



Latvijas  
kvalifikāciju  
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Eiropas  
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# Referencing of the Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area

Updated Self-Assessment Report

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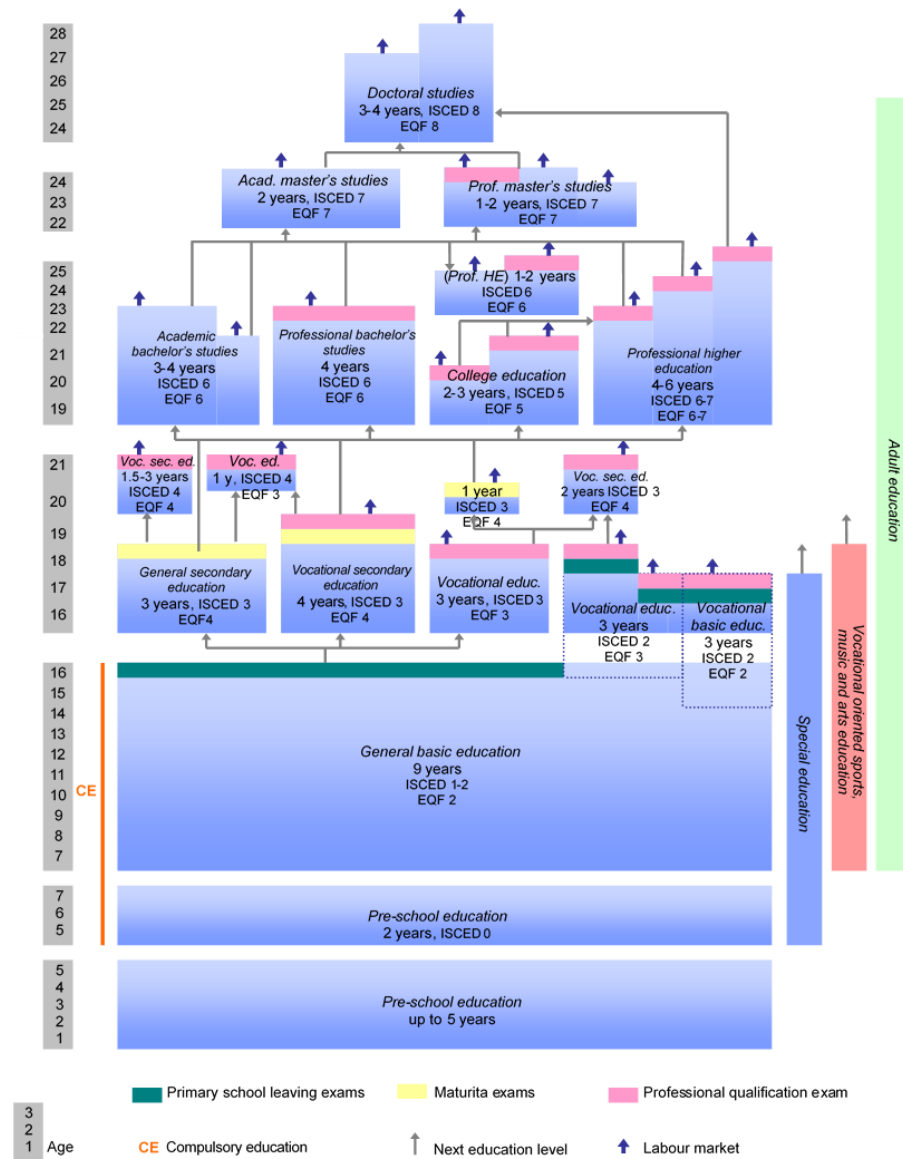
# Table of contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 1. EDUCATION SYSTEM OF LATVIA.....  | 3  |
| 1.1. Description of the formal education system in Latvia.....            | 3  |
| 1.1.1. Regulations.....   | 4  |
| 1.1.2. General Education.....   | 4  |
| 1.1.3. Vocational Education.....  | 6  |
| 1.1.4. Higher Education.....  | 8  |
| 1.2. The role of learning outcomes in the education system in Latvia....  | 11 |
| 1.2.1. General Education.....   | 11 |
| 1.2.2. Vocational Education.....  | 12 |
| 1.2.3. Higher Education.....  | 16 |
| 1.3. Quality Assurance.....   | 18 |
| 1.3.1. General and Vocational Education.....                              | 18 |
| 1.3.2. Higher Education.....  | 23 |
| 1.4. Validaiton of non-formal and informal learning.....                  | 30 |
| 1.4.1. Vocational Education.....  | 30 |
| 1.4.2. Higher Education.....  | 32 |
| 2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE LQF.....  | 35 |
| 3. LQF IMPACT ON FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF LATVIAN<br>EDUCATION.....         | 37 |
| 3.1. Revision of LQF levels .....   | 37 |
| 3.2. Indication of LQF levels in educational documents.....               | 37 |
| 3.3. Other changes in regulatory enactments.....                          | 38 |
| 3.4. Terminology development.....   | 39 |
| 3.5. Development of credit point system in Latvia.....                    | 40 |
| 3.6. Development of sectoral qualifications structures.....               | 40 |
| 3.6.1. Further development of sectoral qualifications structures .....    | 43 |
| 3.6.2. The role of the EQF / LQF in sectoral qualifications structures... | 44 |
| 3.7. Development of the Latvian Qualification Database .....              | 45 |
| 3.8. NCP actions to promote the development of the LQF.....               | 48 |

# 1. EDUCATION SYSTEM OF LATVIA

## 1.1. Description of the formal education system in Latvia

Figure 1. The education system of the Republic of Latvia (2016)



The education system in Latvia consists of pre-school education, basic education, secondary education and higher education.

General education lasts for 12 years, including mandatory 9-year basic education and 3-year secondary education. In addition, pre-school education is compulsory in Latvia from the age of 5. The elementary level of education includes general basic education (1st – 9th grade) and professional education (7th – 9th grade). Secondary education includes general secondary

education, vocational secondary education and vocational education. Higher education includes both academic and professional study programs.

### 1.1.1. Regulations

The Latvian education system is currently regulated by five laws and the Cabinet of Ministers regulations issued in accordance with them and as well as other normative acts. Laws are as follows:

- **Education law (1998)** - regulates all types and grades of education, determine the rights and obligations of the institutions involved, as well as types of education, levels and the types of educational institutions being implemented;
- **Law „About the Crafts” (1993)** - refers to the qualifications of masters and journeyman;
- **Law on Institutions of Higher Education (1995)** - regulates cooperation between the state and universities in order to harmonize university autonomy with the interests of society and the state; as well as regulating the legal basis for the activities of higher education institutions and colleges, defines and protects university autonomy;
- **Law on General Education (1999)** - defines the principles of general education organization and operation; as well as regulating the rights and duties of institutions and persons involved in the process of general education implementation;
- **Vocational Education Law (1999)** - regulates the implementation of all forms and levels of vocational education (except first and second level professional higher education), the provision of appropriate professional qualifications, as well as the responsibility of the various institutions involved.
- **Law About regulated professions and recognition of professional qualifications (2001)** - determine the basic requirements, incl. education and professional qualification requirements, all regulated professions and the recognition of foreign qualifications.
- **The Law of Scientific Activity (2005)** - The law determines the conditions for the establishment, operation, administration, supervision and financing of scientific institutes, the procedures for the implementation of national research, as well as the procedure for obtaining and allocation a doctor's degree.

### 1.1.2. General Education

#### Pre-school education

Every child from the age of five gets an opportunity to gain compulsory pre-school education free of charge. The main objective of pre-school education is to promote the overall development and readiness of the child by starting the primary school stage in basic education.

In accordance with the General Education Law (1999) 20<sup>1</sup>, preparation of a child from the age of five for basic education is compulsory. Pre-school education for children with special needs is implemented in special pre-school educational institutions.

Pre-school does not give a formal assessment of the acquired knowledge and skills; thus, it has not been awarded with the EQF level.

### **General Basic Education (LQF/EQF 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> level)**

The child usually starts the basic education program in the year in which he is full 7 years old (there is a possibility to start education from the age of 6) and lasts until the age of 16. In special cases, acquisition of primary education may continue until the age of 18. Basic education in Latvia is compulsory, the duration of the program is 9 years. The compulsory content of basic education is determined by the national standard of basic education<sup>1</sup>, which also includes first-stage basic education programs 1st – 6th grade.

In the first class, the knowledge and skills acquired by children are assessed not by mark, but in a descriptive way. In 2nd – 3rd grade there is a gradual transition to an assessment on the 10 - point scale – In 2nd and 3rd grades, marks are given in mathematics, in the Latvian language, in minority language and in a foreign language. Starting from the 4th grade, the knowledge and skills acquired by children in all subjects are evaluated in the 10-point scale. The assessment system is included in the national standard of basic education.

Following the acquisition of the basic education program, students conduct centralized exams, the number and content of which are specified in the Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers. Students who have gained an assessment in both the subjects of the basic education program of the year and the state examination, receive a certificate for basic education and a statement of achievements. An assessment of the subjects in which the centralized examination is organized shall be certified by a basic education certificate. These certificates of basic education give the right to continue education in any secondary education program.

If the student does not get an assessment in one of the subjects or in one of the state examinations, he is given an attestation. Attestation entitles you to enter professional basic education or vocational education programs.

### **General secondary education (LQF/EQF 4<sup>th</sup> level)**

The compulsory content of general secondary education programs is determined by the state general secondary education standard<sup>2</sup>. General secondary education programs have the following thematic directions:

- The general education direction determined by the group of educational programs without special emphasis on subjects;

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<sup>1</sup>Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.468 „Regulations on the national standard for basic education, standards for basic education subjects and models of basic education programs” (12.08.2014.)

<sup>2</sup>Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.281 „Regulations on the state general secondary education standard, study subject standards and models of educational programs” (21.05.2013.). Previously Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.715 „Regulations on the standards of general secondary education and general secondary education subjects” (2.09.2008.)

- Humanitarian and social direction, determined by a group of educational programs with special emphasis on humanities and social sciences subjects;
- The direction of mathematics, science and technology, determined by a group of educational programs with special emphasis on mathematics, science and technology subjects;
- Professional direction, which is determined by a group of educational programs with a special emphasis on professional orientation (e.g., art, music, commerce, sports).

The education program in all directions has eight compulsory subjects of the same name, such as the Latvian language, foreign language, mathematics and history. There are 3 to 6 compulsory subjects for each direction of the program. The school can offer a few optional subjects in the amount of 10-15% of the duration of the study or offer to in-depth study of one of the compulsory subjects during this time. The general secondary education program in the respective direction can be combined with the minority education program, including the mother tongue of the minority, as well as the content of the teaching of minority identities and integration into the Latvian society.

The second part of Article No. 3 of the Law on General Education specifies its special types:

- 1) special education;
- 2) social correction;
- 3) pedagogical correction.

### **1.1.3. Vocational Education**

Vocational education enables after the completion of primary school or secondary school to continue education and obtain a professional qualification and obtain the right to continue education at the level of higher education. Developing knowledge, skills and abilities in music, arts or sports can be in professional orientation education program. The knowledge and skills necessary for the labour market can be improved in professional development programs, as well as adults can acquire new qualifications in continuing education programs. Vocational education institutions offer educational programs in all areas of economic activity.

Article No. 4 of the Vocational Education Law (1999) defines three levels of professional education:

1. Professional basic education;
2. Vocational secondary education;
3. Professional higher education (for more details see section 4.5 for higher education):
  - First level professional higher education (college education);
  - Second level professional higher education.

Modern labour market demands are good communication skills, knowledge in mathematics, natural and social sciences, ability to communicate in foreign languages, the ability to use modern information technologies, therefore the acquisition of these subjects and skills are included in professional education programs. In addition, during the acquisition of vocational education, attention is paid to develop susceptibility and entrepreneurial capacities, understanding environmental, safety, health and intercultural issues, youth self-development, to help them succeed in their career and life. If the vocational education program involves the acquisition of a professional qualification, the learning process is organized in such a way that

the acquisition of the theory in the classroom is translated into practical training at school workshops, laboratories, enterprises or institutions.

The content of the vocational education program is determined by the state standard of vocational education<sup>3</sup> and the relevant occupational standard.

Upon graduation from vocational education programs with the acquisition of a professional qualification, the student conducts a professional qualification examination and given a certain level of professional qualification. According to the Vocational Education Law (1999), there are five levels of professional qualification in the Latvian professional education system. These **professional qualification levels apply only to professional education and are automatically subject to LQF/EQF levels by law.**

### **Vocational basic education (LQF/EQF 2<sup>nd</sup> level)**

In vocational basic education programs, a person is admitted without a prior education restriction and no earlier than in the calendar year in which he or she reaches 15 years of age. Vocational basic education programs last for 1-2 years. The certificate of vocational basic education indicates that the student has acquired vocational basic education and has obtained the first level of professional qualification of Latvia (theoretical and practical training that makes it possible to perform simple tasks in a given field of practical activity, such as a cook or a carpenter's assistant).

### **Vocational education (LQF/EQF 3<sup>rd</sup> level)**

In vocational education programs, a person is admitted without a prior education restriction and no earlier than in the calendar year in which he or she reaches 15 years of age. State standard for vocational secondary education and vocational education<sup>4</sup> determines that vocational education programs last for three years for the students, who are graduated primary school or one year, if the student starts after secondary education acquisition or after basic education acquisition from 17 years of age. The completion of the vocational education program is certified by a certificate of vocational education, which confirms that the qualification awarded corresponds to the second level of professional qualification in Latvia (theoretical and practical preparation which enables to perform a qualified performer's work independently, for example, as carpenter, hairdresser, cook, tailor, welder professions). In the content of vocational education programs there are integrated general education subjects, but vocational education does not provide the right to continue education at the higher education institution. Vocational education programs include the theory and practice of 35% and 65%. Vocational education programs are oriented towards the acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills, which enables to independently carry out a qualified work of an executor / worker, asks for responsibility for his work performed according to predefined guidelines, and develops the ability to work in a group as well.

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<sup>3</sup>Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.211 „Regulation on state standard of vocational secondary education and state vocational education” (27.06.2000.)

<sup>4</sup>Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.211 „Regulation on state standard of vocational secondary education and state vocational education” (27.06.2000.)

### **Vocational secondary education (LQF/EQF 4<sup>th</sup> level)**

Vocational secondary education programs include students who have completed general or professional basic education or secondary education. The programs last for 4 years after basic education, 1-2 years after the acquisition of vocational education or 1.5 to 2 years after the acquisition of secondary education. The program is finally awarded with a diploma in vocational secondary education as well as a third level of professional qualification (higher theoretical preparation and professional mastery that enables to perform certain tasks of the skill, including the planning and organization of the work to be performed, such as various technicians, car mechanics, dressmaker, hotel service technicians). The diploma gives the right to continue education at the institution of higher education.

The content of educational programs is determined by the standard of vocational secondary education and vocational education<sup>5</sup>, as well as the relevant profession standard. The vocational secondary education program includes:

- Theories and practices of 50% and 50%;
- 60% and 40% of general education and professional subjects.

### **1.1.4. Higher education**

Higher education system includes academic higher education and professional higher education. Bachelor's and Master's degrees exist both in academic and professional higher education.

#### **Academic higher education (LQF/EQF 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> level)**

The purpose of academic education is to prepare for independent research activity, as well as to provide the theoretical basis for professional activity. Academic education programs are implemented in accordance with the state standard of academic education<sup>6</sup>.

**Bachelor academic study programs** amount to 120-160 Latvian credits (180-240 ECTS credit points). The duration of studies in full-time basic studies is six to eight semesters.

The volume of **academic master's degree programs** is at least 40 Latvian credit points (60 ECTS credit points), provided that the stipulated total duration of Bachelor's and Master's study programs in full-time studies is observed.

#### **Professional higher education (LQF/EQF 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> level)**

The task of professional higher education is to implement in-depth knowledge, skills and competences in a specific field, providing graduates with the ability to develop or improve

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<sup>5</sup> Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.211 „Regulation on state standard vocational secondary education and state vocational education” (27.06.2000.)

<sup>6</sup> Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.240 „Regulations on the state academic standard of education” (13.05.2014.). Previously - Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.2 „Regulations on the National Academic Standard of Education” (03.01.2002.)



systems, products and technologies, and prepare graduates for creative, research and pedagogical work in this field.

**Bachelor's professional study programs** amount is at least 160 Latvian credit points (240 ECTS).

The volume of **master professional study programs** is not less than 40 Latvian CPs (60 ECTS credit points).

Both types - academic and professional - bachelor's degrees have the right to study at a master's degree, but for the master's degree students - doctoral studies. Graduates in Medical, Dental, and Pharmacy (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year studies) can continue their PhD studies.

