Annex 1 - Template and guidelines for National implementation plans. Latvia

1. Brief information on the national context and baseline

MAJOR POLICY DEVELOPMENTS and REFORMS

1. **Guidelines for the Development of Education (2021-2027)**

The policy priorities in education, including VET and adult education, have been represented in the key policy planning document - **Guidelines for the Development of Education: Future Skills for the Society of the Future 2021-2027**, (GDE) (Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādnes), confirmed by the Cabinet of Ministers June 22, 2021. **The overarching goal of the GDE is to ensure quality education for all Latvia's inhabitants, promoting development and implementation of their potential throughout their life and facilitating their ability to change and to lead constant changes in society and economy.** To this end **four main priority areas have been defined** in the GDE:
- Highly qualified, competent and excellence-oriented teachers, academic and scientific personnel
- Modern, qualitative and labour market skills demand oriented education and training
- Supporting everyone's development
- Sustainable and effective management of the education system

In addition, the GDE comprises **two horizontal priorities** - **digitalization and green issues**. These are not separated as distinct projects but are enclosed across all priorities and most activities. Also **inclusion** is being addressed across the activities and developments envisaged by the GDE.

Each GDE priority is being addressed in a comprehensive way – regarding all levels, types and forms of education. The GDE also comprises the key results to be achieved by 2027 and the respective indicators for monitoring the process. The implementation of the GDE has been divided into several stages via action plans. **Action Plan for 2021 – 2023 is currently in the implementation stage** (some discussion and consultations still ongoing).

According to GDE, the key policy priority areas in VET and adult education for 2021 – 2027 are as follows:
In VET:
- Highly qualified, competent and excellence-oriented teachers
- A modern, high-quality VET offer focused on the development of **highly valued skills in the labor market**, including:

- strengthening VET Competencies centers (technicums) capacity', in the context of regional development including
- creating a cooperation platform for implementation of modern vocational education
- developing centers of excellence in VET and promoting innovations, digitalization and green approaches
- providing career development support,
- ensuring the quality and cost-effectiveness of the implementation of VET programmes
- Partnerships for the development of VET, including promotion of international cooperation and cooperation between education and economic sectors, with the enhancement of work-based learning (WBL)

For adult education:
- Development of the offer of VET and HE modular programmes for the needs of the adults
- Implementation of **individualized and flexible adult education offer**, including support for reducing barriers to participation
- Development and implementation of support measures for employers to up-skill and reskill employees, to involve employers in provision of adult learning at workplace
- Improving the skills recognition system
- Creating a socially responsible and sustainable system for financing of adult education (**including skills funds**)
- Development of the quality of adult education
- Strengthening the governance of adult education
- Raising public and employer awareness of adult learning and motivating participation

Digitalisation and green skills, as mentioned previously, are horizontal priorities across most of the activities in VET and adult education - to be referred to more specifically in the subsequent chapters.

2. Amendments to the VET Law

In March 2022 major amendments to the VET Law were adopted by the Parliament – Saeima. Grozījumi Profesionālās izglītības likumā (Amendments to the VET Law), in force since 1.04.2022, https://www.vestnesis.lv/op/2022/52.3. The Amendments represent the results of the **comprehensive VET content reform implemented over the past decade**. The reform addresses transition to a competence (learning outcomes) based approach, with flexible modular VET programs that are relevant to the labour market and in compliance with the sector qualifications frameworks, https://www.visc.gov.lv/lv/aktuala-informacija-profesionala-izglitiba-nozaru-kvalifikacijas-strukturas?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F

The full consolidated version of the VET Law is to be found: **https://likumi.lv/ta/id/20244-profesionalas-izglitibas-likums, VET Law,** Saeima (1999). Profesionālās izglītības likums (Vocational Education Law), last amended on 3 March, 2022, in force since 1.04.2022.

Amendments to the VET Law, among other issues:

- Creates preconditions for a more flexible education and training and facilitates opportunities to improve skills throughout life. The amendments provide that a student can receives **a state-recognised document** not only for the acquisition of the **entire VET qualification**, but also **for its part(s)**. Thus, the current approach is changed in principle - when evaluating the learning outcomes, the **achievements are to be assessed**, instead of identifying deficiencies. This allows the vocational education system to be **more flexible** and focus on the needs and abilities of everyone, also responding faster to sector needs in the labour market

- It is foreseen that modular VET programmes should significantly **reduce the time needed to respond to the demands of the labour market**. It will be ensured in vocational basic education, pre-secondary vocational education, vocational secondary education, continuing education and professional development programmes. For this reason, the terms **'related profession' and 'specialisation'** have been introduced and defined, creating a common understanding of the similar professional qualifications that can be acquired in a shorter time **in the context of lifelong learning**

- Taking into account **the principles** of the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET), the learning-outcomes approach has been strengthened in the norms, as well as the **possibility of accumulating, transferring and recognising them, thus ensuring flexible learning anywhere and anytime**. The possibility of receiving state recognised documents on the acquisition of a **part of a qualification** has also been determined. This approach has a link to the **concept of microcredentials**

- Similarly, through the use of ECVET formal, non-formal and informal learning outcomes, the **recognition of qualifications** is designed to ensure their **comparability between different VET institutions**, as well as **between countries**, through a gradual **accumulation mechanism for qualifications**. It is also important that **lifelong learning opportunities are expanded** by combining formal and non-formal learning. This means that, if necessary, **every adult would have the opportunity to improve their general and professional skills**, as well as **to be up-skilled**, to change their way of life or profession.

- To expand the CVET availability and opportunities, as well as to ensure a rational use of infrastructure and resources (equipment) VET institutions have been granted **the right to offer EQF level 5 CVET qualifications**

- Another important novelty is the **processing of monitoring data of graduates** of VET programmes, as well as **insuring students against accidents** throughout the acquisition of VET programmes.

Based on the delegation from the amended VET Law, more than 20 new (or amended) Cabinet of Ministers Regulations will be drafted and adopted in 2022, 2023 and 2024.

3. VET content reform

VET content reform that started more than a decade ago is being finalised in 2022. The piloted developments of the reform are now included as norms in the Amendments of the VET Law of 2022. The VET content reform has been implemented **in parallel to the development and implementation of the Sector qualifications framework** (SQF), with the support of the ESF programme project OP 852), *Operational Program 'Growth and Employment' ESF project 'Effective Management of Vocational Education Institutions and Improvement of Staff Competence*. The relevant ESF project has been ongoing since 2011 (through two EU funds planning periods). By the reform major changes have been implemented regarding **the content and form of development and delivery of VET curriculum for various target groups in compliance with the labour market requirements**.

4. Developments within the Recovery and Resilience Facility

A substantial amount of the Recovery and Resilience Facility funds will be used to address the challenges of the overall digitial transformation in Latvia, including those within the scope of the activities of the education ministry. The improvement of the overall digital performance will be reached by:

- Making better use of technology: quality learning content, user-friendly tools and secure platforms that respect privacy and ethical standards; optimal technological capacity of schools - infrastructure, connectivity, digital equipment; 100% of teachers use digital technologies in the teaching process.
- Improved data analysis and forecasting: effective planning and strengthening of digital capabilities; 95% of schools use learning analytics solutions to monitor students' individual growth; public and private services based on educational data are used by> 90% of participants in the education system (enrollment in educational institutions, electronic circulation of educational documents at all levels, adult education offer, etc.).

SUPPORT INITIATIVES AND PROJECTS

5. Systemic approaches to improved adult education coordination and governance.**

A sustainable and comprehensive adult learning system needs to be developed, including fair funding approach, created in cooperation with various stakeholders. This system should reach and support different target groups (employees, employers, unemployed and other vulnerable groups, industries etc.). To this end various support measures are being planned and national level projects implemented. The system envisages addressing the most recent EU adult education policy developments, such as individual learning accounts as well.

In 2021, only 8.6% of the Latvian population aged 25 to 64 were involved in adult education activities, while in the Nordic countries this indicator was three and even four times higher. Although adult participation in education has increased over the last year (by 2.0 percentage points compared to 2020), it has remained below the EU average. It should be noted that the involvement of the population in adult education in Latvia has not changed significantly during the last 10 years, and the goal defined for 2020 to increase the involvement of adults in lifelong learning to 15% was not achieved. The policy goal is to reach at least 12% (8% by 2024) of the adult population in adult education by 2027.

6. Revised approaches to teacher training and improved status and prestige of the teaching profession.

Systemic strategic approaches and practical measures are being planned to ensure the training of highly qualified, competent and excellence-oriented teachers and trainers.

7. New role of VET institutions in the context of regional development. Improving strategic planning and operation of VET institutions for increased competitiveness, innovation, digitalisation and green transition

VET institutions need to be strengthened and promoted as centers of excellence and innovation in sectors, developing a flexible and sustainable education offer and strengthening their coordinated and strategic cooperation with representatives of economic sectors and employers. VET institutions need to become relevant actors in the regional context as well - offering a platform for labour market skills' development of various target groups. VET institutions also need to assume a new role for coordinated work in relation to their priority sectors (related to their training programs) of national economy – through closer collaboration with sector representatives. Measures need to be taken for better coordination and joint methodological work among VET institutions that offer the same type of programs. Their strategic planning needs to be revised as well, to be compliant with the modern global tendencies in innovation, digitalisation and green transition and thus increasing their overall competitiveness.

8. Improved stakeholder collaboration for ensuring highly valued skills in the labor market and promoting work-based learning, innovation and excellence, as well as green and digital approaches.

The education ministry has requested technical assistance through the European Commission's Technical Support Instrument, **to support employers in promoting skills' development.** The technical assistance will be provided by the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM) and the OECD between 2021 and 2023.

Apart from the established systemic approaches and collaboration mechanisms (described in greater detail in the chapter on governance), there is a need **to test and promote new forms of stakeholder collaboration** and **labour market relevant skills development for improved competitiveness**. This is especially important for developing appropriate skills in STEM areas.

9. Education quality monitoring system development and revision of the national quality approach, with graduate tracking as a tool.

The need for **a system for long-term data analysis on learner performance has been identified by the education ministry.** There is a need to collect and analyse data that characterise the education system in order to justify changes in education policy at the state and institutional levels. A common platform for data collection needs to be created in order to analyse the interrelationships of data stored in several information systems (for example, data on education, employment data, social insurance data, data about taxes). **Graduate tracking** has been identified as a relevant support tool for quality assurance regarding the labour market relevance of VET graduates.

10. Inclusion policies in education as a means to reduce the risk of dropping out and as a support measure to targeted groups in need of support

Alongside with excellence in VET also inclusion is a high level priority in VET in Latvia. It allows for the maximum realisation of every individuals potential. In VET - due to various social and economic reasons - drop-out of students presents a challenge. In order to **reduce the number of learners who drop out of school and prevent the risks of dropping out**, a specific project is being implemented with the support of the European Social fund. The project promotes the development of a system of sustainable cooperation between a municipality, educational institutions, teachers, support staff and parents or representatives of learners to identify learners who are at risk of dropping out in due time and provide them with personalised support.

In the context of the recent war crises in Ukraine, it is also important to test and develop systemic approaches to address the inclusion issues with regard to asylum seekers and refugees (which formerly was not a challenge for the education system in Latvia).

11. Digital and green transition

In Latvia **digitalisation and green skills are** horizontal priorities across all education system, as determined by the GDE. Thus, certain targeted measures or projects are being implemented to address these policy priorities.

