia (2005-2007) project *New Solutions for Fostering Employability for Former Prisoners*.

More opportunities have been provided for children of the persons having acquired refugee status and children of guest workers at the age of compulsory education.

See section 2.2.1 concerning education programmes with pedagogical correction.

One of the main obstacles to sustain social inclusion is equal availability possibilities throughout various regions. For example, education offer on the country is quite insufficient.

Still issue concerning learners' with special needs transportation to school has to be solved. Number of schools equipped for students with physical disorders is insufficient due to lack of funding. Furthermore, school personnel lack the competences necessary to work with learners having special needs.

2.3.2. Examples of policy measures

See in the section 1.2.1. the measure *Fostering employment of different social groups* (2005-2008).

See in the section 3.3.2. the measure *Development of White Paper on enlargement of guidance and counselling services on national and regional levels*

3. LIFELONG LEARNING THROUGH VET

3.1. National policy context on Lifelong learning through VET

Adult education has developed more actively since 2002. The main policy planning document during the period 2002-2005 was the *Concept of Education Development for 2002-2005* including priorities, which focused on expanding adult learning opportunities. The Concept aimed:

- to ensure cooperation between employers and the state in developing adult education programmes;
- to promote the involvement of higher and vocational education providers in developing all the types of CVET (formal and non-formal for the employed and the unemployed);
- to create a credit transfer system consistent with the academic credit system;
- to develop approaches to evaluate night-schools;
- to involve employers in the funding of continuing education.

To foster further progress of lifelong learning, *Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013* have been developed at the beginning of 2007. Cooperation with social partners is formalised through the Tripartite Cooperation Subcommittee for Education and Employment, as well as Cooperation Committee for Vocational Education. Teachers have pedagogical education and all educational programmes on offer are accredited. Furthermore, a central examination system ensures comparable data concerning learning outcome.

Guidelines for Lifelong Learning for years 2007–2013 were adopted aiming to sustain lifelong learning according to the people interests, abilities and the social and economic development needs of regions. As the aims for lifelong learning policy were listed:

- To ensure the availability of lifelong learning for all social groups;
- To develop a qualitative education offer for adults providing sustainable competence for further socioeconomic and civic activities;
- To form legislative and administrative system involving various stakeholders.

In order to ensure access to lifelong learning, it is planned to create conditions for progress of educated people within all schools, to ensure flexible second chance education according to individual needs, to strengthen formation of education support system for career guidance and counselling, to promote offer of formal and informal/non-formal education, to arrange territorial access of lifelong learning, and to organise activities for minimising gender differences within lifelong learning.

To foster offer of lifelong learning, in the Guidelines following activity directions are given: to create state regulated mechanism for impacting offer and demand of education and labour market, to coordinate adult education within education system, to form state support for adult education providers, to implement evaluation of adult education quality, to implement recognition system of informal and non-formal learning.

Finally, to ensure management of lifelong learning, as activity directions were stated: to form lifelong learning administrative structure both on local and national levels, to develop laws and regulations base for lifelong learning, to form lifelong learning financing mechanisms.

3.2. Facilitating transfer between VET pathways

3.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

Different pathways for pursuing vocational education are determined by the *Vocational Education Law* (1999, 2001). The 2001 amendments introduced vocational continuing education for adults to achieve a professional qualification.

However, there are no other youth programmes as alternative pathways except for the pedagogical correction programmes, which belong to initial vocational education system leading to the same basic education certificate and qualification. The aim of pedagogical correction programmes is to re-integrate early school leavers and those with low level of basic knowledge and skills back to the education system and help them acquire simple professional skills.

The vocational qualifications are closely related to general upper-secondary education and higher education. The introduction of centralized final examinations for vocational upper-secondary graduates ensures that everyone who obtains general upper-secondary education follows the same examinations and opportunities to enrol at higher education institutions. As VET programmes only include a part of general upper-secondary education, special intermediate programmes are available to VET graduates, so that they can enrol at higher education institutions.

Since vocational education is implemented through entire programmes, the possibilities to change mid-course are limited.

3.3. Improving guidance and counselling services and creating guidance structures

3.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

In order to develop lifelong guidance system that enables citizens of any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests and broaden access to guidance across the lifespan with a view to ensuring that high quality guidance different innovative activities to modernise the guidance and counselling system have been launched during last years in Latvia at national level:

The White Paper on guidance and counselling (approved in 2006) has been developed by the Ministry of Welfare in cooperation with 3 ministries (the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Economics, Ministry of Regional Development), Association of Local Governments, social partners' organisations, guidance practitioners, and approved by the Cabinet of Ministers. The Paper covers all aspects of lifelong guidance including the mechanism how to ensure better cooperation and coordination between key players in guidance and counselling at different levels.

The National Forum (NF) on guidance and counselling was established in 2007 involving the policy makers from relevant ministries, guidance providers, social partners and clients. NF aims at being an advisor on necessary improvements of guidance and counselling policy and system at national and local level thus NF fosters strengthening of guidance and counselling policy and system.

To optimise the system of guidance and counselling within the labour sector, former Professional Career Counselling State Agency (PCCSA) has been incorporated into the State Employment Agency (SEA) in September 2007. According to the current legislation, SEA is responsible for provision of guidance and counselling for all individuals irrespective of their

age and social status (the employed, the unemployed, students from age 16). Several new regional offices have been established during the last years and different National and ESF funded programmes and projects are being implemented to support capacity building of institutions responsible for labour market and gender equality policies and support information dissemination and increasing public awareness.

Labour market short term and labour market long term forecasts have been developed by the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Economics.

In order to ensure that individuals' education and career decisions are firmly based, and to assist them to develop effective self-management of their learning and career paths the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia in 2005 has launched a National programme and subsequent project *Fostering the Implementation of Vocational Guidance Provision and Careers Education in the Educational Sector* with the objective to improve accessibility and quality of careers education at educational institutions of all types and levels. The following activities of the project are currently ongoing:

- Professional upgrading of guidance practitioners currently working in the educational sector;
- Development, testing and piloting of methodological and training materials for careers education purposes at schools;
- Development of various information resources on learning opportunities including a national data base and self-assessment tests for E-guidance;
- Development of national qualification framework and a study programme for training of guidance counsellors, piloting the study programme.

3.3.2. Examples of policy measures

WHITE PAPER ON ENLARGEMENT OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES ON NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS (LONG-TERM INITIATIVE)

Rationale for this measure is lack of common understanding of complexity of lifelong guidance system, fragmentation and gaps in guidance provision for specific target groups, roles of key players not clearly defined; lack of clear division of responsibilities in provision of lifelong guidance services to different target groups at a national level

As the objectives of measure were set: to achieve a common understanding of complexity of lifelong guidance system, to agree on a common terminology; to detect and fill the existing gaps in guidance provision for specific target groups; to create a mechanism for better cooperation and coordination between key players in guidance and counselling in order to avoid overlapping and fragmentation in service providing

The target groups are stakeholders of guidance and counselling system (involving the appropriate key players). The document was completed in 2007; the activities are currently implemented on national level

White Paper on Enlargement of Guidance and Counselling Services on National and Regional Levels was a part of national education/training /employment/ social policy strategy.

The main actors engaged in the project were Ministries of Education, Welfare (Labour Department) and Economics, Employment and Education Development State Agencies, and social partners.

White Paper was developed and approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2006; operational programme was developed for the implementation of the principles of the White

Paper; development projects and activities were coordinated on a national level to reach the set objectives and avoid overlapping.

National Forum on lifelong guidance and counselling established and operational from 2007; increased capacity of service providers; improved institutional infrastructure; improved accessibility and quality of careers information; study and further training programmes for guidance practitioners developed and being piloted.

Lifelong Guidance and Counselling have been included in the *Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013*.

As obstacles may be listed: lack of research and evidence on impact of lifelong guidance on national economy, employability and social welfare; lack of professionals and/or academically educated staff in the field of guidance and counselling at all levels

Still a common understanding on national level of the importance of lifelong guidance and counselling in the context of lifelong learning has to be reached. An efficient investment in education and training, social inclusion and social equity and capacity of service providers need to be improved

3.4. Validating (identifying, assessing and recognizing) skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning

3.4.1. Policy progress since 2002

There is no system for validating skills and competences acquired through informal/non-formal education. However, in the frameworks of the ESF National Program Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners, the project Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners has been worked out and results have been disseminated to stakeholders and professionals. The project included the procedure for recognition of acquired skills within informal/non-formal education for adults.

At present (2008), a new *Vocational Education Law* is being worked out; this Law is expected to introduce the system for validating skills and competences acquired through informal/non-formal education.

3.4.2. Examples of policy measures

DEVELOPMENT OF A UNIFIED METHODOLOGY FOR THE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND INVOLVEMENT AND EDUCATION OF SOCIAL PARTNERS (2005-2007)

Between general and vocational education evidential disparity exists, i.e. accordingly, 59.2% and 8.1% in 2002-03 and 53.3% and 7.7% of learners in total in 2006-07. Meanwhile, rapid economic progress requires constant change or improvement of professional skills, which frequently are acquired outside formal education. Thus, informal and non-formal constitute a crucial part of education system that should be evaluated within labour market. Since there was no system of recognizing skills obtained within informal and non-formal education, some steps had to be taken. The aim of this project coincided with *Development Program of Vocational Education System for 2003-2005* to develop a flexible vocational education system capable to conform to changing demands of economy, to foster employment, and to ensure graduates' competitiveness within European labour market.

