



Latvian
Qualifications
Framework



European
Qualifications
Framework

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

Updated Self-Assessment Report

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The Updated Self-Assessment Report was prepared by the Academic Information Centre – the National Coordination Point for referencing the National Qualifications Framework to EQF.

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

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Abbreviations

- AIC – Academic Information Centre
- AIKA – Quality Agency for Higher Education (*Augstākās izglītības kvalitātes aģentūra*)
- CEENQA – Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
- CHE – Council of Higher Education
- ECTS – European Credit Transfer System
- EHEA – European Higher Education Area
- ENIC – European Network of National Information Centres on academic recognition and mobility
- ENQA – European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
- EQAR – European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
- EQAVET – European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
- EQF – European Qualifications Framework
- ESF – European Social Fund
- EU – European Union
- FTUC – Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia
- HEI – higher education institution (higher education institution or college)
- INQAAHE – International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
- LCS – Latvian Council of Science
- LDDK – Employers' Confederation of Latvia (*Latvijas Darba devēju konfederācija*)
- LQF – Latvian Qualifications Framework
- MoES – Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia
- NARIC – National Academic Recognition Information Centres
- NCE – National Centre for Education
- NCP – National Coordination Point for EQF
- NDP – National Development Plan
- NQF – National Qualifications Framework
- PINTSA – National Tripartite Sub-council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment (*Profesionālās izglītības un nodarbinātības trīspusējās sadarbības apakšpadome*)
- QF-EHEA – Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area
- SEC – Sectoral Expert Council
- SEDA – State Education Development Agency
- SEIS – State Education Information System
- SEQS – State Education Quality Service
- SQF – Sectoral Qualifications Framework
- WBL – work-based learning

Introduction

The qualifications framework forms a significant part of an education system, as it represents, in a comprehensible way, the qualifications to be obtained within the system, promoting the mobility and lifelong learning of individuals. Due to the changes to and the development of education system and contents according to the requirements of the society, the qualifications framework is subject to changes as well. At the time the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) was established during 2009-2010, decision was made to organize the referencing of the LQF to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in two phases, given the complexity and duration of this process. In the first phase of the referencing process (2009-2011), an eight-level LQF was established, comprising the sectors of formal general, vocational and higher education. The developed qualification level descriptors are based on learning outcomes, and formal education qualifications are linked to these levels. The level descriptors were elaborated with due regard to the state education and occupational standards, as well as the EQF level descriptors.

The previous Self-Assessment Report “Referencing of the Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area” (2011, 2012) was aimed at describing LQF development process and its referencing to the EQF and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA), which marked the conclusion of the first phase of the referencing process. In 2011, the previous Self-Assessment Report was discussed at national level, and in October of the same year, it was successfully presented to the EQF Advisory Group. In view of the recommendations of the European Commission, Cedefop and international experts, the Self-Assessment Report was revised. In May 2012, the second version of the Report was published¹. The previous Self-Assessment Report (2012) gave a characterization of the aim and course of the referencing process in Latvia and a concise description of the undertaken European-level education reforms that influenced the referencing process. The previous Self-Assessment Report (2012) consisted of two parts:

1. Description of the education system of Latvia; professional qualification levels in Latvia and the role of occupational standards in the context of implementing learning outcomes in education; learning outcomes in higher education; development of a validation system for knowledge and skills acquired outside of formal education; education quality assurance system;
2. Placement of national qualifications in the LQF and EQF; compliance of the referencing process in Latvia with the criteria of the EQF and the Bologna Process, as well as further education reforms.

Already in the first phase of the referencing process, a new Self-Assessment Report was expected to be developed at the end of the second phase of the referencing process (2013-2015) to describe the reforms that have taken place over time and their outcomes in the context of LQF. Since education reforms are time-consuming and involve a range of stakeholders, the development of the Updated Self-Assessment Report was delayed until 2018. Since the publishing of the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012), not only have the LQF and the education system seen development, but also stakeholders have improved

¹ Academic Information Centre and the Ministry of Education and Science (2012). Referencing of Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area. Self-Assessment Report. Second version. Riga: Academic Information Centre and the Policy Coordination Department of the Ministry of Education and Science. See: http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Latvian_Self-Assessment_Report_2nd-version_May-2012.pdf

their knowledge and gained experience in regard to qualifications, learning outcomes and qualifications frameworks. In 2018, the terminology and principles used in the LQF context seem self-evident and form an integral part of education reforms, as a result of the efforts of the Academic Information Centre (AIC) as the National Coordination Point for EQF by providing support for the development of the LQF. However, such changes to education and public awareness is a long-term process, and they cannot be considered as fully completed. The LQF will continue its development also after this Self-Assessment Report will be prepared and presented to the stakeholders.

The present Self-Assessment Report was developed based on the studies and discussions conducted since 2011. In 2013, an assessment of the situation² was conducted to identify developments in education in the LQF context. The study³ carried out in 2016 dealt with an in-depth analysis of changes in education and their influence on the development of LQF. Drawing on the outcomes and conclusions of this study, in 2017 the draft⁴ of the Updated Self-Assessment Report was prepared. The draft report was discussed with the stakeholders and evaluated by three international experts at the end of the year. The recommendations and discussion outcomes were taken into account when developing the present version of the Self-Assessment Report in 2018.

The Updated Self-Assessment Report consists of an introduction and two main parts. The introduction is followed by two chapters presenting the overview of the LQF development and the self-assessment process after 2011. The first part provides a description of changes to education in Latvia as a result of the LQF development, highlighting differences comparing to the situation in 2011. The first part focuses on the following topics: further development of education in Latvia under the influence of LQF; role of learning outcomes in the education system in Latvia; education quality assurance; validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. The second part includes a description of the compliance of referencing process with the criteria of EQF and Bologna Process.

² Academic Information Centre – Latvian NCP (2013). Referencing of Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area. Situation Assessment. See: http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/LQF_evaluation_of_situation_2013.pdf

³ Academic Information Centre – Latvian NCP (2016). Referencing of Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area. Situation Assessment 2016. See (in Latvian): http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/LKL_attistiba_situacijas_izvertejums_2016.gada.pdf

⁴ Academic Information Centre – Latvian NCP (2017). Referencing of Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area. Draft Self-Assessment Report. See: http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Draft_updated_Referencing_report_ENG.pdf

Development of Latvian Qualifications Framework

In 2009, with the commencement of self-assessment process and the development of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF), at national level decision was made to implement this process in two phases:

Phase I (2009-2011) – development of the LQF and referencing of the existing formal education system to the EQF for lifelong learning and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).

Phase II (2013-2015) – review of the Self-Assessment Report based on the new Vocational Education Law, the Law on Higher Education Institutions, and the outcomes of several pilot projects implemented during the respective period of time.

The previous Self-Assessment Report⁵ (2011) focused on the description of the situation in the formal education in Latvia at the time and marked the conclusion of Phase I of the referencing process. The general aim of the LQF is to ensure an unbiased reference to the formal education qualification level awarded by education institutions in Latvia, and learning outcomes. Since education system, due to social and economic demand, is subject to constant changes, the previous report was already planned to be reviewed and updated at the time regarding relevant changes and reforms of education and LQF.

As a result of the referencing process, an eight-level LQF was established, the structure and contents of which is similar to those of the EQF. The qualification level descriptors (see Annex 1 and Annex 11) were based on learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences) and elaborated with due regard to the state education and occupational standards, as well as EQF level descriptors. LQF comprises general, vocational and higher education sectors – from the basic education up to doctoral studies. Due to the content of level descriptors, LQF levels can be referenced to the QF-EHEA as well.

Self-Assessment Process Overview (2009-2011)

The self-assessment process comprised a range of activities:

1. In September 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) set up a working group for referencing the Latvian qualifications system to the EQF to review and approve the level descriptors elaborated by the experts before they were passed on for the amendments to the respective Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia (hereinafter – Cabinet Regulations).
2. Setting up working groups of experts in general, vocational and higher education to elaborate the LQF level descriptors (under the supervision of the working group for implementation of referencing process). In general and vocational education, the level descriptors were elaborated in compliance with the state education and occupational standards, as well as the relevant study subject standards. In higher education, the level descriptors were elaborated in compliance with the QF-EHEA, Bloom's Taxonomy and the EQF.
3. Drafting and approval of Cabinet Regulations. In 2010, the level descriptors elaborated by experts, were included in the amendments⁶ to the Cabinet

⁵ Academic Information Centre and the Ministry of Education and Science (2012). Referencing of Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area. Self-Assessment Report. Second version. Riga: Academic Information Centre and the Policy Coordination Department of the Ministry of Education and Science. See: http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Latvian_Self-Assessment_Report_2nd-version_May-2012.pdf

⁶ Until 31.05.2017, Cabinet Regulations No 990 "Regulations on the education classification of Latvia" were in force. However, they were subject to amendments. At present these Regulations ceased to have effect and were replaced by the new Cabinet Regulations No 322 "Regulations on the education classification of Latvia" (in force since 16.06.2017). See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524>. See the chapter Further Development of the Education in Latvia under LQF Influence.

Regulations. These level descriptors are based on learning outcomes and expressed in three dimensions: knowledge (knowledge and comprehension); skills (ability to apply knowledge, communication, general skills); competences (analysis, synthesis and assessment).

4. Consultative conference on 14 February 2011, where the self-assessment process outcomes were presented to and discussed by all stakeholders and a broad debate on referencing the LQF to the EQF was launched. This debate continued until 31 March on the website of the Latvian NCP in form of comments and via e-mail.
5. AIC, in collaboration with MoES, prepared a Self-Assessment Report “Referencing of the Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area” including a description of the education system of Latvia and its referencing to the EQF and the QF-EHEA in compliance with the criteria and procedures set by the EQF Advisory Group and EHEA.
6. Discussion of the Self-Assessment Report. On 22 June 2011, the first version of the Self-Assessment Report was presented in the meeting of the EQF Advisory Group held in Brussels. In view of the comments and recommendations of the European Commission, Cedefop, and the experts from other countries, AIC made the relevant corrections in the Self-Assessment Report. In October 2011, the improved report and referencing process outcomes were officially presented at the EQF Advisory Group meeting held in Brussels.

After the meeting, the second version of the Self-Assessment Report was prepared with clarifications and additions. Both versions of the Self-Assessment Report are available on the website of Latvian NCP (<http://nki-latvija.lv>).