At the same time a major breakthrough regarding digital performance by various target groups might be reached through the application of the funds made available within the Resilience and Recovery Facility, since targeted systemic improvements have been envisaged in this context.

12. Internationalisation of VET and Baltic collaboration

Internationalisation of education, including VET, is part of the GDE priorities. According to the GDE, the approaches to internationalisation have to go further then mere mobilities. Internationalisation in VET needs to become more targeted and purpose oriented, in order to raise the overall international competitiveness of the VET institutions and the overall VET system. Transnational collaboration projects need to increasingly address the issue of VET excellence and innovation. Additional emphasis needs to be laid on Baltic collaboration, with peer learning, exchange of best practice as well as increased targeted mobilities and application of transparency tools.

Multilateral agreements (memoranda, e.g. Berlin Memorandum of 2012, the Baltic Alliance for Apprenticeships of 2015) and **bilateral agreements** with other EU countries (e.g. Germany and Switzerland) on joint VET developments are contributing to the competitiveness of the Latvian VET system.

Latvian expertise in VET needs to be promoted to other **countries in the EU and beyond**, e.g. **the Central Asia Platform** and the **Eastern Partnership.**

This section **briefly** presents the national context and serves as a baseline for the plan. The participating countries should describe:

i.   The strategic and legal frameworks that are in place and the national context of the VET system at the time of submission of the NIP that will guide the implementation of the planned measures for VET. The information may refer to relevant points of national long-term visions and strategies (e.g. for 2030 and beyond), main strategic documents related to the development of education, training and lifelong learning and, specifically, VET strategies and/or plans, the EU skills agenda, resilience and recovery plans ([1]), employment policies, as well as to sectoral and regional strategies, if applicable. The presentation of the national context of the VET system will focus on the factors (e.g. strong involvement of the social partners) that national VET policy can build upon to address the European priorities and to achieve the objectives of the NIPs.

ii.   main policy initiatives and reforms that have already started and are ongoing at the time of preparing the NIPs. These might include initiatives and reforms that may be completed by May 2022 or will continue. Countries are invited to reflect and describe how these national initiatives will contribute to the implementation of the common priorities.

([1]) Especially the components related to education and training and labour market and social protection. National recovery and resilience plans will be available here: https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en

ii.   relevant (statistical) evidence, especially regarding the quantitative objectives set in the Recommendation (the Commission will provide more information on these in Spring 2022).

2. Challenges and general objectives of the plan

The plan and its objectives are directly linked to the GDE as the key education policy planning document, the latest legal developments in VET, as well as the various ongoing or new policy initiatives.

The main challenges have been identified by the GDE as well. These are:

- Insufficient attractiveness of the teaching profession and the ageing of the teaching staff
- Education and training offer not adequately compliant with modern developments
- Insufficiently inclusive and safe education environment
- Low interest and participation in adult education
- Lack of labour market relevant (demanded) skills
- Insufficient digital skills in the society
- Partially compliant data management and education quality management systems at institutional and national level

Other related challenges and needs regarding VET are:

- VET schools need a new role and respective capacity – especially in regional context, and with digital and green transition in mind.
- VET institutions need to be strengthened and promoted as centers of excellence and innovation in sectors, developing a flexible and sustainable education offer and strengthening their coordinated and strategic cooperation with representatives of economic sectors and employers.
- Improved links with the labour market generally and for WBL developments in particular
- Improved career guidance
- Sector qualification frameworks need to be implemented in close link with VET content update
- More programs and increased enrolment in STEM programs and the qualifications that are needed in the labour market
- Increased stakeholder collaboration and improved quality and relevant result of the collaboration
- Internationalisation of VET
- Increased support to the teachers profession, including support to digital and green approaches

- Improved adult education coordination and governance
- Offer of CVET programs at EQF level 5, especially in STEM area

The challenges will be addressed by the measures and funding envisaged (and earmarked) by the GDE and the respective Action plan. Resources from the state budget and the EU funds is being planned.

The participating countries are invited to identify and describe the main challenges they face (e.g. in the socioeconomic, employment, VET and skills areas) and how they are going to be addressed through the implementation of the planned measures.

The general objectives of the NIPs should be presented in the order of priority and supported with evidence. Countries should make a clear link between the challenges to be addressed and the set objectives and explain how their achievement will help addressing these challenges. The description of each objective should refer to the VET Recommendation priorities and the Osnabrück Declaration objectives (see Annex 2).

The participating countries are invited to explain how they plan to achieve the quantitative objectives set by the Recommendation and other national targets (e.g. those of Skills agenda), as applicable, by 2025 in the medium-term and by 2030 in the long-term and provide the respective evidence.

The participating countries should provide:

i. a brief overview of the main challenges, reform objectives and main measures ([2]) that comprise the NIP and links between them, explain the coherence of all parts of the NIP as well as its consistency with other national initiatives ([3]), where applicable;

ii. a reference to the main sources of funding for the implementation of the NIP, namely which funds, including EU funds, will be used

iii. timeline and current phase of development of the implementation of the NIP with respect to the timeline of the Osnabrück Declaration and the Recommendation.

([2]) A detailed description of those measures will be done in Section 3.

([3]) E.g. national recovery and resilience plans, national reform programmes.

3. Detailed description of main measures and/or their packages ([4])
B. Title
Modernisation of VET content for a flexible, high-quality and attractive offer for increased flexibility and application of transparency tools
Rationale/background, challenges addressed
The contemporary labour market requires a highly flexible qualifications and skills provision system in compliance with sector dynamics and developments. Consequently there is a need for a systemic approaches towards a competence-based modularised VET, both IVE and CVET, for up-skilling the adults, as well. The developed Sector Qualifications Framework (SQF) needs to be implemented and its user friendly e-version developed.
Specific objectives of the measure/package and their relation to the general objectives of the plan
To revise approaches to standards and programme development based on the competence-based and learning-outcomes principles. To ensure a system for the implementation of sectoral qualifications framework (SQF) in compliance with labour market developments (including the development of the **e-SQF**). To create systemic approaches and organise activities/ create preconditions for implementing the up-skilling of adults. To revise the VET content and form of delivery, including green and digital approaches
Description of main actions and activities comprising the measure/package, including implementation milestones and indicative timeline
VET content reform that started more than a decade ago is being finalised in 2022. The piloted developments of the reform are now included as norms in the Amendments of the VET Law of 2022. The VET content reform has been implemented **in parallel to the development and implementation of the** SQF. By the reform major changes have been implemented regarding **the content and form of development and delivery of VET curriculum for various target groups in compliance with the labour market requirements**. The development of standards and modular VET programs (up to NQF/ EQF level 4) are nearly completed, and currently work is being done on refinement of these developments and **drafting of the respective Cabinet of Ministers regulations according to the delegation of the Amendments to the VET Law (2022).**

[4] A package (of measures) is a coherent set of measures that address a particular challenge, one or several priorities and principles of the VET recommendation and/or objectives of the Osnabrück Declaration.

A set of standards for EQF level 5 qualifications have been developed, and currently the **development of the content of EQF level 5 modular programs needs to be started.**

The content of VET programs is being revised as well, aiming at enhanced green and digital transition, with enclosed 'green' modules and digital issues as part of the content and form of offer/ delivery.

The initiative is reaching the stage of full-scale implementation also with regard to adult education. Guidelines for upskilling are being applied by providers of adult education. They can implement one single module (by developing the curriculum according to the number of hours); integrate content of the modules into other lifelong learning modules; develop the content of professional development programmes by assembling several modules; include modules into continuing vocational education programmes in the lifelong learning competence section or use them for in-service training. Providers of adult education can also use these materials as samples for developing other modules for non-formal adult education. Within the project, Recommendations for the development and licensing of non-formal education programmes have been developed.

Thus, the VET content reform is approaching its finalisation, and from 2022 onwards the implementation of the developed approaches and the provisions of the VET Law Amendments need to be fully put in practice.

VISC has started work on the development of the E-SQF concept, initially envisaging a market research for the portal "**Electronic Sector Qualifications System**". The aim is to unify and systematize the learning outcomes within one sector or cross-sectors, including **the introduction of the microcredentials approach**. It is planned that the System (website www.e-NKS.gov.lv) ensures that the developed vocational education content is available and easy to use for all teachers and learners, as well as other users and interested parties (including the employers), ensures the continuity of the implementation of modular VET programs in VET institutions, improves the learning process, makes it easy to navigate the link between professional qualifications and their specializations. Modular content developed by VISC NQF 2.-4. level is easy to modify, improve, as well as easy to use in the development of professional development and adult continuing education offer. Materials will be easy to download and process, so that each user will be able adapt them to their own needs, as well as they might be used by other institutions. The development will provide for interconnection of the System with the State Education Information System (VIIS) and the State Examination Information System (VPIS) and other information systems.

In VET, a unified coding system for professional qualifications included in the Sectoral Qualification Structures has been developed and its implementation has begun. The developed code system is already being implemented and used for ALL professional qualifications. Based on 1.04.2022. amendments to the VET Law, it is planned to incorporate the SQF code system into the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers, linking them with the SQF structure and professional qualification requirements specified in the Professional Standards.

In accordance with the professional qualification requirements specified in the professional standards, in accordance with the amendments to the VET Law, parts of qualifications will be determined and provided for, if any. VISC has already started work on professional qualifications in LQF 2-4 - the identification and coding of the learning units to be achieved. One unit of learning to be developed is unique and applicable to a number of industry-related professional qualifications, or across disciplines. These activities will in the future contribute to **a common approach to micro-credentials** that will allow for learning to be accumulated, assessed and recognized.

EU policy priorities addressed

Council Recommendation on VET	Osnabrück Declaration
☒ A. VET is agile in adapting to labour market challenges. ☒ B. Flexibility and progression opportunities are at the core of VET. ☒ C. VET is a driver for innovation and growth and prepares for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand. ☒ D. VET is an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training/skills. ☒ E. VET promotes equality of opportunities. ☒ F. VET is underpinned by a culture of quality assurance.	☒ 1. Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET. ☒ 2. Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of CVET and digitalisation. ☒ 3. Sustainability – a green link in VET. ☒ 4. European Education and Training Area and international VET.

VET subsystem (IVET, CVET, or both)

☒ initial VET (IVET)
☒ continuing VET (CVET)

Scope (national, regional, local)

☒ national
☒ regional
☐ local

Beneficiaries/target groups

☐ (List to be provided) VET providers; end users (learners)

Responsible ministries/bodies

Ministry of Education and Science

National Centre for Education
Source of funding (National, EU funds, sectoral)
List all sources of funding and estimated amounts, if available. National, EU funds

3. Detailed description of main measures and/or their packages (⁵)
Title
Systemic approaches to improved adult education coordination and governance.
Rationale/background, challenges addressed
Need for a sustainable and comprehensive adult learning system – to ensure continuous training and up-skilling of the labour force. So far Latvia has not been reaching the EU average indicators for the involvement of the adult population in education and training. This requires urgent solutions, since the level of training and up-skilling of the adult population predetermines the overall competitiveness of the national labour force and economy.
In 2021, 8.6% of the Latvian population aged 25 to 64 were involved in adult education activities, while in the Nordic countries this indicator was three and even four times higher. Although adult participation in education has increased over the last year (by 2.0 percentage points compared to 2020), it has remained below the EU average. It should be noted that the involvement of the population in adult education in Latvia has not changed significantly during the last 10 years, and the goal defined for 2020 to increase the involvement of adults in lifelong learning to 15% was not achieved. The policy goal is to reach at least 12% (8% by 2024) of the adult population in adult education by 2027.
Specific objectives of the measure/package and their relation to the general objectives of the plan
Development and implementation of systemic coordinated approaches to adult education – with the involvement of a full spectrum of relevant stakeholders for a comprehensive vision and provision of adequate financial and human resources

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[5] A package (of measures) is a coherent set of measures that address a particular challenge, one or several priorities and principles of the VET recommendation and/or objectives of **the** Osnabrück Declaration.

