



# Implementation of Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes in Latvia

Self-Assessment Report

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The opinions expressed are those of the author(s) only and should not be considered as representative of the European Commission's official position.

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## List of Abbreviations

AIC – Academic Information Centre
AIPY – Agency for International Programs for Youth
CoM – Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia
ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
ECVET – European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
EQAVET – European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
EQF – European Qualifications Framework
ESF – European Social Fund
HEI – Higher education institutions
LQF – Latvian Qualifications Framework
MoES – Ministry of Education and Science
NCE – National Centre for Education
PINTSA – National Tripartite Sub-council for Cooperation in VET and Employment
SEA – State Employment Agency
SEC – Sectoral Expert Council
SEDA – State Education Development Agency
SEQS – State Education Quality Service
VECC – Vocational Education Competence Centre

## Introduction

The Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning<sup>1</sup> stipulates that the Member States should have in place, no later than 2018, arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes which enables the individuals to have their knowledge, skills, and competences validated, and obtain a full or partial qualification. As provided for in the recommendation, the validation procedure shall consist of four distinct phases: identification, documentation, assessment, and certification. Furthermore, the validation process shall be linked to national qualifications frameworks and be in line with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). For the purpose of this Report, the qualification levels are indicated in compliance with Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF), which comprises eight reference levels and is in line with the EQF.

This Report has been prepared with the **aim** to provide an overview of the development and implementation of the system for validating<sup>2</sup> non-formal and informal learning outcomes in Latvia, and, in terms of its content, it is based on the characterization of the principles set out in the recommendation.

The implementation phases of the system for validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in Latvia:

1. **Research phase (2005-2007)** - analysis of other national systems for validating non-formal and informal learning outcomes, validation methods and their applicability in accordance with the traditions of Latvian education;
2. **Legal framework development phase (2009-2011)** - agreement within the Work Group of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) upon guiding principles on the validation, distribution of responsibilities and rights of stakeholders in the respective regulatory enactments, as well as development of the necessary regulatory enactments;
3. **Implementation phase (2011-2016)** - implementation of arrangements to ensure procedures set out in the legal framework, provide support to the key stakeholders, and raise awareness of the possibility to validate non-formal and informal learning outcomes among the members of the general public.

To ensure the adoption of the principles, as stipulated in the recommendation, at the level of policy-makers, it was necessary to agree upon guiding principles for the implementation of the process by defining the responsibilities and rights of the key stakeholders, the form of assessment and certification of learning outcomes achieved through non-formal and informal learning, as well as the financial aspects. The joint opinion was backed up by the "Methodology for the Validation of Non-Formal Education and Assessment of Skills" of 2007<sup>3</sup>, which was the first national-level methodological study on the validation of non-formal learning outcomes in Latvia.

To ensure the implementation of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, in 2010, the necessary amendments to the Vocational Education Law (1999)<sup>4</sup> were adopted, thus establishing the responsible authorities which shall coordinate and organise the assessment of professional competences acquired outside of formal education system (LQF levels 2-4). The procedures for validating non-formal and informal learning outcomes are stipulated by the Cabinet of Ministers (CoM). However, the amendments to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education

1 Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01). See: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32012H1222\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32012H1222(01)&from=EN).

2 For the purpose of this Report, the term "**validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes**" refers to procedures applicable to qualifications of LQF levels 2-7 in Latvia

3 Project of the national programme "Development of a Unified Methodology for the Quality Improvement in Vocational Education and Involvement and Education of Social Partners" implemented during the years 2005 -2007 by the Vocational Education Administration of the Ministry of Education and Science.

4 Amendments to the Vocational Education Law, as adopted on 10 June 2010. See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/212500-grozijumi-profesionalas-izglitiba-likuma>.

(1995),<sup>5</sup> adopted in 2011, defined the principles for the validation of learning outcomes achieved outside study programmes (LQF levels 5-7) determining that the non-formal and informal learning outcomes are to be validated according to the learning outcomes to be achieved in the relevant study programme and the relevant amount of credit points are to be granted.

A student may acquire the contents of a general educational programme in the form of self-education, i.e., outside the education institution. Assessment of an educational programme acquired in such a form can be obtained by taking examinations at the education institution, which implements the relevant programme<sup>6</sup>. Thus, in general education, a formal education programme may be acquired outside the education institution to obtain or improve assessments in general basic education study subjects by obtaining the document attesting the acquisition of general basic education. For the purpose of the legal framework of Latvia, an external student - an adult person who in the form of self-education acquires within a year a part of the content of education determined in accordance with the State general education standards - shall be enrolled in the education institution and initially integrated in the formal education system<sup>7</sup>. Currently, general education does not envisage the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

The Academic Information Centre would like to express gratitude to the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), the State Education Quality Service (SEQS), the State Education Development Agency (SEDA), the Agency for International Programmes for Youth (AIPY), and the State Employment Agency (SEA) for the provision of up-to-date information and support in the preparation of the content of this Report.

5 Amendments to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, as adopted on 28 July 2011. See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/233707-grozijumi-augstskolu-likuma>.

6 Section 8 "Forms of Acquisition of Education" of the Education Law, as adopted on 29 October 1998. See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=50759>.

7 Cabinet Regulation No. 591 "Procedures for Enrolling Students in and Discharging from General Education Institutions and Special Pre-School Educational Groups, and also for Moving Them up into the Next Grade", as adopted on 13 October 2015. See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/277597-kartiba-kada-izglitojamie-tiek-uznemti-visparejas-izglitiba-iestades-un-specialajas-pirmsskolas-izglitiba-grupas>.

# 1. Legal Framework for and General Characterization of Procedures for Validating Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes

## 1.1. Brief Review of the History of the Implementation of Validation Procedures

On 1 September 2001, the amendments to the Education Law (1998) came into force, which, for the first time, defined “non-formal education” - educational activities in conformity with interests and demand organised outside of formal education. At the same time, the Education Law was complemented by Section 46 “Adult Educational Programmes”, determining the provisions for the implementation of non-formal adult educational programmes, which foresee ensuring of education in compliance with the interests of employers, state or private individuals outside of formal education system. The provisions for the implementation of non-formal adult education were introduced, that did not yet allow for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

In 2004, the Council of the European Union and the representatives of the Governments of the Member States agreed upon the development of a set of common principles on the validation of non-formal learning<sup>8</sup>, encouraging the Member States to promote at national, regional, and sectoral level the visibility of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. During the years 2005-2007, the Vocational Education Administration of the Ministry of Education and Science implemented the project of the National programme “Elaboration of a Joint Methodology for Increasing the Quality of Vocational Education and Involving and Educating Social Partners”,<sup>9</sup> which aimed at facilitating compliance between the vocational education system and labour demand, and elaboration of a joint methodology for increasing the quality of vocational education and involvement of social partners. The implementation of the project enabled the development of a “Methodology for the Validation of Non-Formal Education and Assessment of Skills” which stipulated that the implementation of the validation and assessment of non-formal learning in Latvia has the following prerequisites:

1. Necessity for the development of laws and regulations;
2. Agreement by the social partners upon a reliable authority responsible for the coordination of the process;
3. Professional competences are defined in the occupational standards;
4. Training of experts in the field of the assessment of professional competences;
5. Development of a modular programmes for candidates who have not sufficiently acquired professional competences.

According to the declaration by the Government, adopted on 11 March 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science was assigned to undertake the necessary arrangements to ensure the validation of knowledge, skills, and competences acquired through non-formal learning and the acquisition of a professional qualification<sup>10</sup>, which was approved on 16 September 2009 by the Cabinet of Ministers.<sup>11</sup> The amendments to the Vocational Education Law regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes were drafted in 2009 and adopted in 2010.

8 Draft Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning, 18 May 2004. See: [https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/3084932/Council\\_9175\\_04.pdf/45c4628f-1eef-4588-8e7b-abc09d112426](https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/3084932/Council_9175_04.pdf/45c4628f-1eef-4588-8e7b-abc09d112426). According to this document this version can be seen as adopted and legitimate.

9 Elaboration of a Joint Methodology of Increasing the Quality of Vocational Education and Attracting and Education Social Partners. Theoretical rationale. Riga: Vocational Education Administration of the Ministry of Education and Science, 2007. See: [https://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/metmat/09\\_teor\\_pamatojums.pdf](https://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/metmat/09_teor_pamatojums.pdf).

10 Declaration on the Intended Activities of the Cabinet of Ministers lead by Valdis Dombrovskis, 11 March 2009. See: <https://www.mk.gov.lv/sites/default/files/editor/dombrovskis-1-deklaracija.pdf>.

11 Cabinet Order No. 629 “On the Concept “Raising Attractiveness of Vocational Education and Involvement of Social Partners within Vocational Education Quality Assurance”, as adopted on 16 September 2009. See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=197894>.

In the legal framework, the term “outside of formal education” (and not “non-formal and informal learning outcomes”) is used in accordance with the definition in Education Law (1998) of non-formal education<sup>12</sup> that is acquired “outside of formal education”. In this Report, the terms are used in the context of EQF and in line with the Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Since 2010, the Section 29<sup>1</sup> of the Vocational Education Law<sup>13</sup> stipulates that the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes takes place in accordance with the requirements of the Occupational standard, as well as the right to assess it is delegated to accredited vocational education institutions or accredited examination centres.

On 22 February 2011, Cabinet Regulation “Procedure for the Assessment of Professional Competence Acquired Outside of Formal Education System”,<sup>14</sup> was adopted, which prescribes the procedure for validating non-formal and informal learning outcomes (LQF levels 2-4) by developing a licit validation system with specific procedures. This regulation does not apply to professions, the validation of which is regulated by special regulatory enactments, such as the Law on the Regulated Professions and the Recognition of Professional Qualifications.<sup>15</sup> The professional competence of the candidate is to be assessed by way of a professional qualification examination subject to charges and in line with the respective regulatory enactments, which prescribe the procedure under which professional qualification exams are held, similar to that for the assessment of professional competences acquired within a formal education system. The respective fee for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes at LQF levels 2-4 is stipulated by the Cabinet Regulation,<sup>16</sup> and it is applied depending on the study programmes within a specific thematic area and the number of persons who are simultaneously (up to 12 persons) taking the professional qualification exam. As provided for in the legal framework of Latvia, a system for validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, as coordinated by the State Education Quality Service (SEQS), has been introduced at LQF levels 2-4.

During the years 2011-2015, the State Education Development Agency (SEDA) implemented the ESF project “Development of Sectoral Qualifications System and Increasing the Efficiency and Quality of Vocational Education”, one of the aims of which was to ensure the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (LQF levels 2-4) and raising public awareness. The attainment of the aim of this project was coordinated by the SEQS acting as a project partner. Within the framework of this project, 80 persons were able to have their non-formal and informal learning outcomes validated free of charge (LQF levels 2-4). In order to raise public awareness of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, the Sectoral Expert Councils (SEC), as established within the framework of the project, provided information dissemination activities among the sectoral enterprises.

On 1 August 2011, amendments to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (1995) came into force. By these amendments, the aforementioned Law was complemented with Section 59<sup>2</sup> “Studies outside Study Programmes”, which regulates the procedure for validating professional experience and such education, that is not “formal education”, as well as defines the responsibilities of the stakeholders and the basic principles for the validation of non-formal and informal learning

12 Section 1 “Terms Used in this Law” of the Education Law, as adopted on 29 October 1998. According to Section 14<sup>1</sup>, “Non-formal education - educational activities in conformity with interests and demand organised outside of formal education.

13 Amendments to the Vocational Education Law, as adopted on 30 June 2010. See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/212500-grozijumi-profesionalas-izglitiba-likuma>.

14 Cabinet Regulation No. 146 “Procedure for the Assessment of Professional Competence Acquired outside of Formal Education System”, as adopted on 22 February 2011. See: <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=226788>.

15 Law on the Regulated Professions and the Recognition of Professional Qualifications, as adopted on 20 June 2001 and available at: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=26021>, prescribes certain regulated professions in which the qualification requirements are determined by accredited education programmes and in cases specified by the law - the provisions for professional certification

16 Cabinet Regulation No. 791 “Price List of Paid Services of Vocational Education Institutions and Examination Centres”, as adopted on 10 September 2013. See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=259780>.

outcomes (LQF levels 5-7)<sup>17</sup>. According to the aforementioned amendments, an institution of higher education or college (HEI) shall evaluate individual's learning outcomes achieved in previous learning or professional experience and if they comply with the requirements of the relevant study programme, recognise them, as well as grant the relevant amount of credit points. Moreover, up to 30% of credit points from a vocational or academic study programme may be granted, validating the learning outcomes achieved in professional experience. These amendments to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (1995) served as basis for drafting the Cabinet Regulation,<sup>18</sup> which prescribed policies and procedures applicable to the individual, assessor, and the higher education institution. In order to put the procedures stipulated by this Cabinet Regulation in concrete terms, each HEI replaced their by-laws and developed a clarifying methodology for the validation of learning and work placement outcomes, thus, at the level of higher education, developing their own approach to and practice of the assessment of learning outcomes achieved through non-formal learning in line with the legal framework.

During the years 2015-2016, the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) implemented the project co-funded by the European Commission - "Validation of Prior Learning", which aimed to improve the procedures for validating learning outcomes achieved through non-formal and informal learning and professional experience at the HEIs of Latvia, as well as to improve the legal basis. Within the project, the "Recommendations on the assessment and validation of learning outcomes achieved outside of formal education or in professional experience"<sup>19</sup> (LQF levels 5-7) were developed, by addressing them to the higher education institutions, colleges, and collaboration partners. In addition, proposals for amendments to five legally binding legal acts were elaborated within this project.