Self-Assessment Process since 2011

The Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) includes formal education qualifications in general, vocational and higher education sectors at different levels of education – from basic education up to doctoral studies. The placement of education qualifications in the LQF is shown in Table 1. Compared to 2011, the differences in regard to the placement of qualifications at different levels are as follows:

- Special basic education qualifications, i.e., certificate of general basic education (special education programmes for students with severe mental development disorders or multiple severe developmental disorders) and certificate of general basic education (special education programmes for students with mental development disorders) were at LQF levels 1 and 2 (currently – at LQF level 1).
- Basic education qualifications, i.e., certificate of general basic education and certificate of vocational basic education were at LQF level 3 (currently – at LQF level 2).
- Certificate of vocational education (arodizglītība) was referenced to LQF level 4 (currently – LQF level 3).
- LQF did not include certificates of professional qualification (currently – LQF levels 2 to 4).
- In 2018, a new qualification was introduced – professional Doctor's diploma in arts (LQF level 8).

The changes to the placement of qualifications were made in view of the development of the national education system and education policy, as well as developments in the field of education and employment in Europe. These changes should promote the comparability of Latvian qualifications with the qualifications of other countries. For instance, in most European countries, basic education qualifications are referenced to EQF level 2. At the same time, already during the first referencing phase (2009-2011), a thorough assessment of qualifications – their learning outcomes – was carried out and ongoing discussions with all stakeholders were taking place with an aim to arrange the qualifications at the relevant LQF levels according to the tradition in the education system of Latvia. However, further discussions, especially at international level, gave rise to the following questions:

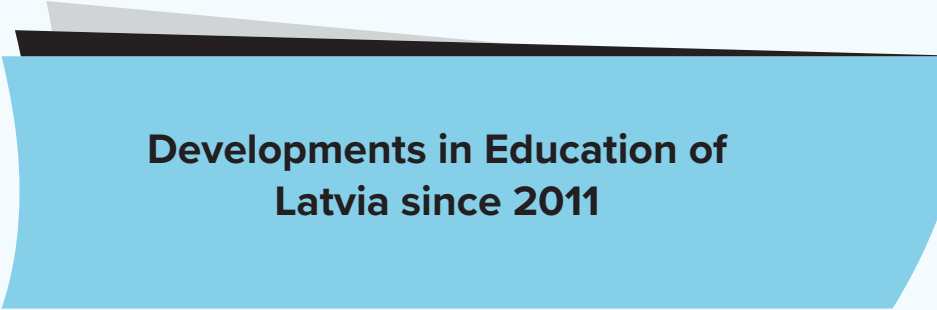
- Why basic education qualifications apply to three different LQF levels (LQF levels 1 to 3)?
- Why vocational education (arodizglītība) and vocational secondary education qualifications are at the same level (LQF level 4), even though each of these qualifications provide different legal rights to pursue further education?
- Are continuing vocational education qualifications awarded in Latvia and why they are not included in the LQF?

Table 1. Placement of formal education qualifications of Latvia in LQF (2018)

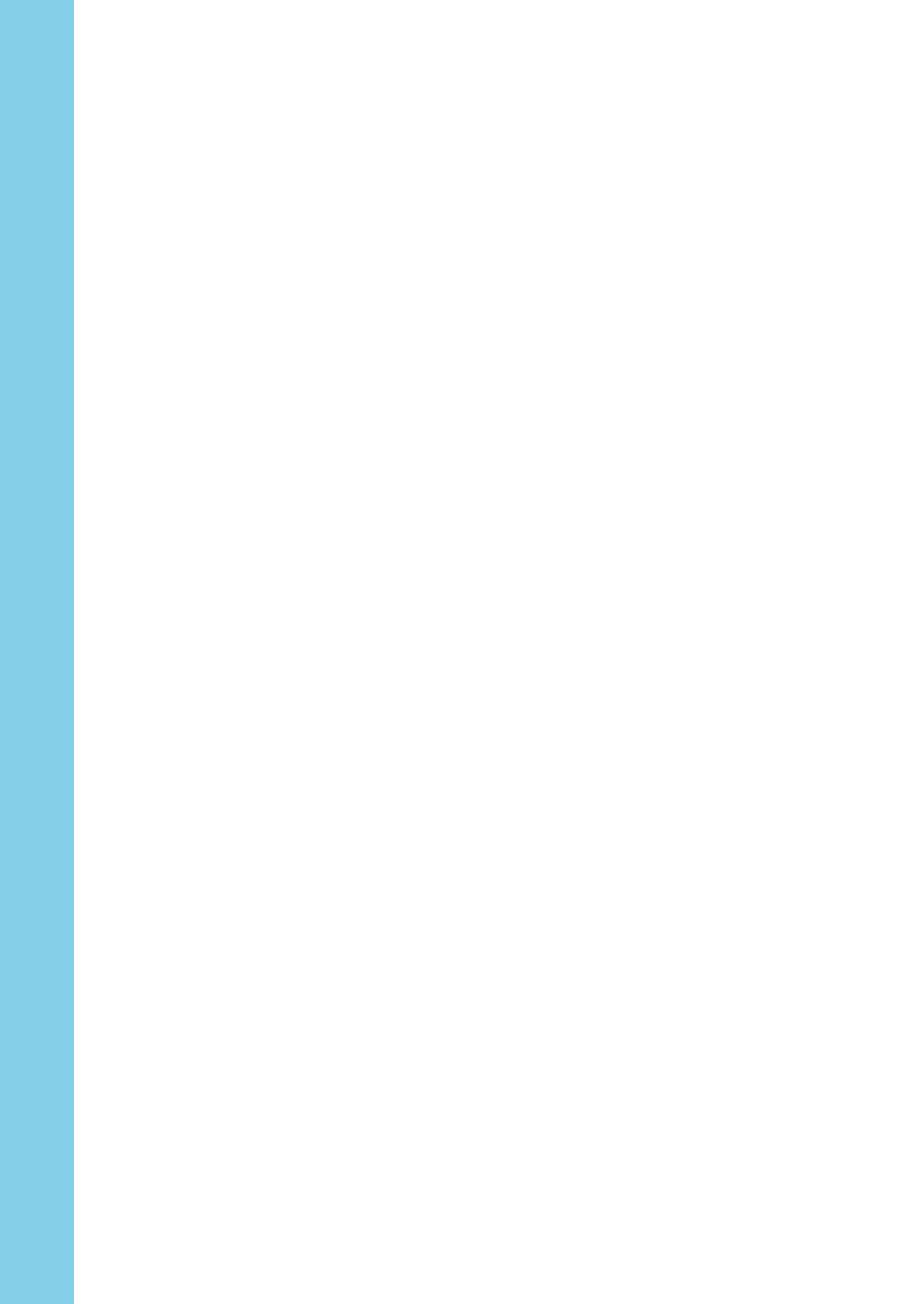
Education documents (qualifications)	LQF level
Certificate of general basic education (special education programmes for learners with (severe) mental development disorders or multiple severe developmental disorders)	1
Certificate of general basic education Certificate of vocational basic education Certificate of professional qualification (at basic education level)	2
Certificate of vocational education (<i>arodizglītība</i>) Certificate of professional qualification (at vocational education (<i>arodizglītība</i>) level)	3
Certificate of general secondary education Diploma of vocational secondary education Certificate of professional qualification (at secondary education level)	4
Diploma of first level professional higher education (college education, length of fulltime studies – 2 to 3 years)	5
Bachelor's diploma Professional Bachelor's diploma Diploma of professional higher education, diploma of higher professional qualification (length of full-time studies – at least 4 years)	6
Master's diploma Professional Master's diploma Diploma of professional higher education, diploma of higher professional qualification (total length of full-time studies – at least 5 years)	7
Doctor's diploma Professional Doctor's diploma in arts	8



PART I



**Developments in Education of
Latvia since 2011**



1. Further Development of Education of Latvia under LQF Influence

In the light of socio-economic and technological developments, also constant changes in education – and hence in the national qualifications framework – may be observed to adjust the content, form, and organisation of education to the requirements of the society. Since 2012, when the previous Self-Assessment Report was published, stakeholders have been discussing topical matters regarding LQF resulting in several amendments to the existing or adoption of new laws and regulations.

1.1 Legal Framework of LQF

As already mentioned in the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012), LQF level descriptors and the compliance of education programmes with LQF/EQF levels were defined by the Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the education classification of Latvia” (in force since 9.10.2010)⁷. The amendments of 2015 to the Education Law (1998) defined LQF and provided the regulatory framework by specifying that LQF forms an important part of education system (see education system of the Republic of Latvia in Annex 2 of this Report).

The amendments to the Education Law (1998) with regard to LQF that were approved on 18 June 2015 and entered into force on 16 July 2015, were as follows:

“Section 8¹. **Latvian Qualifications Framework**

(1) Latvian Qualifications Framework is an eight-level system comprising education levels (basic, secondary and higher education) and all types of education (general, vocational/professional and academic education), as well as professional qualifications obtained outside formal education. The Latvian Qualifications Framework is referenced to the European Qualifications Framework.

(2) Latvian Qualifications Framework levels are described by the learning outcomes to be achieved at the relevant level. Each further level represents the knowledge, skills, and competences defined for the preceding level.