The project *Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners* is part of ESF National Program *Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners*.

The aim of the project is to strengthen cooperation between social partners and education providers, thereby, ensuring compliance of vocational education to demands of labour market. The project had three activity directions:

- 1) Methodology for field studies, methodology for working out occupational standards and vocational education programmes, as well as qualification examination content
- 2) Methodology for quality provision and evaluation of vocational education establishments
- 3) Development of methodology and complex of measures for evaluation of informal/non-formal skills, education programme and methodological material for educating social partners to increase vocational education quality, formation of regional vocational education and employability councils.

The major target groups are vocational, informal education providers and social partners. The project is focused both on initial and continuous education.

In autumn 2007, expert group finished developing the sets of methodological materials and the products were published and disseminated to specialists, policy makers and stakeholders.

The project is going to operate on national level in the European context. The project *Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners* is part of ESF National Program with the same title.

The key actor is the Vocational Education Administration (PIA) which was responsible for implementation of the project. PIA arranged the expert group and coordinated its work, as well as published and disseminated project products.

PIA is under the direction of the Ministry of Education and Science. The main functions of PIA are: to organise the accreditation of vocational education providers and programmes, to participate in the development of occupational standards and the content and methodology of exams, to oversee the activity of learning and examination centres, and to organise the professional development of vocational teachers.

The materials were worked out grounding on field and theoretical studies. However, the impact of policy measure cannot be evaluated since it was finished recently.

Initially the idea of working out methodology for evaluation of skills acquired in informal and non-formal education may be considered as indicator of success because the project is the first step to found system of informal education recognition. The project assisted to raise awareness of vocational education providers, policy makers and stakeholders.

Thereafter, the indicators of success may be an active application of the project products within vocational education and activities of social partners.

The aim of this project was set in accordance with the *Development Program of Vocational Education System for 2003-2005*, i.e. to develop a flexible vocational education system capable to conform to changing demands of economy, to foster employment, and to ensure graduates' competitiveness within European labour market.

Since the project was carried out in the frameworks of the ESF National Program *Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education*

and Involvement and Education of Social Partners, it is implemented in compliance with other directions.

The data and products of the project are taken into account in working out the new *Vocational Education Law*, which is expected to introduce the system for validating skills and competences acquired through informal/non-formal education.

The main obstacles to implementation of the project products are insufficient legal bases and the slow pace of developing legislation. The procedure for validating skills and competences acquired through informal and non-formal education is not determined in the current edition of the *Vocational Education Law* (1999).

Furthermore, the policy measure cannot be evaluated since it was finished recently.

The legal bases should be grounded to implement the project products, i.e. the new *Vocational Education Law* and following regulations should be worked out and adapted. Thereafter, the issue of introduction the project products within the process of vocational education and work of social partners will require attention.

4. IMPROVING QUALITY OF VET

4.1. National policy context on improving quality of VET

Within the *Programme for the development of vocational education for 2003-2005* (2003) in the frameworks of sub-activity *Quality of Vocational Education* there were two directions: further education of vocational teachers, and ensuring vocational education quality in compliance with labour market demands. The directions mentioned have been included in the further education policy planning documents, as well.

One of important aspects to improve quality of vocational education is to strengthen more intensively relations between education and labour market, which has been highlighted within two education policy planning documents in a row: *The Concept of Education Development for 2002-2005* and *Guidelines for the Development of Education for the period of 2007-2013* (2006). More detailed description of relations between education and labour market see in the sections 5.1 and 5.2. The vocational education quality and cooperation with the social partners was the focus of the project *Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners*, which has been carried out and its products, methodology materials, have been disseminated to stakeholders, policy makers and professionals in the frameworks of the ESF National Program *Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners*. See sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2 for more information concerning this project.

The other aspect is development of unified school quality evaluation system on national level. Since 2005 school education quality evaluation system has been established for general education in the frameworks of *Education Development Concept for 2002-2005*. Vocational Education Administration is responsible for arranging accreditation of vocational education providers according to the Cabinet Regulations *Procedure of accrediting vocational education programmes, education establishments and examination centres and certifying heads of vocational education establishments* (2005, 2007).

The improvement of teacher education and further teacher education system is one of directions listed in the *Guidelines for the Development of Education for the period of 2007-2013* (2006). Since 2006 in the frameworks of the ESF National Program *Development of Teacher In-service Network* the project *Development of In-service Teacher Training Network* has been implemented. The State Agency for Quality Assessment in General Education (VIKNVA), which organises national procedure of general education quality evaluation (licensing and accreditation of schools and education programmes).

4.2. Improving quality in VET provision

4.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

Quality of vocational education provision is related with promoting cooperation between education providers and employers, e.g. through engaging social partners within development of occupational standards. See the sections 5.1 and 5.2.

During the period 2005-2007, in order to foster faster adaptation of vocational education system to economic demands, the ESF project *Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and*

Education of Social Partners has been carried out and its products, methodology materials, have been disseminated to stakeholders, policy makers and professionals.

National vocational education quality control is ensured through education program and establishment accreditation, which is outlined in the Cabinet Regulations *Procedure of accrediting vocational education programmes, education establishments and examination centres and certifying heads of vocational education establishments* (2005, 2007) in accordance with the standards determined in the *Vocational Education Law* (1999). Before 2005 the procedure was outlined within the Cabinet Regulations *Procedure of accrediting vocational education programmes, education establishments and examination centres* (2002). The objective of accreditation is to ensure that programme content meets the required standards of publicly provided vocational education and occupational standards because the accreditation process follows an evaluation of the quality of the provision on offer. Providers of any stage (IVET, CVET) can only offer programmes which have been licensed and programmes must meet both educational and occupational standards. Publicly owned education institutions may implement informal education programs without obtaining a license. However only through graduating accredited programme a student may obtain state-recognized documents certifying their vocational qualifications. The accreditation also assists in promoting both national and international transparency of education. Vocational Education Administration among other functions organises licensing and accreditation of vocational education programs, organises accreditation of vocational education institutions and examination centres.

See sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 for more information.

4.2.2. Examples of policy measures

See policy measure *Modernisation and raising prestige of vocational education system* (2007-2013) in the section 2.2.2.

4.3. Supporting the professional development of VET teachers and trainers and increasing the attractiveness and social status of the teaching and training professions

4.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

There is no separated education system or particular State policy for vocational education teachers. However, when teacher education or other issues are discussed in most cases situation of general education teachers is considered. Raising teachers' salaries has been set as one of the major priorities, as well.

Until the *Vocational Education Law* (1999) was passed, VET teachers were specialists in the vocation, few had a pedagogical qualification. In 2006/07 the proportion of teachers having pedagogical education achieved 82% of total amount of vocational teachers.

Improving teacher training and the professional development system was one of the main action points in the *Concept on the Education Development in 2002-2005* aiming to ensure the quality of vocational education according to social and economic needs. The Concept of Education Development for 2002-2005 suggested harmonizing content of teacher study programmes and further education programmes with education content reform.

The *Vocational education development programme 2003-2005* (2003) comprised teacher education in the frameworks of the priority Quality of Vocational Education, in which teacher education is viewed as vocational education quality improvement mechanism. In 2002, Vocational Teacher Occupational Standard was approved and accordingly with the Standard in

four universities Vocational Teacher Education Programmes were started implementing. The impulse for this programme was given by the Cabinet Regulations on *Demands for Necessary Education and Professional Qualification to Teachers* (approved in 2000 and regarding vocational teachers came in force in 2004), which set unified demands for teacher qualifications and according to which all full time teachers working at school have to possess pedagogic qualification. The Cabinet Regulations *Procedures on the Acquisition of Education and Professional Improvement of Vocational Education Teachers* (2005) outline the procedures for vocational teachers acquiring education and participating within professional improvement programmes.

During the period 2003-2005, approximately 300 further teacher education programmes per year were harmonized, thereby, fostering correspondence between teacher further education programmes and demand of education content and bilingual education reforms. 18 further teacher education programmes concerning implementation of basic education content reform and 6 further education programmes for teacher further educators who organised study courses for basic education teachers were worked out. Teacher salaries have been increased; and a unified teacher payment increase system has been worked out. In 2008 April one of the pilot project *Development of In-service Teacher Training Network* activities, introducing 5 level teacher qualification category system, results have been approbated.

The MoES has commenced to implement ESF National Programme project *Development of further teacher education methodological network and provision*, which in the frameworks of ESF National Programme activity *Human resources and employment* aims to provide the development of continuous vocational teacher education enabling teachers to work with different target groups. Within EQUAL project vocational in-service training program for teachers working with persons with special needs has been worked out by the State Social Integration Agency.

As obstacles to the planned changes may be mentioned lack of unified approach and system of further teacher education management, as well as lack of educators and funding. Due to lack of State funding, teacher ability to participate within professional improvement and further education programmes is limited, thus study concerning the efficiency of current resources should be carried out. However, it is planned to allocate funding from ESF to further teacher education.

Regarding teacher payment there are several socioeconomic problems which are topical both in Latvia and Europe. In near future there may be crises due to teacher ageing (9.09% of teachers are at pension age) because young people do not choose teacher profession both for low payment and status. The number of novice teachers decreases: 19.23% of teachers were under age of 30 in 2000/01, while 15.01% of teachers – in 2004/05. Most of teachers are females, which fosters gender segregation in Latvian society. Taking into account rapidly increasing inflation and limited state budget funding, teacher payment is not differentiated enough and is not competitive.

