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

Self-Assessment Report

Second version

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Self-Assessment Report was prepared by the Academic Information Centre in cooperation with the Lifelong Learning Development Division of the Policy Coordination Department of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia.

Experts involved in the composing the Report and gathering information:

Baiba Ramiņa,	*director of Academic Information Centre*
Dmitrijs Kuļšs,	*deputy director of Policy Coordination Department – head of Lifelong Learning Development Division of the Ministry of Education and Science*
Gunta Kinta,	*Coordinator of NCP and ReferNet projects, Academic Information Centre*
Kristīne Strūberga,	*director of Quality Evaluation Department of State Education Quality Service*
Andra Šenberga,	*deputy head of State Education Quality Service and director of Licensing and Register Department*

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Abbreviations

- ACHEP – Accreditation Commission of Higher Education Programmes
- AIC – Academic Information Centre
- CEEN – Central and Eastern European Networking Association
- CoM – Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia
- CP – credit points
- EAQAN – Euroasian Quality Assurance Network
- ECTS – European Credit Transfer System
- EHEA – European Higher Education Area
- ENQA – European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
- EQANIE – European Quality Assurance Network in Engineering Education
- EQF – European Qualifications Framework
- ESF – European Social Fund
- HEC – Higher Education Council
- HEQEC – Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre
- INQAAHE – International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
- LQF – Latvian Qualifications Framework
- MoES – Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia
- NCP – National Coordination Point
- NQF – National Qualifications Framework
- QF-EHEA – Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area

Introduction

General aim of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) as a common reference system is to promote the development of lifelong learning principle and foster the international mobility of inhabitants. The EQF offers to Latvia an opportunity to describe its education system for the system and qualifications awarded within the system would be better understandable for other countries. Simultaneously, also Latvian inhabitants may understand better the Latvian and other national education systems, including qualifications referenced to the EQF. The referencing of national qualifications to the EQF imparts several **advantages**:

- The implementation of qualifications framework definitely will improve international comparability of the Latvian qualifications. The qualification descriptions including learning outcomes allow comparing qualifications from different countries much better. Present descriptions naming study courses or subjects acquired during the learning frequently are not only insufficient, but also ambiguous – because titles of study subjects differ, subjects of large volume are divided differently into smaller ones in different countries, as well their teaching direction is not clear. The framework also will improve international recognition of Latvian qualifications – both for studies and employability.
- The qualifications framework will help employers to understand better education process and its outcomes. An employer is not really interested how many hours an applicant has learnt each subject, in this case credit points are not the solution. The employer wants to understand in general what level qualification the applicant has, but mostly – what the applicant knows, understands and is able to do. Actually developing qualifications framework corresponds to the needs of employers.
- Learners acquire greater awareness of learning/teaching process if intended learning outcomes are formulated. It helps a learner in both choosing education programme according to their interests and needs and understanding requirements in each study subject; thereby, the learner can plan their learning more successfully.
- The qualifications framework provides wider possibilities to lifelong learning. Formulating learning outcomes for each education programme and for each of its components promotes recognition of prior learning acquired outside formal education system. Meanwhile, formulating learning outcomes for several study subjects or their parts (modules) that are related and have to be acquired simultaneously allows providing these modules not only to learners, but also to adults, who need the relevant knowledge, skills and competence for their professional or personal improvement.

- Qualification level descriptors based on learning outcomes may be and already are used as guidelines for developing education programmes. The education programmes are developed for them to ensure the attainment of general and sectoral learning outcomes. Thereby, the syllabi for the relevant study subjects are developed according to the common aim to achieve intended learning outcomes.

Yet the referencing process may also include some **risks**, which should be taken into account when referencing national qualifications to the EQF:

- The referencing process is arranged in a hasty and unreasoned manner. In order to prevent this risk, the referencing process in Latvia is planned in two steps.
- All stakeholders do not participate in the referencing process. During the referencing process meetings, conferences, as well as both face-to-face and virtual discussions were organized involving representatives from ministries, national and local governments' agencies, social partners including employers' organizations, trade unions and students' organizations.
- The stakeholders and inhabitants do not have a clear understanding on the meaning of the EQF. Engaging the stakeholders in the consultation process raised awareness of the current process, as well as ensured their support to the provided placement of national qualifications in the EQF. Yet informing inhabitants about the EQF should be continued.

As result of referencing process, 8-level Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) was established. The developed level descriptors are based on learning outcomes (see definition in Appendix 1), and formal education qualifications are linked with these levels. The level descriptors were elaborated regarding national education and occupational standards, as well as the EQF level descriptors. The LQF comprises formal higher, vocational and general education sectors. The placement of Latvian formal education qualifications on eight LQF/EQF levels is illustrated in the Table below.

Table 1. The placement of the Latvian formal qualifications in the LQF and EQF

Latvian education documents (qualifications)	LQF and EQF level
Certificate of general basic education, statement of records (for students in special educational programmes for students with severe mental development disorders or several severe development disorders)	1
Certificate of general basic education, statement of records (for students in special educational programmes for students with mental development disorders	2
Certificate of general basic education, statement of records, certificate Certificate of vocational basic education, statement of records	3
Certificate of general secondary education, statement of records, certificate Certificate of vocational education, statement of records Diploma of vocational secondary education, statement of records	4

Diploma of first level professional higher education (1st level professional higher (college) education. The length of full-time studies 2-3 years)	5
Bachelor's diploma Professional Bachelor's diploma Diploma of professional higher education, diploma of higher professional qualification (2nd level professional higher education, the length of full-time studies – at least 4 years)	6
Master's diploma Professional Master's diploma Diploma of professional higher education, diploma of higher education, diploma of higher professional qualification (2nd level professional higher education, the total length of full-time studies – at least 5 years)	7
Doctor's diploma	8

This Self-Assessment Report focuses on the referencing process of the Latvian formal qualifications to the EQF. The introducing part consists of three chapters: first, the aim and developments of referencing process are characterised; second, the education reforms of the European scale that influenced the referencing process are outlined; and, third, the referencing criteria according to which national qualifications are linked to the EQF and the QF-EHEA are listed.

The 1st part of the Report includes description of the Latvian education system, as well as the Latvian professional qualification levels and the meaning of occupational standards in introducing learning outcomes in education are explained. Furthermore, the inclusion of learning outcomes in higher education, and development of recognition system for prior education is described; at the end of this part the quality assurance system in education is outlined. The 2nd part of the Report focuses on the placement of the Latvian qualifications within the LQF/EQF; in the chapter referencing process in Latvia is outlined according to the EQF and Bologna Process criteria, and, finally, further reforms, which will be followed by the 2nd phase of the referencing process, in education are described. The Report has appendices and the list of abbreviations.

1. Aim and Procedure of Self-Assessment

Since Latvia regained its independence 20 years before, the Latvian education system has experienced significant changes. During these last 20 years, a rather simple and easy to understand qualifications system has been developed. **Qualification** in this Report is understood as an outcome of any knowledge and skills acquired, which is formally documented (document certifying obtained formal education is awarded). Definitions of other terms are included in the Appendix 1. The acquisition of qualification or diploma is frequently connected with the acquisition of formal education. This system is easy to administer, and it is regulated by the Education Law (*Izglītības likums*, 1998). Thus, currently there is no need to unite in one institution the administration of all qualifications or diplomas. However, there is a lack of public understanding of the system of qualifications, the concept of qualification and their connection with the labour market. An intensive involvement of social partners in the development of the qualifications system until recently was not a generally accepted practice, which has led to a rather reserved attitude towards the system by the social partners. The foregrounding the issue of qualifications framework, including the consultation process, helped to improve not only the understanding of society and social partners, but also their attitude towards the system. The inclusion of reference to the LQF/EQF levels in all education documents, which in Latvia is planned to be introduced during the 2nd phase of referencing, will raise the public awareness even more about the qualifications and their levels included in the qualifications framework.

Since 1 June 1999, the national legislation[1] clearly defines education as "a process of systematic acquisition of knowledge and skills and development of attitudes, and result thereof", i.e. a kind of learning outcomes has been defined in Latvia already for more than ten years. For example, the state general secondary education standard[2] defines the requirements for each study subject, also defining the necessary competences to be mastered in order to acquire secondary education. However, until now the levels of knowledge, skills and competence were not defined, which promotes the practical application of the education standard according to the principles included in the qualification framework, i.e. clearly defines the outcome of knowledge and skills (outcome), not focusing on study subjects and number of classes (input). Moreover, in higher education the learning outcomes were not

[1] Education Law, Section 1, Para 4

[2] http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=181216

defined in accordance with the basic principles of qualifications framework. The framework, envisaging in the united legal regulation[3] the general outcome descriptors for each qualification level and expressing these as knowledge, skills and competence, is able to ensure that the acquisition of each individual qualification occurs in accordance with the respective learning outcomes descriptors, thus promoting shift towards to learning outcomes based education system.

One of the most important aims of qualifications framework is setting up a united scale of levels for all qualifications (*izglītību apliecinoši dokumenti*), moreover, a scale, which is comparable with the qualifications of other countries via the EQF. It expands the inhabitants' opportunities for mobility not only between countries, but, which is more important, between various institutions and education levels. It is facilitated by a process taking place parallel to the qualifications framework – recognition of knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education, which is based upon a simple principle – all knowledge and skills are valuable, irrespective of the way and form of their acquisition.

The referencing procedure should cover all education stages and forms, all professional qualification levels, including qualifications acquired through validation of professional competence obtained outside formal education, or craftsman qualifications (*Amata meistara diploms*) and journeyman qualifications (*Amata zeļļa diploms*). The elaboration of the national qualifications framework is a labour-, time- and resource-consuming process, which becomes apparent through the examination of the experience of other countries, for example, Ireland and the United Kingdom, where this process has been implemented for approximately a decade. To perform the referencing process and the elaboration of national qualifications in a continuous and meaningful way, it is planned to do in two phases.

Phase I, 2009-2011

The establishment of the LQF; and the referencing of the existing Latvian education system to the EQF for lifelong learning and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).

Phase II, 2013-2015

Review of the Self-Assessment Report, on the basis of the new Vocational Education Law, Higher Education Law and the results of several existing projects, e.g. ESF project "Development of sectoral qualifications system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education" (2010-2013).

[3] http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=184810

This Report describes the present situation in the Latvian formal education and, thus, represents the conclusion of the 1st phase. The Report may be used both for national and international reference when comparing the present formal Latvian qualifications with the qualifications in other national systems. Thus, the main aim of the newly established LQF is to provide an objective reference regarding the level and general learning outcomes of the formal qualifications awarded by the Latvian education institutions. However, education system as result of social and economic demands is subjected to continuous changes. In order to capture the mentioned changes expected in the coming years, this Report will be revised and updated accordingly including other parts of education, e.g. nonformal learning and crafts education. The Report is expected to be reviewed at the end of the 2nd phase. The mentioned revision also includes further referencing of the national qualifications, which have not been placed in the framework during this phase of process, i.e. the LQF will be reviewed and complemented.

The referencing process

In Latvia the referencing process of education system to the EQF and the QF-EHEA started in 2009.

The process consists of the following activities:

1. The establishment of a working group by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES);
2. The establishment of working groups for the elaboration of national education levels descriptors (under the supervision of the working group);
3. Drafting and approving the Cabinet of Ministers (CoM) Regulations;
4. Advisory conference;
5. Elaboration of the Self-Assessment Report;
6. Consultation on the Self-Assessment Report.

On 28 September 2009, MoES set up a working group (see Appendix 2) for linking Latvian qualifications system to the EQF in accordance with the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council (23 April 2008) on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning. This working group mostly performed the tasks of a consulting and supervision, reviewing and approving materials prepared by the experts.

To prepare the descriptors of national education levels, Academic Information Centre (AIC) and the Lifelong Learning Development Division of the Policy Co-ordination Department of MoES attracted specialists from the State Education

Content Centre, who, on the basis of the national education standards, occupational standards and study subjects standards, elaborated the education level descriptors for:

- General secondary education;
- General basic education;
- Vocational basic education;
- Vocational secondary education;
- Vocational education.

To ensure the compliance of level descriptors between various sectors, the foresaid groups of experts cooperated with each other. The materials prepared by the experts were reviewed and approved by the referencing working group.

The Bologna Process working group (see Appendix 3) established by MoES in 2004 also involved actively in developing Bologna cycle descriptors.

In 2009, the working group established by the Latvian Rectors' Council (Appendix 4) prepared the education level descriptors for all Bologna cycle qualifications.

The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the EQF for lifelong learning (April 2008) advises to set appropriate measures so that by 2012 all certificates of qualifications, diplomas and Europass documents issued by the competent authorities, using the qualification systems of the respective country, would clearly indicate a reference to the appropriate EQF level. Thus, amendments to the CoM Regulations of 2 December 2008 No. 990 "Regulations on the classification of Latvian education" were drafted. To the table included in these Regulations outlining the Latvian education stages and the respective programmes a new column was added, referencing each education programme to the appropriate EQF level. The Regulations also contain eight, on learning outcomes based Latvian level descriptors developed in line with the EQF descriptors (therefore, in the Regulations eight levels are called "EQF levels"). In this case, the level descriptors were used to place formal education programmes on a certain level of qualifications framework regarding education and occupational standards that stipulate content and outcomes of education. See Appendix 9.

On 14 February 2011, a national conference was arranged – discussions about the referencing of Latvian system to the EQF, in which 118 representatives from ministries, national agencies, education governing institutions, education establishments, employers' organizations, trade unions, as well as from other institutions related to education participated.

On 27 April 2011, an international conference “The European Qualifications Framework in Latvia” was held, in which the draft of this Report and consultation process results were presented. In total, 140 participants took part in this conference representing organizations or institutions that were involved in the consultation process, as well as other national and foreign organizations related to education sector.

The information on the referencing process and the possibility to express one’s opinion and propose amendments is available via the webpage of the Latvian National Coordination Point (NCP, http://nqf-latvia.lv).

Both conferences and the consultation process on the NCP website helped in communicating the newly developed level descriptors and the referencing activities and results to larger public.

2. European Education System Reforms

The European education system should adjust to the requirements of the knowledge-based society and the necessity to improve the level and quality of employability. Education and employment opportunities should be offered to various target groups – adolescents, unemployed, as well as to those employees, whose skills lag behind the rapid economic changes.

In March 2000, the European Council in Lisbon advanced strategic aims for the EU to strengthen employment, economic reforms and social cohesion as part of the knowledge-based society. The main aim for the next decade: to create a globally competitive and dynamic, knowledge-based economy, which would ensure sustainable economic growth, more and better jobs and increase social cohesion.

The new European strategy "Europe 2020" as one of the tasks for the state sets: to increase the openness and significance of education systems, by elaborating national qualifications systems and ensuring better compliance of the study achievements with the labour market needs[4].

The Bologna Process was launched on 19 June 1999, when the ministers of education of 29 European states signed the Bologna Declaration. Currently the number of state parties to the process has reached 47. The Declaration signed by the ministers envisaged that the establishment of a common EHEA should be completed by 2010, and in 2010 at the Vienna Conference of Ministers it was announced that the Common EHEA has been created, at the same time emphasizing that a lot remained to be done in order to reach all the objectives:

- European higher education system is transparent and reciprocally easy to understand;
- It is organised in three cycles – first (bachelor), second (master) and third (doctor);
- Degrees/diplomas, acquired in one part of the common EHEA, are appropriately recognised in another part of this area – both for continuation of studies and the labour market;
- Graduates are employable in the European labour market;
- Students and teachers alike are able to move freely within the EHEA and are actively using this opportunity.

[4] Communication from the Commission. EUROPE 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Brussels, 3.03.2010

Due to the Bologna Process higher education is no longer isolated from lifelong learning: knowledge and skills acquired outside studies give credit points, which can be included in the total amount of studies needed to acquire a degree/qualification or master a study module. Simultaneously, those acquiring education through lifelong learning are effectively using the opportunity to master separate higher education programme modules, which they need. Thus, European higher education is attractive on a global scale.

One of the objectives set to reach the aims of the Bologna Declaration is:

- to develop NQFs, which are based on the learning outcomes for the education programmes in general and for each study course and are compatible with the QF-EHEA.

Already in 2000, in Lisbon European Council concluded that increased transparency of qualifications should be one of the components in creating a flexible the EQF, founded upon transparency and mutual trust, and which would be a shared system of reference both in the field of education and employment.

Also in the context of the Copenhagen Process, the conclusions of the European Council's and the Member States governmental representatives' meeting on 15 November 2004 regarding the future priorities of enhanced European cooperation in vocational education gave priority to the development of an open and flexible the EQF.

The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council (23.04.2008) on the establishment of the EQF for lifelong learning states that the development and recognition of citizens' knowledge, skills and competence are crucial for the development of individuals, competitiveness, employment and social cohesion in the Community. Such development and recognitions should facilitate transnational mobility for workers and learners and contribute to the meeting of requirements of supply and demand in the European labour market. Access to and participation in lifelong learning, including disadvantaged people, and the use of qualifications should be promoted and improved at national and community level.

Therefore, the objective of this recommendation was to create a shared system of reference, and with its help explain the qualifications in various systems and qualifications levels both with regard to general and vocational education and higher education. This reference system would improve the transparency, comparability, transferability and recognition of inhabitants' qualifications, acquired in accordance with the various practices of different member states. As a principle, it should be possible to reach each qualification level through various education and career paths.

Moreover, the EQF should allow the international sectoral organisations to link their qualification systems with the common European point of reference, thus indicating the link between international sectoral qualifications and national qualification systems. Thus, the Recommendation allows reaching broader aims linked to the promotion of lifelong learning and employment opportunities for employees and learners, increasing mobility and social integration. Transparent quality assurance principles and information exchange, promoting mutual trust, would help to implement this Recommendation.

This Recommendation proposes the following to the member states:

1. To use the EQF as a reference tool to compare the qualification levels of different education systems and to promote both lifelong learning and equal opportunities in the knowledge-based society, as well as the further integration of the European labour market, while respecting the rich diversity of national education systems;
2. Relate their national qualifications systems to the EQF by 2010, in particular by referencing, in a transparent manner, their qualification levels to the levels defined in the EQF, and, where appropriate, by developing NQFs in accordance with national legislation and practice;
3. Adopt measures, as appropriate, so that, by 2012, all new qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications systems, to the appropriate EQF level;
4. Use an approach based on learning outcomes when defining and describing qualifications, and promote the validation of informal and non-formal learning in accordance with the common European principles agreed in the Council conclusions of 28 May 2004, paying particular attention to those citizens most likely to be subject to unemployment or insecure forms of employment, for whom such an approach could help increase participation in lifelong learning and access to the labour market;
5. Promote and apply the principles of quality assurance in education, when relating higher education and vocational education qualifications to the EQF;
6. Designate NCPs linked to the particular structures and requirements of the Member States, in order to support and, in conjunction with other relevant national authorities, guide the relationship between national qualifications systems and the EQF with a view to promoting the quality and transparency of that relationship.

3. Criteria of Referencing Process

The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the EQF (2008) mentioned in the previous chapter invites the Member States to reference qualifications levels within national qualifications systems to the EQF by 2010, this aim is difficult to implement and ambitious. In order to meet this timeline and ensure that the referencing process is designed in such a way that it can be understood and trusted by all stakeholders and institutions in all involved states, the EQF Advisory Group has agreed upon a number of criteria and procedures. The aim of these criteria is to ensure that all information and documents that are put in the public domain are validated by the competent authorities, are relevant and transparent, are comparable and create trust, as well as are understandable to those who are not familiar with Latvia's qualifications and education system. Ten criteria, which implementation in Latvia is outlined in section 11.1, have been set with regard to the quality of the EQF **referencing process**.

1. The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process, including NCP, are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities.
2. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the NQF or qualifications system and the EQF level descriptors.
3. The NQF or qualifications system and its qualifications are based on learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where these exist, to credit systems.
4. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the NQF or qualifications system or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.
5. The national quality assurance system(s) for education refer(s) to the NQF or qualifications system and are consistent with the relevant European principles and guidelines.
6. The referencing process should include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies.
7. The referencing process should involve international experts.
8. The competent national body or bodies should certify the referencing of the NQF or qualifications system with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing and the evidence supporting it should be published by the competent

national bodies, including NCP, and should address separately each of the criteria.

9. The official EQF platform should maintain a public listing of Member States that have confirmed that they have completed the referencing process, including links to completed referencing reports.
10. Following the referencing process, and in line with the timelines set in the Recommendation, all new qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications systems, to the appropriate EQF level.

Similar criteria for the conformity of NQF or qualifications system have been set during the referencing to the QF-EHEA (see 11.2). The foresaid criteria are:

1. The national framework for higher education qualifications and the body or bodies responsible for its development are designated by the national ministry with responsibility for higher education;
2. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications in the national framework and the cycle qualification descriptors of the QF-EHEA;
3. The national framework and its qualifications are demonstrably based on learning outcomes and the qualifications are linked to ECTS or ECTS compatible credits;
4. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national framework are transparent;
5. The national quality assurance system for higher education refer to the national framework of qualifications and are consistent with the Berlin Communiqué and any subsequent communiqué agreed by ministers in the Bologna Process;
6. The national framework and its correspondence to EHEA are shown in all diploma supplements;
7. The responsibility of stakeholders involved in qualifications framework is clearly defined and public.

Procedures for verifying that national frameworks are compatible with the QF-EHEA were stipulated in the Bergen Ministerial Conference Report (2005) and are as follows:

- The competent national body/bodies should certify the compatibility of the national framework with the QF-EHEA;

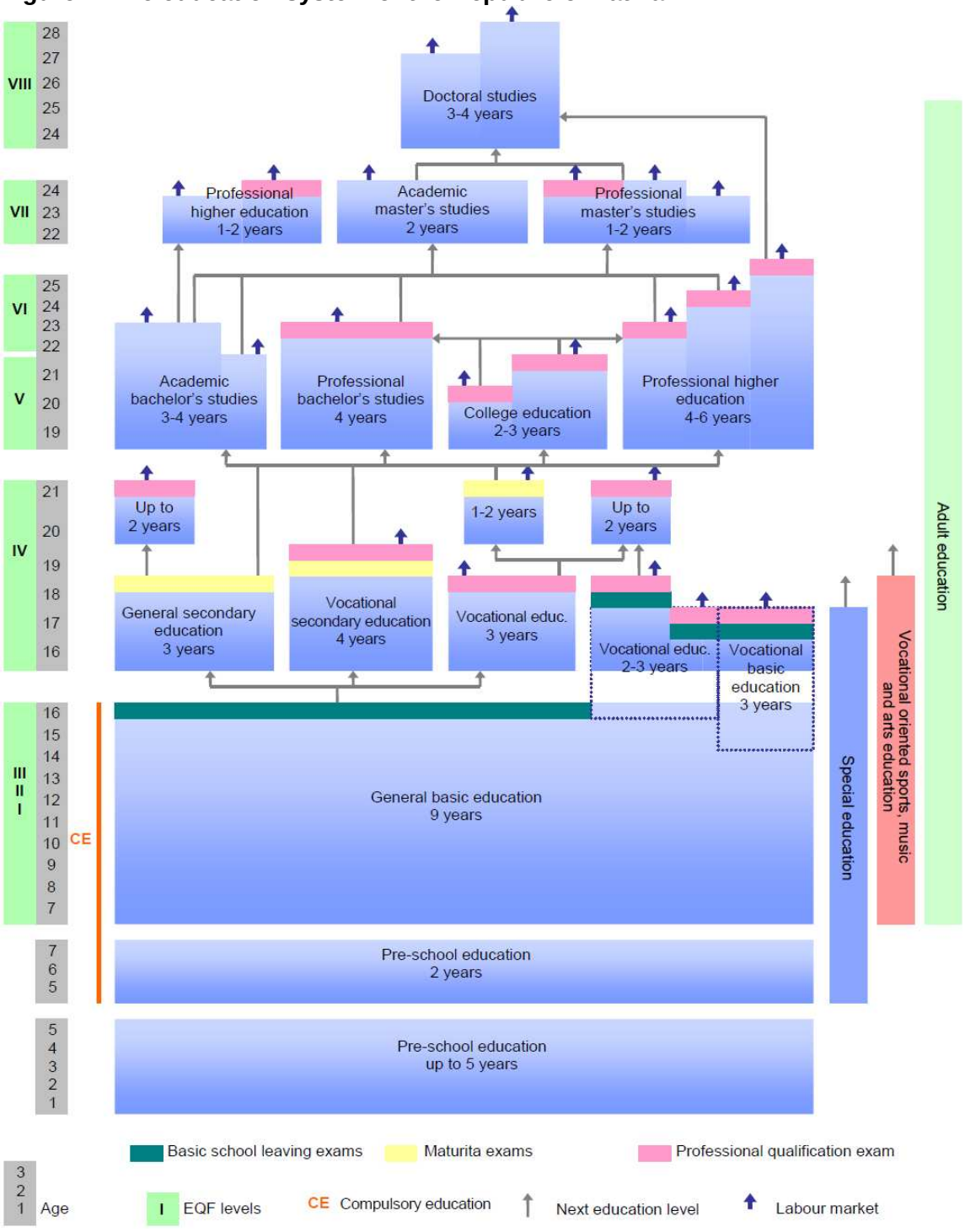
- The self-assessment process should include the stated agreement of the quality assurance bodies in the country in question recognized through the Bologna Process;
- The self- assessment process should involve international experts;
- The self-assessment and the evidence supporting it should be published and should address separately each of the criteria set out;
- The ENIC and NARIC networks should maintain a public listing of States that have confirmed that they have completed the self-certification process;
- After the completion of the self-assessment process, relevant qualification level should be noted in Diploma Supplements issued by showing the link between the national framework and the QF-EHEA.

It should be noted that when discussion referencing in the context of the EQF the process focuses on qualification levels, namely, to which the EQF level national qualification levels correspond. Meanwhile, in the Bologna Process particular higher education qualifications are referenced.

I Part

4. Description of the Latvian Formal Education System

Figure 1. The education system of the Republic of Latvia



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

General education in Latvia in total lasts 12 years consisting of compulsory 9-years basic education and 3-years secondary education. Additionally pre-school education at age of 5-6 is compulsory in Latvia.

Basic education stage comprises general basic education (grades 1-9) and vocational basic education (grades 7-9).

Secondary education stage comprises general secondary education, vocational secondary education and vocational education.

Higher education comprises both academic and professional study programmes.

4.1 Legislation

At present, five laws and CoM regulations and other legal documents passed in accordance with these laws stipulate the education system in Latvia. There are the following laws:

- The Education Law (1991, 1998);
- The Law "On Craftsmanship" (1993);
- The Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995);
- The General Education Law (1998);
- The Vocational Education Law (1999).