(3) Latvian Qualifications Framework levels are as follows:

- 1) first qualification level – ability to demonstrate elementary knowledge and use it to perform basic practical tasks under supervision of a professional;
- 2) second qualification level – ability to demonstrate basic skills and use them to perform simple practical tasks in the relevant field with some autonomy or under supervision of a professional;
- 3) third qualification level – ability to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and use it to perform a range of tasks in an unchanging and stable environment, taking responsibility of the work outcome;
- 4) fourth qualification level – ability to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and independently plan and organize work in the relevant field, taking responsibility, working individually, in a team or by managing the work of other individuals;

⁷ Cabinet Regulations No 931 “Amendments to the Cabinet Regulations of 2 December 2008 No 990 “Regulations on the education classification of Latvia”” (in force since 9.10.2010). See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/219241-grozījumi-ministru-kabineta-2008-gada-2-decembra-noteikumos-nr-990-noteikumi-par-latvijas-izglitibas-klasifikaciju->

5) fifth qualification level – ability to demonstrate comprehensive and specialised knowledge in the relevant field; ability to use an analytical approach to solve practical problems within a field of work in a changing environment; ability to demonstrate understanding of the scope of one’s own activities in a broader social context, to participate in the development of the relevant field, and to evaluate one’s own actions and those of other individuals;

6) sixth qualification level – ability to demonstrate basic and specialised knowledge in the relevant field and use it to perform professional, artistic, innovative or research activity; ability to use a scientific approach in problem solving, assuming responsibility and initiative; ability to take decisions and find creative solutions in changing contexts;

7) seventh qualification level – ability to demonstrate advanced or extensive knowledge in the relevant field of work or study; ability to independently use theory, methods, and problem solving skills required to perform research, artistic or highly qualified professional activities in changing contexts; ability to independently define and critically analyse complex scientific and professional problems, to integrate knowledge from different fields, and to contribute to the creation of new knowledge;

8) eighth qualification level – ability to demonstrate extensive scientific knowledge and skills; ability to demonstrate the knowledge and understanding of most advanced scientific theories and findings, and to use scientific methodology and contemporary scientific methods in the relevant field of science or profession and in the interface of various fields; ability to independently improve one’s scientific qualification and to implement large-scale scientific projects; ability, by means of independent critical analysis, synthesis and assessment, to carry out significant research or innovation tasks.

[..]

“Section 14. **Competence of the Cabinet of Ministers in the Field of Education**

[..]

1) determines descriptors of knowledge, skills, and competences corresponding to levels of the Latvian Qualifications Framework.”

The level descriptors referred to in the Education Law are more general than those provided for in the Cabinet Regulations. Moreover, they are not divided by categories of knowledge, skills, and competences. In 2017, pursuant to the amendments to the Education Law, new Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the education classification of Latvia”⁸ (in force since 16.06.2017) were drafted and approved. The new Cabinet Regulations, compared to its version of 2010, as referred to in the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012), provides changes to the placement of education programmes at LQF/EQF levels, and specifies LQF level descriptors. In Table 1, included in Annex 1 to the new Regulations, both LQF and EQF (not only EQF) are mentioned, when indicating the correspondence of education programmes to the respective qualifications framework levels. LQF level descriptors (Table 2 included in Annex 1 to the Cabinet Regulations) have been reviewed to ensure the continuity and their matching to the changing needs of labour market. See Annexes 1 and 3 to this Report.

Since the publication of the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012), a range of other changes have been made in the laws and regulations regarding the LQF and qualifications

⁸ Annex 1 to Cabinet Regulations No 322 “Regulations on the education classification of Latvia” (in force since 16.06.2017). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=291524>

with a crucial role in the development of the LQF. The respective amendments reflect the significance of the LQF and learning outcomes in the education system of Latvia. The respective information is provided in Annex 4.

1.2 Review of LQF Levels

Since the establishment of the LQF and the first phase of its referencing to the EQF (2009-2011), debates have been held both at national and international level which have given rise to a range of questions regarding the necessary improvements for the LQF, resulting in significant suggestions and changes to the regulatory framework.

At the seminar “The role of social partners in developing the Latvian Qualifications Framework: problems and solutions” held on 11 May 2012 and aimed at launching an expert debate on the improvement of LQF, conclusions were drawn that society, especially employers, should be informed on the issues of the LQF and EQF in a planned and structured way, the use of common terminology should be promoted, the placement of basic, vocational, general and vocational secondary education qualifications in the LQF should be reviewed, and the necessary amendments should be made to the relevant laws and regulations.

On 23 October 2012, at the international conference “Upper levels of qualifications frameworks: Should we include professional qualifications?” the possibility to place also professional qualifications on upper levels of qualifications frameworks was discussed. During the conference, representatives from different countries shared their experiences on how national qualifications framework levels 5-8 were used in their countries. The discussions on the extension of LQF levels 5-8 continued also when developing Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks (SQF) and determining which professional qualifications correspond to LQF levels 5-7. Read more about the development of SQFs in Chapter 1.7.

The study of 2013⁹ analysed the situation regarding the changes in the education system of Latvia in the context of the introduction of the LQF. The main topics of this study were as follows: assessment of the descriptors of the LQF levels 1-4 and suggestions for their improvement; reforms in quality assessment in higher education; introduction of learning outcomes in education institutions of Latvia, which was the subject to a separate study in 2013 (see Chapter 2 for more information regarding the role of learning outcomes in the education system of Latvia), as well as developments in the validation of knowledge and skills acquired outside of formal education system.

The suggestions of experts regarding changes to the laws and regulations, published in the study, were discussed at the seminar “Latvian Qualifications Framework levels 1-4: development and enlargement” (8.03.2013). Discussions within the seminar were organised in two working groups involving representatives of general and vocational education. The representatives of both groups conceptually agreed with the changes to LQF levels 1-4, as suggested by the experts, and the necessary amendments to the relevant regulatory framework. The outcomes of the seminar were summarised and submitted to MoES as suggestions for changes to LQF levels 1-4 (see the suggestions in Annex 5). The suggestions and conclusions were taken into account when drafting amendments to the Vocational Education Law in 2015¹⁰.

⁹ Academic Information Centre – Latvian NCP (2013). Referencing of Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area. Situation Assessment. See: http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/LQF_evaluation_of_situation_2013.pdf.

¹⁰ Academic Information Centre – Latvian NCP (2014). International Qualifications in Latvia. Study Report. See: <http://www.nki-latvija.lv/en/pasakumu-materiali/2014/opening-up-the-national-qualifications-frameworks-for-international-qualifications>

The amendments to the Vocational Education Law as regards the LQF levels were as follows:

“Section 5. **Professional qualification levels**

Professional qualification levels are as follows:

- 1) First level of professional qualification – theoretical and practical background, which provides an opportunity to carry out simple tasks in a certain area of practical activity **(corresponds to the Latvian Qualifications Framework level 2)**;
- 2) Second level of professional qualification – theoretical and practical background, which provides an opportunity to perform qualified performer’s work independently **(corresponds to the Latvian Qualifications Framework level 3)**;
- 3) Third level of professional qualification – advanced theoretical background and professional skill, which provides an opportunity to carry out certain performer’s duties, which also include planning and organising the work to be implemented **(corresponds to the Latvian Qualifications Framework level 4)**;
- 4) Fourth level of professional qualification – theoretical and practical background, which provides an opportunity to perform complicated performer’s work, as well as to organise and manage the work of other professionals **(corresponds to the Latvian Qualifications Framework level 5)**;
- 5) Fifth level of professional qualification – highest qualification of professional in a certain field, which provides an opportunity to plan and perform scientific research work in the relevant field **(corresponds to the Latvian Qualifications Framework levels 6 and 7)**.”

These amendments reflect the referencing of five Latvian professional qualification levels to the respective LQF levels. Compared to the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012), changes regarding the placement of Latvian professional qualification levels in the LQF/EQF are as follows:

- Currently, Latvian professional qualification level 1 corresponds to the LQF/EQF level 2 (not LQF/EQF level 3).
- Currently, Latvian professional qualification level 2 corresponds to the LQF/EQF level 3 (not LQF/EQF level 4).

This has resulted in the change of the placement of the relevant vocational education qualifications – certificate of vocational basic education and certificate of vocational education (*arodizglītība*) – on the LQF/EQF levels.

In 2014, the study “International Qualifications in Latvia”¹¹ was conducted to evaluate the concept of international qualifications and the significance of this type of qualifications in education and labour market of Latvia. The study results were presented both in Latvia and abroad. The international conference “Opening up the National Qualifications Frameworks for international qualifications” (held on 14.11.2014) gave rise to a debate on the inclusion of international qualifications in the LQF and on the most suitable solution in this respect. In the course of the debate conclusions were drawn that sectoral research should be conducted, as a result of which the qualifications at sectoral level could be arranged in a certain system, which thereafter could be referenced to the LQF¹². Even

¹¹ Academic Information Centre – Latvian NCP (2014). International Qualifications in Latvia. Study Report. See: http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/International-qualifications-in-Latvia_EN.pdf.

¹² International conference “Opening up the National Qualifications Frameworks for international qualifications” (14.11.2014), Academic Information Centre – Latvian NCP. Conference materials. See: <http://www.nki-latvija.lv/en/pasakumu-materiali/2014/opening-up-the-national-qualifications-frameworks-for-international-qualifications>

though the question of international qualifications in the context of the LQF is still relevant, for the time being, no mechanisms have been developed to enable the referencing of international qualifications to the LQF.

Along with the amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions¹³ (in force since 1.04.2018), since 2018, the LQF contains a new qualification – professional Doctor's diploma in arts. The professional Doctor's degree in arts is awarded after completing a professional doctoral programme in arts. The scientific degree in arts focuses on the research of arts and cultural processes, whereas the fundamental condition for awarding the professional Doctor's degree in arts is creation of art and artistic innovation. Professional Doctor's degree in arts may be awarded in many European countries. However, until now, Latvia was the only country from the three Baltic countries not offering such possibility. Since the aforementioned study programmes will be implemented only from academic year 2019/2020, no further information is available.

1.3 Reference to LQF Levels in Education Documents

Since 2011, several amendments to laws and regulations have been made to ensure that vocational and higher education certificated contain a mandatory reference to the relevant EQF/LQF level in compliance with the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the European Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (23 April 2008). Unfortunately, the agenda does not include the question regarding general education qualifications.

Higher Education

In April 2013, the new Cabinet Regulations “Procedure by which state recognised education documents certifying higher education are issued”¹⁴ (in force since 19.04.2013) were approved, thus, replacing the Cabinet Regulations of 2007 with the same title, which were in force at the time the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012) was drafted, and including information on the LQF and EQF levels.

The EQF/LQF is referred to in Annex 7 to the Cabinet Regulations, which stipulates the sample of the Diploma Supplement, in the description of the qualification level and the higher education system of Latvia. The latter contains a schematic representation of higher education with “European/Latvian Qualifications Framework levels”, as well as the placement of higher education qualifications in the EQF/LQF. The respective excerpts from the Cabinet Regulations are provided in Annex 6 to this Report. Moreover, in accordance with these Cabinet Regulations, Diploma Supplements added a higher education diploma must contain a reference to “European/Latvian Qualifications Framework level or the level of the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area”.

Vocational Education

As explained above, in April 2015, amendments to the Vocational Education Law¹⁵ (2015) significant in the context of the LQF were adopted. These amendments address also the inclusion of a reference to the LQF in the newly issued vocational education certificates. Section 6 “Documents certifying vocational education and professional

¹³ Amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions. Section 3 (in force since 1.04.2018). See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/297219-grozijumi-augstskolu-likuma>.