4.3.2. Examples of policy measures

DEVELOPMENT OF IN-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING NETWORK (JULY 2006 – AUGUST 2008)

Regarding teacher payment there are several socioeconomic problems which are topical both in Latvia and Europe. In near future there may be crises due to teacher ageing because young people do not choose teacher profession both for low payment and status. The number of novice teachers decreases: 19.23% of teachers were under age of 30 in 2000/01, while 15.01% of teachers – in 2004/05. Taking into account rapidly increasing inflation and limited state budget funding, teacher payment is not differentiated enough and is not competitive.

Lack of unified approach and system of further teacher education management, as well as lack of educators and funding were the reasons for taking steps to improve situation. Due to lack of State funding, teacher ability to participate within professional improvement and further education programmes is limited.

Therefore, the State Agency for Quality Assessment in General Education (VIKNVA) implements the ESF National Program the project *Development of Teacher In-service Network* on the basis of the trilateral agreement concluded on 2006 among the Ministry of Education and Science (1st level mediator institution of ESF), State Agency for Education Development (VIAA, 2nd level mediator institution of ESF) and VIKNVA. The total funding of the project is EUR 1,138,297 of which 75% is ESF funding.

The general aim of the project is to improve the quality of education by creating the preconditions for the development of teachers' in-service training methodological network; thereby, ensuring the professional development of teachers corresponding to a purposeful and coordinated development of education system and the needs of an individual teacher. The specific aim of the project is to create the methodological, human resource and institutional basis for teachers' in-service education.

To attain the aims of the project the work is carried out in four key activities:

- Development of the system of the teachers' in-service training content modules.
- Development of the criteria and methodology for assessing the content of teachers' in-service training.
- Development of the system for organization and monitoring of the quality of the content of teachers' in-service training.
- Development of recommendations for the teachers' professional career development model according to the developed system of teachers' in-service training.

The target group is teachers working at initial education institutions. The approbation of teachers' professional career development model was concluded in April 2008 in which 1408 teachers from 192 schools participated voluntary.

During the project implementation four working groups in compliance with the planned activities were established, local and foreign consultants and experts were invited to participate in these activities. To formulate recommendations, the current situation in Latvia and the European Union countries concerning teachers' in-service education was studied. According to set activities the system of the teachers' in-service training content modules, the criteria and methodology for assessing the content of teachers' in-service training, the system for organization and monitoring of the quality of the content of teachers' in-service training were developed and the recommendations for the teachers' professional career development model was worked out; approbated, evaluated by experts and, thereafter, improved. Therefore, informative and instructional seminars, discussions and public debates have been organized; and the project website has been formed.

Since the project is part of ESF National Programme, it is implemented in accordance with other activities taking into account current social and economic tendencies impacting education both in Latvia and Europe.

The project is implemented and managed by the State Agency for Quality Assessment in General Education (VIKNVA), which organises national procedure of general education quality evaluation (licensing and accreditation of schools and education programmes).

The outcomes of the project will be three independent studies, 90 in-service educationalists will be trained; 2000 teachers will get acquainted with the methods of teachers'

in-service training; the preconditions for establishing the territorial didactic support units will be created, the handbook will be developed and published.

Since the project will be concluded only in August 2008 and final report has not been published yet, the indicators of success, the obstacles cannot be evaluated, and remaining issues to solve cannot be stated

The project is part of ESF National Programme and is implemented in accordance with other activities taking into account current social and economic tendencies impacting education both in Latvia and Europe.

5. STRENGTHENING THE LINKS BETWEEN VET AND THE LABOUR MARKET

5.1. National policy context on strengthening the links between VET and the labour market

One of important aspects to improve quality of vocational education is to strengthen more intense relations between education and labour market. In 2000, the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-committee for Vocational Education and Employment was founded involving representatives from Ministries, the Association of Free Trade Unions and the Confederation of Employers. The task of the Subcommittee is to promote dialogue between government, employers and employees on education and employment issues. To function on regional level, four regional councils have been established in 2005 in the framework of ESF activities. Councils assess how the supply of vocational programmes matches regional needs. Tripartite councils participate in the development of occupational standards by examining them and considering its acceptance. See section 5.2 for more detailed information.

According to the directions stated in the Education Development Concept for 2002-2005, number of occupations having central final exams increased by year; within qualification examinations great number of professionals engaged (101 employers' representative and 53 representatives of vocational institutions in 2006); and development of occupational standards (in 2006 developed 15 and updated 3 standards) was arranged for the most demanded professions. The vocational education quality and cooperation with the social partners was the focus of the project Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners, which has been carried out and its products, methodology materials, have been disseminated to stakeholders, policy makers and professionals in the frameworks of the ESF National Program Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners. See sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2 for more information concerning this project.

Ensuring vocational education quality in compliance with labour market demand has been set as one of directions in the main education policy planning document *Guidelines for the Development of Education for the period of 2007-2013* (2006). Among others an obstacle is the slow adaptation of educational system to economic demands. More detailed description of relations between education and labour market see in the sections 5.2 and 5.3.

The National Lisbon Programme for Latvia for 2005-2008 as one of its goals includes the need to strengthen cooperation among public administration organisations, education establishments and employers to bring education supply into synchronization with the needs of the labour market.

However, there is a lack of systematic labour market research and forecasts of medium-term skills needs. Meanwhile, rapidly growing industries experience workforce shortages or find the pool of available labour lacking appropriate skills.

In the frameworks of the National Programme measure *Promotion of Employment* the third priority *Development of Human Resources and Promotion of Employment* was implemented in open projects *Support to conducting labour market studies* (2005-2007), which included various research, for example, examination of human resources potential in mechanical engineering and metalworking industries and creating a strategy to recruit new specialists using advertising and motivation in the industry (2005). A specific study on employment possibilities for disabled people within the sector was also undertaken.

5.2. Involving companies/sectoral organisations/social partners in VET provision to make it more responsive to labour market needs

5.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

In 2000, the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-committee for Vocational Education and Employment was founded by representatives from Ministries (Welfare, Economy, Finance, Justice, Agriculture, Education and Science, Regional Development and Local Government Affairs), the Association of Free Trade Unions and the Confederation of Employers. The task of the Subcommittee is to promote cooperation between government, employers and employees on education and employment issues. This is a part of the National Tripartite Cooperation Council established to promote cooperation between the government, employer and employee organisations in planning and implementing national policy and strategy in vocational education and employment.

The supply of vocational programmes correspondence to regional needs is assessed by four regional councils (founded in 2005), which have been established in the framework of ESF activities.

Tripartite councils participate in the development of occupational standards by examining them and considering their correspondence to labour market. Occupational standards define the tasks required within a particular vocation and determine the content for vocational qualifications. Standards usually are updated and reviewed as necessary but not often than every 5th year. Every 5 years standards are assessed and updated by education providers, employers, students, government organisations, quality assurance agencies and external experts. Representatives of the MoEs and other ministries, the Latvian Union of Local Governments, the Employers Confederation, non-governmental field organizations, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Confederation of Free Trade Unions and vocational education providers take part in developing occupational standards.

All topics related to the anticipation of skill needs and qualifications are defined together with the development of vocational education in the National Development Plan and Development Programmes. The next steps in terms of reviewing the Latvian situation include the development of the succeeding planning documents: *National Lisbon Programme for Latvia for 2005-2008*, *Long-term Economic Strategy of Latvia for 2001-2030*, *National Economy Single Strategy for 2004-2030*, *Common Declaration for Employment Priorities of Latvia 2003* issued by the government and European Commission, *National Action Plan on Employment for 2004*, *National Development Plan for 2004-2006*, *National Development Plan for 2007-2013*, *The Law on Unemployed and Job Seekers* (2002).

Information on skill needs is collected partly, but not systematically, on national level. A few sector analyses (e.g. in ICT and the construction industries with Phare support) and research into the changing labour market have been conducted in recent years to provide information for planning education provision. In some regions or sectors employers' surveys are conducted by employment services to identify short-term annual needs. These surveys show less demand for people with low-level qualifications and an increasing demand for qualified workers and craftsmen, equipment and machine operators, and multi-professional skills.

Changes in society have a significant impact on the development of education provision and the importance of allowing people to continuously update their skills and competences during their lifetime. This has a significant impact on the education system which should allow people to re-enter it according to their needs.

As strengths of skills forecasting may be mentioned: introduced necessary legislation and regulations, founded cooperation structures between the government and social partners,

implementation of ESF and ERAF national programmes ensuring the conformity of education quality according to the labour market requirements, introduction of a unified procedure for the examination process in IVET and CVET, promoted access to education for socially excluded target groups. As the obstacles of skills needs forecasting appear: the lack of cooperation between vocational education providers and employers, and the lack of funding for research.

5.2.2. Examples of policy measures

TRIPARTITE COOPERATION SUB-COMMITTEE FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT (SINCE 2000)

Vocational education programmes offered did not ensure that graduates obtain the knowledge, skills and competences necessary in particular occupation. Since the education system show tendency to adapt slowly to labour market demands, employers' involvement within development of education content had to be promoted.