In professional higher education, without Bachelor's and Master's programs, there is another division of programs:

- **1<sup>st</sup> level professional higher education (colleges) study program**, after acquiring receives Latvia's 4th level professional qualification (LQF Level 5). The programs amount to 80-120 CP (120-180 ECTS credits) and are based on the acquisition of the profession, but their graduates can continue their studies in second level professional higher education programs.
- **2<sup>nd</sup> level professional higher education study programs**, after acquiring receives Latvian 5th level professional qualification (LQF Levels 6-7). These programs are at least 40 CP (60 ECTS credit points) in bachelor's degree (short professional programs) or at least 160 CP (240 ECTS credit points) after obtaining secondary education. In both cases, the programs include the practice and the state examination, including the final work. If the program covers 160 CP (240 ECTS) of the bachelor's degree program, the graduates get the right to enter the Master's program.<sup>7</sup>

State standards for first and second level professional higher education are determined by the Cabinet of Ministers<sup>8</sup>.

### **Doctoral studies (LQF/EKQF 8<sup>th</sup> level)**

Since January 1, 2000, one type of scientific degree - a doctoral degree corresponding to the level 8 of the LQF is granted in Latvia. Admission to doctoral studies requires a master's level degree. A doctoral degree is awarded to a person who has successfully passed the examinations in the chosen field of science and has developed and publicly defended the dissertation paper containing the original research results and provides new insights in the corresponding field of science, under the guidance of an experienced scientist.

### **Admission requirements**

In order to qualify for admission to university college / college, secondary education must be acquired in a general or vocational secondary education program. Applicants are admitted to

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<sup>7</sup>Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.202 „Procedure for issuing state-recognized certificates of higher education" (16.04.2013.)

<sup>8</sup>Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.141 „Regulations on the state standard of the first level professional higher education" (20.03.2001.), Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.512 „Regulations on the state standard of the second level professional higher education" (26.08.2014.)

university college or college in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 846 of 10 October, 2006 "Regulations on requirements, criteria and procedures for admission to study programs".

Since 2006, the student admission competition for bachelor's and professional study programs, in which the admission requirement is the previously acquired secondary education, is based on the results of centralized examinations.

Higher education institutions and colleges may impose additional requirements for prior education, special eligibility and qualifications or other conditions.

**Table 1. Latvian formal education documents according to the LQF level**

| Educational documents (qualifications)   | LQF level |
|--|-----------|
| Certificate of general basic education (special educational programs for learners with (severe) mental development disorders or several severe developmental disorders)  | 1.        |
| Certificate of general basic education<br><br>Certificate of vocational basic education<br><br>Certificate of professional qualification (basic education level)   | 2.        |
| Certificate of vocational education<br><br>Certificate of professional qualification (vocational education level)  | 3.        |
| Certificate of general secondary education<br><br>Diploma for vocational secondary education<br><br>Certificate of professional qualification (secondary education level)  | 4.        |
| First level professional higher education diploma (college education, duration of full time studies 2-3 years)   | 5.        |
| Bachelor's diploma<br><br>Professional Bachelor's diploma<br><br>Professional higher education diploma, diploma of highest professional qualification diploma (duration of full time studies – at least 4 years) | 6.        |
| Master's diploma<br><br>Professional master's diploma<br><br>Professional higher education diploma, higher professional qualification diploma (total duration of full time studies – at least 5 years)           | 7.        |
| Doctoral diploma   | 8.        |

## 1.2. The role of learning outcomes in the education system in Latvia

Elements of learning outcomes in separate legislative acts were already reflected before the creation of the Latvian qualifications framework (LQF). This is evidenced, for example, by the amendments made at the end of 2009 "Guidelines for lifelong learning policy 2007-2013", which aimed to create a learning outcomes-based qualifications framework<sup>9</sup>. However, the perception of learning outcomes by stakeholders as statements that the learner knows, understands and is able to complete after completing a stage of learning has been reinforced by the work on developing the LQF.<sup>10</sup> As the creation of the LQF encouraged stakeholders to discuss the importance of learning outcomes in education, changes to the regulatory framework were introduced. The relationship between the Learning outcomes approach and the development of the LQF is also shown on June 18, 2015 in the Education law (came into force on July 16, 2014), which defines the Latvian Qualifications Framework and their learning outcomes.<sup>11</sup>

The use of learning outcomes in the educational process is ensured by the regulatory enactments regulating the content of education (i.e., state education and occupational standards), the system of state examinations as well as the licensing and accreditation of educational institutions and programs.<sup>12</sup>

### 1.2.1. General education

The content of general education is determined by:

- Standards of state education, i.e., state general basic<sup>13</sup> and secondary<sup>14</sup> education standard, as well as subjects' standards (Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers);

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<sup>9</sup>Kinta, G. (2014). The role of learning outcomes in the management of vocational secondary education. Doctoral Thesis. Riga: Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art of University of Latvia.

<sup>10</sup>Academic Information centre and Ministry of Education and Science (2012). Referencing of the Latvian education system to the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area. Self-assessment report. 2<sup>nd</sup> version. Riga: Academic Information centre and Policy coordination department of Ministry of Education and Science. [http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Latvijas-pasvertejuma-zinojums-2-versija\\_maijs-2012.pdf](http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Latvijas-pasvertejuma-zinojums-2-versija_maijs-2012.pdf)

<sup>11</sup>Education law. Article No.8.<sup>1</sup>. Latvian qualifications framework.

(1) The Latvian Qualifications Framework is an eight-level system that covers the levels of education (basic education, secondary education, higher education) and all types of education (general education, professional education, academic education), as well as professional qualifications acquired outside the formal education system. The Latvian qualifications framework is linked to the European qualifications framework.

(2) The Latvian qualifications framework levels are characterized by the **learning outcomes** at the appropriate level. Each of the following levels includes the **knowledge, skills and competences** defined at the previous level." [...]

<sup>12</sup>Academic Information centre (2013). Implementation of learning outcomes in Latvian educational institutions. Research report. [http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/MR\\_petijuma\\_zinojums\\_2013.pdf](http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/MR_petijuma_zinojums_2013.pdf)

<sup>13</sup>Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.468 „Regulations on the state standard for basic education, standards for basic education subjects and models of basic education programs” (in force since 23.08.2014.), <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=268342>

- General education programs (developed by general education institutions in accordance with the regulatory framework).

In general, when comparing the Cabinet of Ministers regulations that were in effect during the creation of the LQF's from 2009 to 2011 and those that are valid at the time of writing this report, it can be concluded that there is no change in general education in relation to the implementation of the learning outcomes approach. However, one of the priorities of education policy is to transform the content of general education into competences.

The main objectives of primary education programs in 2016 have not changed and they are:

1. provide basic knowledge and basic skills necessary for students within their social and personal life;
2. to provide the basis for further education for the learner;
3. to promote harmonious formation and development of the learner;
4. encouraging a learner to take a responsible attitude towards himself, his family, society, the environment and the state.

The main objectives of general secondary education programs in 2016 have not changed and they are:

1. to provide learners with the knowledge and skills necessary for personal growth and development, civic participation, employment, social integration and continuing education;
2. to promote the perfection of the learner as a mentally, emotionally and physically developed personality and to develop healthy lifestyle habits;
3. to promote the socially active attitude of the learner, preserving and developing his / her language, ethnic and cultural singularity, as well as to improve understanding of the fundamental principles of human rights embodied in the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia and other legal acts;
4. to develop the learner's ability to study and develop independently, to motivate lifelong learning and deliberate career choices.

### **1.2.2. Vocational education**

The normative acts regulating vocational education usually mention the concepts related to learning outcomes - the most common "knowledge" and "skills", after amendments to Article No. 24 of the Professional education law (in force since 25.10.2006), in relation to occupational standards, also appear "attitudes" and "competences" - without defining the concepts.<sup>15</sup> The term "results to be achieved" in Article No. 25 of the Vocational education law on as amended (in force since 15.05.2015) was included in 2015. The explanations of individual terms were gradually introduced, for example, amendments to the Vocational Education Law point No. 2, 8<sup>1</sup> (in force since 1.07.2010) stipulated that the professional competence was "a set of knowledge, skills and responsibility for the pursuit of a professional activity in a given work situation".

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<sup>14</sup>Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.281 „Regulations on the state general secondary education standard, study subject standards and models of educational programs” (in force since 6.06.2013.), <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=257229>

<sup>15</sup>Kinta, G. (2014). The role of learning outcomes in the management of vocational secondary education. Doctoral Thesis. Riga: Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art of University of Latvia.

Vocational education content<sup>16</sup> is regulated by following documents:

- 1) state standard of vocational education;
- 2) the occupational standard or professional qualification requirements if the profession does not require the development of occupational standard, coordinated with the National Tripartite Co-operation Council's Tripartite Co-operation Sub-Council on Professional Education and Employment;
- 3) a description of the structure of the qualifications of the sector, which is developed and updated by a specific institution of the Cabinet of Ministers, in coordination with the sectoral expert council and the trilateral co-operation sub-council of the National tripartite co-operation council on vocational education and employment;
- 4) professional education program (developed by a professional education institution).

As regards the introduction of learning outcomes in vocational education on September 21, 2017, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted amendments to the standard of vocational education<sup>17</sup>. Vocational education envisages the introduction of a more modular approach to educational programs, therefore modifications to the compulsory professional content of vocational secondary education and vocational education also require modules. The modules are based on learning outcomes, consisting of an assessment and demonstration of a combination of knowledge, skills and competences. Article No. 1., Section No. 24 of the Vocational Education Law<sup>18</sup> states that the module is an integral part of the professional qualification, it is based on the learning outcomes as a measurable and verifiable set of knowledge, skills and competences.

Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No.149 „Procedure for the development of occupational standards”<sup>19</sup> (in force since 3.03.2007.), which lost force in 1.01.2016., regulated the contents of the profession standards and development procedures in years 2011 – 2012, when Self-assessment report was prepared and involved parties discussed it.<sup>20</sup> The report describes the importance of occupational standards for learning outcomes in vocational education. In September 2016, new Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 633 "Approval of the occupational standard, requirements for professional qualification (if the profession is not confirmed by the occupational standard) and the Procedure for the Formation of the Qualifications Framework in the Field"<sup>21</sup> were approved (effective as of September 30, 2011). The operation of the new

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<sup>16</sup>Vocational Education Law, Article No. 22 (in force since July 14, 1999, with amendments that came into force on July 6, 2017),<http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=20244>

<sup>17</sup>Amendments to the Cabinet of Ministers June 27, 2000 Regulations No. 211 "Regulations on the State standard for vocational secondary education and the State vocational education standard" Cabinet of Ministers 19.09.2017. regulations No.564/LV, 188 (6015), 21.09.2017. In force since 22.09.2017.<https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=8533>

<sup>18</sup> Vocational Education Law, Article No. 22 (in force since July 14, 1999, with amendments that came into force on July 6, 2017),<http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=20244>

<sup>19</sup><http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=153849>

<sup>20</sup>Academic Information centre and Ministry of Education and Science (2012). Attracting the Latvian education system to the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and the European Qualifications Framework for higher education. Self-assessment report. Version 2. Riga: Academic Information centre and Policy coordination department of Ministry of Education and Science. [http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Latvijas-pasvertejuma-zinojums-2-versija\\_maijs-2012.pdf](http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Latvijas-pasvertejuma-zinojums-2-versija_maijs-2012.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=285032>

regulations has been extended in line with the amendments to the Vocational Education Law, including the development of professional qualification requirements and sectoral qualifications structures; moreover, the regulation refers to the link between these documents and the relevant level of LQF. Unlike the in year 2007 of Cabinet of Ministers regulations, in which the content of occupational standards was defined in Article No. 5 of the basic text and annex, the main provisions of each document are reflected in the new provisions in the annexes (see Table 2).

**Table 2. The main elements of profession standards in years 2010 and 2016**

| <p><b>Cabinet of Ministers Regulations "Procedure for the Development of Profession Standards" (in force since 03.03.2007-01.01.2016)</b></p>   | <p><b>Cabinet of Ministers Regulations „Procedure for the development of the occupational standard, the professional qualification requirement (if the profession is not approved by the occupational standard) and the sector qualification structure development” (in force since 30.09.2016.)</b></p>  |
|---|---|
| <p>5. The working group referred on Article No. 4 of these Regulations determine:</p> <p>5.1. occupational <b>roles and tasks</b>;</p> <p>5.2. <b>skills</b> necessary for carrying out the basic tasks of professional activity;</p> <p>5.3. the <b>knowledge</b> necessary for carrying out the basic tasks of a professional activity (indicate the level of conception, understanding or usage);</p> <p>5.4. the <b>professional competence</b> necessary for carrying out the professional activity (<b>skills, knowledge and responsibility</b> in certain work situations are necessary);</p> <p>5.5. the <b>occupation in the sector's qualifications structure</b> and a description of employment, in which a summary of the main tasks of the professional activity is provided.</p> | <p><u>Annex 1. Occupational standard</u><br/>[...]<br/>3. Summary of the main tasks and duties of the professional activity<br/>4. <b>Skills and attitudes, professional knowledge and competences</b> necessary for the fulfillment of basic tasks and duties of professional activity<br/><i>In table: [...]</i> <b>Competences (level of qualification)</b><br/>5. Skills and attitudes, general knowledge and competences necessary for the fulfillment of basic tasks and duties of professional activity<br/><i>In table: [...]</i> <b>Competences (level of qualification)</b><br/>[...]<br/><u>Annex 2. Professional qualification requirements</u><br/>[...]<br/>3. <b>Skills and attitudes, knowledge and professional competences</b> necessary for the performance of work tasks<br/><i>In table: [...]</i> <b>Competences (level of qualification)</b><br/>[...]<br/><u>Annex 3. Qualification structure of the sector</u><br/>1.General characteristics of the professions in the sector<br/>1.1. Level of qualification<br/>1.2. Description of the qualifications level of the sectoral professions (<b>achievement of learning outcomes: knowledge, skills, competence, autonomy and responsibility</b>) [...]</p> |

Regarding the main elements of the vocational education program. The Vocational Education Law has developed and approved amendments compared to the description of the situation in

the Self-assessment report. The term "results to be achieved" is mentioned in the law in describing the structure of professional education programs, as well as in the explanation of the term "module program" (Article No.1, paragraph No.2<sup>5</sup>). The law defines the term "learning outcomes to be achieved" as an appreciable and demonstrable set of knowledge, skills and competences in the explanation of the term "module" (Article No.1, paragraph No. 2<sup>4</sup>).

**Table 3. The main elements of vocational education programs in years 2010 and 2016**

| <b>Vocational Education Law, Article No. 25 (in force since 01.07.2010-31.12.2010.)</b>  | <b>Vocational Education Law, Article No. 25 (with amendments in force since 06.07.2017)</b>  |
|--|--|
| <p>Article No. 25 of vocational education program</p> <p>(1) The vocational education program is a document regulating vocational education, which according to the standard of a state professional education and occupational standard of a corresponding level of education determines:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) vocational education program <b>tasks</b>;</li> <li>2) the <b>content</b> of the professional education program;</li> <li>3) a <b>plan for the implementation</b> of the professional education program;</li> <li>4) requirements for <b>previously acquired education</b>;</li> <li>5) the <b>personnel, financial and material resources</b> necessary for the implementation of the vocational education program.</li> </ol> <p>(2) A vocational education program is developed by an educational institution in co-ordination with its founder.</p> | <p>Article No. 25 Vocational education program</p> <p>(1) The vocational education program is a document regulating professional education, which according to the state vocational education standard and the professional qualification requirements (if the profession does not require the development of a occupational standard) according to the relevant level of education, determines:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) the <b>objectives</b> of the vocational education program and the <b>results to be achieved</b>;</li> <li>2) the <b>content</b> of the vocational education program;</li> <li>3) a <b>plan for the implementation</b> of the vocational education program;</li> <li>4) requirements for <b>previously acquired education</b>;</li> <li>5) the <b>level</b> of vocational education programs in the <b>Latvian qualifications framework</b>;</li> <li>6) the <b>personnel, financial and material resources necessary</b> for the implementation of the vocational education program.</li> </ol> <p>(2) A vocational education program is developed by an educational institution in co-ordination with its founder.</p> |

A professional qualification examination is organized to determine whether vocational education and training students at the time of study (LQF 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> levels) have acquired the necessary knowledge, skills and competences at the end of vocational education programs. The contents and the course of qualification examinations are regulated by the Cabinet of Ministers regulations<sup>22</sup>. In these provisions, during the period under consideration, no amendments have been made regarding the strengthening of the significance of learning outcomes in professional qualification examinations.