¹⁴ Cabinet Regulations No 202 “Procedure by which state recognised education documents certifying higher education are issued” (in force since 19.04.2013). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=256157>.

¹⁵ Amendments to the Vocational Education Law (adopted on 23.04.2015; in force since 15.05.2015). See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/273942-grozijumi-profesionalas-izglitibas-likuma>.

qualifications” of the Law was supplemented with Paragraph 8, which came into force on 1st January 2017: “The state recognised documents certifying vocational education and professional qualification must also include a reference to the respective level of the Latvian Qualifications Framework”. Meanwhile, Section 25 “Vocational education programme”, Paragraph 1 of the Law, which gives a description of the key elements of a vocational education programme, was supplemented with Clause 5: “The level of vocational education programme in the Latvian Qualifications Framework”.

Pursuant to the amendments to the Vocational Education Law (1998), also the Cabinet Regulations “Procedure by which state recognised documents certifying vocational education and professional qualification and documents certifying acquisition of a part of an accredited vocational education programme are issued”¹⁶ (in force since 2.07.2005; amendments in force since 8.04.2016) were reviewed. Annexes 1 to 4 to the Cabinet Regulations provide for the samples of documents certifying the vocational education and professional qualifications, in which the professional qualification level is followed by a reference to the respective LQF level:

- Annex 1 “Certificate of vocational basic education”, Paragraph 3: “The awarded qualification corresponds to the first level of professional qualification and Latvian Qualifications Framework level 2.”
- Annex 2 “Certificate of vocational education”, Paragraph 3: “The awarded qualification corresponds to the second level of professional qualification and the Latvian Qualifications Framework level 3.”
- Annex 3 “Diploma of vocational secondary education”, Paragraph 3: “The awarded qualification corresponds to the third level of professional qualification and Latvian Qualifications Framework level 4.”
- Annex 4 “Certificate of professional qualification”, Paragraph 3: “The awarded qualification corresponds to the <first/second/third> level of professional qualification and Latvian Qualifications Framework level <2/3/4>.”

The amendments to regulatory framework regarding the inclusion of a reference to the LQF in vocational education and professional qualification certificates came into force on 1st January 2017. As this provision has been only recently introduced, at present, there is still lack of experience in and information on its implementation in practice.

1.4 Referencing of Pre-Bologna Qualifications to Bologna Process Qualifications

Since 2011, when the first version of Self-Assessment Report was published, pre-Bologna qualifications were referenced to Bologna qualifications arranged in a three-cycle system.

In terms of the European Commission NARIC project in 2010¹⁷, recommendations on referencing previously obtained qualifications to the Bologna cycle qualifications in Latvia were elaborated. These recommendations referred to higher education qualifications certified by state recognised education documents of the Republic of Latvia or the USSR, and to higher education qualifications awarded in the Republic of Latvia after 20 August 1991.

¹⁶ Cabinet Regulations No 451 “Procedure by which state recognised documents certifying vocational education and professional qualification and documents certifying acquisition of a part of an accredited vocational education programme are issued” (in force since 2.07.2005; amendments in force since 8.04.2016). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=111580>.

¹⁷ Akadēmiskās informācijas centrs (2010). Eiropas Komisijas NARIC projekts 2010-0064/001-001 „RPFL – recognition of prior formal learning with emphasis on older qualifications”.

In view of the project outcomes, in February 2012, the Cabinet Regulations “Procedure for referencing degrees and professional qualifications”¹⁸ (in force since 2.03.2012) were approved. The Regulations prescribes the procedures by which degrees and professional qualifications in higher education are referenced to the degrees and professional qualifications stipulated by the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995). The Regulations refer to degrees and professional qualifications awarded both in the Soviet Union and in the independent Latvia in the 1990s, provided that the implementation of the relevant study programmes was started before 26 December 2000 when the current legal framework regarding degrees and professional qualifications came into force. Previously awarded qualifications are not referenced if “the higher education certificate was issued by a higher education institution of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League, and the awarded qualification is related to Communist Party activity, scientific communism, Communist Party propaganda, agitation or other similar issues”, and the original “education documents were not issued using the forms of education documents recognised by the state at the respective time period” (Section 9 of Cabinet Regulations, 2012). Based on these conditions provided for in the Cabinet Regulations, Annex 7 to this Report includes a comparison of pre-Bologna qualifications and Bologna qualifications.

The procedures by which previously obtained qualifications are referenced are similar to the procedures by which foreign qualifications are recognized in Latvia.

1.5 Development of Terminology

The development of the LQF and its referencing to the EQF brought a need to discuss the use of a common terminology in this context. Since education policy making at European level is carried out mostly in English, these terms, to a great extent, set the basis for a common terminology to be used within the EHEA. In the process of translating international documents related to education policy, quite often new terms need to be created or assigned new contents to the existing ones. Moreover, in order to describe the education system of Latvia in international arena, accurate translations of terms in English are required. Frequently each language user follows a different approach to tackle these terminological problems, which, in turn, hinders others to understand what these terms describe in each separate case.

To identify the existing terminological problems in the context of qualifications frameworks, in 2015, a study on the use of terminology was launched to promote discussions among stakeholders. This two-year study implied the analysis of terminology by selecting the most frequently used terms and finding appropriate definitions and contextual examples. The outcomes of the study were summarized in a report and discussed with education stakeholders and linguists both by electronic means and on site during the workshop “Terminological problems in the context of the European and Latvian Qualifications Frameworks” (14.12.2015).

To elaborate recommendations on the terms used in the context of the LQF and EQF, based on the outcomes of the study and discussions during the seminar, a working group was established. The recommendations elaborated by the working group were presented in the seminar addressed to education stakeholders and linguists (15.09.2016), as well as submitted for use to the Ministry of Education and Science and the Terminology Commission of the Latvian Academy of Sciences.

¹⁸ Cabinet Regulations No 142 “Procedure for referencing degrees and professional qualifications” (in force since 2.03.2012). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=244724>.

The study report “Terminology in the Context of the European Qualifications Framework and Latvian Qualifications Framework”¹⁹ (2016) is available on the website of the Latvian NCP.

1.6 Development of Credit Point System in Latvia

Comparing to the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012), no significant changes have been introduced in the relevant laws and regulations and at the education system level concerning credit point systems, i.e., such system exists only in higher education. However, a wide range of measures has been undertaken over time to facilitate the development of a credit point system in vocational education as well.

In higher education, the national credit point system is in use, where the conversion of Latvian credit points into European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credit points requires multiplication by a factor of 1.5. The significance of the ECTS in higher education of Latvia was already characterized in the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012)²⁰. During the time period in question, no significant changes have been implemented regarding credit points; that is reflected also in the results of the study conducted within the Erasmus+ NARIC project “Automatic Recognition between Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (AURBELL)” (2014-2016).

Since 2014, the State Education Development Agency (SEDA) has been implementing the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) activity within the Erasmus+ Annual Work Programme of Latvia, in order to promote the understanding of ECVET principles among vocational education stakeholders. Within the activity, the MoES appointed four national ECVET experts who participate in different events to inform stakeholders about relevant matters concerning ECVET. In 2015, national ECVET experts and SEDA elaborated recommendations on the conditions for the introduction of ECVET principles in vocational education of Latvia²¹. These recommendations were presented to stakeholders at the international conference “ECVET experience and challenges in Europe and Latvia” (16.12.2015) and submitted to MoES. According to the expert report, no credit point system has been introduced for vocational education in Latvia. However, several ECVET principles have been already introduced as part of vocational education reforms, for instance, modularisation of vocational education, definition of intended learning outcomes for vocational education programmes and their modules, revision of occupational standards, as well as validation of learning outcomes achieved outside of formal education.

1.7 Development of Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks

Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks (SQF) are a systematised summary (for education sector purposes) established as a result of sectoral research, which provides the description of professional qualifications²² required in a specific field, taking into account sectoral developments. Since the publication of the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012), considerable changes regarding the SQFs development have been made.

¹⁹ Academic Information Centre – Latvian NCP (2016). Terminology in the Context of the European Qualifications Framework and Latvian Qualifications Framework. Study Report. See: http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Terminologijas_zinojums_2016.pdf.

²⁰ Academic Information Centre and the Ministry of Education and Science (2012). Referencing of Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area. Self-Assessment Report. Second Version. Riga: Academic Information Centre and the Policy Coordination Department of the Ministry of Education and Science. See: http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Latvian_Self-Assessment_Report_2nd-version_May-2012.pdf

²¹ State Education Development Agency (2015). Recommendations on the Conditions for the Introduction of ECVET Principles in Latvian Vocational Education. See: http://viaa.gov.lv/library/files/original/leteikumi_ECVET_20ievie_c5_a1anai_20LV.pdf.

SQF qualifications are referenced to the respective LQF level, in compliance with Section 5 of the Vocational Education Law (1999; amendments in force since 15.05.2015), starting from simple sectoral professions to upper level sectoral professions. In case of regulated requirements in place regarding the LQF level of a specific profession in the sector or the sectoral branch, for instance, the qualification should not be lower than LQF level 5, the lower level descriptors of the specific branch are not elaborated and included in the respective professional qualification level descriptor of the particular sector. SQFs contain also the elements of other qualification systems. For instance, the craftsman qualifications specified in the Law on Craftsmanship (1993) have been included in the SQFs according to the recommendations of Latvian Chamber of Crafts on referencing levels of craftsman qualifications to Latvian professional qualification levels.

The development of the SQFs took place in three phases: 1) initial development (2011-2015); 2) development of the regulatory framework (2015-2016); and 3) improvement and approval (2017-2018).

Phase I – Initial Development (2011-2015)

On 16 February 2011, the National Tripartite Sub-council for Cooperation in Vocational Education and Employment (PINTSA) approved a listing of 14 sectors, for which a SQF had to be developed: construction; manufacturing of electronic and optical products, information and communication technologies; energy; timber production (forestry, timber processing); chemical industry and related industries – chemistry, pharmacy, biotechnology and environment; metalworking industry, automotive industry and mechanical engineering; agriculture; food industry; printing and publishing industry, manufacturing of paper and paper products and computer design; beauty treatment sector; tourism; manufacture of textiles, wearing apparel and leather products; transport and logistics; entrepreneurship, finances, accounting and administration (wholesale, retail and economics).