On 1 January 2018, amendments to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (1995) came into force. By these amendments, the aforementioned Law was complemented with Section 59<sup>3</sup> "Validation of Knowledge, Skills, and Competences Acquired outside of Formal Education or in Professional Experience". It prescribes the rights of an individual to have his or her learning outcomes, as achieved through non-formal learning, recognized at the level of higher education, in compliance with the learning outcomes to be obtained in the respective study programme and to receive the respective credit points. At the same time, the amendments to Section 59<sup>2</sup> "Studies outside of Study Programmes" of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (1995) came into force that no longer prescribed that the amount of credit points to be granted when recognising the learning outcomes achieved in professional experience shall be limited to only 30% from the respective study programme. Based on these amendments to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (1995), on 14 August 2018, a new Cabinet Regulation "Regulations on the Validation of Competences Obtained outside of Formal Education or in Professional Experience and the Learning Outcomes Achieved in Previous Learning"<sup>20</sup>, which prescribes a joint procedure and criteria for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes at the level of higher education (LQF levels 5-7).

17 Amendments to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, as adopted on 14 July 2011. See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/233707-grozijumi-augstskolu-likuma>

18 Cabinet Regulation No. 36 "Regulations Regarding the Validation of Learning Outcomes Achieved in Previous Learning or Professional Experience", as adopted on 10 January 2012 and no longer in force as from 17 August 2018.

19 Recommendations on the assessment and validation of learning outcomes achieved outside of formal education or in professional experience. Project "Validation of Prior Learning" within Erasmus+ Key Action 3: Support for Policy Reforms under the EU programme for education, training, youth, and sport. Riga, Ministry of Education and Science, 2016. See: <http://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/eiropas-savieniba/erasmus-2014-2020/ieprieks-iegutas-izglitiba-pielidzinasa>

20 Cabinet Regulation No. 505 "Regulations Regarding the Validation of Competences Achieved outside of Formal Education or in Professional Experience and the Learning Outcomes Achieved in Previous Learning", as adopted on 14 August 2018. See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/301013-arpus-formalas-izglitiba-apputo-vai-profesionalaja-pieredze-ieguto-kompetencu-un-iepriekseja-izglitiba-sasnietu>

## 1.2 The Process of Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes in the Legal, Institutional, and Financial Context (LQF levels 2-4)

The Vocational Education Law (1999) lays down a set of basic principles for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes at LQF levels 2-4:

- The validation takes place in line with the requirements set out in the occupational standard.
- The right to carry out the validation process is delegated to accredited vocational education institutions or accredited examination centres.
- The procedure for validating non-formal and informal learning outcomes is determined by the Cabinet of Ministers (CoM).

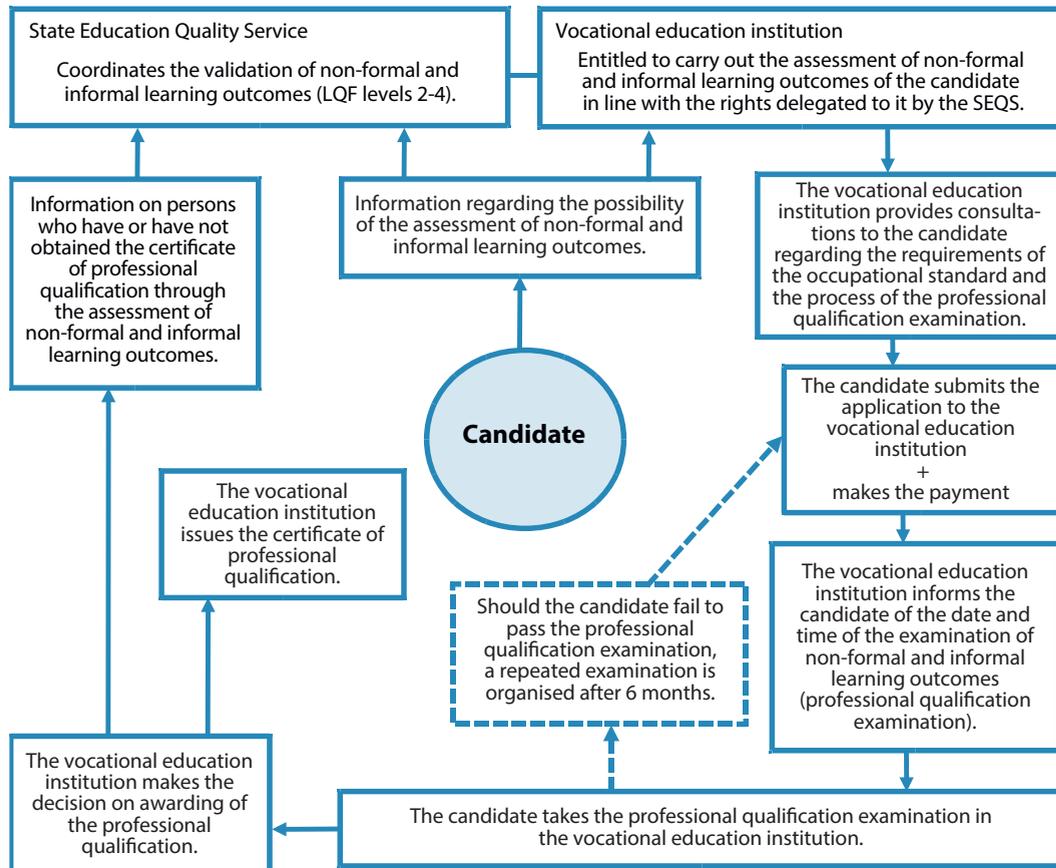
The Cabinet Regulation specifies the institutional principles for the validation, the validation procedure, rights, responsibilities and obligations of the stakeholders<sup>21</sup>, as well as the price list of the paid services<sup>22</sup>. The validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes at LQF levels 2-4 (see Figure 1) takes place by way of a professional qualification examination, which does not differ from the examination taken by the graduates of formal education programmes. Furthermore, the same Cabinet Regulation stipulates the regulations on the content and procedural requirements.<sup>23</sup> When deciding on the delegation of the right for the higher education institution to carry out the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, the assessment by the accreditation committee regarding the experience of an institution of higher education or an examination centre in organising professional qualification examinations in line with the labour demand is of great importance.

21 Cabinet Regulation No. 146 "Procedure for the Assessment of Professional Competence Acquired outside of Formal Education System", as adopted on 22 February 2011. See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=226788>.

22 Cabinet Regulation No. 791 "Price List of Paid Services of Vocational Education Institutions and Examination Centres", as adopted on 10 September 2013. See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=259780> (Cabinet Regulation No. 432 "Regulations Regarding the Price List of Paid Services of Vocational Education Institutions and Examination Centres", as adopted on 19 February 2012, was in force until 1 January 2014)

23 Cabinet Regulation No. 662 "Regulations Regarding the Procedural Requirements of Professional Qualification Examinations in Accredited Vocational Education Programmes", as adopted on 30 August 2011. See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=235206>.

**Figure 1. Schematic representation of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (LQF levels 2-4)**



Currently, the certificate of professional qualification may be obtained in two ways (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Conditions for acquiring the certificate of professional qualification**



The right to carry out the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes was relevant to institutions of higher education qualified for the status of a vocational education competence centre (VECC, see Annex 4)<sup>24</sup>. VECC is a vocational education institution, which has the material base necessary to acquire the professional qualification in all basic professions of the relevant field. The task of such centres consists in providing the necessary methodological support to other vocational education institutions as necessary to acquire the profession in the relevant field and to serve as a place where both young people and adults are able to acquire the latest technologies. In addition, VECC fulfils the functions of an examination centre, including the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. Since 2015, the status of a VECC is granted also to education institutions operating in the field of art, music or dance.<sup>25</sup>

By applying the principle of equal treatment and eligibility, the right to carry out the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes was delegated also to other education institutions, including private vocational education institutions.<sup>26</sup>

Such a delegation granted is valid up to three years. During the years 2011-2017, the delegated vocational education institutions offered the persons the possibility to have their non-formal and informal learning outcomes validated in more than 100 different professional qualifications at LQF levels 2-4. In 2012, the validation was provided by 34 education institutions, whereas in 2018, this number had reached already 43. The increase in the number of the aforementioned education institutions is attributable to the procedures by which the status of a VECC is granted to education institutions operating in the field of art, music or dance.

The need for the introduction of a service regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in an accredited education institution is subject to certain external factors as follows:

1. Regulatory enactments laying down the requirements for an education institution to ensure the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes;
2. Education institution's own initiative to introduce a new service;

<sup>24</sup> Section 15<sup>1</sup> "Vocational Education Competence Centre" of the Vocational Education Law, as adopted on 10 June 1999. See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=20244>.

<sup>25</sup> Cabinet Regulation No. 495 "Procedures for the Granting and Annulment of the Status of a Vocational Education Competence Centre in the Field of Art, Music or Dance", as adopted on 25 August 2015. See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=276178>.

<sup>26</sup> SEQS Internal Regulation No. 6 "Procedures for the Delegation of the Task of Assessment of Professional Competence Acquired outside of Formal Education System", as adopted on 10 April 2012. See: [https://ikvd.gov.lv/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/10.04.2012.ieksejie\\_noteikumi\\_Nr.6.pdf](https://ikvd.gov.lv/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/10.04.2012.ieksejie_noteikumi_Nr.6.pdf)

3. Interest of the candidates to receive the service;
4. Employers' initiative to ensure the upgrading of qualification and assessment of professional competences of the employees;
5. Development opportunities for the education institution through diversification of their offer.

The SEQS maintains a register of delegated education institutions and a database of persons, which have received the certificate of professional qualification. For the purpose of the maintenance of this database, education institutions provide the SEQS with information about candidates, which have applied for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, and persons, which have received the certificate of professional qualification through the validation. Centrally collected information allows for preventive quality control measures and the possibility to collect statistical data on the progress and results of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

In 2011, the binding Cabinet Regulation on the price list<sup>27</sup> of paid services of vocational education institutions and examination centres regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes was established. As provided for in the existing price list, a candidate pays the lowest price for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in cases where he or she seeks to take an examination within the approaching professional qualification examination in the respective educational programme. A vocational education institution organizes a professional qualification examination according to the wishes of the candidates - individually or in groups comprised of up to 12 persons. So, for instance, as provided for in the price list regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in the professional qualification "Carer" (LQF level 3), the price applicable to one person taking the examination individually amounts to EUR 339.34, whereas to those taking the examination in a group consisting of twelve persons - EUR 52.25 for each person. As for the professional qualification "Welder" (LQF level 3), a person taking the examination individually pays EUR 357.13, but in a group consisting of twelve persons, each person pays EUR 70.03. The established price difference is the reason why persons mainly opt for the professional qualification examination in a group, previously agreeing with the education institution.

### 1.3 The Process of Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes in the Legal, Institutional, and Financial Context (LQF levels 5-7)

Sections 59<sup>2</sup> and 59<sup>3</sup> of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (1995) lay down the basic principles for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes at LQF levels 5-7. As provided for in the aforementioned sections, learning outcomes are validated based on the compliance of knowledge, skills, and competences acquired in previous learning or professional experience, as well as learning outcomes achieved in previous learning with the learning outcomes to be achieved in the respective study programme of the higher education institution or college by awarding the respective amount of credits. Cabinet Regulation<sup>28</sup> prescribes the procedure and criteria for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes by specifying the procedures applicable to an individual, the assessor, and the decision-making process. Thus, a person has the right to apply to any higher education institution or college to have his or her knowledge, skills, and competences acquired in previous learning or non-formal and informal learning outcomes validated.

Knowledge, skills, and competences acquired in **professional experience** may be validated in the part of the study programme, which is formed by the work placement. Moreover, the achieved learning outcomes must be in line with the learning outcomes to be achieved in the respective study course or module, which attest the acquisition of the practical skills.

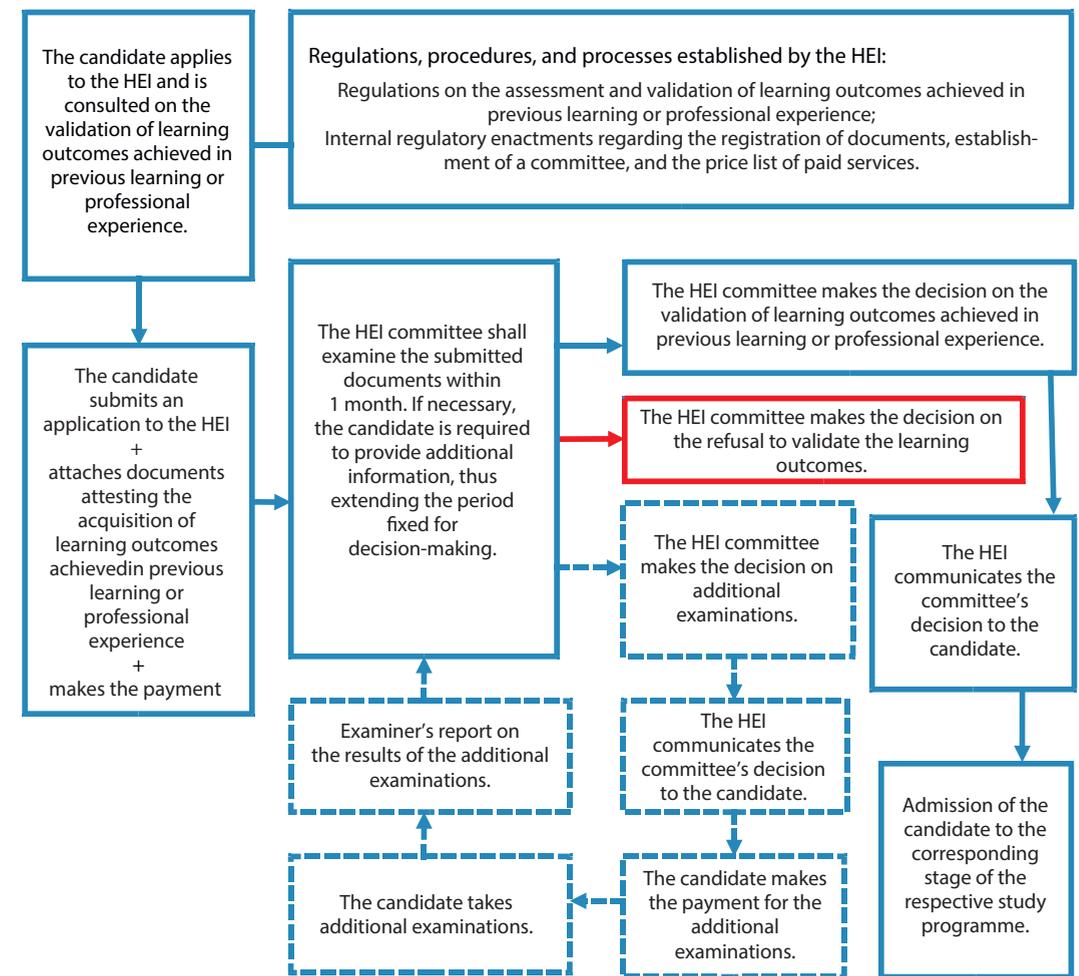
27 Cabinet Regulation No. 791 "Price List of Paid Services of Vocational Education Institutions and Examination Centres", as adopted on 10 September 2013. See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=259780>

28 Cabinet Regulation No. 505 "Regulations Regarding the Validation of Competences Achieved outside of Formal Education or in Professional Experience and the Learning Outcomes Achieved in Previous Learning", as adopted on 14 August 2018. See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/301013-arpus-formalas-izglitiba-apguto-vai-profesionalaja-pieredze-ieguto-kompetencu-un-iepriekseja-izglitiba-sasnigtu>.