Sustainable and comprehensive adult learning system, including a fair funding approach, created in cooperation with various stakeholders, which reaches and supports different target groups (employees, employers, unemployed and other vulnerable groups, industries etc.).

This is being implemented by creating a unified, well-thought-out and sustainable adult education system, where each project reaches its target audience and planned results, the fragmentation of the adult education system will be diminished and efficient management of resources will be achieved. The concept of the unified adult education system foresees the provision of support measures in adult education in the three beneficiary pillars. Firstly, on-demand support will be provided to individual employers or companies to support the needs for skilled and flexible workers and to enhance the performance and competitiveness of companies. Secondly, sectoral training needs will be supported through sectoral associations, organizations and various partners, raising the overall level of education, competences and professionalism of the employees in the specific sector. Thirdly, support will be provided for individuals' based needs, regardless of their level of education, employment status or employer's willingness and capacity.

Additional support activities include:
Tracking quality of adult learning field and its' correspondence to the labour market needs, as well as overall assessment of adult competencies

- Education ministry's subordinated institution ''The State Education Development Agency'' has its own Lifelong Learning Data Analytics Department, which analyses learning needs, training offers and its relevance to the labour market using 4 main assessment criteria - labours market's demand, the inclusion of the main target groups (for example low-skilled persons), modular curriculum and whether occupation's hourly rate is >7 Euro. Currently, the analysis is used to develop training offers for the project "Improvement of Employees' Professional Competence (EU Funds SO 8.4.1.)" learning rounds. If the analytical approach is effective, it will also be applied more broadly in the context of adult learning outside the project.

- Latvia has started to participate in the *OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)*, which allows to evaluate skills of 16-65 years old population in main information processing areas – literacy, numeracy and problem solving and their use in daily life and in the work environment. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the OECD took a decision to postpone PIAAC survey for one year. In January 2022, the National Research Centre has signed the agreement with a fieldwork contractor and preparations are ongoing for the OECD's PIAAC simulated trial survey in Latvia, to be conducted in 2022 from

February to March. The main PIAAC study is intended to be conducted from August 2022 to March 2023. The first results of the OECD's PIAAC study will be published in 2024. The obtained data will allow to analyse imbalance between the supply and demand of skills in the labour market and the impact of the specific skills on the remuneration, as well as to compare the quality of Latvia's human resources on an international level.

- In order to tackle significant gaps in the adults' learning management system, the Education Ministry is working on strengthening the Adult Education Government Board. Its task is to define and approve goals and tasks related to the development of human resources, priorities, target groups and sectors, as well as to make decisions on the distribution of available funding. The Council regularly evaluates the implementation and impact of adult learning initiatives. It is important for the Board to improve cooperation between all engaged stakeholders, in particular, sectoral representatives at national, regional and local levels for implementing labour market demand-based adult education provisioning, as well as ensuring its quality and sufficiency;

- To promote quality in adult non-formal education, the Education Ministry has submitted amendments to the Education Law regarding the implementation of non-formal education quality criteria for adoption (presently in Saeima for the 2nd reading). To introduce quality criteria in adult non-formal education and a common procedure for quality assurance in adult non-formal education, the project of new regulations of the Minister Cabinet are being developed.

- According to amended VET Law (3.03.2022), new regulations of the Minister Cabinet are being developed to introduce flexibility and individual approach in CVET taking into account the **EC Recommendation on Up-skilling Pathways**.

- To enhance the quality of adult education, in the Erasmus+ project "National Coordinators for the implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning in Latvia", **a new in-service training programme for adult educators without pedagogical training (72 hours) was designed.** The programme was piloted by the University of Latvia (64 adult educators participated in the pilots and received certificates). The results of the piloting will be used to improve and implement this training programme in 2023. A new training programme for adult educators with pedagogical education (3 modules, 36 hours) was designed in cooperation with the Latvian Association of Higher Education Institutions for Lifelong Learning (LAKMA), the University of Latvia, the University of Liepaja, the Ventspils University of Applied Sciences, the Riga Technical University and the Rezekne Academy of Technologies. The pilot project was launched involving all the abovementioned universities. The results of the piloting will be used to improve and implement this training programme for the target group – HEI staff working with adults -, in autumn, 2022.

Fostering overall educational culture among adults, reaching and attracting different target groups

- EPALE platform is used as an informative channel and tool to reach a wider audience (such as the general public) (EPALE has been included in the Latvian national policy plan for adult education "Guidelines of the Education Development for 2021-2027 "Future Skills for the Future Society"" and its Action Plan for 2021-2023).
- To support municipalities in the organisation of adult education, "Guidelines for the management of adult education in municipalities", which include a job description for an adult education coordinator, has been developed (with the support of the Erasmus+ project "National Coordinators for the implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning in Latvia"). The competence development programme for the Adult Education Coordinator has been developed in line with the job description. Two modules of this programme were piloted in 2021, involving adult education coordinators and municipal staff. The programme is currently being piloted. The results of the piloting will be used to improve and implement this programme. A network of adult education coordinators in local municipalities has been developed. Regular seminars and PLAs have been organized for adult education coordinators.

Adult education curricula (modules) are being designed - for different levels addressing 'Skills for Life', with a particular emphasis on digital and financial competences. The modules will be piloted in cooperation with adult education coordinators in local municipalities.

Promoting the concept of individual learning accounts

In order to provide individuals with the necessary support for the acquisition of knowledge and skills, the **concept of Individual Learning Accounts is under development.** This is expected to raise participation rates in adult learning and reduce skills shortages.

Today, an employee often depends on the employer's ability and decisions to exercise his or her training rights. This tool will enable individuals to participate in the acquisition of skills relevant to the labour market and to manage their own careers, as well as to support them in identifying learning needs and overcoming learning barriers.

It is planned that individual learning opportunities will give access to a personalized budget to cover the costs of training (during the approbation period - the development of an individual's digital skills), counselling, skills assessment, mobility and other expenses. It will be possible to accumulate and use individual study rights and the allocated budget over a longer period of time. It will be possible to supplement it from various sources (for example, contributions, awards or gifts from employers or individuals).

The set goal envisages the **development and approbation of the concept of individual study accounts corresponding to the Latvian context by 2026** in order **to stimulate the participation of adults in education**, especially in the **acquisition of digital skills**. It will make the world's best digital learning tools available through specialized high-quality machine translation and other AI solutions, involving educational experts in the validation and adaptation of localized content.

EU policy priorities addressed	
Council Recommendation on VET	**Osnabrück Declaration**
☒ A. VET is agile in adapting to labour market challenges. ☒ B. Flexibility and progression opportunities are at the core of VET. ☒ C. VET is a driver for innovation and growth and prepares for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand. ☐ D. VET is an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training/skills. ☒ E. VET promotes equality of opportunities. ☒ F. VET is underpinned by a culture of quality assurance.	☒ 1. Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET. ☒ 2. Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of CVET and digitalisation. ☐ 3. Sustainability – a green link in VET. ☐ 4. European Education and Training Area and international VET.

VET subsystem (IVET, CVET, or both)
☐ initial VET (IVET) ☒ continuing VET (CVET)
Scope (national, regional, local)
☒ national ☒ regional ☐ local
Beneficiaries/target groups
☐ (List to be provided) VET providers; end users (learners)
Responsible ministries/bodies
Ministry of Education and Science State Education Development Agency (VIAA) National Centre for Education (VISC)
Source of funding (National, EU funds, sectoral)
List all sources of funding and estimated amounts, if available. **National, EU funds**

Detailed description of main measures and/or their packages ([6])
Title:
Highly qualified, competent and innovation/ excellence-oriented teachers and administrative staff
Rationale/background, challenges addressed
Insufficient competitiveness of the teaching profession has been a serious challenge in Latvia for a prolonged period. The attractiveness of the profession among educators is low, and the same applies to the prestige of the profession in the society. Partly it is related to the relatively non-competitive salaries of the teaching staff. The teachers working in the system are committed but overloaded and frequently are under the risk of burn-out. Also the average age of the teachers in the system tends to be high – most of the pedagogical staff is over 50 years of age. It is therefore important to provide support measures to raise the attractiveness of the profession, to reduce burn-out risks for educators and implement new approaches to teacher training programmes, by creating mechanisms for attracting young educators, as well. **This is crucial, since only loyal, committed, well qualified and innovation oriented teachers can ensure the implementation of envisaged VET reforms.** The plan is highly challenging, since statistically 38% of teachers in Latvia respond they want to leave the profession in the next five years (average of 25% in the OECD). In addition, 26% of teachers in Latvia of 50 years of age and younger would like to leave the profession in the next five years (OECD average 14%). Since teachers' leaving work has far-reaching consequences, e.g. it may impact student achievements, negatively impact the school climate and the implementation of training programs, this requires fast financial an organisational solutions for supporting the teaching staff, as well as for replacing (potentially) missing teachers.
Specific objectives of the measure/package and their relation to the general objectives of the plan
To implement systemic strategic and practical measures for ensuring highly qualified, competent and excellence-oriented teachers – through strengthened strategic approaches to the training of teachers
Description of main actions and activities comprising the measure/package, including implementation milestones and indicative timeline

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[6] A package (of measures) is a coherent set of measures that address a particular challenge, one or several priorities and principles of the VET recommendation and/or objectives of the Osnabrück Declaration.

1. Strengthening strategic approaches to the training of teachers:
   - Annual identification of evidence-based training needs for teachers using advanced teacher skills assessment tools and methods
   - Targeted and needs-based planning of teacher training at municipal level, providing equivalent support facilities for all educators
   - Implementation of unified, coordinated and strategically monitored vocational development systems by ensuring effective cooperation between the various stakeholders in professional development;
   - Support for innovative, research-based and diverse vocational development activities and methodological support;
   - Improving quality and effectiveness of teacher training solutions assessment
   - Research-based pedagogical activities and professional development; providing a sufficiently targeted and regular methodical approach for the development of professional competencies of teachers and academic staff
   - Strengthening the potential for professional cooperation – TALIS 2018 highlights that Teachers professional cooperation, which includes greater interdependence between teachers, forms the basis for innovative and effective teaching. In Latvia 12% of teachers report on professional participation (in cooperation) at least once a month (OECD average of 21%) and 17% as often as the work is organise in teams (OECD average of 28%)
   - Ensuring a high quality doctoral offer – quality of doctoral studies affects quality of education of teachers and academic staff
   - Ensuring regular professional development, methodological and consultative support through targeted coordination of the involvement and cooperation of the various parties. Changing the focus on educational content and the functioning of educational institutions – support for teachers to be able to promote and follow each learner for growth, be able to apply pedagogical approaches and strategies in the classroom with learners representing different cultural, linguistic, social and economic contexts, be able to include learners with special needs, with efficient use of information and communication technologies, evaluating the performance of learners, engaging in learning content planning, ensuring cooperation with older pupils in support of learning, etc.
   - Enabling educators to react proactively to change in society and various unforeseen challenges in their work – in this respect continuously improving their professional skills and lifelong learning.
2. Ongoing consultations and social dialogue on the reform for teachers' salaries.

