



**Latvia**

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## Education for All 2015 National Review

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# EDUCATION FOR ALL NATIONAL REVIEW OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA



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## Abbreviations

HE	higher education
AIC	Academic Information Centre
HEI	higher education institutions
MD	Ministry of Defence
CHE	The Council of Higher Education
UNO	United Nations Organisation
CSB	Central Statistical Bureau
DTA	digital teaching aids
EFA	Education for All
EFQM	<i>The European Foundation for Quality Management</i>
EC	European Commission
ME	Ministry of Economics
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EU	European Union
MF	Ministry of Finance
MI	Ministry of the Interior
GDP	gross domestic product
ICT	information and communication technologies
SSEQ	State Service of Education Quality
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
PA	Prison Administration
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
AIPY	Agency of International Programs for Youth
MC	Ministry of Culture
LBAS	Free Trade Union Federation of Latvia
LDDK	Employers' Confederation of Latvia
LIKTA	Latvian Information and Communications Technology Association
LIVA	Association of Latvian Education Leaders
LIZDA	Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees
MW	Ministry of Welfare
LNCC	Latvian National Centre for Culture
LSA	Student Union of Latvia
LCCI	Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
LU	University of Latvia
LLA	The Latvian Language Agency
CM	Cabinet of Ministers
NDP 2020	Latvian National Development Plan 2014-2020
BIE	Board of Industry Experts
NRP	The Latvian National Reform Programme for the Implementation of "EU 2020" Strategy
NGO	non-governmental organisations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
VECC	Vocational education competence centre
RC	Rectors' Council
SF	structural funds
SIF	Society Integration Foundation
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics ( <i>science, technology, engineering, and mathematics</i> )

MJ	Ministry of Justice
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation ( <i>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</i> )
MEPRD	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development
SEDA	State Education Development Agency
NCE	National Centre for Education
MH	Ministry of Health
GAP	Government action plan
MA	Ministry of Agriculture

## Introduction

Education is important for every person, family, society, and the state in general. It is a path to quality of individual life of a person, formation of the knowledge society, and the national economic growth and prosperity. Investment in education and lifelong learning is an essential prerequisite for economic development and promotion of the national competitiveness, as well as for reaching the highest welfare level.

In the twenty-first century, education is lifelong, and it is a part of our daily lives – a conscious choice and satisfaction; to know more and be able to do more, faster, more accurate; to learn and study with understanding and pleasure, learn from each other regardless of the social, economic, or health status; to learn in the environment that is adjusted to individual requirements using modern teaching aids.

According to the Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020 of the Republic of Latvia, the main goal of the education development policy is high-quality and inclusive education for personal development, human welfare, and reaching sustainable national growth.

The following sub-goals are defined in accordance with analysis of the issues identified in the previous planning period and future challenges:

### **Education environment: to increase the quality of education environment by optimising the content and developing a suitable infrastructure**

Environmental quality of education at all educational levels is determined by its content that promotes improvement and strengthening of individual knowledge, competencies, and skills, professional and competent teaching personnel that pass this educational content to educatees, modern educational environment and educational process that promote comprehension and acquisition of the content, as well as embodiment of inclusive education principle envisaging an equal opportunity irrespective of the needs and abilities, property status, social status, race, nationality, sex, religion and political beliefs, health conditions, place of residence, and occupation of educatees in available, respectful, and supportive environment.

### **Individual skills: to promote development of individual's professional and social skills based on values education for life and competitiveness in the work environment**

Professional and social skills are improved in the most purposeful way when an individual chooses an appropriate professional growth direction for the future, providing support mechanisms for schools and education leavers at the same time, thus increasing the overall education level and employment of Latvian society while promoting civic co-responsibility and social activity of educatees as a result of measures outside the formal education, as well as strengthening the principle of lifelong learning.

### **Effective management: to improve efficiency of resource management by development of institutional excellence and resource consolidation of educational institutions**

Improvement of resource management efficiency at the national, regional, and local level by developing institutional excellence, includes introduction of education quality supervision or monitoring that will enable all interested parties to track, evaluate, and consequently affect education-related processes and results, optimisation of financing models, provision of education availability, and improvement of international competitiveness of education.

Article 112 of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia states that anyone is entitled to education. The State shall ensure that anyone may acquire primary and secondary education without charge. Pursuant to Section 3.1, Paragraph 1 of the Education Law, a prohibition of differential treatment has been stipulated, thus guaranteeing the persons referred to in Section 3 of the Education Law<sup>1</sup> the right to acquire education regardless of the material and social status, race, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, religious and political affiliation, state of health, occupation and place of residence.

The aforementioned provisions of the Education Law are binding in the implementation of education at all its levels and in all types of education in accordance with Paragraphs 5 and 6 of the Education Law, as well as in the application of the norms of the General Education Law, the Vocational Education Law and the Law on Institutions of Higher Education

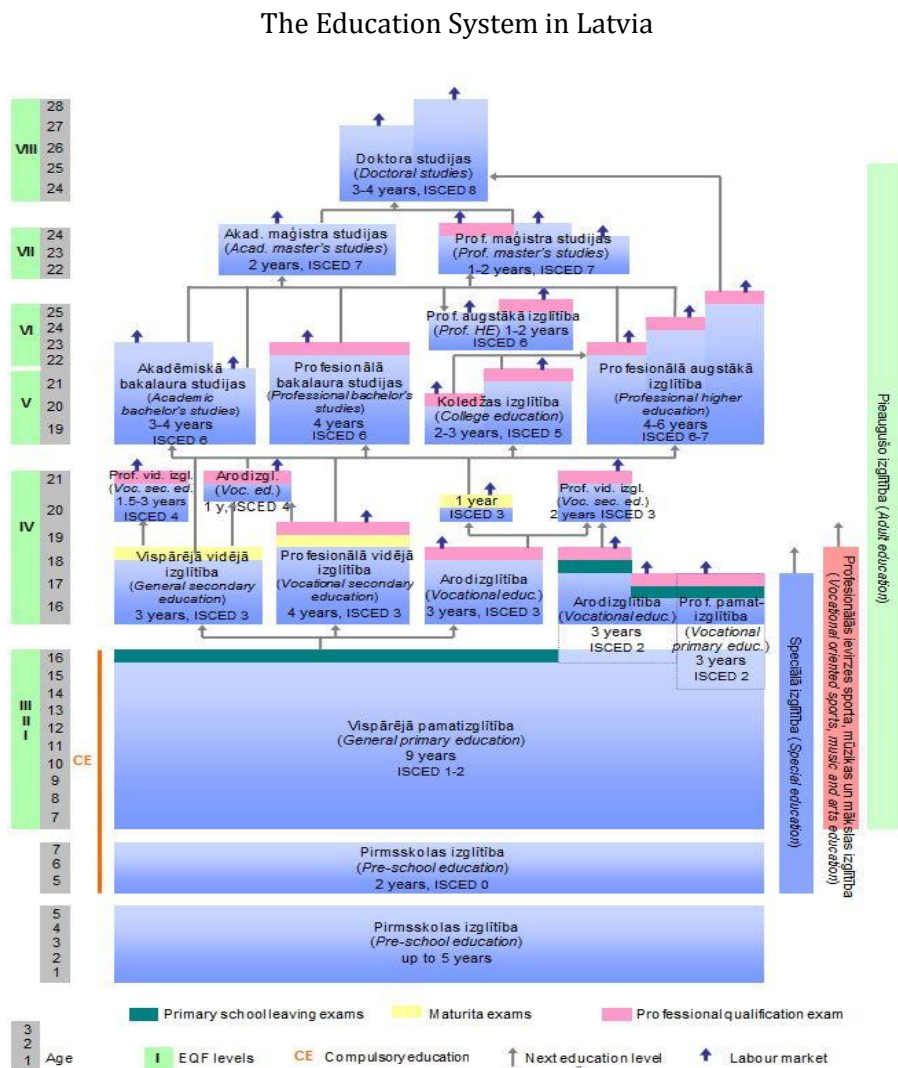
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<sup>1</sup> The following persons have the right to education: a citizen of Latvia; a non-citizen of Latvia; a citizen of the European Union, a citizen of the European Economic Area or a citizen of Swiss Confederation; a permanent resident of the European Community who has a valid residence permit in the Republic of Latvia; a stateless person who has a valid travel document of the stateless person issued in the Republic of Latvia; a citizen of another state, other than a citizen of the European Union, the European Economic Area or Swiss Confederation (hereinafter – a third-country national) or a stateless person who has a valid residence permit in the Republic of Latvia; a refugee or a person who has acquired alternative status; and a person who has received temporary protection in the Republic of Latvia. A minor child of an asylum seeker and a minor asylum seeker has the right to basic education and secondary education, as well as the right to continue the commenced education after reaching the age of majority. A minor third-country national or stateless person who has no legal basis to reside in the Republic of Latvia, has the right to acquire basic education during the time period specified for voluntary exit or during the time period for which the expulsion is suspended, as well as during his or her detention.

## Structure and Organisation of the Education System

The education system is administered at three levels - national, municipal and institutional. The Parliament (Saeima), the Cabinet of Ministers and the MoES are the main decision-making bodies at the national level. The MoES is the education policy-making institution that also issues the licenses for opening comprehensive education institutions and sets the State education standards along with the teacher training content and procedures. Since September 2014, when amendments to the Cabinet of Ministers "Regulations on the classification of Latvian education" were approved, legal comparison with ISCED-2011 levels is provided (see Figure 1).<sup>2</sup>

Figure 1



<sup>2</sup> Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr. 990, 2008. gada 2.decembrī 'Noteikumi par Latvijas izglītības klasifikāciju' [Regulations on the classification of Latvian education (last amended on 23 September 2014)]. <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=184810>



### Pre-school Education

5-6 year old children have to participate in pre-school programmes provided by general education institutions or kindergartens as a part of the compulsory basic education. The objective of the pre-school education is to foster general development of children and their readiness to enter primary stage of the basic education.

### Basic Education

9-year single structure basic education is compulsory for all children from the age of 7. The curriculum is determined by the State basic education standard. The MoES supervises and determines the content of the final national examinations. Pupils who have received evaluation in all subjects of the compulsory education curriculum, national tests and examinations, receive a Certificate of basic education (apliecība par pamatizglītību) and a statement of records (sekmju izraksts) that qualify them and serve as a screening criterion for admission to further education and training in secondary level educational programmes. In case a pupil has not received evaluation in any of the subjects or centralized national tests and examinations, he/she receives a school report (liecība) giving the right to continue education and training in vocational basic education programmes.

### Special Needs Education

Special schools or special education classes within general education schools provide education for children with special needs that correspond to their individual health condition. The structure of special education is very similar to that of the mainstream education providing opportunities for people with special needs to attain knowledge in general education subjects as well as general skills with strong emphasis on the applicability of the acquired knowledge and skills in order to facilitate social inclusion.

At the College of the Social Integration State Agency, established by the Ministry of Welfare, one can acquire level one professional higher education. With the knowledge thus acquired, disabled people will be competitive in the labour market and will be able to continue studies in level two professional higher education programmes at any higher education institution. Alsviki Vocational School, which is under the governance of MoES, provide vocational primary and vocational education programmes for young people with different disabilities. Vocation education

Vocation oriented education in arts, music and sport is voluntary and provides for a person's individual educational needs and wishes. Based on the Education Law, professional orientation education is acquired in parallel/in addition to studies in a basic school or a general secondary school. Developed education programs offer to acquire different specialities. As a result of mastering the programme students obtain a certificate of professional orientation education, which provides a possibility to prepare for the acquisition of a professional education in the selected area. Educational programs are offered in music, art and sports schools.

### Secondary Education

There are two types of secondary education programmes: general secondary and vocational secondary education and training programmes. When admitting students to secondary level education, schools are free to hold entrance examinations according to the basic education standard, except in those subjects for which students have already received a Certificate of the basic education.

### General Education

The compulsory curriculum of 3-year general secondary schools is determined by the State education standards in the following profiles: (1) general comprehensive, (2) humanitarian / social, (3) mathematics / natural science / technical, (4) vocational / professional (arts, music, business, sports). All educational programmes must contain 8 compulsory and 3-6 selected subjects according to the profile. Schools can offer some optional subjects that take no more than 10-15% of the total study time or major in any of the

compulsory subjects instead. General secondary education programmes, irrespective of the profile, may be combined with a national minority educational programme by inclusion of the minority's national language and subjects related to national identity and its integration into the Latvian society. Upon graduation students have to take 4 centralized national examinations, the content and procedure of which are determined by the MoES and approved by the Cabinet of Ministers. A Certificate of the secondary education (atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību) is awarded to all students, who have received a positive assessment in all subjects according to the chosen profile and the national examinations and a certificate of the passed centralized exams and their scores, providing the right to continue education in any higher-level education programme. If the student has not received an evaluation in one or more subjects or national examination, he/she receives a school report (licība).

### Vocational Education

In the Latvian education legislation and system, term “vocational education” is applied, rather than “vocational education and training” because the most of vocational education is implemented through school-based education programmes that include periods of practical learning at school and enterprises.

Different vocational education programmes are developed and offered for all branches of the national economy of Latvia. The State standards of vocational education and the Occupational Standards determine the curriculum/content of vocational education programmes. Most vocational education schools in Latvia provide 4 and 3 year vocational education programmes and only some programmes are designed for vocational basic education purposes. There are 174 vocational basic education (profesionālā pamatizglītība) programmes licenced in Latvia.

3 year vocational basic education and training programmes are provided in vocational schools for students without a certificate of the basic education (after completion of at least 7 grades of basic education, but not before the calendar year when they become 15 years old). Besides acquiring Level 1 or 2 of vocational qualification students also have the opportunity to accomplish the basic education.

4-year vocational secondary education programmes are offered by vocational secondary schools (named: arodividusskola, amatniecības vidusskola, arodģimnāzija or tehnikums) to those students who have successfully completed compulsory basic education. Vocational secondary education programmes lead to a diploma of vocational secondary education (diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību) and professional qualification of level 3: increased theoretical readiness and professional mastery, which allows performing certain duties of an executor, which comprise the planning and organisation of work, for example, various technicians, car mechanics, modellers, and hospitality service specialists – ISCED 3). In addition, vocational secondary education students take state centralized exams in Latvian, Math, foreign language and one in optional study subject. Students receive a certificate of general secondary education (vispārējās vidējās izglītības sertifikāts) which gives the right to enter higher education.

2-3 year vocational education programmes are offered to students who have completed the basic education and provide the opportunity to acquire Level 2 of vocational qualification. Education can be continued in 2-year programmes leading to qualification Level 3 or 1-2 year programmes leading to a Certificate of the secondary education (atestāts par vidējo izglītību). Vocational education programs (2-3 year education programs) are offered in the same thematic education fields, which are also implemented in professional educational programs (4 year educational programs), however, these programs provide different professions to be mastered with different professional qualification levels. The acquisition of a general secondary educational programme (1 year after the acquisition of vocational education, the basis for acceptance of a student to an educational programme is a certificate of vocational education and a statement of records, which certifies that a vocational education programme consists of no more than 4230 hours) is completed by 4 centralized examinations, which are organized according to terms and conditions of

acquisition of general secondary education. Assessments in general education subjects, for which there are centralized examinations, are certified by a general secondary education certificate. Students obtain a certificate of general secondary education, a statement of records and a general secondary education certificate in the manner prescribed by the laws and regulations regulating the field of education.

#### Post-secondary Non-tertiary Vocational Education

In Latvia the programmes (ISCED 4) lie between the secondary and higher levels of education, as well. However, nationally they are qualified as secondary programmes. The continuing vocational programmes (1-3 years long) and professional development programmes (at least 160 hours long, which may be as a part of qualification) fall in this category. After general secondary education there is a possibility to acquire professional improvement programme (no less than 160 training hours, which can be a part of qualification). According to the Professional Education Law, professional improvement is a special kind of professional education which provides an opportunity for persons, irrespective of their age and previous education or professional qualification, to acquire systematic professional knowledge and skills corresponding to the requirements of the labour market. The student, who has studied according to an accredited professional improvement education program, obtains a Certificate on the acquisition of professional improvement education.

#### Higher Education

The admission procedure is not centralised: each higher education institution has its own admissions board and criteria. From the year 2004 the entrance examinations are replaced by the results of the national centralised secondary education examinations.

The system of higher education in Latvia is binary since the Law on Institutions of Higher Education sets a difference between academic and professional higher education but it is not strictly institutionalised. Universities and other institutions of higher education mostly run both academic and professional programmes. There can be distinguished three groups of programmes: academic programmes leading to academic degrees, professional programmes based upon a standard of the first academic degree thus making graduates eligible for further academic studies and the applied professional programmes oriented towards higher professional qualifications but not providing background for direct admission to further academic studies.