As mentioned before, **the Education Law** (*Izglītības likums*) regulates all types and stages of education, defines rights and functions of involved institutions, as well as education types, levels and types of education establishments. The Law "**On Craftsmanship**" (*Likums „Par amatniecību"*) concerns craftsman and journeyman qualifications, which referencing to the EQF will be performed in the 2nd phase of referencing process. **The Law on Higher Education Institutions** (*Augstskolu likums*) states the cooperation between HEI and state institutions to harmonize autonomy of HEI with interests of society and state; regulates legal basis of HEI and colleges, sets and protects the autonomy of HEI. **The General Education Law** (*Vispārējās izglītības likums*) stipulates the organisational and functional principles of general education; regulates rights and obligations of institutions and persons involved in general education. **The Vocational Education Law** (*Profesionālās izglītības likums*) regulates the implementation of all vocational education forms and stages (except first and second level professional higher education; awarding relevant professional qualifications; as well as responsibilities of the involved institutions. The laws also comprise definitions of some terms used in this Report (see Appendix 1).

The Law on Higher Education has been drafted, however, for various reasons it has not been adopted by *Saeima* (the Latvian Parliament) yet. A new version of the Vocational Education Law is also under preparation.

4.2 Grading system

The Education Law (1998) stipulates that basic assessment principles and procedures for obtained education are regulated by the state education standards. The acquisition of professional qualifications is stipulated by the Vocational Education Law (1999) and the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995); the latter regulates also the assessment in the obtained academic higher education. At the end of the acquisition of education in accredited education programmes there are state organised examinations.

Students' assessment is carried out in 10 point scale according to such criteria:

- The volume and quality of obtained knowledge;
- Obtained skills;
- Attitude towards learning;
- Dynamics of learning achievements.

Table 2. 10-point grading scheme for assessment

Achievement level	Grade	Meaning
very high	10	with distinction
	9	excellent
high	8	very good
	7	good
medium	6	almost good
	5	satisfactory
	4	almost satisfactory
low	3-1	unsatisfactory

If in a regular test it is not possible to assess achievements in the 10-point scale, teachers may use "pass" or "fail".

4.3 General education

4.3.1 Pre-school education

All children aged five and six have the possibility to acquire free the mandatory pre-school (*pirmsskola*) education, to prepare for the acquisition of basic education programme, and to develop and improve their social and cooperation skills, stable

self-care and behaviour skills, which facilitates successful child's inclusion into contemporary learning process at school.

In Latvia the pre-school education, similarly as the mandatory basic education, is offered by general education establishments. The basic aim of pre-school education is to promote the general development of a child and their readiness to start the primary school stage in basic education. According to the General Education Law (1999), paragraph No.20[1], the children's preparation from the age of five for starting the acquisition of basic education is mandatory. The pre-school education for children with special needs is implemented at the specialised pre-school educational institutions.

The pre-school does not provide a formal assessment of the acquired knowledge and skills; therefore, it has not been awarded any EQF level.

4.3.2 General basic education (EQF level 1-3)

Children usually start the acquisition of the basic education (*pamatizglītība*) programmes in the year when they turn seven (there is possibility to start from 6) and continues till the age of 16. In special cases the acquisition of basic education lasts till the age of 18. The basic education in Latvia is mandatory; the length of the programme is 9 years. The mandatory content of basic education is defined by the national basic education standard[5], which also includes primary school.

The aim of basic education is to provide opportunities for acquiring the basic knowledge and skills needed in the social and individual life, for guidance with regard to values.

The complete basic education programme is implemented by an education establishment called "basic school" (*pamatskola*). The education programmes for the first four grades may be implemented by a primary school (*sākumskola*). Secondary schools (*vidusskola*) may also implement the complete basic education programme. Likewise, basic education may be implemented by educational institutions called a vocational school (*arodskola*), special education establishment (*speciālās izglītības iestāde*), an evening (shift) school (*vakara (maiņu) skola*), a boarding school (*internātskola*), an education institution or a class of social or pedagogical correction (*sociālā vai pedagoģiskā korekcija*), or another education establishment if it implements complete or parts of basic education programme.

[5] CoM Regulations No.1027 (19.12.2006) "Regulations on the state standard in basic education and in basic education study subjects standards"

In grade 1 of the primary school the knowledge and skills acquired by children are not evaluated with a grade, but descriptively. In grades 2-4 a gradual transition to grading in 10 point scale takes place – in grade 2 grades are given in mathematics, Latvian language, minority language, then in grade 4 – also in natural sciences. Starting with grade 5 the knowledge and skills acquired in all subjects are evaluated using 10 point scale. For the explanations of 10-point scale see Table 2 above.

When finishing basic schools, pupils take centralised examinations, their number and content is set by the MoES. The pupils, who have received a grading in all basic education programme subjects during the year and in the final state examinations, receive a certificate of basic education (*apliecība par pamatizglītību*) and a report card. The grading in the subjects, in which a centralised examination is organised, is attested by a certificate of basic education (*pamatizglītības sertifikāts*). These documents attesting basic education give the right to continue education in any secondary stage education programme.

If a pupil has not received a grading in any of the subjects or state examinations, they are issued a school report. The school report gives the rights to enrol into vocational basic or vocational education programmes.

The Latvian level descriptors in basic education for referencing to the EQF

When developing the EQF level descriptors for basic education in Latvia (see table 3 below), the state basic education standard was used. The standard is defined by CoM Regulations No.1027 (19.12.2006) ”Regulations on the state standard in basic education and in basic education study subjects’ standards” stipulating:

- State standard in basic education – main aims and objectives of basic education programmes, basic education core content, basic principles and procedure of assessing pupils’ acquired basic education;
- Basic education study subjects standards – main aims and objectives of study subjects, core content of study subjects, basic principles regarding acquisition of study subjects, forms and methods of achievement assessment.

EQF levels 1-3 are devoted to basic education stage, because the EQF level 1 refers to special basic education programmes for pupils with severe mental development disorders or several severe development disorders; the EQF level 2 – to special basic education programmes for pupils with mental development disorders. And the EQF level 3 refers to regular general and vocational basic education programmes.

Table 3. Latvian basic education level descriptors for referencing to the EQF[6]

LQF/ EQF level	Knowledge (knowledge and comprehension)	Skills (ability to apply knowledge, communication, general skills)	Competence (analysis, synthesis and assessment)
1	Able to demonstrate elementary knowledge, which manifests itself in recognition and recollection	Able to use elementary practical and cognitive skills, able to execute them under direct supervision using simple tools Able to perform simple tasks, which are repetitive as to their content and predictable	Able to perform tasks in a structured environment, to function in a limited context. Is able to perform elementary tasks, following a model, able to master basic self-care skills
2	Able to demonstrate basic knowledge in concrete subject syllabi	Able to use basic cognitive and practical skills, which are necessary to solve everyday problems by using relevant information, perform tasks and using simple rules and means Able to understand the consequences of one's own actions with regard to self and others	Able to perform tasks individually or in a group under supervision or semi-independently Able to participate in setting some learning objectives and planning the course of action
3	Able to demonstrate the knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts and to use them in the field of studies and professional activities Able to understand various information about materials, technologies in the relevant field of studies or a concrete profession	Able to use various cognitive and practical skills, which are necessary to perform tasks and to solve simple problems, by selecting and using basic methods, means, materials, information and technologies	Able to be aware of and assume responsibility for performing work or study tasks in a permanent and stable environment under the supervision of a specialist in the sector When solving the tasks, is able to adjust one's actions to conditions and to be responsible for the result of work

For more information about the aims and objectives of basic education programmes please see Appendix 5. The placement of basic education programmes on the EQF levels is shown in chapter 10.

4.3.3 General secondary education (EQF level 4)

The mandatory content of general secondary education (*vispārējā vidējā izglītība*) programmes is defined by the state general secondary education standard[7]. The general secondary education programmes have the following thematic directions:

[6] Amendments to CoM Regulations (2.12.2008) No.990 "Regulations on the classification of Latvian education" (5.10.2010)

[7] CoM Regulations No.715 (2.09.2008) "Regulations on the state general secondary education standard and standards of general secondary education study subjects"

- The general education direction, which is established by the group of educational programmes without particularly emphasized study subjects;
- The humanities and social direction, established by the group of educational programmes with particularly emphasized humanities subjects and social science study subjects;
- The mathematics, natural sciences and technology direction, established by the group of educational programmes with particularly emphasized mathematics, natural sciences and technology subjects;
- The vocational direction, established by the group of educational programmes with a particularly emphasized professional orientation (e.g. arts, music, commercial studies, sports).

The educational programmes of all directions contain 8 mandatory subjects with the same name. Each programme direction has additional 3-6 mandatory subjects. The school may offer some more optional subjects, taking up 10-15% of the study time or offer additional in-depth studies of one of the mandatory subjects. A programme of general secondary education of a certain direction may be combined with a minority education programme, including the minority language, study contents linked with the minority identity and integration into Latvian society.

The assessment of general education outcomes and diplomas

At the end of general secondary education, there are four mandatory state centralized examinations. Three of these are set as mandatory by the state; a student has to choose one. The students, who have been graded in all subjects of the general secondary education programme and state examinations, receive a certificate of general secondary education (*atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību*) and a record card. The grading in those subjects, in which a centralised examinations are organised, is attested by the certificate of general secondary education (*vispārējās vidējās izglītības sertifikāts*). These documents attesting the general secondary education give the right to continue education in any educational programmes of a higher stage. If a student has not acquired grading in any of the subjects or state examinations, they are issued a school report.

The Latvian level descriptors in general secondary education for referencing to the EQF

When developing the EQF level descriptors for general secondary education in Latvia (see table 4 below), the state general secondary education standard was used. CoM Regulations (2.09.2008) No.715 ”Regulations on the state general

secondary education standard and standards of general secondary education study subjects" stipulates:

- State general secondary education standard – main aims and objectives of general secondary education programmes, general secondary education core content, basic principles and procedure for assessing students' acquisition of general secondary education;
- Standards of general secondary education study subjects – main aims and objectives of study subjects, core content of study subjects, basic requirements regarding acquisition of study subjects, forms and methods of achievement assessment.

General secondary education programmes refer to the EQF level 4. After successful graduation of these education programmes, graduates have rights to enrol in higher education programmes.

Table 4. The Latvian general secondary education level descriptors for referencing to the EQF[8]

LQF/EQF level	Knowledge (knowledge and comprehension)	Skills (ability to apply knowledge, communication, general skills)	Competence (analysis, synthesis and assessment)
4	Able to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of facts, theories and causalities, which are needed for personal growth and development, civic participation, social integration and continuous education Able to comprehend in detail and demonstrate knowledge of diverse facts, principles, processes and concepts in a specific field of studies or professional activities in standard and non-standard situations Has good knowledge of technologies and methods for performing study or work tasks in the profession	Able to plan and organise work, using various methods, technologies (including information and communication technologies), equipment, tools and materials for performing tasks Able to find, assess and creatively use information for performing study or professional work tasks and problem solving Able to communicate at least in two languages both in writing and orally in a known and unknown context Able to work independently in the profession, to learn and to improve professional qualifications Able to cooperate	Is motivated for further career development, continuous education, life-long learning in a knowledge-oriented democratic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural society in Europe and in the world Able to plan and perform study or work tasks in the profession individually, in a team or by managing the teamwork Able to assume responsibility for the quality and quantity of the outcomes of study or professional activities

For more information about the aims and objectives of general secondary education programmes please see Appendix 6. The placement of secondary education programmes on the EQF levels is shown in chapter 10.

[8] Amendments to CoM Regulations (2.12.2008) No.990 "Regulations on the classification of Latvian education" (5.10.2010)

4.4 Vocational education

Vocational education (*profesionālā izglītība*) provides the opportunity to continue education after graduating from the basic school or secondary school and to acquire the initial professional qualification, as well as to develop abilities for continuing vocational education and to acquire the right to continue education on a higher education level. Vocational education establishments offer educational programmes in all lines of economic activities.

Section 4 of the Vocational Education Law (1999) defines three levels of vocational education:

1. Vocational basic education;
2. Vocational secondary education;
3. Professional higher education (more detailed in the chapter on HE):
   - First level professional higher education (college education);
   - Second level professional higher education.

Good communication skills, knowledge of mathematics, natural and social sciences, the ability to communicate in foreign languages, the skills in using modern information technologies are the requirements of the present labour market; therefore, the education programmes comprise the acquisition of these subjects and skills. Moreover, during the acquisition of vocational education attention is paid to the development of entrepreneurship, awareness of environment protection and inter-cultural issues, and the self-development to help students successfully develop their career and life. In the study process theoretical studies are combined with practical training in the school workshops and labs, in senior years – also in enterprises.

The content of vocational secondary education programme is defined by the state vocational secondary education standard[9] and the relevant occupational standard (*profesijas standarts*). Vocational secondary education programmes are elaborated and implemented in conformity with all lines of economic activities in Latvia.

When graduating vocational education programmes, a professional qualification of a certain level is awarded. According to the Vocational Education Law (1999), there are five professional qualification levels in the Latvian vocational education system. The foresaid **professional qualification levels refer only to vocational education, and they are not automatically referred to the EQF levels**. More about professional qualification levels see chapter 6.

[9] CoM Regulations (27.06.2000) No.211 "Regulations on the state vocational secondary education standard and the state vocational education standard"

4.4.1 Vocational basic education (EQF level 3)

Persons are enrolled in vocational basic education (*profesionālā pamatizglītība*) programmes without restrictions as regards previous education and not before the calendar year, in which the person turns 15. Vocational basic education programmes last 1-2 years. a certificate of vocational basic education (*apliecība par profesionālo pamatizglītību*) indicates that the student has acquired vocational basic education and has obtained Latvian professional qualification level 1 (theoretical and practical readiness, which allows fulfilling simple tasks in a specific sphere of practical activities, for example, a cook's or a carpenter's assistant). Those students without complete basic education before the age of 15 have the possibility to finish general basic education programme parallel to the acquisition of professional qualification.

4.4.2 Vocational education (EQF level 4)

The state vocational education standard[10] stipulates that vocational education (*arodizglītība*) programmes last 3 years for those persons, who have finished basic school. The completion of a vocational educational programme is attested by a certificate of vocational education (*atestāts par arodizglītību*). It attests that the awarded qualification conforms to the Latvian professional qualification level 2 (theoretical and practical readiness, which gives the possibility to perform independently qualified executor work, for example, a carpenter, a hair-dresser, a cook, a seamstress, a welder). General education subjects are integrated into vocational education programmes. Vocational education does not ensure the right to continue education in a HEI, however, to those students, who wish to continue their education, a one-year adjustment course of secondary education is offered, or they have to study additionally at an evening school.

Vocational education programme comprises:

- Theory and practice in the ratio of 35:65;
- Subjects of general education and vocational subjects in the ratio of 60:40.

General study subjects included in the vocational education programmes comprise:

- Language and communication studies 45%;
- Mathematics, natural sciences, technical sciences 33%;
- Social sciences and cultural studies 22%.

[10] CoM Regulations (27.06.2000) No.211 "Regulations on the state vocational secondary education standard and the state vocational education standard"

Vocational education programmes are oriented towards acquisition of necessary knowledge and skills, which give the opportunity to perform independently the work of a qualified executor/worker, require responsibility for one's work, which is performed under instructions, and the ability to work in a group.

4.4.3 Vocational secondary education (EQF level 4)

Pupils, who have completed general or vocational basic education, may be enrolled into the vocational secondary education (*profesionālā vidējā izglītība*) programmes. These programmes last for 4 years following the acquisition of basic education or for 1-2 years following the acquisition of vocational education, or up to 2 years after general secondary education. Upon completion of the programme a diploma of vocational secondary education (*diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību*) is awarded, as well as the Latvian professional qualification level 3 (increased theoretical readiness and professional mastery, which allows performing certain duties of an executor, which comprise the planning and organisation of work, for example, various technicians, car mechanics, modellers, and hospitality service specialists). The diploma gives the right to continue education at a HEI.

The content of educational programmes is defined by the vocational secondary education standard[11] comprising:

- Theory and practice in the ratio of 50:50;
- Subjects if general education and vocational subjects in the ratio of 60:40.

The division of general educational subjects is as follows:

- Languages and communications 45%;
- Mathematics, natural sciences, technologies 33%;
- Social sciences and cultural studies 22%.

The vocational secondary education programmes are oriented towards such level of qualification, which envisages preparedness, allowing the execution of executor's/ workers duties, which include planning and organisation of the work to be done. After acquiring practical work experience, the graduate is able to assume responsibility for the allocation of resources and the work of other executors. General education study subjects are integrated in vocational secondary educational programmes in the amount that gives the rights to the graduates of the programme to study in higher education programmes. Similar to the general secondary education

[11] CoM Regulations (27.06.2000) No.211 "Regulations on the state vocational secondary education standard and the state vocational education standard"

programmes, students at the end of the relevant study courses have to take the state centralized exams in four general study subjects (see section 4.3.3).

4.4.4 Diplomas of vocational education

State recognised vocational education document attests the acquisition of a certain vocational education and professional qualification. State recognised vocational education document is issued to a student, who has mastered an accredited vocational education programme and has passed the final professional qualification examinations and other final examinations stipulated by the state vocational education standard. The following state recognised vocational education documents are issued for completing an accredited vocational education programme:

1. Certificate of vocational basic education (*apliecība par profesionālo pamatizglītību*);
2. Certificate of vocational education (*atestāts par arodizglītību*);
3. Diploma of vocational secondary education (*diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību*).

Information on documents of higher professional education is included in section 4.5.

4.4.5 Latvian level descriptors in vocational education for referencing to the EQF

When developing the EQF level descriptors for vocational education in Latvia (see table 5 below), the state vocational education standards, which are followed by vocational education establishments working out their education programmes, were regarded.

According to CoM Regulations (27.06.2000) No.211 “Regulations on the state vocational secondary education standard and the state vocational education standard”, the vocational education standards define strategic aims and main objectives of vocational secondary and vocational education programmes.

The strategic aims of vocational education are:

- To prepare students for a particular profession, promoting their development as mentally and physically developed, free, responsible and creative personality;
- To promote the acquisition of knowledge and skills, attitudes, which provide students their professional qualification and contribute to their competitiveness in changing social and economic conditions;

- To facilitate student's positive attitude towards peers and the country, promote their self-confidence and ability to take Latvian citizen's duties;
- To create motivation for professional development and continuing education and provide students an opportunity to prepare for further studies in professional higher education.

The specific aims and objectives of vocational secondary and vocational education programmes are defined by each separate education programme regarding relevant professional qualification.

Vocational education at basic and secondary education stage refers to the EQF levels 3-4. As mentioned before, vocational basic education programmes are referred to the EQF level 3. On the EQF level 4 vocational education programmes, which graduates have not rights to enrol in higher education programmes, and vocational secondary education programmes, which graduates have rights to enrol in a HEI, are placed.

Table 5. The Latvian vocational basic, vocational and vocational secondary education level descriptors for referencing to the EQF[12]

LQF/ EQF level	Knowledge (knowledge and comprehension)	Skills (ability to apply knowledge, communication, general skills)	Competence (analysis, synthesis and assessment)
3	Able to demonstrate the knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts and to use them in the field of studies and professional activities Able to understand various information about materials, technologies in the relevant field of studies or a concrete profession	Able to use various cognitive and practical skills, which are necessary to perform tasks and to solve simple problems, by selecting and using basic methods, means, materials, information and technologies	Able to be aware of and assume responsibility for performing work or study tasks in a permanent and stable environment under the supervision of a specialist in the sector When solving the tasks, is able to adjust one's actions to conditions and to be responsible for the result of work
4	Able to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of facts, theories and causalities, which are needed for personal growth and development, civic participation, social integration and continuous education Able to comprehend in detail and demonstrate knowledge of diverse facts, principles, processes and concepts in a specific field	Able to plan and organise work, using various methods, technologies (including information and communication technologies), equipment, tools and materials for performing tasks Able to find, assess and creatively use information for performing study or professional work tasks and problem solving Able to communicate at least	Is motivated for further career development, continuous education, life-long learning in a knowledge-oriented democratic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural society in Europe and in the world Able to plan and perform study or work tasks in the profession individually, in a team or by managing the teamwork

[12] Amendments to CoM Regulations (2.12.2008) No.990 "Regulations on the classification of Latvian education" (5.10.2010)

	of studies or professional activities in standard and non-standard situations Has good knowledge of technologies and methods for performing study or work tasks in the profession	in two languages both in writing and orally in a known and unknown context Able to work independently in the profession, to learn and to improve professional qualifications Able to cooperate	Able to assume responsibility for the quality and quantity of the outcomes of study or professional activities

More information about the aims and objectives of vocational secondary and vocational education programmes is included in Appendix 7. The placement of vocational education qualifications on the EQF levels is shown in chapter 10.

4.5 Higher education

The system of higher education comprises academic higher education (*akadēmiskā augstākā izglītība*) and professional higher education (*profesionālā augstākā izglītība*). There are Bachelor's and Master's degrees in both academic and professional higher education.

4.5.1 Academic higher education (EQF levels 6-7)

The aim of academic higher education is to prepare for independent research activities and to provide theoretical basis for professional activities.

The amount of an **academic bachelor study programme** is 120-160 Latvian credit points (180-240 ECTS credit points), of which:

- Mandatory part is >50 CP (75 ECTS credit points);
- Mandatory electives is >20 CP (30 ECTS credit points);
- Bachelor thesis is >10 CP (15 ECTS credit points);
- And electives.

The length of studies in full-time studies is from six to eight terms.

The amount of an **academic master study programme** is 80 Latvian credits (120 ECTS credit points), of which at least:

- 20 CP (30 ECTS credit points) is the master thesis;
- 30 CP (45 ECTS CP) from the mandatory contents of the programme is devoted to the theoretical insights of the chosen scientific field;
- 15 CP (22.5 ECTS credit points) – to the approbation of the mentioned insights in respect to topical issues.

The academic education programmes are implemented in compliance with the state academic education standard[13].

4.5.2 Professional higher education (EQF levels 5-7)

The objective of professional higher education is to ensure the acquisition of in-depth knowledge in a concrete field, ensuring the graduates' ability to develop or improve systems, products and technologies and to prepare the graduates for creative, research and pedagogical work in this field. The graduates of the first level professional higher education programmes (college education) are awarded with the relevant education document and the Latvian professional qualification level 4 (theoretical and practical background that enables the holder to perform complicated tasks as well as to organise and manage others in their work). When graduating a second level professional higher education programme (university education), graduates are awarded with the relevant diploma and the Latvian professional qualification level 5 (highest specialist qualification which provides for practical performance as well as abilities to plan and perform research and scientific work)[14].

The professional bachelor study programmes ensure the acquisition of professional competence, the amount of these programmes is at least 160 Latvian CP (240 ECTS credit points), which are comprised of:

- Courses of general education >20 CP (30 ECTS credit points);
- Theoretical foundations of the field >36 CP (54 ECTS credit points);
- Professional specialisation >60 CP (90 ECTS credit points);
- Elective courses >6 CP (9 ECTS credit points);
- Practice training >26 CP (39 ECTS credit points);
- State examination, including the graduation thesis >12 CP (18 ECTS CP).

The amount of **professional master study programmes** is at least 40 Latvian CP (60 ECTS credit points), which comprises:

- Recent achievements in the field, theory and practice >7 CP (10.5 ECTS CP);
- Practice training >6 CP (9 ECTS credit points);
- State examination, including the graduation thesis > 20 CP (30 ECTS CP);
- Courses in research, project design, management, psychology and other study courses.

The graduates, who have acquired any type of the Bachelor's degree – either academic or professional, – have the right to enrol into master studies, but those who

[13] CoM Regulations (03.01.2002) No.2 "Regulations on the state academic education standard"

[14] Vocational Education Law (10.06.1999)

have acquired a Master's degree – into doctoral studies. Also the holders of degrees acquired in the professional studies of medicine, dentistry and pharmacy (5 and 6 years) may continue studies in doctoral programmes.

There are also other types of programmes in professional higher education alongside bachelor and master programmes:

- **First level professional higher education (college) study programmes** leading to the Latvian professional qualification level 4. The amount of the programmes is 80-120 CP (120-180 ECTS credit points), and they are basically intended for the acquisition of a profession, but the graduates may continue studies in second level professional higher education programmes.
- **Second level professional higher education programmes** ensure the acquisition of the Latvian professional qualification level 5 upon their completion. These programmes are in the amount of at least 40 CP (60 ECTS credit points) after the acquisition of a Bachelor's degree or at least 160 CP (240 ECTS credit points) after the acquisition of secondary education. In both cases the programme should comprise practice training in the amount of at least 26 CP (39 ECTS credit points) and a state examination (including the graduation thesis) in the amount of at least 10 CP (15 ECTS credit points). If the programme of 240 CP comprises the mandatory part of a bachelor's programme, the graduates acquire the right to enrol in a master programme.

4.5.3 Doctoral studies (EQF level 8)

Since 1 January 2000 only one type of scientific degree is awarded – a Doctor's degree (*doktora grāds*). The pre-condition for enrolment in a doctoral programme is a master level degree. A Doctor's degree is awarded to a person, who has successfully passed the examinations in the chosen field of research and who has elaborated under the guidance of an experienced research advisor and publicly defended a doctoral thesis, which contain the results of original research and new insights in the respective branch of science. The doctoral thesis may be elaborated within the period of 3-4 years within the framework of doctoral studies in a HEI or after carrying out an appropriate amount of independent research. The doctoral thesis can be a dissertation, a set of anonymously reviewed thematically united publications or a monograph. The doctoral degree is awarded by the Doctoral Council. A Doctor's degree is awarded according to the procedure stipulated by Law on Scientific Activity (14.04.2005, last amendments 01.01.2011). The awarding of a Doctor's degree is supervised by the National Commission for Scientific Qualification established by the CoM.

4.5.4 Credentials of higher education

The following documents of higher education attest the academic degree, the first level professional higher education, the second level professional higher education, higher education and the highest professional qualification, as well as the acquired scientific qualification:

- Bachelor's degree (*bakalaura diploms*) and Master's degree (*maģistra diploms*);
- Diploma of first level professional higher education (*pirmā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms*);
- Diploma of professional higher education (*profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms*) or the diploma of higher professional qualification (*augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms*);
- Professional bachelor's diploma (*profesionālā bakalaura diploms*) or the diploma of higher professional qualification (*augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms*);
- Professional master's diploma (*profesionālā maģistra diploms*) or the diploma of higher professional qualification (*augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms*);
- Doctor's degree (*Doktora diploms*).

4.5.5 Enrolment requirements

To be entitled to enrol at HEI/college, secondary education must be acquired. As mentioned before, there are two types of programmes in the secondary education stage – general and vocational secondary educational programmes. Applicants are enrolled at a HEI or a college in accordance the CoM Regulations No.846 "Regulations on demands, criteria and procedure for the enrolment in higher education programmes" (10.10.2006).