Within the ESF project “Developing the Sectoral Qualifications System and Increasing Efficiency and Quality of Vocational Education”²³ (1.12.2010-30.11.2015), a study of abovementioned 14 sectors was conducted, sectoral descriptions for the purpose of vocational education were elaborated, new sectoral professional qualifications structures were developed, and Sectoral Expert Councils (SEC) for altogether 12 sectors were set up. The SQF included:

- 1) sector-specific qualification level descriptors (knowledge, skills and competences) and references to the EQF/LQF levels; and
- 2) sector-specific basic professions, specialization in basic professions, as well as professions related to basic professions in each qualification level.

Phase II – Development of Regulatory Framework (2015-2016)

The amendments to the Vocational Education Law²⁴ (1999; in force since 15.05.2015) provide a regulatory framework for the NQF as one of the documents regulating the content of vocational education. The NQF is defined as a “general description of sectoral professions, as well as an overview of specialisations in sectoral professions and related professions, indicating professional qualification levels for professions and specialisations” (Section 24² of the Law). The amendments to the Law defined the competence of SEC in

²² National Centre for Education (2015). Methodological materials for the development of the Sectoral Qualifications Framework. State Education Development Agency. Elaborated within the ESF project “Developing the Sectoral Qualifications System and Increasing Efficiency and Quality of Vocational Education” (1.12.2010-30.11.2015). See: www.viaa.gov.lv/library/files/original/11_VISC_MET_MATERIALS_NKS_izstradei.pdf

²³ State Education Development Agency. See: http://viaa.gov.lv/lat/arhivs/nozaru_kvalifikacijas_sistema?tl_id=12561&tls_id=14912.

the context of SQF: to participate in the development of the SQF according to labour market needs and to submit proposals on professions required in specific sectors and the respective specialisations.

In September 2016, new Cabinet Regulations “Procedure on the development of occupational standard, professional qualification requirements (if occupational standard is not approved for an occupation) and sectoral qualifications framework”²⁵ (in force since 30.09.2016) were adopted, prescribing the procedures by which SQF were developed. Furthermore, Annex 3 to the Regulations provides definitions of SQF elements:

“1. General description of sectoral professions:

1.1 Qualification level

1.2 Level descriptor of the sectoral profession qualification (intended learning outcomes: knowledge, skills, competence, autonomy, and responsibility)

2. Overview of sectoral professions, specialisations included by such professions, and the related professions

2.1 Title of the profession

2.2 Qualification level

2.3 Profession code (according to the Classification of Professions of the Republic of Latvia)

2.4 Description of the profession

2.5 Specialisations of the profession

2.6 Related professions and **the professional qualification level.**”

Pursuant to the Cabinet Regulations, the development and updating of the SQF is arranged by the National Centre for Education (NCE) after the proposition by SEC or PINTSA (if no SEC has been established for the specific sector). The development or updating of the SQF (at least every five years) is implemented by an expert group set up by the NCE. The final version of the developed or updated SQF is confirmed by PINTSA and thereafter published by the NCE on its website²⁶.

Phase III – Improvement and Approval (2017-2018)

Within the ESF project “Improvement of Sectoral Qualifications System for the Development of Vocational Education and Quality Assurance”²⁷ (16.12.2016-31.12.2021), the functional analysis of the SQF was conducted in compliance with the EQF and LQF. Furthermore, the 14 aforementioned SQF were improved, and a new SQF in the field of arts for the sector of design and creative industries was developed.

In March 2018, PINTSA approved all 15 SQFs. Thus, they have become legally effective and may be used for the development of vocational education curriculum.

1.8 Development of Latvian Qualifications Database

In 2014, Latvian NCP started the development of Latvian Qualifications Database (www.latvianqualifications.lv, LQD) within the Erasmus+ project “European Qualifications

²⁴ Vocational Education Law (1999). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=20244>.

²⁵ Cabinet Regulations No 633 “Procedure on the development of occupational standard, professional qualification requirements (if occupational standard is not approved for an occupation) and sectoral qualifications framework” (in force since 30.09.2016). See: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=285032>.

²⁶ National Centre for Education, Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks. See: <https://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/nozkval.shtml>.

²⁷ National Centre for Education. See: https://visc.gov.lv/visc/projekti/esf_852.shtml.

Framework – National Qualifications Databases” (2014-2016). The LQD was developed as a unique information system comprising data on LQF qualifications and the respective learning outcomes in Latvian and English. Prior to that, the available databases contained information on specific education sectors or issues, in most cases, only in Latvian.

To enable the assessment of the information available and development of a system according to stakeholders’ needs, the LQD was developed in collaboration with a working group established for this purpose and made up of the representatives from National Centre for Education (NCE), State Education Quality Service (SEQS), State Education Development Agency (SEDA), and the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES). The working group examined the proposals by experts on the content, structure and objectives of the database, and after a discussion agreed upon the most appropriate action according to the situation in Latvia.

In 2016, the LQD was put into operation and linked to the Learning Opportunities and Qualifications in Europe portal²⁸ (LOQ/PLOTEUS portal), containing information on qualifications at European level and regular updates of the data on Latvian qualifications.

Latvian NCP, in collaboration with the working group, continued to work on the development of LQD also in the period 2016-2018, co-funded by the European Commission. During this project period, main activities included developing sustainable information update and entry mechanisms, reviewing the structuring of the existing information, and ensuring automated data exchange with other systems, providing data compatibility and traceability, and long-term relevance of data on qualifications, as well as adapting the content of LQD to link it with the European Skills/Competences, Qualifications, and Occupations (ESCO) portal²⁹, which was successfully done already in 2017.

In view of the intended changes in education (competence-based general education, modular vocational education programmes, and accreditation of higher education programmes in compliance with the European quality standards and guidelines), which will imply the development of new occupational standards and changes to the content of qualifications, in terms of the development of the LQD, providing functionality is important in order to gather new information and ensure long-term traceability of data on qualifications. To enable the aforementioned, the development of the LQD will continue, with the support of the European Commission, also for the period 2018-2020.

²⁸ Learning Opportunities and Qualifications in Europe, LOQ/PLOTEUS portal. See: <https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus>.

²⁹ European Skills/Competences, Qualifications and Occupations, ESCO portal. See: <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home>.

2. Meaning of Learning Outcomes in Education System of Latvia

In some laws and regulations, elements of learning outcomes were reflected already before the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) was developed. This may be observed, for instance, in the amendments to the Guidelines of Lifelong Learning Policy for 2007-2013, adopted at the end of 2009, which stipulated that a learning outcome-based qualifications framework is to be developed³⁰. However, the awareness of learning outcomes as statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on the completion of learning process among stakeholders grew along with the development of the LQF³¹. Since the development of the LQF gave rise to discussions among stakeholders on the role of learning outcomes in education, several amendments to regulatory framework were made. The linkage between a learning outcome-based approach and the development of the LQF is demonstrated also in the amendments to the Education Law of 18 June 2015 (in force since 16.07.2015), which define the LQF and the relevant learning outcomes.

Education Law. “Section 8¹. Latvian Qualifications Framework

(2) The Latvian Qualifications Framework levels are characterized by **learning outcomes** to be achieved at the respective level. Each further level includes **knowledge, skills, and competences** that have been achieved in the previous levels.” [...]

The use of learning outcomes in education process is ensured by laws and regulations stipulating education content (i.e., state education and occupational standards), state examination system, as well as licensing and accreditation of education institutions and education programmes³².

2.1 General Education

General education content is defined by:

- state education standards, i.e., general basic³³ and secondary³⁴ education standard, as well as study subject standards (Cabinet Regulations);
- general education programmes (developed by general education institutions in compliance with regulatory framework).

State education standards include provisions regarding “knowledge”, “skills” and “attitudes”. However, they do not provide definitions of expected learning outcomes.

In 2010, the content of general basic education was regulated by the Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the state basic education standard and basic education study subject standards” (in force from 23.12.2006 until 22.08.2013)³⁵, until new Cabinet

³⁰ Kinta, G. (2014). Meaning of Learning Outcomes in Vocational Upper-Secondary Education Management. Doctoral Thesis. Riga: University of Latvia, Faculty of Education, Psychology and Arts.

³¹ Academic Information Centre and the Ministry of Education and Science (2012). Referencing of Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area. Self-Assessment Report. Second Version. Riga: Academic Information Centre and the Policy Coordination Department of the Ministry of Education and Science. See: http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Latvian_Self-Assessment_Report_2nd-version_May-2012.pdf.

³² Academic Information Centre (2013). Introduction of Learning Outcomes in the Latvian Educational Institutions. Study Report. See: http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/LO_study_report_2013.pdf

³³ Cabinet Regulations No 468 “Regulations on the state basic education standard, basic education study subject standards and basic education programme samples” (in force since 23.08.2014). See: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=268342>.

³⁴ Cabinet Regulations No 281 “Regulations on the state general secondary education standard, study subject standards and education programme samples” (in force since 6.06.2013). See: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=257229>

³⁵ Cabinet Regulations No 1027 “Regulations regarding the state standard for basic education and basic education study subject standards” (in force from 23.12.2006 until 22.08.2013). See: <http://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=150407>.

Regulations were approved in 2014 (in force since 23.08.2014)³⁶. To assess, whether and how the content of basic education has changed over time in the context of learning outcomes, the aforementioned Cabinet Regulations, including the main aims of education programmes, of 2010 and 2018 were compared.

The main aims of basic education programmes in 2010 and 2018 are as follows:

- to provide learners with **basic knowledge and basic skills** required in their public and personal life;
- to provide learners with a basis for further education;
- to promote harmonious growth and development among learners;
- to encourage learners to take a responsible **attitude** towards themselves, their family, society, environment and the state.

In the previous Self-Assessment Reports (2011 and 2012), the Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the state general secondary education standard and state general secondary education study subject standards”³⁷ (in force from 19.09.2008 until 6.06.2013), which were in force at the time of the development of those Self-Assessment Reports, were used to describe the content of general secondary education. At present the content of general secondary education is regulated by another Cabinet Regulations (in force since 6.06.2013)³⁸. Comparing both Cabinet Regulations in the context of learning outcomes, including the aims of education programmes laid down in these Regulations, conclusions may be drawn that no significant changes may be observed.