<sup>22</sup>Cabinet of Ministers No.662 „Procedures for the professional qualification examination in accredited professional education programs” (in force since 1.09.2011.), <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=235206>

In the policy planning documents (for example, the concept "Increasing the attractiveness of vocational education and participation of social partners in ensuring the quality of vocational education quality"<sup>23</sup>) to achieve the goal of promoting and modernizing vocational education and training, reforms are being implemented in vocational education organization and content - for example, modularization of vocational education, results in vocational education programs, revised occupational standards, as well as assessment of professional competences acquired outside formal education. Within the framework of the European Social Fund project "Establishment of a sectoral qualification system and increase the efficiency and quality of professional education" (2010-2015), implemented by the State Education Development Agency and the Employers' Confederation of Latvia, the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, the State Education Content Center and the Education Quality The sectoral qualifications system (14 sectors), 60 new occupational standards for professions and 20 basic qualification requirements for specialization were developed, which provided support for the implementation of ECVET principles, 60 new occupational standards for professions, and 56 modular education programs were developed (including 22 vocational education framework programs and 34 continuing education programs).<sup>24</sup> The elaboration of the documents regulating the content of vocational education will continue - in April 2016 the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations on the implementation of specific support objective 8.5.2 "Ensure compliance of vocational education and training with the European Qualifications Framework" were approved.<sup>25</sup> .

For more information on sectoral qualifications frameworks, see Chapter 3.6.

### **1.2.3. Higher education**

Since 2011, learning outcomes are an integral part of higher education programs, however, since 2004, the higher education sector has developed study results based on the Bologna cycle descriptions, which were integrated into the LQF descriptions and approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in October 2010.<sup>26</sup>

Prior to the implementation of the Bologna Process - National Qualifications Framework, ECTS, Diploma supplement, quality assurance, learning outcomes, Latvian higher education qualifications were described using the admission conditions, the duration of the study program, and the content of the study. Conversely, in the framework of the Latvian higher education system, which was integrated into the LQF, each qualification was characterized by the level,

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<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2009). Concept „Increasing the attractiveness of professional education and participation of social partners in ensuring the quality of professional education”, <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/documents/3163>

<sup>24</sup> State Education Development Agency (2015). Recommendations on the implementation of ECVET principles in Latvian professional education.

<sup>25</sup> Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 262 „Operational program "Growth and employment" 8.5.2. Implementing rules for the specific objective of the "Ensuring the compliance of professional education and training with the European qualifications framework" in force since 04.05.2016.), <http://likumi.lv/ta/id/281890-darbibas-programmas-izaugsme-un-nodarbinatiba-8-5-2-specifiska-atbalsta-merka-nodrosinat-profesionalas-izglitiba-atbilstibu>

<sup>26</sup> Academic Information centre, Archimedes foundation and Higher education quality evaluation centre (2015). Automatic recognition between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Comparative study report. [http://www.aic.lv/portal/content/files/AURBELL%20report\\_LV\\_1.pdf](http://www.aic.lv/portal/content/files/AURBELL%20report_LV_1.pdf)



the study results to be achieved and the amount of work required to achieve the study results (in credit points).<sup>27</sup>

The developed level descriptions in higher education, which were integrated into the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations in 2010 with amendments (currently the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No.322 "Regulations on the classification of education in Latvia" (13.06.2017), correspond to LQF 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> levels.<sup>28</sup>

The content of higher education is governed by the following documents:

- State education standards, i.e., the state standard of academic education<sup>29</sup>, the state standard of first level professional higher education<sup>30</sup> and the state standard of second level professional higher education<sup>31</sup> (determined by the Cabinet of Ministers);
- Professional higher education programs - occupational standards<sup>32</sup> (determined by the Cabinet of Ministers);
- Higher education study programs (developed by higher education institutions in accordance with the regulatory framework).

The Law on Higher Education<sup>33</sup> establishes the main elements of the structure of the higher education study program. Since 2010, this Law has made a number of amendments introducing the concept of "study results", i.e. "a set of knowledge, skills and competences acquired at the end of a study program, a study module or a study course" (with amendments that came into force on 01.08.2011) and supplementing the elements of the study program structure.

Cabinet of Ministers 16.04.2013. Regulations No.202 "Procedures for the issuance of state-recognized higher education certificates"<sup>34</sup>, which came into force on 19.04.2013 changes were made to the content of the Diploma Supplement (Annex 7)<sup>35</sup>, i.e., 3.2, 4.2. and point 8, with a reference to the study results.

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<sup>27</sup>Academic Information centre and Ministry of Education and Science (2012). Referencing of the Latvian education system to the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European higher education area. Self-assessment report. Version 2. Riga: Academic Information centre and Policy coordination department of Ministry of Education and Science [http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Latvijas-pasvertejuma-zinojums-2-versija\\_maijs-2012.pdf](http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Latvijas-pasvertejuma-zinojums-2-versija_maijs-2012.pdf)

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.240 „Regulations on the national academic standard of education" (13.05.2014.)

<sup>30</sup> Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.141 „Regulations on the state standard of the first level professional higher education" (20.03.2001.)

<sup>31</sup> Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.512 „Regulations on the state standard of the second level professional higher education" (26.08.2014.)

<sup>32</sup> Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.461 „ Regulations on Profession Classifier, basic tasks and essential qualification requirements for the profession and procedure for the use and updating of the Profession classifier" (in force since 1.06.2010.)

<sup>33</sup> Law on Institutions of Higher Education (in force since 1.12.1995., the last amendments came into force 15.07.2016.)

<sup>34</sup> Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.202 „Procedure for issuing state-recognized certificates of higher education" (in force since 19.04.2013.)

<sup>35</sup> Prior to that, the content of the Diploma Supplement was regulated by the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.656 „ Procedure for issuing state-recognized higher education certificates" Annex No.6 (in force since 06.10.2007.)

In 2014, the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations on state education standards in higher education were reviewed and approved, which have a direct impact on the content of higher education study programs. Firstly, new Cabinet of Ministers was approved on May 13, 2014. Regulations No.240 "Regulations on the State Standard of Academic Education"<sup>36</sup>, in which learning outcomes are included in the strategic goal of study programs.

Secondly, the Cabinet of Ministers was approved on August 26, 2014. Regulations No. 512 "Regulations on the national standard for second level professional higher education"<sup>37</sup>, effective from 09/12/2014, in which the achievement of learning outcomes is identified as one of the main tasks of study programs. The rules emphasize learning outcomes or related concepts on several occasions:

In its turn, the Cabinet of Ministers March 20, 2001. Regulations No. 141 "Regulations on the national standard for first level professional higher education"<sup>38</sup> have not been amended or a new version of the provisions has been developed to introduce the concept of learning outcomes. Only in point No. 9.5. The "basic skills, knowledge, skills and abilities" are referred to the basic principles of the evaluation of the first level professional higher education:

Taking into account amendments to the regulatory enactments, from 2011, the higher education institutions reviewed the implemented study programs in order to implement the learning outcomes in them and to meet the requirements for licensing and accreditation.<sup>39</sup>

## **1.3. QUALITY ASSURANCE**

### **1.3.1. General and vocational education**

Educational program accreditation - acquisition of rights to an educational institution or another institution designated by this law to issue a state-recognized educational document for the acquisition of education corresponding to a particular educational program. In the course of accreditation, the quality of implementation of the relevant educational program is assessed (Education Law Article No.1., Point No.10.). Consequently, the quality assessment is linked to the accreditation process, which evaluates the quality assurance in the particular educational institution. Several amendments to laws and regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers have been made in order to promote talent-developing and competitive education, to reduce the administrative burden for public administration and educational institutions, and to raise public awareness about the quality of education and its provision. The amendments stipulated that, when applying for accreditation, the self-assessment report of educational institutions and examination centers should be coordinated with the founder of the institution, and the founder of the educational institution has the right to apply to the educational institution for accreditation. It is also established that the self-assessment report should be available on the website of the public institution or its founder and must be available until the end of the accreditation period. In

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<sup>36</sup> <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=266187>

<sup>37</sup> <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=268761>

<sup>38</sup> <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=6397>

<sup>39</sup> Academic Information Centre (2013). Implementation of learning outcomes in Latvian educational institutions. Research report. [http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/MR\\_petijuma\\_zinojums\\_2013.pdf](http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/MR_petijuma_zinojums_2013.pdf)

order to ensure the regularity of the evaluation of the quality of the activities of educational institutions implementing the curriculum at an intermediate level, it is decided that they will be accredited for a period of six years. The competence of the NEP, trade unions and other associations or foundations has also been determined to delegate sector experts to participate in the licensing and accreditation of professional education establishments, examination centers and professional education programs, and to pass professional qualification exams, to issue opinions on the decision on licensing and accreditation of professional education programs.

During this period, **new normative acts** related to the assessment of the quality and accreditation of general education and vocational education, which strengthens the State Education Quality Service, were also adopted. The new regulation sets a new goal for the quality service - to provide quality and legal education through monitoring the quality of education and providing support for the implementation of the education process. The Quality Service coordinates the implementation of the European Quality Assurance Framework (EQAVET) and the common indicators for the quality evaluation of vocational education in ensuring the quality of vocational education. The functions of the quality service are expanded, including the provision and organization of the assessment of the professional activities of the heads of state and local government educational institutions (except universities and colleges).<sup>40</sup>

The new regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers<sup>41</sup> essentially preserve the procedure of accreditation of the former educational institutions, examination centers and educational programs, however, there are several changes. For example, the accreditation of educational institutions and educational programs without the external evaluation by the expert commission will no longer take place unless the Education Program that is classified as an educational program for which an accredited Educational Program is already implemented by the Education Authority is submitted for accreditation. An important upgrade is the introduction of evaluation of heads of educational institutions in Latvia. The regulations also include International Quality of Vocational Education (EQAVET) indicators and include norms for implementing OECD recommendations. Changes in the procedure for the accreditation of educational institutions and educational programs provide for the quality right to initiate emergency accreditation and the assessment of the head of an emergency educational institution on the initiative of the founder of the educational institution or the Ministry of Education and Science. Following the OECD recommendation to promote the involvement of the educational institution's founder in the process of self-assessment of educational institutions, the role of the founder of the educational institution (most often the municipality) has been reinforced in ensuring the quality of education. The founder should regularly monitor and provide support to the educational institution for the implementation of the recommendations of the accreditation experts, but in the event that the educational program is accredited for only two years, an action plan should be elaborated for eliminating the shortcomings identified in the report of the accreditation expert commission and introducing recommendations. In the event of a failure to comply with this plan, it will be possible to initiate an emergency accreditation process.

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<sup>40</sup> <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=256415>

<sup>41</sup> <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/287602>

The provisions raise the requirements for the decision on the accreditation of an educational institution or educational program. For example, it has been determined that the quality service will decide on the refusal of accreditation if one of the criteria is: "Study content - educational programs implemented by the institution", "Teaching and learning", "Equipment and material and technical resources"; "Human Resources", "Providing Educational Security", "Educational Institution Management and Personnel Management" is rated "insufficient".

The rules also include changes to the accreditation process: 1) the decision on the extension of the accreditation period may be taken, but not longer than six months, if the term of the accreditation expires during the reorganization of the educational institution; 2) an educational institution, by September 1, every year, updates the educational institution self-assessment report and its availability on the educational institutions or the founder's website; 3) the educational institution submits information on the implementation of the recommendations indicated in the report of the expert commission by February 1 (now before December 1); 4) the founder of the educational establishment coordinates, as well as regularly supervises and provides support to the educational institution in the implementation of the recommendations; 5) the quality service decides on emergency accreditation and assessment of the head of an emergency educational institution if the proposal of the founder of the educational institution or the Ministry of Education is received and if it is established that the action plan submitted by the founder is inadequate to remedy the deficiencies indicated in the report of the expert commission and to implement the recommendations; 6) the proposal of the accreditation commission may differ from the proposal of the expert commission.

### **Description of current accreditation procedures (compared to 2011) - internal and external quality assurance of education**

The process of assessing the quality of education in Latvia includes both international (participation in international educational studies OECD PISA, OECD TALIS, etc.) and the state (accreditation and licensing, centralized exams, testing and diagnostic works, national researches on education policy issues, teacher assessment, management and monitoring) and the level of schools (self-assessment and quality assurance in school work, electronic school management systems, e.g. e-class, etc.).

The system of quality assurance and assessment of education still includes the internal and external evaluation of the activities and educational programs of the educational institution as well as the assessment of the professional activities of the heads of educational institutions.

**Internal evaluation** is an educational institution's self-assessment, and within the framework of accreditation, the educational institution must prepare a self-assessment report, which is a prerequisite for accreditation of the institution and programs. The application for accreditation and the self-assessment report are the basis for the initiation of the accreditation process in the institution and may also be submitted electronically, signed with a secure electronic signature. An institution for the accreditation may also be nominated by its founder and the self-assessment report must be consistent with the founder of the educational institution. In order to provide interested parties with the opportunity to obtain information about the quality of school

life, the self-assessment report must be set out on the website of the public institution or its founder and must be available until the end of the accreditation period.

**An external evaluation** involves evaluating experts at an educational institution. In its preparation, the commission of accreditation experts implements visits to educational institutions, discussions with school staff, founders, pupils, parents, school self-governing bodies and social partners, as well as provides methodological support to the educational institution for self-assessment and gives an external view of the work of the educational institution, promoting the continuous improvement process. The accreditation of educational institutions and programs, which is an essential element of development and self-development of the educational environment, is based on the report of the expert commission and the proposal to the accreditation commission for accreditation or its refusal.

The Accreditation experts commission consists of representatives of various institutions. It is created by a quality service and is independent from the educational institution. The expert commission may include representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, the VISC or quality service, local government education specialists and representatives of other institutions, incl. other representatives of the ministry, municipalities, non-governmental organizations, employers, craftsmen and trade unions, as well as educational institutions, with the exception of representatives of the accredited institution who have acquired the program for the improvement of professional competence (A) on the evaluation of the quality of the implementation of education institutions and the implementation of education programs.

In view of the fact that the vocational education process is oriented towards the acquisition of a specific professional qualification in order to qualitatively carry out quality assessment in professional education accreditation, expert commissions should include representatives of employers and employees of the relevant sectors - associations, unions, trade unions, The delegates of the Chamber of Crafts and Industry Certification and Surveillance Authority (if any), ensuring their preparation and systematic and compulsory participation.

Since the preparation of the previous report, **progress has been made** so far in evaluating the quality of general education and professional education by improving the competence of accreditation experts in the quality assessment, the work of accreditation expert commissions, the quality of reports of expert commissions, and understanding in education institutions about the quality assurance process, its meaning and self-esteem as a tool for development and improvement, thus providing the basic conditions for a culture of quality in the school system.

### **Criteria for the assessment of education quality (compared with year 2011)**

Compared to Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 852, during the reporting period, the quality criteria of the educational institution subject to accreditation and the quality criteria of the educational institution's performance or educational program have changed only slightly: the criteria 4.1 and 4.2 have been separated and the criterion 5.2 has been supplemented (see Table 4).

**Table 4. Scope and quality criteria of an educational institution to be evaluated in accreditation** (Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 831, Point No. 22)

| <b>Educational institution areas of activity</b>                                       | <b>Quality criteria</b>   |
|--|---|
| Field 1. Content of the study (educational programs implemented by the institution)    | -   |
| Field 2. Teaching and learning   | 2.1. the quality of teaching  |
|  | 2.2. learning quality   |
|  | 2.3. evaluation as part of the learning process                               |
| Field 3. Educational achievements  | 3.1. learner achievements in daily work                                       |
|  | 3.2. achievements of students in state tests                                  |
| Field 4. Support for learners  | 4.1. psychological support, social pedagogical support                        |
|  | <b>4.2 guaranteeing the safety of learners (safety and labour protection)</b> |
|  | 4.3. support for personality building   |
|  | 4.4. support for career education   |
|  | 4.5. support for the differentiation of teaching work                         |
|  | 4.6. support for learners with special needs                                  |
|  | 4.7. cooperation with a learner's family                                      |
| Field 5. The institution's environment   | 5.1. microclimate   |
|  | 5.2. physical environment and <b>accessibility of the environment</b>         |
| Field 6. Authority's resources   | 6.1. equipment and material technical resources                               |
|  | 6.2. human resources  |
| Field 7. Organization of the work of the institution, management and quality assurance | 7.1. Self-assessment of the institution's work and planning of development    |
|  | 7.2. institution management work and personnel management                     |
|  | 7.3. institution's cooperation with other institutions                        |

### **The role of the LQF in quality assurance**

The basic document of the educational content and process organization is an educational program, the integral part of which is the objectives, tasks and planned (achievable, learning) results of the educational program, which characterize the content of the particular education to a specific level of the EQF / LQF. Consequently, in assessing the quality of the implementation of educational programs and in the process of accreditation, it is necessary to evaluate the content and objectives of the program, as well as the compliance with the EQF / LQF, including whether appropriate requirements for the content, outcomes, teaching and learning process are set in the educational institution.

## 1.3.2. Higher education

### Changes in regulatory enactments

Compared to 2012, there have been significant changes in the quality assessment of higher education. In general, one of the main objectives of the reform is to reinvigorate the document "Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area", developed by the European association for quality assurance in higher education (ENQA). Accordingly, their accreditation agencies should be independent institutions so that their decisions cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other interested parties. In order to achieve this, a decision was taken from 2015 on the transfer of this function to the Academic Information Centre through the establishment of the Higher Education Quality Agency (HEQA) within it. Until then, from 2013 to 2015, accreditation was organized by the Ministry of Education and Science. Even before (1995 - 2013), during the preparation of the previous self-evaluation report, the accreditation of higher education institutions was carried out by the Higher Education Quality Assessment Center.

