

Description of Vocational education system in Latvia

Vocational basic education (integrated primary and lower secondary)

Vocational basic education programmes (*profesionālās pamatizglītības programmas*) (1-3 years) lead to a Certificate of vocational basic education (*apliecība par profesionālo pamatizglītību*) and professional qualification (EQF level 2).

For learners to be admitted, they must be at least 15 years old. The main target groups of these programmes are learners with learning difficulties and early leavers from compulsory basic education. Programmes are provided mainly by special education institutions/development centres or vocational education institutions. Share of learners in this type of programme represents 1% of the total number of vocational education learners (in 2017).

Graduates who have passed general basic education exams have access to secondary level education.

Vocational education at secondary level (upper secondary)

There are four types of vocational education programmes at secondary education level, which vary by content and formal rights.

Vocational education (*arodizglītība*) programmes (3 years) lead to a Certificate of vocational education (*atestāts par arodizglītību*) and professional qualification (EQF level 3), but do not grant the right to enter higher education, as proportion of general study subjects is insufficient. The ratio between theory and practice is 35:65. To access higher education programmes, students must attend one-year bridging course. Main providers are vocational education institutions. Share of learners in this type of programme is 5% of the total number of vocational education learners (in 2017).

Vocational secondary education (*profesionālā vidējā izglītība*) programmes (4 years) lead to a Diploma of vocational secondary education (*diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību*) and professional qualification, and a Certificate of general secondary education (*vispārējās vidējās izglītības sertifikāts*) (EQF level 4). The latter document is awarded for passing four state centralised examinations, and it grants access to higher education. The ratio between theory and practice is 50:50. Main providers are vocational education institutions and some colleges. Share of learners in this type of programmes is 71% of the total number of vocational education learners (in 2017).

One-year vocational education (*arodizglītības programmas pēc pamatizglītības/vidējās izglītības*) programmes leading to a Certificate of professional qualification (*profesionālās kvalifikācijas apliecība*) (EQF levels 3 or 4) are designed for 17 to 29 year-olds with or without completed secondary education for them to acquire professional skills for labour market. Main providers are vocational education schools. Share of learners in this programmes type is 9% of the total number of vocational education learners (in 2017).

One-and-half to three year vocational secondary education after general secondary education (*profesionālā vidējā izglītība pēc vispārējās vidējās izglītības*) programmes leading to Diploma of vocational secondary education (*diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību*) (EQF level 4) are designed for learners to acquire professional skills for labour market. Main providers are vocational education schools. Share of learners in this type of programmes is 14% of the total number of vocational education learners (in 2017).

To obtain a professional qualification (EQF level 3-4), students take state qualification examination at the end of vocational education programme.

Professional higher education

Higher education programmes can be academic (lead to a degree) or professional (lead to a degree and/or professional qualification). There are Bachelor's, Master's and Doctor's degrees in both academic and professional higher education. More than two thirds of all higher education students study in professional study programmes. Professional higher education programmes allow continuous progression from EQF levels 5 to 8.

In parallel to Bologna cycle structure, there is a division of professional higher education (*profesionālā augstākās izglītība*) programmes in two levels:

First level professional higher education programmes (college or short cycle studies, 2-3 years) leading to a Diploma of first level professional higher education (*pirmā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms*) and professional qualification (EQF level 5). Learners with secondary education are admitted. These programmes are mainly focused on acquiring professional skills for labour market, but graduates can continue their studies in second level professional higher education programmes.

Second level professional higher education programmes include:

- professional Bachelor's study programmes which lead to Professional Bachelor's diploma (*profesionālā bakalaura diploms*) and a professional qualification (EQF level 6) and last at least four years;
- professional Master's study programmes which lead to Professional Master's diploma (*profesionālā maģistra diploms*) and a professional qualification (EQF level 7) and last at least one year (in total with Bachelor's degree at least five years);
- professional higher education study programmes which lead to Diploma of professional higher education (*profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms*) and a professional qualification (EQF level 6 or 7). These programmes last four to six years;
- short professional higher education study programmes which lead to Diploma of professional higher education (*profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms*) and a professional qualification (EQF level 6). Learners can enrol in these programmes after completing Bachelor's or second level professional higher education programmes. These programmes last one to two years.

Professional Doctor's degree in arts which leads to Professional Doctor's diploma in arts (*profesionālā doktora diploms mākslās*) (EQF level 8) and lasts at least three years. Legal framework for state standard was developed in October 2018.

Higher education institutions, including colleges, provide full-time, part-time and distance studies at all study levels. While universities provide a full range of professional higher

education programmes, colleges only offer first level professional higher education programmes leading to qualifications of EQF level 5.

Continuing vocational education

Continuing vocational education (*profesionālā tālākizglītība*) programmes enable adults with education/work experience to obtain a state recognised professional qualification in 480 to 1280 hours, depending on the field of study. These programmes lead to a Certificate of professional qualification (*profesionālās kvalifikācijas apliecība*) (EQF level 2-4). Similar to initial vocational education, students of continuing vocational education take a final qualification exam in accordance with procedures approved by the government. These programmes are provided by private education centres and vocational education institutions.

Professional development

Professional development (*profesionālā pilnveide*) programmes (at least 160 hours) enable adults to acquire or upgrade their professional knowledge and skills regardless of their age, education and professional background, but do not lead to a formal qualification. Graduates are awarded with a Certificate of professional development education (*profesionālās pilnveides izglītības apliecība*), which is not referenced to EQF.