Academic higher education programmes are based upon fundamental and/or applied science; they usually comprise a thesis at the end of each stage and lead to a Bachelor's degree (Bakalaura) and Master's degree (Maģistrs). The duration of Bachelor's degree programmes may be 3 or 4 years depending on the study field and educational programme. The 3-4-year Bachelor's degree is considered as a complete academic qualification. Master's degree is awarded after the second stage of academic education and requires at least 5 years of university studies altogether.

The Law on Higher Education Institutions and the Law on Vocational Education stipulate a two-level professional higher education – the first level of professional higher education or college education (2-3 years) leading to professional qualification Level 4 (diploms par pirmā līmeņa profesionālo augstāko izglītību), and second level of professional higher education leading to qualification level 5 (2-3 years). Having mastered a programme of professional higher education, students are awarded a professional qualification or a professional Bachelor's degree that can be followed by a further 1-2 years of professional Master's degree studies. The Master's degree (Maģistrs) of higher professional education is awarded if the total duration of studies is at least five years.

There can be the so-called "short" second level professional higher education study programmes (1-2 years), where qualification is obtained on the basis of the previously acquired first level professional higher education or academic Bachelor's degree. In total the duration of professional qualification Level 5 study

programmes is not less than 4 years after secondary education and not less than 2 years after college education.

### Postgraduate Education

Master's degree or the equivalent (graduates of 5-6 year professional higher education programmes in Law and Medicine can continue education at postgraduate level directly) is required for admission to Doctor's degree studies. Doctor's degree studies last 3-4 full-time years. They include advanced studies of the subject in a relevant study programme (or an equivalent amount of independent research while working at a university, research institution, etc.) and a scientific research towards Doctor's degree thesis. Publications in internationally quoted scientific journals are required before public defence of the Doctor's degree thesis as an integral part of a study programme. The Council of Science appoints the Promotion Council and sets the procedures for awarding Doctor's degrees.

### Adult Education

Adult education includes all types of formal, non-formal and informal education including further and interest education, professional upgrading and professional development training. It is provided to satisfy needs in lifelong education process to support personal development and competitiveness in the labour market regardless of a person's age and previous education.

### Interest-related Education

Interest-related education supplements the knowledge and skills acquired through formal education. Interest-related education in Latvia is implemented and funded according to the programme principle. Interest-related programs are mainly implemented by interest-related education institutions and general education schools. Realisation of the individual educational needs and desires of people regardless of age and previously acquired education is a type of non-formal education. Taking into account that traditionally interest-related education programmes in Latvia are organised for children and youth, the regulatory framework provides requirements to obtain a status of the teacher of interest-related education and procedure for funding interest-related education programmes. The most common extracurricular programmes of interest-related education are dance, music, art, drama, folklore, technical innovation, environmental education, sports, etc. Interest-related education programmes help to develop abilities, talents, also a variety of skills and provide opportunity for children and youth to spend their free time reasonably.

The following table shows the total number of educational institutions and enrolment in Latvia in year 2012/13 (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Education institutions and enrolment (at the beginning of the school year)			
2012/13	Education institutions (September 1)	Enrolment	Of which girls
Pre-school education institutions	605	93 293	45 369
General education	832	212 433	104 839
Vocational education	65	32 086	13 236
Higher education inter alia colleges	61	94 474	55 731

Data source: CSB

Latvia provides considerable support for ethnic minority languages, education and culture. The state continues to develop and finance its bilingual education model providing publicly-funded education in seven

minority languages: Russian, Polish, Hebrew, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Estonian, and Lithuanian. In the school year 2013/2014, there were 99 schools with instruction in Russian, and 65 bilingual (Latvian and minority language programmes) schools. Each of these schools is entitled to determine by itself which subjects are taught in Latvian, but the total should be 60% of all subjects.

### Tuition Fees

Section 12 of the Education Law states that fees for receiving pre-school, basic and secondary education at an institution established by the State or local governments shall be covered from the State budget or local government budgets in accordance with the procedures prescribed by the Cabinet. Private education institutions receive State grants towards the remuneration of teachers and may set fees for receiving education. The founder of the private education institution defines the tuition fee, including for low income students. Teachers' wages and purchasing of textbooks are funded from the state budget according to the number of students entered into the State Education Information System.

The tuition at pre-school, basic and secondary education in a state or municipality founded educational establishment is funded from the national or municipal budget. Private educational institutions may set a tuition fee for providing education. In higher education programmes the state covers tuition fees for a certain number of students' places. Each higher education institution may set a tuition fee for the rest of the students' places. All students are entitled to a loans for their studies in any higher education programme. Foreigners or non-citizens pay for their education in accordance with the agreement concluded with the respective educational establishment. In cases when foreign citizens study in Latvia under an exchange programme and an equivalent number of Latvian students study abroad, the foreigners' studies in Latvia are financed from the budget resources of the Republic of Latvia allocated to the respective institution of higher education. The tuition fee for the citizens of European Union countries shall be determined and covered according to the same procedure as for the citizens and permanent residents of the Republic of Latvia.

### Grading System

Evaluation of educational achievements of a learner is carried out on a scale of 10 points, following criteria such as:

- the scope and quality of the acquired knowledge;
- acquired abilities and skills;
- attitude towards schooling; and
- dynamics of the development of learning achievements.

## National Strategies, Policies, Plans and Targets for Education

**The Guidelines for Education Development Strategy 2014-2020** – adopted by the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia (Saeima) in May, 2014. The Guidelines is the only one sectoral policy planning document that has been adopted on the constitutional level. The Guidelines provides synergy at the national level between all relevant processes in the education policy planning and implementation.

### **Linking Education Development Guidelines 2014 – 2020 with the main development planning documents:**

#### **The Growth Model for Latvia: People First** (approved by the Saeima on October 26, 2005)

A long-term conceptual document defining the human-oriented development model for Latvia, with an emphasis on knowledge, wisdom, and ability to use them as a resource for growth. As a priority long-term task, the following improvements are defined in the education system: 1) everyone has guaranteed access to secondary education and provided opportunities to obtain high-quality higher and vocational education, 2) drastically increased preparation of higher qualification specialists (masters and doctors), increase in the proportion of technical knowledge and natural science at all levels of the education system.

#### **Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia till 2030** approved by the Saeima on June 10, 2010)

“Latvia 2030” is hierarchically the highest national long-term development planning document that includes a conclusion of the necessity of a paradigm change in the education. The education must be of high-quality, accessible throughout the life, and creativity-oriented that allows to respond to challenges of the global competition and demography, and is one of the prerequisites for changing the economic model. The priority long-term lines of action: education accessibility and changes in the organisation of the educational process, school as a social networking hub, contextual education, and change of the teacher profession, e-school and the use of information technologies, lifelong learning.

#### **Latvian National Development Plan 2014 – 2020** (approved by the Saeima on December 20, 2012)

NDP 2020 is hierarchically the highest national medium-term development planning document. It determines the medium-term priorities also in the field of education and science, with an emphasis on such lines of actions as competence development and improvement of research, innovations, and higher education. Some of the main tasks that are defined includes high-quality pre-school education; inclusive education; improvement of the learning content; support for talent growth; training and attraction of creative and qualified teachers; development of vocational education in accordance with the labour market trends; accessibility of higher education, exportability, competitiveness and consolidation; youth involvement in the non-formal education and voluntary work; the promotion of youth employment incl. development of career education system; improvement of educational institutions incl. retention of small rural schools by supporting their function extension emphasising the service basket principle set for the territorial deployment of the educational service in the NDP 2020. For fulfilment of these tasks, MES has planned a series of measures that are also reflected in Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020.

#### **The Latvian National Reform Programme for the Implementation of “EU 2020” Strategy** (approved by the protocol decision of the CM meeting on April 26, 2011)<sup>3</sup>

To ensure achievement of the goals set in the “Europe 2020” strategy, it includes the measures that facilitate implementation of the lifelong learning principle, structural changes in vocational education, modernisation of higher education, development of the potential of scientific activity, modernisation of the material and

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<sup>3</sup> Monitoring and restoration of the Latvian NRP implementation are performed on an annual basis within the European semester when the Progress report on implementation of the Latvian national reform programme in the context of “Europe 2020” strategy is submitted to the European Commission.

technical base of the higher education institutions and raising efficiency of the use of resources, provision of equal access to higher education, improvement of the quality of studies and scientific activity, provision of the basic and secondary education, introduction of modern teaching methods.

**Convergence Programme of Latvia 2013-2016** (approved by the protocol decision (Prot. No. 25, Clause 1) of the CM meeting on April 29, 2013)

In order to achieve the general objectives of the government's budget while ensuring conditions for economic growth in the medium term, the Latvian government continues to implement structural reforms incl. in education and science. There is an emphasis put on provision of accessibility to basic and secondary education, structural changes in vocational education, modernisation of higher education, increase in the proportion of those having obtained higher education, attraction of foreign students, and consolidation of national scientific institutions.

**Government action plan for the implementation of Declaration on the planned activities of the Cabinet of Ministers** (approved by the order No. 84 of the CM of February 16, 2012)

The Government action plan includes the tasks for reaching the objectives defined in the Declaration on the planned activities of the Cabinet of Ministers led by Valdis Dombrovskis. They are connected with a number of educational issues incl. monitoring of the education quality, motivation tools for teachers, flexibility of educational content, pre-school education development, retention of small rural schools and extension of their functions, improvement of professional competencies of teachers, a support system of inclusive education at all levels, the use of ICT in education, transition to compulsory secondary (general or vocational) education, a new funding model for higher education, exportability of higher education, a model of accreditation and quality management of higher education, introduction of the Latvian qualifications framework of Latvian qualifications and improvement of professional standards, participation of field expert boards in the determination of the content of vocational training, cross-sectoral policies in the employment field including promotion of career education, youth employment, and interest-related education, etc. MES has performed actions for the implementation of these measures and will facilitate their continuity within Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020.

**Development Concept for Latvian Higher Education and Institutions of Higher Education 2013-2020** (developed in accordance with Paragraph 1 of Section 70 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education)

The measures foreseen in the Guidelines in the field of higher education are based on the "Development Concept for Latvian Higher Education and Institutions of Higher Education 2013-2020" elaborated by CHE which contains solutions to problems that will be evaluated in the further discussions with industry representatives in order to agree on a common vision regarding the most essential issues.

**Action Plan for Higher Education and Science Development Measures for the Period from 20.11.2013 to 31.12.2014** (approved by the order No. 560 of the CM of November 11, 2013)

The main goal defined in the action plan of the measures is to provide high-quality, internationally competitive, and science-based higher education that is implemented by effectively managed institutions with consolidated resources. For achieving this objective, higher education openness will be promoted, the system of granting the public funding will be improved, an effective education quality management and monitoring system will be developed, as well as the link between higher education, research, and industry will be strengthened that correspond to the planned measures in the field of higher education in the Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020.

**Science, Technology Development, and Innovation Guidelines 2014-2020** (approved by the order No. 685 of the CM of December 28, 2013)

The main goal of science, technology, and innovation policy is development of Latvian knowledge base and innovation capacity, as well as coordination of the innovation system. For reaching this goal, human capital

in the fields of science, technology, and innovation will be developed, international competitiveness of Latvian science will be promoted, research and education sector will be modernised and integrated, more effective knowledge transfer environment will be created and capacity of corporate absorption and innovations will be strengthened, management of the field of science, technology, and innovation will be optimised, as well as demand for science and innovation will be formed.

Science, Technology Development, and Innovation Guidelines in the national development planning system is a part of the Smart Specialisation Strategy and promotes achievement of the goals defined in the national long-term and medium-term policy planning documents. The Smart Specialisation Strategy foresees that Latvian economic transformation will take place by investing in three strategically important directions (change of production and export structure in the traditional economic sectors; growth in the sectors where it is possible to create products and services with high value added; sectors with significant horizontal impact and contribution to the economic transformation) by setting seven priorities (products of higher value added, a productive innovation system, energy efficiency, modern ICT, modern education, knowledge base, and polycentric development) and identifying five areas of specialisation (knowledge-intensive bioeconomy; biomedicine, medical technologies, biopharmaceutics and biotechnologies; information and communication technologies; smart energy and intelligent materials, technologies and engineering systems). A modern education system that corresponds to the future labour market demand is set as one of the priorities, and it will facilitate economic transformation, as well as development of competencies, entrepreneurial spirit, and creativity needed for the implementation of the strategy priorities at all levels of education.

Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020 have taken into account the fields approved by the Smart Specialisation Strategy for competitive and knowledge-based development.

**Youth Policy Guidelines 2009-2018** (approved by the order No. 246 of the CM of April 20, 2009)

The measures set in the Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020 are binding to the objectives of youth policy foreseeing improvement of the quality of youth life by promotion of their initiatives, participation in decision-making and public life and support of work with youth, and provision of an easier transition from a child to adult status. Underlining the connection with the education system, within the implementation of the Youth policy, the emphasis is put on support for the youth employment incl. promotion of integration of the unemployed youth (incl. the disabled) in the labour market by improvement of their basic skills; as well as opportunities for the practice of youth at the employer and practice quality development. At the same time, participation of youth, voluntary work development, mobility facilitation, as well as engagement in physical activities and sports life are promoted.

**State Language Policy Guidelines 2005-2014** (approved by the order No. 137 of the CM of March 2, 2005)

The goal of the State language policy is to provide sustainability, linguistic quality, and competitiveness of the Latvian language - the State language of the Republic of Latvia and the EU official language in the Latvian and global language market that includes measures for provision of learning and mastering of Latvian as the mother tongue, second and foreign language, improvement of teaching methodology for learning Latvian, perfection of professional mastery of teachers of Latvian language, preparation and issue of teaching aids and methodology tools incl. electronic ones, needed for learning and mastering Latvian that is to be supported within the project of Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020, as well.

**Sports Policy Guidelines 2014-2020** (approved by the order No. 666 of the CM of December 18, 2013)

The goal of the Sports policy is to increase the proportion of the Latvian population that engage in physical or sports activities at least 1-2 times in a week. In order to reach this, physical activity and awareness of the population (especially of children and youth) of the necessity of physical activities in order to maintain and strengthen health will be encouraged, development of sportsmen preparation and competition system will be improved, health care and medical supervision of children and youth with increased physical load, high



performance athletes and disabled athletes will be improved, availability and development of the sports infrastructure will be facilitated, as well as creation of a sustainable sports financing system will be ensured. In general, these goals correspond to the principles mentioned in the Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020.