Practical support measures are being implemented within the framework of the Operational Program 'Growth and Employment' ESF project 'Effective Management of Vocational Education Institutions and Improvement of Staff Competence' (agreement No. 8.5.3.0/16/I/001), continuous training and support is being rendered to teachers and administrative staff to improve their professional competence (including regular training courses and relevant skills' development), national and international mobilities, peer learning, company visits).

EU policy priorities addressed	
Council Recommendation on VET	**Osnabrück Declaration**
☒ A. VET is agile in adapting to labour market challenges. ☐ B. Flexibility and progression opportunities are at the core of VET. ☐ C. VET is a driver for innovation and growth and prepares for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand. ☒ D. VET is an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training/skills. ☐ E. VET promotes equality of opportunities. ☒ F. VET is underpinned by a culture of quality assurance.	☐ 1. Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET. ☒ 2. Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of CVET and digitalisation. ☐ 3. Sustainability – a green link in VET. ☐ 4. European Education and Training Area and international VET.
VET subsystem (IVET, CVET, or both)	
☒ initial VET (IVET) ☒ continuing VET (CVET)	
Scope (national, regional, local)	
☒ national ☐ regional ☐ local	
Beneficiaries/target groups	
☐ (List to be provided) VET institutions; VET teachers and trainers	
Responsible ministries/bodies	
Ministry of Education and Science National Centre for Education (VISC)	
Source of funding (National, EU funds, sectoral)	
List all sources of funding and estimated amounts, if available. **National, EU funds**	

3. Detailed description of main measures and/or their packages ([7])
Title
New role of VET institutions in the context of regional development. Improving strategic planning and operation of VET institutions for increased competitiveness, innovation, digitalisation and green transition
Rationale/background, challenges addressed
VET institutions need to be strengthened and promoted as centers of excellence and innovation in sectors, developing a flexible and sustainable education offer and strengthening their coordinated and strategic cooperation with representatives of economic sectors and employers. VET institutions need to strengthen their capacity for increased competitiveness and improved performance regionally, nationally and internationally, according to the (draft) Education development guidelines 2021-27 (EDG). The existing approach for the development, implementation and monitoring of VET institutions' **investment and development strategies** needs to be improved. Based on the experience from implementation of respective strategies of the previous planning period of 2014-2020, the education ministry has initiated a more unified systemic approach and coordinated guidance for the process. The improved approach promotes the concept for VET institutions as relevant regional actors and promoters of excellence in methodological work in particular sectors in collaboration with sector representatives. These strategies also envisage addressing the most urgent VET policy issues at institutional level, including digitalisation and green approaches
Specific objectives of the measure/package and their relation to the general objectives of the plan
The objectives of the policy development are: • to implement a systemic approach for developing the VET institutions' investment and development strategies until 2027 in line with the GDE 2021-2027 and in compliance with the support Guidance manual from the education ministry. This ensures that the strategies are structured in a uniform way, include clearly defined goals and address national VET priorities; • to encourage the VET institutions to set ambitious development goals allowing for growth and competitiveness at national and international level.
Description of main actions and activities comprising the measure/package, including implementation milestones and indicative timeline

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[7] A package (of measures) is a coherent set of measures that address a particular challenge, one or several priorities and principles of the VET recommendation and/or objectives of the Osnabrück Declaration.

- The VET institution investment and development strategy is a document reflecting a common understanding of the VET institution management teams regarding the overall strategic development of the school. It is meant to improve the planning of financial and human resources, as well as facilitate the self-assessment procedures and drafting of the annual self-assessment report.

- A manual (guidelines) has been prepared by the education ministry to assist the schools in drafting the strategies. A three-month training programme for VET institutions on the development of strategies was offered by the ministry and the National centre for education (VISC) prior to the development of draft strategies. The projects of strategies were reviewed by the Evaluation Commissions represented by education ministry, its agencies, social partners and other relevant stakeholders and their comments were sent to VET schools. VET schools improved their strategies according to the received comments and presented them to the Strategy Evaluation Commission again. If any improvements were necessary, VET schools made them and presented their strategies for the second time. Thus it was ensured that their strategies comply with proposed VET policies and broader stakeholder vision on the role of the particular VET institution in the context of regional labour market or in broader national context, in case the VET institution has a particular role at national level.

- The strategies have to address the key VET policy priorities. Each VET institution is responsible for the coordination of one or several methodological areas in relation to the key VET programs implemented. The methodological work has to be implemented in close collaboration with respective sectors of industry. Support to other VET institutions offering the same type of programs needs to be rendered – as to the methodological approaches and compliance to quality assurance demands

- The VET institutions have to report annually to the education ministry on the implementation of their strategy

- Special attention needs to be paid to links with the labour market/ employment, including work-based learning issues, digitalization, green skills, VET excellence and internationalisation

EU policy priorities addressed

Council Recommendation on VET	Osnabrück Declaration
☒ A. VET is agile in adapting to labour market challenges. ☒ B. Flexibility and progression opportunities are at the core of VET. ☒ C. VET is a driver for innovation and growth and prepares for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand.	☒ 1. Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET. ☒ 2. Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of CVET and digitalisation. ☒ 3. Sustainability – a green link in VET.

☒ D. VET is an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training/skills. ☒ E. VET promotes equality of opportunities. ☒ F. VET is underpinned by a culture of quality assurance.	☒ 4. European Education and Training Area and international VET.

VET subsystem (IVET, CVET, or both)

☒ initial VET (IVET)

☒ continuing VET (CVET)

Scope (national, regional, local)

☒ national

☒ regional

☒ local

Beneficiaries/target groups

☐ (List to be provided) VET institutions; VET teachers; end users (learners); local communities

Responsible ministries/bodies

Ministry of Education and Science

Source of funding (National, EU funds, sectoral)

List all sources of funding and estimated amounts, if available.

National, EU funds, sectoral

3. Detailed description of main measures and/or their packages ([8])

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[8] A package (of measures) is a coherent set of measures that address a particular challenge, one or several priorities and principles of the VET recommendation and/or objectives of the Osnabrück Declaration.

Title
Improved stakeholder collaboration for ensuring highly valued skills in the labor market and promoting work-based learning, innovation and excellence, as well as green and digital approaches

Rationale/background, challenges addressed

Development of labour market relevant skills is high on VET policy agenda in Latvian VET. To address the issue there are well-established collaboration mechanisms among various stakeholders at all levels. At national level there is a tripartite council (PINTSA). At sector level there are tripartite sector expert councils (SECs) for all sectors of the national economy. At institutional level there are VET institutions Conventions with representatives from the local government and relevant agencies, local businesses, associations and other. **These mechanisms are represented in great detail in the section on VET governance.** The VET programs, examinations, work based learning are on the agenda of all these structures.

At the same time, so far there have been no targeted activities to supporting employers for promoting relevant skills development in VET in Latvia. **There is a need to overtake expertise and good practice for drafting a regulatory framework to support employers to up-/re-skill their employees.** To this end, the education ministry has requested technical assistance through the European Commission's Technical Support Instrument, to support employers in promoting skills development. The technical assistance will be provided by the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM) and the OECD between 2021 and 2023, by implementing the project **''Supporting employers to promote skills development in Latvia''.**

In addition, it has been identified that more advanced developments, such as innovation, greening, digitalisation, new forms of partnerships (e.g. among VET, AE and research institutions, advanced businesses) is not yet being addressed sufficiently by the existing well established collaboration mechanisms. **For this reason additional effort is being made to improve the existing consortia and to promote and test new forms of consortia and collaboration mechanisms to increase the competitiveness and modern labour market relevance of VET.** This direction of work is in compliance with the priorities of the GDE. A special emphasis is being made on the intensification of the provision and attractiveness of STEM (related) programs and approaches, since these have not yet been covered sufficiently by VET in Latvia. So far the programs in service sectors have been more popular with the students.

Thus, there is a increasing **shortage of specialists in STEM sectors** at all levels of education. At the same time, STEM programs are frequently not a priority choice among vocational education and training (VET) applicants. These programs are being **considered as too theoretical, complicated and not attractive enough**. At the same time students are often not fully aware of the **contemporary**

developments and environment and excellent career perspectives in the STEM branches, and that even for lower and medium level qualifications **innovation and digitalisation** is part of the process.

Moreover, the **possibilities offered by WBL** for all levels of programs and varied target groups in STEM jobs are not being used effectively enough. Therefore it is vital **to create approaches and collaboration models** with the involvement of varied relevant stakeholders to promote **effective implementation of permeable studies in STEM domains in Latvia,** breaking the existing stereotypes and proving the excellent job and career prospects.

Thus, these developments need to be linked with WBL and career guidance approaches – as a natural way for stimulating the professional choices and development of young people in a real work environment and in a collaborative way between various education and employment providers.

Consequently, there is a need to test new collaboration models and partnerships ensuring high quality skills and competences that lead to quality jobs and careers for students at all levels, meeting the needs of an innovative, inclusive and sustainable economy.

The example of such a model is represented by the recently supported EU Erasmus+ program project **Platform of Vocational Excellence Water Scale-up. PoVE Water Scale-up** is a joint initiative of 8 VET schools, 7 Water industry professionals, 4 academic partners and 3 support partners in Europe (NL, DE,MT, CZ,LV, EE, BE) and beyond (SA) to educate our VET students to become agile, digitally skilled and sustainable oriented water sector professionals that our future desperately needs. **The aim of the project** is to integrate Vocational Excellence in the Water sector, thus ensuring high quality skills and competences that lead to quality jobs and careers, meeting the needs of an innovative, inclusive and sustainable economy.

Specific objectives of the measure/package and their relation to the general objectives of the plan

1. The main objective of the project ''Supporting employers to promote skills development in Latvia'' is to enable the Latvian authorities to draft a regulatory framework aiming to support employers to up-/re-skill their employees, accompanied by: 1) reports assessing the key barriers and enabling conditions and EU good practices for employers to support training for their employees; 2) practical guidelines to develop the regulatory framework for implementing a policy package for employers; 3) a roadmap for potential supplementary measures. Strengthening the rights and duties of employees and employers within the regulatory framework will provide the basis for a sustainable and socially responsible adult education support system.

2. It is planned to test (pilot) approaches that involve a strong partnership between education institutions (VET and higher education – HE), employers representatives (e.g. professional associations) and the research/ innovation based/ rooted agent ensuring a forward

looking approach. To a great extent this represents the so called 'knowledge triangle' or 'triple helix' approach, with the additional emphasis on the role of VET in the partnership.

However, the development of such a collaboration and partnership model should be rooted in the comprehensive VET (content) reform implemented in Latvia over the past decade. It concerns the development and implementation of the Sector qualifications framework (SQF) - referenced to NQF and EQF - for all sectors of the national economy and the introduction of competence-based approach for VET programs and their modularisation.

The developed SQF has a great potential which needs to be activated and put into practice to a full extent, since its implementation allows for a unified approach and permeability of programs at all levels, with the involvement of all types of education institutions, the employers, and with the possibility to build a strong WBL component in the programs at all levels and for all target groups. This would also allow for the development of agile, digitally skilled and sustainable oriented STEM sector professionals, ensuring high quality skills and competences that lead to quality jobs and careers.