In order to include ESG standards and institutional changes in the regulatory enactments, changes were made to the Law on Higher Education Establishments, as well as a number of Cabinet of Ministers regulations were established and approved, which determine the licensing and accreditation procedures, on the basis of which developed methodologies for organizing licensing of study programs, assessment of study courses and assessment of higher education institutions and college assessment.

Higher education quality assurance system consists of licensing of study programs and accreditation of study areas, which includes internal quality assessment and external quality assessment.

### External quality assessment

#### Licensing of study programs

According to Article No. 1 of the Law on Higher Education, the licensing of a study program is "the granting of a right to a higher education institution, college or their branches to implement a certain study program". The licensing procedure is determined by Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 408 "Study Program Licensing Regulations"<sup>42</sup>. In Law on Higher Education Article No. 55.<sup>2</sup> the licensing process of the study program is marked. A license is required for the implementation of any study program, upon its receipt, during the year, the implementation of the relevant study program is started.

An application for licensing is submitted by the University / College to the Academic Information Centre, which organizes the licensing process. The application must be accompanied by information about the institution of higher education, the study program, the teaching staff

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<sup>42</sup><http://likumi.lv/ta/id/275563-studiju-programmu-licencesanas-noteikumi>

involved in its implementation and other aspects.<sup>43</sup> Once the documents have been verified and all the necessary information has been received, the agency starts the evaluation procedure. The assessment of the study program is carried out by two industry experts, approved by the licensing commission. After an assessment visit to university college / college, experts draw up a joint opinion. The licensing commission becomes aware of this and takes a decision on licensing or refusal to grant a license.

If the study program corresponds to the study direction of the higher education institution or college and other requirements of the regulatory enactments, a decision is made on its licensing and the Academic Information Centre issues a license signed by the Minister of Education and Science to the higher education institution or college. (Law on Higher Education Article No. 55.<sup>2</sup> Point No. 2.)

If a decision is made to refuse to license the study program, the higher education institution or college is entitled to submit an application for licensing of the study program corresponding to the corresponding field of study not earlier than after six months (Law on Higher Education Article No. 55.<sup>2</sup> Point No. 5.).

In order to receive a license for the implementation of the study program in a new field of study, the university college / college must before submit an application to the Ministry of Education and Science for the opening of a new study direction. This decision is taken by the Cabinet of Ministers when assessing the resources of a higher education institution or college, as well as the conformity of the study area with the priorities of state development.

### **Accreditation of the study direction**

According to Article No. 1 of the Law on Higher Educational Establishments, the accreditation of study direction is "an inspection with the purpose of determining the quality of the resources of an institution of higher education or college and the ability to implement a study programme corresponding to a specific study direction in accordance with regulatory enactments. The accreditation of the study direction of an institution of higher education or college gives the institution of higher education or college the right to issue a State-recognised diploma of higher education for successful acquisition of a study programme corresponding to the relevant study direction."

The procedure for accreditation of study courses is determined by the Law on Higher Education Article No. 55.<sup>3</sup>, Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 407 "Regulations for the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions, Colleges and Study Areas"<sup>44</sup> and Methodology of evaluation of study directions<sup>45</sup>:

The study direction of an institution of higher education or college is to be accredited within two years after the implementation of the first study program corresponding to this field of study has

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<sup>43</sup> <http://www.aic.lv/portal/content/files/SPLicencesanasOrganizesanasMetodika.PDF>

<sup>44</sup> <http://likumi.lv/ta/id/275560-augstskolu-koledzu-un-studiju-virzienu-akreditacijas-noteikumi>

<sup>45</sup> [http://www.aic.lv/portal/content/files/Studiju\\_virzienu\\_novertesanas\\_metodika\\_30032016.pdf](http://www.aic.lv/portal/content/files/Studiju_virzienu_novertesanas_metodika_30032016.pdf)



been commenced (Law on Higher Education Article No. 55.<sup>3</sup> Point No. 1.). Accreditation of study areas is organized by the Academic Information Centre (Point No. 1<sup>1</sup>.) in accordance with the study directions specified in Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 407 and the procedure for their accreditation.<sup>46</sup>

In order to initiate the study field accreditation, the university prepares an application, which is accompanied by information about the study programs corresponding to the higher education institution and the study field, as well as the self-assessment report of the study area. After the accreditation application and document examination, the agency establishes a team of five experts. After consulting the documentation and assessment visits to the university / college, they agree on the assessment and prepare a joint opinion on the basis of which the Accreditation commission decides on the accreditation and its duration. The study course is accredited to the relevant institution of higher education or college for a period of six years. If, in the course of accreditation of a field study, the non-compliance of the higher education institution or college resources and capabilities with the requirements of regulatory enactments is identified, but it is eliminated within the term of accreditation of the study field, the respective field of study at the higher education institution or college is accredited for two years. During this period, the university or college should remedy the deficiencies identified and report on the correction of these shortcomings. A university or college may also propose to close a separate study program corresponding to this course of study. If a decision is made on the accreditation of a field of study at a university or college, an accreditation sheet of the study area signed by the Minister of Education and Science is issued.

### **Accreditation of universities and colleges**

The Law on Higher Education establishes that the **accreditation** of an institution of higher education or college is **"an examination of the organization of a higher education institution or college and the quality of resources which results in it being awarded a state-recognized university or college status"**<sup>47</sup>. In accordance with Law on Higher Education Article No. 9 "University college or college accreditation", stipulated in the second part of the "University and college accreditation", is entitled to issue state-recognized diplomas for the acquisition of the relevant study program if the following conditions are met:

- 1) the relevant university or college is accredited;
- 2) the relevant study program is accredited;
- 3) The Constitution of the University or the College's Charter has been approved by the Saeima or the Cabinet of Ministers respectively.

The **accreditation procedure** is established in Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 407 "Regulations for the accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges and study directions" and the methodology for the evaluation of higher education institutions and colleges<sup>48</sup>. Similarly to the study area of accreditation, an application has been prepared by the higher education

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<sup>46</sup>Cabinet of Ministers 14 July, 2015 Regulation No. 407 "Regulations for the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions, Colleges and Study Areas"

<sup>47</sup>Law on Higher Education Article No. 1.

<sup>48</sup>[http://www.aic.lv/portal/content/files/Augstskolu\\_un\\_koledzu\\_novertesanas\\_metodika.PDF](http://www.aic.lv/portal/content/files/Augstskolu_un_koledzu_novertesanas_metodika.PDF)

institution with detailed information and a self-assessment report. Upon access to the documents, the agency establishes a panel of seven experts that evaluates the information submitted and, after an assessment visit, draws up a joint opinion. The Higher Education Council decides on the accreditation of the higher education institution / college: A decision on the accreditation of an institution of higher education or college shall be taken by the council if, at the date of the decision, not less than half of the study courses in which the higher education institution or college implements study programs are accredited.

After receiving the opinion of the Higher Education Council on accreditation, the Academic Information Centre issues an accreditation document signed by the Minister of Education and Science. If the higher education institution or college does not provide the study base, information base, quality of studies in accordance with the requirements referred to in the first part of the Law on Higher Education Article No. 55 or in the activities of the higher education institution or college, significant violations of the regulatory enactments have been identified, the Minister of Education and Science has the right to issue an order on the extraordinary accreditation of the higher education institution or college , accreditation time, cancellation or cancellation of accreditation. Before issuing an order, the Higher Education Board issues a reasoned opinion<sup>49</sup>.

**Compared to 2012, there have been significant changes in the accreditation of universities:**

- One of them is the transition from accreditation of study programs to accreditation of study courses from May 2013. All Latvian study programs are divided into 29 study courses.<sup>50</sup>
- From July 15, 2015, licensing and accreditation is organized by the Higher Education Quality Agency (HEQA), which was established within the framework of the Academic Information Centre. Until then, accreditation was carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science, which took it from the Higher Education Quality Assessment Center (organized accreditation from 1994 until April 2013). One of the main objectives for the creation of HEQA was to achieve the independence of the accreditation agency in accordance with the ESG ("Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area").
- Members of the Accreditation and Study Program Licensing Commission are selected by competition according to pre-established criteria (formerly, delegates from certain organizations). Expert selection is also carried out according to predefined conditions.
- The assessment and quality assessment of the requirements of regulatory enactments have been separated.
- The expert group prepares a joint opinion after an assessment, not an individual one.
- In general, all the licensing and accreditation procedures and the functions and rights of the individuals and institutions involved are defined in more detail, thus making the assessment process clearer and more objective.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>According to Article No. 9, Paragraph three of the Law on Higher Education Establishments

<sup>50</sup>Pp.12.-15. [http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/LKI\\_situacijas\\_izvertejums\\_2013.pdf](http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/LKI_situacijas_izvertejums_2013.pdf)

<sup>51</sup>[http://www.aic.lv/portal/content/files/All\\_14102015\\_Jolanta.pdf](http://www.aic.lv/portal/content/files/All_14102015_Jolanta.pdf)

## Internal quality assessment

External and internal quality assessment in higher education institutions is closely linked, as self-assessment reports are analyzed by accrediting study courses and universities / colleges. In accordance with the Law on Higher Education<sup>52</sup> Higher education institutions implement their internal quality assurance systems, in which the following activities are carried out: 1) establishes policies and procedures for ensuring the quality of higher education; 2) develop mechanisms for the formation, internal approval, monitoring of their activities and periodic inspection of their study programs; 3) establish and publicize criteria, conditions and procedures for assessing the student's progress, which makes it possible to ascertain the intended achievement of the study results; 4) establish internal procedures and mechanisms for ensuring the qualifications and work quality of the academic staff; 5) ensures that information about student achievements, graduates' employment, students' satisfaction with the study program, the efficiency of the academic staff, available study materials and their costs, and the essential indicators of the University's activities are collected and analyzed.

The content and structure of the self-assessment report must comply with the requirements specified in Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 407<sup>53</sup>, it must be prepared in accordance with the guidelines of the Academic Information Centre.

### Criteria for the assessment of education quality (compared with 2011)

#### Licensing of study programs

When adopting new Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 408 "Regulations for the Study Program Licensing", the evaluation criteria of study programs as defined in the previous regulations have been taken over (see Appendix 1). One of the most significant changes is the requirement for each academic staff member to prepare three publications in reviewable editions instead of five, but six years, as well as that at least three doctoral students involved in the implementation of the doctoral program should have experts approved by the Latvian Council of Science in the relevant field.

#### Accreditation of higher education institutions and colleges

Annex 3 of Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 407 lists the criteria for the assessment of a university and college. For a comparison with the previous version see Appendix 2. In general, the new rules are more detailed, they specify more precisely the requirements for the material and technical base and the staff of the universities, and include the ESG standards for internal quality assurance.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Law on Education Article No.2<sup>1</sup><http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=37967>

<sup>53</sup>Cabinet of Ministers 14 July, 2015 Regulation No. 407 "Regulations on university, college and study field accreditation" Point No. 2.5.

<sup>54</sup>Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). (2015). Brussels, Belgium. 10 p.

## Evaluation of study directions

Annex 9 of Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 407 lists the criteria for the assessment of the field of study. For a comparison with the rules that are in force until now, see Appendix 3. Similarly, to the assessment of universities and colleges, the new criteria for the assessment of study fields are more detailed than the previous ones and include advanced ESG standards for internal quality assurance.<sup>55</sup>

## Responsible institutions for ensuring higher education quality

**Higher Education Quality Agency (HEQA<sup>56</sup>)**, mainly ensures the licensing of study programs, accreditation of higher education institutions and study areas, quality monitoring / development.

**Higher Education Quality Assurance Council**-consisting of the State Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Science, Director of the Center, Chairman of the Council of Higher Education (hereinafter - the Council), Chairman of the Council of Rectors, Chair of the Association of Latvian Colleges, Director General of the Employers' Confederation of Latvia, President of the Students' Association of Latvia, Chairman of the Latvian Council of Science, Chairman of the Board of Agricultural Cooperation Council of Latvia, Representative of the National Economy Council, Chairwoman of the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, President of the Latvian Medical Association, registered with the European Higher Education Quality Assurance Register.

## Ministry of Education and Science

In the process of accreditation of the study program or accreditation of the study field, at the request of the agency, provide data on the higher education institutions or colleges that are included in the registers of the Ministry of Education and Science. Upon receipt of a copy of the study accreditation or licensing commission decision, it issues to the agency a license / study program accreditation page signed by the Ministry of Education and Science signed by the Ministry of Education and Science and issued to the higher education institution or college.

**Council of Higher Education(CHE)<sup>57</sup>** is an independent organization, 12 members of which are approved by the Saeima for four years. The Higher Education Council consists of one delegate from the Latvian academy of Sciences, the Association of the Arts and Crafts, the Latvian Association of Education Directors, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Association of Latvian Colleges, the Council of Rectors, the Association of Professors of the Latvian Higher Education Institutions, the Employers' Confederation, the Latvian Education and Science Unions, a representative of the Latvian Student Association, as well as a delegated representative of local governments and other legal entities and natural persons.

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup><http://www.aika.lv/>

<sup>57</sup><http://www.aip.lv/>

CHE decides on the accreditation of higher education institutions / colleges and submits it to the Ministry of Education and Science for approval. The Council is also entitled to "get acquainted with the assessment and accreditation materials of any higher education institution" and "to request extra-accreditation for any higher education institution or its field of study"<sup>58</sup>.

### **Latvian Council of Science**

At the request of the Agency, an opinion on the doctoral program submitted for licensing is provided in accordance with Article No. 16, Point No. 7 of the Law on Scientific Activity.

### **International context**

Since April 2015 CHE is ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) affiliated member. CHE is as well INQAAHE (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education) and CEENQA (Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education) member.

Preparations have been launched to meet the preconditions and to submit an application for the inclusion of the CHE in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education) and, therefore, to become a fully-fledged ENQA member after an international assessment.

### **The role of the LQF in quality assurance**

The creation of the LQF has helped to define specific planned learning outcomes, according to which the content of the courses and the assessment system is developed (see Chapter 4 for more on the significance of learning outcomes in Latvian education system). This is also one of the aspects that are being analyzed in the assessment of study areas and higher education institutions. Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 407 stipulates that one of the aspects of the internal quality assurance system to be assessed is the compliance of study programs with the following requirement: "Study programs must be designed in such a way that they correspond to the goals set, including the planned learning outcomes. The qualification obtained in the study program must be clearly defined and explained and should concern the correct level of the national higher education qualification framework and, consequently, the qualification framework of the European Higher Education Area".

The importance of defining learning outcomes in quality assurance was highlighted by representatives of higher education institutions in the interviews conducted in the study: "The results of interviews with representatives of higher education institutions indicate that learning outcomes have become an important criterion in recent years, since their description for study subjects has become a mandatory requirement. Representatives of the Higher Education Institutions Administration pointed out that the formulation of learning outcomes was a time consuming and complex process that has not yet been completed, but has helped to improve

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<sup>58</sup>Law on Institutions of Higher Education, Article No. 71. Points No. 1. and No. 2. <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=37967>

internal quality control, it is easier to prevent duplication of study subjects and to identify shortcomings or learning disadvantages within the curriculum".<sup>59</sup>

The development of the LQF in various ways facilitates the internationalization of Latvian education, the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad and mobility, which in turn contributes to its qualitative growth.

## 1.4. Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Recommendation of the Council of the European Union of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012 / C 398/01) requires Member States to introduce, by 2018 at the latest, measures for the recognition of non-formal learning providing knowledge, skills, as well as the opportunity to obtain full or partial qualifications. Educational institutions should facilitate access to formal education and training based on learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning and, where appropriate and where applicable, grant exemptions or credits for relevant learning outcomes from this learning. The recommendation states that the procedure for recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes should include four steps: identification, documentation, evaluation and certification, and that the recognition process must be in line with national qualifications frameworks and the European Qualifications Framework.<sup>60</sup>

### 1.4.1. Vocational education

In Latvia, since 2011, a regulatory framework has been developed for the assessment of professional competence acquired outside the formal education system (hereinafter - assessment of professional competence)<sup>61</sup>. These provisions do not apply to professions whose assessment of professional competence is regulated by special legislation, for example, the Law "On Regulated Professions and the Recognition of Professional Qualifications" (in force since 20.07.2001). The recognition and assessment of non-formal learning is provided in the professional qualifications that can be obtained through formal education, such as vocational basic education, vocational education, vocational secondary education, professional continuing education and professional higher education. The professional qualification assessment of professional competence in the professional qualification examination is applied to the second to fourth qualification level professional qualifications of the LQF. Assessment of professional competence is an opportunity for a person to certify the professional competence acquired

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<sup>59</sup>Academic Information centre (2013). Implementation of learning outcomes in Latvian educational institutions. Research report., 31. p. [http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/MR\\_petijuma\\_zinojums\\_2013.pdf](http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/MR_petijuma_zinojums_2013.pdf)

<sup>60</sup>The text of the recommendation is available at:<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/LV/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52012PC0485>

<sup>61</sup>Cabinet of Ministers February 22, 2011 Regulations No. 146 „Kārtība, kādā novērtē ārpusformālās izglītības sistēmas apgūto profesionālo kompetenci”

during his lifetime and, having passed the professional qualification examination, to obtain a state-recognized professional qualification document. A person has the opportunity to obtain a full qualification, but it is not linked to the confirmation of the content of the relevant formal vocational education program.