**Guidelines of Optimisation of Vocational Education Institutions Network 2010-2015** (approved by the order No.5 of the CM of January 6, 2010)

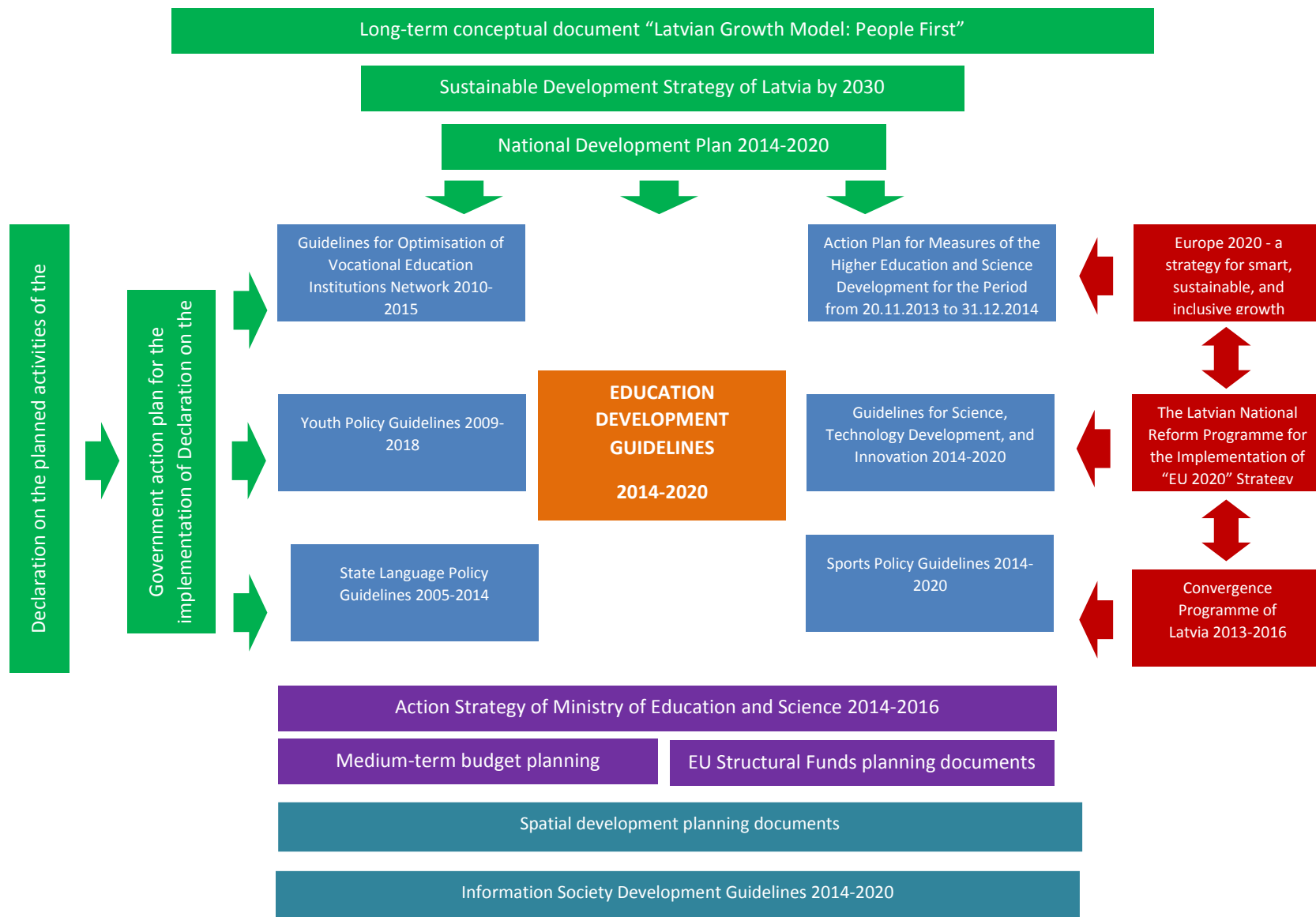
Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020 are related to the Guidelines of Optimisation of Vocational Education Institutions Network 2010-2015 which aims to provide further implementation of structural reforms of the vocational education system by optimisation of a number of vocational education institutions and their placement in regions, as well as by carrying out their differentiation, to create a modern material and technical provision of vocational education that corresponds to contemporary requirements, to promote more effective use of resources of all types increasing quality and availability of the vocational education. As a result, a differential network of vocational education institutions that corresponds to the demographic tendencies will be established in the State; a balanced offer (in the regional and national level) of the opportunities to acquire vocational education programmes will be provided in order to prepare the number of specialists needed for the labour market and ensure the conformity of the education offer with the employment structure; as well as the process of optimisation of vocational education institutions will comply with the cooperation principle between public institutions, local governments, and industry associations to ensure flexible and effective use of resources of all types, as well as the ability to quickly respond to the changes in the market demand.

**Information Society Development Guidelines 2014-2020** (approved by the order No. 468 of the CM of October 14, 2013)

The objective of this document is to build a knowledge-based economy and improve overall quality of life by provision of opportunities provided by the use of information and communication technologies for everyone and by contribution to the increase in public administrative efficiency and national competitiveness, as well as creation of work places. The achievement of this objective will include enhancement of the ICT education and e-skills corresponding to the framework of Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020.

Figure 3

## Linking Education Development Guidelines 2014 – 2020 with the main development planning documents



## Governance of the Education System

According to the Education Law the responsibilities of governance are shared among the different institutions in the following way:

### Cabinet of Ministers

The Cabinet of Ministers shall:

- specify the forms for State-recognised education documents, the criteria and procedures for the issuance of education documents;
- determine the procedures by which the State shall finance basic education and secondary educational programmes, which are implemented by private educational institutions;
- specify the procedures for the receipt, repayment and extinguishment of credit, and the amount of credit, for studies in higher educational programmes implemented by educational institutions;
- specify the procedures for registration of children who have reached mandatory school age;
- approve the constitution of the National Defence Academy of Latvia and higher education institutions established by private individuals;
- establish, reorganise and dissolve State educational institutions and State educational support institutions upon the proposal of the Minister for Education and Science, or other Ministers;
- specify the procedures for the registration and accreditation of educational institutions;
- regulate the rules and procedures for the accreditation of institutions of higher education institutions;
- specify the procedures for the licensing and accreditation of educational programmes
- confirm the list of pedagogical professions and positions;
- confirm, in accordance with pedagogical professions, the requirements for required education and professional qualifications of teachers;
- specify the procedures by which the State organises and finances the publication and acquisition of teaching materials;
- determine the procedures for the assessment and approval of the compliance of the educational literature with the State basic education and general secondary education standard;
- specify the procedures for the payment of work remuneration and the amount of remuneration for teachers;
- specify the procedures for the financing of special educational institutions and special education classes of general educational institutions and boarding schools;
- determine a single State policy and strategy in education and submit the basic guidelines for educational development for the following four years to the Saeima for approval;
- determine the guidelines for the State pre-school education;
- set State education standards;
- specify the minimum costs for the implementation of educational programmes per one student;
- determine the procedures by which an educational institution (except institutions of higher education and colleges) provides library and information services;
- determine the procedures by which prophylactic health care and access to emergency medical assistance, as well as the safety of students in educational institutions and the events organised by such institutions shall be ensured;
- determine the amount of workload for teachers;
- determine the procedures for the receipt of scholarships and the minimum amount of scholarships for the students of higher educational programmes, who have been enrolled according to competitive procedures in conformity with the number of State financed places, and for students of professional educational programmes who have been enrolled in conformity with the number of State or local government financed places;
- specify the procedures for the financing of interest-related educational programmes;
- regulate the organisation of children's camps and activity regulations;

- determine the procedures by which the State shall finance professional orientation educational programmes;
- determine the authority which keeps the registers of teachers and educational programmes;
- determine the authority which licences educational programmes;
- determine the authority which carries out accreditation of educational programmes and educational institutions;
- determine the content of the State Education Information System and the procedures for the maintaining and updating thereof;
- determine the procedures by which the State shall finance adult non-formal educational programmes, further educational programmes and professional qualification improvement, as well as the criteria for the receipt of the relevant financing;
- determine the procedures for professional qualification improvement of teachers;
- determine the procedures by which State examinations shall take place in accredited educational programmes (except higher educational programmes);
- determine the support measures for employers in additional educating of employees, including the criteria for the receipt of such support and the procedures for the implementation of support measures; and determine the procedures by which the educational institution shall inform parents (persons who exercise custody) of students, local government or State institutions if an student fails to attend the educational institution without a justified reason.

#### Ministry of Education and Science

The MoES shall:

- implement a unified State policy and development strategy in education;
- draw up draft policy planning documents and regulatory enactments in the field of education;
- ensure the maintenance and updating of the State Education Information System;
- organise educational and professional skill improvement work for teachers; co-ordinate the research and methodology work;
- develop the guidelines for the State pre-school education, the State education standards;
- draw up proposals and submit, pursuant to specified procedures, a request for the allocation of State budget resources for education, science, sports and development of the official language;
- control lawful utilisation of State budget resources provided for education at the educational institutions subordinated thereto;
- co-ordinate the co-operation in education of the State educational institutions with foreign countries and international organisations;
- develop course programme models for subjects of study or courses (except higher educational programmes) in conformity with the requirements of the State education standards;
- prepare model by-laws for educational institutions and educational support institutions;
- organise State procurement for preparation and publication of teaching materials in conformity with basic educational programmes;
- specify and co-ordinate the procedures for the acquisition of education and professional qualification improvement for teachers;
- organise the development of electronic teaching resources and teaching materials complying with the education standards;
- monitor the results of the educational process of State-financed educational institutions; prepare and implement measures for the improvement of the quality of the educational process;
- develop model educational programmes complying with the guidelines for the State pre-school education and the requirements of State education standards;
- approve the classification of Educational Institution Registers, Educational Programmes Registers and Teacher Registers;
- submit proposals to the Cabinet regarding the foundation, reorganisation and dissolution of State educational institutions and education support institutions, co-ordinating such with the relevant local governments;

- approve the by-laws of educational institutions (except institutions of higher education and colleges) subordinated to the MoES;
- hire and dismiss heads of educational institutions (except institutions of higher education) subordinated to the MoES;
- make proposals for the dismissal of heads of local government educational institutions and co-ordinate the hiring or dismissal of heads of local government educational institutions; and manage the provision of library and information services in educational institutions.

### Other Ministries

Ministries of other sectors shall:

- submit proposals to the Cabinet, regarding the foundation, reorganisation or dissolution of State educational institutions, co-ordinating with the Ministry of Science and Education;
- prepare the educational content of professional subjects of study and the standards for professional subjects of study, and control observance of such in the educational institutions under their subordination;
- ensure the activity of the educational institutions subordinated thereto, as well as organise and finance publication and acquisition of teaching materials in conformity with the standards for professional subjects of study;
- control the financial and economic activity of the educational institutions subordinated thereto;
- approve the by-laws of educational institutions (except institutions of higher education and colleges) subordinated thereto.

### Local Governments

Each local government has a duty to ensure that children whose declared place of residence is in the administrative territory of the local government, have the opportunity to acquire pre-school education and basic education at the educational institution closest to the place of residence of the child or at the closest educational institution which implements educational programme in the official language, or bilingually (educational programmes for ethnic minorities), to ensure that youths have the opportunity to acquire secondary education, as well as to ensure the opportunity to implement interest-related education and to support extracurricular activities, also children's camps.

In order to ensure that a child whose place of residence is declared in the administrative territory of the local government has the opportunity to attend an educational institution of his or her free choice, but who is attending an educational institution which is located in the administrative territory of another local government, the local government has a duty to enter into agreement in accordance with the procedures specified by the Cabinet regarding participation in the financing of the maintenance expenditures of an educational institution subordinated to the relevant local government.

A city local government and a municipality local government shall:

- upon co-ordinating with the MoES establish, reorganise and dissolve general educational institutions, including boarding schools, special educational institutions and classes, as well as pre-school educational groups for children with special needs and interest-related educational institutions, but, upon co-ordinating with the relevant sectoral ministry and the MoES, establish, reorganise and dissolve professional educational institutions;
- hire and dismiss heads of general educational institutions, including boarding schools, special educational institutions, interest-related educational institutions, professional orientation educational institutions in sports under the subordination thereof, co-ordinating with the MoES, but the heads of professional orientation educational institutions in arts or culture – co-ordinating with the relevant sectoral ministry;
- specify the procedures by which the educational institutions under the subordination thereof shall be financed from the budget;
- participate in the financing of State and other local government educational institutions on the basis of mutual agreements;

- may participate in the financing of private educational institutions on the basis of mutual agreements;
- allocate local government budget resources to educational institutions, and control utilisation thereof;
- maintain the educational institutions, except special educational institutions, special educational classes and groups in general educational institutions, boarding schools, also those financed from the State budget, subordinated thereto, taking into account that the financial support provided to such institutions shall not be less than the financial support specified by the Cabinet, and control utilisation of such financial resources;
- provide support to the educational institutions subordinated thereto for the performance of the necessary improvements detected during the accreditation of these educational institutions;
- ensure the transfer of the State budget resources allocated for salaries of teachers of the educational institutions and educational support institutions subordinated thereto to the accounts of the educational institutions;
- ensure the work remuneration of the maintenance, technical and medical employees of the educational institutions subordinated thereto, except the work remuneration of the maintenance, technical and medicinal employees of such special educational institutions, special educational classes and groups in general educational institutions, as well as of such boarding schools, which are financed from the State budget;
- ensure prophylactic health care and access to emergency medical assistance for students of the educational institutions subordinated thereto in accordance with the procedures specified by the Cabinet, as well as determine such students for whom the cost of meals shall be covered by the local government;
- ensure the acquisition of education for students with special needs (in compliance with the state of health which affects the type of acquisition of education) in special educational institutions, pre-school educational groups for children with special needs, special educational classes, as well as in boarding schools in accordance with the procedures and in the amounts specified by the Cabinet;
- ensure catering in special educational institutions, pre-school educational groups for children with special needs, special educational classes and boarding schools subordinated thereto in accordance with the procedures and in the amounts specified by the Cabinet;
- ensure transport for students to commute to the educational institution and back to their place of residence if it is not possible to use public transport;
- ensure professional guidance and career education for children and youths;
- ensure interest-related education for children and youths, issue licences for implementation of interest-related educational programmes;
- ensure protection of the rights of children in the field of education;
- provide consultative assistance to families in regard to the upbringing of children;
- ensure the operation of the local government pedagogical-medical commission and the accessibility thereof for children with special needs;
- carry out registration of children who have reached the mandatory school age in accordance with procedures specified by the Cabinet;
- specify the amount of benefits and material support of another kind and the procedures for granting thereof to students in the educational institutions subordinated thereto;
- implement policy in adult education and ensure the distribution of the financing granted and supervision over the utilisation of financial resources;
- participate in the provision of educational literature, literature of another type necessary for educational process and other teaching materials for the educational institutions subordinated thereto;
- promote the possibility for educational institutions to use the unified library information system;
- organise professional skill improvement of teachers, co-ordinate and ensure methodological work;

- determine the number of positions in institutions of higher education to be funded from the local government budget resources;
- ensure the organisation of State examinations, including centralised examinations, in accordance with the procedures specified by the Cabinet;
- support participation of students in olympiads of subjects, competitions, shows, projects and sports competitions; and
- fulfil the functions of local governments in the field of education specified in other regulatory enactments.

### The State Education Quality Service

The State Education Quality Service is an institution subordinated the MoES. Its functions shall be prescribed by the by-laws approved by the Cabinet. The State Education Quality Service shall:

- control compliance of the educational process with laws and regulatory enactments regulating education;
- analyse the activities of educational institutions, draw up proposals for amendments of regulatory enactments and for improving the work of educational institutions;
- in cases when violation of laws or other regulatory enactments has been observed, make proposals to the employer to impose disciplinary sanctions for the head of an educational institution or the teacher, or terminate the employment contract entered into with him or her;
- impose administrative sanctions in accordance with the procedures and in the cases prescribed by law;
- in cases when the health or life of the students is in danger, as well as for other violations of the law, temporarily suspend, while the founder of the educational institution has not examined the relevant matter and taken a decision, the orders of officials and relieve the officials from performing duties; and
- issue certificates for the commencement of a pedagogical private practice.

### Private Persons or Legal Entities

Private persons or legal entities may establish, reorganize and close private education institutions. The rules of registration of an institution, accreditation of an institution, licensing, registration and accreditation of education programmes are the same as for public schools.

### Key Stakeholders

According to the Education Law the public shall participate in the organisation and development of education by popularising all forms of education, educating and promoting improvement in the quality of education, creating educational programmes, protecting the rights and interests of students and teachers during the acquisition of education and work process, developing educational institutions and education support institutions and public organisations.

Activities of the MoES cover broad section of society, therefore, informing society and involving it in science, sports, youth, state language and especially education policy-making is a relevant course of action for the ministry. In general, the ministry ensures cooperation with more than 65 non-governmental organisations, including associations in education, organisations for parents, Student Union of Latvia, sport associations etc. In 2013, the ministry concluded cooperation agreements with 23 non-governmental organisations for the total amount of EUR 11.65 million. In the same time EUR 80.2 million will be allocated to the non-governmental organisations for arranging various events for young people in the framework of youth state policy.

There are several advisory and coordinating councils (for instance advisory council Education for All, advisory council for minority education, the Latvian National Sports Council, Youth Advisory Council etc.) permanently working within the ministry, through which exchange of various society opinions is being implemented for promoting policy development.

Cabinet Regulation<sup>4</sup> lays down participation of society in development planning process. According to this procedure society representatives can participate in development planning, by taking part in inter-institutional working groups and advisory councils, as well as by participating in public debates and consultations and by engaging in discussion groups, forums and other participation activities and also by submitting written proposals and objections to the draft of development programming document and to a legislative proposal.

The MoES involves non-governmental organisations in the work groups in the course of development of regulatory acts and policy planning documents. The trade union of employees of education and science of Latvia unites employees from the field of education. Aims of the trade union are not only protection of the rights of teaching staff, but also - advantage development of education and science in Latvia.

In order to balance out various interests of society representatives' organisations in social and economic issues at national level the National Tripartite Cooperation Council was established, which coordinates and organises trilateral social dialogue between employers' associations, governmental institutions and trade unions. The National Tripartite Cooperation Council is made of representatives appointed by the government, the Employers' Confederation and the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia on basis of parity. Within the National Tripartite Cooperation Council there are eight sub-councils, including the Tripartite Sub-council for Co-operation in Vocational Education (PINTSA).