Since 2006, the student enrolment contest for bachelor and professional study programmes, in which entrance requirement is secondary education, is based on results of central state exams. These central state exams have to be taken both in general and vocational secondary education programmes; thus, legally graduates of both types of education programmes have access to higher education. These requirements do not refer to persons, who have obtained secondary education before 2004; persons, who have obtained secondary education abroad; or persons with special needs.

Higher educational institutions and colleges, with the approval of the Higher Education Council (HEC), may define also specific enrolment requirements (for example, define, which subjects should be mastered at the secondary school to be able to enrol in the particular HEI/college to acquire the relevant study programme).

4.5.6 Latvian level descriptors in higher education for referencing to the EQF

When developing the level descriptors in higher education (see Table 6 below), the working group established in 2009 by the Latvian Rectors' Council (see Appendix 4) applied:

- Dublin descriptors (2002-2004) developed in terms of the Bologna Process and the cycle descriptors elaborated by the Bologna Process working group set by MoES (see Appendix 3);
- Bloom's taxonomy, i.e. hierarchal system of six knowledge acquisition levels based on ideas of American psychologist Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues (1956);
- The EQF descriptors included in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the EQF for lifelong learning (23.04.2008).

Higher education refers to the EQF levels 5-8. First level professional higher education programmes (college education) are referred to the EQF level 5. On the EQF level 6 academic and professional bachelor study programmes, as well as professional higher education programmes are placed; on the EQF level 7 – academic and professional master study programmes, as well as professional higher education programmes; and on the EQF level 8 – doctor study programmes.

The placement of higher education qualifications on the EQF levels is shown in chapter 10. Higher education cycle descriptors developed according to Dublin descriptors are shown in chapter 7, Table 7.

Table 6. Latvian higher education level descriptors for referencing to the EQF[15]

LQF/ EQF level	Knowledge (knowledge and comprehension)	Skills (ability to apply knowledge, communication, general skills)	Competence (analysis, synthesis and assessment)
5	Able to demonstrate comprehensive and specialised knowledge and understanding of facts, theories, causalities and technologies of the concrete professional field	Able, on the basis of analytical approach, to perform practical tasks in the concrete profession, demonstrate skills, allowing to find creative solutions to professional problems, to discuss and provide arguments regarding practical issues and solutions in the concrete profession with colleagues, clients and management, able to, with an appropriate degree of independence, to engage in further learning, improving one's competences	Able to define, describe and analyse practical problems in one's profession, select the necessary information and use it for solving clearly defined problems, to participate in the development of the concrete professional field, demonstrate understanding of the place of the concrete

[15] Amendments to CoM Regulations (2.12.2008) No.990 "Regulations on the classification of Latvian education" (5.10.2010)

		Able to assess and improve one's own actions and those of other people, to work in co-operation with others, to plan and to organise work to perform concrete tasks in one's profession or to supervise such work activities, in which unpredictable changes are possible	profession in a broader social context
6	Able to demonstrate the basic and specialised knowledge typical of the concrete branch of science or profession and a critical understanding of this knowledge, moreover, a part of this knowledge complies with the highest level of achievement in this branch of science or profession Able to demonstrate understanding of the most important concepts and causalities of the concrete branch of science or professional field	Able, by using the mastered theoretical foundations and skills, perform professional, artistic, innovative or research activity, to define and describe analytically information, problems and solutions in one's own branch of science or profession, to explain them and to provide arguments when discussing these with both specialist and non-specialists Is able to structure independently one's own learning, to guide one's own and one's subordinates further learning and improvement of professional qualification, to demonstrate scientific approach to problem solving, to assume responsibility and take initiative when performing individual work, when working in a team or managing the work of other people, to take decisions and find creative solutions under changing or unclear conditions	Able to obtain, select and analyse information independently and to use it, to take decisions and solve problems in the concrete branch of science or profession, demonstrate understanding of professional ethics, assess the impact of one's professional activities on environment and society and participate in the development of the concrete professional field
7	Able to demonstrate advanced or extensive knowledge and understanding, a part of which conforms to the most recent findings in the concrete branch of science or professional field and which provide the basis for creative thinking or research, *inter alia*, working in the interface of various fields	Able to use independently theory, methods and problem solving skills to perform research or artistic activities, or highly qualified professional functions Able to provide arguments when explaining or discussing complex or systemic aspects of the concrete branch of science or professional field both to specialists and non-specialists Able to guide independently the improvement of one's own competences and specialisation, to assume responsibility for the results of staff and group work and analyse them, to perform business activities, innovations in the concrete branch of science or profession, to perform work, research or further learning under complex or unpredictable conditions, if necessary, change them, using new approaches	Able to define independently and critically analyse complex professional problems, substantiate decisions and, if necessary, carry out additional analysis Able to integrate knowledge of various fields, contribute to the creation of new knowledge, research or the development of new professional working methods, demonstrate understanding and ethical responsibility for the possible impact of the scientific results or professional activity on environment and society

8	Able to demonstrate that has good knowledge of and understands most topical scientific theories and insights, has mastered research methodology and contemporary research methods in the concrete branch of science or professional field and in the interface of various fields	Able to assess and select independently appropriate methods for scientific research, has contributed to the expansion of the limits of knowledge or given new understanding of the existing knowledge, by carrying out an original research of major scope, part of which is on the level of internationally cited publications Able to communicate both orally and in writing about one's own field of scientific activity (one's own branch) with wider research community and the general public Able to improve one's scientific qualification independently, by implementing scientific projects, attaining achievements meeting the international criteria of the branch of science, to manage research or development tasks in companies, institutions and organisations, requiring extensive research knowledge and skills	Able, by performing independent critical analysis, synthesis and assessment, to solve significant research or innovation tasks, to set independently research idea, to plan, structure and manage large-scale scientific projects, including projects in international context

5. Professional Qualification Levels and the Possible Ways of Their Development

The Vocational Education Law (1999) stipulates that there is a system of five professional qualification levels in the Latvian vocational education:

1. Level 1 – theoretical and practical training that prepares students for performing simple tasks in a certain area of practical activity (assistant cook, carpenter etc.);
2. Level 2 – theoretical and practical background that allows the holder to perform qualified work independently (carpenter, hairdresser, cook, welder etc.);
3. Level 3 – advanced theoretical and professional background which enables the holder to fulfil certain tasks, including planning and organising work (various technicians, car mechanics, hotel service specialist etc.);
4. Level 4 – theoretical and practical background that enables the holder to perform complicated tasks as well as to organise and manage others in their work;
5. Level 5 – the highest qualification of a specialist in a field that enables the holder to plan and perform research and scientific work in the field.

Professional qualification levels are reflected in all formal education documents issued in Latvia when awarding professional qualification. As mentioned before, these professional qualification levels refer only to vocational education, and they are not automatically referred to the EQF levels.

The Order of CoM No.629 on the Concept “Raising Attractiveness of Vocational Education and Involvement of Social Partners within Vocational Education Quality Assurance” (16.09.2009) sets out that regarding the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the EQF for lifelong learning, Latvian system of five professional qualification levels should be linked to the framework of eight levels, clearly indicating the conformity of the qualifications levels, paying special attention to the transition period measures and explanations of the differences between the system of qualifications levels currently in force and the EQF level 4.

Therefore, amendments to the CoM Regulations (2.12.2008) No.990 “Regulations on the Classification of Latvian education” were drafted and approved in October 2010 (see Appendix 9). In the Regulations to each education programme relevant EQF level was indicated. Eight level descriptors developed are included in chapter 10, Table 8.

During the consultation process, discussions (both face-to-face and virtually) about the referencing of five Latvian professional qualification levels to the EQF were

organised, involving in them representatives from the Policy Coordination Department, the Vocational and General Education Department of MoES, the State Education Content Centre, the State Education Quality Centre and the State Education Development Agency, as well as other social partners.

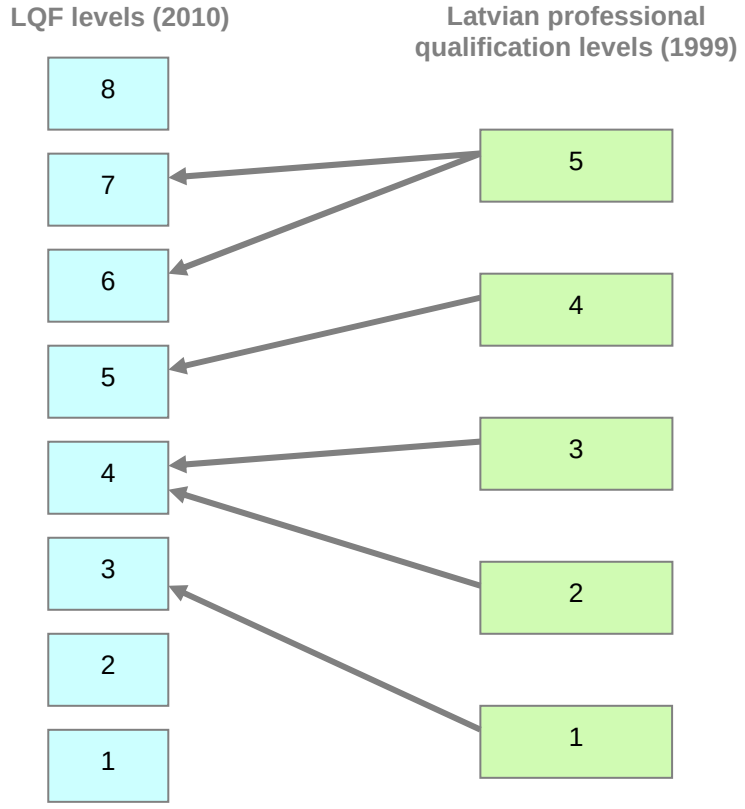
The topic for discussion was the placement vocational education programmes (Latvian professional qualification level 2) – whether on LQF level 3 or 4. The decision was taken that vocational education programmes correspond more to the LQF level 4, because:

- According to the Vocational Education Law (1999), vocational education is part of vocational secondary education (EQF level 4);
- According to vocational education standards, the main difference between vocational education and vocational secondary education programmes is in the number of hours devoted to general subjects – vocational secondary education programmes comprises approximately 500 hours more, since these programmes also include state final centralized exams in general subjects that are necessary for entering in HE programmes;
- According to national experts, education providers tend to elaborate artificial education programmes with complicated titles in order to include a complete secondary education and, thus, the Latvian professional qualification level 3 would be awarded. Although for mastering relevant professional knowledge and skills, complete general secondary education (with state final centralised exams) was not essential.

Thus, placing both vocational secondary education and vocational education programmes on the same level helps to avoid existing disparity and artificially made differences.

However, the most submitted opinions about the referencing of five Latvian professional qualification levels to eight qualifications levels developed in Latvia turned out to be similar to the amendments of October 2010 done in the CoM Regulations (2.12.2008) No. 990 “Regulations on the classification of Latvian education” (see Appendix 9). The figure below shows the placement of five Latvian professional qualification levels on eight LQF levels (and EQF levels).

Figure 2. The placement of five Latvian professional qualification levels[16] on eight LQF levels[17]



As illustrated in figure 2 above, at present five Latvian professional qualification levels impart qualifications only up to professional higher education level, i.e. not including qualifications corresponding to the LQF level 8. When developing the LQF in future, it will be taken into account that both a Doctor's degree and vocational education qualifications, which do not belong to higher education, may be referred to the EQF level 8. Yet currently such vocational education qualifications do not exist in the Latvian education system.

In terms of ESF project "Development of sectoral qualifications system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education" (2010-2013), which is implemented by an institution under MoES – the State Education Development Agency, it is planned to explore professions in 12 sectors and tasks, knowledge, skills and competences relevant to the professional activity of these professions and to elaborate the structure of qualifications grouping the professions related to the sector: basic professions, related professions and specialisations.

As result of this study, the qualifications structure (alias professions involved in basic activity) will be grouped according to five existing Latvian professional

[16] Vocational Education Law (10.06.1999)

[17] Amendments to CoM Regulations (2.12.2008) No.990 "Regulations on the classification of Latvian education" (5.10.2010)

qualification levels; as well as on basis of developed descriptions of knowledge, skills and competence for sectoral professions, these professions will be placed on the relevant EQF levels (*alias* LQF levels) included in Table 2 “Descriptors of knowledge, skills and competence confirming to the EQF level” of Annex 1 to CoM Regulations (2.12.2008) No.990 “Regulations on the classification of Latvian education” (see Appendix 9).

6. Occupational Standards and the Implementation of Learning Outcomes

The Vocational Education Law (1999) states that the content of vocational education is regulated by the following basic documents:

1) The state vocational education standard;
2) The occupational standard;
3) The vocational education programme.

The state vocational education standards set out in the law – the state vocational education standard, the state vocational secondary education standard and the state standard of the first level professional higher education – in conformity with the stage of education define:

- The strategic aims of educational programmes;
- The mandatory content of education;
- The basic principles and procedure for evaluating the acquired education.

The state vocational education standards are elaborated by the MoES and approved by CoM. More detailed information concerning vocational education standards is included in section 4.4.5.

The occupational standards are part of the Profession Classification and define the basic tasks and obligations for the respective professional activities, the basic requirements of professional qualification, and the **general and professional knowledge, skills, attitudes and competences** needed to fulfil them. Currently 466 occupational standards have been approved and are available on the webpage of the State Education Content Centre, section of vocational education (http://visc.gov.lv/saturs/profizgl/stand_registrs.shtml). A sample of an occupational standard approved in 2009 may be seen in Appendix 8.

CoM Regulations (27.02.2007) No.149 “Procedure of developing occupational standards” stipulate that MoES (for professions of the Latvian professional qualification level 4-5, i.e. the EQF levels 5-7) and the State Education Content Centre (for professions of the Latvian professional qualification level 1-3, i.e. the EQF levels 3-4) in cooperation with the National Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment arrange designing and expertise of draft occupational standards engaging also representative from sectoral ministries and professional organizations and providing organizational and methodological support in the development of draft occupational standards.

In order to develop a draft occupational standard, a working group is established, in which representatives from the sectoral or inter-sectoral professional organizations or employers' organizations are included. This working group defines:

- Specific duties and tasks of occupation;
- **Necessary skills** to perform basic tasks of professional activity;
- **Necessary knowledge** to perform basic tasks of professional activity (indicating the level of concept, understanding or application);
- **Necessary professional competence** (necessary skills, knowledge and responsibility in certain working situations) to perform basic tasks of professional activity;
- Place of occupation in sectoral qualification system and description of employability, in which summary of basic tasks in professional activity is provided.

Draft occupational standards may be developed also by trade unions, employers' organizations, sectoral organizations, education establishments and other individuals and institutions.

Vocational education programmes are elaborated by education establishments in line with education, occupational standards as well as with recommendations set by the State Education Content Centre. Thereafter, programmes are evaluated by the Centre and licensed by the State Service for Education Quality. Thus, if an education programme does not reflect relevant knowledge, skills and competences included in the standards, it is not licensed or accredited and education establishment may not issue state recognized education documents. According to the Vocational Education Law (1999), vocational education programmes comprise:

- Objectives of vocational education programme;
- Content of vocational education programme;
- Implementation plan of vocational education programme;
- Requirements regarding previous education;
- Personal, financial and material resources necessary for implementing vocational education programme.

To determine whether students have acquired relevant knowledge, skills and competence during their learning, vocational education programmes are concluded with the state qualification exam. The content of qualification exams is developed according to relevant occupational standards.

Hence, the use of learning outcomes in vocational education may be considered to be quite obvious both at legal and implementation level.

7. Learning Outcomes and Bologna Cycles in Higher Education

Before the Bologna Process was started, the qualifications of higher education were predominantly characterised by the conditions for enrolment, the length of the programme (later – the study work load), the study contents. At the same time almost nothing was said about the learning outcomes, i.e. knowledge, skills and competences. This kind of information did not provide to the employers or the diploma recognition institutions in other countries, to the students themselves or the general public a sufficiently clear insight about the acquired qualification. The developed QF-EHEA characterises each qualification by its level, the intended learning outcomes and the amount of work (credit points) needed for reaching the learning outcomes.

The new Latvian framework for higher education, which belongs to the LQF, is founded upon the three cycles of the Bologna Process – bachelor, master and doctor. The cycle descriptors are based on the learning outcomes, which as the result of programme are expected from the majority of "average" students, not upon the "minimum standards", allowing graduating from the programme with the lowest possible performance, nor upon the maximum standards, which are expected only from a small percentage of the most outstanding students. In the elaboration of the cycle descriptors, so-called Dublin descriptors (2002-2004), Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom, 1956) and the EQF descriptors (CoM Regulations (2.12.2008) No.990 "Regulations on the classification of Latvian education", with amendments 5.10.2010) were used, offering generalised definitions for learning outcomes, which are typical for the qualifications awarded at the completion of each Bologna cycle.

The elaboration of the qualifications framework in Latvian higher education started in 2004, when for each qualification type its place in the Bologna three-cycle structure was defined. MoES established a working group for the fulfilment of this task, involving all major institutions of higher education, this group specified the levels for all types of qualifications in Latvian higher education and their place in the Bologna three-cycle system, defined the general learning outcomes for all types of Latvian qualifications, conditions for enrolment and the further possibilities for all qualification types.

The learning outcomes for Latvian higher education qualifications framework are described in the following sections:

- The profile of competences typical of the respective qualification, the competence objectives to be reached regarding fields of competences;
- Knowledge and understanding;
- Ability to apply knowledge;
- Analysis, synthesis, evaluation;
- Communication;
- General skills;
- Conditions for enrolment and the amount of study work in credit points needed to acquire the qualification.

The developed level descriptions for higher education, which due to the amendments of 5.10.2010 were integrated in CoM Regulations (2.12.2008) No.990 “Regulations on the classification of Latvian education”, correspond to the descriptions of the EQF levels 5-8.

Table 7. The cycle descriptors for higher education

	College qualification (EQF Level 5)	Bachelor (EQF Level 6)	Master (EQF Level7)	Doctor (EQF Level 8)
Characteristics	*The competences conforming with the diploma of the 1st level professional higher education (college) comprise the competences of a secondary education graduate and are acquired through professional studies, which proceed in close contact with the relevant professional field*	*Bachelor's competences comprise the competences of a secondary education graduate and are acquired in a branch through studies based upon the theoretical foundations of the branch of science or professional field*	*Master's competences comprise the bachelor's competences are acquired through science based studies, of which research work and making independent insights and conclusions are an important part*	*Doctor's competences comprise the master's competences*
	In addition to the competences of a secondary school graduate, the holder of the 1st level professional higher education diploma IS ABLE TO:	***In addition to the competences of a secondary school graduate, the holder of a Bachelor's degree IS ABLE TO:***	***In addition to the bachelor's competences the holder of a Master's degree IS ABLE TO:***	***In addition to the master's competences the holder of a Doctor's degree IS ABLE TO:***
Knowledge and understanding	demonstrate comprehensive and specialised knowledge and understanding of facts, theories, causalities and technologies of the concrete professional field	• demonstrate the basic and specialised knowledge typical of the concrete branch of science or profession and a critical understanding of this knowledge, moreover, a part of this knowledge complies with the highest level of achievement in this branch of science or profession • demonstrate understanding of the most important concepts and causalities of the concrete branch of science or professional field	demonstrate advanced or extensive knowledge and understanding, a part of which conforms with the most recent findings in the concrete branch of science or professional field and which provide the basis for creative thinking or research, inter alia, working in the interface of various fields	demonstrate that has good knowledge of and understands most topical scientific theories and insights, has mastered research methodology and contemporary research methods in the concrete branch of science or professional field and in the interface of various fields

Ability to apply knowledge	• on the basis of analytical approach, to perform practical tasks in the concrete profession • demonstrate skills, allowing to find creative solutions to professional problems	by using the mastered theoretical foundations and skills, perform professional, artistic, innovative or research activity	use independently theory, methods and problem solving skills to perform research or artistic activities, or highly qualified professional functions	assess and select independently appropriate methods for scientific research, has contributed to the expansion of the limits of knowledge or given new understanding of the existing knowledge, by carrying out an original research of major scope, part of which is on the level of internationally cited publications
Analysis, synthesis, evaluation	• discuss and provide arguments regarding practical issues and solutions in the concrete profession • select the necessary information and use it for solving clearly defined problems • participate in the development of the concrete professional field demonstrate understanding of the place of the concrete profession in a broader social context	• obtain, select and analyse information independently and to use it • take decisions and solve problems in the concrete branch of science or profession • demonstrate understanding of professional ethics • assess the environmental and social impact of one's professional activities and participate in the development of the concrete professional field	• define independently and critically analyse complex professional problems, • substantiate decisions and, if necessary, carry out additional analysis • integrate knowledge of various fields • contribute to the creation of new knowledge, research or the development of new professional working methods • demonstrate understanding and ethical responsibility for the possible environmental and social impact of the scientific results or professional activity	• by performing independent critical analysis, synthesis and assessment, to solve significant research or innovation tasks • set independently research idea, to plan, structure and manage large-scale scientific projects, including projects in international context • assume responsibility for the ethical aspects of one's research activities
Communication	discuss and provide arguments regarding practical issues and solutions in the concrete profession with colleagues, clients and management	define and describe analytically information, problems and solutions in one's own branch of science or profession, to explain them and to provide arguments when discussing these with both specialist and non-specialists	provide arguments when explaining or discussing complex or systemic aspects of the concrete branch of science or professional field both to specialists and non-specialists	communicate both orally and in writing about one's own field of scientific activity (one's own branch) with wider research community and the general public

General skills	• with an appropriate degree of independence, to engage in further learning, improving one's competences • assess and improve one's own actions and those of other people • work in co-operation with others • plan and to organise work • perform concrete tasks in one's profession or to supervise such work activities, in which unpredictable changes are possible	• structure independently one's own learning, to guide one's own and one's subordinates further learning and improvement of professional qualification • demonstrate scientific approach to problem solving • assume responsibility and take initiative when performing individual work, when working in a team or managing the work of other people • take decisions and find creative solutions under changing or unclear conditions	• guide independently the improvement of one's own competences and specialisation • assume responsibility for the results of staff and group work and analyse them • perform business activities, innovations in the concrete branch of science or profession • perform work, research or further learning under complex or unpredictable conditions, if necessary, change them, using new approaches	• improve one's scientific qualification independently • implement scientific projects, attaining achievements meeting the international criteria of the branch of science • manage research or development tasks in companies, institutions and organisations, requiring extensive research knowledge and skills
Formal aspects *(Additional information, not part of the descriptor)*				
	• *persons, who have acquired secondary education, are enrolled in programmes of 1st level professional higher education* • *persons, who have acquired the qualifications of the 1st level professional higher education are entitled to continue the studies in a relevant study programme for completing a full study cycle* • *the study programmes leading to the acquisition of the 1st level professional higher education comply with the particular occupational standard and comprise 120-180 ECTS credits*	• *all Bachelor's degree holders have the right to study in the second study cycle* • *persons are enrolled in bachelor programmes only after the acquisition of secondary education* • *bachelor study programmes comprise 180-240 ECTS credits*	• *persons are enrolled in master study programmes after the completion of the first study cycle* • *all Master's degree holders have the right to study in the third study cycle* • *ensuring that the total number of credit points in the studies of the 1st and 2nd cycle is at least 300 ECTS credits, the master study programme may comprise 600120 ECTS credits*	• *persons are enrolled in doctoral study programmes after completing the second study cycle* • *the length of doctoral studies is 3-4 years or 180-240 ECTS credits*

8. Recognition of Prior Learning

In Latvia the recognition of knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education is based upon the principle that knowledge and skills are valuable, irrespectively of the way in which they are acquired. The mechanism of recognition allows the state to confirm this value, by issuing a document of formal education or qualification, thus making a person's knowledge or skills visible.

In 2008 a working group was established at MoES with the aim to reach an agreement regarding the definition, aims and principal scheme of knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education, the practical aim and basic principles for developing the system, as well as to define the approaches, methods, levels affected by the system, responsible institutions, as well as to prepare recommendations on the necessary amendments to the laws and regulations. The working group took into consideration "Methodology for validating prior learning and skills" of 2007, which was elaborated in the framework of MoES National Programme ESF project (2005-2007).

In developing the system the summative approach to the validation of knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education was set as a priority, i.e. a candidate proving their knowledge and skills receives a formal certificate on it. The working group agreed on the main pre-condition for successful introduction of system for validating knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education – the acquired formal education or qualification document should be identical with the document issued by an education institution upon a successful graduation of programme.

The working group discussed the education and qualification document levels, which could be obtained in the terms of validation process of knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education. The following suggestions were evaluated:

1. **General education (basic, secondary, the EQF levels 1-4).** A person may obtain general basic or secondary education by proving that they have the knowledge and skills included in the education standard. Decision was made to postpone the implementation for a definite period of time and to introduce after the introduction of the EQF levels 2-3.
2. **Vocational education (the EQF levels 3-4).** A person may obtain vocational education by proving that they have the knowledge and skills included in the education and occupation standard. Decision was made to ensure the implementation of the process by 1 January 2011 with regard to initial professional qualifications.

3. **Higher education (the EQF levels 5-8).** A person can acquire higher education (or become enrolled into a concrete stage of HE), by proving that they have the knowledge and skills included in the education standard. Decision was taken that the process has been delayed, because the draft Law of Higher Education, which was submitted to the government already in 2006 and defines validation mechanisms of knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education, has not yet been approved by *Saeima*.

Since the beginning of 2010, there have been public discussions about the idea of validating knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education for obtaining a professional qualification, by the initiative of MoES, involving also the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Welfare, the State Education Quality Service, the State Education Content Centre, AIC, the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments, the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, the Employers' Confederation of Latvia, the Latvian Adult Education Association, the Latvian Chamber of Crafts and other institutions.

On 1st July 2010, the Amendments to the Vocational Education Law (1999) came into force establishing the rights of a person to obtain knowledge and skills assessment with the aim of obtaining a vocational qualification document. The Law defines the term "professional competence", which includes the totality of knowledge, skills and responsibility for performing professional activities in a concrete working situation. The Law stipulates that the responsible body for the process is MoES, and delegates to the government to adopt the procedure for assessing the knowledge and skills obtained outside formal education.

On 22 February 2011, CoM Regulations No.146 "Procedure how professional competence obtained outside formal education system is assessed" were approved. These Regulations to a great extent are based on the results of the MoES working group. The Regulations stipulate the procedure how professional competence (except regulated professions) that corresponds to the Latvian professional qualification level 1-3, i.e. the EQF level 3-4, obtained outside formal education is assessed. The institutions assessing professional competence may be accredited education establishments or examination centres, which have been assigned by the State Education Quality Service. The procedure on validating professional competence obtained outside formal education is as follows:

1. Individual's application for assessment of their professional competence;
2. Professional qualification exam;
3. Awarding document certifying a professional qualification.