The main objectives of general secondary education programmes in 2010 and 2018 are as follows:

- to provide learners with **knowledge and skills** required for personal growth and development, civic participation, employment, social integration, and further education;
- to promote the improvement of learners as mentally, emotionally and physically developed personalities and to cultivate healthy lifestyle habits;
- to promote socially active **attitude**, by preserving and developing their language, ethnic and cultural singularity, as well as to improve understanding of fundamental principles of human rights embodied in the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia and other legal acts;
- to develop learners’ **ability to learn and improve themselves independently**, to motivate them for lifelong learning and deliberate career choices.

When comparing the Cabinet Regulations in effect during the development of LQF from 2009 to 2011 and those currently in force (2018), conclusion may be drawn that no significant changes in general education regarding the implementation of a learning outcome-based approach have been made so far. At the same time, the aims of general education programmes, as defined in the Cabinet Regulations, are rather general, and they reflect only the core values of the society and the main lines of action on which education institutions and their teaching staff should focus in implementing education programmes.

³⁶ Cabinet Regulations No 468 “Regulations on the state basic education standard, basic education study subject standards and basic education programme samples” (in force since 23.08.2014). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=268342>.

³⁷ Cabinet Regulations No 715 “Regulations on the state general secondary education standard and state general secondary education study subject standards” (in force from 19.09.2008 until 6.06.2013). See: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=181216>

³⁸ Cabinet Regulations No 281 “Regulations on the state general secondary education standard, study subject standards and education programme samples” (in force since 6.06.2013). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=257229>.

Thus, these aims cannot be changed frequently or radically to ensure sustainability and continuity of education, but in cases where an outcome-based approach is implemented, the aforementioned must be determined in the documents regulating the content of education. However, one of the priorities of education policy is to transform the content of general education into competence-based education.

The National Centre for Education (NCE) implements the ESF project “Competence-Based Approach in Curriculum”³⁹ (17.10.2016-16.10.2021), to promote the shift from a study subject-based curriculum to learning outcome-based curriculum. The project aims at approving a competence-based general education curricula (in collaboration with 100 education institutions), in compliance with the description of compulsory general education curriculum and its implementation in pre-school, basic and secondary education levels.

2.2 Vocational Education

Laws and regulations stipulating vocational education content usually mention the concepts related to learning outcomes (the most common – “knowledge” and “skills”). However, following the amendments to Section 24 of the Vocational Education Law (in force since 25.10.2006), in relation to occupational standards such terms as “attitudes” and “competences” appear⁴⁰, without the respective definitions. The term “expected outcomes” was referred to in Section 25 of the Vocational Education Law, amended in 2015 (in force since 15.05.2015). Also the explanations of individual terms were gradually introduced, for instance, the amendments to Section 2, Paragraph 8¹ of the Vocational Education Law (in force since 1.07.2010) stipulated that professional competence is a “set of knowledge, skills and responsibility for the pursuit of a professional activity in a given work situation”.

According to the Vocational Education Law⁴¹ (1999), the content of vocational education is regulated by the following documents:

1. state vocational education standards, i.e., state standard for vocational education, state vocational secondary education standard⁴² and state standard of first level professional higher education (defined by the Cabinet of Ministers)⁴³;
2. occupational standards or requirements for professional qualifications and descriptors of the Sectoral Qualifications Framework⁴⁴ (approved by PINTSA);
3. vocational education programmes (developed by vocational education institutions in compliance with regulatory framework).

During the preparation of the previous Self-Assessment Report (2011-2012), the same Cabinet Regulations were in force as in 2018. As for the introduction of learning outcomes in vocational education, several amendments to “Regulations on the state vocational secondary education standard and the state vocational education standard”

³⁹ Website of the National Centre for Education. See: http://visc.gov.lv/visc/projekti/esf_831.shtml.

⁴⁰ Kinta, G. (2014). Meaning of Learning Outcomes in Vocational Upper-Secondary Education Management. Doctoral Thesis. Riga: University of Latvia, Faculty of Education, Psychology and Arts.

⁴¹ Section 22 of the Vocational Education Law (in force since 14.07.1999; with amendments in force since 6.07.2017). See: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=20244>.

⁴² Cabinet Regulations No 211 “Regulations on the state vocational secondary education standard and the state vocational education standard” (in force since 1.07.2000; recent amendments came into force on 22.09.2017). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=8533>.

⁴³ Cabinet Regulations No 141 “Regulations on the state standard of first level professional higher education” (in force since 5.04.2001). See: <https://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=6397>

⁴⁴ Cabinet Regulations No 633 “Procedure on the development of occupational standard, professional qualification requirements (if occupational standard is not approved for an occupation) and sectoral qualifications framework” (in force since 30.09.2016). See: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=285032>.

were made – on 8 March 2016⁴⁵ and 19 September 2017⁴⁶. Expansion of modular approach to vocational education programmes is planned; in this respect, modifications to compulsory professional content of vocational secondary education and vocational education, alongside the respective study subject, involve modules. The modules are based on learning outcomes, consisting of an assessment and of a set of knowledge, skills, and competences that a learner is able to demonstrate. To ensure the introduction of a higher quality vocational education curriculum, the amendments complement the strategic aim of vocational secondary education and vocational education programmes – after the completion of those programmes learners must have acquired competences comprising knowledge, skills and attitudes defined by the respective occupational standards or requirements for professional qualifications. However, since 2007, no amendments have been introduced to the state standard of the first level professional higher education.

The Cabinet Regulations “Procedure on the development of occupational standards”⁴⁷ (in force since 3.03.2007), which became invalid on 1st January 2016, regulated the content of occupational standards and procedures for their development from 2011 to 2012, at the time when the previous Self-Assessment Report (2011, 2012) was prepared. The Report described the importance of occupational standards regarding learning outcomes in vocational education. In September 2016, new Cabinet Regulations “Procedure on the development of occupational standard, professional qualification requirements (if occupational standard is not approved for an occupation) and sectoral qualifications framework”⁴⁸ (in force since 30.09.2016) were approved. The scope of the new Regulations has been expanded in compliance with the amendments of 2015 to the Vocational Education Law (1999) by including also development of requirements for professional qualifications and Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks. Furthermore, the Regulations also refer to the link between the aforementioned documents and the respective LQF level (see Table 2).

Compared to the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012), changes to the main elements of vocational education programmes in line with the amendments to the Vocational Education Law (in force since 15.05.2015) have been made. The term “expected outcomes” has been used in the Law to describe the structure of vocational education programmes (Section 25, Paragraph 1), as well to explain the term “modular programme” (Section 1, Paragraph 2⁵). In the explanation of the term “module” (Section 1, Paragraph 2⁴), the concept “expected learning outcomes” refers to a set of knowledge, skills and competences, which can be assessed and demonstrated (see Table 3).

⁴⁵ Cabinet Regulations No 144 “Amendments to Cabinet Regulations of 1st July 2000 No 211 “Regulations on the state vocational secondary education standard and the state vocational education standard”” (in force since 1.09.2016). See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/293661-grozijumi-ministru-kabineta-2000-gada-27-junija-noteikumos-nr-211-noteikumi-par-valsts-profesionalas-videjas-izglitiba-standar>

⁴⁶ Cabinet Regulations No 564 “Amendments to Cabinet Regulations of 27 June 2000 No 211 “Regulations on the state vocational secondary education standard and the state vocational education standard”” (in force since 22.09.2017). See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/293661-grozijumi-ministru-kabineta-2000-gada-27-junija-noteikumos-nr-211-noteikumi-par-valsts-profesionalas-videjas-izglitiba-standar>

⁴⁷ Cabinet Regulations No 149 “Procedure on the development of occupational standards” (in force from 3.03.2007 until 1.01.2016). See: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=153849>.

⁴⁸ Cabinet Regulations No 633 “Procedure on the development of occupational standard, professional qualification requirements (if occupational standard is not approved for an occupation) and sectoral qualifications framework” (in force since 30.09.2016). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=285032>

Table 2. Main elements of occupational standards in 2010 and 2018

Cabinet Regulations “Procedure on the development of occupational standards” (in force from since 3.03.2007 until 1.01.2016)	Cabinet Regulations “Procedure on the development of occupational standard, professional qualification requirements (if occupational standard is not approved for an occupation) and sectoral qualifications framework” (in force since 30.09.2016)
<p>5. The working group referred to in Paragraph 4 of these Regulations determines:</p> <p>5.1 the duties and tasks which characterise the profession;</p> <p>5.2 the necessary skills for the performance of the basic tasks of the professional activity;</p> <p>5.3 the necessary knowledge (the level of conception, awareness and application shall be indicated) for the performance of the basic tasks of the professional activity;</p> <p>5.4 the necessary professional competence (necessary skills, knowledge, and responsibility in certain work situations) for the performance of the professional activity; and</p> <p>5.5 the place of the profession in the sectoral qualifications framework and employment description, in which the summary of the basic tasks of the professional activity shall be provided.</p>	<p>Annex 1. Occupational Standard [...]</p> <p>3. Summary of basic tasks and duties of the professional activity.</p> <p>4. The skills, attitudes, professional knowledge, and competences required for the performance of the basic tasks and duties of the professional activity. In the table: [...] Competences (qualification level)</p> <p>5. The skills, attitudes, general knowledge, and competences required for the performance of the basic tasks and duties of the professional activity. In the table: [...] Competences (qualification level) [...]</p> <p>Annex 2. Requirements for professional qualification [...]</p> <p>3. The skills and attitudes, knowledge and professional competences required for the performance of work tasks. In the table: [...] Competences (qualification level) [...]</p> <p>Annex 3. Sectoral Qualifications Framework</p> <p>1. General description of sectoral professions</p> <p>1.1 Qualification level</p> <p>1.2 Descriptor of the sectoral profession qualification level (learning outcomes to be achieved: knowledge, skills, competence, autonomy, and responsibility) [...]</p>

Table 3. Main elements of vocational education programmes in 2010 and 2018

Vocational Education Law, Section 25 (in force from 1.09.2001 until 14.05.2015)	Vocational Education Law, Section 25 (with amendments, in force since 15.05.2015)
<p>Section 25. Vocational Education Programme</p> <p>(1) A vocational education programme is a document regulating vocational education and, in accordance with the state vocational education standard of the relevant education level and occupational standard, it shall determine:</p> <p>1) vocational education programme's tasks;</p> <p>2) vocational education programme's content;</p> <p>3) vocational education programme's implementation plan;</p> <p>4) requirements in regard to previously completed education;</p> <p>5) human, financial and material resources necessary for the implementation of vocational education programme.</p> <p>(2) Vocational education programme shall be developed by an education institution in coordination with its founder.</p>	<p>Section 25. Vocational Education Programme</p> <p>(1) A vocational education programme is a document regulating vocational education, and, in accordance with the state vocational education standard and occupational standard or the requirements for professional qualifications (if no occupational is standard approved for the relevant profession) of the relevant education level, it shall determine:</p> <p>1) vocational education programme's aim and outcomes to be achieved;</p> <p>2) vocational education programme's content;</p> <p>3) vocational education programme's implementation plan;</p> <p>4) requirements in regard to previously completed education;</p> <p>5) vocational education programme's level in the Latvian Qualifications Framework [in force since 16.07.2015]; and</p> <p>6) human, financial and material resources necessary for the implementation of vocational education programme.</p> <p>(2) Vocational education programme shall be developed by an education institution in coordination with its founder.</p>

A professional qualification examination is organized at the end of a vocational education programme to determine whether learners have acquired the necessary knowledge, skills and competences during their studies (LQF levels 2-4). The content and procedure of qualification examinations are regulated by the Cabinet Regulations⁴⁹. During the period in question, no amendments to these Regulations have been made regarding the strengthening of the role of learning outcomes in professional qualification examinations.