**Knowledge, skills, and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning**, on the other hand, may be validated in cases where they comply with the level of higher education and they have been acquired in:

1. Continuing education programme, professional development education programme or any other education programme (except for a basic education, general secondary education, and higher education programme), where the knowledge, skills, and competences acquired through which are in line with the learning outcomes to be achieved in the respective study course or module.
2. Knowledge, skills, and competences acquired in other forms of non-formal and informal learning (such as self-education) may be validated in study programmes, which prepare specialists in regulated professions. In such cases, the validation is possible only regarding those learning outcomes to be achieved in the respective study programme or module, which attest the acquisition of theoretical knowledge.

**Figure 3. Schematic representation of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (LQF levels 5-7)**



Each HEI establishes the regulations on the assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes and specify a structural unit, which ensures the implementation of the procedures for validating non-formal and informal learning outcomes. Based on the aforementioned regulations,

higher education institutions or colleges establishes internal rules for the implementation of the procedures, committees responsible for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, registers containing the decisions made by the committee, as well as a price list of paid services. By establishing the internal rules, the HEI must keep in mind that the application for the assessment of learning outcomes is voluntary, as well as assure privacy of the candidates and use an equal and fair approach towards all candidates.

The procedure prescribes that the committee established by the HEI shall, within one month, examine the documents attesting the acquisition of learning outcomes achieved in previous learning or professional experience and if they comply with the requirements of the relevant study programme, recognise them, as well as grant the relevant credit points. The validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes shall be carried out by using a common approach towards the application of rights, and no candidate shall be forbidden to use his or her rights. From 1 August 2011 until 1 January 2018, only 30% of credit points from a study programme could be granted, recognising the learning outcomes achieved in professional experience. However, along with the amendments<sup>29</sup> to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (1995) this restriction was removed.

The decision on the compliance of the knowledge, skills, and competences, as acquired by the person in previous learning or professional experience, with the learning outcomes to be achieved in the relevant study programme implemented by the HEI, is made by the committee, which, in certain occasions, may invite an expert for the examination of the submitted documents. The procedure by which the HEI committee shall make a decision prescribes special cases, where the person is asked to express his or her opinion before the committee makes the decision.<sup>30</sup> The decision on the validation of learning outcomes achieved in previous learning or professional experience, or the refusal to validate such learning outcomes shall be sent to the candidate and registered in a special HEI register, which is not publicly available.

There is no common price list regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes established at the level of higher education. The price payable for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes and additional examinations specified by the committee differ among the higher education institutions. For instance, a HEI establishes a price list regarding the validation of specific non-formal and informal learning outcomes, but the price payable for the additional examinations, as specified by the committee, is applied in compliance with the prices of the paid services stipulated for the relevant academic year.

Thus, each HEI based on their regulatory enactments and methodological recommendations develop their own approach and practice for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes depending on the fact, whether the study programme in question is an academic or vocational higher education programme.

#### 1.4 Mechanisms Used in Each Phase of the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes: Identification, Documentation, Assessment, and Certification

The mechanisms and procedures to be used to ensure the implementation of the phase of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes are based on the procedure prescribed in the respective regulatory enactments, which specify the activities, rights, and responsibilities of the stakeholders to carry out the necessary procedures in a consequent manner. Methods for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (CEDEFOP, 2015), as referred to in European guidelines, are used in validation phases.<sup>31</sup>

29 Amendments to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, as adopted on 29 November 2017. See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/295397-grozijumi-augstskolu-likuma>.

30 Regulations on the validation of learning outcomes achieved in previous learning or professional experience at Riga Stradiņš University. See: [https://www.rsu.lv/sites/default/files/imce/Dokumenti/Nolikumi/studiju\\_rezultatu\\_atzisanas\\_nolikums.pdf](https://www.rsu.lv/sites/default/files/imce/Dokumenti/Nolikumi/studiju_rezultatu_atzisanas_nolikums.pdf).

31 European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop reference series; No 104, Cedefop, 2015. See: [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3073\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3073_en.pdf).

### Identification of Learning Outcomes

LQF levels 2-4	LQF levels 5-7
<p>The identification of the learning outcomes takes place within the consultations, as provided free of charge, regarding: 1) the requirements of the relevant occupational standard and 2) the process of the professional qualification examination.<sup>32</sup></p> <p>Each consultation lasts one hour.</p> <p>The consultations are provided by a specialist of the institution of higher education, who informs the candidate of the validation procedure and the respective costs, list of professional competences included in the occupational standard, as well as the content, process, and evaluation criteria of the professional qualification examination. During the consultation, by way of a dialogue, the learning outcomes achieved in professional experience are identified. The candidate is not required to provide documentary evidence attesting the professional competences acquired. However, the certification of the respective learning outcomes may require more than one method, for instance, personal interviews, debates, portfolio, and analysis of practical experience, as well as a declarative method, which is based on individual's independent identification and recording of competences, such declaration being verified by a third party.<sup>33</sup></p> <p>Virtually all candidates avail themselves of the opportunity to receive consultations free of charge.</p> <p>Since two consultations free of charge are provided to each candidate, who has acquired a professional qualification, it can be estimated that during the years 2011-2017, more than 11.916 consultations have been provided to the candidates.<sup>34</sup></p>	<p>The internal regulations of the HEI provide for the provision of consultations to candidates regarding the assessment and validation process, the possible outcome, as well as the procedure for contesting and appealing of the decisions made by the committee. The consultations consist of two parts: 1) consultations regarding the procedure and requirements and 2) consultations regarding the content, which is usually carried out by a person responsible for the implementation of the respective study programme.</p> <p>The responsibilities of a consultant, which cannot be also the assessor, may be delegated to a person involved in the study process, such as a representative of the study department of the HEI or a director of a study programme. The higher education institution is not required to set up a job position especially for this purpose.</p> <p>The consultant informs the candidate of the self-assessment conditions, so that the candidate would be able to assess his or her knowledge, skills, and competences, as acquired in previous experience, in a more consistent manner. In the self-assessment, the candidate not only describes his or her practical experience, but also analyses it and assesses this experience against the learning outcomes to be achieved in the respective study programme.</p> <p>Moreover, the HEI provides consultations regarding the issuance of documents free of charge. In most cases, the candidate is informed of the validation procedure by using electronic means of communication.</p>

32 Paragraph 9 of Cabinet Regulation No. 146 "Procedure for the Validation of Professional Competence Acquired outside of Formal Education System", as adopted on 22 February 2012.

33 Assessment of professional competences acquired outside of formal education system. Methodological recommendations addressed to education institutions and examination centres. European Social Funds project "Development of a Sectoral Qualifications System and Improvement of the Efficiency and Quality of Vocational Education", Riga, SEDA, 2015.

34 See the number of persons who have received the certificate of professional qualification in Annexes 1 and 2 to this Report.

## Documentation of Learning Outcomes

LQF levels 2-4	LQF levels 5-7
<p>To ensure the documentation of learning outcomes in as transparent way as possible, there are no specific requirements regarding the previous learning, occupation, or age of the candidate (however, the candidate must have attained the age of 18 years<sup>35</sup>).</p> <p>During the consultations, the candidate is able to identify his or her professional competences by using the declarative method, by means of which the consultant during the interview is able to identify to what extent candidate's professional competences are developed and how they are used in practice. In order to identify to what extent candidate's professional competences are used in practice and how they have been acquired, a self-assessment questionnaire is used.<sup>36</sup></p> <p>The self-assessment of the candidate allows for the identification of qualification-related professional competences acquired in professional and personal experience.</p>	<p>The documentation phase implies the provision of documentary evidence of non-formal and informal learning outcomes regarding the learning outcomes to be achieved, their listing, collecting of evidence, and building of a dossier that will be subject to assessment.</p> <p>The HEI provide consultations to the candidates free of charge and assist them in defining whether the indicated learning outcomes have been selected, documented and listed adequately and fully prepared for their assessment. The consultant informs the candidate of the documents necessary to commence the validation process. The application on the validation shall be accompanied by documents attesting the learning outcomes achieved in previous learning or professional experience.</p> <p>The results of the survey<sup>37</sup>, as organized in the HEI in 2016, suggest that, in most cases, higher education institutions or colleges tend to document the non-formal and informal learning outcomes mostly by means of the portfolio method, and are less likely to use the declarative method, demonstration of skills in work situation or the simulation method.</p>

35 Requirements provided for in Section 4 "Mandatory Education" of the Education Law: *"The preparation of children from the age of 5 for the acquisition of basic education and the acquisition of basic education, or the continuation of acquisition of basic education until reaching the age of 18, shall be mandatory"*.

36 Assessment of professional competences acquired outside of formal education system. Methodological recommendations addressed to education institutions and examination centres. European Social Funds project "Development of a Sectoral Qualifications System and Improvement of the Efficiency and Quality of Vocational Education", Riga, State Education Development Agency, 2015

37 Information based on the results of the inquiry among higher education institutions within the project "Validation of Prior Learning", as implemented by the MoES during the years 2015-2016 in the framework of Erasmus+ Key Action 3: Support for Policy Reforms under the EU programme for education, training, youth, and sport.

## Assessment of Learning Outcomes

LQF levels 2-4	LQF levels 5-7
<p>To carry out the assessment of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, the vocational education institution organizes professional qualification examination, the content of which is elaborated by the education institution itself by using a common methodology. After the consultations, which are provided free of charge, the candidate submits to the vocational education institution the application on the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. In the application, the candidate indicates the period of time, within which he or she has intended to take the professional qualification examination: 1) within the framework of an accredited vocational education programme or 2) within a period of two months of the receipt of the application submitted by the candidate.</p> <p>The assessment process is organized similar as in the case of the examinees in formal education - in compliance with the fundamental principles of the assurance of rights of individuals, stakeholder obligations, mutual trust, and legitimacy provided for in European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning.<sup>38</sup></p> <p>The examination consists of the theoretical part (usually a test), in which the knowledge of the individual are tested against the respective occupational standard, and the practical part, which implies tasks and tests, in compliance with the requirements and professional competences provided for in the respective occupational standard. The examination committee is established by the vocational education institution, which chooses the committee members from among the employers representing the respective field.</p> <p>In cases where a candidate fails to pass the professional qualification examination, he or she is bound by the same rules as applicable in formal education. Furthermore, the candidate may repeat the examination no earlier than 6 months thereafter by covering the respective examination fees.</p>	<p>For the assessment of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, the higher education institution or college establishes at least one committee in each study direction, provided that the HEI implements study programmes relevant to this study direction.</p> <p>The HEI committee examines the application accompanied by the respective documents, make a decision, and, if necessary, lay down tests necessary to assess the learning outcomes. The validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is subject to the fulfilment of criteria as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The presented documents contain clear, full, and unambiguous information regarding the achieved learning outcomes;</li> <li>- The previous education of the candidate complies with the requirements for the admission to the respective study programme;</li> <li>- One credit point can be granted for learning outcomes achieved outside of formal education or in professional experience, provided that such learning outcomes have been achieved in a study process the duration of which is at least one week (40 academic hours);</li> <li>- In the tests, if any, the candidate has proved his or her knowledge, skills, and competences, which comply with the requirements for the respective study programme or course thereof.</li> </ul> <p>The committee may specify the type of tests to be used for the assessment of non-formal and informal learning outcomes by taking into consideration the way in which the candidate has achieved such learning outcomes.</p> <p>As for the validation of candidate's professional experience, it may be validated in the part of the study programme, which is formed by the work placement. However, the professional experience may be validated automatically or through specific tests, as laid down by the committee.</p> <p>In cases where candidate's professional experience is validated in the respective study course of a study programme or a study module, the candidate shall: 1) take tests determined for the respective study course or module or 2) take additional tests, as laid down by the committee.</p>

38 European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning. Cedefop, 2009.

## Certification of Learning Outcomes

LQF levels 2-4	LQF levels 5-7
<p>A vocational education institution issues a State recognized document - the certificate of professional qualification (LQF levels 2-4) - to a person, who has successfully passed the professional qualification examination (with the grade of at least 5 (satisfactory) in a 10-point grading scale).</p> <p>During the years 2011-2017, the certificate of professional qualification, as acquired through the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (LQF levels 2-4), was issued to 5543 persons, 2316 out of which had acquired the qualification corresponding to LQF level 3 (see Annex 1) and 3227 - the qualification corresponding to LQF level 4 (see Annex 2). The validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes was carried out in 77 professional qualifications, which equals to half of the opportunities offered by education institutions.</p>	<p>The validation of learning outcomes is recorded in the decision made by the HEI committee. It specifies the amount of the learning outcomes expressed in credit points, as well as the title of the study programme or study course, for which the credit points for the validated learning outcomes are granted. The HEI communicates the decision of the committee to the candidate. The candidate may appeal against a decision made by the committee to the rector of the higher education institution or the director of the college within one month of the entry into force of such decision, whereas the decision made by the rector of the higher education institution or the director of the college may be appealed to the administrative court within one month of the entry into force of such decision.</p> <p>A person who does not study in the respective study programme may resume the studies in the corresponding stage of the study programme after the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes by laying down the amount of the study courses and modules to be additionally acquired, and the respective tests, as necessary.</p> <p>In cases where the candidates have achieved the learning outcomes in other learning settings or time periods, the HEI shall consider the way the credit points are to be granted.</p> <p>The experience of HEIs in the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes differ from institution to institution, but it is clear that they have been carrying out the validation process since at least 2012. The statistical data on validation outcomes in different higher education institutions have been collected to describe aims to be achieved within different projects and presented in thematic seminars. However, they do not provide an insight into the progress of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. Some HEIs have considerably greater experience in the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes - on average around 40 persons per year.<sup>39</sup></p>

39 Presentations of the University of Latvia and Rīga Stradiņš University in the project closing conference held on 21 October 2016. Presentation by Latvia University of Agriculture in AIC seminar in 2017.