To strengthen cooperation between the government, employer and employee organisations in planning and implementing national policy and strategy in vocational education and employment, the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-committee for Vocational Education and Employment was founded as a part of the National Tripartite Cooperation Council. The main functions of the sub-council are:

- To review drafts of state development plans, concepts and normative acts concerning vocational education, human resource development and employment and draw up proposals for improvements;
- To evaluate proposals and submit suggestions to state and non-government organisations dealing with vocational education and employment concerning vocational education funding and structure management, the organisation of vocational guidance and counselling, elaboration and update of educational programmes and occupational standards etc.
- To coordinate the foundation and activities of regional councils for cooperation between vocational education and employment.

The supply of vocational programmes correspondence to regional needs is assessed by four regional councils, which have been established in 2005 in the framework of ESF activities.

Tripartite councils participate in the development of occupational standards by examining them and considering their correspondence to labour market. Occupational standards define the tasks required within a particular vocation and determine the content for vocational qualifications. Standards usually are updated and reviewed as necessary but not often than every 5th year. Every 5 years standards are assessed and updated by education providers, employers, students, government organisations, quality assurance agencies and external experts. The target groups for the activities of Councils are vocational education providers.

The Tripartite Sub-Committee functions since 2000, while Regional Councils were founded in 2005, which function accordingly on national and regional levels.

The Tripartite Cooperation Sub-committee for Vocational Education and Employment (2000) was founded as a part of the National Tripartite Cooperation Council (1993). Four Regional Councils take part in vocational education policy planning on regional level.

The state and local government institutions, as well as Employers' Confederation of Latvia and Trade Unions take part in the activities of Sub-Committee.

The Sub-Committee reviews drafts of state or sector policy planning documents concerning vocational education, human resource development and employment and may provide proposals for alterations. The Sub-committee coordinates the activities of regional councils for cooperation between vocational education and employment and participates in the development of occupational standards.

The dialogue between education providers and employers has been promoted. Since 2002, Sub-Committee has taken part in working out occupational standards (in 2006 expertise of 33 standards) which determine content of vocational education programmes.

The Sub-Committee's activities are carried out in the context of national and regional education, economic and social policy.

On national level Tripartite sub-council functions rather efficiently, while on regional level one of obstacles is low motivation of social partners to participate in the activities of councils because the State does not provide any financial support. Employers are not interested in providing practice training places due to lack of the State funding, as well.

THE PROJECT THE MINISTRY OF WELFARE RESEARCHES IN THE FRAMEWORKS OF ESF NATIONAL PROGRAMME PROJECT LABOUR MARKET RESEARCHES (2005-2007)

There was a lack of systematic labour market research and forecasts of medium-term skills needs. Meanwhile, vocational education experience difficulties to adapt efficiently to changing economic demands. As a result, graduates do not possess knowledge, skills and competences required within labour market. Traditionally, skills needs were forecasted applying specific sector research and studies, which do not manage to provide general description of situation, and Reports on the Economic Development of Latvia prepared by the Ministry of Economics twice a year, evaluate the economic progress provide some economic development forecasts. These data are used by Ministry of Education and Science to analyse industrial development and to set policy priorities.

However, these researches did not ensure middle and long-term forecasts of skill needs. To improve skill need forecasting and to explore economic trends and demands the ESF National Programme Labour Market Researches was launched.

The researches were carried out in order to identify and to solve economic issues and to foster achievement of policy aims. In Labour Market Researches as a priority was set: the development of human resources and fostering employment. In the frameworks of The Ministry of Welfare Researches in total 13 themes were explored of which those more linked with vocational education are listed below.

Career development of post graduates – to clarify reasons why graduates did have work related to their profession, as well as the numbers of graduates continuing their education.

Vocational and higher education programmes and labour market demands – to study the procedure how the occupational standards are developed and to find out how the standards correspond to the Occupation Register; to clarify how many students enrol and finish their vocational studies (within 120 occupations); to state reasons influencing the choice of studies.

Occupational mobility – to study current situation of workforce occupational mobility and to state major reasons of the mobility; to give suggestions for improving the situation (on creating policy documents); and to develop recommendations for improving occupational mobility of education policy.

Geographical mobility – to study the inner and outer flow of workforce depending on the balance between demand and supply within labour market; to develop recommendations for arranging active and preventive events to foster employment in entire country, thereby, decreasing regional differences.

Working conditions and risks – to study the sphere of work protection in enterprises and to develop recommendations for improving legal base of labour market, and for implementing social, economical, technical, preventive and organizational activities.

Unemployment and social exclusion – to find out the reasons and length of unemployment and social exclusion, through clarifying the role of low education level and giving suggestions to combat unemployment and social exclusion.

The target groups are rather large due to various focuses of researches. Labour force in different sectors, graduates of vocational and higher education institutions, vocational and higher education institutions etc.

The researches were carried out between years 2005 and 2007 on national and regional level. The project is part of the ESF National Programme Labour Market Researches. The other researches in the programme were managed by State Employment Agency and the Ministry of Economics. The studies were administrated and arranged by the Ministry of Welfare.

Since the project was finished recently, its influence may not be evaluated completely yet. The researches helped to explore economic tendencies and state of labour market. For an instance, career and educational development of graduates was analysed, the procedure how the occupational standards are developed and their correspondence to labour market, reasons influencing the choice of studies have been studied, as well as occupational and geographical mobility of workforce. The research on working conditions and risks will be used for improving legal base of labour market, and for implementing social, economical, technical, preventive and organizational activities. The other study will assist in combating unemployment and social exclusion.

The data gathered in researches will be applied in further education long-term planning policy to ensure education compliance with economic and social demands.

The reports are published; information on the projects is disseminated through the project website <http://www.darbatirgus.gov.lv/index.php>.

Since the project was finished recently, it may not be evaluated completely yet. As indicator of success, application of data collected during researches within education policy may be considered. This project initiated labour market studies on large scale and set foundations for further researches on skill needs.

The Researches were carried out in the context of other National Programmes and the outcomes will be integrated within further long-term policy planning.

The employers consider that practical skills of graduates are insufficient, while theoretical knowledge is satisfying. However, employers are not motivated to provide practical training places for students due to the lack of the State financing. Finally, the development of occupational standards is cumbersome and time consuming process.

5.3. Integrating learning with working

5.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

According to the data of survey Vocational Training in Enterprises, conducted by the Central Statistics Bureau, in 2005 in-service training was organized by 36% of enterprises. The data show that the in-service training is regularly organized in 85% of large enterprises with the number of employees of 250 and more, which draw plans for personnel development and have established training centres and possess financial resources for educating employees, while

in less than one third of small enterprises (10-49 employees) in-service education is ensured regularly.

It may be concluded that in-service education at workplace has decreased: in 1999 the in-service was organized in 53% of Latvian enterprises, while in 2005 – 36%. Significantly more workplace training is organized in enterprises dealing with financial intermediation (63%), while most rarely – in the manufacturing industry (32%).

30% of the total number of enterprises organise education courses, which are held separately from particular workplace and which have specially designed curricula. Employees use opportunities to participate in the external vocational training courses more than in the internal education courses. In 2005 29% of the total number of enterprises used courses organized by other enterprises/organizations, but 6.7% used vocational training organized in the own enterprise. While informal learning (training in the process of work, training using the change of work, etc) was provided by 27% of enterprises. According to the data obtained in the survey, in 2005 practically 15% of the total number of employees participated in the in-service (25% in 1999).

An apprenticeship system exists on a small scale mainly in the crafts sector in traditional professions. *The Crafts Law* (1993) regulates the organisation of craft education and issuing qualifications. The main organisation involved is the Chamber of Crafts which is a self-governing organisation for developing crafts and craftsmanship in Latvia.

Through the apprenticeship system it is possible to obtain the journeyman and master craft qualification. The journeyman examination comprises two parts: presentation of qualification work and techniques used and theoretical knowledge. The master craftsman qualification is awarded after an examination. Apprenticeship qualifications do not provide access to regulated professions nor do they give access to continue in the formal education and training system. There are no mechanisms in place for those, who dropped out from apprenticeship before completing training, to continue in another form.

5.3.2. Examples of policy measures

See in the section 3.4.2. *Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners* (2005-2007).

See section 5.2.2. for the instances of measure Tripartite Cooperation Sub-committee for Vocational Education and Employment (since 2000).

5.4. Integrating skill and competence needs of the labour market into VET provision

5.4.1. Policy progress since 2002

Employers have engaged in designing and providing expertise of occupational standards, as well as in the assessment of vocational education quality through participating in the accreditation commissions and examination commissions of vocational qualification. Occupational standards define the tasks required within a particular vocation and determine the content for vocational qualifications. Every 5 years standards are assessed and updated by education providers, employers, students, government organisations, quality assurance agencies and external experts. Since 2000, the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-committee for Vocational Education and Employment, established by representatives from Ministries, the Association of Free Trade Unions and the Confederation of Employers, promotes cooperation

between government, employers and employees on education and employment issues. Tripartite councils participate in the development of occupational standards by examining them and considering their correspondence to labour market.

Developing methodology for working out occupational standards and vocational education programmes was one of the objectives for the project *Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners* (2005-2007), which generally aimed to strengthen cooperation between social partners and education providers, thereby, ensuring compliance of vocational education to demands of labour market. See sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2 for more information concerning this project.