The validation process of knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education is for a fee; thus, a person can take a conscious decision to participate with the aim to receive a professional qualification document. A person, who wishes that their professional competence is assessed, has to submit relevant application to institution assessing professional competence. The institution assessing professional competence must provide to the candidate consultations free of charge regarding the requirements set in the concrete occupational standard and the procedure of professional qualification exam. Up to the point of deciding to take the exam the procedure is free of charge for the candidate.

In the period of two months after receiving an application for assessment, the institution for assessing the professional competence organises and holds the professional qualification exam in conformity with the procedure of organising professional qualification exam as defined by the legislation.

The applicant, who has successfully passed professional qualification exam (grade no lower than “5 – satisfactory”), is awarded with a state recognized document certifying the Latvian professional qualification of level 1-3 (EQF level 3-4) by the institution for assessing the professional competence in line with procedure stated by laws and regulations.

9. Quality Assurance System in Latvia

9.1 Quality assurance in general education

The aim of the former State Agency for Assessing the Quality of General Education was to secure the inhabitants' rights to acquire qualitative education by organising an unbiased and comprehensive procedure for assessing the quality of general education.

To reach this aim, the functions of the Agency included:

- To introduce a uniform quality assessment system in general education;
- To organise the accreditation of general education establishments and programmes, as well as the certification of heads of the local government founded general basic and secondary education establishments;
- To ensure the preparation of accreditation experts;
- To provide information on the general education quality within the country needed for the analysis of education policy.

Since 2005, a new understanding of quality assessment in general education was introduced in Latvia by creating a uniform quality assessment system for general education in the state[18]. A uniform methodology for quality assessment was used, evaluating seven activities fields of education establishments divided in 20-22 criteria (e.g. correspondence of curricula to legal regulations, quality of teaching and learning, assessment, cooperation with parents, students' learning achievements, various kind of support to students, environment of education establishment etc.) across four levels (very good, good, average, insufficient). At present accreditation is recognised by society and education establishments. The advantage of accreditation is clearly defined requirements (accurate criteria) and way of assessment. Thus, it can be concluded that a definite system for assessing the quality of general education has been in place for at least five years.

In Latvia the accreditation mechanism for general education was introduced in compliance with the Latvian legislation, and the regulations adopted by the European Parliament and Council in 2001 on cooperation in quality assessment in school education, which were elaborated in line with the EU long-term development aims defined by the Lisbon Strategy, as well as the achievements and results of the

[18] CoM Regulations (16.08.2005) No.612 "Procedure how general education establishments and programmes are accredited, as well as heads of the local government founded general basic education and general secondary education establishments are certified" [expired 18.09.2010]

Latvian education system development project “School Assessment Component” implemented in cooperation with the World Bank. Currently this accreditation mechanism is the pre-condition for the state to recognise acquired education and to guarantee that the acquired education is comparable both in Latvia and in Europe.

One of the pre-conditions for ensuring the quality of education is to elaborate qualitative education content. In 1994, the Education Content and Examinations Centre was established, initially its functions covered only the development of educational content, diagnostics and control of education quality. Gradually the functions increased in scope, a united system of state tests was created, and centralised exams were introduced. In 2002, the Education Content and Examination Centre started supervising also issues of teachers’ further education.

9.2 Quality assurance in vocational education

In 1999 MoES delegated the licensing and accreditation of vocational education establishments and programmes to the Vocational Education Centre, which in 2007 was reorganized as the Vocational Education Administration. The Vocational Education Administration was an institution of direct public administration subordinated to MoES. Meanwhile, MoES continued to register vocational schools.

The functions of the Vocational Education Administration were:

- To ensure the functioning, quality and development of vocational basic education, vocational and vocational secondary education in accordance with the procedure set out in legal acts regulating education;
- To ensure the functioning, quality and development of vocational continuing education, the process of improving professional qualifications and professionally orientated education in accordance with the procedure set out in legal acts regulating the sphere of education;
- To take part in the elaboration of the national policy for vocational education.

To fulfil the functions, the Vocational Education Administration in relation to vocational education quality assessment:

- Licensed vocational education programmes, certified the heads of vocational education establishments;
- Organised accreditation of vocational education establishments and examination centres, elaborated regulations and procedures; as well as accredited vocational education programmes;
- Ensured the development and expertise of occupational standards according to the procedure set out in legal acts regulating vocational education;

- Created sample vocational education programmes;
- Assessed the compliance of vocational education programmes with the state vocational secondary education and vocational education standard, as well as occupational standard;
- Submitted proposals for drafting legal acts linked with the development and assessment of vocational education programmes; and linked with the procedure of centralised professional qualification exams at the vocational education establishments and examination centres;
- Organised the elaboration and evaluation of the study and methodological aids needed in vocational education;
- Organised further education and professional improvement for vocational education teachers;
- Developed and maintained data bases to ensure the functioning of the vocational education information systems.

In that period, new legal acts[19] were adopted and gradually the procedure and performance of licensing education programmes and accrediting education establishments, education programmes and examination centres was improved. The methodology for assessing the quality of education programme implementation and the operation quality of education establishments and examination centres was elaborated – the components of assessment criteria. A united methodology was used in quality assessment, evaluating the **quality of education programme implementation** regarding 10 criteria (e.g. correspondence to education and occupational standard, material supply, organization of methodological functions, analysis of students' learning achievements, teachers' professional improvement etc.), the **operational quality of education establishment** according to 20 criteria (e.g. room equipment, education environment, organization of establishment's functions, establishment's documentation, arranging teaching/learning process, system of students' assessment, cooperation with employers, correspondence of resources for arranging professional qualification exams etc.), but the **operational quality of examination centres** regarding 11 criteria (e.g. methodological and material supply, provision of relevant examination commission, environment tidiness and its correspondence to persons with special needs, legal documents regulating centre's activities) across three levels (good, sufficient and insufficient).

[19] CoM Regulations (16.08.2005) No.613 "Procedure how vocational education programmes, education establishments and examination centres are accredited and heads of vocational education establishments are certified" [expired 18.09.2010]

With the changes in the socio-economical and political situation, vocational education establishments improved the content of education programmes and intensively expanded the offer of education programmes, which led to an increase in the activities of education establishments in implementing education programmes and in assessing the quality of their implementation.

To ensure the involvement of social partners in the quality assessment of the activities of education establishments, examination centres, of the vocational education programmes delivery, the accreditation of education establishments, examination centres and licensing education programmes, and organisation of accreditation was implemented in cooperation with MoES and other ministries, the State Education Inspection, the State Centre of Culture Education of the Ministry of Culture, the Vocational Education Centre of the Ministry of Health, Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments, the Employers' Confederation of Latvia, Latvian Chamber of Crafts, industry associations, other state, local government, public and commercial institutions.

Ensuring the access to information for all the stakeholders about the functioning of vocational education system played a significant role in aligning the situation, including information on programme licensing and accreditation and the register of accredited vocational education programmes. Over time accreditation process was improved by simplifying its administration and ensuring resource economy.

The initial accreditation of almost all state and local government founded vocational education establishments was completed, prior in 2009 the Vocational Education Administration was reorganized and its functions were aligned to other state education institutions.

9.3 Quality assessment in general and vocational education since mid-2009

The competence of MoES includes full responsibility for the political aspects and strategy in ensuring the accessibility and quality of education, but several institutions under the Ministry have responsibility for the quality of education. There are quality assurance policy and procedures in the education programmes on all the EQF levels.

Education quality is assured and maintained by:

1. Elaborating education policy and adopting strategic decisions;
2. Developing education content;

3. Registering education establishments;
4. Developing and licensing education programmes;
5. Accrediting education establishments and programmes;
6. Ensuring supervision of education process.

The structural reforms in education continued, and in 2009 the State Education Content Centre and the State Education Quality Service were established as institutions of direct public administration under the supervision of MoES.

The functions of the **State Education Content Centre** in this field are:

- To ensure the elaboration of the study content in general education and supervise its delivery;
- To ensure the development of education content for vocational basic education, vocational education, vocational secondary, continuing vocational education, professional improvement and professionally orientated education in compliance with the state standards;
- To ensure the assessment of students' achievements by state examinations in general education; to ensure development and implementation of a uniform content of vocational education state examinations;
- To coordinate the development of study aids complying with the general and vocational education standards;
- To coordinate the functioning of support system ensuring that learners with special needs acquire education;
- To coordinate and deliver teachers' professional improvement.

The functions of the **State Education Quality Service** in this field are:

- To maintain registers in the field of education (decrees on registering establishments and registration; register of teaching and academic personnel; registers of licensed education programmes, accredited education institutions and programmes; register of research institutions);
- To license education programmes, i.e. conformity assessment of education programmes (except informal, leisure and higher education), granting the right to deliver them, preparing licences;
- To perform privately practicing teachers' accreditation (conformity assessment of the applications submitted by private persons, meetings and decisions of the certificate awarding commission, preparing and register of certificates);
- To organise quality assessment – of education establishments (except pre-school, HEIs and colleges) and education programmes (except pre-school, professional

improvement, professionally orientated education, informal and professional higher education), as well as to ensure the accreditation process of examination centres;

- To perform monitoring of the implementation of accreditation recommendations, and analysis of education establishments' functioning;
- To ensure and coordinate validation of professional competence obtained outside formal education system by conferring the rights to an accredited education establishment or examination centre to validate professional competence obtained outside formal education.

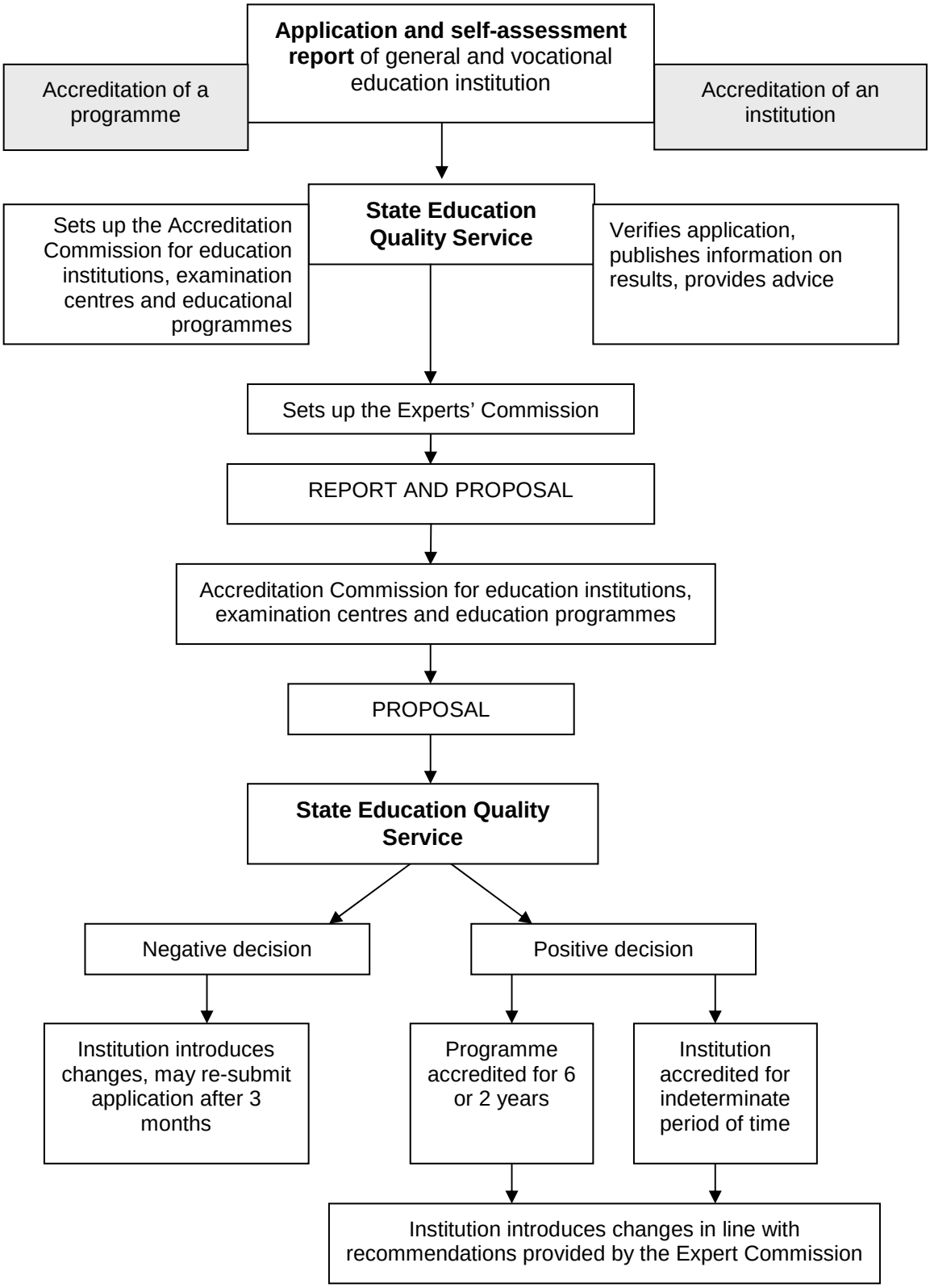
To ensure the improvement of the vocational education quality assessment system, since 2010 the State Education Quality Service has joined the working group of European quality assurance in vocational education and training (EQAVET).

As mentioned above, till 2010 two national education quality assessment systems existed – for general and vocational education, which was an obstacle for forming a comprehensive view on the education quality in Latvia. In order for the state to be able to guarantee not only the existence and accessibility of education system, but also the acquisition of qualitative, comparable education complying with contemporary requirements, to avoid threats of education fragmentation by regions, when education (contents, quality) in one local government significantly differs from the education offer in another local government, a uniform accreditation system for the whole country was developed both in general and vocational education, based upon uniform assessment criteria and united system of self-assessment providing data for the analysis and elaboration of education policy.

On 14 September 2010, new CoM Regulations No.852 "Procedure of accrediting general and vocational education programmes, education establishments and examination centres" were adopted, uniting the accreditation of both general and vocational education. These Regulations stipulate a uniform accreditation procedure (see Figure 3 below) and clearly define quality requirements in general and vocational education, which is for education programmes on the EQF levels 1-4.

A uniform education quality assessment system ensures the use of a uniform quality assessment methodology, assessing seven operational fields of education establishment or examination centre: education content, teaching and learning, students' achievements, support to students, environment at the establishment, resources of establishment, work organization of establishment, management and development planning. The assessment of these fields, dividing them more specifically, is based on 19 criteria for education establishments and 12 criteria for examination centres across four levels (insufficient, sufficient, good and very good).

Figure 3. The accreditation scheme of general and vocational education establishments and programmes



Internal and external assessment is performed during the accreditation process. The internal assessment is performed, by the education establishment preparing its self-assessment report, which is a mandatory precondition for the

accreditation of institutions and programmes. The accreditation procedure in an institution is initiated on the basis of the self-assessment report.

The new system is developed, promoting the self-assessment of institutions as a method for improving the study work and the institutions within a balanced system of self- and external assessment. The external assessment is developed to ensure methodological support to the self-assessment of educational institutions and to give external view concerning work of education establishment through performing continuous improvement and supervising the process for it would not comprise only administrative check-ups.

Accreditation of education establishments and programmes, which is an important element educational environment development and self-improvement, is based upon the report provided by the expert commission and its recommendations to the accreditation commission on granting or denying accreditation. The expert commission consists of representatives from various institutions. It is arranged by the State Education Quality Service and it is independent from the particular education establishment. Representatives of MoES, the State Education Content Centre or the State Education Quality Service; education specialists of local governments; representatives of other institutions including representatives of other ministries, local governments, non-governmental organisations, employers, craftsmen and trade unions; as well as representatives from education establishments, except from those from the establishment undergoing accreditation, can be included in expert commission.

Since in vocational education the process of education in each education programme is focused on the acquisition of concrete professional qualification, in order to perform quality assessment in qualitative way, the vocational education accreditation expert commissions always include the representatives of the respective supervising institutions, as well as sectoral associations, societies, employers' representatives delegated by the Latvian Chamber of Crafts, ensuring their regular and mandatory participation.

Before going to an education establishment, the accreditation experts evaluate the institution's self-assessment report. The accreditation experts work at the education institution for three days on average, assessing the operations of the education establishment in seven fields mentioned above. During the accreditation procedure references from the founders, staff, students and parents are obtained. The strong points of institution are identified and recommendations by the accreditation experts to education establishment are prepared during the

accreditation process. The accreditation commission, which also constituted of representatives of various institutions and social partners, examines the expert commission's reports and recommendations and submits a proposal to the State Education Quality Service for the decision on accreditation or its denial.

In 2009 the elaboration of a monitoring system for accredited institutions was started, in which it is planned to follow the implementation of the accreditation experts' recommendations and prepare reports to MoES.

To ensure public certainty about and trust in education process and quality transparency and clarity, education establishments publish their self-assessment reports and the State Education Quality Service publishes the accreditation experts' reports on their websites. Information on all accredited education institutions and programmes is available in the State Education Information System database (https://www.viis.lv).

To assess and improve the quality of accreditation process, the accredited education institutions provide a feedback on the work of accreditation experts at education establishments by sending to the State Education Quality Service a filled-out questionnaire.

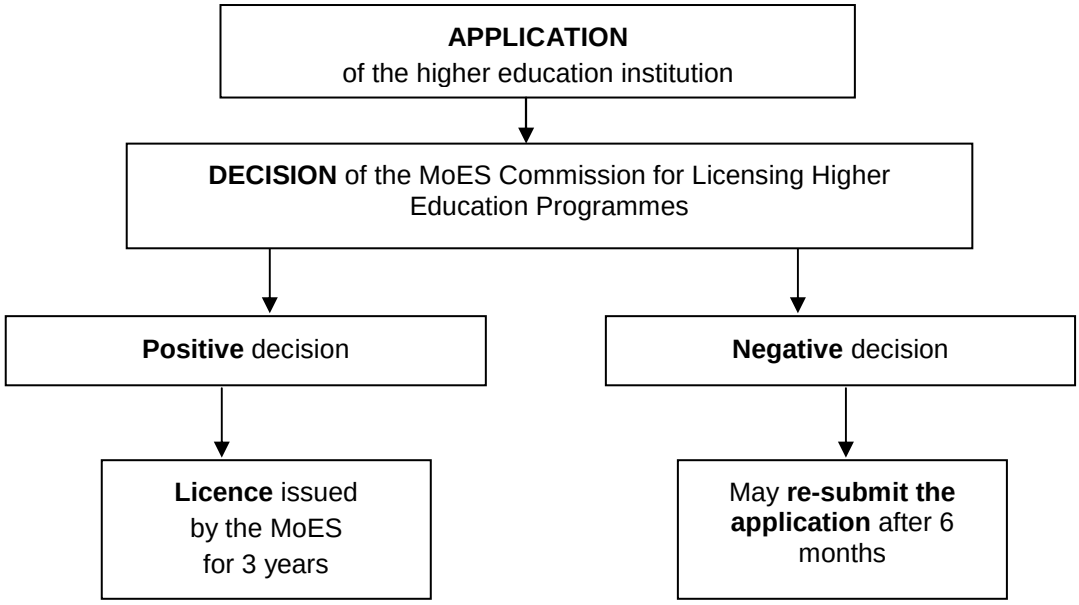
When licensing education programmes, the experts from the State Education Quality Service evaluate the correspondence of education programmes to the state education standards, occupational standards, occupational classifier, as well as to requirements of legal regulations regulating education content and process, also making sure that the planned content of education programmes will allow students to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and competences.

During the accreditation process accreditation experts (including experts delegated from sectoral associations) evaluate the correspondence of education programmes to the state education standards, occupational standards and occupational classifier, as well as the correspondence of syllabi to study subject standards paying particular attention to evaluating relevance of education programme aims, objectives. Education programme content, implementation and provision of resources are also evaluated. Thus, in the accreditation process it is possible to obtain assurance that education establishment provide students with opportunities to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and competences access defined in standards, relevant to labour market and industry. Simultaneously during the accreditation process, experts focus on the correspondence of education programme content and outcomes to the relevant qualification level description.

9.4 Quality assessment of HEIs and study programmes

According to the Education Law[20] (1998) and the Law on Higher Education Institutions[21] (1995), HEIs may start delivering only licensed study programmes. The licensing is a prior quality assurance, which procedure is set out in CoM Regulations of 20 August 2005 No.650 "Procedure of licensing higher education programmes"[22]. Study programmes are licensed by the Commission for Licensing Higher Education Programmes established by MoES (see Figure 4 below).

Figure 4. The scheme of the study programme licensing process



Section 28 of Education Law provides that an educational institution is independent in the development and implementation of education programmes in accordance with the provisions set out in regulatory enactments, the by-laws or the constitution of education institution. Thus, the study programme developed by the education institutions and submitted for licensing must conform to the provisions of the Education Law, the Law on Higher Education Institutions and respective CoM Regulations on the requirements of the state standards on academic education, on first and second level higher professional education.

Assessment of the quality of HEIs' work and the implemented study programmes is done during accreditation. There are two types of accreditation – of HEI and study programme (see Figure 5 below). The first accreditations of HEIs and study programmes were performed in 1996.

[20] http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=50759/
[21] http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=37967/
[22] http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=115551&from=off/

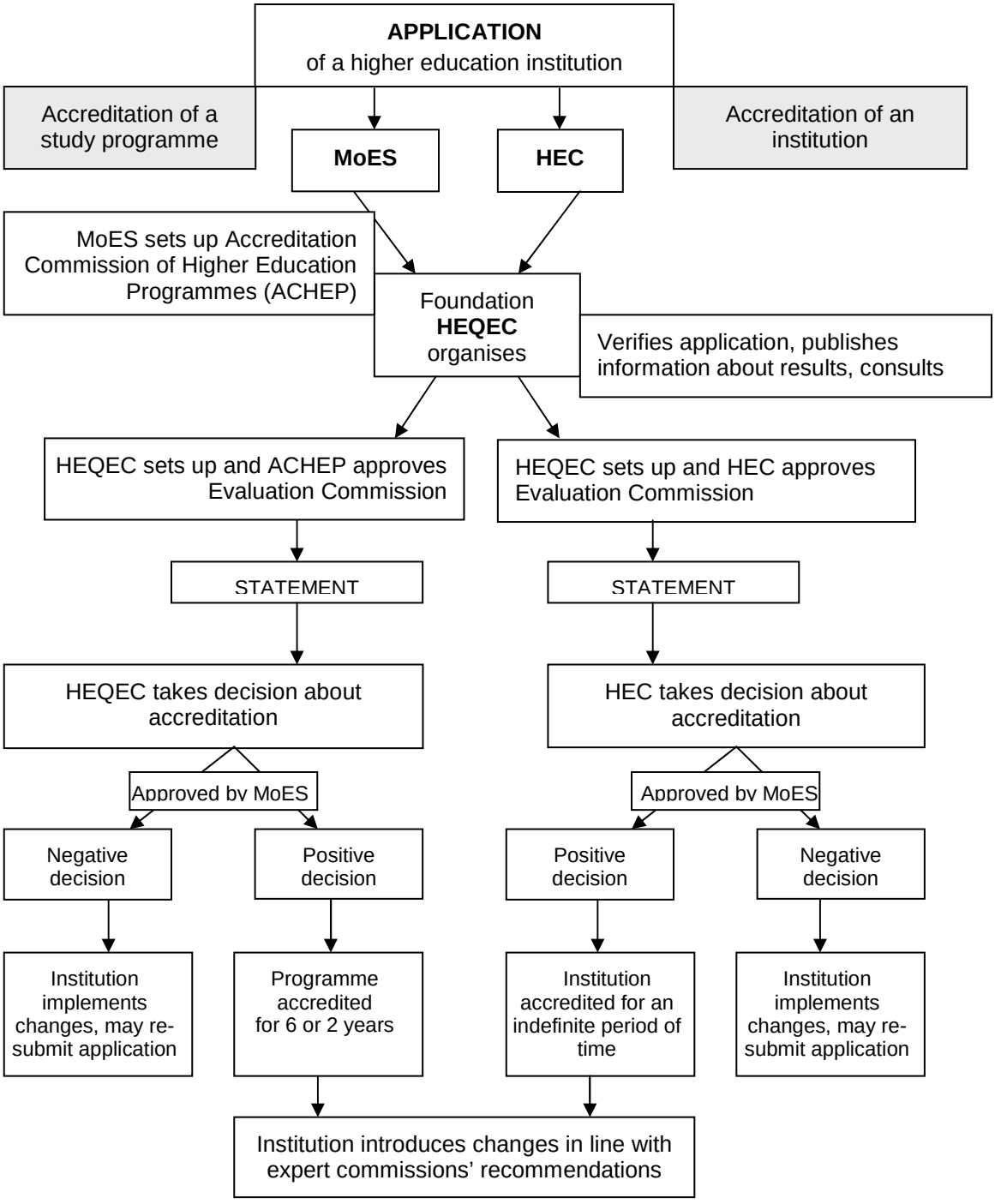
In accordance with Paragraph 7, Section 55 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, study programmes must be accredited within two years following their commencement and at least once in six years. The procedure for the accreditation of HEIs, colleges and implemented programmes is defined by CoM Regulations (3.10.2006) No.821 "Procedure for the accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges and higher education programmes"[23], accrediting study programmes from the EQF level 5-8.

Section 27 of the Education Law provides that all education institutions, except those, which implement only leisure education programmes, must be accredited. The accreditation of an educational institution must be performed within five years following the day, when education institution has commenced its activities. The accreditation of a HEI actually means that the HEI's work organisation and resources are inspected and as result status of the state recognized HEI or college is awarded. The HEI's and its structural units' organisation, the quality of studies and efficient use of resources is evaluated. If the decision is positive, the HEI acquires the right to issue diplomas recognised by the state. A HEI or a college may be accredited if at least a half of its study programmes is accredited. Usually a HEI is accredited for an indefinite period of time. As exception, the accreditation has a fixed term, requiring repeated assessment within two years time. Study programmes are accredited once in six years. In exceptional cases temporary accreditation is granted with repeated accreditation in two years time.

During the accreditation process both internal and external assessment is carried out. The internal assessment is realised by HEI preparing a self-assessment report, which is a mandatory pre-condition for the accreditation of the institution and the study programme. The self-assessment report describes and assesses study programmes or their elements, organisation and practical implementation, compares with similar programmes in Latvia or in other European Union member states, characterises teaching staff in qualitative and quantitative way etc. Representatives of administration, teachers and students are involved in the preparation of the self-assessment report. A part of self-assessment is published on HEI/college webpage.