The reforms regarding the content of vocational education are ongoing. They imply the development of new occupational standards, requirements for professional qualifications, and modular education programmes⁵⁰, half of which in 2016 were launched as pilot programmes in vocational education institutions. Currently, the development of modular vocational education programmes takes place within the ESF project “Improvement of Sectoral Qualifications System for the Development of Vocational Education and Quality Assurance”⁵¹ (16.12.2016-31.12.2021), implemented by the National Centre for Education (NCE). The project aims at improving the content of vocational education, to develop and update occupational standards and requirements for professional qualifications in line with the LQF, and improve the content of professional qualification examinations by introducing a modular approach in education programmes and ensuring the resources necessary for an efficient implementation of education programmes, thus, improving sectoral qualifications system.

For more information on NQFs see section 1.7.

2.3 Higher Education

Already since 2004, higher education sector has developed learning outcomes on basis of Bologna cycle descriptors, which were integrated into the LQF descriptors and approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in October 2010⁵², and since 2011 learning outcomes Already since 2004, higher education sector has developed learning outcomes on basis of Bologna cycle descriptors, which were integrated into the LQF descriptors and approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in October 2010⁵², and since 2011 learning outcomes are mandatory part of the higher education study programmes.

Prior to the introducing the tools of the Bologna Process – the National Qualifications Framework, ECTS, Diploma Supplement, quality assurance and learning outcomes – higher education qualifications in Latvia were described in terms of admission requirements, study programme duration, and study content. However, in the Latvian higher education framework, which is integrated into the LQF, each qualification was characterized by its level, expected learning outcomes and workload (in credit points) required to achieve those learning outcomes. The developed level descriptors in higher education, integrated into the Cabinet Regulations (currently – Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the education classification of Latvia”, adopted on 13.06.2017) in 2010 according to the relevant amendments, correspond to the LQF levels 5-8⁵³.

⁴⁹ Cabinet Regulations No 662 “Procedure of professional qualification examinations in accredited vocational education programmes” (in force since 1.09.2011). See: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=235206>.

⁵⁰ State Education Development Agency (2015). Recommendations on the Conditions for the Introduction of ECVET Principles in Latvian Vocational Education. See: http://viaa.gov.lv/library/files/original/leteikumi_ECVET_20ievie_c5_atanai_20LV.pdf.

⁵¹ Website of the National Centre for Education. See: http://visc.gov.lv/visc/projekti/esf_852.shtml.

⁵² Academic Information Centre, Archimedes Foundation, and Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre (2015). Automatic Recognition between Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Comparative study report. See: http://www.aic.lv/portal/content/files/AURBELL_report_EN.pdf.

⁵³ Academic Information Centre and the Ministry of Education and Science (2012). Referencing of Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area. Self-Assessment Report. Second Version. Riga: Academic Information Centre and the Policy Coordination Department of the Ministry of Education and Science. See: http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Latvian_Self-Assessment_Report_2nd-version_May-2012.pdf.

Higher education content is regulated by the following documents:

- state education standards, i.e., state academic education standard⁵⁴, state standard for the first level professional higher education⁵⁵, state standard for the second level professional higher education⁵⁶, and state professional higher education standard for obtaining Doctor's degree⁵⁷ (determined by the Cabinet of Ministers);
- for professional higher education programmes – occupational standards or the requirements for professional qualifications and Sectoral Qualifications Framework descriptors⁵⁸ (approved by PINTSA);
- higher education study programmes (developed by higher education institutions in compliance with regulatory framework).

The Law on Higher Education Institutions⁵⁹ (1995) determines the main elements of the structure of a higher education study programme. Since 2010, a range of amendments has been made to this Law, including the introduction of the concept “learning outcomes”, i.e., “a set of knowledge, skills, and competences to be acquired following the completion of a study programme, study module or a study course” (with amendments in force since 1.08.2011) and completion of the structural elements of study programmes, study courses and study modules (see Table 4).

Table 4. Main elements of higher education study programmes in 2011 and 2018

Section 55 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (in the version in force from 1.12.1995 until 30.07.2011)	Section 55 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (in the version in force since 1.08.2011)
<p>(1) A study programme shall include all the requirements necessary for obtaining an academic degree or professional qualification. A study programme shall be regulated by a special document – a description of study content and implementation which:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) sets requirements regarding previous education; 2) in accordance with the level and type of education, sets an aim, objective and expected learning outcomes for implementation of the particular study programme, content of offered education, amounts of mandatory, limited elective and elective parts of study programmes, time distribution required for completing study programmes, as well as criteria, forms and procedure for evaluation of education to be completed. <p>[...]</p>	<p>(1) A study programme shall include all the requirements necessary for obtaining an academic degree or professional qualification. A study programme shall be regulated by a special document – a description of study content and implementation which:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) sets requirements regarding previous education; 1) defines to which study field the relevant study programme corresponds; 2) in accordance with the level and type of education, sets: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) aim for implementation of specific study programme and expected learning outcomes upon its completion, including planned study courses, study modules, and their expected learning outcomes, b) content of offered education; c) amounts of mandatory, limited elective and elective parts of study programmes and distribution of credit points between them; and d) education criteria for achievement and evaluation of learning outcomes, forms and procedure for their testing. [...]

⁵⁴ Cabinet Regulations No 240 “Regulations on the state academic education standard” (in force since 16.05.2014). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=266187>.

⁵⁵ Cabinet Regulations No 141 “Regulations on the state standard of first level professional higher education” (in force since 5.04.2001). See: <https://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=6397>.

⁵⁶ MCabinet Regulations No 512 “Regulations on the state standard of second level professional higher education” (in force since 12.09.2014). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=268761>.

⁵⁷ Cabinet Regulations No 617 “Regulations on the state professional higher education standard for obtaining Doctor's degree and the procedure for awarding a professional Doctor's degree in arts” (in force since 10.05.2018). See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/301992-noteikumi-par-profesionalas-augstakas-izglitiba-valsts-standartu-doktora-grada-iegunasai-un-kartibu-kada-pieskir-profesionalo>.

⁵⁸ Cabinet Regulations No 633 “Procedure on the development of occupational standard, professional qualification requirements (if occupational standard is not approved for an occupation) and sectoral qualifications framework” (in force since 30.09.2016). See: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=285032>.

⁵⁹ Law on Higher Education Institutions (in force since 1.12.1995; the recent amendments came into force on 1.04.2018). See: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=37967>.

The mentioned amendments to the Law proposed changes to the existing Cabinet Regulations or to develop several new Cabinet Regulations, in order to regulate the use of learning outcomes in the study process. With regards to Cabinet Regulations “Procedure by which state recognised education documents certifying higher education are issued”⁶⁰ (in force since 19.04.2013), amendments to the content of Diploma Supplement (Annex 7)⁶¹ were made, more specifically, to Sub-paragraphs 3.2 and 4.2 and Paragraph 8, by indicating a reference to learning outcomes. The changes in the mentioned paragraphs are as follows:

“3. Information on the level of qualification:

3.2 Official length of programme (in years and credit points), start and end date of the acquisition of the programme.

NB: Should a student be awarded credit points for **learning outcomes** achieved in previous learning or professional experience, the number and date of the decision of the commission for validation of **learning outcomes**, as well as the name of education institution and education programme or its part, or the way professional experience was acquired, as well as time and place of the achieved **learning outcomes** shall be indicated.” [...]

“4. Information on the contents and results gained:

4.2 Programme requirements (programme aims and intended **results of studies**). [...]

“8. Information on national higher education system. [...]

Grading System. The degree of achieved **study results** is assessed by 10-point degree system or PASS/FAIL.

Assessment of achieved **study results** by 10-point degree system.” [...]

In the translation of Diploma Supplement, as provided for in the Cabinet Regulations, three different English language translations for the term “*studiju rezultāti*” are used, i.e. “learning outcomes” (Sub-Paragraph 3.2), “results of studies” (Sub-Paragraph 4.2), and “study results” (Paragraph 8).

In 2014, Cabinet Regulations on state education standards in higher education were reviewed and approved, having a direct effect on the content of higher education programmes. Firstly, the new Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the state academic education standard”⁶² (in force since 16.05.2014) were approved, where learning outcomes are reflected in the strategic aim and main aims of study programmes, as well as in the assessment principles. The aims of study programmes are as follows:

“3. The strategic aim of study programmes is to ensure the acquirement of **theoretical knowledge and research skills** of sciences by achieving **learning outcomes** defined in the relevant study programme, which comply with **knowledge, skills and competences** of European Qualifications Framework (hereinafter – Framework) level 6 or 7, as stipulated in the education classification of Latvia.

4. The main aim of a Bachelor’s degree study programme is to provide **a set of knowledge, skills and competences** in compliance with **knowledge, skills, and competences** of the

⁶⁰ Cabinet Regulations No 202 “Procedure by which state recognised education documents certifying higher education are issued” (in force since 19.04.2013). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=256157>.