Synergy should be sought also with the new EU and LV VET policy on developing centres (and networks) of vocational excellence and the promotion of innovation and new types of strategic partnerships in VET provides new opportunities for attracting competitive students to VET STEM programs. This also provides new opportunities for the development of work based learning and permeability of VET and higher education programs with good career development prospects for young professionals.

So far there has not been opened a specific VET budget line to finance such new forms of partnerships. These are primarily being tested through EU funded projects and their consortia. At the same time the piloting yields valuable information for further potential systemic developments, based on the results of the piloting.

Description of main actions and activities comprising the measure/package, including implementation milestones and indicative timeline

1. During the year 2021 two important stages of the project have been done: firstly, the project was launched and presented to the broader public which included public webinar with the participation of the high level management and representatives of public administration; secondly, project's advisory group has designed the Inception note reviewing general context, main legislation, key stakeholders and presenting the project and its work plan. During year 2022 project's team has made comprehensive research on obstacles which faces employers to invest in the skills of employees as well as submitted recommendation how these barriers could be tackled. In May 2022 OECD has organized Good practice workshop, where representatives from Estonia, Ireland and Sweden shared their experience in different measures related to adult learning and support for employers.

2. Piloting a stakeholder collaboration scheme to promote the **development of competitive labour force** at all levels **in STEM sectors** – through **practice oriented and work-based learning** approaches.

The approach envisages the collaboration of vocational education and training (VET), higher education (HE) and research institutions and labour market actors **to ensure the development and implementation of permeable VET and HE, as well as continuing education (CE) programs at all levels in STEM sectors** with a prominent **WBL component and international dimension**. **It aims also at** developing and promoting **a respective examination system** in compliance with labour market developments and demands. It should comprises **a strong ICT (digitalisation component)** and **green approach**. The **training of trainers** is part of the process to ensure joint methodological approaches.

The policy issues/ priorities to be addressed:

- Promotion of training in STEM sectors through initial and continuing education programs
- Promotion of WBL in VET as an integral part of training
- Collaboration of key stakeholders (with knowledge triangle approach) to develop permeable VET and HE programs
- Developing the sector examination centres in collaboration with employers representatives
- Professional development of teachers and trainers
- Promoting the internationalisation aspect and the use of transparency tools for the exchange of students (learners and teachers/ trainers
- Study/ research to ensure a research/ data based policy – regarding STEM (including a joint operational understanding of the STEM concept, WBL etc.
- Digitalisation of the procedures (platform/database for STEM programs, stakeholders etc.)
- Professional development of public administration representatives to ensure innovation and introduction of best practice – in relation to research data

The development and implementation of the model would facilitate:
- Permeability of STEM programs at different levels (primarily from EQF 3 to EQF 7)
- Revision of existing content or development of new one for the modular programs in VET (and HE)
- Updating the methodological work in collaboration with the STEM sectors to facilitate the implementation of work-based learning (WBL) as an integral part of the VET (and HE) programs

Moreover, it would also, expand the holistic approach to vocational excellence in STEM sectors by securing a central role of VET in the regional innovation ecosystems. It will also further develop strong and enduring relationships between VET, HE, research and respective industries. It will drive innovation in STEM related VET at national level by developing contemporary, flexible permeable (digital) learning materials in close collaboration with sectoral employers with a parallel implementation of WBL component for all STEM programs for all types of target groups (initial and continuing VET). It will ensure that current and future STEM sector professionals have the key skills and competences demanded – through blended training programmes with a strong WBL component. It should also promote increasing student's, teacher's and professional's competence acquired through international mobilities, since it should become a common practise in STEM related VET.

At present a Consortium has been established – via an EU Erasmus+ program project in innovative water management system (in the call for VET centres of excellence), starting in 2022. This consortium, apart from international partners, involves 5 partners from Latvia – two VET institutions, one college (EQF level 5), one HE institution and a professional association.

Another pilot partnership – in wooden industry – well in progress, envisaging the implementation of an EQF level 5 CVET program in wooden industry and involving stakehoders from VET and HE institutions, chambers and sector companies from the Baltics.

Based on the acquired experience so far, stakeholder discussions have started on forming a similar type of partnerships in the transport and logistics sector – to further promote innovation, excellence and digitalisation in VET provision in labour market relevant programs.

All these developments have an international dimension, thus contributing also to the internationalisation of VET, as well as testing and application of EU transparency tools.

EU policy priorities addressed

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VET subsystem (IVET, CVET, or both)
☒ initial VET (IVET)
☒ continuing VET (CVET)
Scope (national, regional, local)
☒ national
☒ regional
☒ local
Beneficiaries/target groups
☐ (List to be provided) VET institutions; end users (learners); employers; local communities
Responsible ministries/bodies
Ministry of Education and Science VET institutions
Source of funding (National, EU funds, sectoral)
List all sources of funding and estimated amounts, if available. **State budget, ESF, Erasmus+**

3. Detailed description of main measures and/or their packages ([9])
Title
Education quality monitoring system development and revision of the national quality approach
Rationale/background, challenges addressed
Education quality is a broad concept. Learner performance is the integral indicator of the education quality, thus, evidence-based education policy-making requires long-term data on learner performance at each education level. The routine quality assurance procedures, based on EQAVET principles, have been the responsibility of the State Quality Assurance Agency (IKVD). At the same time, **a system for long-term data analysis on learner performance was missing**. There is a need to collect and analyse data that characterise the education system in order to justify changes in education policy at the state and institutional levels.

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[9] A package (of measures) is a coherent set of measures that address a particular challenge, one or several priorities and principles of the VET recommendation and/or objectives of the Osnabrück Declaration.

A common platform for data collection needs to be created in order to analyse the interrelationships of data stored in several information systems (for example, data on education, employment data, social insurance data, data about taxes).

Until now, the processes of education quality assessment in Latvia have lacked systemic character. Various educational quality monitoring tools and processes have been used, including data collected by State education Information system (VIIS), data on the results of student examinations, statistical data on general education, vocational education (on subordinate institutions of the Ministry of Education and Science) and accreditation of educational institutions and programs and other. However, these tools and processes are hardly interconnected and do not form a unified education quality monitoring system that would provide regular, systematic, objective, methodologically based and transparent evaluation of education system performance at the educational program / institution, municipal, regional and national level, as well as in the international context.

Currently the development of such system has started, and the system aims at **ensuring data analysis according to comparable criteria, as well as analytical and research work with nationally defined criteria.** By this the education ministry and its subordinate institutions are **intending to strengthen their analytical capacity, in order to ensure the analysis of education quality data and to prepare technical specifications for research and development in education**.

One of the aspects to ensure VET quality and labour market compliance is also improved **VET graduate tracking** / monitoring. It is informative whether the system provides qualified specialists, according to industry skill requirements, and meeting the needs of the labour market. Lack of information on the employability and actual employment of VET graduates is preventing an appropriate analysis and a targeted planning of future programme offer and potential enrolments. **Graduate tracking will be used as a tool supporting the education quality monitoring system.**

Specific objectives of the measure/package and their relation to the general objectives of the plan

To improve the education quality monitoring system based on statistical information, the results of comparative educational research, the achievement of students at the national level and other indicators characterising the results of the work of education institutions: analysis of the results of centralised examination and accreditation and licensing, as well as evaluation of the quality of teachers' work, the use and analysis of information, taking into account the medium and long-term achievable strategic goals and results.

To provide a framework for the implementation of graduate tracking in VET, primarily to institutions responsible for graduate tracking development: the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) and the Central Statistics Bureau.

Description of main actions and activities comprising the measure/package, including implementation milestones and indicative timeline

A change in the education quality monitoring system was initiated in 2018. It was essential to improve also the quality assessment of both general and VET education by introducing requirements corresponding to current education developments in the assessment of the quality of activities of educational institutions. The quality of vocational education is ensured through the accreditation of VET institutions and VET programmes, which is carried out by the Accreditation Experts Commission. VET institutions have to submit a self-assessment report with included information about EQAVET quality indicators to the State Education Quality Service every year.

However, the accreditation of education programmes will no longer exist, but there will be a transition to institutional accreditation. Also, the accreditation criteria will no longer be aligned with the EQAVET indicators, but linked to the definition of education quality (4 categories and 12 elements) developed in the education quality monitoring project. At the same time the EQAVET indicators will be retained in the institutions' self-assessments.

The project on Education quality monitoring system development and implementation was launched by the education ministry   in April 2018. It is jointly financed by the European Social Fund and its goal is to develop an education quality monitoring system based on the analysis and measurements of statistics, results of comparative education studies, student achievements at the state level and other indicators describing the education institutions, such as examination results, accreditation, licensing, as well as teacher performance assessment. The main activities include:

a. development of a description of the education quality assessment monitoring system and monitoring tools and approval of the tools;

b. development and implementation of a research programme in education: development of a procedure; implementation of eight studies (in higher education, vocational education, general education and adult education);

c. implementation of twinning and strategic communication activities, including training for those involved in monitoring the quality of education.

The revision of the national approach was continued, a new regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers regarding the procedures for accreditation of educational institutions, educational programmes and evaluation of the professional activity of heads of educational institutions was developed in 2020. The revision also supports the increased use of EQAVET indicators as they are included as essential to the self-assessment report.

Research for the development and implementation of a risk identification system has been launched. The aim of the research is to develop a mathematical model of the components of the education quality management system and its prototype 'Education quality risk identification system' for general education and vocational education.

Work on an online glossary of education terms has been launched. The aim of the glossary is to develop an online dictionary explaining education terms in Latvian with equivalent terms in English, German, French and Russian to ensure:

- Development of education terminology in Latvia
- Qualitative use of education terms
- The development of a common understanding of the correct use of education terminology.

The policy development envisages also creating **a coordinated approach to VET graduate tracking** - with involvement and support from stakeholders, especially those dealing with statistics, taxation system and the social security system – based on the experience accumulated by the higher education system and international counterparts. The concept proposed by the education ministry is based on the analysis of available administrative data regarding the employment and income of VET graduates. The framework provided for graduate tracking describes the responsibilities and data exchange between the involved parties (MoES, Central Statistics Bureau, State Revenue Service, The State Social Insurance Agency).

In 2020 a taskforce has been established within the education ministry to work on designing a concept for the development and implementation of a graduate tracking system in VET. Consultations with various stakeholders have taken place. Work on the design of the concept is ongoing. The education ministry has prepared the report On the establishment of a graduate tracking system in VET. The MoES has received the most recent data available and started its analysis.

In 2021 the education ministry submitted the report to the government and initiated discussion on the necessary amendments to the legislation.

In 2022 Central Statistics Buerau prepares data on 2019 graduates, meanwhile amendments have to be made to the legal enactments for publishing graduate tracking data. Amendments to the VET Law includes delegation for graduate tracking.

In order to develop a framework for the implementation of graduate monitoring in vocational education and to ensure the monitoring of graduates' further progress, the education ministry has drafted informative report 'On the Establishment of a Graduate Monitoring System in Vocational Education', which was reviewed by the Cabinet of Ministers on 31.05.2022. meeting.

The monitoring of graduates is also stipulated by norms of the amended VET Law (in 2022) - entered into force on 01.04.2022. Based on delegation from the VET Law, Amendments to Cabinet of Ministers regulations regarding the VIIS are needed – their drafting in processin the process.

Graduate tracking data that are collected:

- **socio-biographical and socio-economic information**
    - Name, date of birth (year), gender, personal identification number (only for data processing)
- **information on education and training**
    - VET program code, name/title of program
- **information on employment or continuation of education and training**

    Employment status: Employed (including selfemployed etc); Employed and Studying; Unemployed; Inactive (Economically); number of companies founded by graduate; number of graduates that founded companies; number of graduates that owning shares in company.