PINTSA is empowered to evaluate and make proposals for policy development documents and legislative proposals in the fields of human resource development, education and employment and make proposals for their improvement, including for the most efficient use of the state budgetary resources, and for number of students in vocational education financed by the state budget etc.

12 sector expert councils were established within the European Union Structural Funds "Establishing Sector Qualifications Framework and Increasing Efficiency in Vocational Education and Quality", which have been active since 2011. Their aim is to promote cooperation with other sectors, including forecasting sector development and also studying and ensuring correspondence between education and labour market demand and supply. Sector employers' organisations or their associations, as well as sector trade union organisations, the Latvian Chamber of Crafts, sector ministries and other institutions get involved in sector expert councils.

This ensures that representatives delegated by all stakeholders, namely, by state, by employers and their organisations (trade unions), as well as by professional organisations across sectors participate in the work of sector expert councils.

There are several non-governmental institutions, European level youth organisations, social entrepreneurs, public authorities at national and local level, region-to-region associations, informal groups of young people (setting up and carrying out different projects by themselves) engaged in the field of non-formal education. There is an extensive cooperation with European Union institutions and information networks to inform young people on various opportunities offered by the programme outside of Latvia.

### Teaching Staff and School Leaders

According to the Education Law a pedagogue is a natural person who has the education and the professional qualifications specified in this Law or in other laws regulating education, and who participates in the implementation of an educational programme at an educational institution or in certified private practice.

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<sup>4</sup> Cabinet Regulation of 25.04.2009 no. 970 "Sabiedrības līdzdalības kārtība attīstības plānošanas procesā" (Procedure for Society Participation in Development Planning Process), <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=197033>.



Meanwhile the following persons may not work as pedagogues: 1) persons who have been punished for an intentional crime and have not been rehabilitated; 2) persons whose capacity to act are limited in accordance with procedures prescribed in regulatory enactments; 3) in educational institutions established by the State or local governments – persons who do not have a document issued in accordance with the procedures prescribed by the Cabinet that attests to command of the official language at the highest level, except for academic personnel of institutions of higher education – citizens of other states and stateless persons who are participating in the implementation of particular educational programmes on the basis of an international agreement, as well as teachers working at educational institutions or branches thereof founded by foreign states; and 4) persons who have been deprived, by a court decision, of the right of custody.

In Latvia the general term pedagogue (pedagogs) is used in regulations to refer to all teachers - persons with acquired pedagogical education and teaching qualification.

In May 2011 the Cabinet of Ministers issued regulation on the list of teachers' professions and posts<sup>5</sup>. The following list of posts refers to teachers and education staff directly responsible for teaching:

1) General education pedagogues: general secondary education teacher; basic education (integrated primary and lower-secondary education) pedagogues; general basic education teacher; basic education teacher;

2) Pre-school pedagogues: pre-school education teacher; pre-school education music teacher; pre-school education sports teacher;

3) Vocational education pedagogues: vocational education teacher; vocational orientation education teacher;

4) Pedagogues of higher education institutions and colleges: assistant; associate professor; lecturer; professor.

5) Special education pedagogues: teacher – speech therapist; special education teacher; special pedagogue.

Posts at education institution linked to posts of pedagogues: Teacher of prolonged-day group; Education institution museum pedagogue; Interest-related education teacher; Boarding school teacher; Head coach; Vocational training teacher; Conductor; Concert master; Choreographer; Ballet-master; Sports coach.

School teachers in Latvia are trained at higher education level. There are two groups of programmes (according concurrent or consecutive models) providing teacher training, academic and professional; thus initial teacher training is provided in the following programmes: second level professional higher education study programmes (integrated vocational Bachelor's degree programme); academic study programmes in a discipline related to subjects taught in schools followed by professional higher education study programme; first level professional higher education study programmes.

### Performance of the Education System

The basic principles for the evaluation of the acquired education are specified in the guidelines for the State pre-school education, the basic criteria and procedures are specified in the State education standards. Acquisition of education in conformity with accredited educational programmes at an educational institution conclude with State examinations.

### Educational Attainment

Data of education attainment level shows that 23.1% of the population (from the age of 15) have acquired higher education (including Doctor's degrees), among them 64% women; there are 30.2% of people (among them 52% women) with vocational average or vocational education; general secondary education – 23.8% (among them 54% women), basic education – 19% (among them 51% women). 4% of the population of age above 15 haven't completed basic education, 0.01% considered themselves illiterates.

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<sup>5</sup> Cabinet regulation of no 354 „Noteikumi par pedagogu profesiju un amatu sarakstu”, likumi.lv/doc.php?id=229913.

The number of graduates shows the proportion of the students having achieved the formal aim of education (overcoming threshold) and characterizes the annual contribution to the society made by education.

In school year 2012/2013 97.3% of students completed the ninth grade with a certificate of basic education. The situation where, on average, barely 3% of students are the potential drop-outs at mandatory education in the last five years has become more stable, indicating an acute necessity to evaluate the actions of previous five years and efficiency thereof, as well as to look for objective causes and for possibilities to remove the causes leading to it.

However, the fact that 99.3% of students at grade 12 (excluding special schools and classes) have obtained diploma of general secondary education shows that firstly, the education provision is planned well enough and secondly, students have made a reasoned choice. It is to be mentioned that the secondary education is obtained by also 86.7% of the twelfth grade students at evening (shift) schools. Latvia participated in all PISA cycles starting from 2000 until the most recent PISA 2012. Figure 4 shows the performance of students according to PISA results.

Figure 4

	2000	2003	2006	2009	2012
Reading	458	491	479	484	489
Mathematics		483	486	482	491
Science			490	494	502

Latvia also participated in other international studies including the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study – PIRLS – in 2001 and 2006, and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study – TIMSS – in 1995, 1999, 2003 and 2007. Overall, these studies confirm the performance improvement of Latvian students, while the latest results of TIMSS suggest much better standings when comparing to other countries.

## Main Challenges of Education for Achieving EFA Goals

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the main challenges have been the differing levels of economic development throughout the country and the high proportion of the Russian minority, especially in the Eastern part of the country.

The economic crisis, starting in 2009, severely affected Latvia. Unemployment deteriorated, and consequently, emigration of Latvian youth became a major problem. In response to that situation, Latvia started to focus on lifelong learning by reforming the system of vocational education as well as adult education, in order to enhance the flexibility and mobility of Latvians, taking into account labour market demands. The economy is particularly lacking in experts of the STEM fields. Despite the measures taken, high youth unemployment rate remains a challenge to be solved.

Demographic trends, namely the decreasing population of the country poses a serious threat to the economy. The Ministry of Economy forecasts a significant decrease in the number of students in secondary and higher education until 2020. Parallel to this trend, small schools in rural areas raise the issue of financial sustainability.

On the other hand, the number of children eligible for pre-school education is much higher than institutions founded by local governments can provide for. To tackle the existing shortage of places in municipality kindergartens, Latvia has introduced the system of child-minders as well as various forms of financial support to parents who educate their children outside public institutions.

The achievements made in the education sector in the past two decades show that Latvia has successfully dealt with some of the major issues, while improvement of others is still in progress. All in all, the country is on the right track to achieve the goals of education for all.

### **Demographic challenges and disproportions of the labour market**

The economic growth, sustainability, and competitiveness of Latvia is primarily set by capacity of our human resources. Demography is the key factor, which currently has a negative impact on the future prospects in any sector including education.

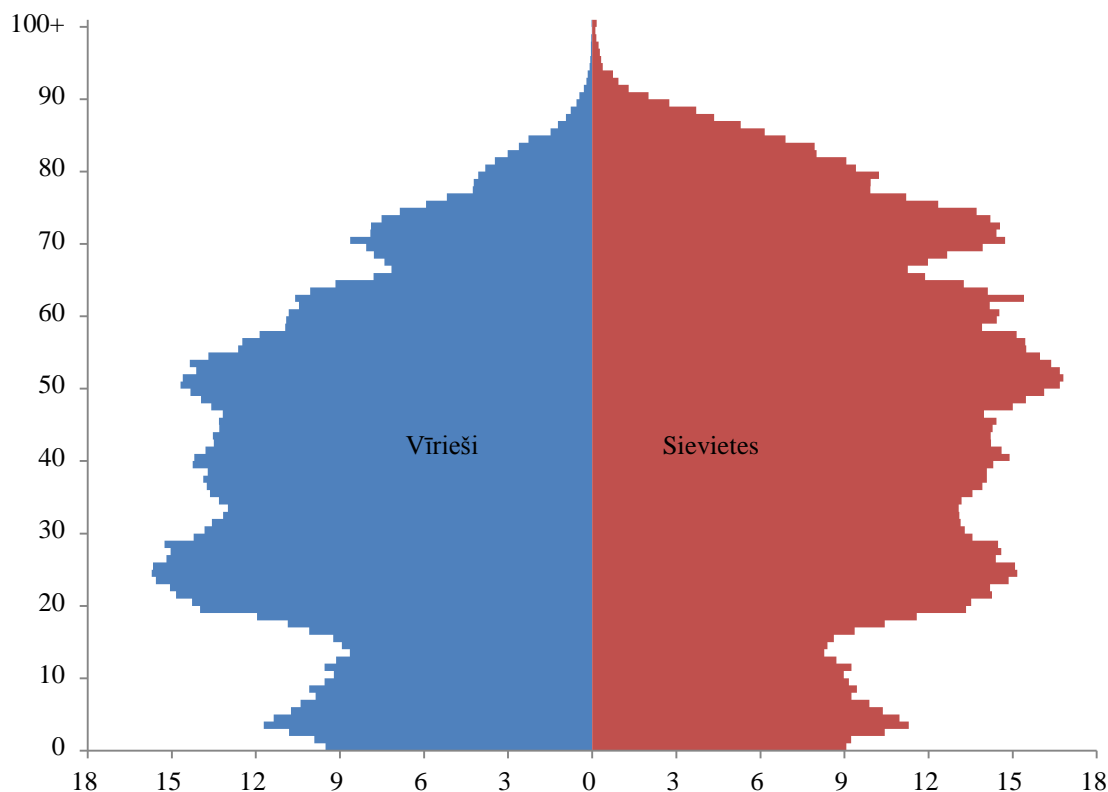
According to the data of CSB, at the beginning of 2013, there were 2.02 million people in Latvia that was for about nearly 360 thousand less than in 2000. According to the demographic forecasts, the number of Latvian population in the coming years will continue to decrease. The main reasons of the aforementioned process are ageing, permanently low birth ratio, and emigration<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Medium and long-term forecasts of the labour market by ME

Figure 5

**Number of residents according to the age groups at the beginning of 2012 (thousand)**

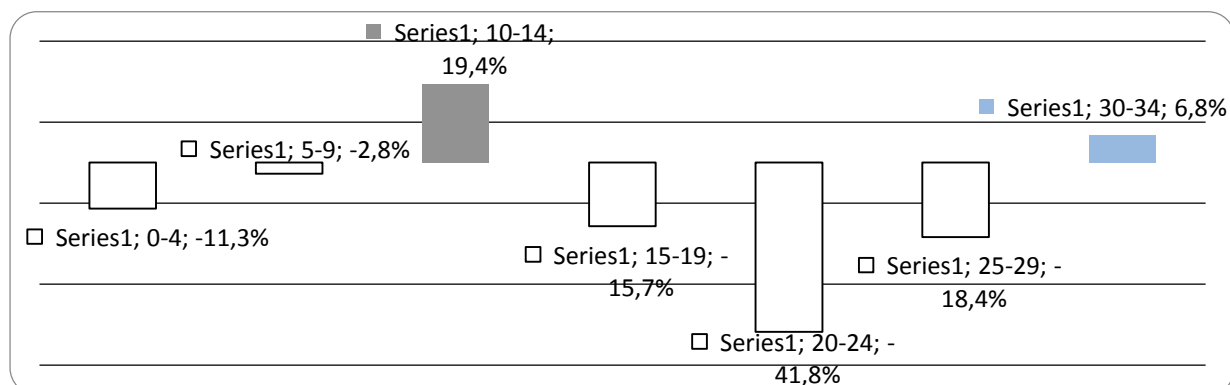


Source: ME, 2013

With regard to the aforementioned, the Latvian educational system expects a serious demographic shock in the nearest years. It is expected that there will be considerable decrease in the number of pupils and students in the secondary and higher education by 2020.

For already several years, the number of pupils enrolled in secondary schools decreases, while the number of pupils enrolled in vocational education institutions remains at about the same level. This can be explained by the overall demographic situation in the country (the number of the youth finishing elementary school decreases), as well as by the increasing number of persons who have previously acquired education, including the secondary education and who continue to study in vocational education institutions.

### Changes in the number of population in 2020 compared with 2012 in various age groups (%)



Source: ME, 2013

It is expected that in 2020 the number of pupils in secondary general education will fall by 11.6 thousand, while in higher education – by 27.6 thousand as compared to 2012. The only education stage where increase in the number of educatees aged 7 to 15 is expected, is basic education.

Demographic forecasts indicate that the existing network of educational institutions of all levels will not be rationally used in the future. Latvian demographic forecasts are an important prerequisite for organisation of the network of educational institutions over the next seven years.

The Ministry of Economics in its Statement on the medium and long-term forecasts of the labour market 2013<sup>7</sup> which analyses the possible labour market trends in the medium and long term and reflects potential risks if the existing education system and structure of the educational offer remain, has identified the following major disproportions in the labour market:

- a large surplus of specialists in the fields of the humanitarian and social sciences. In these fields, increase in the supply of labour force by 2020 may constitute almost a half of the total increase in the labour force with higher education;
- discrepancy between the supply of formal education and demand of the labour market will remain. For example, the demand for engineering specialists will be considerably higher than the supply;
- there will be a large proportion of youth entering the labour market without a specific speciality and skills, while the demand for such labour force will diminish;
- a large number of low-skilled people. There is a relatively large proportion of the population with basic education in the labour market, moreover, a significant drop in this figure is not expected in the nearest future.

To reduce the potential disproportions in the future labour market, the problems must be addressed in a complex way. For example, it is difficult to increase the number of students studying natural sciences and engineering sciences if pupils of elementary education and secondary education already have poor knowledge and little interest in subjects of the sciences. It should also be taken into account that the possible solutions for higher education, general secondary education, secondary vocational education, and basic education will give more visible impact in long term. The formal education is able to adapt to the changing conditions in the labour market comparatively slowly. A more efficient way to reduce disproportions of the labour market in short term is organisation of the adults education systems including continuing education.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.em.gov.lv/images/modules/items/tsdep/darba\\_tirgus/EMZino\\_21062013.pdf](http://www.em.gov.lv/images/modules/items/tsdep/darba_tirgus/EMZino_21062013.pdf)

## **Learning environment and content partially meeting the contemporary requirements**

Pre-school education and care provision is the basis for successful engagement in elementary education, social inclusion, personal growth and employment in the future. To ensure the content-harmonised transition from pre-school to elementary school taking into account the new teaching content based on competencies, the educational content also for children aged 1.5 to 4 should be improved, as well as appropriate learning environment should be ensured.

In order to enhance the learning outcomes of elementary and secondary education, the implementation of the improved competence-based teaching content including the use of ICT should be provided.