However, there is a lack of systematic labour market research and forecasts of medium-term skills needs. Meanwhile, rapidly growing industries experience workforce shortages or find the pool of available labour lacking appropriate skills. Skills needs are forecasted in two ways:

- Ministries, sectoral organizations and other legal bodies and non-governmental organizations undertake specific research and studies. Research is used to evaluate the situation in certain sectors and industries, and the Ministry of Education and Science may update the education requirements for those occupations and improve the relevant occupational standards.
- The Ministry of Economics prepares Reports on the Economic Development of Latvia twice a year, in June and December. The Reports evaluate the economic situation and progress of reforms and provide economic development forecasts. The Ministry of Education and Science uses the report to analyse industrial development, employment indicators by sector, and financial support for the next years. Information about employment changes and sectoral growth shows the demand for certain occupations and which education programmes will be necessary. The Ministry coordinates results with regional councils and municipalities to plan their education provision in a way which will meet national skills requirements.

In the frameworks of the National Programme measure *Promotion of Employment* the third priority *Development of Human Resources and Promotion of Employment* was implemented in open projects *Support to conducting labour market studies* (2005-2007), which included various research, for example, examination of human resources potential in mechanical engineering and metalworking industries and creating a strategy to recruit new specialists using advertising and motivation in the industry (2005). A specific study on employment possibilities for disabled people within the sector was also undertaken.

5.4.2. Examples of policy measures

See section 5.2.2. for examples of measures: Tripartite Cooperation Sub-committee for Vocational Education and Employment (since 2000), and

The project The Ministry of Welfare Researches in the frameworks of ESF National Programme project *Labour Market Researches* (2005-2007)

6. GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING

6.1. National policy context on VET governance and funding

The *Vocational Education Law* (1999) determines the competence of those institutions responsible for the vocational education management. The main institutions without changes have been the Cabinet of Ministers, the Ministry of Education and Science with the Department of Vocational and Continuing Education, and Vocational Education Administration. The same institutions share the responsibilities for organising continuous vocational education.

VET institutions are classified according to the ownership: state, local government, and private schools. Vocational education is free for full-time students of the state or local government schools. Students also receive scholarship determined by the Cabinet. The number of local government and private establishments is rather small, but number of private schools has increased (4.1% of total in 1999/2000 and 15.5% in 2005/2006).

Initial vocational education financing is determined by the *Education Law* (1998), the *Vocational Education Law* (1999), the *Crafts Law* (1993) and regulations of the Cabinet, as well as by statutes of certain vocational education institutions. At present (2008), a new *Vocational Education Law* is being worked out.

Subsidies come from the state general budget, local governments and private sources. Amount of state subsidies is determined by the Cabinet of Ministers in conformity with number of educated persons and minimal educational cost per one educated person. This normative funding in vocational education was introduced in 2000. Education establishments make an inquiry for fund every year. After the state budget confirmation school receive funding and spent it to realise their educational programmes accordingly the legislation.

As the majority of VET schools are state-owned and run, the national budget is the main source of funding. The overall budget for vocational education was EUR 45,163,784 in 2005 (EUR 43 million in 2000). The funding of vocational education establishments comprised 88.1% of subsidies from the state general budget (EUR 39,810,368) and by 11.9% of their own income (paid services provided by VET institutions, amounting EUR 5,353,416). In 2005, 42% of funds allocated to VET schools were for recurrent costs and just 4% towards capital investment. Staff costs account for the greatest part of the current expenditure (54%).

According to the directions set in the *Education Development Concept 2002-2005*, schools under the authority of the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture since July 2004 were to be resigned to the MoES, which assisted in simplifying vocational education management and funding.

6.2. Changes made to administrative/institutional structures

6.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

The main institutions managing vocational education without essential changes have been the Cabinet of Ministers, the Ministry of Education and Science with the Department of Vocational and Continuing Education, and Vocational Education Administration. The same institutions share the responsibilities for organising continuous vocational education.

The Cabinet of Ministers determines the state's political and strategic areas in VET, funds VET providers according to criteria established by the MoES, sets the framework for

issuing state recognised qualifications and determines the recognition of foreign qualifications. The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) develops the framework regulations for VET and accredits providers, creates and updates the register of occupational standards and makes proposals about the allocation of funds from the state budget, supervises guidance and counselling services and researches skills demands of the labour market, employs the heads of VET institutions under its supervision.

The Department of Vocational and Continuing Education, which belongs to the MoES, develops state policy and strategy in VET. The department guides, plans and coordinates VET development and supervises VET providers. It collaborates with employer organisations and trade unions and provides technical support for the work of National Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment. The Tripartite Sub-council was founded in 2000 to ensure coordinated action and policy in vocational education between the government, employers and education providers (see 5.2.2.). The Department also assures that national policy meets EU demands and takes part in developing international agreements.

Vocational Education Administration, which is also under the direction of the MoES, organises the accreditation of VET providers and programmes, participates in the development of occupational standards as well as the content and methodology for exams. The Administration oversees the activity of learning and examination centres and organises the professional development of vocational teachers.

Implementing labour market policies and programmes for the unemployed is the main function of the State Employment Agency (1991), which is under the supervision of the Ministry of Welfare. Furthermore, the Ministry of Welfare and its Labour Department are responsible for managing active and passive labour market policy.

Continued reforms have been carried out linked to the process of joining the EU. The *Education Development Concept for 2002-2005* has been implemented, as well as the *Programme for the Development of Vocational Education for 2003-2005*, was adopted with aim to develop the vocational education system to meet the demands of the market economy, encourage employability, meet EU human resource development statements, and promote an EU competitive labour force. One of three directions of the Programme was *Management of vocational education system and effectiveness of education expenditures* which was carried out to promote unity within vocational education system administration and effective utilisation of financial and material resources.

Although the problem had already been recognized in the mid-nineties, vocational education establishments remained under the direction of several ministries, i.e. the MoES, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as the Ministry of Defence. All these ministries acted independently, allocated financial resources, planned and set up their own institutional networks, organised curricula development groups, set up quality monitoring mechanisms and dealt with student enrolment issues. Obtaining consistent information on education and training and unified decision making proved quite a challenge. Therefore, overlaps and irrational use of financial and human resources appeared.

In accordance with the Cabinet decision, which followed the *Education Development Concept 2002-2005*, since July 2004 vocational education institutions or vocational colleges under the authority of the Ministry of Welfare (1), the Ministry of Health (6) and the Ministry of Agriculture (34) were resigned to the jurisdiction of the MoES. The reorganisation promoted simplification of vocational education management and an effective use of finances and material resources in vocational education. Due to school optimisation process the number of state schools decreased in 2003 and 2004.

6.2.2. Examples of policy measures

EFFICIENCY OF EDUCATION EXPENSES (2002-2005)

This measure is part of education policy planning document the *Concept of Education Development for 2002-2005* (2002). The direction included the following objectives:

- 1) Optimisation of general education establishment network
- 2) Efficiency promotion of education establishment expenditures
- 3) Provision of unified education system management
- 4) Development of normative principles for education funding and provision of funding application visibility.

According to the *Concept of Education Development for 2002-2005* (2002), major changes in education are possible by using state financial resources. If funding allocated to education is utilized inefficiently, education quality and availability may become limited. Already in mid-nineties optimisation of school network was set as an objective, which was implemented successfully in several districts and still was topical during the action period 2002-2005. Optimisation of schools regards to proportion between numbers of students and teachers, number of students in class and education quality. Furthermore, management of vocational education was fragmented since vocational education establishments were under direction of six ministries (the MoES, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as the Ministry of Defence).

Therefore, as one of general aims and activity directions in *The Concept of Education Development for 2002-2005* (2002) was optimisation of school network to promote quality of education management and improve efficiency of funding usage.

Optimisation of general education establishment network was implemented by decentralising education system management, i.e. general schools are resigned to local governments. In order to achieve optimal number of students in classes and rational use of funding, localisation of schools providing full or part time programmes close to students' home had to be provided. Meanwhile, in rural territories secondary education institutions with more than 100 students had to be developed, which would be able to provide at least two secondary education programmes, students' dormitories and transportation for students.

Efficiency promotion of education establishment expenditures could be carried out by updating infrastructure. In the frameworks of the project *Development of Education System* (2000) methodology was developed and renovations and heat isolation of buildings for 74 education institutions, this activity had to be continued for 2002-2005 using state and engaging foreign financial support.

To unify education system management, education establishments had to be resigned to a single ministry. Before implementation of activity six ministries independently planned their school network, managed student enrolment, funding and approved education programmes and carried out quality control. Due to this system collection of general information was bothered, procedures on making decisions was time consuming. This caused overlap of management functions and inefficient use of financial and human resources.

Development of normative principles for education funding initially required evaluation of education programmes and equalisation of funding among similar programmes. Since 2002, contracts between line ministries and higher education institutions have been started to sing on education of specialists and number of study places. Taking into account this experience state proposal had to be prepared.

One of major Concept aims was to promote efficiency of education expenditures in all stages and types of education.

To optimise general education establishment network, rational planning of education establishment network in cooperation with local governments was promoted, as well as optimal number of students in class. Education establishments in rural territory had to be provided with transport.

To promote efficiency of education establishment expenditures, a new education system development project supported by foreign institutions had to be prepared. School renovation and heat isolation of buildings using state and local government funding programmes had to be carried out.

To provide unified education system management, all state vocational secondary education and higher education establishments had to be resigned to the MoES. However, those education establishments regulated by services remained under direction of particular services. General boarding-schools had to be reorganised as schools with dormitories.

To develop normative principles for education funding and provide visibility of funding application, expenses of similar education programmes had to be equalised, normative fulfilment of minimal expenditures for vocational education programmes had to be ensured. Transition from minimal to optimal expenditures had to be commenced, and methodology for preparing state proposal within vocational education had to be developed. Long-term contracts between ministries and higher education institutions had to be developed, as well as indicators for university action control had to be developed and implemented.