## **Identification**

The procedure does not directly envisage the identification of the applicant's learning outcomes and the applicant has no obligation to document his / her previous professional competence. Individual professional experience is found in free consultations on the requirements of the profession standard and the conduct of the professional qualification examination. An educational institution that has received a delegation for the assessment of professional competence is provided by a competent consultant. The consultant must prepare the bidder for the evaluation process, informing the evaluation procedure, content, evaluators and evaluation criteria. During the free consultation, a debate and an interview, which is an aid measure for identifying the results of a person's previous learning, which is in line with the recommendations of the Council of Europe on the validation of formal and informal learning, can be used to identify the applicant's professional competence.

The goal of identifying the results of non-formal and informal learning is to identify the person's ability and confidence to certify his or her practical skills and the level of theoretical knowledge in a particular professional qualification in accordance with this standard of profession.

## **Documentation**

For documentation, in order to make the individual's experience more visible, the requirements of the applicant's previous education, employment and age are not directly specified in the regulatory enactments. In free consultations, the applicant is provided with information on the knowledge and skills specified in the relevant occupational standard, as well as the possibility to establish the applicant's professional competence. This is ensured by the use of a declarative method by which the consultant will discuss with the applicant how professional competences are applied in the work environment. The declarative method helps the applicant to prove the level of his professional competence, ascertain to what extent the applicant's specific professional competence is developed. In order to determine the intensity of application of the applicant's professional competences in the work environment and the way of acquiring professional competence, it is possible to conduct the applicant's "skill audit" in the form of self-assessment. Personal experience is documented individually or with the help of a consultant. Using the applicant's self-assessment questionnaire, the professional competences acquired in work and personal experience are determined according to the profession standard.

## **Assessment**

The results of non-formal and informal learning of a person are assessed in the professional qualification examination, the content of which is developed and organized by the authorized institution or educational institution that received the delegation. The assessment process is

organized similar to those who have completed the formal education program, which is in line with the principles defined in the European Guide for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, rights of the parties involved, the provision of mutual trust and the rule of law. The effective process of evaluating the professional competence depends on the professional cooperation of the consultant and the professional qualification examination commission and the content of the qualitative professional qualification examination prepared in accordance with the profession standard. The objective and professional approach of the professional qualification examination commission to the process of evaluating applicants can be a decisive factor in the quality and reliability of the results of the assessment of professional competence. Each evaluation process is unique because it provides an individual approach to assessing the applicant's professional competence.

### **Certification**

The results of the assessment of professional competence can serve as a basis for the recognition of part or all of the qualifications. It is a possibility for a person to certify the professional competence acquired during his lifetime and, having passed the professional qualification examination, to obtain a state-recognized professional qualification document, which is a document certifying the professional competence of a state-determined model, which ensures opportunities to work in the corresponding profession.

Between 2011 and 2016, more than 3,800 applicants have used the opportunity to assess their professional competence in 50 professional qualifications, which is one half of the opportunities offered by educational institutions.

Analyzing the statistics of the professional qualifications obtained by the applicants, the information provided by the educational institutions about the selection of applicants for the assessment of professional competence in particular professions and the data collected by the applicants, it is established that the public demand for obtaining a specific professional qualification is determined by: 1) requirements of the regulatory enactments regarding the qualification of persons working in the sector; 2) employers' interest in employing skilled professionals; 3) the compliance of education of employees of state institutions with the requirements of professional qualification; 4) interest of the professions demanded in the labour market.

The assessment of professional competence is an option that is used not only by employees, jobseekers and other stakeholders, but also by employers.

### **1.4.2. Higher Education**

Acknowledgment of the learning outcomes achieved through formal education and professional experience in higher education in Latvia has been started since 2012, it is based on European recommendations and the following Latvian normative acts:

a) Law on Higher education;



b) Cabinet of Ministers January 10, 2012 Regulations No. 36 "Rules for the recognition of learning outcomes achieved in previous education or professional experience".

In the higher education, identification of the results of the non-formal and informal learning of a person - documentation - evaluation - certification is provided in accordance with the procedures established by the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No.36 of January 10, 2012 "Regulations on the Recognition of Study Results Achieved in Prior Education or Professional Experience". The Regulations determine the procedure for evaluating and recognizing the learning outcomes achieved in previous education or professional experience (in higher education) and the criteria for recognition. In turn, those study results that are achieved when studying in the study program can be recognized in accordance with Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 16 of November 16, 2004. 932 "Procedure for the commencement of studies at the later stages of studies" (not according to the procedure specified in Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 36 of January 10, 2012 "Rules for the Recognition of Study Results Achieved in Advanced Education or Professional Experience").

An institution of higher education or college shall evaluate the results of the studies achieved in a person's previous education or professional experience and, if they meet the requirements of the respective study program, recognize them, as well as give appropriate credits. The study results achieved in professional experience can be recognized in professional or academic study programs, besides, only 30 percent of the professional or academic study program credits can be awarded, recognizing the study results achieved in professional experience. A decision on the recognition of learning outcomes achieved in previous education or professional experience is accepted by the commission for recognition of study results established by a higher education establishment or college. In case of recognition, the commission assigns a certain number of credit points to the candidate according to the achieved study results. Learning outcomes achieved and recognized in previous education or professional experience cannot be counted as final examinations, state examinations, final examinations - qualification exam or doctoral thesis for the respective study program.

The study results achieved in professional experience can be recognized only in the part of the study program which consists of practice, in addition, these study results must be achieved in the field of professional activity that corresponds to the thematic area of education in the study program. The study results achieved in professional experience can also be recognized in the study program's study course or study module, in which it is possible to acquire practical knowledge, skills and competence. On the other hand, the results obtained in previous education can be recognized if they correspond to the higher education level and are achieved:

- Professional continuing education program, which acquires the opportunity to obtain Latvian 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> professional qualification level (LQF / EQF 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> level);
- Separate study program in the study course or study module, which the person has acquired as a listener;
- Part of the study program;
- Other forms of non-formal education, with the exception of study programs that meet the regulated professions.

A candidate who does not study in a particular study program can be matriculated at the relevant study stage of the study program after recognizing the study results, if necessary, individually determining the amount of additional study courses or study modules to be completed and the corresponding examinations.

In order to improve the knowledge of higher education institutions regarding the application of recognition of teaching outcomes achieved in previous education and professional experience at a higher education institution, Ministry of Education and Science in years 2015-2016 the project "Equalization of Previous Education" was implemented (Erasmus + KA3 project). In order to find out the real situation, a university survey was carried out. The results of the survey showed that not all universities have started recognition of the learning outcomes obtained in previous education and professional experience, as well as different perceptions and experience in recognition procedures.

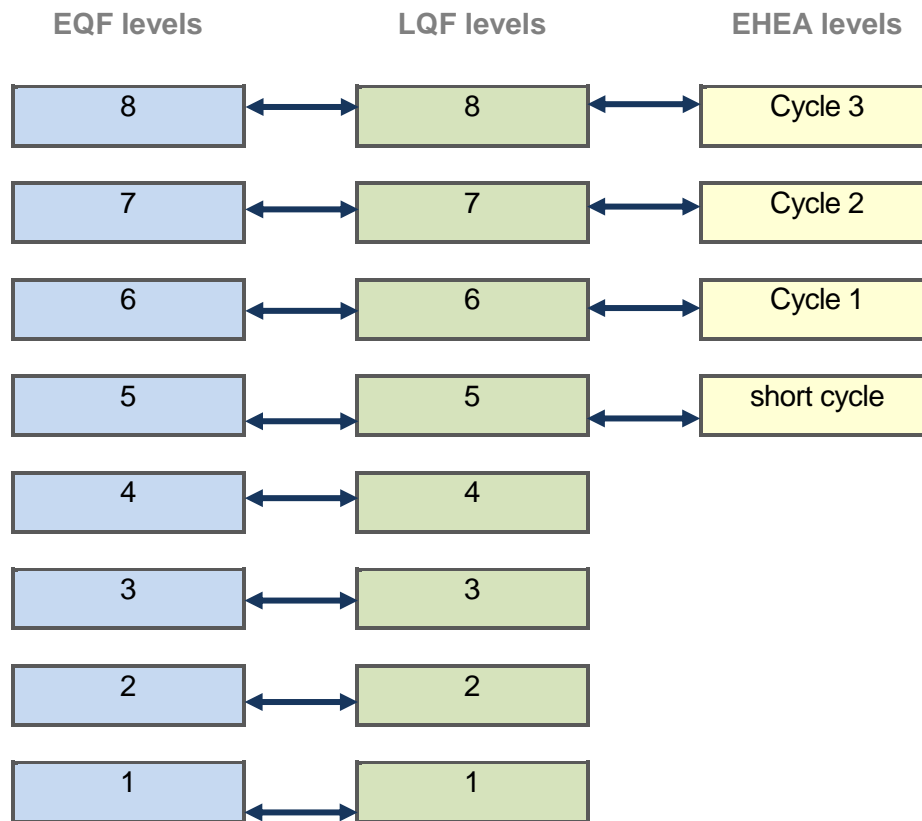
During the project, discussions with higher education institutions were organized, exchanges of experience took place, recommendations were made for higher education institutions in recognition of the results of previous education and professional experience, and amendments were made to the normative acts in order to comply with EC recommendations.

## 2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE LQF

In Latvia, referencing the education system to the EQF and EHEA qualifications framework started in 2009. As result of referencing process, 8-level Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) was established. The developed level descriptors are based on learning outcomes, and formal education qualifications are linked with these levels. The level descriptors were elaborated regarding national education and occupational standards, as well as the EQF level descriptors. The LQF comprises formal higher, vocational and general education sectors.

When developing the LQF levels, they were made compatible with the EHEA Qualifications Framework.

**Figure 2. The compatibility of the LQF/EQF with the levels of the EHEA Qualifications Framework.**



In September 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) formed a working group for linking the Latvian Qualifications System to the EQF in accordance with the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council (23 April 2008) on the establishment of the EQF for lifelong learning. This working group mostly performed supervision tasks, reviewing and approving level descriptors prepared by the experts prior elaborating the amendments to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations.

To prepare the descriptors of the LQF levels, Academic Information Centre (AIC) and the MoES Policy Co-ordination Department attracted specialists from the National Centre for Education, who, on the basis of the national education standards, occupational standards and study subjects' standards, elaborated the education level descriptors for general basic and secondary education, vocational basic and secondary education, as well as for vocational education. In 2010, these level descriptors were included in the amendments to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations<sup>62</sup> and they are based on learning outcomes expressed in three dimensions: knowledge (knowledge and comprehension); skills (ability to apply knowledge, communication, general skills); competence (analysis, synthesis and assessment).

At higher education level the working group established by the Latvian Rectors' Council in 2009 prepared the education level descriptors for all Bologna cycle qualifications. These descriptors were formulated according to the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process) Qualifications Framework; Bloom's taxonomy, i.e. hierarchal system of six knowledge acquisition levels based on ideas of American psychologist Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues (1956); as well as to the EQF. These level descriptors were integrated in the mentioned Cabinet of Ministers Regulations.

The comparison of the Latvian education system and the EQF was presented and discussed on 14 February 2011 in the national conference organized to discuss referencing of the Latvian education system to the LQF/EQF. 118 representatives from ministries, national agencies, education governing institutions, education institutions, employers' organizations, trade unions, as well as from other education-related institutions participated in the conference. The debate of it continued till 31 March on the NCP website through comments and emails.

On 22 June 2011, the 1<sup>st</sup> version of the self-assessment report "Referencing of the Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area" was presented during the meeting of the European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group in Brussels.

Regarding the comments and recommendations provided by the European Commission, Cedefop and international experts, AIC reviewed the report. The updated version of the report and the results of referencing were officially presented during the meeting of the EQF Advisory Group in October 2011 in Brussels.

After the meeting, some amendments were introduced in the self-assessment report "Referencing of the Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area" and its 2<sup>nd</sup> version was prepared.

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<sup>62</sup>Up to 31 May 2017 the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 990 "Regulations on the Latvian Education Classification", with the mentioned amendments, were in use. At the moment, these Regulations are no longer in force and new regulations on the Latvian education classification are in force now (Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 322). During the period from 2011 to the moment of writing this report they were being improved and supplemented regarding also the matters related to the LQF. These supplements will be reviewed in the section about **the LQF development**.

## 3. LQF IMPACT ON FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF LATVIAN EDUCATION

Although the LQF has been established, work on the development of LQF is continued, encouraging discussion and promoting changes in regulatory enactments.

### 3.1. Revision of LQF levels

In 2012, the seminar "The role of social partners in the development of the Latvian qualifications framework: problems and solutions" organized by the AIC, raised the issue of the necessary improvements in the LQF. In 2013, AIC carried out a study entitled "Referencing of the Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area. Situation Assessment" regarding changes in the education system of Latvia regarding the implementation of the LQF. The study was presented at the 2013 seminar "Latvian Qualifications Framework Levels 1-4: Development and Extension", which resulted in the preparation and submission of proposals from the MoES for changes at the level 1-4 of the LQF, on the basis of which, in 2015, amendments were made to Vocational Education Law<sup>63</sup> and in year 2017 new Cabinet of Minister Regulations No.322 "Regulations on the classification of Latvian education"<sup>64</sup>.

### 3.2. Indication of LQF levels in educational documents

In accordance with the criteria for the extension of the EQF, changes were made to the regulatory enactments, establishing a mandatory reference in educational documents to the level of the LQF.

- **In Higher Education**

Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 232 of 16 April 2013 "Procedure for the Issuance of State-recognized Higher Education Certificates" sets out a specimen of the diploma supplement,

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<sup>63</sup> Vocational Education Law (1999, with amendments of 23 April 2015) Article No. 5. "Professional qualification levels" – five levels of professional qualifications indicate compliance with the Latvian qualifications framework level

Article No. 6. "Evidence of vocational education and professional qualifications" is updated with the eighth part (in force since January 1, 2017): state-recognized certificates of vocational education and documents certifying professional qualifications also indicate the level of the Latvian qualifications framework. Article No. 25. "Vocational education program" the first part is supplemented by the fifth paragraph, which specifies: the level of the vocational education program in the Latvian qualifications framework.

<sup>64</sup> Cabinet of Ministers June 13, 2017 Regulations No. 322 [Regulations on Latvian education classification](#)

Annex 1: Table 1. *First and second level of classification and its comparison with the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF), the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-2011);*  
Annex 1.: Table 2. *Descriptions of knowledge, skills and competences of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF)*

which should include the information on the level of qualification. The level of qualification is indicated in accordance with the information provided in section 8 of the Diploma Supplement regarding the system of higher education in the country, specifying the level of Latvian vocational qualification, the level of European / Latvian qualifications framework or the EHEA qualification framework level. If there is a joint diploma, the level of qualification is indicated by agreement.

- **Vocational Education**

Cabinet of Ministers Regulation on June 21, 2005, No. 451 "Procedures for issuing state-recognized certificates of vocational education and professional qualifications and accreditation of the part of accredited vocational education programs" (with amendments in force since 1 January 2017) the annexes stipulate that vocational education and qualification documents should include an indication of the level of professional qualification and the level of the Latvian qualifications framework.

### 3.3. Other changes in regulatory enactments

In the process of introducing the LQF, other amendments were made to several laws and regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers, defining the reference need for the LQF (see Table 5).