## 1.5 Setting of the Procedure for Validating Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes and the Possible Priorities in Line with Sectoral Needs

Due to the development of the current labour market and modern technologies, the regulatory enactments, which prescribe the requirements for the qualifications of employees, often require changes. The most efficient way for the individuals to have the necessary qualification verified is the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (see Table 1).

As for the requirements provided for in the Law on Administration of Residential Houses (2009),<sup>40</sup> which stipulate that a person is entitled to perform the administrative task in a residential house, if he or she has acquired a document certifying at least a LQF level 4 professional qualification, during the years 2012-2013, 415 persons acquired a professional qualification. Worth mentioning is the fact that the oldest examinee, which acquired the professional qualification "Residential House Administrator", was 77 years old.<sup>41</sup> In 2012, the State Border Guard College commenced the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in the professional qualification "State Border Officer" (LQF level 4), thus allowing also the employees of the State institution - State Border Guard - to have their professional competence, as acquired in work settings, certified. From 2012 until 2017, altogether 346<sup>42</sup> persons acquired the professional qualification "State Border Officer". However, from 2013 until 2017, 927 persons had their non-formal and informal learning outcomes validated in order to obtain in the certificate of the professional qualification "Carer" (LQF level 3), whereas 264 persons had obtained the certificate of the professional qualification "Babysitter" (LQF level 4). Also in this case, the acquisition of these professional qualifications was subject to the regulatory enactments governing the respective field which stipulate that a person is entitled to provide social services if he or she has acquired the necessary qualification.<sup>43</sup> In 2015, the Fire Safety and Civil Defense College commenced the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in the professional qualification "Fire and Rescue Service Fireman" (LQF level 4), whereas in 2016, the State Police College commenced the same in the professional qualification "Junior Inspector of State Police" (LQF level 4). By 2017, altogether 942 interior system employees had their professional competences, as acquired in the respective work settings, validated.<sup>44</sup>

**Table 1. Most acquired professional qualifications (LQF levels 3-4), as obtained through the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes during the years 2011-2017**

Professional qualification (LQF level)	Number of persons
Fire and Rescue Service Fireman (4)	680
State Border Officer (4)	346
House Manager (4)	415
Junior Inspector of State Police (3)	262
Carer (3)	927
Babysitter (4)	264

40 Section 13 "Professional Qualifications of the Administrator of Residential Houses" of the Law on Administration of Residential Houses, as adopted on 4 June 2009. See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=193573>.

41 SEQS Report on the assessment of professional competences acquired outside of formal education system during the years 2011-2015. See: <https://ikvd.gov.lv/publikacijas/zinojumi-un-parskati/>.

42 SEQS Report on the assessment of professional competences acquired outside of formal education system during the years 2011-2015. See: <https://ikvd.gov.lv/publikacijas/zinojumi-un-parskati/>; Overall data on the number of persons who have acquired a qualification by 2017, as collected by SEQS.

43 Cabinet Regulation No. 288 "Procedure for Receiving Social Services and Social Assistance", as adopted on 21 April 2008. See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=174327>. Cabinet Regulation No. 404 "Requirements for Providers of Child Supervision Services and Procedures for Registration of Providers of Child Supervision Services", as adopted on 16 July 2013. See: <https://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=258873>.

44 Overall data on the number of persons who have acquired a qualification by 2017, as collected by SEQS.

During the years 2011-2017, in 47% of the cases, the acquisition of the certificate of professional qualification (LQF levels 3-4), as obtained through the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, was attributable to the applicability of regulatory enactments or specific requirements, for instance, certification, to individuals who work in this field. In the rest of the cases, the individuals themselves were motivated to have their professional competences assessed, or it was done at the initiative of employers. Not only employees, but also employers avail themselves of the possibility to have their professional competences assessed. Since there is no great demand for LQF level 2 qualifications on the labour market, the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in the qualifications corresponding the aforementioned level has not been carried out.

## 2. Benefits of the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes, Including the Granting of a Qualification and/or Partial Qualification

### 2.1 Qualifications to Be Acquired through the Validation

In Latvia, the validation and assessment of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is carried out with regards to qualifications to be acquired within formal education - vocational basic education, vocational education, vocational secondary education, continuing vocational training, and higher education.

### 2.2 Compliance of the Qualifications, as Acquired through the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes, with the Standards of Qualifications Acquired within Formal Education Programmes

Latvian Qualifications Framework is based on the learning outcomes to be achieved within formal education, which also refer to the procedure for validating non-formal and informal learning outcomes. The learning outcomes to be achieved in vocational education (LQF levels 2-4) are laid down in national vocational education standards, occupational standards, and vocational education programmes. However, the quality of the acquisition of the learning outcomes to be achieved is attested through accreditation and State final examinations.

Higher education programmes (LQF levels 5-7) are developed in compliance with the respective national education standards and/or occupational standards, which results in professional higher education programmes. The learning outcomes to be achieved in higher education programmes are determined by the content of the respective programme consisting of study courses and modules, as well as practical training within professional higher education programmes. A full qualification in higher education is attested by a certain number of credit points. Non-formal and informal learning outcomes can be validated through the validation of those parts of a study programme, which a person has already acquired - similarly as in the validation of a partial qualification, but without receiving a formal document attesting the acquired education.

### 2.3 Mechanisms Related to the Inclusion into Formal Education

The validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes with regards to professional qualifications corresponding to LQF levels 2-4, does not aim for a direct inclusion of a person into formal education. After passing the professional qualification examination, a person shall obtain the certificate of professional qualification, which allows for his or her integration into the labour market. However, the certificate of professional qualification may also serve as a basis for further education in a formal education programme in the respective field. In such cases, the learning outcomes achieved by the person in previous learning shall be assessed in the education institution, and the decision on his or her admission to a formal education programme shall be made by the education institution in compliance with the admission requirements for the respective formal education programme. However, the certificate of professional qualification (LQF levels 2-4) does not provide access to studies in higher education programmes.

In higher education (LQF levels 5-7), the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes aims at providing access to the respective study programme, as implemented by the HEI, regarding which the learning outcomes are validated. As provided for in Section 59<sup>2</sup> of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (1995), a person has the right to be enrolled in a higher education institution or college for the acquisition of an individual study module or study course. The procedures for registration shall be determined by the relevant higher education institution or college. A certificate shall be issued to a listener of a study module or study course acquired at a higher education institution or college, which shall contain information regarding the amount of credit points and the evaluation of the learning outcomes. A person has the right to accumulate the study workload, as attested by the respective certificates, over a longer period of time and, if he or she has an adequate previous education, to request that the HEI evaluate the compliance of the workload with the study programmes or phases thereof, granting the relevant credit points for it.

### 3. Coherence of the Measures of the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes with Other Transparency and Validation Tools

#### 3.1 Characterization of the Reference to and the Compliance of Validation Measures with the LQF and EQF

Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) was established in 2010. Since 2015, the Education Law defines the LQF<sup>45</sup> as a system of eight levels, which comprises all education levels (basic, secondary, and higher education), types (general, vocational, and academic), and forms (formal, self-education, non-formal, and informal learning). Moreover, the LQF is referenced to the European Qualifications Framework.

The LQF levels are characterized by learning outcomes, and the knowledge, skills, and competences to be acquired in each of the following levels of qualification are contained in the previous level of qualification. This principle applies to both the acquisition of formal qualifications and the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. The certificate of professional qualification (LQF levels 2-4), which is issued to a person after the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, complies with the learning outcomes of the formal qualification corresponding to the relevant LQF level.

In the Qualifications Framework for Latvian Higher Education (LQF levels 5-8), which has been integrated into LQF, each qualification is characterized by the level, learning outcomes to be achieved, and the workload necessary to achieve the latter (credit points). Under the Qualifications Framework for Latvian Higher Education, learning outcomes to be achieved shall be generally specified (study courses and study modules) and assessed by granting credit points, as well as systematized depending on the conditions (mandatory, optional, and free choice courses) and types (academic or professional) of acquisition. Thus, the conditions for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in higher education provide for the validation of that part of qualification, which refers to the qualification corresponding to the respective level.<sup>46</sup>

Since 19 April 2013, the level of EQF or LQF, or the level corresponding to the qualifications framework for EHEA is indicated in the higher education diploma supplement.<sup>47</sup>

As from 1 January 2017, the corresponding LQF level shall be indicated in all State-recognized documents certifying acquisition of vocational education and professional qualification.<sup>48</sup>

#### 3.2 Documentation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes by Means of European Transparency Tools

Traditionally, significant support regarding the non-formal learning in the field of youth is provided by youth organizations and centres, which offer non-formal and interest-related education programmes and volunteering opportunities that allow for further acquisition of vocational or higher education.

45 Amendments to the Education Law, as adopted on 2 July 2015. See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/275053-grozijumi-izglitiba-likuma>.

46 Referencing of the Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the qualifications framework for European Higher Education Area. Assessment of the situation in 2016, AIC, 2016. See: [http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/LKI\\_attistiba\\_situacijas\\_izvertejums\\_2016\\_1.pdf](http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/LKI_attistiba_situacijas_izvertejums_2016_1.pdf).

47 Cabinet Regulation No. 202 "Procedures by which State-recognized Documents Certifying Acquisition of Higher Education Are Issued", as adopted on 16 May 2013. See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=256157>.

48 Cabinet Regulation No. 451 "Procedures by which State-recognised Documents Certifying Vocational Education and Vocational Qualification and Documents Certifying Acquisition of a Part of an Accredited Vocational Education Programme Are Issued", as adopted on 21 June 2005. See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=111580>.

One of the most important frameworks for non-formal learning in the field of youth in Latvia and across the entire EU is the programme "Erasmus+: Youth in Action", which at the same time provides the mechanism for the validation of the acquired competences - Youthpass Certificate. As provided for in the Council Recommendation of 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes of 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, Youthpass aims to facilitate the validation of learning outcomes.<sup>49</sup>

One of the lines of action within the sub-objective of the Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020 is the provision of more possibilities of non-formal and informal learning to children and young people.<sup>50</sup> The Guidelines aim to foster the development of a system for validation and assessment of non-formal learning outcomes in the field of youth and to introduce the Youthpass tool to ensure the validation of non-formal learning at national level by the second half of 2016. The Agency for International Programmes for Youth is the institution responsible for the attainment of this objective in Latvia.<sup>51</sup> The performance indicators "Number of organizations using the Youthpass Certificate for the validation of non-formal learning achievements" and "Number of young people who have received the Youthpass Certificate" to be achieved by 2020 have been already greatly outweighed (see Table 2), which indicates to the visibility and application of the Youthpass tool for the documentation of non-formal learning outcomes in the field of youth.

**Table 2. Planned and achieved results regarding the introduction of the Youthpass tool**

	Number of organizations using the Youthpass Certificate for the validation of non-formal learning achievements in 2017	Number of organizations using the Youthpass Certificate for the validation of non-formal learning achievements in 2020	Number of young people who have received the Youthpass Certificate in 2017	Number of young people who have received the Youthpass Certificate in 2020
Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020	50	100	750	1500
Data provided by the Agency for International Programmes for Youth in May 2018	601		16 490	

49 Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01). See: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32012H1222\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32012H1222(01)&from=EN).

50 Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020. Lines of action within the sub-objective 2 "Skills of individuals: Fostering of a Value Education Based Development of Individual's Professional and Social Skills for Life and Competitiveness in Work Settings", 2.3 Provision of more possibilities and improvement of access to education outside of formal education by children and young people. See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=266406>.

51 The Agency for International Programmes for Youth is an institution of direct administration subordinated to the Minister for Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia. The objective of the Agency is to promote youth activity and mobility, involvement in voluntary service, non-formal learning and information programmes and projects targeted at youth, as well as to support the link between non-formal learning and lifelong education. See: <https://jaunatne.gov.lv/lv>.

In 2015, the Agency for International Programmes for Youth implemented the pilot project “Level Up!” which aimed at promoting non-formal learning and the identification of learning outcomes in the field of youth. Within the project, the use of the Youthpass Certificate for the attestation of the involvement of young people in local activities in Latvia was approved, especially the second part of this document - self-assessment of learning outcomes. As suggested by the project outcomes, the use of the Youthpass Certificate may account for a significant increase of competitiveness on the labour market, provided that they have acquired new competences through non-formal learning, are aware of it, and are able to formulate it, whereas the employer is able to identify and validate this experience and the added value thereof<sup>52</sup>. In 2016, by aiming at encouraging a debate on the next steps to be taken to introduce the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in the field of youth in Latvia, the Agency for International Programmes for Youth organized the national forum “Non-Formal and Validated” (in Latvian: “Neformāls un atzīts”), in which field experts and young people supported the establishment of a system of validation of non-formal learning in the field of youth at national level.

The Ministry of Education and Science has established a Working Group and by 31 December 2020 (see sub-paragraph 3.4.) it is planned to implement a system of validation of non-formal learning in the field of youth in Latvia.