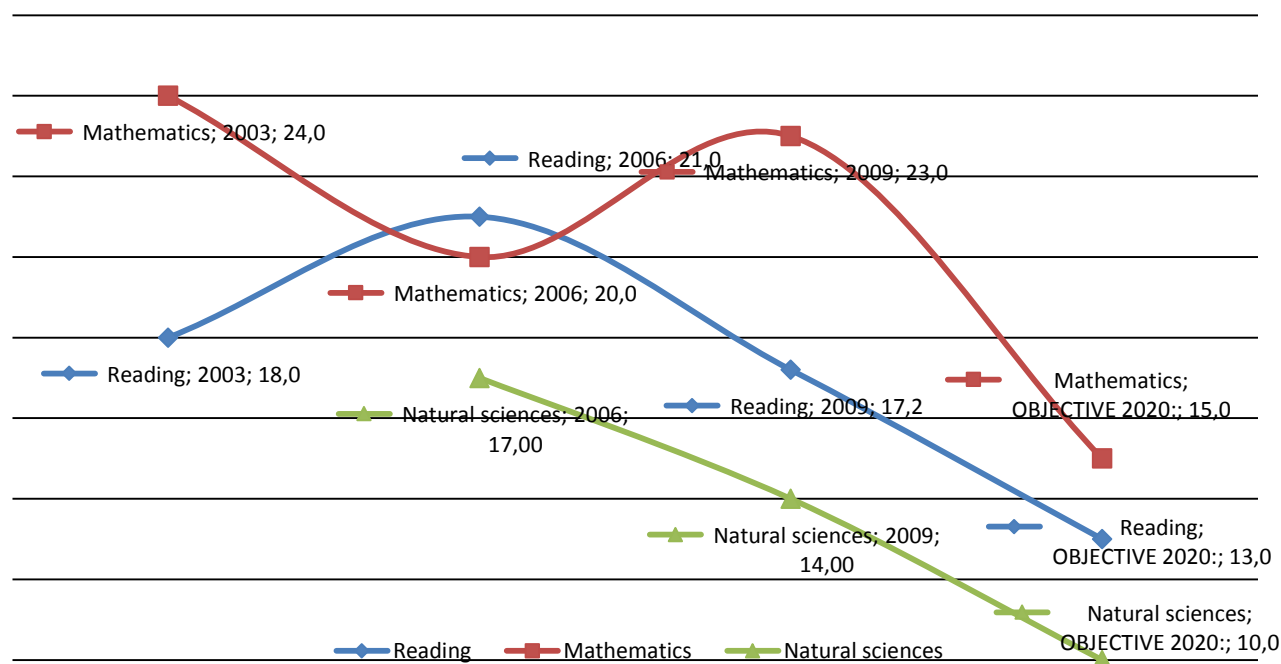
The results of OECD PISA for 2006, 2009, and 2012 show that there is a comparatively small proportion of pupils with high achievements in literacy, mathematics, and natural sciences in Latvia, and this number continues decreasing. At the same time, there is a tendency that the learning outcomes of boys are lower than those of girls. With regard to aforementioned, more attention in the following planning period should be paid to monitoring of learning outcomes and establishment of causal relations between the factors affecting the learning results and learning outcomes of educatees in order to foresee measures for improvement of learning outcomes in the educational content that is based on competencies.

Reduction of the proportion of the youth having showed poor results in the tests of OECD PISA is topical, as well. Although Latvia has made substantial progress in the natural sciences, the improvement of literacy and mathematics is topical thus ensuring the objective set by NDP 2014-2020 (the lowest competence levels in literacy in 15 % in 2017 and 13 % in 2020) and objectives set by "Education and Training 2020" - to ensure by 2020 that poor results in these three competencies are only for 15 % of the corresponding youth group. For comparison, when evaluating the PISA results of 2009 the EC has also highlighted Estonia where poor results in literacy, mathematics, and natural sciences were respectively showed by only 13.3 %, 12.7 %, and 8.3 % of the youth in 2009.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> "Education Benchmarks in Europe", European Commission (August 2011). [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/benchmarks10\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/benchmarks10_en.pdf)

### Pupils aged 15-16 (%) with low learning results (the 1st level of PISA)<sup>9</sup>



According to the data of the Ministry, increasingly less pupils take centralised examinations in chemistry, physics, and biology. This indicates low interest of educatees in the sciences. The proportion of graduates from higher education institutions in the fields of mathematics, science, and technology (13 %) is one of the lowest in Europe, as well. With regard to the aforementioned, as well as taking into account the threat of the labour market disproportions in the future<sup>10</sup>, it is necessary to increase the proportion of students of the total number of students in natural sciences and engineering sciences.

It is necessary to continue the modernisation of the needed STEM teaching environment in educational institutions in the next planning period. Taking into account the increasing role of ICT in the educational processes, development of modern electronic teaching aids in different content areas is topical. ICT integration should ensure improvement of the teaching/study environment and creation of new teaching/study approaches.

In the recent years, there has been lack of support, as well as finance for the implementation of the values education measures observed that includes development of educational work.

On the basis of the results of the study of 2007, "Availability and Offer of Interest-related Education in Latvia", it is important to emphasize opportunities of pupils engaged in the interest-related education programmes to choose their profession and build career more successfully. According to the requirements of the 21st century, a system of professional orientation and career education should be developed, the quality of professional orientation education and interest-related education for youth should be improved by ensuring modern and appropriate learning environment incl. provision of ICT and the latest technologies in technical and scientific creativity. Specific measures to improve the interest-related education will be developed after a planned audit of the interest education field.

<sup>9</sup> The objective of mathematics skills for 2020 is determined in accordance with ET2020; literacy objective for 2020 corresponds to the NAP objective. The objective of natural sciences for 2020 is lower than the target indicator of ET2020 (15 %) as results of 2012 of PISA showed that there is 10.5 % of pupils aged 15-16 with low learning results in the natural sciences (level 1) in Latvia.  
[http://www.ipi.lu.lv/uploads/media/Latvija\\_SSNP\\_2012\\_pirmie\\_rezultati\\_un\\_secinajumi.pdf](http://www.ipi.lu.lv/uploads/media/Latvija_SSNP_2012_pirmie_rezultati_un_secinajumi.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Informative statement of the ME on medium and long-term forecasts in labour market, 2013.

## **Insufficient facilitation of the motivation and professional growth of teachers**

In 2009, as a result of amendments to the State budget, funding for operating grants to municipalities for wages of teachers was reduced by about 50 % and significant changes were made in the wage system introducing a new financing principle "Money follows pupil". Thus, the number of labour rates of teachers in elementary and secondary general education institutions significantly decreased. The principle of financing led to competition and differential wages of teachers for one rate, affected wages of many teachers, as well as created differentiation of the wages of teachers for one rate in various regions with different number of pupils and different ratio of the number of pupils/teachers.

In the context of Latvian demographic and socially economic situation, in the regions with a small number of pupils the wages of teacher have remained very low as compared to the wages in the regions with a coordinated school network and optimal number of pupils.

Evaluation of the age structure of teachers in general education schools and vocational education institutions shows that still a large portion of the teachers are over 50. The proportion of teachers under 30 in general education schools rose insignificantly. The breakdown of gender in the field of people employed in education has not substantially changed either, and dominance in the proportion of women teachers in all education levels is still observed, especially in general and vocational education institutions.

With the introduction of new learning content, it would also be necessary to improve professional competencies of teachers incl. promotion of leadership, creativity, ICT and foreign language skills.

In 2013, the Informative report "Linking Programme for Evaluation of Motivation, Wage, and Professional Activity Quality of Teachers of General and Vocational Education", Development and Implementation thereof" was developed the purpose of which is to create a linking system for evaluation of motivation, wages, and quality of the professional activity of teachers of general and vocational education. In addition, the program foresees provision of modern teaching and working environment and improvement of a professional growth support system for teachers.

A large part of the identifiable problems is related to the issues that are directly subordinated to the financial aspects, so along with this, effective resource management by taking into account revisions and improvement of the existing financing model must be primarily ensured.

For improvement of the overall situation of the country, development of institutional excellence, and raise of the prestige of the teacher profession, the implementation of the linking programme for evaluation system of motivation, wages, and quality of the professional activity of teachers of general and vocational education institutions must be continued.

## **Insufficient implementation of the principle of inclusive education and individualised learning approach**

There are several target groups in provision of inclusive education – children and youth subjected to the exclusion risk caused by their development, ability and health, and social conditions and those children and youth of Latvian nationals who have re-emigrated and born outside Latvia.<sup>11</sup>

Although the Latvian education system offers sufficiently diverse opportunities and educational programmes, a part of the youth who have started to obtain education face various problems in this process, such as social and economical problems, socialisation problems incl. violence among peers, etc.,

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<sup>11</sup> Definite measures are foreseen in Re-emigration Support Plan.



and leave school without obtaining education that corresponds to his or her age. In 2008, the proportion of school leavers aged 18-24 who have not obtained the secondary education and do not continue education was 15.5 %, which was a higher ratio than the average one in the EU (14.9 %). The analysis of this indicator reveals distinct differences in the breakdown of gender, namely, the proportion of male early leavers of the total number of population in the relevant age group is about two times bigger than the one of women (correspondingly 17.2 % and 9.4 % in 2009, 15.8 % and 7.5 % in 2011, and 14.5 % and 6.2 % in 2012). The mentioned indicator reduced to 11.6 % already in 2011 and to 10.2 % in 2012. However, serious work should be done to maintain and improve this indicator by 2020, as well as to provide prevention measures to those educatees who are threatened by the risk of early school leaving, as well as to continue the implementation of compensatory measures as the educational offer of the second chance.

According to the Eurostat data of 2010, there is the third largest proportion of children aged up to 17 in Latvia as compared to other EU countries who are at the risk of poverty and exclusion. Compared to the average national indicators of OECD (including Estonia and Lithuania), the Latvian education system compensates influence of unfavourable social and economical status of families on achievements to a greater extent. A considerable difference of the mean value of the ratio of social and economical status in Latvia is established just for pupils of rural schools and town schools, and city schools indicating a considerably unfavourable social and economical status of rural pupils. In the planning period 2014-2020, as well, grants for catering of primary school pupils will be provided, as well as other support measures, however, improvement of pupils' social and economical situation requires an inter-disciplinary approach. Regardless the necessity for education systems to respond to diversity and ensure the successful inclusion of all people in the education system, there is still insufficient provision of support to children and youth with special needs in the education process. Inclusion of persons with special needs in the general education system must still be continued. In order to provide the most effective support to persons with special needs, it is essential to ensure that there is corresponding personnel in general and vocational education institutions. Taking into account the increasing number of pupils with special needs in general education schools, interaction, knowledge transfer, and professional growth of teachers of general and special education schools are important, thus raising awareness about the persons with special needs.

Promotion of communication skills, socialisation, and inclusion and elaboration and offer of complex inclusion measures for children and youth with special needs are topical, and this at the same time would promote public understanding of restrictions and needs of such group of persons.

Youth can face social and economical, as well as socialisation problems, incl. violence among peers (according to the Study carried out by the World Health Organization in 2009/2010 and published in 2012 on health habits of pupils in 39 countries, Latvia has one of the highest rate of violence among peers<sup>12</sup>), and they leave school without obtaining education that corresponds to their age.

Safe environment in an educational institution plays important role in solving the problem of early school leaving. It is also necessary to improve performance of the youth who have high risk of early school leaving and low level of basic skills, for example, due identification of those pupils whose performance in acquisition of the basic skills are weak at all educational stages by providing them individual support thus providing high-quality and available education and care in early childhood<sup>13</sup>. Involvement of children and youth of the third country citizens and national minorities including Roma in the Latvian education system taking into account their cultural and historical traditions must be facilitated.

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<sup>12</sup> [www.euro.who.int/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/167425/E96444\\_part2\\_5.pdf](http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/167425/E96444_part2_5.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> EC's document "Tackling early school leaving": "A key contribution to the Europe 2020 agenda" p 6  
[http://ec.europa.eu/education/school-education/doc/earlycom\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/school-education/doc/earlycom_en.pdf)

## **Insufficient attraction of vocational education**

Although in the recent years there was an increase in the proportion of educatees in vocational education programmes by about 5.7 %, the proportion of educatees in the secondary general and secondary vocational education is not balanced. In 2012 the proportion of educatees in the secondary general and secondary vocational education stage was about 61:39.

According to the forecasts of the ME, in the coming years, the the people having no professional qualification will have the biggest problems to find a job. To promote employment of the youth and faster integration into the labour market, a new and improved offer of the existing vocational (1-1.5 years long) programmes have been elaborated, and their implementation is planned to be continued in the planning period 2014-2020, as well.

To broaden the ability of educatees to respond in competition circumstances in a flexible way and stimulate the rise in the living standard, especially for specific groups of educatees, e.g., early school leavers, migrants, persons with disabilities, etc., complex solutions to improve the attraction of vocational education increasing the number of pupils in the secondary vocational education programmes, as well as reducing the number of those pupils in the secondary vocational education institutions who are expelled from the institution due to underperformance or non-attendance of lessons must be searched. Special attention in the coming years should be paid to strengthening cooperation with employers, vocational education management, implementation of vocational education programmes, incl. ensuring of practices and the development of new principles of vocational education, such as a development of modular vocational education programmes and vocational education that is based on work environment. Currently, approaches that are based on work environment in provision of vocational education is a high-level priority of the education and employment policy in the European Union including in Latvia.

Vocational education and employment are examined in an integrated manner as parts of a single process, thus emphasizing the necessity of involvement and role of employers and social partners already in the early stages of vocational education, also with regards to the content of vocational education and its implementation types.

## **High unemployment among youth**

According to the data of CSB, in 2013 there are about 255 thousand youth aged 15-24 in Latvia. In the second half of 2013, about 70 thousand were employed, 18 thousand were searching for a job, and 148 thousand are considered to be economically inactive (mostly learning or studying). Out of the number of the unemployed registered at the State Employment Agency, 9.5 % were youth, besides 71 % of them have no qualification or no sufficient education level that corresponds to the labour market needs.

As compared to other EU countries, the Latvian labour market is assessed as one of the most segregated by gender. A school and the aspect whether and in what way interest is created in pupils regarding particular fields and whether it is intentional and determined have an important role in the choice of a profession.

One of the tasks of the youth policy is to build a friendly youth-oriented support system that offers a wide range of possibilities for development, social inclusion, and social cohesion, by promotion of competitiveness of the youth into the labour market, incl. giving a chance in a short period of time to obtain a qualification that corresponds to the labour market requirements.

It is also necessary to reduce the proportion of youth having low basic skills providing training to the unemployed youth and early school leavers, and inactive youth, thus promoting their social inclusion and competitiveness in the labour market by development of their social, civil, and communicative skills, incl. support for elaboration and approbation of non-formal education programmes for the youth at youth

centres and educational institutions in cooperation with societies and foundations, and teachers to improve competencies of the persons involved in the work with youth.

Career education and career support measures are an important prerequisite for informed education and future career choice of youth. In n collaboration with the partners involved MES continues to work on an expansion concept of the Career Development Support System (CDSS) especially emphasising importance of the career education in both general, vocational, and higher education, as well as involvement of industries and employers in the exploration of the world of professions eliminating insufficient and diverse understanding of responsible and related institutions about the CDSS target groups and the types of services, insufficient interdisciplinary coordination and fragmentation of resources.

By supporting implementation of the career development measures, incl. at higher education institutions in cooperation with employers for reduction of the number of study leavers especially promoting cooperation with industry enterprises for implementation of technical and intellectual creativity activities in connection with environment, natural sciences, mathematics and information technology, engineering and technology, manufacturing and construction, health care and environmental protection, as well as for reduction of profession stereotypes and increase of youth motivation to learn professions that lack labour force.

Cooperation with employers when implementing the career development measures also increases the attractiveness of vocational education and motivates pupils to obtain higher education.

For implementation of high-quality career education in the education system, teachers currently lack sufficient professional competences in the implementation of professional career activities including communications, information processing, and work with ICT. Since September 1, 2012, there are teachers - career advisers mostly with partial workload employed, only in 54 (6.5 %) general education schools in Latvia.

### **Lack of education monitoring system**

In August 2009, educational institutions have started working with the National Education Information System (hereinafter NEIS) by replacing the previous Latvian Education Informatisation System (LIIS), thus providing an opportunity to obtain comprehensive data about the applicants to pre-school education, educatees of general education, as well as teaching staff personnel and rating of teachers.

In order to facilitate management and monitoring of the process of lifelong learning, providing a comprehensive informational base, one of the key aspects is to ensure sustainability and advance the functionality of the NEIS supplementing it with the information about adult learning opportunities. In the context of the previous achievements, implementation of the ongoing international projects should be continued by developing cooperation with the leading European research institutions.

Improvement of the internal quality systems of higher education institutions according to the internationally recognised quality management guidelines must be developed.

For promotion of management and monitoring of lifelong learning processes, summarised on a regular basis, information on adult learning opportunities in municipalities is required. There is a necessity to create a single information exchange system for higher education and a career monitoring system of HEIs' graduates to obtain information for making reasonable decisions.

In order to promote management and monitoring of lifelong learning processes, the information on adult learning opportunities in municipalities to be summarized on a regular basis is needed.

There is a necessity to create a single information exchange system for higher education, as well as to ensure a coordinated survey of future activities of graduates.

In order to ensure formation of an effective, evidence-based education policy, it is necessary to establish an education policy implementation and education quality monitoring system, which is directed towards development of the policy analysis capacity in public administration and higher education and research institutions. A study of factors that affect learning achievements of an in-depth study (incl. comparatively low average learning achievement of boys) must be carried out in close connection with the results of the international comparative education researches and national standard monitoring instruments. Examination of the impact of factors, that are indirectly related to the education sector, (such as social and economical ones) on the education quality also has an important role.

It is necessary to strengthen cooperation with groups of the researchers who conduct a variety of studies related to reaching the objectives of the educational policy and provide data that are important to the educational policy makers and decision makers. Coordinated cooperation of the parties involved, as well as educational policy that is harmonised and oriented towards the future needs of the labour market must be linked to the rearrangement system that outpaces the labour market.