- **Additional information**

    Number of graduates with residence permit; emigrated graduates; graduates by statistical regions.

Graduate tracking covers data about graduates employment by NACE and ISCO classifications. University/Higher education study programs from (EQF 5, 6, 7), VET programs from (EQF 3, 4) are being monitored. Graduate tracking data will be collected for 10 years (for example 2018 graduates will be monitored annually until 2028). Graduate tracking data on Higher education graduates have been published on the MoES web site and on open data portal (https://data.gov.lv/dati) where anyone can get a CSV file to work on those data. The similar approach are being planned for VET graduate tracking data publishing.

Target group (direct): state institutions that are responsible for the development of education policy, monitoring of its implementation, development of curricula, assessment of the quality of education and implementation of research: Ministry of Education and Science, National Centre for Education, State Education Quality Service, higher education and scientific institutions.

Target group (indirect): institutions subordinate to Ministry of Education and Science, education departments of municipalities, education experts, administration of education and scientific institutions, teachers, social partners, sector experts, learners and parents.

EU policy priorities addressed

Council Recommendation on VET	**Osnabrück Declaration**
☒ A. VET is agile in adapting to labour market challenges. ☐ B. Flexibility and progression opportunities are at the core of VET. ☐ C. VET is a driver for innovation and growth and prepares for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand.	☐ 1. Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET. ☐ 2. Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of CVET and digitalisation.

☐ D. VET is an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training/skills. ☐ E. VET promotes equality of opportunities. ☒ F. VET is underpinned by a culture of quality assurance.	☐ 3. Sustainability – a green link in VET. ☒ 4. European Education and Training Area and international VET.

VET subsystem (IVET, CVET, or both)
☒ initial VET (IVET)
☒ continuing VET (CVET)
Scope (national, regional, local)
☐ national
☐ regional
☐ local
Beneficiaries/target groups VET institutions, end users (learners), employers
☐ (List to be provided)
Responsible ministries/bodies

Ministry of Education and Science

National Centre for Education (VISC)

State Education Quality Service (IKVD)

Source of funding (National, EU funds, sectoral)
List all sources of funding and estimated amounts, if available. **National, EU funds**

3. Detailed description of main measures and/or their packages ([10])
Title
Inclusion policies in education as a means to reduce the risk of dropping out and as a support measure to targeted groups in need of support

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[10] A package (of measures) is a coherent set of measures that address a particular challenge, one or several priorities and principles of the VET recommendation and/or objectives of the Osnabrück Declaration.

Rationale/background, challenges addressed

Alongside with excellence in VET also inclusion is a high level priority in VET in Latvia. It allows for the maximum realisation of every individuals potential. In VET - due to various social and economic reasons - drop-out of students presents a challenge. In order to **reduce the number of learners who drop out of school and prevent the risks of dropping out**, a specific project is being implemented with the support of the European Social fund. The project promotes the development of a system of sustainable cooperation between a municipality, educational institutions, teachers, support staff and parents or representatives of learners to identify learners who are at risk of dropping out in due time and provide them with personalised support.

In the context of the recent war crises in Ukraine, it is also important to test and develop systemic approaches to address the inclusion issues with regard to asylum seekers and refugees (which formerly was not a challenge for the education system in Latvia).

Specific objectives of the measure/package and their relation to the general objectives of the plan

To equip the teaching and administrative staff of VET institutions with relevant competence in work with groups at risk of exclusion and render support to VET learners at risk of dropping-out

To test and introduce approaches for inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees as part of the VET provision

Description of main actions and activities comprising the measure/package, including implementation milestones and indicative timeline

1. The State Education Quality Service (IKVD) implements the European Social Fund Project No 8.3.4.0/16/I/001 '**Support for the Reduction of Early School Leaving**' to reduce the number of learners who drop out of school. More than 95% of municipalities are involved in the implementation of the project, covering 584 general and vocational education institutions.

Each municipality and public vocational education institution can become a cooperation partner of the project. Municipalities and vocational education institutions can get involved throughout the whole project implementation period. Educational institutions within a municipality can also get involved gradually, if it is not possible to involve all of them simultaneously.

The project promotes the development of a system of sustainable cooperation between a municipality, educational institutions, teachers, support staff and parents or representatives of learners to identify learners who are at risk of dropping out in due time and provide them with personalised support.

Teachers are provided with the opportunity of professional development to improve their skills to work with learners. Methodological tools have been developed within the framework of the project. A database has been created which ensures the regular exchange of information at national, local and institutional level regarding learners who have been identified with the risk of early school leaving, the preventive measures taken and their results. It provides complete statistics, as well as allows for long-term evaluation of the effectiveness of measures.

The project also supports youth NGO initiatives to raise the issue of early school leaving among young people, to address learners through their peers and to engage them in activities. The activities focus on early problem diagnosis and solutions.

Individual support is provided to learners who may drop out due to lack of finances covering their travel costs, meals, accommodation, etc. However, the focus of the project is not the temporary financial support but the design of a sustainable, comprehensive mechanism that creates a supportive and inclusive environment for every learner.

Based on the results and findings within the project systemic approaches are being considered to address the issue of (potential) dropping out and remedial measures to it.

2. Systemic approaches are being tested and introduced to support the asylum seekers due to the war in Ukraine. Based on the legislation issued specifically for the purpose, support is being rendered for the integration of the refugees and asylum seekers into the education system, with adaptation of the existing procedures. In addition, the recognition procedures are being tested and adapted to the specific needs of the target group. Due to the uncertainty of the situation, further adjustments may be needed by the system, also in relation to awarding of qualifications and labour market integration related issues.

EU policy priorities addressed

Council Recommendation on VET	Osnabrück Declaration
☐ A. VET is agile in adapting to labour market challenges. ☒ B. Flexibility and progression opportunities are at the core of VET. ☐ C. VET is a driver for innovation and growth and prepares for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand. ☐ D. VET is an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training/skills. ☒ E. VET promotes equality of opportunities.	☒ 1. Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET. ☐ 2. Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of CVET and digitalisation. ☐ 3. Sustainability – a green link in VET. ☒ 4. European Education and Training Area and international VET.

☐ F. VET is underpinned by a culture of quality assurance.	
VET subsystem (IVET, CVET, or both)	
☒ initial VET (IVET)	
☐ continuing VET (CVET)	
Scope (national, regional, local)	
☒ national	
☒ regional	
☒ local	
Beneficiaries/target groups	
☐ (List to be provided) VET institutions, end users (learners)	
Responsible ministries/bodies	
Ministry of Education and Science State Quality Assurance Service (IKVD)	
Source of funding (National, EU funds, sectoral)	
List all sources of funding and estimated amounts, if available. **National, EU funds**	

3. Detailed description of main measures and/or their packages (¹¹)

Title

Promoting green skills and digitalisation

Rationale/background, challenges addressed

In Latvia there is no specific program in VET to address green transition and digitalisation, since these are **horizontal priorities across most education and training developments at all types and levels of education, according to the GDE 2021-2027**.
At the same time, work has been done to address these issues already for several years. In accordance with the COUNCIL OF EUROPE RECOMMENDATION of 22 May 2018 on **key competences for lifelong learning**, these competences are included in VET content as **a**

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¹¹ A package (of measures) is a coherent set of measures that address a particular challenge, one or several priorities and principles of the VET recommendation and/or objectives of the Osnabrück Declaration.

distinct module 'Green skills'. It was developed already in 2012 and proposed for the implementation by VET institutions. It was further tested and subsequently **updated in 2020**. From 2020 its **content is compulsory** in vocational secondary education and in VET programs.

Digital competence is included **in all occupational/ professional standards starting from 2017 and onwards**, based on 'A Common European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens with eight levels of proficiency'

However, Digitalisation is still a major challenge in Latvia. Against the background of other European countries, Latvia stands out as a country whose population lacks digital and technological skills. According to the values of the DESI index (Digital Economy and Society Index), in 2020 Latvia lags behind the EU average, and in the context of digital development, the lowest indicators are in the segment of human capital and digital technology integration. In February 2021, the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia published a study entitled "Adult Digital, Technological and Language Skills: Opportunities and Challenges for Their Development in Latvia". The aim of the study was to describe the possibilities to promote the participation of Latvians in the 40-45 age group in education and to develop the digital, technological and language skills required in the labour market. The findings of the study need to be analysed and used for improved policy making regarding the formation of digital skills.

At the same time a major breakthrough regarding digital performance by various target groups might be reached through the application of the funds made available within the **Resilience and Recovery Facility**, since targeted systemic improvements regarding digitalisation and digital skills development have been envisaged in this context. The Facility envisages to:

- Make better use of technology: Quality learning content, user-friendly tools and secure platforms that respect privacy and ethical standards; Optimal technological capacity of schools - infrastructure, connectivity, digital equipment; 100% of teachers use digital technologies in the teaching process
- Improve data analysis and forecasting: Effective planning and strengthening of digital capabilities; 95% of schools use learning analytics solutions to monitor students' individual growth; Public and private services based on educational data are used by> 90% of participants in the education system (enrollment in educational institutions, electronic circulation of educational documents at all levels, adult education offer, etc.)

Specific objectives of the measure/package and their relation to the general objectives of the plan

To ensure a comprehensive approach in VET compliance with the latest global developments and challenges

Through the Resilience and Recovery Facility it is planned to:

- Make better use of technology: quality learning content, user-friendly tools and secure platforms that respect privacy and ethical standards; optimal technological capacity of schools - infrastructure, connectivity, digital equipment; 100% of teachers use digital technologies in the teaching process.
- Improve data analysis and forecasting: Effective planning and strengthening of digital capabilities; 95% of schools use learning analytics solutions to monitor students' individual growth; Public and private services based on educational data are used by> 90% of participants in the education system (enrollment in educational institutions, electronic circulation of educational documents at all levels, adult education offer, etc.).

Description of main actions and activities comprising the measure/package, including implementation milestones and indicative timeline

1. In VET curriculum green transition and digitalisation is part of the curriculum. It includes green core modules and sector or occupation-specific courses. A continuous update is being envisaged to comply with the latest developments. Greening in also part of the national skills strategies, as well as regional or sectoral strategies, including the promotion of the concept of VET excellence.

2. At institutional level – all VET institutions' development and investment strategies 2021-2027 address the issue of green transition and digitalisation. Monitoring the progress of these developments is on the agenda for the coming years.

3. A continuous support is being rendered to the teaching and administrative staff for work in digital environment and with digital platforms.

4. An additional training is being provided for the staff working with simulation devices and equipment – to improve their digital competence.

5. The e-version of the SQF is in the development process – to ensure a user friendly format for all stakeholders. Preparatory work is in progress for the introduction of e-diaries for training praxis and WBL to optimise the process and procedures.

6. More specific and targeted measures have been initiated regarding digital competences in adult education. In relation to the development and approbation of the concept of individual learning accounts (ILA) and in order to stimulate the participation of adults in education, especially in the acquisition of digital skills, it is being planned to make the world's best digital learning tools available through

specialized high-quality machine translation and other AI solutions, involving educational experts in the validation and adaptation of localized content.

According to the DESI index (2020), **only 43% of the population in Latvia have basic digital skills** (EU average - 68%), but 24% of the population have higher skills (EU average - 33%). Significant challenges for Latvia are related to the insufficient digital skills of the population at all levels, as well as the relatively low level of digitalisation of companies.