As suggested by the statistics of documents generated online, the use of Europass documents in Latvia has been increasing since 2005. In most cases, Europass CV and Language Passport are used to record information on education and work experience, which by May 2018 were completed online by more than 875 thousand citizens residing in Latvia.<sup>53</sup> Since the procedure for validating non-formal and informal learning outcomes at LQF levels 2-4 does not require documentary evidence of individual’s knowledge, skills, and competences, data on the use of Europass documents in this context are not collected.

Consultations on documents attesting individual’s previous work experience and education, as provided by the HEI, is based on the principles of the portfolio method, which aims to assist the individual in systemizing the aforementioned documents and assess their compliance with the learning outcomes to be achieved in the respective higher education programme. One of the tools used for the documentation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is a Europass document. As suggested by the inquiry conducted by the HEI,<sup>54</sup> in around 40% of cases, a Europass document is used to provide transparency of individual’s non-formal and informal learning outcomes in the validation process. Two out of 45 institutions of higher education and colleges surveyed reported that they had experience in evaluation of the Youthpass Certificate of the candidate.

### 3.3 Synergy between Validation Measures and Formal Education Credit Systems

Although there is no credit system put in place in vocational education in Latvia, the introduction of some ECVET principles is already taking place as part of vocational education reforms, for instance, modularization of vocational education, definition of learning outcomes to be achieved in vocational education programmes, revision of occupational standards, and the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.<sup>55</sup> Granting, referencing, and validation of credit points for a partial

52 AIPY, Validation of non-formal learning in the field of youth will be implemented in Latvia, <http://jaunatne.gov.lv/raksti/latvija-tiks-ieviesta-neformalas-izglitiba-jaunatnes-darba-atzinasan-sistema-papildinats-ar>.

53 Cedefop, *Europass website activity report since February 2005 (Latvia, Latvian)*, 2018, [https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/sites/default/files/statistics\\_lv\\_sincestart\\_1.pdf](https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/sites/default/files/statistics_lv_sincestart_1.pdf).

54 Information based on the results of the inquiry among higher education institutions within the project “Validation of Prior Learning”, as implemented by the MoES during the years 2015-2016 in the framework of Erasmus+ Key Action 3: Support for Policy Reforms under the EU programme for education, training, youth, and sport.

55 State Education Development Agency (2015). Recommendations on the conditions for the introduction of ECVET principles in the vocational education of Latvia. See: [https://viaa.gov.lv/library/files/original/leteikumi\\_ECVET\\_20ievie\\_c5\\_a1anai\\_20LV.pdf](https://viaa.gov.lv/library/files/original/leteikumi_ECVET_20ievie_c5_a1anai_20LV.pdf).

qualification (transfer from another country) are seen as the greatest risk by education institutions.<sup>56</sup> The application of ECVET principles for the referencing of modules (units) through a diploma or certificate (a set of several such diplomas/ certificates form a qualification) would decrease the drop-out rate, as the students could be awarded a certificate attesting the acquisition of a qualification of lower level also after one-year studies. Similar approach would be used in the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.<sup>57</sup>

During the years 2011-2015, within the ESF project “Development of Sectoral Qualifications System and Increasing the Efficiency and Quality of Vocational Education” the “Methodological recommendations on the development of modular vocational education programmes”<sup>58</sup> were developed. They aimed at introducing an education process based on professional competences and an approach based on learning outcomes into the vocational education system. The methodological recommendations suggest that as a result of the acquisition of a module, after the assessment of learning outcomes to be achieved, a professional qualification or part thereof measurable in competence points (ECVET), could be awarded.

As provided for in the amendments to the Vocational Education Law (1999)<sup>59</sup> (in force as from 6 July 2017), if a module of an accredited modular vocational education programme or several modules thereof are acquired, an education institution shall issue a certificate for the acquisition of the module or related modules.<sup>60</sup> Education institutions may issue the certificate in a format chosen at their own discretion, by indicating additional information of the module acquired.<sup>61</sup>

In higher education (LQF levels 5-8), a person may acquire higher education (or be admitted to studies in the respective stage of higher education) provided that he or she is able to produce evidence of the acquisition of knowledge and skills provided for in the national education standard. In higher education, national credit points are used, which in Latvia are defined as a one-week full-time study workload. The workload of a full-time study is 40 credit points. The amount of ECTS credits is found by multiplying the amount of Latvian credit points by a factor of 1.5.

### 3.4 Implementation of Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes in the Field of Youth

As provided for in the Youth Law (2009), the purpose of non-formal learning in the field of youth is to provide knowledge, develop skills, abilities and attitudes, as well as to promote comprehensive development and active youth participation in decision-making and social life.<sup>62</sup> However, currently there are no defined principles for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in the field of youth in Latvia.

The implementation of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in the field of youth in Latvia is subject to the fulfilment of tasks, as set out in several national medium-term development planning documents, which for the future could serve as a basis for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 Methodological recommendations on the development of modular vocational education programmes. State Education Development Agency, 2015. European Social Fund project “Development of Sectoral Qualifications System and Increasing the Efficiency and Quality of Vocational Education” (Agreement No. 2010/0274/1DP/1.2.1.1.1/10/IPIA/VIAA/001). See: [http://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/metmat/metiet\\_modul\\_prog\\_izstr\\_2015.pdf](http://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/metmat/metiet_modul_prog_izstr_2015.pdf).

59 Amendments to the Vocational Education Law, as adopted on 5 July 2017. See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/292030-grozijumi-profesionalas-izglitiba-likuma>.

60 Section 6 “Documents Certifying Vocational Education and Vocational Qualifications” of the Vocational Education Law. See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=20244>.

61 NCE, Vocational education programmes, <http://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/programmas.shtml>.

62 Youth Law, as adopted on 8 May 2008. See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=175920>.

The line of action of the Latvian National Development Plan 2014-2020<sup>63</sup> related to non-formal learning in the field of youth aims at increasing the employment rate of the population aged 20-64 from 67% in 2011 to 73% in 2020. One of the key tasks is to promote involvement of young people in non-formal education and voluntary work, and youth employment, including the development of career education system and provision of aid measures for young unemployed people for them to be able to gain their first work experience.

One of the lines of action within the sub-objective of the Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020 is the provision of more possibilities of non-formal learning to children and young people<sup>64</sup>. It implies the provision of the possibility to acquire lifelong learning competences by fostering the development of non-formal learning programmes to raise civil awareness among children and young people and strengthen 21<sup>st</sup> century competences and skills.

Under the line of action provided for in the Youth Policy Implementation Plan for 2016-2020<sup>65</sup> the Working Group of the Ministry of Education and Science in collaboration with the Agency for International Programmes for Youth, municipalities, and the State Employment Agency works on a common model for the development of non-formal education in the field of youth at national level, by promoting the use of non-formal learning methods. By 31 December 2020, it is planned to develop a mechanism for the validation of competences acquired through non-formal learning, to provide the respective definitions, and to prepare the necessary amendments to the Youth Law and other binding regulatory enactments. The performance indicator to be achieved is the increase in the percentage of young people who hold the opinion that they are provided with all possibilities to spend their free time.

63 Latvian National Development Plan for 2014-2020, as elaborated on 20 December 2012. See: <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/documents/4247>

64 Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020. Lines of action within the sub-objective 2 "Skills of individuals: Fostering of a Value Education Based Development of Individual's Professional and Social Skills for Life and Competitiveness in Work Settings", 2.3 Provision of more possibilities and improvement of access to education outside of formal education by children and young people. See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=266406>.

65 Cabinet Order No. 256 "Youth Policy Implementation Plan for 2016-2020", as issued on 14 April 2016. See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/281546-par-jaunatnes-politikas-istenosanas-planu-2016-2020-gadam>.

## 4. Support for Individuals

### 4.1 Support and Consulting Arrangements Introduced for the Implementation of the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes

To ensure the procedure for validating non-formal and informal learning outcomes, education institutions have elaborated methodological materials, which comprise detailed descriptions of consultation and support arrangements for individuals. In order to identify the experience gained regarding the efficiency of the assurance of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (LQF levels 2-4), the data of the inquiry<sup>66</sup> among education institutions, as conducted in 2015, allowed for conclusions as follows:

1. Education institutions actively promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in different information sharing environments, such as television, radio, press, internet, and through the collaboration with employers and employees, for instance, by visiting the locations of qualification training. The efficiency of these arrangements largely depends on candidate's own or his/her employer's motivation to undergo the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.
2. Also consultations to be provided for an additional price or free of charge are offered to the candidates by education institutions. The candidates actively avail themselves of the possibility to receive consultations the amount of which depends on the competence of education institution's consultant to convince the candidate of the level of his/her skills in the respective professional qualification.
3. The provision of consultations by education institutions take three forms: a) by involving the respective experts or teachers; b) by sending study materials to the candidate and answering his or her questions electronically; and c) by offering the possibility to acquire theoretical knowledge in non-formal learning programmes.
4. Education institutions have not received any recommendations by the professional qualification examination committee on the improvement or development of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes achieved by the candidates. The content of the professional qualification examination programmes has been recognized as optimal.

Within the European Social Fund project "Development of Sectoral Qualifications System and Increasing the Efficiency and Quality of Vocational Education", as implemented by the SEDA during the years 2010-2015, it was planned to reimburse expenses of the assessment of professional competences incurred by 80 persons who passed the professional qualification examination (see Table 3). The planned aim was achieved within six months (December 2011 - June 2012), which provided a significant impetus for the dissemination of information on the possibilities of having one's professional competences assessed. Within the framework of the aforementioned project, in 2015, an informative booklet "Guide for the Assessment of Professional Competences Acquired Outside of Formal Education System"<sup>67</sup> was published. Prepared in simple and accessible language, it provides information on the necessary measures to be undertaken to carry out the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

Since autumn 2017, the SEDA in collaboration with municipalities, education institutions, and the State Employment Agency (SEA) has been implementing the ESF project "Development of Professional Competences of Employees"<sup>68</sup> (1 January 2017 - 31 December 2022), in the framework

66 SEDA Report on the assessment of professional competences acquired outside of formal education system during the years 2011-2015. See: <https://ikvd.gov.lv/publikacijas/zinojumi-un-parskati>

67 Guide for the assessment of professional competences acquired outside of formal education system // European Social Fund project "Development of Sectoral Qualifications System and Increasing the Efficiency and Quality of Vocational Education"/ Riga, SEDA, 2015, p. 20. See: [https://ikvd.gov.lv/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/08\\_Celvedis\\_ArpusFormalasIzSistProfKompVertesana-1.pdf](https://ikvd.gov.lv/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/08_Celvedis_ArpusFormalasIzSistProfKompVertesana-1.pdf).

68 ESF project "Development of Professional Competences of Employees" (No 8.4.1.0/16/001). See: [http://viaa.gov.lv/lat/pieauguso\\_izglitiba/par\\_projektu](http://viaa.gov.lv/lat/pieauguso_izglitiba/par_projektu).

of which the individuals are able to have the expenses related to the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (LQF levels 2-4) reimbursed. Employees aged 25 and older may receive significant financial support - reimbursement of the expenses amounting to 90%. Moreover, employees from a disadvantaged background may be reimbursed for 100% of their expenses. By June 2018, based on the criteria for the reimbursement of expenses, altogether 92 persons were reimbursed for their expenses, whereas 14 persons received a refusal. The majority of the persons applying for the reimbursement of expenses related to the validation were aged 25-44.

**Table 3. Reimbursement of expenses related to the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in professional qualifications (LQF levels 3-4) within ESF projects**

Qualification (LQF level)	2011-2012*	2017**	Until June 2018**
Finishing Technician (4)			2
Carer			8
Car Mechanic (4)	59		8
Car Electrician (4)	1		
Librarian (4)		2	8
Railway Transport Organization and Traffic Safety Technician (4)		2	1
Electrical Engineering Technician (4)		4	11
Electrical Fitter (3)	4		
Catering Service Specialist (4)			8
Building Construction Technician (4)			3
Photo Design Specialist (4)			3
Accountant (4)	6		1
Customer Service Specialist (4)			5
Arc Welder in Welding with Mechanical Machine in the Active Gas Environment (MAG) (3)	7	3	
Locomotive Technician (4)	3		
Specialist of Material Design (4)			1
Chef (3)			10
Transport Wagon Technician (4)			1
Junior Inspector of State Police (4)			11
<b>IN TOTAL</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>81</b>

\* Within the ESF project "Development of Sectoral Qualifications System and Increasing the Efficiency and Quality of Vocational Education" (2010-2015).

\*\* Within the ESF project "Development of Professional Competences of Employees" (2017-2022).

## 4.2 Special Measures for Disadvantaged Groups

The Law on Support for Unemployed Persons and Persons Seeking Employment (2002) prescribes the measures to increase competitiveness, especially measures for the improvement of social and functional skills, the acquisition of basic skills and abilities necessary for the labour market, as well as the acquisition of work finding techniques, non-formal education, including the official language, and other measures that facilitate the competitiveness of unemployed persons and persons seeking employment on the labour market.<sup>69</sup> The non-formal learning programmes, as organized by the SEA, are addressed to individuals the skills of which do not comply with the ever-changing labour market needs or are not sufficient, which is why the individuals have hard time to find employment.<sup>70</sup> The target group is comprised of SEA registered unemployed persons and persons seeking employment, especially those having a low level of skills and qualification which do not match the labour market needs.

After the acquisition of a non-formal learning programme, the duration of which is up to two months, a person receives a document attesting the acquired knowledge. This document allows for a more successful integration into the labour market, further education for career development purposes or validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

## 4.3 "Skills Audit" Possibilities, Timeframes, and Target Group

"Skills Audit" means a process aimed at identifying and analysing the knowledge, skills, and competences of an individual, to help the individual analyse his/her career background, to self-assess his/her position in the labour environment and to plan a career pathway, or in some cases to prepare for the validation of non-formal or informal learning outcomes.<sup>71</sup>

The purpose of consultations provided within the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (LQF levels 2-4) is to convince the candidate of the compliance of the level of his/her knowledge and skills with the occupational standard and the ability to prove his/her professional competences to the professional qualification examination committee. The knowledge of candidates do not always comply with the requirements set out in the standard of the respective contemporary occupation. Moreover, they require additional education on specific topics. A vocational education institution may provide consultations. However, it is a paid service.