The direction was implemented both in general and vocational education, as well as in basic, secondary and higher education level. The target groups were education establishments, local governments and six ministries managing vocational education, i.e. the MoES, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as the Ministry of Defence.

The directions of the *Concept of Education Development for 2002-2005* (2002) were implemented during the period 2002-2005 both on regional and national levels. Some of activities were continued in later years and are included in the planning period 2007-2013.

As mentioned before, the measure was part of the *Concept of Education Development for 2002-2005* (2002), which was the major education policy planning document for the period, thus it determined national guidelines for education development. The main actor within the direction was the Ministry of Education and Science.

In 2005 there were 11 HEI and 13 colleges under direction of MoES. The Ministry of Health resigned its vocational education institutions or vocational colleges (6); the Ministry of Agriculture resigned part of its vocational education institutions or vocational colleges (34), as well as the Ministry of Welfare resigned one of its vocational education institution or vocational college. As result, vocational education management is greatly resigned to the MoES.

Since the measure was introduced as a part of national education policy planning document, the activities were carried out in the context with state social and economic trends and policy. The implementation of activities was evaluated and included in the planning period 2007-2013. Local governments according to their capacity provide transport for students.

During the period 2002-2005 no HEI was resigned to the direction of MoES. This process is delayed by the slow progress of regional reform implementation, differences within infrastructure of education institutions, and lack of business activity forecasts.

Due to decrease in number of students by 12 thousands per year, average number of students in class went down. The decrease in number of students and urbanisation tendencies make education services in rural areas more expensive.

As an obstacle to overcome may be mentioned that localisation of schools within regions is unequal. Number of schools providing education for less than 150 students increases, which enlarges expenditures per student. HEI should be resigned to supervision of the MoES. Regional differences in infrastructure and financial and human resources should be minimised.

6.3. Changes made to funding arrangements for VET

6.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

Initial vocational education mostly is financed by state government. Funding of the vocational education was managed by several ministries:

The Ministry of Education and Science – worked out proposals, and made inquiry to demand funds from the state budget in already established procedures; and from received funds ministry financed vocational educational institutions, under their direction and their supporting institutions.

Other ministries – worked out proposals, and made inquiry to demand funds from the state budget in already established procedures; from received funds ministry financed vocational educational institutions under their direction and their supporting institutions; and in the collaboration with the MoES, other state institutions, and local authorities organized continuing education for vocational education teachers at institutions under their direction.

In the frameworks of the *Education Development Concept 2002-2005*, schools under the authority of the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture since July 2004 were resigned to the MoES, which assisted in simplifying vocational education management and in promoting an effective use of finances and material resources in vocational education.

The *Vocational Education Law* (1999) determines the procedure on financing of vocational education institutions:

- The MoES and line ministries determine the amount of students financed from the state budget in state, local governmental, and public educational institutions implementing state accredited vocational education programmes.
- Expenditures of centrally organised final professional qualification examinations and other expenditures related with the award of professional qualification are paid off from the assets of the institution providing particular vocational education programme.
- Expenditures of the vocational education and the award of professional qualification are paid off from the state budget according to previously established procedures to students with disabilities studying in special education institutions or social and educational correction institutions, and to prisoners being imprisoned.
- In public vocational education institutions the charge for participation within vocational education and obtaining vocational qualification is set by founders of institution. While in state schools initial vocational education is for free.
- During in-service training, expenditures of a student's obligatory social insurance are paid off from assets of the institution providing particular vocational education programme.

Vocation schools according to their ownership are financed from State budget, local government budget or private sources. The main financing is from state budget, because the number of students in local government and private schools is comparatively small. The statistical data for school year 2004/2005 show that in local government VET schools there were 2.9 % of total VET students, while in private schools – 3.9%, i.e. 93.2% of students learn in state schools. Funding of public vocational education institutions constitutes of foreign countries financing, revenue from tuitions fees, which is the most general funding source, and other sources

Scholarship in initial vocational education was stated by the Cabinet *Regulations on Scholarships* (1995, 2002, 2004). The regulations determined the average stipend for initial vocational education and tertiary student – EUR 12 per month. Since 2002, amount of stipend has increased. According to the amendments of the Regulations (April 2006), since January 2007, the average stipend for initial vocational education student had to be increased by EUR 28.5 per month.

Only tertiary education students can apply for study loan. Allocation of study loans from the state budget was established in 1999 and the contract with students was made from July 2000. Since September 2001, study loans are allocated from funds of credit institutions with the State guarantee. Tertiary education students may receive two different study loans: to cover study programme expenses and for personal expenses during studies.

According to the *Vocational Education Law*, students studying in accredited first level vocational higher education programs may receive student loan from the state budget or credit institution with the warranty from the government. The order of the allocation, repayment, and clearance of the loan is defined in the *Law of Higher Education Institutions* (1995).

According to data provided by the Central Statistical Bureau, annual state budget expenditure on adult education institutions have been slowly increasing after cut in 2002. There are several sources of funding for adult education: participant's fees, employers' investment, investment of non-governmental organizations, payments from local governments and state budgets. The important increase of funding in 2005 is related with growth of financing to the State Employment Agency through implementation of Structural Funds projects.

Due to the amendments of 2002 in the *Law on Insurance in the Case of Unemployment* (1999) financing for active labour market measures became limited (in particular training measures), when a threshold of not more than 10% of the special employment budget to be spent for active measures was introduced. This led to sharp reduction of resources for vocational training and retraining of unemployed.

The Education Development Concept for 2002-2005 planned to ensure normative observation concerning minimal expenditure of programmes in vocational education and to promote long-term cooperation between ministries and universities. One of the objectives was to equalize expenditures among similar programmes and commence transformation process from minimal expenditure to optimal expenditure level.

However, funding for vocational education has decreased from 0.61 to 0.51 of GDP. The problem is that evaluation of study programmes and equalization of funding is delayed due to slow transformation to normative funding system. Amount of State budgeted subsidy in 2004 was 70% of government approved expenditure minimum per learner for implementing vocational study programmes.

One of three directions of the *Programme for the Development of Vocational Education for 2003-2005* (2003) was Management of vocational education system and effectiveness of education expenditures which was carried out to promote unity within vocational education system administration and effective utilisation of financial and material resources.

6.3.2. Examples of policy measures

See in the section 6.2.2. the example of measure: *Efficiency of Education Expenses* (2002-2005).

6.4. Promoting partnerships in VET policy making

6.4.1. Policy progress since 2002

In 2000, the Tripartite Cooperation Sub-committee for Vocational Education and Employment was founded involving representatives from Ministries, the Association of Free Trade Unions and the Confederation of Employers. The task of the Subcommittee is to promote dialogue between government, employers and employees on education and employment issues. To function on regional level, four regional councils have been established in the framework of ESF activities. Councils assess how the supply of vocational programmes matches regional needs. Tripartite councils participate in the development of occupational standards by examining them and considering its acceptance. See section 5.2 for more detailed information.

Strengthening more intensively relations between education providers and employers has been highlighted both in the *Education Development Concept for 2002-2005* and the *Guidelines for the Development of Education for the period of 2007-2013* (2006). More detailed description of relations between education and labour market see in the sections 5.1 and 5.2. Furthermore, the vocational education quality and cooperation with the social partners was the focus of the project *Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners*, which has been carried out and its products, methodology materials, have been disseminated to stakeholders, policy makers and professionals in the frameworks of the ESF National Program Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners. See sections 3.4.1 for more information concerning this project.

According to the major policy planning document during the period 2002-2005, the *Concept of Education Development* (2002-2005), two of the objectives were to involve employers in the funding of continuing education, and to ensure cooperation between employers and the state in developing education programmes.

6.4.2. Examples of policy measures

See section 3.4.2 the example on Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners.

7. EU TOOLS AND GEOGRAPHIC MOBILITY WITHIN VET

7.1. National policy context to introduction and dissemination of EU tools: EQF, ECVET and Europass and the promotion of geographical mobility within VET (maximum 300 words)

It is impossible to discuss policy progress concerning the EU tools EQF and ECVET in Latvia since they have not been introduced yet. These tools are planned to implement through new *Vocational Education Law* and the new *Higher Education Law*.

Geographic mobility since 1998 has been fostered in the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci programme. The implementation of the Leonardo da Vinci programme is supervised by the State Education Development Agency. In 2007 a successful start was given to 60 preparatory visit projects. 166 mobility, innovation of transfer, preparatory visit projects were confirmed in 2007. In 2007, in total 660 persons (VET students and teachers, people in labour market, counselling specialists and other representatives of VET personnel) received grants and participated in the mobility projects. 93 mobility projects for 2008 have been confirmed with a total funding of EUR 1.130000,00. In 2007 the agency has supervised 374 projects, including Lifelong Learning Policy and Leonardo da Vinci II period.

In 2001 *Law on the Recognition of Regulated Professions and Professional Qualification* was adopted determining the procedure for the recognition of vocational qualifications in regulated professions obtained in foreign countries (not only in EU countries) which assisted in providing legal basis for supporting mobility.

The National Europass centre under supervision of Academic Information Centre (AIC) since 2005 has fulfilled the tasks defined by the European Commission, such as the coordination of the receiving of Europass documents and the promotion of the use of Europass, as well as has implemented several support measures, e.g. National Europass website www.europass.lv. AIC has provided the Europass Mobility form with the respective number to all the citizens having the mobility experience in programmes Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius and Erasmus and having expressed the wish to obtain one. The interest on the Mobility documents has increased: 62 Europass Mobility Passes were issued in 2005, while 196 passes – in 2007.