Therefore, **the approbation of the approach is initially planned specifically for the acquisition of digital skills**, covering both basic skills and developing a high-level digital skills approach, as well as developing the digital capabilities of companies by investing in improving the digital skills of employees.

In line with DigComp 2.2, the Digital Competence Framework for Citizens, which provides a common understanding of what digital competences are and provides a framework for developing digital skills policies through an eight-level and five competences approach, within the ILA a common framework for the assessment of digital skills, the identification and planning of learning needs will be established and legitimized. Great attention will also be paid to expanding the supply of widely available online learning courses and self-study materials in digital format, by creating an appropriate technological environment for this purpose and by implementing measures to promote such learning in the context of developing a common skills management and leadership approach.

Also, as a result of the investment, the Latvianization of materials of open access learning platforms or Massive Open Online Courses (hereinafter MOOC) up to 178 programs / modules will be provided. MOOC is a topical direction of e-learning that offers the opportunity to obtain (non-formal) education outside the existing framework of educational institutions, regardless of the person's geographical location, without the need to meet any formal entry / registration requirements.

Based on the defined quality criteria in platforms such as Coursera, edX, FutureLearn, Udemy, it is planned to select the appropriate courses in the digital field (eg data analysis, graphic design, programming, IT project management, etc.). The Latvianization of these selected courses will provide an opportunity to access the training for an almost unlimited number of participants at the same time, as well as to review and use the training materials even after completing the course. At the end of the course, participants will receive a certificate.

EU policy priorities addressed

Council Recommendation on VET	Osnabrück Declaration
☒ A. VET is agile in adapting to labour market challenges. ☐ B. Flexibility and progression opportunities are at the core of VET. ☒ C. VET is a driver for innovation and growth and prepares for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand. ☐ D. VET is an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training/skills. ☐ E. VET promotes equality of opportunities. ☐ F. VET is underpinned by a culture of quality assurance.	☐ 1. Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET. ☒ 2. Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of CVET and digitalisation. ☐ 3. Sustainability – a green link in VET. ☐ 4. European Education and Training Area and international VET.
VET subsystem (IVET, CVET, or both)	
☒ initial VET (IVET) ☒ continuing VET (CVET)	
Scope (national, regional, local)	
☒ national ☒ regional ☒ local	
Beneficiaries/target groups	
☐ (List to be provided) VET institutions, end users (learners), local community, employers	
Responsible ministries/bodies	
Source of funding (National, EU funds, sectoral)	
List all sources of funding and estimated amounts, if available. **National, EU funds**	

3. Detailed description of main measures and/or their packages ([12])

One table to be developed for each measure that forms the core of the plan

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[12] A package (of measures) is a coherent set of measures that address a particular challenge, one or several priorities and principles of the VET recommendation and/or objectives of the Osnabrück Declaration.

Title
Internationalisation of VET, transnational and Baltic collaboration
Rationale/background, challenges addressed
VET may be competitive provided exchange of best practice and peer learning takes place, including mobilities of teachers and learners and targeted transnational collaboration projects are being implemented.
Specific objectives of the measure/package and their relation to the general objectives of the plan
At institutional level - VET institutions' strategies 2021-2027 need to address the issue of internationalisation in a contemporary understanding, not limiting the concept to mere mobilities of teacher sand learners. Internationalisation has to be related to the overall competitiveness of the VET institution – not only regionally and nationally, but also internationally. At national level – new approaches need to be piloted and implemented (mainstreamed) as to improved internationalisation approaches. This refers to the development of new type of international partnerships, e.g. in relation to platforms of VET excellence, preconditions for increased and improved exchanges and application of transparency tools for recognition. Particular emphasis needs to be laid on Baltic collaboration, especially in the context of the Baltic Alliance for apprenticeships (BAfA). Internationalisation needs to go beyond collaboration within EU. Multilateral agreements (memoranda, e.g. Berlin Memorandum of 2012, the Baltic Alliance for Apprenticeships of 2015) and bilateral agreements with other EU countries (e.g. Germany and Switzerland) on joint VET developments are contributing to the competitiveness of the Latvian VET system. Latvian expertise in VET needs to be promoted to other countries in the EU and beyond, e.g. the Central Asia Platform and the Eastern Partnership. Additional efforts need to be put on the export of VET, similarly to more developed HE export. The benefits arising from bi-lateral and multilateral agreements (memoranda) with other countries need to be used to a full extent.
Description of main actions and activities comprising the measure/package, including implementation milestones and indicative timeline
1. Monitoring of the VET institutions' strategies as to the implementation of internationalisation.

2. Analysis of the implementation of the existing pilot activities and initiatives regarding internationalisation - for proposed mainstreaming of certain developments

3. Continued collaboration in the context of bilateral and multilateral collaboration.

4. Support to new initiatives in relation to the internationalisation in VET.

These activities need to be performed based on the piloted approaches within EU funded collaboration projects in VET and WBL (approaches tested **relevant at system level**):

- Individual Approach and Individual Learning Plan in WBL: Training for WBL Tutors (ILP4WBL), http://qualityplacements.eu/open-education-resources-for-ilp/ (Latvia, Lithuania, Finland)
- Skills for the Baltic Wood industry – European Quality in Vocational Education and Training, https://www.skilled-up.eu/ - co-ordinated by the German – Baltic Chamber of Commerce (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Germany)
- Industry 4.0 CHAlleNGE: Empowering Metalworkers for Smart Factories of the Future (Baltic associations of metalworks, VET institutions – working with smart technologies, joint upgraded standards, assessment tools), https://www.masoc.lv/en/projects/industry-40-challenge-empowering-metalworkers-for-smart-factories-of-the-future-4change
- FinLat-Logic - Aligning work-based learning curricula in VET programmes of logistics through cross-border WBL in Latvia and Finland, https://www.visc.gov.lv/lv/projekts/projekts-finlat-logic
- 3LoE-3LoE - Three-level Centers of Professional Excellence: Qualification, Entrepreneurship and Innovation in the Green Economy, (partners from LV, LT, PL, DD, AT, IT, ES) https://3-loe.eu
- Dig4VET: Digital Tools for Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Validation in VET and WBL, (partners from LV, LT, FI, PT and CZ) https://qualityplacements.eu/wbl-projects/about-dig4vet/ - ongoing

In particular the recently started project - **Platform of Vocational Excellence Water Scale-up.**

PoVE Water Scale-up is a joint initiative of 8 VET schools, 7 Water industry professionals, 4 academic partners and 3 support partners in Europe (NL, DE,MT, CZ,LV, EE, BE) and beyond (SA) to educate our VET students to become agile, digitally skilled and sustainable oriented water sectorprofessionals that our future desperately needs. **The aim of the project** is to integrate Vocational Excellence in the Water sector, thus ensuring high quality skills and competences that lead to quality jobs and careers, meeting the needs of an innovative, inclusive and sustainable economy. Objectives and activities are:

- Expand the holistic approach to Vocational Excellence in the EU Water sector by securing a central role of VET in the regional Innovation

- Ecosystems and further developing strong and enduring relationships between VET, research & the water industry.
- To expand PoVE Water geographically in a sustainable way (environmentally and economically) in line with the EU Green deal by setting up and interlinking CoVE Water networks that operate on interregional level.
- Drive innovation in water related VET on a regional and EU level by developing contemporary (Digital, VR) learning materials.
- Ensure that current and future water sector professionals have the key skills & competences demanded by developing blended training programmes.
- Increasing student's, teacher's and professional's competence for international mobilities by organising international mobilities as common practise in Water related VET.
- Building EU and global recognition for PoVE Water as a worldwide point of reference for VET in the water sector.
- Future proof the workforce for the Water sector and avoid a brain- & skills drain by securing current and increasing future students in water related studies.

EU policy priorities addressed

Council Recommendation on VET	Osnabrück Declaration
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VET subsystem (IVET, CVET, or both)	
☒ initial VET (IVET) ☒ continuing VET (CVET)	
Scope (national, regional, local)	
☒ national ☒ regional ☐ local	
Beneficiaries/target groups	

☐ (List to be provided) VET institutions, end users (learners)
Responsible ministries/bodies
Ministry of Education and Science
National Centre for Education
Source of funding (National, EU funds, sectoral)
List all sources of funding and estimated amounts, if available. **National, EU funds, sectoral**

4. Governance of the implementation of the plan
This section describes how the NIP will be implemented.
The participating countries should:
(i)   provide a summary of the stakeholder involvement, optionally supported by a diagram, explaining their roles and responsibilities contributing to the successful implementation of the plan , more specifically but not exclusively:
• authorities – national, regional and/or local – involved;
• social partners;
• VET providers, representatives of VET learners;
• partnerships involving relevant stakeholders, including at regional and sectoral level or international partners, engaged or created for the purpose.
(ii)   indicate how you will organise monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the NIPs in cooperation with Cedefop's ReferNet and your country' s DGVT representatives and in line with the national context and the above described governance arrangements.
VET governance in Latvia is being implemented through **social dialogue** and **inter-institutions' consultation procedures**. The social partners are the Employers Confederation of Latvia (LDDK) and the Free Trade Union Association (LBAS). There are also several **formalised institutional mechanisms** put in place to guide the relevant policies:

a) at ministerial level - with the aim **to improve coordination between education and employment policies** both for initial and continuing vocational education, and support the involvement of employers in education development and delivery, in July 2016, the Minister of Economy, the Minister for Education and Science, and the Minister for Welfare established the Employment Council – the ministers meeting regularly, usually at monthly basis; parallel to this, **consultations with other ministries** (e.g. culture, agriculture, health, interior issues is being implemented on day-to-day basis)

b) The **Tripartite Sub-Council for Co-operation on VET** (PINTSA) meets on regular basis to discuss **better linkage between education and employment policies** in concrete terms, with a particular emphasis on apprenticeships. PINTSA is an instrument allowing for an immediate reaction for identified problems or challenges, since all the three sides of the dialogue (the representatives of the state (ministries), the employers organisations and the employees organisations) are involved and present, and they are accountable to the Council. Any issue that is raised can be included in the Agenda of the Council meeting, and if necessary, included repeatedly – until the partner agree on a common beneficial solution. Above all – **if the issue has a high level policy context**, the Employment Council discusses it among the three relevant ministers of education, economy and employment, thus allowing for solutions at a high policy level.

c) The sectors are being represented in **Sectoral expert councils (SECs)** - advisory bodies supporting the development of quality VET programmes in line with the needs of the labour market. SECs operate on the basis of **tripartite collaboration.** Their members include representatives from employers' organisations, trade unions, ministries (the education, economics and welfare ministries), as well as other branch ministries, and the State Employment Agency;

d) VET institutions have established advisory bodies – **Conventions** - where the local and regional aspects of VET developments are regularly discussed. In the Conventions the VET institution's administration, local or regional employers, local and national government organisations are represented to better coordinate the local/ regional and national priorities for better education and employment/ labour marker compliance. Information exchange within the Conventions allows for a better informed decision by the VET institution also regarding the offer of VET programs in co-operation with local employers.

Regarding adult education, the main governance body is the **Adult Education Coordination Board** involving multiple stakeholders.

Part of the overall VET governance is related to transnational agreements on collaboration in VET, e.g. among the Baltic countries, bilaterally between Latvia and Germany, Latvia and Switzerland, the Berlin memorandum of six EU countries.