[23] http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=145125/

Figure 5. The accreditation scheme of HEIs and study programmes



In Latvia the external assessment is an important stage in the accreditation of both the secondary and higher education stage. The external assessment is implemented in two stages. First, taking into consideration the self-assessment report submitted by a HEI, the Evaluation Commission assess the materials submitted by the HEI or college and the actual conditions at the HEI or college and, if necessary, requests further information. The minimum number of members of the Commission is three, of which at least one must be a foreign expert (except first level professional

higher education programmes (college programmes), when all experts may be from Latvia). Each expert provides their statement. The assessment expert commission, on the basis of the self-assessment, the survey results of students and the graduates' employers, expert opinions and the results of the assessment commission experts' visit to the HEI or college, prepares the common statement, which together with the experts' statements is submitted to the Accreditation Commission of Higher Education Programmes (ACHEP, if a study programme is undergoing accreditation) approved by the MoES or the Higher Education Council[24] (HEC, if a HEI is undergoing accreditation), which takes a decision on accreditation. Three types of decisions are possible:

- To perform accreditation of a study programme or a HEI (usually study programmes are accredited for 6 years, but the institutions – without a fixed term),
- To perform accreditation of a study programme or a HEI for 2 years, if serious shortcomings have been identified in the assessment process,
- To refuse accreditation.

HEC or ACHEP may refuse accreditation to HEI, college or study programme, if:

- The common statement of assessment expert commission or an expert's individual statement (if expertise is performed by a single expert) is negative;
- HEI, college or study programme does not correspond to requirements of the Law on Higher Education Institutions and other regulations;
- Material, informative (including library) basis of studies, financial basis and faculty members' qualification does not correspond to conditions of study programme implementation;
- Studies in master and doctoral level programmes are not based on latest developments and theories of the relevant science field.

If the accreditation has been refused, HEI or college may apply for accreditation repeatedly no sooner than in six months' time and at least within a year after the adoption of this decision.

The administrative and organisational process of accreditation is ensured by the foundation Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre[25] (HEQEC), which was established on 28 December 1994; its founded are: the University of Latvia; the Riga Technical University; the Daugavpils University; the Riga Stradins University; and the School of Business Administration "Turība", Ltd. Approximately 600 Latvian and

[24] www.aip.lv
[25] www.aiknc.lv

foreign experts are involved in the evaluation work organised by HEQEC to assess HEIs, colleges and their study programmes.

In Latvia the quality assurance system in higher education is used both for improving the quality and as a means to reform higher education.

The accreditation costs of HEI, college or study programme are covered from the budget of the particular HEI or college[26].

According to Paragraph 4, Section 9 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions, HEQEC at the end of each academic year publishes in the official newspaper “Latvijas Vēstnesis” the list of those HEIs, which have the right to issue diplomas on the acquisition of higher education, as well as the names of accredited study programmes at these institutions. HEQEC ensures elaboration and practical application of programme accreditation methodology; it coordinates assessment experts and provides advice to them. Currently HEQEC represents Latvia in the associations of national organisations: ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) as a candidate member, INQAAHE (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education), CEEN (Central and Eastern European Networking Association), EQANIE (European Quality Assurance Network in Engineering Education) and EAQAN (Euroasian Quality Assurance Network).

[26] http://www.aiknc.lv/static_media/dati/materiali/LV/IzmaksuAprekUnIzcen210909.pdf/

II Part

10. EQF Levels in the Latvian Education System

When arranging consultation process in Latvia, according to present laws and regulations comparison (in a form of table) between the LQF/EQF levels and Latvian education system was prepared. In the table below for each the LQF/EQF level relevant Latvian education documents (qualifications) are indicated. For drafting this comparison, the following laws and regulations were used:

- The Education Law (1991, 1998);
- The Vocational Education Law (1999).
- The Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995);
- The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the EQF for lifelong learning (23.04.2008);
- CoM Regulations No.990 "Regulations on the classification of Latvian education" (2.12.2008, amendments 05.10.2010).

This level comparison was presented to the social partners and discussed in the national conference held on 14 February 2011. The discussion continued also after the conference paying more attention to the placement of education programmes on the LQF/EQF levels 1-4. As mentioned before, the opinions expressed were not significantly different from the placement of education programmes on the LQF/EQF levels included in the amendments of October 2010 to CoM Regulations (see Appendix 9).

The main discussions were about the placement of vocational education programmes (see chapter 5) and basic education programmes. Basic education programmes were placed on the LQF levels 1-3 regarding pupils' mental abilities. Formally the same education document is issued to all basic education graduates, although in reality the acquired learning outcomes are quite varied. To indicate the existing differences, education programmes are placed on three LQF levels.

While formulating the LQF level descriptors included in the foresaid CoM Regulations, experts to a great extent built on the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council (23.04.2008) on the establishment of the EQF for lifelong learning, therefore, direct link between the of the Latvian and the EQF level descriptors may be observed (see Table 9 in chapter 11.1) and in the Regulations these levels are called "EQF levels". In both cases eight level structure is applied based on learning outcomes that are expressed in three dimensions:

- Knowledge (knowledge and comprehension);
- Skills (ability to apply knowledge, communication, general skills);
- Competence (analysis, synthesis and assessment).

Table 8. The comparison of the EQF for lifelong learning and the Latvian Qualifications Framework

European level descriptors based on learning outcomes[27]			Latvian level descriptors based on learning outcomes [28]			Latvian education documents	LQF & EQF level
Knowledge	**Skills**	**Competence**	**Knowledge**	**Skills**	**Competence**		
Basic general knowledge	Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks	Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context	Able to demonstrate elementary knowledge, which manifests itself in recognition and recollection	Able to use elementary practical and cognitive skills, able to execute them under direct supervision using simple tools Able to perform simple tasks, which are repetitive as to their content and predictable	Able to perform tasks in a structured environment, to function in a limited context Is able to perform elementary tasks, following a model, able to master basic self-care skills	Certificate of general basic education, statement of records (for students in special educational programmes for students with severe mental development disorders or several severe development disorders)	1
Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study	Basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools	Work or study under supervision with some autonomy	Able to demonstrate basic knowledge in concrete subject syllabi	Able to use basic cognitive and practical skills, which are necessary to solve everyday problems by using relevant information, perform tasks and using simple rules and means Able to understand the consequences of one's own actions with regard to self and others	Able to perform tasks individually or in a group under supervision or semi-independently Able to participate in setting some learning objectives and planning the course of actions	Certificate of general basic education, statement of records (for students in special educational programmes for students with mental development disorders	2
Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish a task and solve problems by	Take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study Adapt own behaviour to	Able to demonstrate the knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts and to use them in	Able to use various cognitive and practical skills, which are necessary to perform tasks and to solve simple problems, by selecting and using basic methods, means, materials, information and technologies	Able to be aware of and assume responsibility for performing work or study tasks in a permanent and stable environment under the supervision of a	Certificate of general basic education, statement of records, certificate Certificate of vocational basic education, statement of records	3

[27] Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council (23.04.2008) on the establishment of the EQF for lifelong learning

[28] CoM Regulations (2.12.2008) No.990 "Regulations on the Classification of Latvian education", Appendix 1, Table 2 (with amendments 05.10.2010)

	selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information	circumstances in solving problems	the field of studies and professional activities Able to understand various information about materials, technologies in the relevant field of studies or a concrete profession		specialist in the sector When solving the tasks, is able to adjust one's actions to conditions and to be responsible for the result of work		
Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad context within a field of work or study	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study	Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change Supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities	Able to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of facts, theories and causalities, which are needed for personal growth and development, civic participation, social integration and continuous education Able to comprehend in detail and demonstrate knowledge of diverse facts, principles, processes and concepts in a specific field of studies or professional activities in standard and non-standard situations	Able to plan and organise work, using various methods, technologies (including information and communication technologies), equipment, tools and materials for performing tasks Able to find, assess and creatively use information for performing study or professional work tasks and problem solving Able to communicate at least in two languages both in writing and orally in a known and unknown context Able to work independently in the profession, to learn and to improve professional qualifications Able to cooperate	Is motivated for further career development, continuous education, life-long learning in a knowledge-oriented democratic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural society in Europe and in the world Able to plan and perform study or work tasks in the profession individually, in a team or by managing the teamwork Able to assume responsibility for the quality and quantity of the outcomes of study or professional activities	Certificate of general secondary education, statement of records, certificate Certificate of vocational education, statement of records Diploma of vocational secondary education, statement of records	4

			Has good knowledge of technologies and methods for performing study or work tasks in the profession				
Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge	A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems	Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change Review and develop performance of self and others	Able to demonstrate comprehensive and specialised knowledge and understanding of facts, theories, causalities and technologies of the concrete professional field	Able, on the basis of analytical approach, to perform practical tasks in the concrete profession, demonstrate skills, allowing to find creative solutions to professional problems, to discuss and provide arguments regarding practical issues and solutions in the concrete profession with colleagues, clients and management, able to, with an appropriate degree of independence, to engage in further learning, improving one's competences Able to assess and improve one's own actions and those of other people, to work in co-operation with others, to plan and to organise work to perform concrete tasks in one's profession or to supervise such work activities, in which unpredictable changes are possible	Able to define, describe and analyse practical problems in one's profession, select the necessary information and use it for solving clearly defined problems, to participate in the development of the concrete professional field, demonstrate understanding of the place of the concrete profession in a broader social context	Diploma of first level professional higher education (1st level professional higher (college) education. The length of full-time studies 2-3 years)	5
Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving critical understanding	Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and	Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for	Able to demonstrate the basic and specialised knowledge typical of the concrete	Able, by using the mastered theoretical foundations and skills, perform professional, artistic, innovative or research activity, to define and describe analytically information, problems and	Able to obtain, select and analyse information independently and to use it, to take decisions and solve problems in	Bachelor's diploma Professional Bachelor's diploma Diploma of professional higher education, diploma of higher professional	6

of theories and principles	unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study	decision –making in unpredictable work or study contexts Take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups	branch of science or profession and a critical understanding of this knowledge, moreover, a part of this knowledge complies with the highest level of achievement in this branch of science or profession Able to demonstrate understanding of the most important concepts and causalities of the concrete branch of science or professional field	solutions in one's own branch of science or profession, to explain them and to provide arguments when discussing these with both specialist and non-specialists Is able to structure independently one's own learning, to guide one's own and one's subordinates further learning and improvement of professional qualification, to demonstrate scientific approach to problem solving, to assume responsibility and take initiative when performing individual work, when working in a team or managing the work of other people, to take decisions and find creative solutions under changing or unclear conditions	the concrete branch of science or profession, demonstrate understanding of professional ethics, assess the impact of one's professional activities on environment and society and participate in the development of the concrete professional field	qualification (2nd level professional higher education, the length of full-time studies – at least 4 years)	
Highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/ or research Critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between	Specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/ or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields	Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches Take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/ or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams	Able to demonstrate advanced or extensive knowledge and understanding, a part of which conforms with the most recent findings in the concrete branch of science or professional field and which provide the basis for creative thinking or research, inter alia, working in the	Able to use independently theory, methods and problem solving skills to perform research or artistic activities, or highly qualified professional functions Able to provide arguments when explaining or discussing complex or systemic aspects of the concrete branch of science or professional field both to specialists and non-specialists Able to guide independently the improvement of one's own competences and specialisation, to assume responsibility for the results of staff and group work and analyse them, to perform business activities, innovations in	Able to define independently and critically analyse complex professional problems, substantiate decisions and, if necessary, carry out additional analysis Able to integrate knowledge of various fields, contribute to the creation of new knowledge, research or the development of new professional working methods, demonstrate understanding and	Master's diploma Professional Master's diploma Diploma of professional higher education, diploma of higher education, diploma of higher professional qualification (2nd level professional higher education, the total length of full-time studies – at least 5 years)	7

different fields			interface of various fields	the concrete branch of science or profession, to perform work, research or further learning under complex or unpredictable conditions, if necessary, change them, using new approaches	ethical responsibility for the possible impact of the scientific results or professional activity on environment and society		
Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields	The most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/ or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice	Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research	Able to demonstrate that has good knowledge of and understands most topical scientific theories and insights, has mastered research methodology and contemporary research methods in the concrete branch of science or professional field and in the interface of various fields	Able to assess and select independently appropriate methods for scientific research, has contributed to the expansion of the limits of knowledge or given new understanding of the existing knowledge, by carrying out an original research of major scope, part of which is on the level of internationally cited publications Able to communicate both orally and in writing about one's own field of scientific activity (one's own branch) with wider research community and the general public Able to improve one's scientific qualification independently, by implementing scientific projects, attaining achievements meeting the international criteria of the branch of science, to manage research or development tasks in companies, institutions and organisations, requiring extensive research knowledge and skills	Able, by performing independent critical analysis, synthesis and assessment, to solve significant research or innovation tasks, to set independently research idea, to plan, structure and manage large-scale scientific projects, including projects in international context	Doctor's diploma	8

11. Compliance of the Referencing Process to the Criteria of the EQF and the Bologna Process

11.1 EQF criteria

1. The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process, including the National Coordination Point, are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities.

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

In 2008, MoES delegated the **Academic Information Centre** to perform the functions of the National Coordination Point for referencing the national qualifications framework to the EQF. AIC is a foundation which was established in 1994 by MoES and the Institute of Mathematics and Computer Science of the University of Latvia. The aim of AIC stated in the statutes is to ensure free movement of individuals in the field of education and employment. The functions and work tasks of AIC are determined by the agreement with MoES. There are the following functions of AIC:

- Latvian representative to the European Council/UNESCO diploma recognition network ENIC and the European Union diploma recognition network NARIC;
- Information institution regarding regulated professions;
- Contact point for ReferNet network established by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP);
- National Europass centre;
- National Coordination Point for referencing NQF to the EQF;
- In cooperation with MoES and other stakeholders, provision of attracting higher education students from the third countries.

The tasks of the **NCP** are as follows:

- To refer existing qualification levels in national qualification system to the EQF levels stated in the Annex II of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council (23.04.2008) on the establishment of the EQF for lifelong learning;
- To ensure that transparent methods are applied to link national qualification levels to the EQF, on one hand, facilitating their comparison and, on the other hand, ensuring that decisions related to this process are published;
- To prepare Latvian self-assessment report concerning the referencing of Latvian education system to the EQF for lifelong learning;
- To arrange discussions and consultation process among stakeholders about the referencing of Latvian education system to the EQF for lifelong learning by ensuring access to necessary information for all participants;
- To inform regarding the results of consultation process (launched website, international conference).

In 2009, MoES established the **working group for referencing the Latvian education system to the EQF**, which is chaired by the deputy state secretary on policy issues of MoES inviting to the working group all stakeholders – education agencies, education quality assurance agencies, representatives of employers' and employees' organizations, students etc. (see Appendix 2). The working group evaluated materials and level descriptors prepared by experts and recommended directing the developed amendments of CoM Regulations[29] to CoM for approval.

2. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the NQF or qualifications system and the EQF level descriptors.

The working group established by MoES for referencing the Latvian education system to the EQF approved education level descriptors for basic, general and higher education:

- When developing basic education level descriptors in Latvia (see table 3 in chapter 4), the state basic education standard was used. The standard is defined by CoM Regulations (19.12.2006) No.1027 "Regulations on the state standard in basic education and in basic education study subjects' standards".
- When developing general secondary education level descriptors in Latvia (see table 4 in chapter 4), the state general secondary education standard, which is stipulated by CoM Regulations No.715 (2.09.2008) "Regulations on the state general

[29] Amendments to CoM Regulations (2.12.2008) No.990 "Regulations on the classification of Latvian education" (5.10.2010)

secondary education standard and standards of general secondary education study subjects", was used.

- When developing vocational education level descriptors in Latvia (see table 5 in chapter 4), CoM Regulations (27.06.2000) No.211 "Regulations on the state vocational secondary education standard and the state vocational education standard" were applied.
- When developing level descriptors for higher education, the EQF level descriptors, Dublin descriptors (2002-2004), as well as Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom, 1956) was used. See chapter 7.

These level descriptors were compared with the EQF level descriptors and it was evaluated, to which EQF level the particular level descriptor is the most corresponding (see Table 9 below).

Table 9. The comparison of the EQF and the Latvian level descriptors

	European level descriptors[30]	Latvian level descriptors[31]	EQF level
K	**Basic general knowledge**	Able to demonstrate **elementary knowledge**, which manifests itself in recognition and recollection	1
S	**Basic skills** required to carry out **simple tasks**	Able to use **elementary practical and cognitive skills**, able to execute them under **direct supervision** using **simple tools** Able to perform **simple tasks**, which are repetitive as to their content and predictable	
C	Work or study under **direct supervision** in a **structured context**	Able to perform tasks in a **structured environment**, to function in a **limited context** Is able to perform **elementary tasks**, following a model, able to master **basic self-care skills**	
K	**Basic factual knowledge** of a field of work or study	Able to demonstrate **basic knowledge** in concrete subject syllabi	2
S	**Basic cognitive and practical skills** required to **use relevant information** in order to carry out tasks and to **solve routine problems** using **simple rules and tools**	Able to use **basic cognitive and practical skills**, which are necessary to **solve everyday problems** by **using relevant information**, perform tasks and using **simple rules and means** Able to **understand the consequences** of one's own actions with regard to self and others	
C	Work or study **under supervision with some autonomy**	Able to perform tasks individually or in a group **under supervision or semi-independently** Able to participate in setting some learning objectives and **planning the course of actions**	

[30] Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council (23.04.2008) on the establishment of the EQF for lifelong learning

[31] CoM Regulations (2.12.2008) No.990 "Regulations on the Classification of Latvian education", Appendix 1, Table 2 (with amendments 05.10.2010)

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

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

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

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

**K – knowledge, S – skills, C – competence*

3. The NQF or qualifications system and its qualifications are based on learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where these exist, to credit systems.

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

Speaking about general education the state basic and secondary education standards, as well as standards for study subjects stipulate the requirements for each subject, also defining the necessary competences to be mastered in order to acquire basic and secondary education. Schools develop their education programmes and teachers – programmes for study subjects according to the state education standards. If an education programme provided by a school does not comply with the

requirements of education standard, it may not be accredited. At the end on general basic and secondary education programmes, students have to take state final exams which also are designed regarding relevant education standards.

The content of vocational education is stipulated by vocational education standards, occupational standards and education programmes. The state vocational education standards describe the strategic aims of educational programmes, the mandatory content of education, and basic principles and procedure for evaluating the acquired education. The occupational standards define the basic tasks and obligations for the respective professional activities, the basic requirements of professional qualification, and the general and professional knowledge, skills, attitudes and competences needed to fulfil them. Vocational education establishments use education and relevant occupational standard to elaborate their education programmes; otherwise, the education programmes cannot undergo accreditation. Students demonstrate the acquired learning outcomes in state centralized final exams for general subjects (in vocational secondary education programmes) and state qualification final exams, which content is developed in line with relevant occupational standards.

In HE sector institutions tend to revise their study programmes to introduce learning outcomes to be able to undergo the process of accreditation. Additionally professional higher education programmes have to be developed in line with education standard and/or relevant occupational standard.

On 22 February 2011, CoM Regulations No.146 “Procedure how professional competence obtained outside formal education system is assessed” were approved. These Regulations to a great extent are based on the results of the MoES working group. The Regulations stipulate the procedure how professional competence that corresponds to the Latvian professional qualification level 1-3, i.e. the EQF level 3-4, obtained outside formal education is assessed.

For higher education (EQF level 5-8) it is planned that a person can acquire higher education (or become enrolled into a concrete stage of HE), by proving that they have the knowledge and skills included in the education standard. The procedure will be included in the referencing 2nd phase, because the draft Law of Higher Education, which was submitted to the government in 2006 and defines validation mechanisms of knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education, has not yet been approved by *Saeima*.

In higher education credits are used, which in Latvia are defined as the amount of one-week workload of full-time studies. The amount envisaged for one academic year

of full-time studies is 40 credits. Recalculating it into the ECTS credits, the amount of Latvian credit points has to be multiplied by 1.5. See section 4.5.

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

In Latvia the referencing of education system to the EQF for lifelong learning and the EHEA Qualification Framework started in 2009; the process was transparent and involved all main institutions. The process consisted of the following activities:

1. The establishment of a working group by MoES, i.e. referencing working group;
2. The establishment of expert groups for the elaboration of national education levels descriptors (monitoring ensured by the referencing working group);
3. Drafting and approving the CoM Regulations;
4. Advisory conference;
5. Elaboration of the Self-Assessment Report;
6. Consultation on the Self-Assessment Report.

In 28 September 2009, MoES set up a working group (see Appendix 2) for linking Latvian qualifications system to the EQF in accordance with the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council (23 April 2008) on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning. This working group mostly performed the tasks of a supervisory group, reviewing and approving materials, e.g. level descriptors, prepared by the experts.

To prepare the descriptors of national education levels, AIC and the Policy Coordination Department of MoES attracted specialists from the State Education Content Centre, who using the state education standards, occupational standards and study subjects standards, elaborated the descriptors of education levels for:

- General basic education;
- General secondary education;
- Vocational basic education;
- Vocational secondary education;
- Vocational education.

The developed level descriptors were reviewed and approved by the referencing group to ensure comparibility between education sectors and levels.

In 2009, the working group established by the Latvian Rectors' Council (see Appendix 4) prepared the education level descriptors for all Bologna cycle qualifications.

On 14 February 2011, a national conference was arranged – discussions about the referencing of the Latvian formal qualifications to the EQF, in which representatives from ministries, national agencies, education governing institutions, education establishments, employers' organizations, trade unions, as well as from other institutions related to education participated. Furthermore, on 27 April 2011, an international conference was held, in which the draft of this Report and consultation process results were presented.

The information on the referencing process and the possibility to express one's opinion and propose amendments was possible also via the webpage of the Latvian NCP (http://nqf-latvia.lv).

As result of the referencing process, 8-level LQF was established and all formal Latvian qualifications from general, vocational and higher education sectors were linked to the LQF/EQF. This process was transparent since all stakeholders were involved either in the development or in the consultation process regarding the introduction of the LQF. However, taking into account that education as social phenomenon experiences constant changes, in Latvia the referencing process is organized in two stages. This Report, which describes the referencing of formal national qualifications to the LQF/EQF, concludes the **1st phase (2009-2011).**

The **2nd referencing phase (2013-2015)** will include a larger range of qualifications, and this Report will be revised taking into account possible amendments in legislation and projects results. The LQF also is expected to experience revision and introduction of new qualifications.

In the course of 2nd phase, the development of national qualification system planned according to education policy planning document – the Concept "Raising Attractiveness of Vocational Education and Involvement of Social Partners within Vocational Education Quality Assurance" (16.09.2009) – is an issue on which consent between the state and social partners is reached prior the drafting of the new Vocational Education Law. The agreement stated that national qualifications system will be established comprising 8 professional qualification levels according to the LQF.

Regarding the Concept, in course of time sectoral qualifications frameworks will be developed since the EQF levels allow to create sectoral qualifications structures. The Employers' Confederation of Latvia in cooperation with the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia establishes Sectoral Expert Councils, which include representatives from all professional associations and sectoral crafts unions. The Sectoral Expert Councils will develop sectoral qualifications structures corresponding to the national qualifications system.

To ensure the performance of tasks, the Sectoral Expert Councils will:

1. Organize research and assessment of competences and skills necessary for sector, develop sectoral qualifications structures corresponding to the national qualifications system, provide recommendations about basic professions and relevant specializations necessary for the sector;
2. Organize development and update of sectoral occupational standards.

The implementation period of the ESF project "Development of sectoral qualifications system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education" is from the end of 2010 **to 31 December 2013**. The aim of project is improving vocational education quality and efficiency regarding the need of economic sectors, creating also sectoral qualifications system. The project will support: the establishment and activities of Sectoral Expert Councils; research of competences and skills in economic sectors for making education demand; development of sectoral qualifications system; development or improvement of sectoral occupational standards for basic professions; development of the relevant professions and basic requirements for specialization qualifications; introduction of modules system in the development or improvement of vocational education programmes for acquiring a basic profession, relevant profession or specialization including continuing vocational education programmes; improving examination; piloting validation and recognition system of knowledge, skills and competence acquired outside formal education.

According to the Order of CoM of 11 August 2010 No.469 "Amendment to Order of CoM (16.09.2009) No.629 "On the Concept "Raising Attractiveness of Vocational Education and Involvement of Social Partners within Vocational Education Quality Assurance"", MoES has to draft and the minister of education and science has to submit to CoM regarding a certain procedure the new project of the Vocational Education Law until **1 August 2012**. At present, the project of the law is not public and is subject to change; therefore, detailed content of the future law is not available. Yet the law is expected to include articles focusing on the qualifications framework.

Furthermore, it is planned to introduce new Higher Education Law, which project is still under the discussion in *Saeima*. The project will introduce some new terms in legislation, e.g. employability.

5. The national quality assurance system(s) for education refer(s) to the NQF or qualifications system and are consistent with the relevant European principles and guidelines.

National education quality assurance system imparts whole formal education system. The activities of the Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre, the Higher

Education Council and the State Education Quality Service in their functions are based on European principles and guidelines. HEQEC represents Latvia at ENQA as a candidate member, INQAAHE, CEEN, EQANIE and EAQAN.

In accordance with the delegating agreement of functions concluded between MoES and HEQEC, MoES asks HEQEC to work in line with European standards and guidelines for quality assurance in terms of EHEA. The operation of HEQEC regarding European principles and guidelines is confirmed by the Assessment Report "Report of the Panel of the external review of Latvian foundation Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre" (24.11.2010). HEQEC in its work, when arranging accreditation of HEIs and higher education programmes, has taken into account experts' recommendations.

When licensing education programmes, the experts from the State Education Quality Service evaluate the correspondence of education programmes to the state education standards, occupational standards, occupational classifier, as well as to requirements of legal regulations regulating education content and process, also making sure that the planned content of education programmes will allow students to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and competences.

During the accreditation process accreditation experts (including experts delegated from sectoral associations) evaluate the correspondence of education programmes to the state education standards, occupational standards and occupational classifier, as well as the correspondence of syllabi to study subject standards paying particular attention to evaluating relevance of education programme aims, objectives. Education programme content, implementation and provision of resources are also evaluated. Thus, in the accreditation process it is possible to obtain assurance that education establishment provide students with opportunities to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and competences access defined in standards, relevant to labour market and industry. Simultaneously during the accreditation process, experts focus on the correspondence of education programme content and outcomes to the relevant qualification level description.

6. The referencing process should include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies.

In the working group for referencing the Latvian education system to the EQF (see Appendix 2) all major quality assurance institutions were engaged, which involved actively in the referencing process and are listed below:

- The Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre – foundation arranging quality assurance in higher education;

- The Higher Education Council – institution monitoring higher education quality;
- The State Education Quality Service – institution monitoring quality of basic, secondary and vocational education, as well as ensures the supervision of the state in education.