7.2. Promoting the comparability of qualifications between different national, regional or sectoral contexts and their future compatibility with EQF

7.2.1. Policy progress since 2002

Linking the Latvian professional qualification system to EQF has started already. On higher education level the system has been set already; legally it will be introduced with the new *Higher Education Law*. In vocational education NQF will be integrated through the new concept of Vocational Education Law.

According to the *Vocational Education Law* (1999), there are five levels of professional qualifications:

- Level 1 (ISCED 2) – theoretical and practical training that prepares students for performing simple tasks in a certain area of practical activity, e.g. assistant cook, carpenter ;

- Level 2 (ISCED 3) – theoretical and practical background that allows the holder to perform qualified work independently (carpenter, hairdresser, cook, welder etc.);
- Level 3 (ISCED 3) – advanced theoretical and professional background which enables the holder to fulfil certain tasks, including planning and organising work (various technicians, car mechanics, hotel service specialist etc.);
- Level 4 (ISCED 5) – theoretical and practical background that enables the holder to perform complicated tasks as well as to organise and manage others in their work;
- Level 5 (ISCED 5) – the highest qualification of a specialist in a field that enables the holder to plan and perform research and scientific work in the field.

7.3. Promote the transfer and accumulation of qualifications between different national, regional or sectoral contexts and facilitating the future implementation of ECVET

7.3.1. Policy progress since 2002

At present (2008), a new *Vocational Education Law* is being worked out; this Law is expected to stipulate introduction of the European Credit System for VET within national education system.

7.4. Promoting Europass and ensuring synergy with EQF and ECVET

7.4.1. Policy progress since 2005 to introduce and promote Europass

As in one of the EU member states, in 2005 the National Europass centre (NEC) under the supervision of Academic Information Centre was established to carry out the coordination of the receiving of Europass documents and the promotion of the use of Europass, as well as has implemented several support measures.

The Latvian NEC cooperates with employment services and recruitment agencies for posting Europass CV on their web pages. Interest on the Mobility documents has evidently increased: 62 Europass Mobility Passes were issued in 2005, while 196 Passes – in 2007. AIC has provided the Europass Mobility form with the respective number to all the citizens having the mobility experience in programmes Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius and Erasmus and having expressed the wish to obtain one.

Higher education institutions remain responsible for completing and issuing Diploma Supplement, which template in Latvia since 2002 has been introduced in some and since 2004 is obligatory for all higher education institutions. In 2005, working group was established by the MoES for implementing the Certificate Supplement. Latvian NEC coordinated the working group to elaborate pilot Europass Certificate Supplement for five occupations – cook, hairdresser, arc welder, cabinet-maker, and electrician – in two versions taking into account Certificate Supplement guidelines and national legislation. To discuss better implementation procedure for the Certificate Supplement, in 2006 NEC organized two seminars and the conference Europass Certificate Supplement with participation of foreign experts in the latter.

To promote the use of Europass, NEC constantly updates the national website (www.europass.lv), which is linked to the websites of the Latvian centres of Euroguidance, Eurodesk and EURES and serves as information tool for receiving queries from individual and education institutions. In 2007, approximately 16000 templates were downloaded from the website.

Every year NEC publishes several informative brochures, conference leaflets on Europass, its documents and mobility. Part of the information materials are disseminated directly to general, vocational and higher education institutions of Latvia.

NEC has organised both large conferences, e.g. in cooperation with European Union networks *Europe Offers...*(2007), and informative seminars for limited audiences at secondary schools, at local guidance centres and employment services (31 informative seminars, meetings, discussions in 2007). Since 2006 NEC participates in Career Days of HEI, and since 2005 – the largest exhibition School providing information on education possibilities.

7.5. Promoting geographical mobility of learners within VET

7.5.1. Policy progress since 2002

Latvia has taken part in the Leonardo da Vinci programme since 1998, which ensured geographic mobility of learners within vocational education on national level. The implementation of the Leonardo da Vinci programme is supervised by the State Education Development Agency. Increasing numbers of participants within activities organised in the frameworks of Programme show that mobility is an issue of large interest, e.g. mobility project competition increased by 18% in 2005 comparing to 2004. The projects were developed by state and local government institutions, state and private education establishments, trade unions, non-governmental organisations and enterprises.

In 2007 a successful start was given to 60 preparatory visit projects. The projects were developed by state and local government institutions, state and private education establishments, trade unions, non-governmental organisations and enterprises. 166 mobility, innovation of transfer, preparatory visit projects were confirmed in 2007. In 2007, in total 660 persons (VET students and teachers, people in labour market, counselling specialists and other representatives of VET personnel) received grants and participated in the mobility projects. 93 mobility projects for 2008 have been confirmed with a total funding of EUR 1.130000,00. In 2007 the agency has supervised 374 projects, including Lifelong Learning Policy and Leonardo da Vinci II period.

In 2001, *Regulations on the Recognition of Regulated Professions and Professional Qualification* were adopted determining the procedure for the recognition of vocational qualifications in regulated professions obtained in foreign countries (not only in EU countries) which assisted in providing legal basis for supporting mobility. Therefore, no legal obstacles exist to the educational and professional mobility

Until the end of 2006, the mobility within higher education was promoted by the Erasmus sub-programme of the EU programme Socrates. The development of the mobility within Erasmus may be characterized by the number of HEI involved: in 2000, there were 10 HEI, in 2006/2007 – 29 HEI. The proportion ratio between flow of Latvian exchange students and other member states has gradually equalised, e.g. in 2004/2005 there were four Latvian exchange students per one foreign exchange student, while in 2006/2007 – two Latvian students per one foreign student.

8. DEVELOPMENT OF VET STATISTICS

8.1. Progress made on national VET statistics since 2002

Issues on collecting, analysing and disseminating national statistics are regulated by the *Official Statistics Law* (1997, 2007), which determines that the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) is the major (and the only legal) institution for organising work of national statistics. The Law was drafted in compliance with the European Council *Regulations on Community statistics* (February 1997) to ensure higher quality of statistical data from both ethical and professional aspects. The Central Statistical Bureau provides domestic and foreign data users with internationally comparable statistical information on economical, demographic, social, and environmental processes in Latvia.

The CSB is directly subordinated to the Ministry of Economics and is financed by state budget, income from charges for provided services, and foreign sources. As at January 2007 the CSB had to comply with 245 EU legal acts binding in the field of statistics, including 166 Regulations of the Parliament, Council or Commission, 66 Commission Decisions, 12 EU Directives and other EU laws and regulations.

Since 1998 annually Programme of state Statistical Information is issued to outline deadlines and statistical indicators to collect. According to the Programme, the Statistical Yearbook of Latvia is published offering an exhaustive description of socio-economic activities and processes of the previous year. In 2007 the contents structure was inline with Eurostat data dissemination themes.

More than 2 million statistical indicators provided by CSB are available through official CSB website containing regularly updated public databases. In 2006 the CSB has prepared and issued 59 publications, e.g. Statistical Yearbook, a collection of statistical data Demography, which usually are both in Latvian and English.

Educational statistics is responsibility of The Culture, Education, Science and Health Statistics Section, included in the structure of Social Statistics Department. The Section prepares annual detailed tables for Eurostat on the work of education establishments, as well as has organised The First and Second Survey in Enterprises (the data from the latest issue outlined in 5.3.1.). At the end of 2006 the Section began preliminary works for the Adult Education Survey; the results will be published in 2008. Annually the statistical data collection Education Institutions in Latvia is published containing statistics related to education establishments (including vocational) and enrolment at the beginning of particular school year.

Referring vocational education the CSB provides data on numbers of students depending on education programmes, on age, sex, on study language of learners, on provision of foreign language studies, on numbers of graduates, dropouts, and teachers etc. These data are applied by the Ministry of Education and Science to analyse situation of vocational education and to set further policy directions.

The CSB carries out the continuous Labour Force Survey, which results every year are summarised in a single report. The issue contains data on the economic activity of the population and the situation within labour market, statistics on economically active, as well as on non-working economically inactive inhabitants by age group, sex, education, profession and service length.

Since vocational education is a part of educational statistics, only general data are available which do not reflect complete situation. However, frequently more specific information or dynamic comparison is required, e.g. on vocational education content, on historic development.

Speaking about skill needs forecasts, there is lack of data on graduates' professional activities. It is planned that after six months of graduation, the researches should be carried out by the education institution, while after 12 and 36 months special regular studies (every three years) should be conducted. Furthermore, regular researches should be done to explore employers' opinion about vocational education.

9. VET BEYOND 2010

9.1. What VET issues do you believe should be on the national and on the EU policy agenda post 2010 and why?

All the current policy planning documents are in force till 2013; thus, no marking points are pointed out for 2010. There may be listed following activity directions:

- Modernisation of material and technical provision for vocational education establishments (total state and EU funding EUR 7.97 millions)
- Integration of European Qualifications Framework into National Qualifications Framework, as well as introduction of the European Credit System for VET within national education system. These tools are planned to implement through the new *Vocational Education Law* and the new *Higher Education Law*.
- Increasing the role of social partners within educational process, strengthening the social dialogue.
- Development of education and continuous education system for vocational education teachers.
- Improving access to vocational education in all forms and on all levels to all social groups.
- Development of system for validating skills and competences acquired through informal/non-formal education. The new *Vocational Education Law* is expected to introduce the system for validating skills and competences acquired through informal/non-formal education.
- Fostering the capacity of educational system to adapt to economic demands. Furthermore, there is still a lack of systematic labour market research and forecasts of medium-term skills needs. Meanwhile, rapidly growing industries experience workforce shortages or find the pool of available labour lacking appropriate skills. Therefore, particular emphasis should be put on further development of continuous education system.