In cases where a candidate has doubts as to whether he/she will pass the examination due to the lack of knowledge, the education institution may offer him/her to acquire an adult non-formal education programme, which does not require accreditation.

In order to seek views of the candidates on the satisfaction with the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (LQF levels 2-4), during the years 2014-2015, an on-site inquiry involving 77 candidates was conducted after they had passed the examination.<sup>72</sup> This enabled the education institution to draw conclusions as follows:

1. The candidates had obtained the information regarding the validation of professional competences mainly from the employer or colleagues.
2. The key incentive of the candidates was to increase the level of qualification, at the same time receiving the certificate of professional qualification, as required by the employer.
3. As for the consultations provided free of charge, the questions of the candidates were mainly related to professional competences set out in the occupational standard.

<sup>69</sup> Section 3 "Active Employment Measures" of the Law on Support for Unemployed Persons and Persons Seeking Employment". See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/62539-bezdarbnieku-un-darba-mekletaju-atbalsta-likums>.

<sup>70</sup> From 1 January 2014 until 30 June 2018, the SEA organized non-formal learning programmes within the ESF project "Support for the Education of Unemployed Persons" (No. 7.1.1.0/15/1/001).

<sup>71</sup> Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01). See: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32012H1222\(01\)&from=en](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32012H1222(01)&from=en)

<sup>72</sup> SEQS Report on the assessment of professional competences acquired outside of formal education system during the years 2011-2015. See: <https://ikvd.gov.lv/publikacijas/zinojumi-un-parskati>.

4. After the consultations, as provided free of charge, the applicants required additional learning with regards to specific topics.
5. The candidates carried out the self-assessment of their professional competences, as it is of great importance when preparing for the examination.
6. As for the degree of complexity of the tasks forming the theoretical part of the professional qualification examination, it was indicated as optimal, whereas that of the practical tasks was evaluated as optimal and simple.

Consultations on documents attesting individual’s previous work experience and education, as provided by the higher education institutions and colleges, is based on the principles of the portfolio method, which aims to assist the individual in systemizing the aforementioned documents and assess their compliance with the learning outcomes to be achieved in the respective higher education programme. In most cases, a Europass document is used to provide transparency of individual’s non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

#### 4.4 Assurance of and Access to the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes

Individuals have the possibility to have their non-formal and informal learning outcomes (LQF levels 2-4) validated in governmental, municipal, and private education institutions. Since 2013, there are more than 40 education institutions, which provide the access to the validation all across Latvia, and this number grows dynamically year by year (see Table 4). The latter is attributable to the availability of the information on the service - the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, which is fostered by the activities of education institutions carried out in order to attract candidates. Since 2012, professional competences can be assessed in more than 100 professional qualifications. From 2011 to 2015, the candidates had availed themselves of the opportunity to have their professional competences assessed in 49 professional qualifications, and in 2017 - in 77 professional qualifications, which indicates to the increase in demand for such qualifications on the labour market.

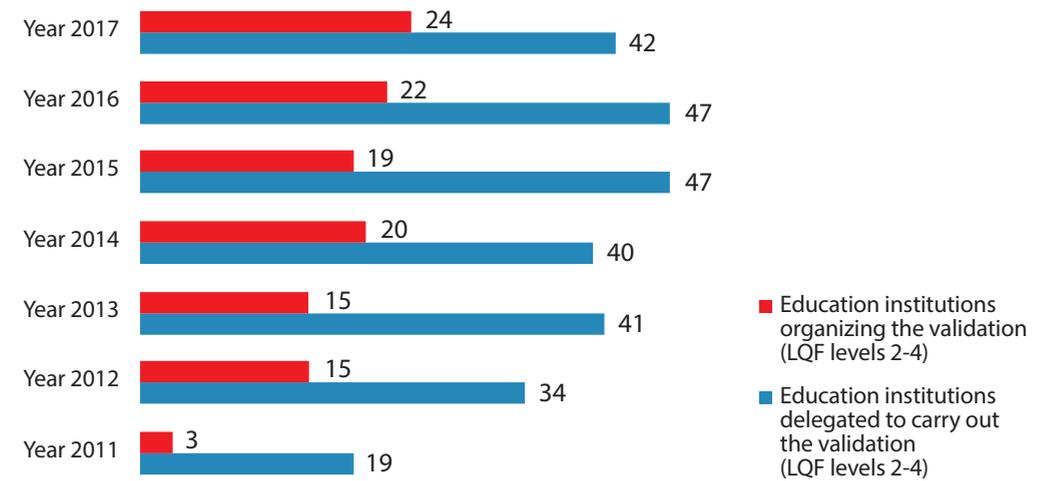
**Table 4. Provision of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (LQF levels 2-4) on annual basis**

Year	Number of professional qualifications	Education institutions founded by the State and municipality	Education institutions founded by natural or legal Persons
2011	85	19	0
2012	116	30	4
2013	122	33	8
2014	140	32	8
2015	159	41	6
2016	179	40	7
2017	155	37	5

The numbers of education institutions delegated by the SEQS to carry out the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes and those practically organizing the latter have varied over the past seven years (see Figure 4). The numerical differences are mainly attributable to the activity of the education institutions in attracting candidates, as well as the motivation of the candidates to have their non-formal and informal learning outcomes validated in specific professional qualifications. Education institutions seek to provide the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes

in as many professional qualifications as possible in compliance with the accredited formal education programmes. However, the choice and motivation of an individual is defined by his/her personal experience and labour market needs. The increase in the number of education institutions, as delegated 2015, is partly attributable to the requirements for the acquisition of the status of a vocational education competence centre (VECC) in the field of art, music or dance.

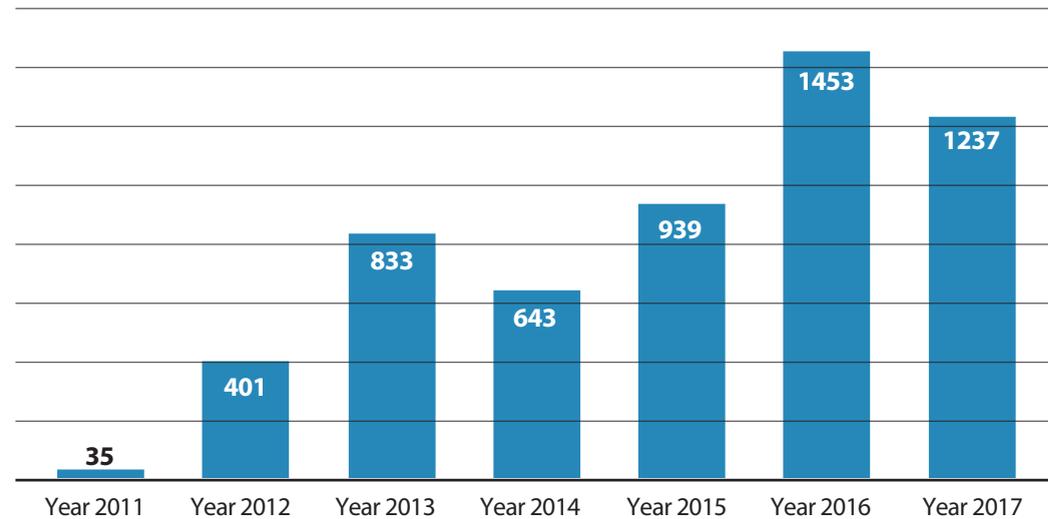
**Figure 4. Numerical comparison of education institutions delegated to carry out the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes and those organizing the latter during the years 2011-2017**



The demand for the specific qualification acquired through the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is defined by: 1) the requirements of the regulatory enactments regarding the qualification of individuals working in the respective field; 2) initiative of employers to employ qualified specialists; 3) the compliance of the employees of governmental institutions with the requirements regarding the professional qualification; and 4) individuals’ interest in professions needed on the labour market.<sup>73</sup> In several cases, the opportunity to have one’s professional competences assessed at Latvian education institutions was taken also by Latvian emigrants who are employed abroad in fields such as catering, car service, and construction.

<sup>73</sup> As suggested by the data of the inquiry, as conducted by the SEQS during the years 2014-2015.

**Figure 5. Number of persons, which have received the certificate of professional qualification through the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (LQF levels 2-4)**



The dynamics of the number of those individuals, who have acquired their qualification through the validation of the non-formal and informal learning outcomes (LQF levels 2-4), has been mainly affected by the requirements of regulatory enactments regarding the qualification of the individuals working in the respective field (see Figure 5). In 2013, for instance, 62.5% out of all individuals had acquired the professional qualifications “Carer” (LQF level 3), “Babysitter” (LQF level 4), and “House Manager” (LQF level 4), whereas in 2016, 40.5% of all individuals had acquired the professional qualifications “Fire and Rescue Service Fireman” (LQF level 4), “Junior Inspector of State Police” (LQF level 4), and “State Border Officer” (LQF level 4).

No centralized collection of data on the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes carried out by higher education institutions or colleges is conducted. Moreover, in terms of design, the procedures for the evaluation of the documents of the individuals are slightly different. The validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes at LQF levels 2-4 is carried out in line with the occupational standard, whereas at LQF levels 5-7 - in compliance with the learning outcomes to be achieved in the respective study programme. In higher education, the experience in the validation of learning outcomes is characterized by the results of the inquiry among 45 higher education institutions (27 State and 18 private HEIs), as conducted by the MoES in 2016.<sup>74</sup> Only two institutions of higher education did not have any experience in the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. All higher education institutions and colleges reported that they have set up regulations on the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, including the procedure for validating learning outcomes. The application for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is usually organized at the beginning of a study semester or once a month. Some higher education institutions are relatively more experienced in the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes – on average 40 persons per year. Some examples characterizing the decision on the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes are set out below.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Information based on the results of the inquiry among higher education institutions within the project “Validation of Prior Learning”, as implemented by the MoES during the years 2015-2016 in the framework of Erasmus+ Key Action 3: Support for Policy Reforms under the EU programme for education, training, youth, and sport.

See: [http://www.izm.gov.lv/images/Erasmus/leprieks\\_iegutas\\_izglitiba\\_pielidzinasa/Pirma\\_dala.pdf](http://www.izm.gov.lv/images/Erasmus/leprieks_iegutas_izglitiba_pielidzinasa/Pirma_dala.pdf).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

1. At Rīga Stradiņš University, during the years 2012-2016, a total of 174 cases were examined. The validation of learning outcomes achieved in previous learning and professional experience was carried out in 137 cases and the validation of learning outcomes achieved only in the professional experience - in 29 cases, whereas in five cases the education institution refused to proceed with the validation procedure due to the lack of the necessary documents.
2. At the University of Latvia, during the years 2014-2016, altogether 85 cases were examined, where a total of 197 study courses were validated, but 13 courses were not validated.
3. At Latvia University of Agriculture, during the years 2013-2017, a total of 109 consultations were provided, in 39 cases of which the decision on the validation was made.

## 5. The Role of Stakeholders in the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes

### 5.1 Engagement of Stakeholders

The report "Non-formal education and its implementation processes in Latvia"<sup>76</sup> as drafted by the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia in 2010, deals with the analysis of the question why persons participate in the activities related to non-formal and informal learning. In the report, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Non-formal learning is more flexible and accessible in terms of both resources and time.
2. Non-formal learning comprises all sectors and is attractive for the representatives of virtually all sectors.
3. The main reason for the involvement in non-formal learning activities is the improvement of work quality.
4. Individuals with lower secondary education or less account for the largest proportion of those individuals who seek to acquire a document attesting the acquisition of non-formal education.

As suggested by these conclusions, the individual is the one benefiting most in the procedure for validating non-formal and informal learning outcomes, as it involves different stakeholders. First of all, by carrying out the validation procedure, the education institution is able to increase the opportunities for their development, which, in turn, allows for the diversification of their offer, whilst implementing the usual education programmes. At the same time, it enables greater visibility of the education institution among different age groups and promotes the lifelong learning concept of the development of individual's competences throughout all his/her life.

Since 2016, the Employers' Confederation of Latvia has been coordinating the activities of Sectoral Expert Councils (SEC), thus providing support to vocational education. One of the main tasks of the SEC consists in authorising sectoral representatives - experts to evaluate learning outcomes during an examination. As for the professional qualification examination (LQF levels 2-4) organized within the framework of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, also in this case the committee is comprised of employers only. Thus, the employers representing the sector of economy are directly involved in the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in line with labour market needs.

The education institution shall coordinate the content of the professional qualification examination with the National Centre for Education (NCE), which provides common methodology for the development of the content of professional qualification examinations. The education institution shall submit the information on the organization of the validation of individual's non-formal and informal learning outcomes to the NCE. The cooperation between public authorities (NCE and SEQs) with regards to the coordination the validation process contributes to better public trust in the quality of the process.

### 5.2 Coordination between Stakeholders

The role of the social partners in the collaboration with education institutions is set out in the respective regulatory enactments. The matters concerning the compliance of the quality of vocational education with labour market needs are dealt with and coordinated by the SEC, the aim of which is to contribute to the improvement of the efficiency and quality of vocational education related to the specific sector, by fostering the collaboration between the State and municipalities, employers representing the respective sectors and employers' associations, as well as trade unions and specialists in matters related to the development of human resources and the compliance of

76 ESF project "Building Administrative Capacity of Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia", action 4.2 "Expert's Report on Regulatory Enactments and Policy Documents". Expert's Report on the Social Field and Development of the Labour Market "Non-Formal Education and its Introduction in Latvia".

the vocational education with labour market needs<sup>77</sup>. To ensure the exchange of information on the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes of the candidates in the respective qualifications, the education institutions collaborate with the SEC. By summarizing the number of professional qualifications acquired through the validation of learning outcomes in the respective field, education institutions are able to initiate new discussions with collaboration partners on the reasons and causes of the motivation of employed persons to have their non-formal and informal learning outcomes validated.