**Table 5. Changes in regulatory enactments**

| Regulatory enactment   | Legal provisions after the amendments   |
|--|---|
| Education Law (1998, with June 18, 2015 amendments)  | <p>Article No. 8<sup>1</sup>. Latvian qualifications framework</p> <p>(1) The Latvian Qualifications Framework is an eight-level system that covers the levels of education (basic education, secondary education, higher education) and all types of education (general education, professional education, academic education), as well as professional qualifications acquired outside formal education. The Latvian qualifications framework is linked to the European Qualifications Framework.</p> <p>(2) The Latvian qualifications framework levels are characterized by the learning outcomes at the appropriate level. Each of the following levels includes the knowledge, skills and competences defined at the previous level. Third part of Article No. 8<sup>1</sup> includes a brief description of each of the qualifications frameworks in Latvia.</p> <p>Article No. 14. Cabinet of Ministers competence in education</p> <p>1<sup>1</sup>) defines the descriptions of knowledge, skills and competences corresponding to the Latvian qualifications framework levels.</p> |
| Law on Higher Education (1995, with July 14, 2011 amendments)  | <p>Sixth part of Article No. 3. a classification of education in Latvia that also includes a comparison of the degrees and professional qualifications obtained in the Republic of Latvia with the European Qualifications Framework and the qualifications, skills and competences described in the European Qualifications Framework level for graduates of each level of study determined by the Cabinet of Ministers.</p>   |
| Cabinet of Ministers May 13, 2014 Regulation No. 240 "Regulations on the state academic standard of education" | <p>Article No. 3 sets the strategic goal of the study programs is to provide students with the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and research skills of science by achieving the study results determined in the study program, which corresponds to the knowledge, skills and competence of the European Qualifications Framework (hereinafter - the Framework) defined in the Latvian education classification.</p> <p>Article No. 4 sets the main aim of the Bachelor's study program is to provide</p>   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | <p>a set of knowledge, skills and competences in accordance with the level 6 knowledge, skills and competences of the framework of the Latvian education.</p> <p>Article No. 15 sets the main aim of the Master's study program is to provide a set of knowledge, skills and competences in accordance with the qualifications, skills and competences of the framework provided for in the Latvian education classification.</p>   |
| <p>Cabinet of Ministers<br/>August 26, 2014<br/>Regulation No. 512"<br/>Regulations on the<br/>National Standard for<br/>Second Level<br/>Professional Higher<br/>Education"</p>  | <p>In the regulation No. 5 "Main tasks of the programs" subparagraph No. 5. 2. states that they are to ensure the achievement of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences) in accordance with the knowledge, skills and competence of the European Qualifications Framework (hereinafter - the Framework) defined in the Latvian Education Classification. Paragraph No. 7 states that the content of the Bachelor program provides a set of knowledge, skills and competences in accordance with the level 6 knowledge, skills and competence of the framework specified in the Latvian education classification.</p> <p>Paragraph No. 21 stipulates that the content of the Master's program provides the acquisition of the knowledge, skills and competences necessary for carrying out the professional activity in accordance with the qualifications, skills and competences of the framework provided for in the Latvian education classification.</p>  |
| <p>Cabinet of Ministers<br/>September 27, 2016<br/>regulation No. 633 "The<br/>procedure for the<br/>development of the<br/>occupational standard,<br/>the professional<br/>qualification requirements<br/>(if the profession is not<br/>approved by the<br/>occupational standard)<br/>and the sectoral<br/>qualification structure of<br/>the sector"</p> | <p>Regulation subparagraph No. 5.1 states that the National Centre of Education organizes the development or updating of the standard of professional or professional qualification of the profession (if the profession does not approve the occupational standard) in accordance with the qualification framework of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (hereinafter - the framework) level.</p> <p>Paragraph No. 6 of the Regulations stipulates that the Ministry of Education and Science shall organize the development or updating of the profession standard or professional qualification requirement (if the profession does not approve the occupational standard) in accordance with Sections 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> of the Framework level.</p> <p>Annex No. 1 stipulates that the occupational standard in Point No. 1 must include the name of the profession, the level of qualification.</p> <p>Annex No. 2 stipulates that the professional qualification requirement in paragraph No. 1 must include the name of the specialization or related profession, level of qualification</p> <p>Annex No. 3 stipulates that the qualifications structure of the sector in Point No. 1 should include the general characteristics of the professions of the sector, subparagraph No. 1.1. must indicate the level of qualification and subparagraph No. 1.2. should include a description of the qualification level of the professions in the sector (achievement of learning outcomes: knowledge, skills, competence, autonomy and responsibility).</p> |

### 3.4. Terminology development

The development of the LQF according to the EQF has contributed to the need to discuss the use of common terminology. As European-level education policy is developed in English, these concepts form the basis of the common terminology used in the European educational area to a large extent. When translating international educational policy documents, it is often necessary to create new terms or assign new content to existing ones. Conversely, by telling about the Latvian education system in the international environment, precise translations of the terms in English must be found. Often, every language user solves these terminological difficulties in a

different way, which, conversely, makes it difficult to understand what in each case is meant with these terms.

In order to identify the problems of the use of existing terminology in the context of Latvia, in 2015, the AIC EQF National Coordination Point launched a study on the use of terminology in the context of the LQF and the EQF, which contributed to extensive discussions at the Latvian level. The analysis of used terminology was carried out by selecting the most frequently used terms, looking for their definitions and relevant contextual examples, and the results were summarized in the report, discussed in broad discussions with representatives of the field of education and language experts both electronically and in person. Based on the results of the analysis and discussions, an expert working group was set up that developed recommendations for the terms used in the context of the LQF and the EQF. These recommendations were presented at a seminar in the field of education in September 2016 and submitted for use by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Terminology Commission of the Latvian Academy of Sciences.

### **3.5. Development of credit point system in Latvia**

Latvian higher education continues to use the national credit point system, which is equated to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credit points. When converting ECTS, the number of Latvian credit point should be multiplied by 1.5.

There is no credit point system in vocational education in Latvia, however, implementation of the principles of the European Credit System for Vocational Education (ECVET) already takes place as part of vocational education reforms. For example, modularization of vocational education is carried out, defined results to be achieved in vocational education programs, their modules, revised occupational standards, as well as the assessment of professional competences acquired outside formal education.<sup>65</sup>

In 2015, the national ECVET experts and the State Education Development Agency nominated by the Ministry of Education and Science have developed recommendations on the implementation of the principles of ECVET in Latvian vocational education<sup>66</sup>.

### **3.6. Development of sectoral qualifications structures**

Within the framework of the ESF project "Establishment of a sectoral qualification system and increase the efficiency and quality of vocational education" (2010 - 2013), implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science subordinate institution of the State Education Development Agency, the professions in twelve sectors and the most characteristic occupational tasks, knowledge, skills and competences were identified. With the involvement of social partners - sectoral expert councils, a sectoral qualifications structure was prepared for each sector by grouping in the basic professions, related occupations and specializations of the profession concerned.

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<sup>65</sup>State Education Development Agency (2015). Recommendations on the implementation of ECVET principles in Latvian vocational education.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.



As a result of the reform of the content of vocational education, as a result of the reform of the content of vocational education, the reform of the content of vocational education, as a result of the informative report "On the feasibility of working environment-based learning in the context of the development of vocational education in Latvia", is intended to create independent co-operation mechanisms with social partners and sectoral organizations on August 12, 2014, in the Cabinet of Ministers, to develop sectoral expert councils to ensure the compliance of the content of vocational education with the needs of the sector. It is intended to review the existing content of vocational education, to update occupational standards, to develop models of educational programs and to introduce modular vocational education programs.

It should be noted that the reform of professional education content is a complex process in which each of the main directions plays an important role, and the results of the reform are directly related and dependent on the quality of professional education infrastructure and equipment, appropriate teaching aids, the professionalism of teachers, and the amount of available funding

For the successful implementation of the reform of the content of professional education, amendments to the Vocational Education Law, which came into force on May 15, 2015, have been developed, which promotes greater employer involvement and the attractiveness of vocational education. The amendments to the law include a regulation on the compliance of professional qualification levels with the Latvian qualification framework levels, the establishment of a convention on vocational education institutions and competence, as well as the establishment of an expert council of the sector and its competence. The changes made will help to establish independent cooperation mechanisms with the social partners and sectoral organizations, to develop sectoral expert councils that would ensure the compliance of the content of vocational education with the needs of the sector and taking into account the specifics and needs of the regions in the respective field. The establishment of the industry councils and the Convention and the provision of their activities are additional tasks that will ensure, in the long term, the compliance of the content of vocational education with the needs of the sector, including participation in the development of sectoral qualifications structures.

In accordance with the Vocational Education Law Article No. 24.<sup>2</sup> specified, the **sectoral qualifications structure** is a general description of the professions of the sector as well as an overview of specializations and related professions in the field of occupations, indicating professional qualifications for occupations and specializations.

The objective of the Sectoral Qualifications Framework (hereinafter - SQF) is to create a transparent, independent, but still interconnected, professional qualifications framework to identify and develop the knowledge, skills and competences of the industry. The creation of the SQF includes descriptions of professional qualifications for the pursuit of professional activities in the relevant field and is based on LQF, which acts as a tool for comparing and explaining the acquired professional qualifications by promoting transnational mobility of learners and employees and promoting their lifelong learning.

For each professional qualification, the necessary knowledge, skills and competences can be achieved through various educational and career paths. Industry of professional qualifications

are included in the eight levels of the LQF, ranging from the simple work of the industry to the highest level of industry occupations.

The activity program "Development of sectoral qualifications system and restructuring of professional education" under the sub-activity "Development of sectoral qualification system and restructuring of professional education" of the EU structural funds 2007 - 2013 planning period started the restructuring of professional education by establishing a sectoral qualification system, conducting research into economic sectors, developing or improving occupational standards and qualification requirements for specialization, as well as the recognition of skills acquired outside formal education (implementation deadline: 1 December 2010 to 30 November 2015). The project was implemented by the State Education Development Agency in co-operation with the Employers' Confederation of Latvia, the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, the National Centre for Education and the State Education Quality Service.

The project strengthened the role of sectoral trade unions, employers' organizations and sectoral associations in professional education by coordinating and consolidating their consolidated requirements for the future skills and competences of the workforce.

Within the framework of the project, 14 sectors were carried out (Construction, Electronic and optical equipment manufacturing, Information and communication technology, Energy, Wood industry (forestry, wood processing), Chemical industry and its allied industries (Chemistry, Pharmaceuticals, Biotechnology, Environment), Metalworking, Mechanical engineering and Mechanical engineering, Food, Agriculture, Printing and Media Technologies, Textiles, Clothing, Leather and Leather Products, Transportation and Logistics, Tourism, Beauty, Business, Finance, Accounting, Administration (Wholesale, Retail and Commercial)) and sectoral research for educational needs identifying also the boundaries of each industry in Latvia, identifying the professions that exist in the sector but not in the Profession Classifier, identifying the growth opportunities of the industry and their sectors in the next three years - the necessity of the workforce, its professional competences. In order to predict the development of the sector, research and provision of conformity of education and labour market demand and supply.

Sectoral and related occupational cards developed as a result of sectoral research are the basis for reviewing the content of existing occupational standards and for developing or updating the required occupational standards and / or professional qualification requirements. It is important that sectoral research is monitored every three years to ensure that the content of professional education is updated to the needs of the industry.

Within the framework of the project, in 2015, the National Centre for Education developed a methodology "Methodological material for the development of the sector qualification structure", where additional qualification levels were compiled according to the LQF levels. In 2015 additional research was conducted aimed at improving **the existing structure of professional qualifications of the sector**.

Developed SQF are publicly available [www.nozaruekspertupadomes.lv](http://www.nozaruekspertupadomes.lv).

### **3.6.1. Further development of sectoral qualifications structures**

On September 30, 2016, the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 633 "Procedure for the development of the occupational standard, the requirements for professional qualification (if the profession is not approved by the occupational standard) and the procedure for the development of the qualifications structure of the sector" of September 27, 2016 entered into force, which stipulates that the necessity of updating the structure of qualification structures is evaluated at least every five years. It is planned to attract funding available from the EU funds for the 2014 - 2020 programming period in the framework of the "Growth and Employment" Operational Program for the development of sectoral qualification structures, occupational standards and professional qualification requirements foreseen by the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations 8.5.2 the specific support objective "To ensure the compliance of vocational education and training with the European Qualifications Framework". The project is implemented by the National Centre for Education in co-operation with Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, the Employers' Confederation of Latvia, the Latvian Agricultural Organization Cooperation Council and the State Education Quality Service.

The National Development Plan for 2014-2020 states that "Development of Competences" requires the involvement of social partners in developing an adaptable and competitive vocational education system, promoting the growth of human productivity in line with labour market requirements.

The involvement of social partners is indicated in the tasks to be performed within the direction of the action:

- Identification and development of the required professional education programs in accordance with the performed and planned sector studies and the identified basic professions and qualifications; identification and development of the required standards and programs of professions, including the placement of professional training placements in the syllabus in cooperation with sectoral entrepreneurs;
- Implementation of modular program (flexible and combined thematic blocks) in professional education, development and approbation of teaching aids, including digital ones;
- Improving the competence of teachers and practitioners involved in professional education in accordance with labour market trends and strengthening the capacity of professional education institutions (including educators) in adult education, etc. tasks.

In the fourth quarter of 2016, the European Structural Fund project was launched in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations of April 26, 2016 No. 262 Implementation provisions of the specific support objective "To ensure the compliance of professional education and training with the European Qualifications Framework" in the project "Improvement of the sectoral qualification system for the development and quality assurance of professional education", the aim of which is to improve the content of professional education and according to the LQF, to update and develop occupational standards and professional qualification requirements, as well as to develop the content of professional qualification examinations, introducing a modular approach to educational programs and providing the necessary teaching aids for the qualitative

implementation of programs in order to improve the sectoral qualification system in this way. The direct aim of the project is to develop professional education content that is adapted to the requirements of the labour market and to ensure the compliance of professional education with the EQF. This follows from the goals and directions of the Education development guidelines for 2014-2020 and it is planned to continue the development of professional education, which has begun in the previous programming period, increasing its attractiveness and continuing cooperation with employers and sectors, with a special emphasis on the role of professional education in the country's economic development and sustainable workforce.

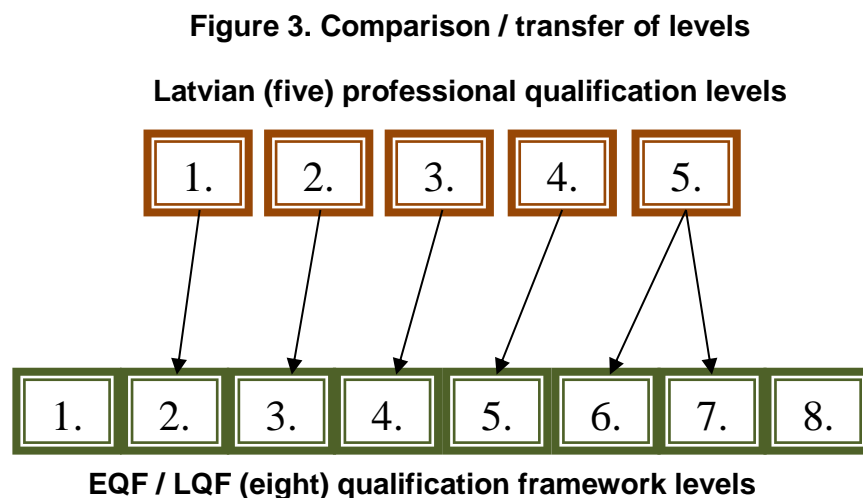
As the creation of a sectoral qualifications framework is an ongoing process, continuous improvement of the methodological approach is required. Consequently, the National Centre for Education in 2016 has supplemented the methodological material with the functional analysis approach, which aims to create a transparent, independent, yet interrelated structure of professional qualifications.

As a result of the project, 14 sectoral qualification structures will be developed (Construction, Electronic and optical equipment manufacturing, Information and communication technology, Energy, Wood industry (forestry, wood processing), Chemical industry and its related industries (chemistry, pharmacy, biotechnology, environment), Metalworking, Mechanical engineering and engineering, Food industry, Agriculture, Printing and media technology, Textiles, clothing, leather and leather products, Transport and logistics, Tourism, Beauty, Business, finance, accounting, administration (wholesale, retail and commercial)) and one new sectoral qualification structure for the artistic design and creative industries sector. It is expected that, after 31 December, 2021, the elaboration of occupational standards and professional qualification requirements and the qualification structure of the sector will be completed and will mainly take place only by updating them in line with changes in labour market requirements within the existing state budget funds.

### **3.6.2. The role of the EQF / LQF in sectoral qualifications structures**

EQF and LQI cover all levels of education (primary, secondary and higher education), types (general, professional, and academic) and forms (formal, non-formal and informal learning and day-to-day learning), and these descriptors do not reflect labour market requirements. In order to best identify and define the professional competences and requirements for professional education required in the labour market, a comprehensive tool is created - the qualification level descriptions of industry professions, which clearly indicate the boundaries of the industry for each level of qualification, showing the level of complexity and level of diversity between the levels, also providing the opportunity to formulate changes and a vision for the future in a particular sector. For the formulation of descriptions of qualifications levels in the field of occupations, it is used both in education and in a language easily understood by the labour market. The elements of the level description are characterized by the autonomy of activities, the complexity of activities and the diversity of activities at different levels.

Article No. 5 of the Vocational Education Law has made the alignment of the EQF / LQF levels (see Figure 3), where the EQF / LQF Level 1 and 8 are not included in the vocational education system.