In order to determine the quality of the Latvian education system, as well as compare it with the knowledge level of educatees in other countries, it is necessary to ensure the participation of Latvia in international studies.

## The Six Goals of Education for All

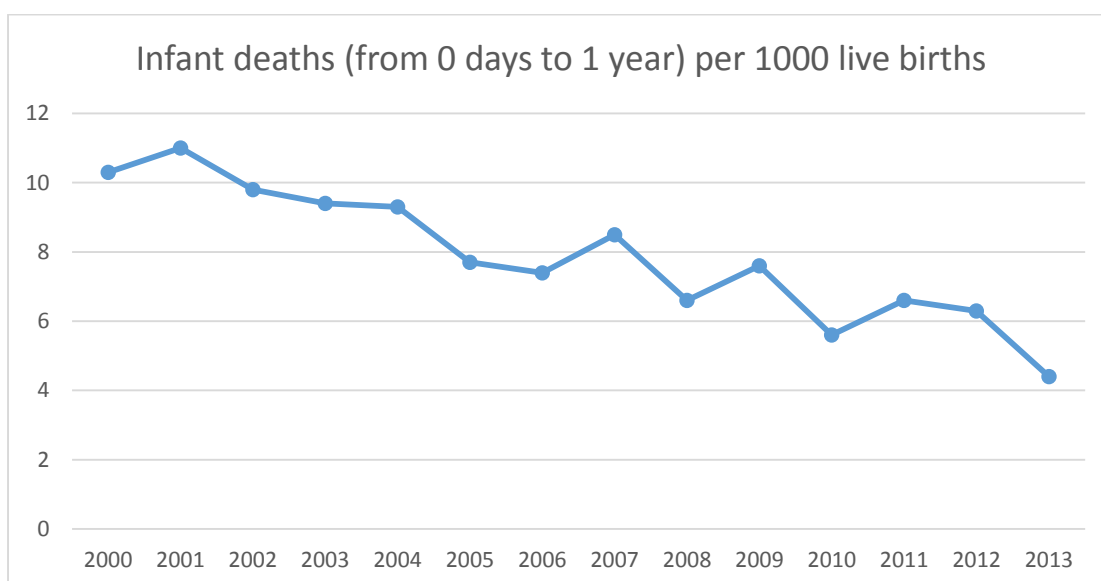
### Goal 1: Expanding and Improving Comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Education

In the education system of Latvia children may enter pre-school education institutions as early as the age of 1.5 years. Considering that the years leading up to primary school education are crucial in shaping the child's personality as well as in preparing him or her for lifelong learning and living in society, starting from 2002, pre-school education is mandatory from the age of 5. According to the PISA survey of 2012, the change between 2003 and 2012 in the percentage of students who had attended pre-primary education (ISCED 0) for more than one year is one of the largest among PISA-participating countries and economies. (19.6 %, rank 2/39)

In accordance with the Law on Local Governments, early childhood care and education is the responsibility of local governments. However, for teachers working with children over the age of 5, remuneration is covered from the State budget. Public pre-school institutions require that parents make a financial contribution to cover the cost of meals and managing expenses, while access to educational activities is free of charge. However, municipalities may, and mostly in rural areas do reduce the cost for meals for children from low income families.

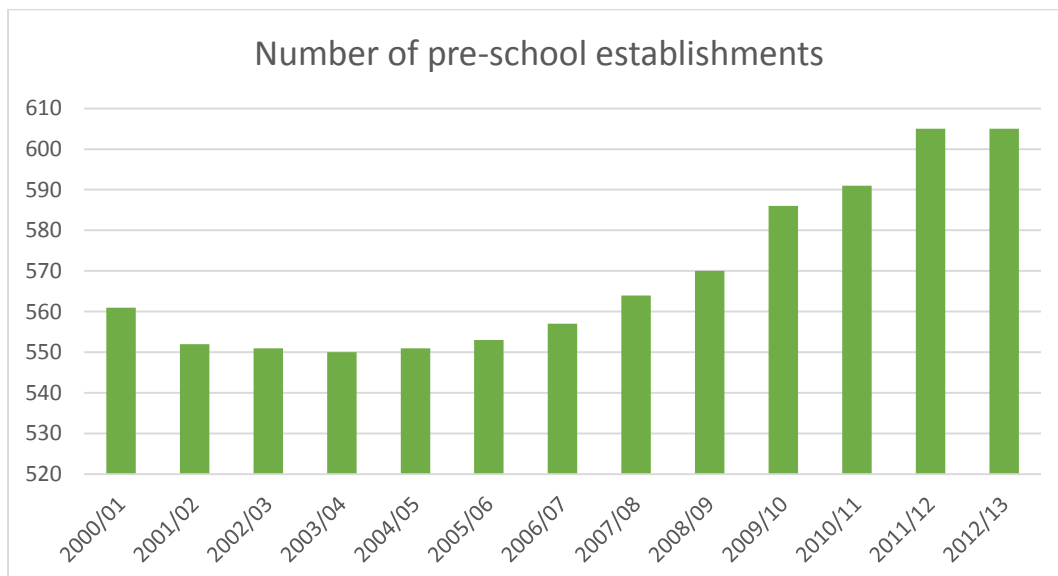
In order to tackle the problem of shortage of places in public pre-school institutions, from September 2013 through 2015, the national government provides benefits to those who do not have a place in municipality pre-school education institutions but attend private institutions or rely on the service of child-minders. The terms of becoming a child-minder are regulated by the Ministry of Welfare, and the people working in this position receive compensation from the State.

Figure 8



Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia

Figure 9



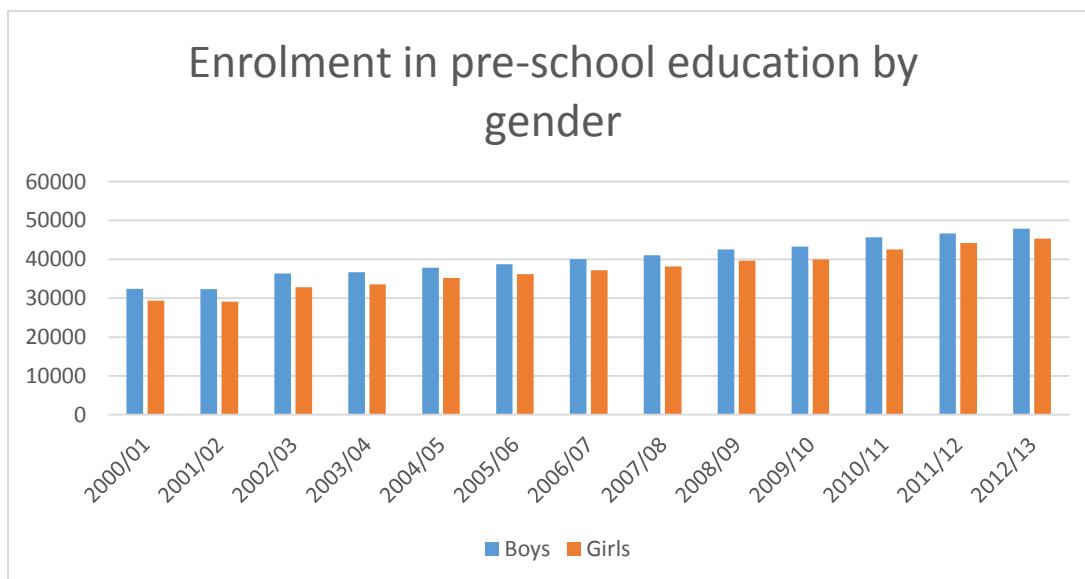
Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia

School enrolment, pre-primary (% gross)

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
56.9	57.4	60.9	75.5	81.4	87.6	92.3	93.4	90.9	89.2	87.4	89.6	92.2

Source: Worldbank data

Figure 10



Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia

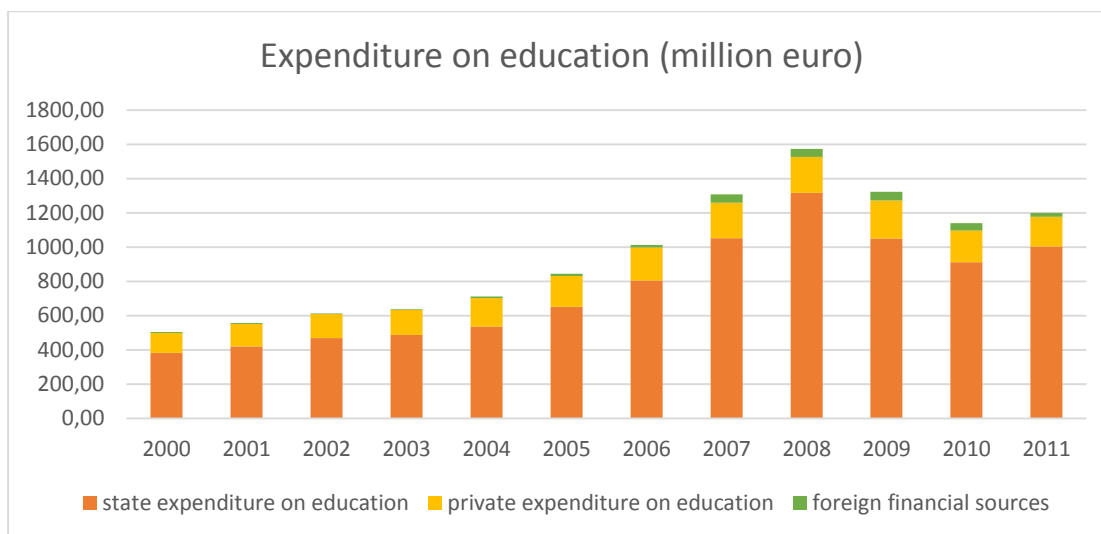
## Goal 2: Universal Primary Education or Universal Basic Education

General education is legislated by the Education Law and the General Education Law. Article 112 of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia states that anyone is entitled to education, regardless of the material and social status, race, nationality, ethnic belonging, gender, religious and political affiliation, state of health, occupation and place of residence. The State ensures that anyone may acquire primary and secondary education without charge. Education is compulsory from the age of 5 through 18.

Latvia provides considerable support for ethnic minority languages, education and culture. Education is acquired in the official language in State and self-government education institutions. However, it may be acquired in another language: 1) in private educational institutions; 2) in State and self-government educational institutions in which educational programmes for ethnic minorities are implemented. The State continues to develop and finance its bilingual education model providing publicly-funded education in seven minority languages: Russian, Polish, Hebrew, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Estonian, and Lithuanian. Bilingual (Latvian and minority language programmes) schools have the right to determine which subjects are taught in Latvian, but the total should be 60% of all subjects.

Several poverty reduction policies are in place both on State and municipality level. From September 2014 State budget funds are allocated for catering of pupils at primary and lower secondary education institutions in the first three grades. For several groups of children meals at school are provided for free at other grades as well, like those from large families, low income families as well as for orphans. These measures depend on the respective municipality and its financial opportunities, hence, there are a couple of municipalities which offer free lunch for all pupils learning in certain grades.

Figure 11



Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia

Figure 12

State expenditure on education (% of gross domestic product)

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
5.64	5.71	5.77	5.34	5.08	5.09	5.09	5.02	5.75	5.64	5.01

Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia

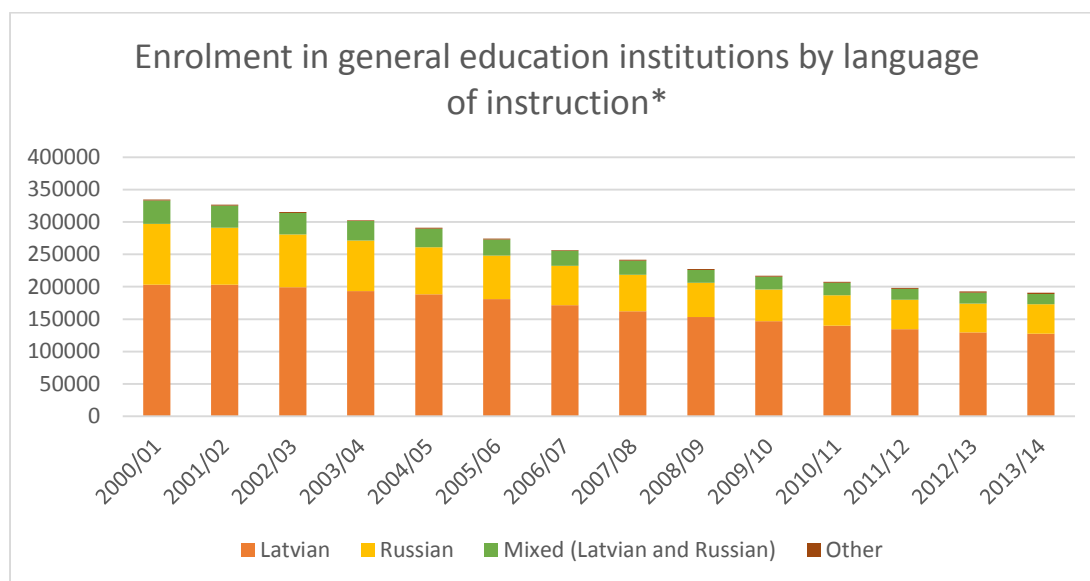
Figure 13

Adjusted net enrolment rate (% of primary school age children)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Male	97.00	97.58	97.18	97.37	97.86
Female	97.19	98.78	99.13	99.00	98.88
TOTAL	97.09	98.17	98.13	98.16	98.36

Source: Worldbank data

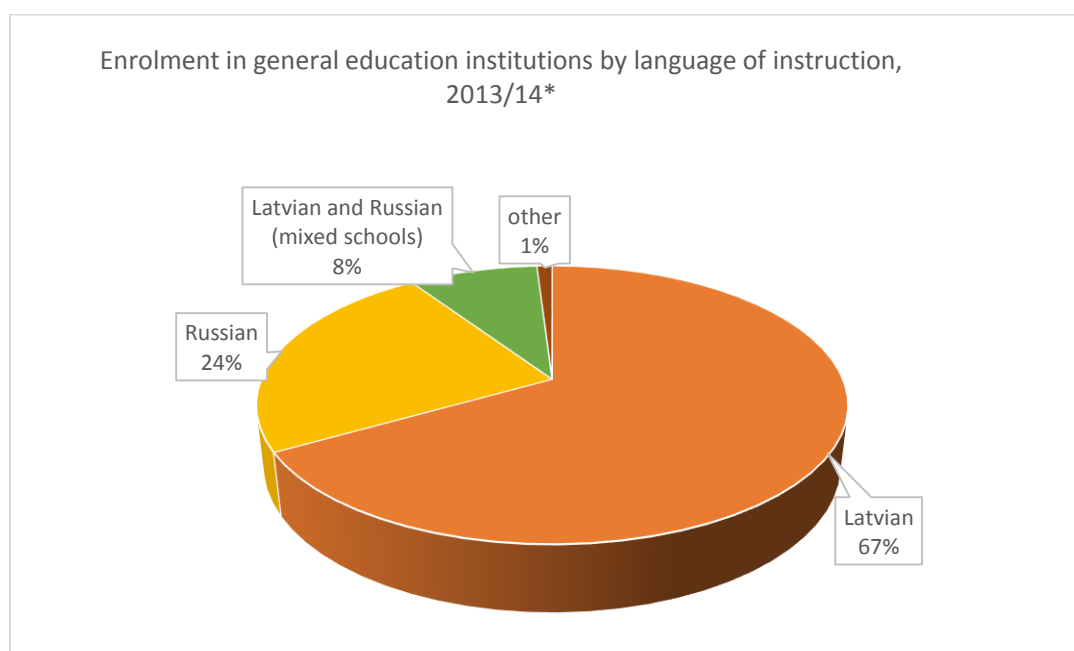
Figure 14



\* at the beginning of the school year; excluding special schools and grades

Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia

Figure 15



\* at the beginning of the school year; excluding special schools and grades

Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia



Figure 16

Early leavers from education and training aged 18-24 in urban and rural areas by territory and sex, share of population aged 18-24 years (%)

		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Latvia	TOTAL	15.6	15.6	15.5	14.3	12.9	11.6	10.6	9.8
	Males	19.3	20.6	20	17.6	16.7	15.8	14.7	13.6
	Females	11.5	10.5	10.8	11	9	7.5	6.3	5.8
Urban area	TOTAL	14	12	12.1	12.3	10.6	9.7	8.8	7.1
	Males	17.2	16.4	17.6	16.2	14.4	13.5	12	10.3
	Females	10.7	7.7	6.8	8.7	7.2	6.1	5.5	4
Rural area	TOTAL	18.9	23.2	22.6	18.3	17.4	15.2	13.8	14.4
	Males	23.7	28.5	24.7	20.3	21.2	19.6	19.1	19
	Females	13.4	17	20.2	16.2	13	10.3	7.7	9.1

Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia

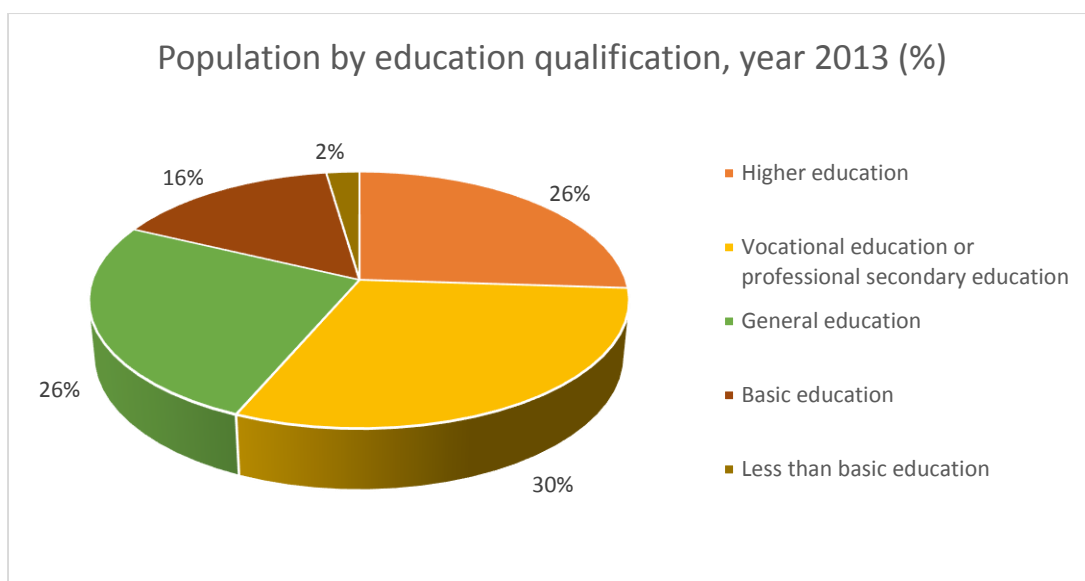
### Goal 3: Life Skills and Lifelong Learning

Adult education may be offered in formal and non-formal educational programmes. The procedures for the implementation of formal adult educational programmes are determined by the Education Law, the Vocational Education Law, the Law on Institutions of Higher Education and other regulatory enactments. It is enshrined in the Education Law that adults have the right to acquire non-formal educational programmes throughout the length of their whole life regardless of previously acquired education.

The State financially supports and a local government may financially support adult education by financing non-formal adult educational programmes, as well as by supporting employers in the additional education of employees. Adults wishing to complete formal primary and secondary education after a certain period of time are given an opportunity and access to second chance education in the form of evening (shift) classes as well as distance or extramural education programmes.

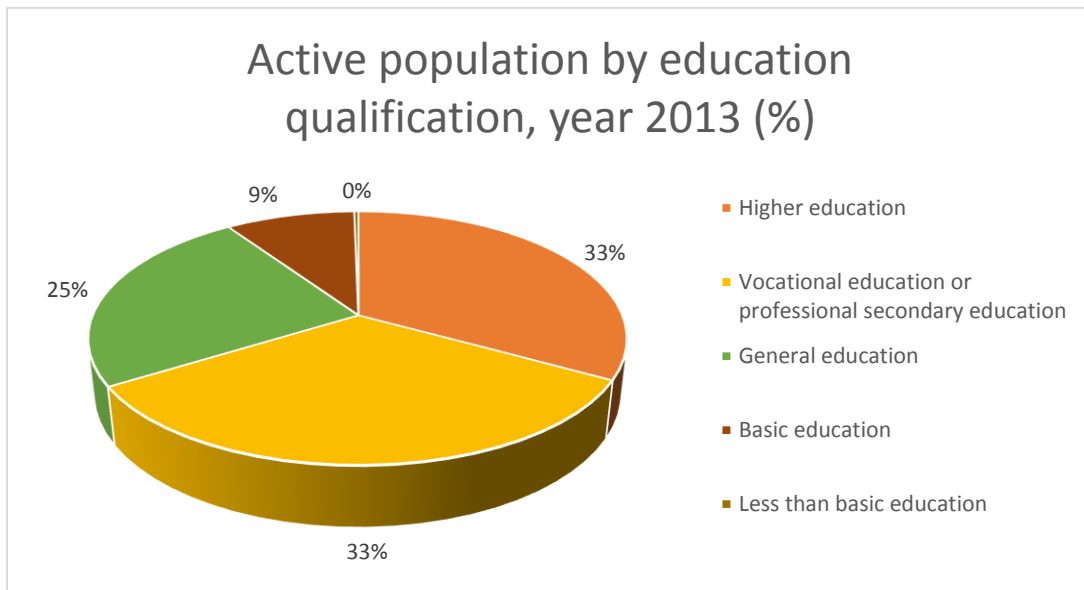
According to the forecasts of the Ministry of Economy, in the coming years, people having no professional qualification will be the most likely group at risk of unemployment. In order to promote employment of the youth and their faster integration into the labour market, Latvia seeks to invite more students into vocational education. In response to labour market demands, the share of the number of students in vocational education and secondary education is planned to be changed in favour of vocational education from 33/67 (in 2010) to 50/50 (in 2020). In order to make vocational education more attractive as well as to improve the quality of vocational education, major structural reforms are taking place at the moment. Vocational education programmes with a modular approach will be developed to ensure the acquisition of vocational and lifelong learning competencies. The National Centre for Education is preparing occupational standards and basic vocational qualification requirements in cooperation with employers and sectorial experts.

Figure 17



Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia

Figure 18



Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia

## Goal 4: Youth and Adult Literacy

In Latvia, the literacy rate among the population has been close to 100% ever since the country regained its independence in 1989. Nevertheless, a slight increase can be observed since 2000. The proportion of female to male literates is well-balanced, with women having a bit more literates among them as compared to males of the same age group. In terms of educational attainment, females have a higher level of education on average, with more than 30% having acquired higher education, as compared to less than 20% of males, in the year 2013.

Figure 19

Literacy rate by age and sex (% of population)

	1989	2000	2011
Youth total (% of people aged 15-24)	99.78	99.75	99.84
Youth male (% of males aged 15-24)	99.75	99.71	99.80
Youth female (% of females aged 15-24)	99.82	99.78	99.87
Adult total (% of people aged 15 and above)	99.45	99.75	99.90
Adult male (% of males aged 15 and above)	99.75	99.79	99.88
Adult female (% of females aged 15 and above)	99.20	99.71	99.91

Source: Worldbank

## Goal 5: Gender Equality

The Education Law prohibits differential treatment on the basis of gender. Statistics show that there is no significant difference between females and males in the proportion of enrolment to primary and secondary education. However, at the level of tertiary education females outnumbered males by almost 80% in the year 2000. This ratio changed in favour of males, but females still outnumbered males by 50% in the year 2013. The teaching profession is far from balanced in terms of gender, as the majority of teachers, including school leaders, are female at all levels of education.

Based on the results of the PISA 2012 survey, 15-year-old girls performed better than boys in all three areas tested, including those in which boys tend to perform better than girls on average throughout the OECD countries. In reading, girls performed better than boys with a statistically significant difference of 55 points (OECD average: 38 points higher for girls). In mathematics, the main topic of PISA 2012, girls performed better than boys with a non-statistically significant difference of 4 points (OECD average: 11 points higher for boys). In science literacy, girls performed better than boys with a statistically significant difference of 15 points (OECD average: only 1 point higher for boys).

Figure 20

## Educational attainment by sex (% of population)

		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Higher education	TOTAL	14.2	14.1	15.6	14.6	16.1	16.6	17.1	17.8	20.1	20.6	21.8	22.6	24	26
	Male	13.4	12.4	13.6	12.3	13.3	13.5	13.6	14.4	15.7	15.8	16.8	17.1	18	19.8
	Female	14.8	15.4	17.3	16.5	18.4	19.2	20.2	20.8	24	24.8	26.1	27.3	29.3	31.4
Vocational education or professional secondary education	TOTAL	31.8	30.1	32	32.4	31.3	31.1	31.4	30.1	30.2	30.5	31.4	31.2	31.4	30.4
	Male	34.5	31.9	32.5	33.6	32.8	32.5	33.2	31.6	32.6	32.5	33.2	33.8	34.8	33.4
	Female	29.6	28.6	31.6	31.3	29.9	30	29.8	28.7	28.1	28.8	29.9	29	28.4	27.8
General education	TOTAL	23.1	22	23.5	24.2	24.8	24.8	24.2	25.3	25	25.7	25.6	25	25.6	25.6
	Male	21.7	20.9	22.1	22.3	23.5	23.7	22.6	23.9	23.7	25.1	25.3	24.5	24.8	25.7
	Female	24.1	23	24.6	25.7	26	25.8	25.6	26.5	26.2	26.1	25.8	25.5	26.2	25.6
Basic education	TOTAL	22.4	25.7	23.3	23.1	22.9	22.7	22.7	22.1	20.4	19.8	18.4	18.4	16.5	15.6
	Male	23.3	28.3	26.2	25.9	25.1	25.1	25.8	25.1	23.1	22.5	21.4	21.5	19.6	18.5
	Female	21.7	23.5	20.8	20.8	21.1	20.6	20.1	19.6	18.1	17.5	15.8	15.8	13.8	13
Less than basic education	TOTAL	8.6	8.1	5.7	5.7	4.9	4.8	4.5	4.4	4.2	3.4	2.8	2.7	2.5	2.3
	Male	7	6.4	5.6	5.8	5.2	5.2	4.8	4.7	4.9	4	3.3	3.2	2.8	2.6
	Female	9.8	9.5	5.8	5.7	4.6	4.4	4.2	4.2	3.6	2.8	2.5	2.3	2.2	2
Not indicate	TOTAL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.2	-	-	-	-	-	0.1
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.2	-	-	-	-	-	0.1
	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.1	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia

Figure 21

	Higher education			Vocational education or professional secondary education			General education			Basic education			Less than basic education			Not indicate		
	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F
2000	14,2	13,4	14,8	31,8	34,5	29,6	23,1	21,7	24,1	22,4	23,3	21,7	8,6	7	9,8	-	-	-
2001	14,1	12,4	15,4	30,1	31,9	28,6	22	20,9	23	25,7	28,3	23,5	8,1	6,4	9,5	-	-	-
2002	15,6	13,6	17,3	32	32,5	31,6	23,5	22,1	24,6	23,3	26,2	20,8	5,7	5,6	5,8	-	-	-
2003	14,6	12,3	16,5	32,4	33,6	31,3	24,2	22,3	25,7	23,1	25,9	20,8	5,7	5,8	5,7	-	-	-
2004	16,1	13,3	18,4	31,3	32,8	29,9	24,8	23,5	26	22,9	25,1	21,1	4,9	5,2	4,6	-	-	-
2005	16,6	13,5	19,2	31,1	32,5	30	24,8	23,7	25,8	22,7	25,1	20,6	4,8	5,2	4,4	-	-	-
2006	17,1	13,6	20,2	31,4	33,2	29,8	24,2	22,6	25,6	22,7	25,8	20,1	4,5	4,8	4,2	-	-	-
2007	17,8	14,4	20,8	30,1	31,6	28,7	25,3	23,9	26,5	22,1	25,1	19,6	4,4	4,7	4,2	0,2	0,2	0,1
2008	20,1	15,7	24	30,2	32,6	28,1	25	23,7	26,2	20,4	23,1	18,1	4,2	4,9	3,6	-	-	-
2009	20,6	15,8	24,8	30,5	32,5	28,8	25,7	25,1	26,1	19,8	22,5	17,5	3,4	4	2,8	-	-	-
2010	21,8	16,8	26,1	31,4	33,2	29,9	25,6	25,3	25,8	18,4	21,4	15,8	2,8	3,3	2,5	-	-	-
2011	22,6	17,1	27,3	31,2	33,8	29	25	24,5	25,5	18,4	21,5	15,8	2,7	3,2	2,3	-	-	-
2012	24	18	29,3	31,4	34,8	28,4	25,6	24,8	26,2	16,5	19,6	13,8	2,5	2,8	2,2	-	-	-
2013	26	19,8	31,4	30,4	33,4	27,8	25,6	25,7	25,6	15,6	18,5	13	2,3	2,6	2	0,1	0,1	-

Figure 22

## Ratio of female to male enrolment by education level (%)

	Ratio of female to male primary enrolment (%)	Ratio of female to male secondary enrolment (%)	Ratio of female to male tertiary enrolment (%)
2000	98.04	102.76	178.73
2001	98.34	101.56	167.37
2002	97.77	100.57	165.60
2003	96.87	99.62	167.15
2004	96.42	99.56	171.38
2005	95.97	100.28	178.64
2006	96.66	100.64	180.01
2007	96.00	102.66	184.90
2008	96.30	102.45	188.88
2009	97.73	101.23	182.82
2010	99.30	98.29	175.71
2011	99.55	96.65	163.66
2012	99.22	96.70	153.58

Source: Worldbank data

Figure 23

## Proportion of female teachers (%)

	Primary education, teachers female (%)	Secondary education, teachers female (%)	Tertiary education, teachers female (%)
2000	96.62	80.14	61.15
2001	96.84	80.78	51.98
2002	97.10	81.35	54.31
2003	96.91	81.79	54.76
2004	97.18	82.22	55.37
2005	97.12	83.17	57.95
2006	96.79	85.15	56.97
2007	-	-	56.68
2008	92.89	81.27	57.16
2009	92.99	82.12	57.92
2010	93.61	82.97	57.68
2011	93.35	82.25	58.69
2012	93.49	82.23	57.44

Source: Worldbank data

## Goal 6: Improving the Quality of Education

All teachers to be qualified to work in a school must undergo study programmes leading not only to higher pedagogical education but also to a teacher qualification in the respective level of education. Besides, most programmes prepare teachers of certain subjects (subject specialists). Thus, completion of a certain kind of programme entitles to teach the respective subject at the respective level of education. There are exemptions – early childhood teachers and primary school teachers (classes 1-6) receive a teacher qualification in the respective level of education, and are entitled to teach most subjects i.e. are general study subject teachers.

The institutions responsible for decision-making concerning the conditions of service for teachers are: the MoES, municipalities and education institutions. The Education Law, the Labour Protection Law and the Labour Law as well as a number of regulations issued by the Cabinet of Ministers determine conditions of service for teachers.

Continuing professional development is compulsory in Latvia for teachers (including school heads and their deputies) at all education levels. According to Cabinet regulation each pedagogue should take part in professional qualification improvement programme which is at least 36 hours every three years.<sup>14</sup> The programme is organized by the educational institutions which have the rights to realize professional qualification improvement programmes for teachers. They are financed by the state, local government or private finances. The aims of professional development are to ensure the necessary teacher qualification, to conform to the needs of society and to promote the growth of teachers as creative personalities. Curriculum includes development of specific subjects and subject teaching, cooperation with pupils and parents, and creative processes in education work. In general, teachers themselves are responsible for acquiring the mandatory professional development.

According to the Cabinet Regulation No.363, A or 36-hour programs can be developed and implemented by education institutions, professional non-governmental organizations of teachers in coordination with the local government, in whose territory the programme will be implemented, as well as the institutions subordinate to the Ministry of Education and Science, which do not need to coordinate the implementation of programs. Teachers are responsible for the improvement of their professional qualification. The mastering of the programs is mainly funded by teachers themselves, local government support is also possible, the state covers courses of programme B of professional improvement for teachers. The scope of programme A is no less than 36 hours within 3 years. After the mastering of programme A, its implementer issues a certificate of improvement of teacher's professional qualification valid for 3 years. The information regarding the mastering of programme A is entered into the State Education Information System, where the teachers are warned about the expiry of their certificate and invited to master a 36h program.

Teachers, who have not less than one year's service in pedagogy and participate in implementing of general educational programmes, including of general education programmes at pre-school educational level, of vocational educational programmes at basic or secondary educational level, of professional orientation programmes and of interest education programmes, have the right to receive the teacher quality assessment at least every five years. Based on the teacher quality assessment teacher is awarded with one of the five teacher assessment levels, which are provided by:

- 1) Teacher quality assessment level 1, 2 and 3: by the educational institution, in coordination with the municipality where the educational institution is located;
- 2) Teacher quality assessment level 4: by the municipality, within whose administrative territory the educational institution is located, in coordination with the MoES;

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<sup>14</sup> Cabinet regulation of 02.07.2013. no. 363 „Noteikumi par pedagogiem nepieciešamo izglītību un profesionālo kvalifikāciju un pedagogu profesionālās kvalifikācijas pilnveides kārtību” (Requirements for Necessary Education and Professional Qualifications of Pedagogues, and Procedures of Pedagogues' Professional Development), <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=258334>.