The representatives of these quality agencies as members of the referencing group reviewed the LQF level descriptors providing their contribution in the field of their expertise. Prior introducing level desriptors in the CoM Regulations, the working group approved these descriptors. These agencies also participated in the consultation process by expressing their opinion and providing assent of the consultation process results. The representatives of the State Education Quality Service provided input for this Report, as the placement of basic, general and vocational secondary education qualifications in the LQF caused the most of discussions. Thus, the mentioned quality agencies were engaged in the referencing process from the beginning as full-fledged members.

7. The referencing process should involve international experts.

In the referencing process the international experts were involved in several its stages:

1) Consultation process – three experts participated in the national conference presenting the model of their country's qualification framework and sharing their experience on referencing process:

- Carita Blomkvist, Finnish National Board of Education;
- Olav Aarna, Estonian Qualifications Authority;
- Sean O'Reilly, National Qualifications Authority of Ireland.

2) Three experts also participated in the discussions on the Self-Assessment Report:

- Sean O'Reilly, National Qualifications Authority of Ireland;
- Kulli All, Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia;
- Luca Lantero, Italian ENIC-NARIC Centre.

When selecting the international experts, the following criteria were considered:

- Expert's experience in developing and introducing NQF;
- Expert's knowledge in education field;
- Expert's knowledge concerning the Latvian education system.

The experts represented one of the succeeding education fields:

- Vocational education
- Higher education
- Overarching framework.

The geographical location of countries the experts represented was also taken into account:

- One expert from a neighbouring country;
- One expert from a country with similar education system features;
- One expert from a country, which is not a neighbouring country.

The tasks of international experts were:

- Share their experience in conferences and meetings;
- Review and comment the Self-Assessment Report;
- Participate in discussions with the Latvian stakeholders

According to the views of conferences participants, the social partners highly appreciated the involvement of the international experts in the referencing process.

As the international experts were involved in early stages of the referencing process, their experience and comments were taken into account when composing this Report. The experts' comments expressed, during the consultation process were integrated in the Report.

8. **The competent national body or bodies should certify the referencing of the NQF or qualifications system with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing and the evidence supporting it should be published by the competent national bodies, including the NCP, and should address separately each of the criteria.**

This Self-Assessment Report has been prepared involving social partners; it was published and its electronic copy is available on the website of MoES (www.izm.gov.lv), on the website of the Latvian NCP (http://nqf-latvia.lv), and the Latvian ENIC-NARIC website (www.aic.lv).

9. **The official the EQF platform should maintain a public listing of member states that have confirmed that they have completed the referencing process, including links to completed referencing reports.**

The Latvian NCP has launched website (http://nki-latvija.lv or http://nqf-latvia.lv), in which information on the referencing process is provided, as well as the electronic copy of this Self-Assessment Report is published.

10. **Following the referencing process, and in line with the timelines set in the Recommendation, all new qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications systems, to the appropriate EQF level.**

In Latvia amendments to the CoM Regulations of 2 December 2008 No. 990 "Regulations on the classification of Latvian education" were drafted and approved in

October 2010 (see Appendix 9). To the table included in these Regulations outlining the Latvian education stages and the respective programmes a new column was added, referencing education programmes to the appropriate EQF level. All education institutions awarding education documents in Latvia will be able to use these Regulations to precisely indicate the relevant EQF level. The inclusion of reference to the EQF levels in all education documents in Latvia is planned to be introduced during the 2nd phase of referencing. The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council (23 April 2008) on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning has introduced a range of education reforms in Latvia. In order to ensure that reference to the EQF in education documents for Latvian inhabitants is included in the right way, the changes in the education documents are planned to introduce after the approval of the Higher Education Law in *Saeima*, as well as after drafting and approving the new Vocational Education Law.

11.2 Criteria of the Bologna Process

The Bologna Process continues the reforms in higher education that were launched in Latvia already at the end of 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. The reforms in the Latvian higher education already dealt with the majority of aspects set in Bologna Declaration[32], before it was signed. The Education Law of 1991 already envisaged the introduction of bachelor and master programmes. Currently in practice Latvian HEIs offer programmes of the three Bologna cycles. **The drafted Law on Higher Education, which is not approved in *Saeima* yet, includes a complete transition to the qualifications of three Bologna cycles**, and this Law would set out the qualifications framework for higher education.

The aim of the LQF for higher education is to ensure that qualification levels, which can be acquired in Latvia, are harmonised, understandable and comparable in the EHEA; thus, promoting international recognition of the Latvian qualifications. The qualifications framework for higher education defines the qualification levels that can be obtained through studies, the necessary amount of study work in ECTS credits and the learning outcomes to be attained. Higher education programmes may consist of study modules, study courses, practice training and final examinations.

The higher education qualifications framework will include 3 study cycles:

1. First cycle studies (basic studies), which are completed with a Bachelor's degree;
2. Second cycle studies, completed with a Master's degree;

[32] Latvia in the Bologna Process. Latvian Rectors' Council. Academic Information Centre. Andrejs Rauhvargers. Riga, 2003

3. Third cycle studies, completed with a Doctor's degree.

More information about the current degrees and professional qualifications awarded in higher education is available in section 4.5.

It is planed that the short cycle studies are part of the first cycle for acquiring the higher education qualification. After receiving the qualification diploma of the short cycle higher education, a person may continue studies in bachelor programme, in further stages for completing the cycle. Graduating from higher education programmes leading to higher education qualification of a physician, a dentist, a pharmaceutist or a veterinary doctor, the degree of the second cycle is awarded.

Studies can be continued in the next cycle only after acquiring the appropriate degree completing the previous cycle. Each higher education programme (except doctoral programmes) envisages the possibilities for continuing studies in the next cycle or for completing the cycle.

If the completion of a higher educational programme results in the acquisition of a totality of knowledge, skills and attitudes, which are needed to meet the requirements set in the occupational standard or requirements for employment in a specific field of professional activity, the title of the respective profession is written into the diploma issued to the graduates of the higher education programme.

Table 10. ECTS credits and qualifications awarded for HE programmes

Cycle	Programme	ECTS credits and qualification
First	Short cycle higher education qualification programme	120-180 ECTS credits (at least two academic years); the short cycle higher education qualification is awarded in the relevant fields of professional activities.
	Bachelor programme	180-240 ECTS credits (at least three academic years); for successful completion of a bachelor programme the Bachelor's degree is awarded, which is awarded in a branch of science, interdisciplinary studies or a field of professional activities.
Second	Master programme	60-120 ECTS credits, taking into consideration that the total amount of studies in higher education programmes to qualify for a Master's degree, should be at least 300 ECTS credits, of which at least 60 ECTS credits are in the master programme; for successful completion of a master programme a Master's degree is awarded.
Third	Doctoral programme	180-288 ECTS credits; Doctor's degree is awarded.

In order to reference the Latvian higher education qualifications to the QF-EHEA, **seven criteria** defined by the Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks in 2005 were taken into account. The criteria are outlined below.

1. **The national framework for higher education qualifications and the body or bodies responsible for its development are designated by the national ministry with responsibility for higher education.**

Since this Self-Assessment Report is prepared for referencing the national qualifications both to the EQF and QF-EHEA, the criterion is similar to the 1st one in the section 11.1. **The Ministry of Education and Science**, which is the leading state governance institution in the field of education and science, is responsible ministry for higher education. In 2008, MoES delegated the **Academic Information Centre** to perform the functions of the National Coordination Point for referencing the national qualifications framework to the EQF for all education levels (see 11.1), which is also Latvian representative to the European Council/UNESCO diploma recognition network ENIC and the European Union diploma recognition network NARIC.

In 2009, MoES established the working group for referencing the Latvian education system to the EQF, and which serves also as working group for referencing Latvian higher education to qualification framework of European Higher Education area. Working group is chaired by the deputy state secretary on policy issues of MoES inviting to the working group all stakeholders, also representatives from higher education – education agencies, education quality assurance agencies, representatives of employers' and employees' organizations, students etc. (see Appendix 2). The working group evaluated materials and level descriptors prepared by experts and recommended directing the developed amendments of CoM Regulations to CoM for approval.

2. **There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications in the national framework and the cycle qualification descriptors of the QF-EHEA.**

The new Latvian framework for higher education, which belongs to the LQF, includes all three cycles of the Bologna Process – bachelor, master and doctor. The cycle descriptors are based on the learning outcomes (see chapter 7). In the elaboration of the cycle descriptors, so-called Dublin descriptors (2002-2004), Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom, 1956) and the EQF descriptors (CoM Regulations (2.12.2008) No.990 "Regulations on the classification of Latvian education", with amendments 5.10.2010) were used, offering generalised definitions for learning outcomes, which are typical for the qualifications awarded at the completion of each Bologna cycle. Therefore, an evident link may be observed between the Latvina level descriptors and QF-EHEA descriptors (see Table 11 below).

Table 11. The comparison of the EHEA descriptors and the Latvian level descriptors

	EHEA descriptors[33]	Latvian level descriptors[34]
First cycle qualification	Have **demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study** that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by **knowledge of the forefront of their field of study** Can **apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach** to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study Have the **ability to gather and interpret relevant data** (usually within their field of study) to inform judgments that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues Can **communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences** Have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to **continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy**	Able to demonstrate the **basic and specialised knowledge typical of the concrete branch of science or profession** and a critical understanding of this knowledge, moreover, a part of this knowledge complies with the **highest level of achievement in this branch of science or profession** Able to **demonstrate understanding of the most important concepts and causalities** of the concrete branch of science or professional field Able, by using the mastered theoretical foundations and skills, **perform professional, artistic, innovative or research activity**, to define and **describe analytically information, problems and solutions** in one's own branch of science or profession, to explain them and to **provide arguments when discussing these with both specialist and non-specialists** Is able to **structure independently one's own learning**, to guide one's own and one's subordinates further learning and improvement of professional qualification, to demonstrate scientific approach to problem solving, to **assume responsibility and take initiative** when performing individual work, when working in a team or managing the work of other people, to take decisions and find creative solutions under changing or unclear conditions Able to **obtain, select and analyse information independently and to use it**, to take decisions and solve problems in the concrete branch of science or profession, demonstrate understanding of professional ethics, assess the impact of one's professional activities on environment and society and participate in the development of the concrete professional field

[33] A Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area. Adopted at the Bergen Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, in May 2005

[34] CoM Regulations (2.12.2008) No.990 "Regulations on the Classification of Latvian education", Appendix 1, Table 2 (with amendments 05.10.2010)

Second cycle qualification	Have demonstrated **knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances** that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a **basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas**, often within a research context Can apply their **knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments** within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study Have the **ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgments with incomplete or limited information**, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments Can **communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and nonspecialist audiences** clearly and unambiguously Have the **learning skills to allow them to continue to study** in a manner that may be **largely self-directed or autonomous**	Able to demonstrate **advanced or extensive knowledge and understanding, a part of which conforms to the most recent findings** in the concrete branch of science or professional field and which provide the **basis for creative thinking or research**, inter alia, working in the interface of various fields Able to **use independently theory, methods and problem solving skills** to perform research or artistic activities, or highly qualified professional functions Able to **provide arguments when explaining or discussing complex or systemic aspects** of the concrete branch of science or professional field both to **specialists and non-specialists** Able to **guide independently the improvement of one's own competences and specialisation**, to assume responsibility for the results of staff and group work and analyse them, to perform business activities, innovations in the concrete branch of science or profession, to perform work, research or **further learning under complex or unpredictable conditions**, if necessary, change them, using new approaches Able to **define independently and critically analyse complex professional problems**, substantiate decisions and, if necessary, carry out additional analysis Able to **integrate knowledge of various fields**, **contribute to the creation of new knowledge**, research or the development of new professional working methods, **demonstrate understanding and ethical responsibility** for the possible impact of the scientific results or professional activity on environment and society

Third cycle qualification	Have demonstrated a **systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods** of research associated with that field Have demonstrated the **ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process** of research with scholarly integrity Have made a **contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge** by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication Are **capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas** Can **communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general** about their areas of expertise Can be expected to be **able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement** in a knowledge based society	Able to demonstrate that has **good knowledge of and understands most topical scientific theories and insights, has mastered research methodology and contemporary research methods** in the concrete branch of science or professional field and in the interface of various fields Able to **assess and select independently appropriate methods** for scientific research, has **contributed to the expansion of the limits of knowledge or given new understanding of the existing knowledge**, by carrying out an original research of major scope, part of which is on the level of internationally cited publications Able to **communicate both orally and in writing about one's own field of scientific activity (one's own branch) with wider research community and the general public** Able to **improve one's scientific qualification independently**, by implementing scientific projects, attaining achievements meeting the international criteria of the branch of science, to manage research or development tasks in companies, institutions and organisations, requiring extensive research knowledge and skills Able, by performing independent critical analysis, synthesis and assessment, to **solve significant research or innovation tasks**, to set independently research idea, to plan, structure and manage large-scale scientific projects, including projects in international context

3. The national framework and its qualifications are demonstrably based on learning outcomes and the qualifications are linked to ECTS or ECTS compatible credits.

The Latvian higher education framework, which is a part of the LQF, is based on three Bologna cycles – bachelor, master and doctor. The cycle descriptors are oriented on learning outcomes (see chapter 7). In the Latvian higher education credit points compatible to ECTS are used. In Latvia a credit point is defined as the amount of the workload of one-week full-time studies. The amount for one academic year of full-time

studies is 40 credit points. Recalculating it into the ECTS credits, the amount of Latvian credit points has to be multiplied by 1.5.

4. **The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national framework are transparent.**

The elaboration of the qualifications framework in the Latvian higher education started in 2004. To ensure that referencing process of higher education qualifications is transparent, working groups, which developed cycle descriptors for higher education qualifications and specified their place in the Bologna three-cycle system and the EQF, all higher education stakeholders participated (see Appendices 2, 3, 4). The consultation process was organised during different development stages of framework from 2006-2010 including various seminars and conferences.

5. **The national quality assurance system for higher education refer to the national framework of qualifications and are consistent with the Berlin Communiqué and any subsequent communiqué agreed by ministers in the Bologna Process.**

This criterion is similar to the 5th EQF referencing criteria analysed in chapter 11.1. The Latvian education quality assurance system for higher education refers to the national qualifications framework and is consistent with suggestions raised in Berlin Communiqué (2003), i.e. national quality assurance system includes a definition of the responsibilities of the involved bodies and institutions, evaluation of programmes or institutions, including internal assessment, external review, participation of students and the publication of results, a system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures, international participation, co-operation and networking (see chapter 9.6).

The activities of the Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre, the Higher Education Council and the State Education Quality Service in their functions are based on European principles and guidelines. HEQEC represents Latvia at ENQA as a candidate member, INQAAHE, CEEN, EQANIE and EAQAN.

6. **The national framework and its correspondence to EHEA are shown in all diploma supplements.**

The Diploma Supplement has been successfully introduced in Latvia. Several Latvian HEIs started issuing Diploma Supplements already in 1999. Since 2004 the Diploma Supplement is mandatory both in Latvian and in English. Currently the content and issuing of the Diploma Supplement are regulated by the CoM Regulations (02.10.2007) No.656 “Procedures by which state recognized documents certifying higher education are issued”. See Appendix 10.

The Diploma Supplement conforms to the model developed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO/CEPES). The supplement is prepared to provide objective information and ensure the academic and professional recognition of the qualification documents.

The Diploma Supplement contains information about the substance, level, context, content and status of the studies successfully completed by the person. It does not contain references to the evaluation or equivalence of the qualification, nor suggestions regarding its recognition. Information is provided in all eight sections. If in any of the sections information is not included, the reason is indicated.

7. The responsibility of stakeholders involved in qualifications framework is clearly defined and public.

Responsibility of stakeholders involved in higher education qualifications framework is clearly defined. **The Ministry of Education and Science**, which is the leading state governance institution in the field of education and science, implements a unified state policy and development strategy in education, as well as designs projects of policy planning documents and laws and regulations in the field of education, including higher education.

The Higher Education Council is an institution, which develops national higher education strategy, implements cooperation between HEIs, state institutions and society for developing higher education, supervises the quality of higher education, and ensures that qualitative decisions are taken regarding higher education. HEC consisting of 12 members is approved by *Saeima* on the basis of a proposal of the Minister for Education and Science. HEC includes one delegated representative of the Latvian Academy of Science, the Association of Art Higher Education Institutions, the Latvian Association of Education Managers, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Colleges Association of Latvia, the Latvian Rectors' Council, the Latvian Association of University and College Professors, the Employers' Confederation of Latvia, the Education and Science Workers Trade Union, a representative of the Latvian Students' Association, as well as a delegated representative of institutions of higher education founded by local governments and other legal and natural persons.

Both representatives from MoES and HEC participated in working groups, which elaborated higher education qualifications framework (see Appendices 2, 3, 4).

11.2.1 Referencing of the pre-Bologna qualifications to the Bologna qualifications

In terms of European Commission NARIC project in 2010[35], recommendations on the referencing previously acquired education to the Bologna cycle qualifications have been elaborated.

These recommendations referred to higher education qualifications, which are certified by the nationally recognized diplomas of the Republic of Latvia or the USSR, and to higher education qualifications issued in the Republic of Latvia after August 20, 1991. These recommendations did not apply to higher education qualifications, which are certified by the higher education diplomas issued by the HEIs under direction of the Ministry of the Interior and the military sector (Defence Ministry) of the USSR. In this case, the decision on referencing the relevant higher education qualification is made by HEI, in which the holder of qualification wishes to continue their studies, or by the employer. These recommendations also did not apply to higher education qualifications, which are certified by the diplomas issued by education institutions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist Union of Youth (*Komsomol*). These education documents are referenced to non-formal education documents.

Recommendations on the referencing the higher education qualifications acquired in the education system of the USSR are as follows:

1. Qualification acquired at a HEI of the USSR and attested by a diploma with awarded higher professional qualification is referenced to a Bachelor's degree, if the minimum length of full-time studies is less than five years.
2. Qualification acquired at a HEI of the USSR and attested by a diploma with awarded higher professional qualification is referenced to a Master's degree, if the minimum length of full time studies is five years and more.
3. Qualification acquired at a HEI of the USSR and attested by one of the following documents issued by the Supreme Certification Committee, is equalled to a Doctor's degree:
    1) *Kandidat nauk*;
    2) *Doktor nauk*.

[35] European Commission NARIC project (2010-0064/001-001) "RPFL-recognition of prior formal learning with emphasis on older qualifications", Academic Information Centre, 2010.

Recommendations for referencing the qualifications acquired in the education system of the Republic of Latvia are as follows:

1. Qualification acquired in the education system of the Republic of Latvia and attested by one of the listed education documents, may be referenced to the Bologna cycle Bachelor's degree:
    1) Bachelor's degree, if the length of full-time studies is at least five years;
    2) Higher education institution diploma or higher professional education diploma (diploma of higher professional qualification) or professional higher education diploma (diploma of higher professional qualification), with which a professional qualification is awarded if the minimum duration of full-time studies is less than five years;
    3) Higher professional education diploma (diploma of higher professional qualification) or professional higher education diploma (diploma of higher professional qualification), with which a professional qualification is awarded after obtaining a Bachelor's degree or a higher professional qualification, if the total minimum duration of full-time studies is shorter than five years;
    4) Professional higher education diploma (diploma of higher professional qualification) with awarded professional Bachelor's degree, if the duration of full-time studies is less than five years.
2. Qualification acquired in the education system of the Republic of Latvia and attested by one of the listed education documents, may be referenced to the Bologna cycle Master's degree:
    1) Master's degree;
    2) Higher education institution diploma or higher professional education diploma (diploma of higher professional qualification) or professional higher education diploma (diploma of higher professional qualification), with which a professional qualification is awarded if the minimum duration of full-time studies is five years or longer;
    3) Higher professional education diploma (diploma of higher professional qualification) or professional higher education diploma (diploma of higher professional qualification), with which a professional qualification is awarded after obtaining a Bachelor's degree or a higher professional qualification, if the total minimum duration of full-time studies is five years or longer;
    4) Professional higher education diploma (diploma of higher professional qualification) with awarded professional Master's degree, if the duration of full-time studies is five years or longer.

3. Qualification acquired in the education system of the Republic of Latvia and attested by one of the listed education documents, may be referenced to the Bologna cycle doctor's degree:
    1) Doctor’s diploma;
    2) Habilitated doctor’s diploma.
4. Qualification acquired in the education system of the Republic of Latvia and attested by one of the listed education documents, may be referenced to the short cycle qualification:
    1) Diploma of the first level professional higher education (*diploms par pirmā līmeņa profesionālo augstāko izglītību*);
    2) The first level professional higher education diploma (*pirmā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms*).

12. Further Reforms of Education in Referencing the Latvian Qualifications to the EQF

As mentioned before, the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council (23 April 2008) on the establishment of the EQF for lifelong learning has introduced a range of education reforms in Latvia.

According to the education policy planning document approved by CoM – the Concept "**Raising Attractiveness of Vocational Education and Involvement of Social Partners within Vocational Education Quality Assurance**" (16.09.2009) – the development of national qualification system is planned. Regarding this issue consent between the state and the social partners is reached prior the drafting of the new Vocational Education Law. The agreement stated that national qualifications system will be established comprising 8 professional qualification levels according to the EQF, i.e. national qualifications system will be established comprising 8 professional qualification levels according to the EQF.

MoES has established a working group for elaborating the project of the **Vocational Education Law**, because regarding the Order of CoM of 11 August 2010 No.469 "Amendment to Order of CoM (16.09.2009) No.629 "On the Concept "Raising Attractiveness of Vocational Education and Involvement of Social Partners within Vocational Education Quality Assurance"", MoES has to draft and submit to CoM the new project of the Vocational Education Law until 1 August 2012. Still the issue on the **Higher Education Law**, which approval by the *Saeima* has been delayed, is topical.

With the support of European Structural Funds sectoral qualifications frameworks will be developed. In terms of ESF project "**Development of sectoral qualifications system and increasing the efficiency and quality of vocational education**" (2010-2013) it is planned to explore professions in 12 sectors, as well as tasks, knowledge, skills and competences relevant to the professional activity of these professions; and on basis of developed descriptions of knowledge, skills and competence for sectoral professions, these professions will be placed on the relevant EQF levels included in the Amendments to CoM Regulations (2.12.2008) No.990 "Regulations on the classification of Latvian education" (see Appendix 9).

Recently a project for evaluating higher education programmes and developing recommendations has been launched with the support of ESF in order to promote the quality of higher education. On 9 May 2011, the State Education Development Agency signed agreement with HEC about the allocation of funding for ESF activity "**Improvement of study programmes' content and implementation and**

development of academic personnel's competence". During the project experts will assess 40 higher education programmes in detailed manner to promote the quality, efficiency, international competitiveness of higher education, and to review the correspondence of higher education programmes to economic needs. In the assessment of higher education programmes the use of learning outcomes and qualifications level descriptors when developing and providing higher education programmes will be also taken into account.

Appendices

1 Appendix. Vocabulary used in the Latvian education system

Definitions from Vocational Education Law (1999), Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995) and the Concept of the MoES "Raising Attractiveness of Vocational Education and Involvement of Social Partners within Vocational Education Quality Assurance" (2009) are used for the interpretation of these terms:

- **accreditation of an education institution** (*izglītības iestādes akreditācija*) – the acquiring of rights by an education institution to issue a State recognised education document for the acquisition of education corresponding to a particular education programme;
- **basic education** (*pamatizglītība*) – an educational level in which preparation for the secondary educational level or for professional activity takes place, where basic knowledge and skills necessary for life in society and for the individual life of a person are acquired, and where value-orientation and involvement in public life is developed;
- **centralised examination** (*centralizēts eksāmens*) – an examination developed according to a special methodology and organised according to a single procedure at the national level for the assessment of the educational achievements of students in particular subjects at the conclusion of the basic education and general secondary education level;
- **credit point** (*kredītpunkts*) – an accounting unit of studies which corresponds to a student's work load of 40 academic hours (one week of studies) in which up to 50% of the academic hours are intended for contact lessons;
- **education level** (*izglītības pakāpe*) – a completed stage of education, which includes organised and successively realised acquisition of education;
- **formal education** (*formālā izglītība*) – a system which includes basic education, secondary education and higher education levels the acquisition of the programme of which is certified by an education or professional qualification document recognised by the State, as well as an education and professional qualification document;
- **higher education** (*augstākā izglītība*) – a degree of education in which personality development based on science or art, or science and art, in the selected academic or professional, or academic and professional, field of study, as well as the preparation for scientific or professional activity, which takes place after the completion of a secondary education;
- **informal education** (*neformālā izglītība*) – educational activities in conformity with interests and demand organised outside of formal education;

- **learning outcomes**[36] (*mācīšanās rezultāti*) – knowledge, skills and competences that are acquired during a certain period of education;
- **professional competences** (*profesionālās kompetences*) – the description of the knowledge, skills and responsibility needed for performing professional activities in a concrete work situation;
- **professional orientation education** (*profesionālās ievirzes izglītība*) – the acquisition of systematised knowledge and skills, as well as the formation of values orientation in art, culture or sport concurrently with the basic education or secondary education level;
- **qualification**[37] (*izglītības kvalifikācija* or *izglītību apliecinošs dokuments*) – an outcome of any knowledge and skills acquired, which is formally documented, i.e. document certifying obtained formal education is awarded; .
- **recognition of prior learning** (*neformālās izglītības atzīšana*) – the assessment of professional competences conforming with a concrete profession acquired outside formal education and issuing a document certifying the assessment;
- **secondary education** (*vidējā izglītība*) – an educational level in which multi-dimensional growth of an individual, purposeful and profound development in intentionally chosen general and professional education, or general or professional education stream, preparation for studies at the highest level of education or professional activity, and involvement in public life takes place;
- **special education** (*speciālā izglītība*) – general and vocational education adapted for persons with special needs and/or health problems;
- **State education standard** (*valsts izglītības standarts*) – a document that determines, in conformity with the level and type of education, the main goals and objectives of educational programmes, the mandatory basic content of education, basic criteria for evaluation of acquired education, and general procedures;
- **vocational education** (*profesionālā izglītība*) – practical and theoretical preparation for the practice of a particular profession, and for the acquisition and improvement of professional skill;
- **vocational further education** (*profesionālā tālākizglītība*) – a special kind of vocational education which provides an opportunity for adults with previous education and professional experience to acquire a specific level vocational qualification;
- **vocational in-service training** (*profesionālā pilnveide*) – a special kind of vocational education which provides an opportunity for persons, irrespective of their age and previous education or vocational qualification, to acquire systematic vocational knowledge and skills corresponding to the requirements of the labour market.

[36] The term is defined in the context of this Report, since an official definition is not available.
[37] See the previous footnote.