When describing the qualification levels of industry professions, the opinions of the sectoral research results, sectoral expert councils and other relevant industry representatives are taken into account. There are situations in which the sector or industry sector regulates the requirements for the level of professional qualifications of a profession - for example, it must not be lower than the level 4 - professional qualification or level 5 of the LQF does not define the lower level descriptors of the particular sector and exclude industry from the relevant professional qualification level description.

It is possible to add other elements of the qualification system to the sectoral occupation card. For example, craftspeople qualifications defined in the Law on Crafts (1993) may be included in accordance with the recommendations of the Latvian Chamber of Crafts regarding the alignment of the qualification levels of craftsmen with the levels of professional qualification.

### **3.7. Development of the Latvian Qualification Database**

Within the Erasmus+ program 2014-2020, the National Co-ordination Points (NCP) for action support policy measures, the European Commission co-fund the establishment of national qualifications databases and qualifications registers. The AIC project "European Qualifications Framework - National Qualifications Databases" has established the Latvian Qualifications Database (LQDB) [www.latvijaskvalifikacijas.lv](http://www.latvijaskvalifikacijas.lv). It is a unique information system that collects data on education qualifications equated with the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF). The database includes educational qualifications that can be obtained in accredited educational institutions within the framework of accredited educational programs, hence these qualifications are recognized by the state.

One of the preconditions for the period 2014 to 2016 was to link the national qualifications database to the European portal "Learning Opportunities and Qualifications in Europe"<sup>67</sup> (hereinafter referred to as the PLOTEUS portal) which collects information on qualifications at European level. In the context of the EQF, the concept of "qualification" is understood to mean that every educational qualification that attests knowledge, skills and competences that corresponds to a certain level of the National Qualifications Framework (Latvia - LQF), which, in turn, is aligned with the level of the EQF. From June 2016, the LQDB is connected to the PLOTEUS portal, where data on Latvian qualifications are regularly updated.

In order to evaluate the information available and to build the existing system, the AIC set up a working group with representatives from the National Centre for Education, the State Education Quality Service, the State Education Development Agency and the Ministry of Education and Science, which allows cover educational issues such as setting up programs at various levels of education, accreditation and the accumulation and presentation of educational information in different systems. Different databases have different content elements, structure, and also information is diverse. The EQF / LQF levels for the graduate education are presented only by the Study Direction Register, which collects information about higher education. Learning outcomes are not collected by any of the systems; partly the results of learning are presented in the National Education Opportunity Database - NIID.LV as a description of educational programs. The education qualification differs from the program information, because it differs both at the name level and is otherwise defined. There are two types of standards for education compliance with the LQF level - the standard of education<sup>68</sup>, whose formulated goals and objectives include learning outcomes, as well as the profession standard<sup>69</sup>, which defines the knowledge, skills and competences corresponding to the profession on the level 1 - 5 of the professional qualification level. The standards, knowledge, skills and competences are the basis for the establishment of the LQF level system and also for defining the qualification unit in the LQDB system. Although general basic education and general secondary education offer multi-directional programs, their preparation is determined by the basic education standard and the general secondary education standard; therefore, within the meaning of the framework, general education has only two qualifications and evidence of educational qualifications - a certificate of general basic education and a certificate of general secondary education. Similarly, in vocational education (including first level professional higher education or college education)

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<sup>67</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/>

<sup>68</sup> Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 468 "Regulations on the state standard for basic education, basic education subject standards and samples of basic education programs"(12.08.2014);

Cabinet of Ministers 21.05.2013. Regulation No.281 "Regulations on the national standard for general secondary education, standards on study subjects and models of educational programs"

Cabinet of Ministers 27.06.2000. Regulation No. 211 "Regulations on the state standard for professionalsecondary education and the state vocational education standard"

Cabinet of Ministers 20.03.2001. Regulation No. 141 "Regulations on the state standard for first level professional higher education"

Cabinet of Ministers 13.05.2014. Regulation No. 240 "Regulations on the state academic standard of education"

Cabinet of Ministers 26.08.2014. Regulation No. 512 "Regulations on the state standard for second level professional higher education"

<sup>69</sup>National Centre for Education: <http://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/standarti.shtml> (see Occupational standards from 2008 to 2016)

there are fewer qualifications than programs. Compliance with the standards within a program type is based on individual qualifications, i.e. all three-year vocational education programs, which lead, for example, to cook's professional qualification, are developed according to a common standard, therefore the knowledge, skills and competences attested by the "Certificate of Vocational Education with Professional Qualification - cook" will be the same. Different qualifications are defined in higher education because, although the principles of curriculum development are based on education and occupational standards, higher education institutions are autonomous in their activities and programs are developed individually. Thus, in the framework of higher education, each study program provides a separate qualification. If the program provides for several professional qualifications, a number of education qualifications may also be derived from one program. In higher education, the definition of learning outcomes within the framework corresponds to the expected learning outcomes indicated in the diploma supplements, defined by each higher education institution itself. The compliance of Latvia's education with the EQF / LQF levels within the program types has been strengthened in the regulations on the classification of Latvian education<sup>70</sup>.

In order to use the LQDB for a broader range of stakeholders, it is necessary in the long term to create mechanisms for updating and introducing sustainable information and for reviewing existing information structuring. Within the framework of the EQF communication and information process within the European Commission, the PLOTEUS portal will continue to carry out the function of national qualifications databases and registers between connectivity, which allows for the search and comparison of qualifications, but since the information contained in the PLOTEUS portal and the funding activities are closely linked to the development of European skills, competences<sup>71</sup>, the European Commission intends to co-finance the registers of national qualifications databases and qualifications from 2016-2018 as well to review, update and further develop the databases, as well as the appropriate content for linking the content to the ESCO portal.

Taking into account the expected changes in education (competence-based basic education, modular professional education programs, accreditation of higher education programs in accordance with European quality standards and standards), which will include the development of new standards and the changes in the content of qualifications, therefore it is essential to improve the functionality of accumulating new information and qualifications in order to improve the LQDB system ensuring long-term data traceability.

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<sup>70</sup>Cabinet of Ministers 02.12.2008. Regulation No. 990 "Regulations on the classification of education in Latvia" (with amendments of 5.10.2010 and 23.09.2014, lost force); Cabinet of Ministers 15.06.2017. Regulation No. 322 "Regulations on the classification of education in Latvia"

<sup>71</sup><https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home>

### **3.8. NCP actions to promote the development of the LQF**

From 2011, the Academic Information Centre as the National Coordination Point for the EQF (hereinafter NCP) has provided a series of events to introduce the stakeholders of education with the principles of EQF and LQF, the introduction of learning outcomes in educational practice, and stimulate discussions on the improvement of the LQF and the inclusion of new qualifications in the LQF, which resulted in proposals for amendments to the Vocational Education Law and updating of the new Latvian education classification.

The main methods used are NCP conferences, seminars, expert discussions, forums, research. 4 international conferences on the development of the LQF / EQF, terminology, internationalization of education, and other topics related to AIC competence issues were organized.

During the reporting period, AIC has carried out several studies: "Introduction of Learning Outcomes in the Latvian Education Institutions" (2013), "Referencing of the Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area. Situation Assessment" (2013), "International Qualifications in Latvia" (2014) and "Terminology in the Context of Latvian Qualifications Framework and European Qualifications Framework" (2016).

In order to increase the awareness of the NCP partners involved in the discussions about the development of the EQF and the national qualifications frameworks in other countries, NCP has prepared and published translations in Latvian:

- European Union, 2010. Added value of national qualifications frameworks in implementing the EQF. European Qualifications Framework Series: Note 2;
- European Union, 2011. Referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF. European Qualifications Framework Series: Note 3;
- European Union, 2011. Using learning outcomes. European Qualifications Framework Series: Note 4;
- CEDEFOP, 2012. International qualifications;
- CEDEFOP, 2013. Analysis and overview of NQF level descriptors in European countries;
- CEDEFOP, 2014. Qualifications at level 5: progressing in a career or to higher education;
- The use or potential use of QFs by HEIs and other stakeholders linked to mobility: Project overview and country report on Latvia (2014);
- UNESCO, 2015. Level-setting and recognition of learning outcomes;
- CEDEFOP, 2015. European guidelines for validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- CEDEFOP, 2016. Monitoring the use of validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- CEDEFOP, 2016. Validation and open educational resources. Thematic report for the 2016 update of the European inventory on validation.



NCP maintains a website [nki-latvija.lv](http://nki-latvija.lv), which contains very valuable and structured information on the qualifications framework in Latvia and other countries, as well as on the European qualifications framework.



Latvijas  
kvalifikāciju  
ietvarstruktūra



Eiropas  
kvalifikāciju  
ietvarstruktūra

# Referencing of the Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area

Updated Self-Assessment Report

Draft

Part 2

Riga, December 2017



Ar Eiropas Savienības  
programmas  
„Erasmus+” atbalstu

# Compliance of the Referencing Process to the Criteria of the EQF

- 1. The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process are clearly determined and published by the competent authorities.**

The main competent authority is the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) which is the leading state governance institution in education, implements a unified state policy and development strategy in education, as well as designs projects of policy planning documents and laws and regulations in the field of education (Education Law, 1998). MoES ensures the recognition of professional competences obtained outside formal education (Vocational Education Law, 1999). MoES develops samples of general education programmes and arranges the development of general education content and methodology (General Education Law, 1999).

In 2008, MoES delegated the Academic Information Centre to perform the functions of the National Coordination Point for referencing the national qualifications framework to the EQF. AIC is a foundation, which was established in 1994 by MoES and the Institute of Mathematics and Computer Science of the University of Latvia. The following aim of AIC activity is stated in the statutes of AIC:

- To ensure the participation of the Republic of Latvia in the education information networks of European Council, European Union and UNESCO, as well as implement the tasks determined by the regulations of the Republic of Latvia in order to ensure free movement of individuals in the field of education and employment.
- To provide support for the quality assurance of higher education, organizing the accreditation of institutions of higher education and colleges and the study directions and the licensing of study programmes.

The functions of AIC are determined by the agreement with the MoES. The functions implemented by AIC are the following:

- Latvian representative of diploma recognition and information centre networks (ENIC) and National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union (NARIC) of the European Council and UNESCO;
- Information institution on recognition of professional qualifications in regulated professions within the directive 2005/36/EK;
- Member of vocational education information network ReferNet established by Cedefop;
- Latvian National Europass centre;
- Latvian coordination point (NCP) for referencing national qualifications framework to the EQF;
- The agency for accreditation of accreditation of institutions of higher education and colleges and the study directions and the licensing of study programmes.

The tasks of NCP are:

- To reference the qualifications levels of the national qualifications system to the EQF levels determined in the annex II of the Council recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning;
- To ensure that transparent methods are used in order to reference the national qualifications levels to the EQF, on the one hand, facilitating their comparison, on the other hand, ensuring that the decisions related to this process, are published;
- To provide the stakeholders the access to the information and consultations on how the national educational qualifications relate to EQF within the national qualifications systems;
- To encourage all stakeholders' (educational institutions, social partners, sectoral representatives and experts) participation in finding solutions of issues on comparability of educational qualifications and their use at the European level in accordance with the national laws and regulations.

**2. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications frameworks or systems and the level descriptors of the EQF.**

LQF levels are referenced to the corresponding EQF level descriptors. In 2010, the working group established by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) approved education level descriptors for basic, general and higher education, that were established in the legislation with amendments to the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 990 "Regulations on the classification of the Latvian education".

At present, comparing to the previous self-assessment report, there have been amendments to the state basic education standard (Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No 468 "Regulations on the state basic education standard, standards of basic education study subjects and samples of basic education programmes" (12.08.2014), state general secondary education standard (Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No 281 "Regulations Regarding the State General Secondary Education Standard, Subject Standards and Sample Education programmes"), vocational education standard (Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers No 211 with the amendments in 2016 and 2017 "Regulations regarding the State Vocational Secondary Education Standard and the State Industrial Education Standard") as well as occupational standards.

The created LQF level descriptors were repeatedly compared with EQF level descriptors and the it was evaluated which LQF levels closer corresponds to the EQF levels. See the table below. Substantial changes are the correspondence of general basic education to the LQF level 2 and correspondingly EQF level 2, as well as correspondence of vocational education (arodizglītība) to the LQF level 3 and correspondingly EQF level 3.

|         | Descriptors of the EQF levels <sup>1</sup>  | Descriptors of the LQF levels <sup>2</sup>  | LQF/ EQF level |
|---------|---|---|----------------|
| K       | <b>Basic general knowledge</b>  | Able to demonstrate <b>elementary knowledge</b> , which manifests itself in recognition and remembering   | <b>1.</b>      |
| S       | <b>Basic skills</b> required to carry out <b>simple tasks</b>   | Able to use <b>elementary practical and cognitive skills</b> , able to perform them <b>under direct supervision</b> using <b>simple tools</b><br>Able to perform <b>simple tasks</b> , which are repeated as to their content and predictable   |                |
| R/<br>A | Work or study <b>under direct supervision in a structured context</b>   | Able to perform tasks <b>in a structured environment</b> , to function <b>in a limited context</b><br>Is able to perform <b>elementary tasks</b> , following a model, able to master <b>basic self-care skills</b>  |                |
| K       | <b>Basic factual knowledge</b> of a field of work or study  | Able to demonstrate <b>basic knowledge</b> of work or specific basic knowledge set out in subject syllabi in the field of studies or professional activities to be mastered   | <b>2.</b>      |
| S       | <b>Basic cognitive and practical skills</b> required <b>to use relevant information</b> in order to carry out tasks and <b>to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools</b> | Able to use <b>basic cognitive and practical skills</b> , which are necessary to perform tasks by <b>using relevant information</b> , and to solve <b>everyday problems</b> by using <b>basic rules and instruments</b><br>Able to <b>understand the consequences of one's actions</b> with regard to self and others |                |
| R/<br>A | Work or study <b>under supervision with some autonomy</b>   | Able to perform tasks <b>under supervision</b> of a specialist, performing such tasks individually or in a work group <b>or semi-independently</b><br>Able to participate in setting some learning or work objectives and <b>planning the course of action</b>  |                |

<sup>1</sup> Council of Europe Recommendation (22 May 2017) on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/LV/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615\(01\)&from=LV](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/LV/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01)&from=LV)

<sup>2</sup> The Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 322 “**Regulations on the Classification of the Latvian Education**” (June 13, 2017). Before - The Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 990 „**Regulations on the Classification of the Latvian Education**” (December 2, 2008), Annex 1, Table 2.

|     |  |  |    |
|-----|--|--|----|
| K   | <p><b>Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts</b>, in a field of work or study</p>  | <p>Able to demonstrate <b>the knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts</b> and to use them in the field of studies and professional activities</p> <p>Able to understand various information about materials, equipment, technologies in the relevant field of studies or a concrete profession</p>  | 3. |
| S   | <p>A range of <b>cognitive and practical skills</b> required to accomplish tasks and solve problems <b>by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information</b></p>   | <p>Able to use <b>various cognitive and practical skills</b>, which are necessary to perform tasks and to solve problems, <b>by selecting suitable basic work methods, instruments, materials, information and technologies</b></p>  |    |
| R/A | <p><b>Take responsibility</b> for completion of tasks in work or study</p> <p><b>Adapt own behaviour to circumstances</b> in solving problems</p>  | <p>Able to be aware of and <b>assume responsibility</b> for performing work or study tasks</p> <p>When solving the tasks, is able to <b>adjust one's actions to conditions</b> and to be responsible for the result of work</p>  |    |
| K   | <p><b>Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts</b> within a field of work or study</p>  | <p>Able to demonstrate <b>broad knowledge of facts, theories and causalities</b>, which are necessary for personal growth and development, civil participation, social integration and continuous education</p> <p>Able to understand in detail and <b>demonstrate knowledge of diverse facts, principles, processes and concepts</b> in a specific field of studies or professional activities in standard and non-standard situations</p> <p><b>Master technologies and methods</b> for performing study or work tasks in the profession</p>                                 | 4. |
| S   | <p>A range of <b>cognitive and practical skills</b> required <b>to generate solutions</b> to specific problems in a field of work or study</p>   | <p>Able to <b>plan and organise work</b>, using various methods, technologies (including information and communication technologies), equipment, tools and materials for performing tasks</p> <p>Able to <b>find, assess and creatively use information</b> for performing study or professional work tasks and problem solving</p> <p>Able to <b>communicate at least in two languages</b> both in writing and oral in a known and unknown context</p> <p>Able to <b>work independently</b> in profession, to <b>learn and to improve</b></p> <p>Able to <b>cooperate</b></p> |    |
| R/A | <p><b>Exercise self-management</b> within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change</p> <p><b>Supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement</b> of work or study activities</p> | <p>Is <b>motivated for further career development, continuous education, life-long learning</b> in a knowledge-oriented democratic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural society in Europe and in the world</p> <p>Able to <b>plan and perform study or work tasks</b> in the profession individually, in a team or <b>by managing the teamwork</b></p> <p>Able to <b>assume responsibility for the quality and quantity</b> of the outcomes of study or professional activities</p>   |    |