9.2. How could these issues be addressed through national and EU policy and/or targets?

European Qualifications Framework and the European Credit System for VET are planned to implement through the new *Vocational Education Law* and the new *Higher Education Law*. Moreover, the new *Vocational Education Law* is expected to determine procedure and the system for validating skills and competences acquired through informal/non-formal education.

A number of policy strategic documents have been adopted promoting education, lifelong learning and human resource development, including improving vocational education priorities.

The Guidelines for the Development of Education for the period of 2007-2013 (2006) determine the aims for the education system development, the directions for their implementation.

To implement the Lisbon Programme in Latvia, the *National Development Plan* (2006) for the period 2007-2013 has worked out. The aim of the document is to facilitate a balanced

and sustainable development of the country, as well as to ensure an increase in Latvia's competitiveness.

Meanwhile, the *National Strategic Reference Framework of Latvia 2007-2013* (2007) lays down a common strategy for the obtaining of the EU Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund resources, and provides coordination between the funds and the operational programmes.

The Declaration of the Intended Activities of the Cabinet of Ministers led by Ivars Godmanis (2007) among other outlines vocational education policy priorities.

The education policy is also outlined in the following Latvian documents: long-term conceptual document *The growth model of Latvia: People First, Long-term Economic Development Strategy*, *Joint Economic Strategy*, *Development Guidelines of Sustainable Development of Latvia*, *Guidelines for Policy Planning*, *Latvian National Action Plan for Employment*, *Guidelines of Sport Policy for years 2004–2009* and *Regional Development Guidelines*. The Latvian education policy has been worked according to the guidelines set by the European policy mainstreams such as the Lisbon Strategy, Bologna Process, European Commission Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, UNESCO programme *Education for All*, European Commission work programme *Education and Training 2010*, European initiative *i2010 – European Information Society for Growth and Employment*, EU Basic Strategy regarding gender equality.

10. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES AND SOURCES

10.1. Sources, references and websites

- Annual Report 2006. Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. 2007. http://www.csb.gov.lv/images/modules/items/item_file_5061_gadaparsk06anglurgb_eng.pdf.
- Declaration of the Intended Activities of the Cabinet of Ministers led by Ivars Godmanis (*Deklarācija par Ivara Godmaņa vadītā Ministru kabineta iecerēto darbību*). The Cabinet of Ministers, 2007.
- Development of Further Teacher Education Network (*Pedagogu tālākizglītības metodiskā tīkla nodrošinājuma izveide*). The State Agency for Quality Assessment in General Education, 2006.
- Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement of Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners (*Vienotas metodikas izstrāde profesionālās izglītības kvalitātes paaugstināšanai un sociālo partneru iesaistei un izglītošanai*). Vocational Education Administration, 2005-2007. http://www.izmpic.gov.lv/ESF/index_ESF.html.
- Education and Skills. (*Izglītība un prasmes*). The Ministry of Finances, 2007.
- Education and Training 2010. Ministry of Education and Science. Riga, 2007.
- Education Development Concept for 2002-2005 (*Izglītības attīstības koncepcija 2002. – 2005. gadam*). The Ministry of Education and Science, Riga.
- Fostering Attractiveness of Initial Vocational Education (*Sākotnējās profesionālās izglītības pievilcības veicināšana*). The Ministry of Finances, 2008.
- Guidelines for Lifelong Learning Policy 2007-2013 (*Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013.gadam*). The Ministry of Education and Science, 2007.
- Labour Market Researches (*Darba tirgus pētījumi*). The Ministry of Welfare, 2005-2007. <http://www.darbatirgus.gov.lv/index.php>.
- Public Report 2006. Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia. 2007. 87 p.
- National Development Plan for 2004-2006 (*Nacionālais attīstības plāns 2004-2006*). The Cabinet of Ministers, 2003.
- National Development Plan for 2007-2013 (*Nacionālais attīstības plāns 2007-2013*). The Cabinet of Ministers, 2006. <http://www.nap.lv/lat/>.
- National Education Development Guidelines 2007-2013 (*Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013.gadam*). The Ministry of Education and Science, 2006.
- National Lisbon Programme of Latvia for 2005-2008, Latvia, 2005. 52p.
- National Strategic Reference Framework of Latvia 2007-2013 (*Valsts stratēģiskais ietvardokuments 2007.-2013.gadam*). Ministry of Finance, 2007.
- Regulations on Demands for Necessary Education and Professional Qualification to Teachers (*Noteikumi par prasībām pedagogiem nepieciešamajai izglītībai un profesionālajai kvalifikācijai*). The Cabinet of Ministers, 2000, 2004.
- Regulations on Procedure of accrediting vocational education programmes, education establishments and examination centres and certifying heads of vocational education

establishments (*Kārtība, kādā akreditē profesionālās izglītības programmas, izglītības iestādes un eksaminācijas centrus un atestē profesionālās izglītības iestāžu vadītājus*). The Cabinet of Ministers, 2005, 2007.

- Report on Economic Development of Latvia (*Ekonomikas ministrijas ziņojums par tautsaimniecības attīstību*). Ministry of Economics, Riga, July 2007.
- Statistical Yearbook of Latvia 2007. Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, Riga: 2007.
- Support to Introduction of Career Education within Education System (*Atbalsts profesionālās orientācijas un karjeras izglītības ieviešanai izglītības sistēmā*). The Cabinet of Ministers. 2006.
- The Education Law. The Cabinet of Ministers. Riga, 1991.
- The Crafts Law. The Cabinet of Ministers. Riga, 1993.
- The General Education Law. The Cabinet of Ministers. Riga, 1999.
- The Law of Higher Education Institutions. The Cabinet of Ministers. Riga, 1995.
- The Law on Insurance in the Case of Unemployment. The Cabinet of Ministers. Riga, 1999.
- The Law on Unemployed and Job Seekers. The Cabinet of Ministers. Riga, 2001.
- The Official Statistics Law. The Cabinet of Ministers. Riga, 1997, 2007.
- The Project Development of Education System (*Izglītības sistēmas attīstības projekts*). The Ministry of Education and Science, 2000.
- The Programme for the development of vocational education for 2003-2005 (*Profesionālās izglītības sistēmas attīstības programma 2003.-2005. gadam*) Riga, 2003.
- The Vocational Education Law. The Cabinet of Ministers. Riga, 1999.
- Vocational Teacher Occupational Standard (*Profesionālās izglītības skolotāja profesijas standarts*). The Ministry of Education and Science, 2002.
- Vocational training in enterprises in Latvia in 2005. Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia. Riga, 2008. ISBN 978-9984-06-330-007-023-000.
- White Paper on Enlargement of Guidance and Counselling Services on National and Regional Levels (*Karjeras attīstības atbalsta paplašināšanas koncepcija*). The Cabinet of Ministers. Riga, 2006.
- www.aic.lv Academic Information Centre (*Akadēmiskās informācijas centrs*)
- www.csb.gov.lv Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (*Centrālās statistikas pārvalde*)
- www.izmpic.gov.lv Vocational Education Administration (*Profesionālās izglītības administrācija*)
- www.europass.lv Latvian National Europass Centre (*Latvijas Nacionālais Europass centrs*)
- www.izm.gov.lv Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*)
- www.lm.gov.lv Ministry of Welfare (*Labklājības ministrija*)
- www.pkiva.gov.lv Career Service Department of State Employment Agency / Professional Career Counselling State Agency (*Profesionālās karjeras izvēles valsts aģentūra*)
- <http://www.nva.lv> State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra*)

- <http://www.siva.gov.lv> State Social Integration Agency (*Sociālās integrācijas valsts aģentūra*)
- www.refernet.lv ReferNet Latvia (*ReferNet Latvija*)
- www.viaa.gov.lv State Education Development Agency (*Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra*)

10.2. List of Acronyms

List of the acronyms mentioned in this report in an alphabetic order is provided below:

- AIC – Academic Information Centre (*Akadēmiskās informācijas centrs*)
- CSB – Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (*Centrālās statistikas pārvalde*)
- KIPNIS – Provision of career education programmes within education system (*Karjeras izglītības programmu nodrošinājums izglītības sistēmā*)
<http://www.viaa.gov.lv/Euroguidance/kipnis/index.htm>
- MoES – The Ministry of Education and Science (*Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija*)
- MoW – Ministry of Welfare (*Labklājības ministrija*)
- NEC – Latvian National Europass Centre (*Latvijas Nacionālais Europass centrs*)
- NF – The National Forum (*Sadarbības padome*)
- PIA – Vocational Education Administration (*Profesionālās izglītības administrācija*)
- PCCSA – Professional Career Counselling State Agency (*Profesionālās karjeras izvēles valsts aģentūra*)
- SEA – State Employment Agency (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra*)
- VIAA – State Education Development Agency (*Valsts izglītības attīstības aģentūra*)
- VIKNVA – The State Agency for Quality Assessment in General Education (*Vispārējās izglītības kvalitātes novērtēšana valsts aģentūra*)