### 5.3 The Role of Social Partners in Contribution to the Identification and Documentation of Learning Outcomes Achieved in Work or Voluntary Work Settings

Along with the introduction of the system for validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes during the years 2012-2013, the project "Towards an Integrated System for Validation of Non-Formal Learning Outcomes: Initiating a National Network of Cooperation" (VAL-NET) of the EU lifelong learning programme KA1-ECETA2 was initiated. It was implemented by five partners representing different stakeholders and collaboration partners - the National Library of Latvia, the Training and Consulting Centre Baltic Bright (project coordinator), the SEQs, Latvian Adult Education Association, and Gulbene Municipal Library. The project aimed at raising awareness of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes among different social partners and stakeholders, and creating of mechanisms for information exchange (national network of information exchange) and information channels.

Illustrated by specific examples, the outcomes of the discussions, as held during the workshops of the VAL-NET project, and information on the development of validation system in Latvia were summarized in a booklet "Validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in Latvia."<sup>78</sup> This publication reflected the common opinion of the collaboration partners at national level on the factors contributing to the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in Latvia:

- Simplified and understandable public information on the possibilities for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.
- Coordinated and centralized information on education institutions offering possibilities for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.
- Coordinating and monitoring role for the entire system for validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes as a whole. This role may imply the provision of information, methodological support and consulting, collection of statistical data and good practices, exchange of experience, and quality control.
- Social partners, employers and other stakeholders may contribute to the development of the system.

An example of the role of employers and collaboration partners in the contribution to the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes achieved in work or voluntary work settings, is the initiative by the National Library of Latvia (NLL) regarding the introduction and validation of the qualification "Librarian" (LQF level 4) in librarianship. Along with the amendments<sup>79</sup> to the Vocational Education Law (1999) in 2010, which prescribed the possibilities for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, at the initiative of the NLL, series of active discussions on the relevance of the introduction of librarian's profession (LQF level 4) were initiated. To ensure the involvement of this sector in the system for validation of non-formal learning outcomes in a complex manner,

77 Section 12 "Competence of Sectoral Expert Councils, Trade Unions, and other Unions or Foundations" of the Vocational Education Law, as adopted in 1999. See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=20244>.

78 Validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in Latvia. - Riga, National Library of Latvia, EU project "Towards an Integrated System for Validation of Non-Formal Learning Outcomes: Initiating a National Network of Cooperation", 2013.

79 Amendments to the Vocational Education Law, as adopted on 10 June 2010. See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/212500-grozijumi-profesionalas-izglitiba-likuma>.

proposals for amendments to regulatory enactments<sup>80</sup> were drafted. In response to that, in 2011, a draft standard of librarian's occupation was elaborated, as a result of which the key policy makers and practitioners in librarianship - NLL Centre for Education, the Department of Information and Library studies of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Latvia, and the Latvian Culture College of Latvian Academy of Culture - initiated the development of a sectoral qualifications framework. For the purpose of training needs of sectoral employers, the NLL Centre for Education provided a modular programme which allowed for acquisition of information and basic knowledge and implied that the portion which equals 40% of the entire time allowed for studies shall be dedicated to distance learning by means of the digital learning environment Moodle and individual learning. It took only a few years to make considerable progress towards the development of librarianship education system. On 20 May 2015, the standard of librarian's profession<sup>81</sup> (LQF level 4) was harmonized. Since 4 October 2016, the NLL has been implementing the accredited vocational continuing education programme "Library Science", which allows for the acquisition of the qualification "Librarian". Based on the experience of the NLL gained by organizing professional qualification examinations, in 2017, the NLL initiated the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes regarding librarian's qualification. So far, 12 persons have already availed themselves of this opportunity.

Many education institutions promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in collaboration with employers and employees, for instance, by visiting locations where qualification training takes place.

80 Development of a new librarianship education concept; Drafting of proposals for the amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 371 "Regulations regarding the Number of Employees Necessary for the Work of a Librarian and the Education Necessary for Holding Positions"; Submission of proposals for the modifications to the Law on Libraries with the Ministry of Culture; Coordination of amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 347 "Regulations regarding the Requirements for the Necessary Education and Professional Qualification of Teachers" (2000) with regards to the requirements regulating the education of school librarians, with the Ministry of Education and Science.

81 The occupational standard of librarian harmonized by the National Tripartite Sub-council for Cooperation in vocational education and Employment (PINTSA) in the session of 20 May 2015. See: <https://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/ps0526.pdf>.

## 6. Capacity Building and Quality Assurance

### 6.1 Mechanisms and Measures for the Development of Employees Involved in the Validation Process

By introducing the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, as from 2011, the SEQS has been actively providing advisory support to education institutions. In collaboration with the education institutions, it aims at encouraging the candidates to have their non-formal and informal learning outcomes validated impartially and diligently, whereas the experience of education institutions gained in the work with candidates helps to identify the necessary improvements when organizing the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes and dealing with procedure-related matters.

After having carried out the collection of the performance indicators on the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes on a regular basis, during the years 2012-2016, the SEQS organized five outreach seminars "Experience in the validation of professional competences acquired outside of formal education system". These outreach seminars allowed for face-to-face discussions of the performance indicators of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes and the progress of this process, as well as to seek for optimum problem solutions by referring to the positive experience gained by education institutions.

In order to develop a common understanding of the implementation of the assessment of professional competences, in 2015, the methodological recommendations "Assessment of professional competences acquired outside of formal education system"<sup>82</sup> for education institutions and examination centres and the informative booklet "Guide for the assessment of professional competences acquired outside of formal education system"<sup>83</sup> were drafted.

An important aspect in capacity building is the development of a common understanding of the importance of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in the education system as a whole. However, the development of a common understanding largely depends on the use of the terminology in the field of the validation of learning outcomes.<sup>84</sup> During the years 2015-2016, the Academic Information Centre acting as Latvian coordination point for referencing national qualifications framework to the EQF (NCP) conducted a study, which aimed at identifying the terminology and specific use thereof in the context of EQF and LQF. Explanations of the terms used in the field of education and recommendations on their equivalents in Latvian are provided in the report "Terminology in the context of European and Latvian Qualifications Framework"<sup>85</sup>.

Since 2012, the AIC and the MoES have organized several workshops, which dealt with matters

82 Assessment of professional competences acquired outside of formal education system. Methodological recommendations addressed to education institutions and examination centres. ESF project "Development of a Sectoral Qualifications System and Improvement of the Efficiency and Quality of Vocational education", Riga, SEDA, 2015.

83 Guide for the assessment of professional competences acquired outside of formal education system // European Social Fund project "Development of Sectoral Qualifications System and Increasing the Efficiency and Quality of Vocational Education"/ Riga, State Education Development Agency, 2015. See: [https://ikvd.gov.lv/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/08\\_Celvedis\\_ArpusFormalasIzSistProfKompVertesana-1.pdf](https://ikvd.gov.lv/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/08_Celvedis_ArpusFormalasIzSistProfKompVertesana-1.pdf).

84 Terminology commission of the Latvian Academy of Science Minutes No. 3/1099 (17 August 2010) and No. 4/1100 (24 August 2010). See: <http://termini.lza.lv/article.php?id=310>; <http://termini.lza.lv/article.php?id=311>. In 2010, the Terminology Commission of the Latvian Academy of Sciences considered alternative wording for the terms "attestation", "verification", "assessment" or "recognition" and approved the term "validation of learning outcomes".

85 Terminology in the Context of European and Latvian Qualifications Framework. Study Report, AIC-NCP, 2016. See: [http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Terminologijas\\_zinojums\\_2016.pdf](http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Terminologijas_zinojums_2016.pdf). In the context of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, the term "validation" has two meanings: 1) recognition - with regards to referencing of diplomas, especially in the context of the assessment of learning outcomes achieved outside of formal education system; 2) certification - used in the context of ECVET in cases, where the competent authority certifies that the learning outcomes to be achieved have been assessed against specific criteria.

related to the implementation of a system for validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. The aim of the thematic seminars was:

- To discuss the possibilities to make higher education more open to higher education institutions and colleges to expand the contingency of students;<sup>86</sup>
- To discuss the role of vocational education institutions in the validation of learning outcomes achieved in previous learning;<sup>87</sup> and
- To share experience and developments in the validation of non-formal learning outcomes with the social partners, and vocational and higher education institutions.<sup>88</sup>

In 2016, in order to provide support to the HEI staff involved in the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, the “Recommendations on the assessment and validation of learning outcomes achieved outside of formal education or in professional experience” were drafted. In addition, the HEIs collaborate to settle matters related to methodology and validation procedures.

## 6.2 Mechanisms and Measures for the Accessibility of the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes and Visibility of Issuing Authorities

Education institutions, which provide the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, use internet resources to ensure the access to information. The information available on the website of an education institution usually contains information as follows:

1. Qualifications for which the validation of learning outcomes takes place;
2. Information on consultations provided free of charge; and
3. The competent official (consultant), his or her phone number and e-mail or other contact information.

The education institutions keep social partners, such as enterprises offering qualification training, informed of the possibilities of the validation of learning outcomes on a regular basis.

## 6.3 Quality Assurance Mechanisms Introduced and Implemented to Ensure Reliability of the Process of Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes

The right to carry out the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (LQF levels 2-4) are delegated to accredited education institutions. Accreditation certifies the evaluation of the existing quality management system, as implemented to ensure the operation and fulfilment of key functions by an education institution. Moreover, it entitles an education institution to issue a State-recognized document attesting the acquisition of education and professional qualification. The rights, responsibilities and liabilities on an education institution are set out in the respective agreement on the delegation of the right to carry out the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. Such delegation agreements are concluded for the duration of up to three years or until the expiration of the accreditation term in cases where it does not exceed three years. Prior

86 Workshop “Openness of higher education: How to make higher education more accessible for individuals with different learning experiences?”, as organized by the AIC on 5 October 2012. See: <http://www.nki-latvija.lv/pasakumu-materiali/2012/augstakas-izglitiba-atvertiba-ka-padarit-augstako-izglitibu-pieejamaku-cilvekiem-ar-dazadam-izglitibas-pieredzem>.

87 AIC workshop “Learning outcomes based validation of previous learning in vocational education” of 12 December 2014. See: <http://www.nki-latvija.lv/pasakumu-materiali/2014/macisanas-rezultatos-balstita-ieprieksejas-izglitibas-atzisana-profesionalaja-izglitiba>

88 MoES workshop “Assessment of professional competences acquired outside of formal education system” of 30 June 2015. See: <http://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/aktualitates/828-seminars-arpus-formalas-izglitiba-sistemas-apgutas-profesionalas-kompetences-novertesana>; AIC workshop “Assessment/ validation of non-formal learning outcomes in the context of Latvian Qualifications Framework” of 26 October 2017.

See: <http://www.nki-latvija.lv/pasakumu-materiali/2017/neformalas-izglitiba-rezultatu-novertesana---atzisana-latvijas-kvalifikaciju-ietvarstrukturas-konteksta>

to the extension of the delegation agreement, the SEQS repeatedly carries out the assessment of internal quality assurance mechanisms at an education institution.

The initial stage of the introduction of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes clearly highlighted the lack of reliability of professional qualifications acquired through the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes on the part of sectoral enterprises.<sup>89</sup> Traditionally, the public confidence in professional qualifications acquired within formal education system has been built on common quality requirements and the supervision and control of the quality of the operation of education institutions and implementation of educational programmes, carried out by public authorities. Information of the society of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes contributes to a better understanding of quality assurance mechanisms among employers and employees’ organizations.

Quality assurance mechanisms are ensured in line with principles as follows:

- The professional qualification examination is organized similar to the final examination to be taken within formal education.
- The assessors forming part of the professional qualification examination committee are also representatives of the sectoral employers.
- Requirements for non-formal and informal learning outcomes are stipulated in the occupational standards and are available to the public.
- The accreditation of an education institution certifies the quality assurance in the operation of the education institution and implementation of educational programmes.
- Cabinet Regulation prescribes a common procedure for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.
- Cabinet Regulation prescribes a common list of prices for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

Each HEI has their own by-laws and internal rules for the procedures for validating non-formal and informal learning outcomes, which, in general, ensure transparency in the implementation of this process and respect for the rights of the candidates.

89 Assessment of professional competences acquired outside of formal education system. Methodological recommendations addressed to education institutions and examination centres. European Social Fund project “Development of a Sectoral Qualifications System and Improvement of the Efficiency and Quality of Vocational education”, Riga, State Education Development Agency, 2015.

## 7. Evaluation, Supervision, and Monitoring

### 7.1 Mechanisms for the Supervision and Evaluation of Validation Activities

The supervision of the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes at LQF levels 2-4 is carried out by the SEQS in line with the activities provided for in the delegation agreement.<sup>90</sup>

Activities for the supervision of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes	Impact on the quality assurance in the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes
1. Supervision and quality control of the validation process including the organization and procedure of the professional qualification examination.	1. Compliance with regulatory enactments and respect for the rights of individuals.
2. Collecting of the information on validation outcomes.	2. Centralised information on persons that have acquired the certificate of professional qualification.
3. Consulting of education institutions.	3. Methodological and legal support for education institutions.
4. Compliance of the issuance of documents attesting the acquisition of a professional qualification with the regulatory enactments.	4. Compliance of the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes with the procedures prescribed by the regulatory enactments.
5. Compliance of the information, as provided by a vocational education institution, with the regulatory enactments and actual circumstances.	5. Compliance of the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes with the procedures prescribed by the regulatory enactments and quality monitoring.

The vocational education institutions shall inform the SEQS on the organization of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, as planned for a person (or persons), as well as the validation outcomes after a candidate has taken the professional qualification examination (see subparagraph 1.2 of this Report). Periodical collection of the aforementioned information allows for a comprehensive data analysis and provision of public information on the progress of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.<sup>91</sup> The SEQS representatives participate in the professional qualification examinations as observers, thus ensuring also on-site supervision of this process.

During the years 2012-2015, the regulations on the accreditation of HEIs<sup>92</sup> with regards to the compliance of the study content with the aims and objectives of the study programme in the respective field to be assessed, as well as regarding the requirements for the qualifications framework prescribed also the assessment criterion "Assurance of possibilities of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes"<sup>93</sup>. According to this criterion, the HEIs had to provide internal rules and procedures necessary for the implementation of the validation (see sub-paragraph 1.3).