|            |   |   |           |
|------------|---|---|-----------|
|            |   |   |           |
| <b>K</b>   | <b>Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge</b> within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge                                 | Able to demonstrate <b>broad and specialised knowledge</b> and understanding of <b>facts, theories, causalities and technologies of the concrete professional field</b>   | <b>5.</b> |
| <b>S</b>   | A comprehensive range of <b>cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions</b> to abstract problems  | Able, on the basis of <b>analytical approach</b> , to perform practical tasks in the concrete profession, demonstrate <b>skills, allowing to find creative solutions to professional problems</b> , to discuss and provide arguments regarding practical issues and solutions in the concrete profession with colleagues, clients and management, able to, with <b>an appropriate degree of independence, to engage in further learning</b> , improving one's competences<br>Able to <b>assess and improve one's actions and those of other people</b> , to work in co-operation with others, to <b>plan and to organise work</b> for performing concrete tasks in one's profession, to perform or supervise such work activities, in which <b>unpredictable changes</b> are possible |           |
| <b>R/A</b> | <b>Exercise management and supervision</b> in contexts of work or study activities where there is <b>unpredictable change</b><br><b>Review and develop performance of self and others</b> | Able to <b>define, describe and analyse practical problems</b> in one's profession, select the necessary information and use it for solving clearly defined problems, to <b>participate in the development of the concrete professional field</b> , demonstrate understanding of the position of the concrete profession in a broader social context  |           |
|            |   |   |           |
| <b>K</b>   | <b>Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study</b> , involving a critical understanding of theories and principles   | Able to demonstrate <b>the basic and specialised knowledge</b> typical to the concrete branch of science or profession and able to demonstrate <b>a critical understanding of this knowledge</b> , moreover, a part of this <b>knowledge complies with the highest level of achievements in this branch of science or profession</b><br>Able to demonstrate <b>understanding of the most important concepts and causalities</b> of the concrete branch of science or professional field   | <b>6.</b> |
| <b>S</b>   | <b>Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation</b> , required to solve <b>complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study</b>                        | Able, by using the mastered theoretical basis and skills, <b>perform professional, artistic, innovative or research activity</b> , to define and describe analytically information, problems and solutions <b>in one's branch of science or profession</b> , to explain them and to provide arguments when discussing these with both specialist and non-specialists<br>Is able to <b>structure independently one's learning, to guide one's and subordinates' further learning</b> and professional improvement, to demonstrate scientific approach to problem solving, to <b>assume responsibility and take initiative</b> when performing individual work, working in a team or managing the work of other people, to take decisions and find creative                             |           |

|            |   |  |           |
|------------|---|--|-----------|
|            |   | solutions <b>under changing or unclear conditions</b>  |           |
| <b>R/A</b> | <p><b>Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making</b> in unpredictable work or study contexts</p> <p><b>Take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups</b></p>                              | <p>Able to <b>obtain, select and analyse information independently and to use it</b>, to take decisions and solve problems in the concrete branch of science or profession, demonstrate <b>understanding of professional ethics</b>, assess the impact of one's professional activities on environment and society and <b>participate in the development of the concrete professional field</b></p>  |           |
| <b>K</b>   | <p><b>Highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research</b></p> <p><b>Critical awareness of knowledge issues</b> in a field and <b>at the interface between different fields</b></p> | <p>Able to demonstrate <b>advanced or extensive knowledge and understanding, a part of which is relevant to the most recent findings in the concrete branch of science or professional field</b> and which provide <b>the basis for creative thinking or research</b>, including working <b>in the connection of various fields</b></p>  | <b>7.</b> |
| <b>S</b>   | <p><b>Specialised problem-solving skills</b> required in <b>research and/or innovation</b> in order <b>to develop new knowledge and procedures</b> and <b>to integrate knowledge from different fields</b></p>  | <p>Able to <b>use theory, methods and problem solving skills independently</b> to perform <b>research or artistic activities</b>, or highly qualified professional functions</p> <p>Able to <b>provide arguments when explaining or discussing complex or systemic aspects of the concrete branch of science or professional field</b> both to specialists and non-specialists</p> <p>Able to <b>guide independently the improvement of one's competences and specialisation</b>, to assume responsibility for the results of staff's group work and analyse them, to do business, innovations in the concrete branch of science or profession, to <b>perform work, research or further learning under complex or unpredictable conditions, and, if necessary, change them, using new approaches</b></p> |           |
| <b>R/A</b> | <p><b>Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable</b> and require <b>new strategic approaches</b></p> <p><b>Take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice</b> and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams</p>         | <p>Able to <b>define independently and analyse critically complex scientific and professional problems</b>, justify decisions and, if necessary, carry out additional analysis</p> <p>Able to <b>integrate knowledge of various fields, commit to the creation of new knowledge</b>, research or the development of new professional working methods, demonstrate <b>understanding and ethical responsibility</b> for the possible impact of the scientific results or professional activity on environment and society</p>  |           |



|     |  |   |           |
|-----|--|---|-----------|
| K   | <b>Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields</b>   | Able to demonstrate that one <b>knows and understands most topical scientific theories and insights</b> , has mastered research methodology and latest research methods in the concrete branch of science or professional field and <b>in the connection of various fields</b>  | <b>8.</b> |
| S   | <b>The most advanced and specialised skills and techniques</b> , including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and <b>to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice</b> | Able to <b>assess and select independently appropriate methods for scientific research</b> , has contributed to <b>the increase of the limits of knowledge or given new understanding of the existing knowledge and its use in practice</b> , by carrying out an original research of major scope, part of which is on the level of internationally cited publications<br>Able to <b>communicate both oral and in writing about one's field of scientific activity</b> (one's branch) with larger research community and society in general<br>Able to <b>improve one's scientific qualification independently</b> , by implementing scientific projects, making achievements meeting the international criteria of the branch of science, to manage research or development tasks in companies, state institutions and organisations, where is requiring extensive research knowledge and skills |           |
| R/A | Demonstrate <b>substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes</b> at the forefront of work or study contexts including research             | Able, <b>by performing independent, critical analysis, synthesis and assessment, to solve significant research or innovation tasks</b> , to set independently research idea, to plan, structure and manage large-scale scientific projects, including international projects  |           |

**3. The national qualifications frameworks or systems and their qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and related to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where appropriate, to credit systems.**

Since 1st June 1999, the Education Law clearly defines education as “a process of systematic acquisition of knowledge and skills and development of attitudes, and result thereof”, i.e. a kind of learning outcomes has been defined in Latvia for quite long. The application of learning outcomes in education is ensured by the state education and occupational standards, system of national exams, as well as by the accreditation of education establishments and programmes.

In Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 322 “Regulation on the classification of education in Latvia” (13.06.2017) the learning outcomes for each level are described as follows:

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| Knowledge (knowledge and comprehension) | Skills (ability to use knowledge, communication, general skills) | Competence (analysis, synthesis and evaluation) |
|---|--|---|

The occupational standard is one of the documents regulating the content of vocational education, which defines the basic tasks and duties of the professional activity, the requirements for professional qualification, the general and professional knowledge, skills, attitudes and competences necessary for their fulfilment. Requirements for professional qualification lay down knowledge, skills, attitudes, and professional competences necessary for the performance of work tasks in the related occupations and specializations of a professional field. At present, all occupational standards are developed basing on learning outcomes. The methodology for the development of occupational standards (2017) defines the methodology for identifying and integrating knowledge, skills and competences in occupational standards.

Vocational schools use state education standards and the relevant occupational standards to elaborate their educational programs; otherwise the educational programmes cannot be accredited. Students demonstrate the acquired learning outcomes in state centralized final exams in general subjects (in vocational secondary education programs) and in state professional qualification exams, the content of which is developed in accordance with the corresponding occupational standards.

With the changes in the legislation, as well as in the content and organization of vocational education (e.g. modularisation, the implementation of the ECVET principles, the development of sectoral qualifications systems, revision of occupational standards) reforms are implemented that reinforce the importance of learning outcomes.

Higher education institutions have reviewed their study programs in order to introduce learning outcomes and to pass the quality assessment process. In addition, higher education programs have to be in line with the relevant state education standards and / or occupational standards (professional higher education programmes).

On 22 February 2011, Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 146 "Procedure for assessing the professional competencies acquired outside the formal education system" was approved. It determines the procedure for assessing the professional competence acquired outside the formal education system, which corresponds to the requirements of Latvian professional qualification levels 1-3 of, i.e., LQF levels 2-4. Thus, everyone has the opportunity to certify knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside the formal education system and obtain a professional qualification.

For higher education (LQF levels 5-8), on 10 January 2012, Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 36 "Regulation on recognition of learning outcomes acquired in previous education or professional experience", issued in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995, amendments in force since 1.08.2011.). This regulation determines the procedure for assessing and recognizing learning outcomes (for higher education level) obtained in previous

education or professional experience, and the criteria for recognition. All higher education establishments have developed internal rules and procedures for the recognition of learning outcomes achieved in previous education or professional experience.

In higher education credit points are used, which in Latvia are defined as the workload of one week of full-time studies. The amount planned for one academic year in full-time studies is 40 credit points. When converting into ECTS credits, the number of Latvian credit points must be multiplied by 1.5.

In vocational education the introduction of ECVET principles has started, especially in international mobility projects.

**4. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.**

The referencing of the Latvian education system to the EQF for lifelong learning and the EHEA qualifications framework was launched in 2009, the process was transparent and involved in debates all major stakeholders.

As a result of the referencing process, 8-level LQF was established and all formal Latvian qualifications from the general, vocational and higher education sectors were linked to the LQF / EQF. This process was transparent since all stakeholders were involved either in the development of the LQF or in the consultation process regarding the implementation of the LQF. However, taking into account that the qualifications framework contributed to the long-term development of various processes that could not be accomplished in the time frame of the EQF recommendation of 2008 it was planned to organize the referencing process in two phases. In 2012, the first self-assessment report described the referencing of formal national qualifications to the LQF / EQF, thus completing Phase 1 (2009-2011).

The 2nd referencing phase (2016-2018) covered a wider range of issues to be addressed in the development of the qualifications framework. The LQF / EQF levels make it possible not only to build a comprehensive system of qualifications, but also qualification structures in different sectors. The Employers' Confederation of Latvia, in co-operation with the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, organize sectoral expert councils, composed of representatives from all professional associations and sectoral craft associations. Sectoral expert councils elaborate sectoral qualification structures in accordance with the Latvian qualifications framework.

The consolidation of the LQF in the regulatory enactments was continued, including in the Education Law, the Law on Vocational Education and the Law on Higher Education the necessary definitions, as well as the correspondence between the levels of professional qualifications and the LQF levels.

**5. The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications frameworks or systems and are consistent with the principles on quality assurance as specified in Annex IV to this recommendation.**

In Latvia, all qualifications that are included in the Latvian Qualifications Framework are subject to quality assessment, thus increasing trust in their quality and level. The national quality assurance system applies to the entire formal education system. The Higher Education Quality Agency, the Higher Education Council, and the State Education Quality Service are based on European principles and guidelines. The Higher Education Quality Agency organizes quality assessment in higher education.

The Higher Education Council is an institution that oversees the quality of higher education, and the State Education Quality Service is an institution that oversees the quality of basic, secondary and vocational education, and ensures state supervision of education.

The quality assurance system in Latvian education meets the principles of quality assurance in Annex IV: evaluates the design of qualifications and the application of the learning outcomes approach, provides a valid and reliable assessment in accordance with transparent and consistent learning outcomes-based standards, includes feedback mechanisms and continuous improvement processes; involves all relevant stakeholders at all stages of the process, applies consistent evaluation methods, associating self-assessment and external review, is an integral part of the internal management of bodies issuing qualifications with an EQF level, is based on clear and measurable objectives, standards and guidelines, is supported by appropriate resources; includes a regular review of the existing external monitoring structure or agency, carrying out quality assurance, includes the electronic accessibility of the evaluation results.

**6. The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies that the referencing report is consistent with the relevant national quality assurance arrangements, provisions and practice.**

The quality assurance authorities and other institutions that were involved in the Phase I of the referencing process have already agreed to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 322 "Regulations on the classification of education in Latvia" (June 2017) which determine the allocation of Latvian qualifications to the levels of the LQF / EQF. The quality assurance agencies (the State Education Quality Service, the Higher Education Quality Agency), as institutions interested in the renewed referencing process, reviewed the updated report and provided their input in accordance with their respective competences. These institutions also participated in the consultation process, expressing their views and agreeing on the outcome of the consultation process.

**7. The referencing process shall involve international experts and the referencing reports shall contain the written statement of at least two international experts from two different countries on the referencing process.**

In the process of elaborating the report, three international experts were involved in the consultation process by presenting their national experience in setting up the qualifications framework and participating in the discussions on the report. The three experts from different countries represented a neighbouring country, a country with similar experiences and a country that is not a neighbouring country. Experts' experiences covered the EQF, the establishment and implementation of NQFs, the field of education in general and the Latvian education system as well as vocational and higher education.

Experts:

- Juraj Vantuch, non-staff advisor to the Slovak Education Minister, Head of the Slovak National Observatory of Vocational Training
- Kulli All, Estonian Ministry of Education and Science; Deputy Head of Adult Education Department
- Karolina Pietkiewitz, HE consultant; Project Manager of the European Students' Union until June 2017.

**8. The competent authority or authorities shall certify the referencing of the national qualifications frameworks or systems with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing, and the evidence supporting it, shall be published by the competent authorities, including the EQF National Coordination Points, and shall address separately each of the criteria. The same report can be used for self-certification to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, in accordance with the self-certification criteria of the latter.**

This updated self-assessment report was prepared by the Academic Information Centre (the Latvian NCP) involving the Ministry of Education and Science, social partners and other stakeholders. The report assesses the criteria for referencing both the European Qualifications Framework and the European Higher Education Area by considering each criterion individually. It will be published and will be available electronically on the Ministry of Education and Science website ([www.izm.gov.lv](http://www.izm.gov.lv)) and on the website of the Latvian NCP (<http://nki-latvija.lv>).

**9. Within 6 months from having referenced or updated the referencing report, Member States and other participating countries shall publish the referencing report and provide relevant information for comparison purposes on the relevant European portal.**

The Latvian NCP has created a website (<http://nki-latvija.lv> or <http://nqf-latvia.lv>) which contains information on the referencing process and an electronic version of the self-assessment report. The report will also be published on the Learning Opportunities portal at <https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/lv>, on the Latvian ENIC-NARIC website ([www.aic.lv](http://www.aic.lv)), and on the EHEA website ([www.ehea.info](http://www.ehea.info)).

**10. Further to the referencing process, all newly issued documents related to qualifications that are part of the national qualifications frameworks or systems (e.g. certificates, diplomas, certificate supplements, diploma supplements) and/or qualification registers issued by the competent authorities should contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications frameworks or systems, to the appropriate EQF level.**

In Latvia, starting from 2013, the qualifications framework level is used in higher education documents and from 2017 in documents certifying vocational qualifications.

Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 202 "Procedure for issuing state-recognized certificates of higher education"<sup>3</sup> (16.04.2013) updated the content of the Diploma Supplement (Annex 7 to the regulation - *Diploma Supplement*) in accordance with the referencing of the Latvian education system to the European Qualifications Framework and stated a possibility to indicate the corresponding level of European / Latvian qualifications framework. The scheme of the higher education system of the Republic of Latvia has been supplemented with the levels of Latvian / European Qualifications Framework and a new table with the location of higher education qualifications along the Latvian and European Qualifications Framework levels has been included. Consequently, the Diploma Supplement for Higher Education provides a comprehensive explanation of the relevance of higher education qualifications to the EQF and LQI levels.

Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 451 "Procedure for issuing state-recognized certificates of vocational education and professional qualifications, and of parts of accredited vocational education programs" (2005, as amended on April 5, 2016, which came into force on January 1, 2017)<sup>4</sup> stipulates the requirement they should also indicate the level of the Latvian qualifications framework.

Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 322 "Regulation on the classification of education in Latvia"<sup>5</sup> from 2017 includes the first and second level of classification and its comparison with the

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<sup>3</sup> Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.202 „Procedure for issuing state-recognized certificates of higher education" (16.04.2013.)

<sup>4</sup> Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 451 "Procedure for issuing state-recognized certificates of vocational education and professional qualifications, and of parts of accredited vocational education programs" (2005, as amended on April 5, 2016, which came into force on January 1, 2017)

<sup>5</sup> Cabinet of Ministers 15.06.2017. Regulation No. 322 "Regulation on the classification of education in Latvia" (13,06,2017). Previously - Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 990 "Regulation on the classification of education in Latvia" (02.12.2008, with amendments of 5.10.2010 and 23.09.2014, lost force)

Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF), the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-2011). All institutions issuing educational documents in Latvia can use this regulation to accurately indicate the appropriate level of LQF / EQF.