2 Appendix. Referencing working group

The order of the MoES (28.09.2009) No.405 about the establishment of working group for referencing Latvian qualifications system to the EQF in accordance with the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council (23 April 2008) on the establishment of the EQF for lifelong learning. This working group included:

1	**Chair of the working group:** Kristīne Vāgnere, deputy state secretary on policy issues of MoES
2	**Deputy chair of the working group:** Dace Ratniece, director of the Policy Coordination Department of MoES
Members of working group:	
3	R.Ančupāne, deputy head of State Examination Preparation Unit of the State Education Content Centre
4	O.Bašķere, specialist in general secondary education issues of the Executive office of the Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees
5	I.Brante, deputy director of the Vocational Education and General Education Department and head of the Vocational Education Division of MoES
6	J.Dzelme, chairperson of board of the Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre
7	K.Kazāks, representative of the Latvian Chamber of Crafts
8	O.Kokāne, adviser in education and culture issues of the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments
9	V.Krupskis, headmaster of the Mechanics and Technology College of Olaine
10	D.Kuļšs, deputy director of Policy Coordination Department – head of Lifelong Learning Development Division of MoES
11	R.Leimane, Senior expert of Vocational Education Content Provision Unit of the State Education Content Centre
12	S.Ozoliņa, rapporteur in social and economic issues of the Executive office of the Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees
13	B.Ramiņa, director of Academic Information Centre
14	A.Rauhvargers, Secretary General of Latvian Rectors' Council
15	I.Saknīte, head of academic direction of the Latvian Students' Association
16	M.Skudra, adviser in education and employment affairs of the Employers' Confederation of Latvia
17	M.Strads, legal adviser of the Higher Education Policy Division of the Higher Education Department of MoES
18	K.Strūberga, director of the Quality Evaluation Department of the State Education Quality Service
19	G.Šmaukstele, head of the Vocational Education Division of the Vocational Education and General Education Department of MoES
20	J.Vētra, chairperson of Higher Education Council
21	I.Zvīdriņa, head of Labour Market Policy Division of the Labour Department of the Ministry of Welfare. In absentia she is substituted by V.Vilcāne, senior expert of Labour Market Policy Division of the Labour Department of the Ministry of Welfare
22	D.Papāns, legal advisor of Lifelong Learning Development Division of the Policy Coordination Department of MoES

3 Appendix. Bologna working group established by the Ministry of Education and Science

1	**Chair of the working group** Kristīne Vāgnere, deputy state secretary on policy issues of MoES
Members of working group:	
2	Baiba Ramiņa, director of Academic Information Centre
3	Jānis Vētra, chairperson of Higher Education Council
4	Andrejs Rauhvargers, Secretary General of Latvian Rectors' Council
5	Gita Rēvalde, director of the Higher Education Department of MoES
6	Ilze Trapenciere, specialist in higher education and science issues of the Executive office of the Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees
7	Inese Cvetkova, executive director of Latvian Electrical Engineering and Electronics Industry Association (Employers' Confederation of Latvia)
8	Elmārs Beķeris, study pro-rector of Riga Technical University,
9	Dzintra Prikule, head of Higher Education Programme Unit of Academic Programme Agency
10	Inga Saknīte, head of academic direction of the Latvian Students' Association

4 Appendix. Working group established by the Latvian Rectors' Council

1	**Chair of the working group** Andrejs Rauhvargers, Secretary General of Latvian Rectors' Council
Members of working group:	
2	Baiba Ramiņa, director of Academic Information Centre
3	Jānis Vētra, chairperson of Higher Education Council
4	Gita Rēvalde, director of the Higher Education Department of MoES
5	Māris Strads, legal adviser of the Higher Education Policy Division of the Higher Education Department of MoES
6	Jevgēņijs Kopitovs, rector of Transport and Telecommunication Institute
7	Vija Daukšte, rector of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences
8	Uldis Sukovskis, study pro-rector of Riga Technical University
9	Ilona Kiukucāne, adviser in education and employment affairs of the Employers' Confederation of Latvia
10	Ilze Trapenciere, specialist in higher education and science issues of the Executive office of the Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees (Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia)
11	Inga Saknīte, head of academic direction of the Latvian Students' Association

5 Appendix. Main aims and objectives of basic education programmes

Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.1027
Riga, 19 December 2006 (Minutes No.68 10§)

Regulations on the state standard in basic education and in basic education study subjects' standards

Issued pursuant to Paragraph 19 of Section 14 of Education Law

[...]

II. The main aims and tasks of basic education programmes

1. Basic education programmes have the following main aims:
   1) to ensure to the pupil the basic knowledge and skills necessary in public and personal life;
   2) to create the foundation for the pupil's further education;
   3) to promote harmonious formation and development of the pupil;
   4) to facilitate the pupil's responsible attitude towards self, family, society, environment and the state.
2. Basic education programmes have the following main tasks:
   1) to develop the notion and understanding of the main processes in nature, society and sustainable development, moral and ethical values;
   2) to ensure the opportunity for mastering the basic knowledge and basic skills in language and mathematics;
   3) to ensure the opportunity to acquire the basic learning skills and basic skills in using information technologies;
   4) to ensure the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and democratic values needed for a Latvian citizen;
   5) to ensure the opportunity to gain the experience in creative activities;
   6) to develop the basic notion on Latvian, European and global cultural heritage;
   7) to cultivate communication and cooperation abilities.

Prime Minister A.Kalvītis
Minister for Education and Science B.Rivža

Annex 1 to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 1027 of 19 December 2006

The subjects of study typical of education fields, main tasks, educational aspects and general contents

1. The subjects of study typical of education fields and main tasks

No.	Field of education	Subjects of Study	Main Tasks
1.1.	Basics of technologies and science	Mathematics Natural Sciences Physics Chemistry Biology Geography Information science	To ensure the opportunity to acquire basic knowledge on the regularities of mathematics and natural sciences, on the possibilities of using information technologies, promoting an understanding of the unity of nature. To promote the mastering of the basics of research work, by observing phenomena and processes in nature, using mathematical models and information technologies. To develop understanding of the interconnection between achievements in mathematics and natural sciences, technologies, the everyday life of people, economic activities and environment, creating the need to safeguard environment and health. To develop diverse learning experience.
1.2.	Language	Latvian language Latvian language and literature (in minority education programmes) Minority language (in minority education programmes) Foreign language	To develop the linguistic competence, i.e., to understand the idea of a spoken and written text; to express one's thoughts creatively in writing and orally. To improve knowledge of the system of language, its regularities and features. To cultivate the culture of language and communication. To teach to perceive language as a component of the human and national culture and develop personal responsibility for one's own linguistic culture. To improve independent learning skills.
1.3.	Arts	Literature Music Visual art	To acquaint with diverse forms of artistic expression. To encourage self-expression in creative work, to participate in artistic activities (for example, to sing, play, draw, sculpt, write), to develop the perception of a work of art. To acquaint with the diversity of the art world. To improve learning skills.
1.4.	Man and society	Latvia's and world history Social sciences Housekeeping and technologies Sports Ethics Christian fait	To develop an understanding of the general conditions for the mental and physical development of a human being and of civic stance. To improve the understanding of the structure and development of society. To improve the understanding of sustainable development. To develop the experience in independent, creative and substantiated interpretation of past and contemporary events. To develop communication and cooperation skills. To promote a positive and active attitude towards life in society and develop the skills for democratic civic participation. To improve independent learning skills.

2. Educational aspects included in a field of education and their general contents

No.	Educational aspects	General contents
2.1.	Aspect of self-expression and creativity	Experience of creative activities. Opportunity to look independently for and find solutions to practical problems, to discover interconnections. Cultivation of resourcefulness, imagination. Possibility to engage in artistic creativity, sports.
2.2.	Analytical critical aspect	Experience of intellectual activities – independent, logical, consistent, substantiated, critical and productive thinking. Ability to define and substantiate one's opinion. Linking past, present and future events.
2.3.	Moral and aesthetic aspect	Understanding of concepts linked with human interaction – fairness, respect, equality, honesty, reliability, responsibility, composure, helpfulness, sensitivity, and kindness. Understanding of a person's rights to equality. Positive attitude towards culture heritage.
2.4.	Aspect of cooperation	Cooperation and teamwork skills. The skill to listen to and respect different opinions. The skill to take a decision and assume responsibility for its implementation. The skill to act responsibly in conflict situations, extreme situations and to take care for one's own and others' safety, to look for help, if necessary.
2.5.	Aspect of communication	Latvian language skills. Practical experience in language use. The skill to communicate (converse, write, read) in several languages. Public presentation skills, the skill to express and substantiate one's opinion.
2.6.	Aspect of learning and practical activity	Independent learning skills, as well as the skill to plan and organize the learning process. Acquisition of diverse knowledge and skills and using them in practical activities. The skill to use various types of information in learning process, to seek advice, to find assistance. The skill to use modern technologies.
2.7.	Mathematical aspect	Using mathematics in practical life (for example, measuring, calculating, comparing, illustrating in figures and graphs).

Minister for Education and Science B.Rivža

6 Appendix. Main aims and objectives of general secondary education programmes

Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.715
Riga, 2 September 2008 (Minutes No.61 47 §)

Regulations on the state general secondary education standard and standards of general secondary education study subjects

Issued pursuant to Paragraph 19 of Section 14 of Education Law and Paragraph 11 of Section 4 of the General Education Law.

[...]

II. The main aims and tasks of general secondary education programmes

1. General secondary education programmes have the following main aims and tasks:
   1) to ensure to the student the knowledge and skills necessary for personal growth and development, civic participation, employment, social integration and continuation of education;
   2) to promote the development of the student into a mentally, emotionally and physically developed personality, to cultivate healthy life-style habits;
   3) to promote the student's socially active stance, in safeguarding and developing one's own language, national and cultural uniqueness, as well as to improve understanding of the principles of human rights included in the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia and other legal acts;
   4) to develop the student's ability to learn and improve independently, to motivate for lifelong learning and considered choice of a career.
2. To ensure to the student the knowledge and skills necessary for personal growth and development, civic participation, employment, social integration and continuation of education, the main tasks are the following:
   1) to provide the necessary knowledge, to develop the student's abilities and skills in the chosen direction of general secondary education;
   2) to create an understanding of the processes taking place in the society and the wish to participate in the sustainable development of society in a co-responsible way;
   3) to promote the development of creative and intellectual abilities;
   4) to improve the skills of using modern information and communication technologies.
   5) to promote the student's competitiveness in acquiring further education.

3. To promote the development of the student into a mentally, emotionally and physically developed personality and to cultivate healthy life-style habits, the main tasks are the following:
    1) to improve the understanding of a healthy life-style, awareness of the need to take care of one's physical development, health and safety;
    2) to facilitate getting acquainted with various cultures, awareness of cultural values and national identity;
    3) to improve the experience in creative a activities, to promote the development of student's emotional and creative abilities.
4. To promote the student's socially active stance, in safeguarding and developing one's own language, national and cultural uniqueness, as well as to improve understanding of the principles of human rights included in the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia and other legal acts, the main tasks are the following:
    1) to deepen the understanding of the role of Latvian language in a multicultural society;
    2) to improve the Latvian language, minority language (in minority education programmes) and foreign languages competence as a means for the mental, intellectual development and self-expression of a personality in a multicultural society;
    3) to improve the understanding of cultural diversity in the context of the values of Latvian and world culture;
    4) to promote interest and understanding of one's own place in society, Latvian and world culture heritage, responsible participation in the creation of culture environment, on the basis of the principles of democracy and humane values;
    5) to improve understanding of the socioeconomic regularities in the development of society and the diversity of its structures;
5. To develop the student's ability to learn and improve independently, to motivate for lifelong learning and considered choice of a career, the main tasks are the following:
    1) to improve the skill of practical and independent work;
    2) to use diverse learning methods and technologies appropriate to the study work, being aware of one's creative potential;
    3) to create motivation for career choice.
6. In the minority education programmes every year at least five study subjects are studied in Latvian language. These subjects do not include Latvian language and literature.
7. The acquisition of study contents in the minority language can be ensured for up to two fifths of the total study load during the school year.

7 Appendix. Main objectives of vocational secondary and vocational education programmes

Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.211
Riga, 27 June 2000 (Minutes No.29 3 §)

Regulations on the state vocational secondary education standard and the state vocational education standard

Issued pursuant to Paragraph 19, Section 14 of Education Law and Section 23.2. of Vocational Education Law

[...]

Annex 1 to Cabinet of Ministers Regulation NO.211 of 27 June 2000

The main tasks of the programmes of state vocational secondary education and vocational education

1. In accordance with Para 2.1. of this Regulation: to prepare the student for activities in a specific profession, promoting his or her development into a mentally and physically developed, free, responsible and creative personality

No	**Main tasks**	The level to be achieved by the student in implementing the main tasks of **vocational secondary education programme** in conformity with **the third level professional qualification**	The level to be achieved by the student in implementing the main tasks of **vocational programme** in conformity with **the second level professional qualification**
1.1.	To ensure acquisition of skills and knowledge and to promote the development of abilities towards the chosen vocational education	Has mastered the chosen vocational education programme	Has mastered the chosen vocational education programme
1.2.	On the basis of person's ethical experience, to promote the development of the system of values needed for independent life in society	Ethical evaluation skills have been improved A humane system of values has been developed and ethnical awareness as guidelines for action Knows the basic ethical principles of business relationships	A humane system of values has been developed and ethnical awareness as guidelines for action
1.3.	To develop communication and cooperation skills	Communication skills have been improved Able to solve conflicts Able to work and cooperate within a group	Communication skills have been improved Able to work and cooperate within a group
1.4.	To broaden the insight into Latvian and world culture heritage	Is aware of national culture as part of humanity's culture	Is aware of national culture as part of humanity's culture
1.5.	To improve aesthetical awareness	Aesthetical awareness has been improved, as well as the ability to evaluate, taking into consideration the aesthetical aspect	Aesthetical awareness has been improved

1.6.	To promote the acquisition of experience from creative activities and to develop creative abilities	Motivation for creative self-expression has been developed	Motivation for creative self-expression has been developed
1.7.	To promote the strengthening of health and physical development, to promote understanding of health as a pre-condition for the quality of life	Leads a healthy life-style	Leads a healthy life-style

2. In accordance with Para 2.2. of this Regulation: to promote acquisition of knowledge and skills, development of attitudes, which would ensure to the student the acquisition of the second or third level professional qualification and would promote his or her competitiveness under changing socio-economic conditions

No	**Main tasks**	The level to be achieved by the student in implementing the main tasks of **vocational secondary education programme** in conformity with **the third level professional qualification**	The level to be achieved by the student in implementing the main tasks of **vocational programme** in conformity with **the second level professional qualification**
2.1.	To develop skills and abilities of general intellectual activities	Is able to perform intellectual activities on the level of knowledge, understanding, usage and simple analysis Uses knowledge and theoretical understanding in a complex activity of a wide range Is able to obtain and assess information independently Uses a wide range of knowledge and skills for solving well-defined, but unknown and unpredictable problems	Is able to perform intellectual activities on the level of knowledge, understanding and usage Uses in-depth knowledge with corresponding theoretical substantiation in narrow fields of activities Interprets the available information independently Performs complex (complicated) activities – predominantly in predictable situations
2.2.	To acquire practical and theoretical training conforming with the professional qualification	Has the following knowledge and skills conforming with the professional qualification: 1) detailed theoretical knowledge and understanding; 2) a wide range of skills, skills and mastery essential for the profession Is able to perform the work independently, including the planning and supervision of the work to be done	Has the following knowledge and skills conforming with the professional qualification: 1) general knowledge; 2) a wide range of skills and skills essential for the profession Is able to perform the work independently and achieve the result within a limited period of time
2.3.	To master theoretically and practically the technologies and environment in conformity with the professional	Knows and is able to use appropriate technologies	Knows and is able to use appropriate technologies

	qualification		
2.4.	To acquire the skill to use technologies for obtaining and processing information	Is able to use technologies for obtaining and processing information in professional activities	Is able to use technologies for obtaining and processing information
2.5.	To improve the Latvian language proficiency and learn at least one foreign language	Cultivated Latvian language proficiency and improved the proficiency of a foreign language(-es)	Improved proficiency of Latvian language and a foreign language(-es)
2.6.	To promote the understanding of Latvia's historical experience a in the context of European and world history	Knows and understands the regularities of historical development of one's own region, Latvia, Europe and the world	Is aware of the regularities of historical development of one's own region, Latvia, Europe and the world
2.7.	To perfect theoretical knowledge and skills in mathematics	Is able to use mathematical knowledge and skills in professional activities	Is able to use mathematical knowledge and skills
2.8.	To perfect the ability to study, analyze and observe the processes in nature and society	Is able to use the knowledge of the facts and rules of natural sciences in professional activities Is able to assess the processes in nature in society and to see them systemically and in development Understands the principle of the unity of ecological space and abides by the environment protection requirements in professional activities	Is able to assess the processes in nature and society Abides by the environment protection requirements in professional activities
2.9.	To promote the development of a systemic view of the socioeconomic structure of the society and the economic processes in contemporary society	Understands the basic principles of market economy Is able to find one's place in the economic structures of the society and function in them Understands the economic relationship of the employer and the employee and knows the relevant acts of legislation	Is able to find one's place in the economic structures of the society and function in them Understands the economic relationship of the employer and the employee and knows the relevant acts of legislation
2.10.	To form an understanding about the European Union as the contemporary European socioeconomic model	Has an understanding about the political structure of the European Union, as well as the principles of common economic space and the mobility of labour	Has an understanding of the principle of the EU labour mobility

2.11.	To develop self-assessment, independent action and decision taking skills, to promote the development of attitudes and understanding of values needed for professional growth	Adequately assesses one's own abilities Plans activities in accordance with circumstances, possibilities and one's own abilities Schedules time in accordance with the task Is able to make substantiated choice and take a decision independently under known and unknown conditions Is able to take responsibility for the quantitative and qualitative results of one's own professional activities, assumes a partial responsibility for the performance of others Is purposeful, systematic and rational in one's activities Is meticulous and accurate Abel to take initiative	Adequately assesses one's own abilities Plans activities in accordance with circumstances, possibilities and one's own abilities Performs a definite task within a limited period of time Is able to take a decision – predominantly under known circumstances Assumes responsibility for the quality and quantity of the result of the professional activity Is systemic and rational in one's activities Is meticulous and accurate

3. In accordance with Para 2.3. of this Regulation: to promote a student's positive attitude towards other people and the state, to facilitate self-confidence and the ability to assume the responsibilities of a Latvian citizen.

No.	**Man tasks**	The level to be achieved by a student in implementing the main tasks of **vocational secondary education programme in** conformity with the **third level professional qualification**	The level to be achieved by a student in implementing the main tasks of **vocational programme** in conformity with **the second level professional qualification**
3.1.	To form an understanding of the foundations of the state, policy and law, to develop skills for participation in democratic society	Knows the political structure of one's own state Understands the basic principles of law and democracy and is able to realize one's rights by using the institutions of a democratic society Is tolerant towards people of other ethnic and social groups	Understands the basic principles of law and democracy and is able to realize one's rights by using the institutions of a democratic society Is tolerant towards people of other ethnic and social groups
3.2.	To develop a civic attitude towards the security of the state and society	Understands an individual's responsibility for fostering the security of the state and society	Understands an individual's responsibility for fostering the security of the state and society

4. In accordance with Para 2.4. of this Regulation: to create motivation for professional development and further education and to ensure to the student the opportunity to prepare for continuing education on the level of professional higher education.

No	**Main tasks**	The level to be achieved by the student in implementing the main tasks of **vocational secondary education programme** in conformity with **the third level professional qualification**	The level to be achieved by the student in implementing the main tasks of **vocational programme** in conformity with **the second level professional qualification**
4.1.	To develop learning skills and interest in continuing education in accordance with one's own abilities and needs	Able to select and critically assess in a targeted way sources of information Is able to engage in self-education and to master new skills. Is motivated to master new technologies Is motivated for the professional career development. Is motivated to continue one's education	Is able to engage in self-education and to master new skills Is motivated to master new technologies Is motivated to continue one's education
4.2.	To develop the skill to inform about one's own professional competence, achievements and performance results	Is able to form and express one's opinion, is able to inform visually about the results of one's activities	Is able to inform about the results of one's activities

8 Appendix. Sample of occupational standard

APPROVED
at the meeting of the National Tripartite Sub-Council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment
on 17 June 2009, Minutes No.5

The occupational standard for the furniture carpenter

1. General issues

1) Name of the profession – furniture carpenter.
2) Code of the profession – 7422 16.

2. Description of occupation

1) Professional qualification level – 3rd level of professional qualification.
2) Summary of the basic tasks of professional activities:

Furniture carpenter is a wood processing specialist, who makes, assembles and installs on site furniture of various kinds and constructions, including, solid wood and wooden board and upholstered furniture, as well performs repairs and restoration of furniture. A furniture carpenter plans and organizes the performance of working tasks independently, complies with the technological requirements in production, the sequence of operations, ensures the operability of equipment, technological lines and tools, abides by the requirements of labour and environment protection. According to necessity cooperates with the client – takes in orders, provides advice, elaborates a sketch, prepares a cost estimate and delivers the product to the client. The furniture carpenter predominantly works at carpentry workshops, wood-processing and furniture production companies, as well as on sites.

3. Professional competences needed for performing professional activities

1) Ability to accept and evaluate raw materials and materials – to evaluate the conformity of the quality of raw materials and materials for producing a product.
2) Ability to produce a sketch on the basis of an oral description.
3) Ability to read and understand technical documents, drafts, technological maps, instructions and other working documents, to apply the obtained information in the process of work.
4) Ability to perform gluing, veneering and sanding of wood elements and materials.
5) Ability to select the appropriate type of machining centres, to work with combined and universal machining equipment.

6) Ability to produce, assemble and install on site furniture of various types and constructions (solid wood and wood board furniture, framework furniture and upholstered furniture) and other wood products, as well as to perform simple furniture repair and renovation work.
7) Ability to maintain machining centres and technological lines.
8) Ability to finish wooden products, choosing the appropriate tools for finishing and restoring works.
9) Ability to produce decorative elements for furniture, choosing appropriate tools.
10) Ability to work with control and measuring tools, to determine the compliance of the raw material, the finished production and packaging materials with the quality and technical requirements.
11) Ability to collect and analyse information about the work of a technological line or separate machines to detect and prevent in a timely manner deviations in the technological process, to prevent the production of low quality products, to look for creative problem solutions.
12) Ability to known and apply labour protection rules, to comply with electric and fire safety rules on the job and when working at wood processing machining centres or technological lines, to use safe working methods.
13) Ability to abide by the environment protection requirements.
14) Ability to work with simple equipment for lifting and moving cargo, when operating technological lines or machining centres.
15) Ability to prepare documentation for the final products and to forward the final products to the clients or for storing at the warehouse.

4. Skills necessary for implementing the basic tasks of professional activities

1) To understand the drafts of furniture constructions and other wooden products.
2) To prepare detailed description of wooden products, to prepare specification.
3) To elaborate a sketch of the product;
4) To make solid wood and wood board furniture of various constructions and decorative elements for this furniture.
5) To make simple elements of upholstered and other furniture.
6) To make repairs and restore furniture and other wooden products.
7) To choose methods of assembling and assemble, including, on site assembling.
8) To perform gluing and veneering works, using various glues and gluing equipment; to determine the quality of the glue joint.

9) To select materials for work and use them rationally.
10) To process wood with tools and electric hand-held instruments.
11) To prepare equipment, tools, auxiliary equipment for work and to check their compliance with labour and environment protection requirements.
12) To do mechanical processing works of wood with machining equipment (circular saw benches, band saw tables, bed-type millers, milling equipment, drilling machines, drilling-punching machines, bench grinders, turning and other machining equipment).
13) To perform preparatory work linked with the use of machining tools and equipment (choosing appropriate cutting instruments, assessing the quality of cutting equipment, to maintain and store the equipment, to maintain the wood processing machining tools in working order, to assemble and regulate protective equipment, auxiliary equipment or other technological equipment).
14) To perform the chemical protection of wooden products and finishing of furniture with hand-held tools (brushes, rolls) and with spraying method.
15) To work in a group, to plan one's own and the group's work.
16) To be competent in the planning and organisation of one's work.
17) To prepare production cost estimates.
18) To cooperate with the client.
19) To organise one's working place and to perform works in compliance with the appropriate labour protection, electric and fire safety and environment protection requirements.
20) To provide first aid if accidents happen.

5. Knowledge necessary for performing the basic tasks of professional activities

1) To perform the basic tasks of professional activities the knowledge on the level of notion is needed of:
   1.1 The basics of micro- and macro economy.
2) To perform the basic tasks of professional activities the knowledge on the level of understanding is needed of:
   2.1 basics of physics;
   2.2 materials science;
   2.3 basics of chemistry;
   2.4 basics of electric engineering;
   2.5 computer skills;

2.6 automatic machining centres and technological lines used in wood processing.

3) To perform the basic tasks of professional activities the knowledge on the level of applying is needed of:

3.1. macroscopic structure of timber and log sections;

3.2. physical, mechanical properties and technological properties;

3.3. defects of timber;

3.4. sawn timber and blanks;

3.5. board materials;

3.6. glues and finishing materials;

3.7. new perspective materials;

3.8. basics of wood processing;

3.9. wood processing machining equipment and tools;

3.10. wood processing technology;

3.11. glues, gluing and veneering technology;

3.12. protective and finishing materials for wood products, protection and finishing technology;

3.13. knowledge of machining tools for wood processing and of cutting instruments;

3.14. re-cycling of wood processing waste;

3.15. constructions of wood products and furniture;

3.16. technical measurements, fit tolerance;

3.17. drafts, reading of drafts;

3.18. commercial activities;

3.19. labour protection (including, safety, labour law and rights);

3.20. performance of mathematic calculations (calculation of area, volume, amount, percentage);

3.21. elementary knowledge in chemistry (solvents, diluents, glues);

3.22. hardeners; understanding of the processes of drying, hardening and reaction);

3.23. understanding, reading and applying the measures of different systems (mass, area, volume, geometrical sizes, speed, rotation, temperature);

3.24. understanding of elementary physics (movement, resistance, adhesion, cohesion, electricity);

3.25. simple terms, symbols in foreign languages linked with wood processing (English, German);

3.26. Latvian language;

3.27. communication.