Regarding financial issues - changing the VET and AE financing model is part of the present agenda. The same refers to the improved model for teachers' salaries

5. Expected effects of the plan

The participating countries are invited to assess and explain the expected effects of the implementation of the NIPs in the short-, medium and long-term. Benefits and improvements in relevant socio-economic areas, skills and education and training and on various target groups should be considered.

The participating countries should also indicate potential obstacles/risk factors that can hinder the implementation of the NIP and explain how they foresee to overcome those.

The implementation of the NIP is related to the Action plan of the GDE for the respective period and the overall implementation of GDE for the period till 2027. In short term the GDE Action plan for 2021-2023 is relevant. The Action Plan (2021-2023), as well as the GDE 2021-2027 determines also the performance indicators to be achieved by 2023 and by 2027 respectively. Subsequently further action plans will be developed for the period 2024-2027, taking into consideration the achievements till 2023, as well as identified challenges.

The risks for the implementation of NIP are the same as the ones related to the implementation of GDE and its Action plan(s). Primarily it related to the geopolitical situation which, among other issues, may create also financial and social instability.

Annex 2 – National level reforms and actions defined in the VET Recommendation and the Osnabrück Declaration

VET Recommendation priorities	Detailed VET recommendation priorities	Osnabrück Declaration objectives	Specific national level actions by 2025
A. Vocational education and training is agile in adapting to labour market changes	A.1 VET programmes that offer a balanced mix of vocational including technical skills well aligned to all economic cycles, evolving jobs and working methods and key competences, including solid basic skills, digital, transversal, green and other life skills which provide strong foundations for resilience, lifelong learning, lifelong employability, social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development; A.2 VET curricula, programme offers and qualifications which are regularly updated, building on skills intelligence (i.e. graduate tracking systems, skills anticipation mechanisms, including at sectoral and regional levels); A.3 an appropriate degree of autonomy of VET providers, flexibility, support and funding to adapt their training offer to changing skills needs, green and digital transitions and economic cycles;	1. Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET	1.1. Explore the possibility of setting up a network of voluntary experts and executives, retired or on sabbatical, to support their peers in the fields of VET and apprenticeships as part of the EAfA 1.3 Reinforce work-based learning and apprenticeships by implementing the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships and making use of the on-demand support services, and policy learning initiatives. Strengthen the use of quality and inclusive apprenticeships as a tool to support school/training-to-work transitions of vulnerable groups and to improve citizens' qualification levels. 1.5. Develop national and regional skills intelligence systems including skills anticipation and graduate tracking; enable social partners, decision-makers, stakeholders and providers to adapt and update VET programmes, curricula and guidelines in a timely and effective manner

VET Recommendation priorities	Detailed VET recommendation priorities	Osnabrück Declaration objectives	Specific national level actions by 2025
	A.4 VET programmes at all levels which comprise work-based learning components that are further expanded also in continuing vocational education and training, and complemented by appropriate support and measures to stabilise the offer of apprenticeships and to address specific challenges of small companies to create work-based learning opportunities in different sectors of the economy.	4. European Education and Training Area and international VET	4.4. Promote intercultural knowledge, skills and competences as part of qualification and curricula requirements in VET qualifications in line with the Key Competence Framework
B. Flexibility and progression opportunities are at the core of vocational education and training	B.1 learner centred VET programmes that offer access to face-to-face and digital or blended learning, flexible and modular pathways based on the recognition of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning and open up career and learning progression; continuing vocational training programmes designed to be adaptable to labour market, sectoral or individual up- or reskilling needs; and B.2 VET programmes which are based on modules or units of learning outcomes and validation mechanisms allowing the transfer, recognition and accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes with a view to gaining a qualification, a partial qualification, as relevant in the national context.	2. Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of C-VET and digitalisation	2.1. Develop national skills strategies for quality and inclusive lifelong learning with all relevant national, regional, sectoral stakeholders and social partners. Besides education and training provision, the national skills strategies may include guidance, incentives for improved skills provision by employers, increased participation by employees, validation of prior learning and targeted public approaches for reaching out to inactive and unemployed individuals, NEETs or individuals at risk of unemployment
C. Vocational education and training is a driver for innovation and growth and prepares for the digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand	C.1 integration of VET into economic, industrial and innovation strategies, including those linked to recovery, green and digital transitions; expansion of the training offer fostering the acquisition of entrepreneurial, digital and green skills; C.2 establishment of Centres of Vocational Excellence, which act as catalysts for local business investment, supporting recovery, green and digital transitions, European and regional innovation and smart	1. Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET 3. Sustainability – a green link in VET	1.4. Support Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) and improve permeability between vocational and academic pathways, including work-based learning and enhanced cooperation between VET, HE and research centres, thus establishing quality and effective VET and apprenticeship programmes at EQF level 5 and above 3.1. Create incentives for greening VET programmes, including education and training in green technologies and innovation, in energy efficiency, circular economy, environmental

VET Recommendation priorities	Detailed VET recommendation priorities	Osnabrück Declaration objectives	Specific national level actions by 2025
	specialisation strategies, development of vocational education and training, including at higher qualification levels (EQF levels 5-8), in line with national context and provide innovative services such as clusters and business incubators for start-ups and technology innovation for SMEs, as well as innovative reskilling solutions for workers at risk of redundancy; and C.3 access to state-of-the-art infrastructure, digitalisation strategies in line with national context and environmental and social sustainability in VET programmes and organisational management, thus contributing to the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.		awareness, sustainable use of learning and training material, digitalisation to reduce climate effects 3.2. Define labour-market-relevant skills for the green transition that are to be incorporated in curricula and VET provision, including basic skills across all sectors and occupations and sector-specific skills in cooperation with the social partners 3.3. Define and support opportunities to enable teaching and training staff, managing teams in VET providers and trainers and mentors in companies to act as multipliers and mediators, in view of increasing digitalisation and sustainability within the provision and management of training programmes
D. Vocational education and training is an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training/skills	D.1. permeability between both initial and continuing vocational education and training, general education and higher education; D.2 development of VET at EQF levels 5 to 8; D.3 delivery based on a mix of open, digital and participative learning environments, including learning conducive workplaces supported by state-of-the-art and accessible infrastructure, equipment and technology, and accompanied by versatile pedagogies and tools (e.g. ICT based simulators, virtual and augmented reality); D.4 initial and continuing professional development of VET teachers and trainers to foster technical and digital skills and effective innovative training methods, including teaching in virtual environment, in line with	1. Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET 2. Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of C-VET and digitalisation	1.2. Support the development of digital infrastructure for learning and teaching purposes in VET including artificial intelligence and AR/VR technologies and develop suitable institutional teaching and training arrangements underpinned by adequate infrastructure, especially in remote and rural areas thus ensuring social inclusion 2.2. Develop targeted information measures on the benefits of CVET and ensure user-friendly access to information on IVET and CVET offers at national and regional levels addressing gender and other stereotypes for an equal, fair and diverse society 2.5. Support VET teachers, trainers, guidance counsellors, adult educators and mentors by equipping them with the adequate skills and tools for and through digital technologies; in particular through systematic approaches to, and opportunities for, initial and continuous professional

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	state of the art vocational and digital pedagogy, work with digital learning tools, and in diverse and multicultural environments;		development in both school and work-based settings, as well as distance education and training, enabling them to progress in their careers
	D.5 internationalisation strategies supporting a strategic approach to international cooperation in VET;	4. European Education and Training Area and international VET	4.1. Support and facilitate the mobility of VET and adult learners, including apprentices, for example by developing support structures and providing information on opportunities in host countries
	D.6 Opportunities for learning mobility of vocational learners and staff, including virtual mobility, long-duration mobility and mobility to Partner Countries are in place, facilitated by the use and recognition of units of learning outcomes and of relevant European tools (Memorandum of Understanding and the Learning Agreement); and		4.2. Increase the rate of mobility of VET learners as well as teachers and trainers, while strengthening measures to ensure the quality and recognition of learning outcomes, as well as adequate support structures. Foster longer periods of mobility for VET learners abroad and ensure that apprentice work placements are in line with the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships , taking into account national regulations and collective agreements, including health and safety provisions
	D.7 high quality lifelong learning and career guidance services, making full use of Europass and other digital services.		4.3. Develop VET internationalisation strategies, mobilising partnerships and including commitments for concrete and targeted actions, with all relevant stakeholders in accordance with national or regional regulations
			4.5 Cooperate with other EU countries in preparing national teams for international competitions such as WorldSkills and EuroSkills
E. Vocational education and training promotes equality of opportunities	E.1 inclusive and accessible programmes for vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, low-qualified/skilled persons, minorities, people with migrant background and people with fewer opportunities because of their geographical location and/or their social-economically disadvantaged	1. Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET	1.2. Support the development of digital infrastructure for learning and teaching purposes in VET including artificial intelligence and AR/VR technologies and develop suitable institutional teaching and training arrangements underpinned by adequate infrastructure, especially in remote and rural areas thus ensuring social inclusion

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	situation; targeted measures and flexible training formats prevent early leaving from education and training and support the school-to-work transition; E.2. programmes accessible through digital learning platforms, supported by tools, devices and internet connection, in particular for vulnerable groups and people in rural or remote areas; and E.3 targeted measures promoting gender balance in traditionally "male" or "female" professions and address gender related and other types of stereotypes together.	2. Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of C-VET and digitalisation	2.2. Develop targeted information measures on the benefits of CVET and ensure user-friendly access to information on IVET and CVET offers at national and regional levels addressing gender and other stereotypes for an equal, fair and diverse society
F. Vocational education and training is underpinned by a culture of quality assurance	F.1 further development of national quality assurance systems, for both initial and continuing VET, in all learning environments (such as school-based provision and work-based learning, including apprenticeship schemes) and all learning types (digital, face-to-face or blended), delivered by both public and private providers, underpinned by a set of indicative descriptors and common reference indicators for quality assurance in vocational education and training applied both at system and provider level as defined in Annex II of the Council Recommendation on VET. F.2 Quality Assurance National Reference Point for VET to: take concrete initiatives to implement and further develop the EQAVET Framework, inform and mobilise a wide range of stakeholders, including Centres of Vocational Excellence, to contribute to implementing the EQAVET framework, support self-evaluation as a		

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	complementary and effective means of quality assurance to allow the measurement of success and the identification of areas for improvement, including with respect to digital readiness of VET systems and institutions, participate actively in the European network for quality assurance in vocational education and training, provide an updated description of the national quality assurance arrangements based on the EQAVET Framework, engage in EU level peer reviews of quality assurance to enhance the transparency and consistency of quality assurance arrangements, and to reinforce trust between the Member States;		
Making best use of the European transparency tools		2. Establishing a new lifelong learning culture – relevance of C-VET and digitalisation	2.3. Work with respective stakeholders to develop digital learning solutions supporting access to CVET opportunities and the awarding of CVET credentials and certificates, thereby opening the possibility to obtain full qualifications without neglecting on-the-job CVET and the positive effects of learning conducive work environments

2.4. Support linking national VET platforms or databases to the Europass in accordance with the Europass decision and the EQF Recommendation where appropriate |
| Sustainable partnerships at national, regional and sectoral level, involving all relevant stakeholders | | | |
| Best use of European Union funds and instruments such as the Next Generation EU (Recovery and Resilience Facility, REACT-EU), European Social Fund+, SURE, the European Regional Development Fund, InvestEU, Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, Interreg, Digital Europe, the Just Transition Mechanism and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, and the Modernisation Fund | | | |