90 The rights and obligations of the SEQS are set out in the Delegation agreement on the assessment of professional competences acquired outside of formal education system. See: <https://ikvd.gov.lv/arpus-formala-izglitiba/profesionalas-kompetences-novertesana>.

91 Information on the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is included in the public annual report of the SEQS. See: <https://ikvd.gov.lv/publikacijas/gada-publikie-paraskati>.

92 Cabinet Regulation No. 668 "Regulations on the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions, Colleges, and Study Directions", as adopted on 25 September 2012. See: <https://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=252142>.

93 Cabinet Regulation No. 668 "Regulations on the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions, Colleges, and Study Directions", as adopted on 25 September 2012; Annex to the report by expert or the joint report on the assessment of the study direction relevant to the respective study programme.

In 2015, a new Cabinet Regulation on the accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges, and study directions was drafted.<sup>94</sup> As provided for in this Cabinet Regulation, not only the assurance of procedures for validating non-formal and informal learning outcomes, but also the implementation process per se shall be assessed within the accreditation of study directions. According to this regulation, the HEI shall include the aforementioned information in the self-assessment report.<sup>95</sup>

As provided for in the amendments to Cabinet Regulation on the accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges, and study directions, as adopted in 2017,<sup>96</sup> the AIC shall draft guidelines for the preparation of the report on the self-assessment of the higher education institutions, colleges, and study directions. These AIC guidelines<sup>97</sup> aim at providing a structured framework for the preparation of a self-assessment report and identifying the information to be included therein, as well as the optimal structure and form thereof. As provided for in Paragraph 4 of the criterion No. 2 "Study Direction Management" of Section two "Characterization of the Study Direction" of the AIC guidelines, the HEI shall include in their self-assessment report information on the evaluation of the study period, professional experience, and the procedure for validating non-formal and informal learning outcomes within the framework of the study direction (characterization and evaluation by means of specific examples of the application of the procedures). Thus, there is an internal and external quality assurance system put in place for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in higher education (LQF levels 5-7). The supervision of the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in higher education (LQF levels 5-7) does not take place.

### 7.2 Monitoring

In order to ensure the monitoring, it is important to carry out a periodical analysis of the performance indicators of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. At LQF levels 2-4, a system for the exchange of data between parties involved in the validation process is put in place. Analysis of such information enables a better insight into the process development trends and factors, which have impact on such development. Information on the candidates that have acquired a qualification through the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes allows for the analysis of the professions needed in different sectors on the labour market and the factors influencing the same. The participation in the professional qualification examination as an observer is seen as an opportunity to visit the respective vocational education institution and verify the efficiency of the validation process, as well as to carry out one-site inquiry, which is an analytical research method for the improvement of the current system (see Annex 3).

Latvian vocational education quality assessment system (LQF levels 2-4) includes the indicators of European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), the application of which will allow for a long-term improvement of the monitoring of the quality of formal education. Certain EQAVET indicators (for instance, employment rate of the graduates, application of acquired skills in work settings, and fostering of the access to vocational education) are binding also for the providers of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. Moreover, information regarding the description of these indicators is available in the self-assessment report of education institutions. Both the graduates, which have acquired a formal education programme, and individuals, which have availed themselves of the opportunity to have their non-formal and informal learning outcomes validated, are considered a qualitative indicator of the achieved learning outcomes.

Although there are prerequisites for the monitoring of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes put in place at the level of higher education (LQF levels 5-7), the implementation of the latter has not yet commenced.

94 Cabinet Regulation No. 407 "Regulations on the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions, Colleges, and Study Directions", as adopted on 14 July 2015. See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/275560-augstskolu-koledzu-un-studiju-virzienu-akreditacijas-noteikumi>.

95 Ibid. Section 66

96 Cabinet Regulation No 429 "Amendments to Cabinet Regulation No. 407 "Regulations on the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions, Colleges, and Study Directions", (adopted on 25 July 2017)", as adopted on 14 July 2015. See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/292476-grozijumi-ministru-kabineta-2015-gada-14-julija-noteikumos-nr-407-augstskolu-koledzu-un-studiju-virzienu-akreditacijas-noteikumi>.

97 Guidelines for development of self-assessment reports of study directions AIC, Quality Agency for Higher Education. See: [http://www.aic.lv/portals/content/files/Studiju\\_virziena\\_pasnovertejums\\_zinojuma\\_izstrades\\_vadlinijas.pdf](http://www.aic.lv/portals/content/files/Studiju_virziena_pasnovertejums_zinojuma_izstrades_vadlinijas.pdf)

## Conclusions

### LQF levels 2-4

Since 2011, there is a system for validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in line with the requirements of the occupational standard established in vocational education and provided for in the respective regulatory enactments. Several aspects of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes are harmonized with formal education in terms as follows:

- Validation carried out by vocational education institutions;
- Procedure for and content of the professional qualification examination (paid service);
- Acquired qualification, its LQF level, and learning outcomes;
- Compliance of the learning outcomes with the quality requirements.

The validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes at national level in compliance with the requirements set out in the respective regulatory enactments is coordinated by the SEQS, which delegates the right to carry out the validation to accredited education institutions.

The self-assessment report of education institutions shall include information on the assurance and performance indicators of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

During the years 2011-2017, altogether 5543 persons have acquired a qualification through the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. The dynamical increase in the number of persons, which have acquired a professional qualification, as observed over the last seven years, suggests that the society is interested in the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

### LQF levels 5-7

Since 2012, there is a procedure for validating non-formal and informal learning outcomes put in place in higher education and provided for in the respective regulatory enactments, which means the validation of the part of qualification, which refers to the qualification of the respective level.

The validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes may be carried out only in accredited study programmes.

As the result of the validation, the education institutions grants the respective amount of credit points, which enables the admission to the respective study programme.

In higher education, the validation is coordinated at national level, where the HEIs based on the regulatory enactments and methodological recommendations drafted by the MoES develop individual approach and practice, and determine the validation fee. In order to develop a common understanding of and attitude towards the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, the MoES and AIC organized workshops that enabled the exchange of experience between the HEIs.

The experience of the HEIs in the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes served as basis for the amendments to the regulatory enactments. One of such cases was the elimination of the restriction in 2018, which determined that only 30% of credit points from the respective study programme may be granted, when validating the learning outcomes achieved in previous experience.

The regulatory enactments regulating the accreditation of the study directions of higher education programmes provide for the prerequisites for the description and analysis of the outcomes of the procedures for validating non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

The validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is not carried out in LQF levels 1 and 8, for the validation of a full qualification in regulated professions, as well as for general education qualifications.

## Annexes

### Annex 1. Professional Qualifications Acquired through the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes (LQF Level 3) during the Years 2011-2017, listed in Alphabetical Order

Professional qualification (LQF level 3)	Number of persons who have acquired a qualification							TOTAL
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
Accounting Clerk	-	-	32	15	11	-	12	70
Bathhouse Attendant	-	-	-	-	1	4	1	6
Bricklayer	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Car Mechanic	-	4	9	-	51	28	17	109
Carer	-	-	175	146	173	154	279	927
Carpenter	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
Chef	1	1	28	33	13	40	26	142
Confectioner	-	4	-	-	4	5	-	13
Electrical Fitter	-	4	-	-	4	39	28	75
Employee of Finishing Works	-	-	-	3	10	7	8	28
Engineering Communications Systems Fitter	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5
Hairdresser	-	-	-	3	28	26	5	62
Locksmith	-	-	-	-	-	5	6	11
Manicure and Pedicure Specialist	-	-	-	-	5	25	10	40
Photographer	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2
Plumbing Equipment Assembler	-	-	7	11	53	38	56	165
Sewer	-	-	-	-	6	-	6	12
Tailor	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Welders in Gas Environment, MMA, MAG, MIG, TIG	-	15	98	149	183	143	59	647

**Annex 2. Professional Qualifications Acquired through the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes (LQF Level 4) during the Years 2011-2017, Listed in Alphabetical Order**

Professional qualification (LQF level 4)	Number of persons who have acquired a qualification							TOTAL
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
Accountant	6	1	-	-	23	40	19	89
Advertising Services Commerce Employee	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Agricultural Machinery Mechanic	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	5
Babysitter	-	-	133	96	10	-	25	264
Bartender	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Bread and Flour Confectionary Expert	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2
Building and Road Construction Equipment Mechanic	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Building Construction Technician	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Building Construction Technician	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	4
Car Electrician	-	1	14	8	12	8	18	61
Car Mechanic	26	48	25	20	16	42	59	236
Carpenter of Construction Products	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Catering Service Specialist	-	1	1	-	10	29	60	101
Clothes Style Specialist	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Clothing Tailor	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Setter for Working Machines	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	7
Computer Programming Technician	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	4
Computer System Technician	-	-	2	-	-	8	4	14
Customer Service Specialist	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	8
Ecotourism Specialist	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	3
Electric Engineering Technician	-	-	-	3	24	64	101	192
Electrician	-	3	2	41	16	22	7	91
Electronics Engineering Technician	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Engineering Communications Technician	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	11

Finishing Technician	-	19	7	4	2	3	2	37
Firefighting and Rescue Service Fireman	-	-	-	-	192	387	101	680
Food Service Specialist for Passenger Ships	-	-	-	-	-	6	2	8
Forestry Machinery Mechanic	-	-	1	-	1	2	4	8
Furniture Carpenter	-	-	-	8	-	2	3	13
Gardener	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Hair Stylist	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	17
Hospitality Service Specialist	-	-	-	-	4	9	7	20
Hotel Service Specialist	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	12
House Builder	-	-	-	11	14	14	13	52
House Manager	-	202	213	-	-	-	-	415
Junior Inspector of State Police	-	-	-	-	-	112	150	262
Librarian	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	12
Locomotive Technician	2	12	1	14	4	21	-	54
Logistics Officer	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Mechatronic System Technician	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5
Multimedia Design Specialist	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2
Musician Trumpeter, Ensemble Manager	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Offset Printing Specialist	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4
Photo Design Specialist	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Printing Production Technician	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5
Railway Transport Automatics, Telemechanics, and Communication Technician	-	2	-	-	-	-	3	5
Retail Commerce Employee	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4
Road Construction Technician	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	12
Rural Property Manager	-	-	-	15	12	42	24	93
State Border Officer	-	72	69	48	49	99	9	346
Style Furniture Designer	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Tourism Information Counsellor	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	14
Tourism Services Commerce Employee	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	12
Transport Wagon Technician	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Travel Consultant	-	-	12	-	-	-	-	12
Visual Advertising Design Specialist	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Visual Image Stylist	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	9
Woodworking Equipment Operator	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1

**Annex 3. Data from Survey Conducted after the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes during the Years 2014-2015 (LQF levels 3-4)**

Qualification acquired through the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes	Previous qualification of the individuals	Level of previously acquired education	Number and occupation of the individuals undergoing the examination
Electrician (LQF level 4)	Physics teacher; Carpenter; Driver; Construction worker; Assembler of Electric Equipment	Higher education – 1 Vocational secondary education – 2 General secondary education – 5 Basic education – 2 Vocational education – 2	12 individuals from the same enterprise operating in the respective sector
Locomotive Technician (LQF level 4)	Driver's Assistant; SCB Electrical Engineer; Programming Technician	Higher education – 1 Vocational secondary education – 9 General secondary education – 1	11 individuals from the same enterprise operating in the respective sector
Arc Welder (MMA) (LQF level 4)		Higher education – 1 Vocational secondary education – 1 General secondary education – 1	3 self-employed individuals
Hospitality Service Specialist (LQF level 4)	Bachelor's Degree in Business; Business Specialist	Higher education – 3	3 teachers from education institutions
Plumbing Equipment Assembler (LQF level 3)	Heating System Technician; Industrial Equipment Mechanic; Turner; Technician - Mechanic; Car Mechanic; Heat, Gas, and Water Systems Specialist	Higher education – 1 Basic education – 1 Vocational secondary education – 6 Vocational education – 2 General secondary education – 2	12 individuals from the same enterprise operating in the respective sector
Carer (LQF level 3)	Landscape Technician; Chef; Accountant; Travel Agent; Weaver	Basic education – 4 Vocational secondary education – 2 General secondary education – 5	11 individuals from different fields of employment
Chef (LQF level 3)	Social Pedagogue	Higher education – 1	1 teacher from an education institution
Fire and Rescue Service Fireman (LQF level 4)	Bachelor's Degree in Management Science; Ship's Deck Officer; Agricultural Machinery Mechanic; Ship Engineering Officer	Higher education – 1 Vocational secondary education – 13 General secondary education – 8	24 employees from the State Fire and Rescue Service

**Annex 4. 23 Vocational Education Competence Centres****Vocational basic and secondary education institutions**

Daugavpils Construction Technical School  
Daugavpils Technical School  
Jelgava Technical School  
Kandava Agricultural Technical School  
Kuldīga Technology and Tourism Technical School  
Ogre Technical School  
Priekule Technical School  
Vocational Education Competence Centre "Daugavpils Secondary School for Design and Art "Saules skola"  
Vocational education competence centre „Liepāja Secondary School of Music, Arts, and Design”  
Vocational education competence centre „Liepāja State Technical School”  
Vocational education competence centre „National Secondary School of Arts”  
Vocational education competence centre „Riga Secondary School of Design and Art”  
Vocational education competence centre „Riga State Technical School”  
Vocational education competence centre „Ventspils Secondary School of Music”  
Rēzekne Technical School  
Riga Art and Media Technical School  
Riga Style and Fashion Technical School  
Saldus Technical School  
Smiltene Technical School  
Valmiera Technical School  
State Limited Liability Company "Riga Technical School of Tourism and Creative Industry"  
Ventspils Technical School

**Higher education institution (implements accredited vocational secondary education programmes)**

Vocational education competence centre "Riga Technical College"

Source: National Education Information System Register, accessed on 27 July 2018



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