Duties and tasks

Duties	Tasks
1. To accept and evaluate raw materials and materials	1.1.To assess the conformity of the quality of raw materials and materials (sawn timber, board materials, rotary cut veneer and sliced veneer, glues, varnishes, sanding belts, abrasive materials, etc.) with the supplier's certificate and specifications. 1.2.To verify the conformity of the raw materials with the requirements of the technological process; to measure, record and assess results. 1.3. To comply with the quality management system procedures and instructions regarding acceptance and storing of raw materials and materials.
2. To perform mechanical processing of wood and wooden materials	2.1. To perform the sawing of wood and wooden materials with circular saw, circular saw for ending and band saw equipment. 2.2 To process the blanks with saw setting, thicknessing and four-cutter equipment. 2.3. To cut the blanks with moulding tools with upper and lower placement of shafts and other cutting equipment. 2.4. To make a drill in accordance with the task, with single or multi-shaft drilling machines. 2.5. To make mortises etc. with drilling, drilling-punching and other machining equipment. 2.6.To perform turning works on turning machining. 2.7. To perform the sanding of blanks and aggregate units on band, disc, drum, combined and other sanding machines. 2.8. To use wood processing tools and auxiliary equipment in executing the task. 2.9. To use electric hand-held tools and mobile-stationary equipment for executing the tasks. 2.10. To apply the necessary individual means of labour protection and protective measures for equipment.
3. To perform the gluing, veneering and sanding work on wood and wood materials	3.1. To prepare elements for gluing and the glue. 3.2. To glue wooden materials, blanks and details by using adjustable clamps, glue presses, block presses, etc. 3.3. To glue solid wood boards by using adjustable clamps and frame presses, etc. 3.4. To prepare sliced veneer and to veneer wood materials in block presses, cold and hot hydraulic pressed and vacuum equipment. 3.5. To glue on the sides of joint-type details side materials from solid wood, sliced veneer, PHV, by using adjustable clamp, special machining benches and equipment.

	3.6. To perform gluing works when repairing and restoring furniture and other wood products.
4. To perform the work to produce wooden products and furniture	4.1. To perform the calculations of necessary raw materials, assessment and preparatory work for producing the product. 4.2. To carry out the necessary measurements with the measuring tools used in the wood-processing sector. 4.3. To make the markings necessary for producing blanks and details. 4.4. To perform the necessary machine processing and carpentry work.
5. To perform the work for producing simple upholstered furniture	5.1. To assess the wooden materials for producing mattresses, seats of chairs, back frames, etc. and other simple elements. 5.2. To make the basis for upholstered elements. 5.3. To prepare all materials needed for upholstery work. 5.4. To perform the upholstering works for producing upholstered and semi-upholstered furniture.
6. To make decorative elements for furniture	6.1.To prepare the tools necessary for the work. 6.2. To assess the appropriateness of the raw material for executing wood carving, turning and inlaid works. 6.3. To create various ornaments in inlaid work technique. 6.4. To create woodcarvings with the methods of notching, ribbing and linear cutting. 6.5. To turn elements of various profiles. 6.6. To assess the quality of obtained furniture elements and to correct defects.
7. To perform chemical protection works for wood products and finishing works with spray pistols, brushes or rolls	7.1. To prepare tools or equipment for work. 7.2. To ass the utility of the protective and finishing materials; to prepare the solvent for work. 7.3.To perform the work for the chemical protection of wood and/ or the finishing work of the product. 7.4.To assess the quality and eliminate defects (if possible). 7.5.To assess the necessary labour and environmental protection measures and to apply individual means of protection.
8. To perform tasks linked with the maintenance of machining centres and equipment	8.1.To perform tasks linked with the preparing of equipment or machining centres for the performance of a concrete task. 8.2. To perform the preparatory works for cutting instruments, assembling of sanding materials, to assemble cutting tools. 8.3. To assess the performance of the machining centre; to test the braking systems; to control the indicators of measuring equipment. 8.4. To verify the conformity of equipment and machining centres to the labour protection requirements.
9. To ensure quality of work	9.1. To comply with the technological requirements for producing elements and products. 9.2. To control the conformity of the sizes with the drafts. 9.3. To assess the quality of the surface processing of elements and of the finishing layer.

10.To use the documentation needed in the production process	10.1. To understand the drafts of products, aggregate units and elements. 10.2. To calculate the number of elements to be produced and the materials, fittings necessary. 10.3. To draw cutting maps. 10.4. To use technological documentation, to fill out product documentation.
11. To comply with labour law, to abide by the labour and environment protection requirements	11.1. Before starting work to check the compliance of machining centres, equipment and tools with the labour protection requirement and comply with these requirements while working. 11.2. To provide first aid. 11.3. To act efficiently in case of fire. 11.4. To comply with environment protection requirements.
12.To accept orders, to coordinate proposals, to make a product and to submit the finished product to the client	12.1. To elaborate sketches of the proposal and suggest the recommended materials, substantiate the choice. 12.2. To prepare cost estimates and receive approval. 12.3. To make the product. 12.4. To submit the product to the client; in case of necessity install the product in the location indicated by the client.

The working group for drafting the occupational standard for the furniture carpenter:

- Maija Grīnberģe – Rīga Pārdaugava Vocational Secondary School, teacher
- Juris Emsiņš – Rīga Technical University, Department of Materials Science and Applied Chemistry, practice docent
- Jānis Mārciņš – Latvian Association of Wood Processing Companies and Exporters, managing director
- Māris Avotiņš – Ltd. The Technological Centre of Zemgale, director

Expert of the occupational standard for the furniture carpenter:

- Andris Plezers – Association “Latvijas Mēbeles” (Latvian Furniture), managing director

9 Appendix. Regulations on the classification of Latvian education

Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No.931
Riga, 5 October 2010 (Minutes No.51, § 16)

Amendments to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations of 2 December 2008 No.990 "Regulations on the classification of Latvian education"

Issued pursuant to Section 71 of the Official Statistics Law

The following amendments shall be introduced to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations of 2 December 2008 No.990 "Regulations on the classification of Latvian education" (The newspaper Latvijas Vēstnesis, 2008, No.190, 2009, No.29):

1. To express Annex 1 in new wording (Annex 1).

2. To express Annex 3 in new wording (Annex 2).

Prime Minister *V.Dombrovskis*

Minister of Education and Science *T.Koķe*

Annex 1 to Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No.931 of 5 October 2010
"Annex 1 to Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No.990 of 2 December 2008
Table 1

The first and the second classification level and their comparison with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-97) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

First Classification Level		**Second Classification Level**		**ISCED-97**	**EQF**
1st No. of code	education level	1st and 2nd No. of code (with/without letter)	type of educational programme		
0	Pre-school education	00	Compulsory pre-school educational programmes for five and six year-olds (for children, who have not attended a pre-school institution of education prior commencing compulsory education)	0	
		01	Pre-school educational programmes		
1	First stage of basic education	11	General education, programmes of the first stage of basic education (Grades 1-6)	1	
		10V	Professional orientation education, to be implemented parallel to the programme of the 1st stage of basic education		
		10T	Continuing vocational education (to obtain level 1 professional qualification), to be implemented without restrictions regarding prior education		

2	Second stage of basic education	21	General education, basic education programmes (Grades 1-9)	2A, 2B	1-3
		23	General education, programmes of the second stage of the basic education (Grades 7-9)	2A, 2B	3
		26	General basic education pedagogical correction programmes (educational adjustment programmes for Grade 9)	2A, 2B	3
		22	Vocational basic education, to be implemented without restrictions regarding prior education	2C	3
		20T	Continuing vocational education (to obtain level 2 professional qualification), to be implemented after full or partial acquisition of basic education programme		3
		20P	Professional improvement programme to be implemented after acquisition of basic education		3
		20V	Professional orientation education, to be implemented parallel to the programme of general basic education (Grades 1-9)		3
3	Secondary education level	31	General education (acquisition of general secondary education), to be implemented following the acquisition of basic education. Length of studies – 3 years.	3A, 3B	4
		32	Vocational education (acquisition of 2nd level professional qualification)	3C	4
		33	Vocational secondary education (acquisition of level 3 professional qualification), to be implemented following acquisition of basic education	3A, 3B	4
		35a	Vocational education (acquisition of level 2 professional qualification), to be implemented following the acquisition of general secondary education	4B	4
		35b	Vocational secondary education (acquisition of level 3 professional qualification), to be implemented following the acquisition of general secondary education		4
		36	General education (acquisition of general secondary education), continuation of vocational education. The length of studies – a year.	3A, 3B	4
		37	Vocational secondary education (acquisition of level 3 professional qualification), continuation of vocational education		4
		30T	Continuing vocational education (acquisition of levels 2 or 3 professional qualification), to be implemented following the acquisition of general or vocational secondary education		4
		30P	Professional improvement programme to be		4

			implemented following the acquisition of general or vocational secondary education		
		30V	Professionally orientated education, to be implemented parallel to the acquisition of general or vocational secondary education		4
4	Higher education level	41	1st level professional higher (college) education (acquisition of level 4 professional qualification). The length of full-time studies - 2-3 years	5B	5
		42	2nd level professional higher education (acquisition of level 5 professional qualification and professional Bachelor's degree in the field of professional activities) or 2nd level professional higher education (acquisition of level 5 professional qualification). The length of full-time studies – at least 4 years	5A	6
		43	Academic education (Bachelor's degree). The length of full-time studies – 3-4 years		6
		44	2nd level professional higher education (acquisition of level 5 professional qualification), continuation of college education. Length of full-time studies – at least 1 - 2 years. Total length of full-time studies – at least 4 years.		6
		45	Academic education (Master's degree). Length of full-time studies – 1-2 years. The total length of full-time studies - at least 5 years.		7
		46	2nd level professional higher education, which is implemented on the basis of higher education and which ensures the acquisition of level 5 professional qualification (continuation of education with code 43). The length of full-time studies – at least a year. The total length of full-time studies – at least 4 years		6
		47	2nd level professional higher education, which ensures the acquisition of level 5 professional qualification and the professional Master's degree or professional Master's degree in the field of professional activities. The length of full-time studies – at least a year. The total length of full-time studies – 5 years.		7
		48	2nd level professional higher education (acquisition of 5th level professional qualification). The length of studies - at least a year. The total length of full-time studies – at least 5 years.		7
5		51	Doctoral studies (doctoral degree). The length of studies – 3-4 years. Full-time studies.	6	8

Table 2

Descriptors of knowledge, skills and competence confirming to the EQF level

EQF level[38]	Knowledge (knowledge and comprehension)	Skills (ability to apply knowledge, communication, general skills)	Competence (analysis, synthesis and assessment)
1	Able to demonstrate elementary knowledge, which manifests itself in recognition and recollection.	Able to use elementary practical and cognitive skills, able to execute them under direct supervision using simple tools. Able to perform simple tasks, which are repetitive as to their content and predictable.	Able to perform tasks in a structured environment, to function in a limited context. Is able to perform elementary tasks, following a model, able to master basic self- care skills.
2	Able to demonstrate basic knowledge in concrete subject syllabi.	Able to use basic cognitive and practical skills, which are necessary to solve everyday problems by using relevant information, perform tasks and using simple rules and means. Able to understand the consequences of one's own actions with regard to self and others.	Able to perform tasks individually or in a group under supervision or semi-independently. Able to participate in setting some learning objectives and planning the course of actions.
3	Able to demonstrate the knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts and to use them in the field of studies and professional activities. Able to understand various information about materials, technologies in the relevant field of studies or a concrete profession.	Able to use various cognitive and practical skills, which are necessary to perform tasks and to solve simple problems, by selecting and using basic methods, means, materials, information and technologies.	Able to be aware of and assume responsibility for performing work or study tasks in a permanent and stable environment under the supervision of a specialist in the sector. When solving the tasks, is able to adjust one's actions to conditions and to be responsible for the result of work.
4	Able to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of facts, theories and causalities, which are needed for personal growth and development, civic participation, social integration and continuous education. Able to comprehend in detail and demonstrate knowledge of	Able to plan and organise work, using various methods, technologies (including information and communication technologies), equipment, tools and materials for performing tasks. Able to find, assess and creatively use information for performing study or professional work tasks and problem solving. Able to communicate at least in two languages both in writing and orally in a known and unknown context. Able to work independently in the profession, to learn and to improve	Is motivated for further career development, continuous education, life-long learning in a knowledge- oriented democratic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural society in Europe and in the world. Able to plan and perform study or work tasks in the profession individually, in a team or by managing the teamwork. Able to assume responsibility for the quality

[38] These level descriptors were elaborated referring to the EQF lever descriptors; therefore, here eight levels are called "EQF levels" although these descriptors feature the LQF.

	diverse facts, principles, processes and concepts in a specific field of studies or professional activities in standard and non-standard situations. Has good knowledge of technologies and methods for performing study or work tasks in the profession.	professional qualifications. Able to cooperate.	and quantity of the outcomes of study or professional activities.
5	Able to demonstrate comprehensive and specialised knowledge and understanding of facts, theories, causalities and technologies of the concrete professional field.	Able, on the basis of analytical approach, to perform practical tasks in the concrete profession, demonstrate skills, allowing to find creative solutions to professional problems, to discuss and provide arguments regarding practical issues and solutions in the concrete profession with colleagues, clients and management, able to, with an appropriate degree of independence, to engage in further learning, improving one's competences. Able to assess and improve one's own actions and those of other people, to work in co-operation with others, to plan and to organise work to perform concrete tasks in one's profession or to supervise such work activities, in which unpredictable changes are possible.	Able to define, describe and analyse practical problems in one's profession, select the necessary information and use it for solving clearly defined problems, to participate in the development of the concrete professional field, demonstrate understanding of the place of the concrete profession in a broader social context.
6	Able to demonstrate the basic and specialised knowledge typical of the concrete branch of science or profession and a critical understanding of this knowledge, moreover, a part of this knowledge complies with the highest level of achievement in this branch of science or profession. Able to demonstrate understanding of the most important concepts and causalities of the	Able, by using the mastered theoretical foundations and skills, perform professional, artistic, innovative or research activity, to define and describe analytically information, problems and solutions in one's own branch of science or profession, to explain them and to provide arguments when discussing these with both specialist and non-specialists. Is able to structure independently one's own learning, to guide one's own and one's subordinates further learning and improvement of professional qualification, to demonstrate scientific approach to problem solving, to assume responsibility and take initiative when performing individual work, when working in a team or managing the work of other people, to take decisions and find creative solutions under changing or unclear conditions.	Able to obtain, select and analyse information independently and to use it, to take decisions and solve problems in the concrete branch of science or profession, demonstrate understanding of professional ethics, assess the impact of one's professional activities on environment and society and participate in the development of the concrete professional field.

	concrete branch of science or professional field.		
7	Able to demonstrate advanced or extensive knowledge and understanding, a part of which conforms to the most recent findings in the concrete branch of science or professional field and which provide the basis for creative thinking or research, inter alia, working in the interface of various fields.	Able to use independently theory, methods and problem solving skills to perform research or artistic activities, or highly qualified professional functions. Able to provide arguments when explaining or discussing complex or systemic aspects of the concrete branch of science or professional field both to specialists and non-specialists. Able to guide independently the improvement of one's own competences and specialisation, to assume responsibility for the results of staff and group work and analyse them, to perform business activities, innovations in the concrete branch of science or profession, to perform work, research or further learning under complex or unpredictable conditions, if necessary, change them, using new approaches.	Able to define independently and critically analyse complex professional problems, substantiate decisions and, if necessary, carry out additional analysis. Able to integrate knowledge of various fields, contribute to the creation of new knowledge, research or the development of new professional working methods, demonstrate understanding and ethical responsibility for the possible impact of the scientific results or professional activity on environment and society.
8	Able to demonstrate that has good knowledge of and understands most topical scientific theories and insights, has mastered research methodology and contemporary research methods in the concrete branch of science or professional field and in the interface of various fields.	Able to assess and select independently appropriate methods for scientific research, has contributed to the expansion of the limits of knowledge or given new understanding of the existing knowledge, by carrying out an original research of major scope, part of which is on the level of internationally cited publications. Able to communicate both orally and in writing about one's own field of scientific activity (one's own branch) with wider research community and the general public. Able to improve one's scientific qualification independently, by implementing scientific projects, attaining achievements meeting the international criteria of the branch of science, to manage research or development tasks in companies, institutions and organisations, requiring extensive research knowledge and skills.	Able, by performing independent critical analysis, synthesis and assessment, to solve significant research or innovation tasks, to set independently research idea, to plan, structure and manage large-scale scientific projects, including projects in international context.

Note. The subsequent the EQF level includes the knowledge, skills and competence set for the previous the EQF level."

Minister of Education and Science T.Koķe

Annex 2 to Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No.931 of 5 October 2010
"Annex 3 to Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No.990 of 2 December 2008

The sixth classification level in general education (special types of general; educational programmes, the language of instruction and the form of obtaining education)

The sixth classification level					
5th and 6th No. of code	Special type of educational programmes, the EQF level	7th No. of code	language of instruction	8th No. of code	form of obtaining education
18	pedagogical correction programmes	1	Latvian as the language of instruction	1	day
				2	night (shift)
		2	minority language as the language of instruction	3	extramural
19	social correction programmes				
		3	other language of instruction		
51	special education programmes for visually impaired students – 3rd level				
52	special education programmes for students with hearing disabilities – 3rd level				
53	special education programmes for students with physical development disorders – 3rd level				
54	special education programmes for students with somatic diseases – 3rd level				
55	special education programmes for students with speech disorders – 3rd level				
56	special education programmes for students with learning disabilities (mixed development disorders – pre-school) – 3rd level				
57	special education programmes for students with mental health disorders – 3rd level				
58	special education programmes for students with mental development disorders – 2nd level				
59	special education programmes for students with severe mental development disorders or several severe development disorders – 1st				

Note. For pre-school and basic education programmes the 6th number is 1, for other programmes – 0."

Minister of Education and Science T.Koķe

10 Appendix. Sample of higher education Diploma Supplement

Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No.656
Riga, 2 October 2007 (Minutes No 55, § 12)

Procedures by which state recognized documents certifying higher education are issued

Issued pursuant to Paragraph 14, Section 1 of Education Law and Paragraph 7, Section 10.1 of. Law on Higher Education Institutions

[...]

Annex 6 to Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 656 of 2 October 2007

Diploma Supplement (sample)

This Diploma Supplement follows the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. The purpose of the Supplement is to provide sufficient independent data to improve the international "transparency" and fair academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates etc.). It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualification to which this supplement is appended. It should be free from any value judgements, equivalence statements or suggestions about recognition. Information in all eight sections should be provided. Where information is not provided, the reason should be explained.

1. Information identifying the holder of the qualification:
    1.1. family name(s);
    1.2. given name(s);
    1.3. date of birth (*day/ month/ year)*;
    1.4. student identification number or code (*if available*).
2. Information identifying the qualification:
    2.1. name of qualification and (*if applicable*) title conferred (*in original language*);
    2.2. main field(s) of study for the qualification;
    2.3. name *(in original language)* and status of awarding institution;
    2.4. name (*in original language*) and status of institution (if different from 2.3.) administering studies
    2.5. language(s) of instruction/examination.
3. Information on the level of the qualification:

3.1. level of qualification;

3.2. official length of programme (years and credits), start and end date of the acquisition of the programme;

3.3. access requirements.

4. Information on the contents and results gained:

4.1. mode of study;

4.2. programme requirements (*programme aims and planning results of studies*);

4.3. programme details (e.g. modules or units studied) and the individual grades/marks/credits obtained;

4.4. grading scheme and, if available, grade distribution guidance;

4.5. overall classification of the qualification (*in original language*).

5. Information on the function of the qualification:

5.1. access to further study;

5.2. professional status (*if applicable*).

6. Additional information:

6.1. additional information;

6.2. further information sources.

7. Certification of the supplement:

7.1. date;

7.2. signature;

7.3. capacity;

7.4. official stamp or seal.

8. Information on the national higher education system.

The secondary education is required for the admission to studies in a university/college. All holders of certificates and diplomas the general secondary education or vocational secondary education meet the general admission requirements. However, the universities/colleges are free to set specific admission requirements e.g. additional subjects that had to be taken at the school level to quality for admission to a particular programme.

Bachelor's (bakalaurs) and *Master's (maģistrs*) *degrees* are awarded in both, in academic and professional higher education programmes.

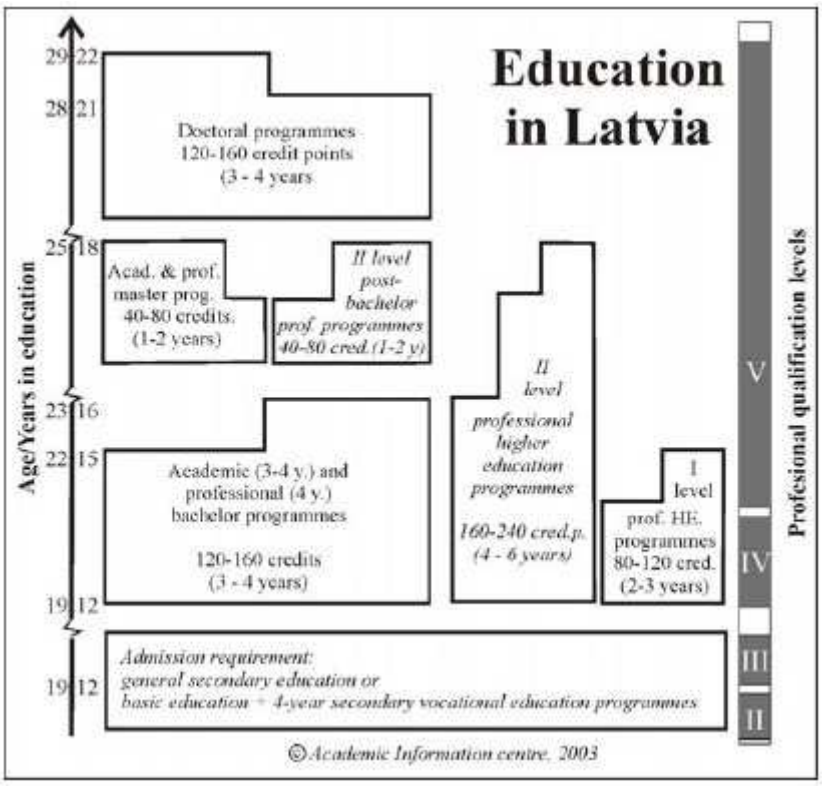
The objectives of **academic higher education (HE)** are to prepare graduates for an independent research, as well as to provide theoretical background for professional activities.

Academic programmes, leading to a *bachelor degree,* comprise 120-160 credits[39]: compulsory part – > 50 (75 ECTS) credits, electives >20 (30 ECTS) credits, thesis >10 (15 ECTS) credits, and the rest is left for students as free choice. Duration of full-time studies is 6-8 semesters.

Academic programmes, leading to *a master degree,* comprise 80 (120 ECTS) credits, of which > 20 (30 ECTS) credits are allocated for thesis, compulsory part of the programme includes theoretical aspects of the specific field of scientific discipline > 30 (45 ECTS) credits and their practical application in solving of actual problems >15 (22,5 ECTS) credits.

Academic education programmes are implemented according to the state standard of academic education.

Higher education (HE)



The objectives of **professional HE** are to provide in-depth knowledge in a particular field, preparing graduates for design or improvement of systems, products and technologies, as well as to prepare them for creative, research and teaching activities in this field.

[39] Latvian credit point is defined as a one-week full-time study workload. An average workload of a full-time study year in most HE programmes is 40 credits. Latvian credit point system is compatible with ECTS. The number of ECTS credits is found by multiplying the number of Latvian credit points by a factor of 1.5.

Professional HE programmes, leading to a professional *bachelor degree,* are designed to ensure professional competence, they comprise at least 160 (240 ECTS) credits and they consist of: general courses >20 (30 ECTS) credits, theoretical courses of the chosen field >36 (54 ECTS) credits, specialization courses >60 (90 ECTS) credits, optional courses >6 (9 ECTS) credits, practical placement >26 (39 ECTS) credits, and state examinations including thesis >12 (18 ECTS) credits.

Professional HE programmes, leading to a professional *master degree,* comprise no less than 40 (60 ECTS) credits: up-to-date achievements in the field – in theory and in practice >7 (10,5 ECTS) credits, practical placements >6 (9 ECTS) credits, state examinations including thesis >20 (30 ECTS) credits as well as research training, courses of design, management, psychology etc.

Graduates of both types of *the bachelor degree* have access to master studies, graduates of the *master degree* – to doctoral studies.

Studies in medicine, dentistry and pharmacy professional studies (5 and 6 year studies), are equal to the *master degree* and the graduates can continue their studies in doctoral level programmes.

Apart from the programmes, leading to *bachelor* and *master degrees*, there are other types of professional higher education programmes.

- *First level professional HE* (university college) programmes comprise 80-120 (120-180 ECTS) credits and lead to the 4th level professional qualification. These programmes are targeted mainly to the labour market. Yet, the graduates of the first level programmes can continue their studies in second level professional programmes.
- *Second level professional HE* programmes lead to the 5^{th} level professional qualification. Such programmes can comprise either at least 40 (60 ECTS) credits for holders of *the bachelor degree* or at least 160 (240 ECTS) credits for secondary school leavers. In both cases programmes should include a practical placement of at least 26 (39 ECTS) credits and graduation examinations including thesis >10 (15 ECTS) credits. Graduates of programmes including the 70 (105 ECTS) credits compulsory part of the bachelor programme, have access to master studies.

Doctoral studies

From January 1, 2000 a single type of *Doctor's (doktors) degree* is being awarded in Latvia. The degree of master is required for admission to doctoral studies. *Doctoral degree* is awarded after public defence of doctoral thesis and successfully passed exams in the chosen scientific discipline. The doctoral thesis has to include original results of the research and new cognitions in the scientific discipline and may

be a result of three to four years of doctoral studies at a higher education institution or an equivalent amount of independent research. The doctoral thesis may be a dissertation, assemblage of topically single peer reviewed publications or monograph. The rights to award the *doctoral degree* are delegated by decision of the Cabinet of Ministers to promotion councils established at the universities. The procedure for awarding the *doctoral degree* is controlled by the Commission of the Scientific Qualification.

Grading system: a 10-point grading scheme for knowledge assessment.

Achievement level	Grade	Meaning	Approx. ECTS grade
very high	10	*izcili* (with distinction)	A
	9	*teicami* (excellent)	A
high	8	*ļoti labi* (very good)	B
	7	*labi* (good)	C
medium	6	*gandrīz labi* (almost good)	D
	5	*viduvēji* (satisfactory)	E
	4	*gandrīz viduvēji* (almost satisfactory)	E/FX
low	3-1	*negatīvs vērtējums* (unsatisfactory)	Fail

Quality assurance. According to the Latvian legislation, state-recognized degrees/diplomas may be awarded upon completion of an accredited programme in an accredited HE institution holding a state-approved *Satversme* (By-law) or college statute. Decisions on programme accreditation are taken by the Accreditation Board, while those on institutional accreditation – by the Higher Education Council.

More information:

1. On educational system: http://www.izm.lv; http://www.aic.lv; www.eurydice.org
2. On status of HE programmes/institutions: http://www.aiknc.lv