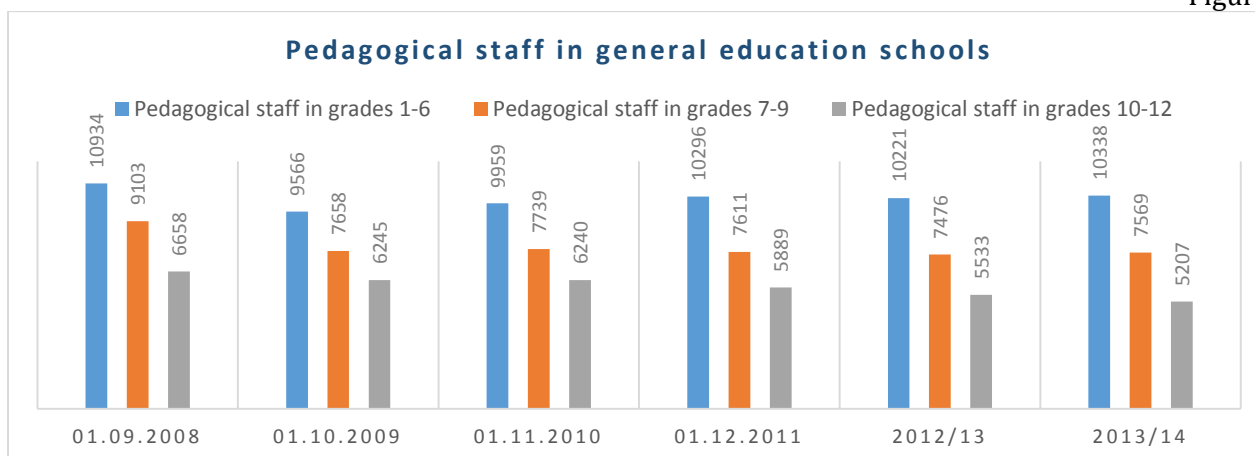


3) Teacher quality assessment level 5: by the Ministry of Education and Science.

After receiving the certificate the teacher may also have a private practice. In 2013 there were issued 184 certificates for launching a teacher's private practice for implementing interest and non-formal education programmes. In comparison with previous years interest in launching a teacher's private practice has not changed substantially.

Figure 4 shows pedagogical staff number in general education schools divided by education levels.

Figure 24



In Latvia, 89% of teachers are female, which is the highest proportion among all TALIS countries (the following TALIS data concerns the teachers of ISCED 2). In only three other countries does the proportion of female teachers exceed 80%—Bulgaria, Estonia and the Slovak Republic.

The average age of teachers in Latvia is 47 years; the average age across TALIS countries is four years less. In Latvia, 5% of teachers are younger than 30 and 11% are older than 59 (the TALIS averages are 12% and 6% respectively).

Only 1 in 10 teachers in Latvia works in a school that does not have to compete with other schools for students (TALIS average is 23%), and 79% of teachers work in schools that compete with at least two other schools (the TALIS average is 63%, in Estonia it is 62% and in Finland it is 50%).

Latvia is one of five TALIS countries (along with Estonia, Iceland, Norway and Poland) where the average number of students in a school is below 300. The average class size in Latvia is 18 students, similar to class sizes in Estonia and Finland and lower than the TALIS average of 24.

In Latvia, 86% of teachers agree that their school provides staff with opportunities to actively participate in school decisions, 92% report that such opportunities are provided to parents and 88% agree that opportunities are provided to students.

The percentage of school leaders in Latvia who report a shared responsibility for the following tasks: appointing or hiring teachers: 53% (TALIS average, 39%); dismissing or suspending teachers from employment: 46% (TALIS average, 29%); establishing teachers' starting salaries, including setting pay scales: 53% (TALIS average, 14%); determining teachers' salary increases: 50% (TALIS average, 18%); deciding on budget allocations within the school: 75% (TALIS average, 47%).

The most needed professional development areas indicated by Latvian teachers are new technologies in the workplace (24%), ICT skills for teaching (19%), student behaviour and classroom management (15%), approaches to individualised learning (14%) and teaching students with special needs (12%).

Teachers in Latvia report that the biggest barriers to their professional development are the following: professional development is too expensive/unaffordable (30%), professional development conflicts with their work schedule (29%), there is no relevant professional development offered (23%), and there are no incentives for participating in such activities (22%) and a lack of time because of family responsibilities (22%). Figures 5 and 6 show the TALIS results for the typical teacher and school leader in Latvia compared to average result in TALIS countries.

Figure 25

The typical teacher and school leader in Latvia

Typical teacher in TALIS countries	Typical teacher in Latvia
68% are women Is 43 years old on average	89% are women Is 47 years old on average
91% completed university or other equivalent higher education	97% completed university or other equivalent higher education
90% completed a teacher education or training programme	91% completed a teacher education or training programme
Has an average of 16 years of teaching experience	Has an average of 22 years of teaching experience
82% are employed full time and 83% have a permanent contract	82% are employed full-time and 93% have a permanent contract
Teaches in a class with 24 students on average	Teaches in a class with 18 students on average

Figure 26

Typical school leader in TALIS countries	Typical school leader in Latvia
51% are men Is 52 years old on average	23% are men Is 53 years old on average
96% completed university or other equivalent higher education	100% completed university or other equivalent higher education
90% completed a teacher education or training programme,	93% completed a teacher education or training programme,
85% a school administration/school leader training programme and 78% instructional leadership training	73% a school administration/school leader training programme and 83% instructional leadership training
Has an average of 9 years of experience as a school leader and 21 years of teaching experience	Has an average of 13 years of experience as a school leader and 25 years of teaching experience
62% are employed full time without teaching obligations and 35% are employed full time with teaching obligations	29% are employed full time without teaching obligations and 67% are employed full time with teaching obligations
Works in a school with 546 students and 45 teachers on average	Works in a school with 295 students and 33 teachers on average

The great majority of teachers' lesson time is spent teaching. On average in TALIS countries and in Latvia, teachers report spending around 80% of their lesson time on actual teaching and learning.

Compared with the average, teachers in Latvia report spending a smaller proportion of their time keeping order in the classroom (9% vs. 13%).

Teachers in Latvia report spending similar numbers of hours performing a variety of work-related tasks, compared with the TALIS average. For example, they report spending 19 hours teaching per week and 6 hours on average for planning their lessons.

The Education Law ordains that each self-government has a duty to ensure that children, the declared place of residence of whom is in the administrative territory of the self-government, have the opportunity to acquire pre-school education and basic education at the educational institution closest to the place of residence of the child. The implementation of this regulation, affected by demographic trends, entails that the pupil-teacher ratio in Latvia is one of the smallest among PISA-participating countries and economies. The PISA survey of 2012 also found that the difference in quality of educational resources between socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged schools in Latvia is one of the smallest among participants of the survey. (0.03 PISA Index, rank 53/62)

It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science to prepare and implement measures for the improvement of the quality of the educational process. The quality of education and compliance with related legislation is monitored by the State Service of Education Quality, a subordinate body of the Ministry. The State Service licenses education institutions and educational programmes and carries out the accreditation thereof. Furthermore, it offers help for educational and scientific establishments, pedagogues, students and their parents.

The Ministry of Education develops guidelines for pre-school education and the State education standard for general education. The State education standard determines, in conformity with the level and type of education, the main goals and objectives of educational programmes, the mandatory basic content of education, basic criteria for evaluation of acquired education, and general procedures. Primary and secondary school students are tested on the main subjects of the curricula after the completion of every three grades to provide feedback on their progress.

In order to measure and improve the international competitiveness of the education system, Latvia cooperates with numerous international organizations, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the European Skills Promotion Organisation (ESPO), the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education' or the ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning among others.

Figure 27

## Pupil-teacher ratio by education level

	Pupil-teacher ratio, primary education	Pupil-teacher ratio, secondary education
2000	15.10	10.74
2001	14.99	11.24
2002	14.34	11.36
2003	13.70	11.15
2004	12.98	11.03
2005	12.20	10.81
2006	11.76	10.25
2007	-	-
2008	11.11	9.84
2009	10.45	8.61
2010	11.88	9.00
2011	11.41	8.33
2012	11.01	7.90

Source: Worldbank data

Figure 28

## Features of a typical teacher in Latvia compared to other TALIS countries

	Typical teacher in TALIS countries	Typical teacher in Latvia
% of females	68%	89%
average age of teachers	43	47
% of training staff who have completed university or other equivalent higher education	91%	97%
% of training staff who have completed a teacher education or training programme	90%	91%
average number of years of teaching experience	16	22
% of teachers employed full-time	82%	82%
% of teachers having a permanent contract	83%	93%
average number of students in a class	24	18

Source: TALIS 2013 data

## Prospects for Post 2015 with Regards to EFA Goals

### Improvement of the education content that is oriented towards competencies required in society and facilitating innovations and healthy lifestyle

The work will be focused on development of the general educational content that is based on the competence approach. A special support will be provided for pre-school education and creation of methodology and work organisation models for work with children aged 1.5-4, incl. also methodological support for childcare providers in the family by ensuring an individual growth that corresponds to a child's age. Support will be provided for development of the competence-based teaching content and methodology for children over 5 by the 6th grade implementing a pilot project for the content approbation in the modern learning environment thus promoting earlier acquisition of secondary general education.

Support will be provided for development of the education content and innovative learning tools, incl. evaluation of pupil achievements in the field of social sciences in general education comprising new competencies such as enterprising spirit, healthy lifestyle, financial literacy, civic education, human safety; support for updating/revision of foreign language learning content and learning methodology for 1st to 12th grade, including a teaching methodology to acquire the usability of foreign language teaching content by strengthening language literacy and creative development of pupils.

Implementation of the content of elementary education (7th to 9th grade) stage will be launched by gradually strengthening the content of the elementary education stage that is based of the competence approach.

In cooperation with social partners, implementation of the approach (elements) that is based on working environment and work practice in vocational education will be ensured.

### Raising motivation and professional capacity of teachers and academic personnel

To ensure improvement of teachers' professional competence, it is planned to develop lifelong competencies (foreign languages, ICT skills) and professional skills (entrepreneurial spirit, financial literacy, leadership, creativity, skills for working with educatees having different levels of abilities and skills) of teachers of vocational subjects, as well as to improve practical skills in the workplace of the teachers and practice supervisors. These measures will raise the qualification of teachers and have favourable effect on the learning results of educatees. Teachers will be able to learn new technologies and improve learning and teaching processes. In general, the activities mentioned will have an important role in attraction of new teachers and motivation to work in the profession.

It is also planned to improve the competencies of the administrative and teaching staff of vocational education institutions in the contexts of learning organisation, methodological issues, and technology development, and this will improve prestige of vocational education institutions. To be properly prepared for work in a linguistically heterogeneous environment, development of teachers in work with modern teaching and methodological aids will be organised for teachers. In addition, professional development of teachers in the content and language-integrated learning methodology will be ensured. To promote mutual international cooperation between teachers, improve their foreign language skills and ICT skills, and build ICT as a part of daily life in education institutions, the implementation of E-Twinning project will be supported.

### Provision of educational environment and process in compliance with the 21st century

Support provision of modern learning environment, including improvement of rooms for natural sciences to implement elementary education programmes, purchase of teaching aids and technical equipment for these programmes, as well as to adjustment of learning environment for their deployment in general

education institutions which also implement vocational education programmes and vocational education institutions established by municipalities, and support for modernisation of dormitories. Implementation of innovative ICT solutions in the learning process and ergonomic improvement of learning environment in general education institutions, especially in secondary schools of the regional level, support for modernisation of dormitories. Support for educational institutions that fulfil the functions of a methodical centre in the fields of STEM and ICT to enhance the education quality and use of methodology in education, incl. support to municipalities for improvement of sports infrastructure of general education schools.

### Implementation of the Inclusive education principle and reduction of social exclusion risk

To implement the principles of inclusive education in practice, it is necessary to identify children and youth in the educational institutions and outside them that are subjected to the risk of social exclusion, identify the reasons of learning failure, elaborate measures for prevention or mitigation of the reasons identified.

After evaluation of the system of special education institutions MES plans to develop funding models of special education, incl. educational institutions and activities, taking into account provision of individualised educational service. It is planned to provide implementation of integration measures for youth with special needs and of other social risk groups in educational institutions foreseeing support also for individual teaching plans, as well as organisation of summer camps for youth with special needs including a variety of such events as festivals, exhibitions, competitions, and creative workshops for youth with special needs, and their participation in the aforementioned activities. Support will be provided also to teachers as it is planned to ensure methodological materials. The range of teaching and methodological tools that are needed for integration of the youth with special needs into the general education system will be developed, as well as improvement of the professional competence of teachers and support personnel. Development and implementation of the continuing education programmes are also planned for specialists (social workers, physiotherapists, ergotherapists, etc.) regarding adjusted sports programmes foreseeing specific training methodologies for work with educatees with special needs.

Early and timely diagnostics of special educational needs in all educational levels and types (except higher education) will be promoted by ensuring preventive measures for due compensation of special needs in educational institutions (incl. improving classification of special education programmes and their needs).

In order to reduce bias and stereotypes in society regarding disabled children and other children and youth at risk of social exclusion, as well as address the issue of violence among peers, there will be toleration and tolerance-promoting and informative measures and elaboration of methodological materials facilitated in the educational institutions, as well as professional competence development of teachers will be ensured.

It is planned to increase availability of support personnel including psychologists in the educational institutions in the pre-school and elementary stages, that will enhance prevention of violence in educational institutions.

The measures taken will contribute to development of inclusive education, which will directly affect integration of children and youth at the risk of social exclusion and those with special needs being of the mandatory education age into education that among other things will also affect the number of early school leavers.

## Reduction of early school leavers and those having not obtained education

The support is foreseen for the implementation of preventive and compensatory measures<sup>15</sup> for those at the risk of early school leaving, poverty, needy and low-income children and youth so that a child or youth can continue learning in a general and vocational education institution as long as possible and finish it, or get a qualification that can be used in the labour market, as well as support is provided for raising quality and availability of interest activities and out-of-school activities for the children and youth at the risk of poverty and social exclusion and needy and low-income children and youth, incl. for establishment of training enterprises and ensuring their operation; assistance to cooperation among municipalities aimed at provision of professional support by the related government and municipal authorities for the needy and low-income children and youth and for those at the risk of poverty.

At the same time, the Youth guarantee envisages involvement of youth, including those who are not employed, learning, or training, in development and implementation of youth initiative projects, as well as non-formal learning activities.

At the same time, for faster and more efficient access to the labour market, there will be an opportunity given to youth to obtain vocational education in the short-term (from 1 to 1.5 years) vocational education programmes.

## Broadening learning opportunities for adults

Investment in human resources is crucial for strengthening the competitiveness and should be viewed together with the situation in the labour market and its development tendencies. Raising qualification, productivity, and competitiveness of people is important for promotion of smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth, thus contributing to the “Europe 2020” strategy goals. Improvement of professional competence of the employed in collaboration with industry associations provide that the skills and knowledge of the employed meet the needs of the labour market and promote productivity, flexibility, adaptation to changes, and rapid technological change of the labour force, thus raising career growth opportunities of the employed both within one sector and different sectors, as well as contributing to the increase in wages in addition to the productivity and competence development.

Improvement of regulatory framework to provide support to adult education and to development of professional competence of the employed people in compliance with the changing conditions of the labour market, covering support to employers to provide formal and non-formal education for the employed. Support to employers for additional education of staff should be enhanced.

There is a necessity to ensure availability of culture education offer of culture institutions within a long term, such as culture memory institutions – museums, archives, libraries – in the formal and informal education process.

It is also planned to develop vocational continuing education programmes and materials, facilitate offer of adult teachers and vocational education institutions, as well as international cooperation both in formal and non-formal adult education, linking it with the goals of the EU growth strategy “Europe 2020”. As a result of implementation of these measures, education opportunities for adults will increase thereby strengthening the principle of lifelong learning, and the number and competitiveness of adults involved in education will grow.

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<sup>15</sup> Report on implementation of youth’s guarantee in 2014-2018 revised by the Cabinet of Ministers on December 17, 2013.