⁶¹ Prior to that, the content of the Diploma Supplement was regulated by Annex 6 to the Cabinet Regulations No 656 “Procedure by which state recognised education documents certifying higher education are issued” (in force since 6.10.2007). See: <http://likumi.lv/ta/id/164267-kartiba-kada-izsniedzami-valsts-atziti-augstako-izglitiba-apliecinosi-izglitibas-dokumenti>.

Framework level 6, as stipulated in the education classification of Latvia.” [...]

“15. The main aim of a Master’s degree study programme is to provide **a set of knowledge, skills and competences** in compliance with **knowledge, skills, and competences** of Framework level 7, as stipulated in the education classification of Latvia.” [...]

Secondly, the Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the state standard of second level professional higher education”⁶³ (in force since 12.09.2014) were approved stipulating that achievement of learning outcomes has to be defined as one of the main aims of study programmes. Moreover, learning outcomes are included in the content of study programmes, process and assessment principles. The Regulations mention learning outcomes and the terms related to them, i.e., “knowledge, skills, and competence” for several times:

“5. The main aims of study programmes are as follows:

5.1 to educate learners by ensuring the completion of the fifth level professional qualification, as well as to promote their competitiveness in the changing socio-economic conditions and the international labour market;

5.2 to ensure achievement of **learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences)** in compliance with European Qualifications Framework (hereinafter – Framework) level 6 or 7 **knowledge, skills and competence**, as stipulated in the education classification of Latvia.”

In 2018, new Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the state professional higher education standard for obtaining Doctor’s degree and the procedure for awarding a professional Doctor’s degree in arts” (in force since 5.10.2018) were adopted, which, just like the Cabinet Regulations described above, define the strategic aim and objectives of study programmes.

However, no amendments have been made to the Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the state standard of first level professional higher education”⁶⁴ (in force since 5.04.2001; last amendments in force since 2.06.2007) or its new version developed, in order to introduce the concept of learning outcomes, except for Sub-paragraph 9.5, where the “capabilities, knowledge, abilities and skills” are referred to the basic assessment principles of first level professional higher education.

The concept of learning outcomes has been introduced in the quality assessment of higher education institutions (HEIs) and study programmes already before the amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995) were made in 2011. For instance, the Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the procedure for the accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges, and higher education programmes”⁶⁵ (in force from 7.10.2006 until 19.10.2012) stipulated that a self-assessment report of a higher education programme has to include “the aims and objectives of a higher education programme, as well as the learning outcomes, which a learner must have attained in a form of knowledge, skills, and attitudes following the completion of a higher education programme” (Annex 2, Paragraph 1). Initial Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on accreditation of higher education

⁶² Cabinet Regulations No 240 “Regulations on the state academic education standard” (in force since 16.05.2014). See: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=266187>.

⁶³ Cabinet Regulations No 512 “Regulations on the state standard of second level professional higher education” (in force since 12.09.2014). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=268761>

⁶⁴ Cabinet Regulations No 141 “Regulations on the state standard of first level professional higher education” (in force since 5.04.2001). See: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=6397>.

⁶⁵ Cabinet Regulations No 821 “Regulations on the procedure for the accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges, and higher education programmes” (in force since 7.10.2006 until 19.10.2012). See: <https://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=145125>.

institutions, colleges, and study fields”⁶⁶ (in force since 30.07.2015) provided a more detailed description of the role of learning outcomes in the study process, however, as a result of the amendments of July 2017, the Annexes 1 and 7 were deleted, as well as Annexes 9 and 10 were edited accordingly by mentioning learning outcomes. For more information on quality assurance, see Chapter 3.

In view of the amendments to the respective laws and regulations since 2011, the HEIs reviewed the implemented study programmes to introduce learning outcomes and ensure their compliance with the requirements for the licensing and accreditation⁶⁷. Thus, the aforementioned suggests that learning outcomes have a great importance in the development and implementation of the study process.

⁶⁶ Cabinet Regulations No 407 “Regulations on accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges, and study fields” (in force since 30.07.2015; amendments in force since 1.02.2017 and 28.07.2017). See: <https://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=275560>

⁶⁷ Academic Information Centre (2013). Introduction of Learning Outcomes in the Latvian Education Institutions. Study Report. See: http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/LO_study_report_2013.pdf.

3. Education Quality Assurance

3.1 General and Vocational Education

As provided by the Education Law (1998), accreditation of education programmes confers an education institution or other institution with the right, laid down in the Law, to issue a state recognised education document for completing education in accordance with a particular education programme. In the course of accreditation, the quality of the implementation of the respective education programme has to be evaluated (Section 1, Paragraph 10 of the Education Law). Thus, quality assessment is related to accreditation process, within which quality assurance in the respective education institution is evaluated.

The aim, objectives and expected learning outcomes, characterising the compliance of a specific education content with the relevant EQF/LQF level, form an integral part of an education programme. Therefore, compliance of content, aims and implementation of education programmes in accordance with the EQF/LQF, including whether education institutions have established requirements regarding content, outcomes and study process, has to be evaluated also during quality assessment and accreditation process. In general education and vocational education (except for higher education), education quality assessment is carried out by the State Education Quality Service (SEQS).

Since 2013, the SEQS has been coordinating the introduction of European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) and common vocational education quality assessment indicators in vocational education quality assurance. At present, the SEQS also ensures and organises the evaluation of the professional activity of the heads of education institutions (except for HEIs)⁶⁸.

In 2016, new Cabinet Regulations “Procedure for accrediting education institutions, examination centres, other institutions set out in the Education Law, general and vocational education programmes and evaluating professional activity of the heads of education institutions” (in force since 23.12.2016, the new title of the Regulations in force since 21.09.2018)⁶⁹ were approved, which essentially preserve the previous procedure for accreditation of education institutions, examination centres and education programmes; however, they stipulate several changes:

- Accreditation of education institutions and education programmes has to be carried out via external evaluation by an expert commission, except for the case if accreditation is carried out for an education programme, which according to classification belongs to an education programme group, for which a corresponding accredited education programme is already being implemented by the said education institution.
- Introducing the evaluation of heads of education institution.
- Introducing eight EQAVET indicators and provisions for the implementation of OECD recommendations.
- Introducing the right of SEQS to initiate extraordinary accreditation and extraordinary evaluation of an education institution’s head at the initiative of the said education institution’s founder or following the proposal of MoES.

⁶⁸ Cabinet Regulations No 225 “Regulations of the State Education Quality Service” (in force since 1.05.2013; recent amendments in force since 1.09.2017). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=256415>.

⁶⁹ Cabinet Regulations No 831 “Procedure for accrediting education institutions, examination centres, other institutions set out in the Education Law, general and vocational education programmes and evaluating professional activity of the heads of education institutions” (in force since 23.12.2016). See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/287602>. Since 21.09.2018, the new title of the Cabinet Regulations is in force.

- Reinforcing the role of an education institution's founder (usually a municipality) in education quality assurance, meaning that the founder has to monitor and provide support to the education institution regarding the implementation of recommendations by accreditation experts. In cases when an education programme is accredited only for two years, an action plan to remedy the non-compliances and implement the recommendations set out in the report by the accreditation expert commission has to be developed. In case of non-compliance with such plan, an extraordinary accreditation procedure may be initiated.
- Increasing requirements when making a decision on the accreditation of an education institution or a study programme, the amount of criteria is increased in which, after receiving evaluation "insufficient", the accreditation is refused.
- Education institution has to update its self-assessment report on annual basis and ensure its accessibility on its own or its founder's website.
- Each year education institution has to submit information on the implementation of recommendations provided for in the expert commission's report..

To ensure regular quality assessment of activities carried out by education institutions implementing study programmes at secondary education level, the possibility to carry out re-accreditation for six years without involving accreditation experts' commission is cancelled. The Regulations also define the competence of SEC, trade unions and other associations or foundations to delegate sectoral experts for participation in licensing and accreditation of vocational education institutions, examination centres and vocational education programmes, and professional qualification examinations, as well as to deliver joint reports on the decision for licensing and accreditation of vocational education programmes.

Current Accreditation Procedures, Compared to 2011

The process of assessing education quality involves international level (participation in international education surveys, such as OECD PISA, OECD TALIS etc.), state level (accreditation and licensing, centralised examinations, tests and diagnostic works, national research on education policy issues, teacher assessment, management, and monitoring), and school level (self-assessment and quality assurance in school work, online school management systems, e.g., e-class etc.).

The system for education quality assurance and assessment includes internal and external evaluation of activities and education programmes of an education institution, as well as assessment of professional activity of education institution heads.

Within the process of **internal evaluation** the education institution has to prepare a self-assessment report. An application for accreditation and the self-assessment report, which needs to be confirmed by the founder of the institution, are used in the accreditation process. To provide the institution's stakeholders with the opportunities to obtain information on the quality of the school's activities, the self-assessment report must be published on the website of either the education institution or its founder, and must be available until the end of the accreditation period.

External evaluation involves evaluation of an education institution by the experts during which the accreditation expert commission visits the education institution, holds discussions with its staff, founders, learners, their parents, school's self-governing bodies and social partners, as well as provides methodological support to the institution regarding

self-assessment and gives an external view of the institution's work by promoting a continuous improvement process. Accreditation of education institutions and education programmes is based on a report by an expert commission on the accreditation or its refusal.

Accreditation expert commission is established by SEQS, and it is independent from the education institution in question. The accreditation expert commission consists of representatives of different institutions, for instance, representatives from MoES, NCE or SEQS, education professionals from local governments, and representatives of other institutions, including other ministries, local governments, non-governmental organisations, employers, craftsmen and trade unions, as well as representatives of other education institutions who have completed a professional competence improvement programme (A) on quality assessment of education institution activity and education programme implementation. Expert commissions for the accreditation of vocational education should consist of representatives delegated by employer and employee organisations of the relevant sectors – associations, unions, trade unions, the Chamber of Crafts and sectoral certification and supervisory authority (if any), by ensuring their preparation and systematic and compulsory participation.

Since the preparation of the previous Self-Assessment Report (2011), progress has been made so far in quality assessment of general education and vocational education by improving the competence of accreditation experts in quality assessment, work of accreditation expert commissions, quality of reports by expert commissions, and understanding of quality assurance process of education institutions, its meaning, and self-assessment as a tool for development and improvement, thus providing the basic conditions for the development of quality within school system.

Criteria for Education Quality Assessment

When comparing the lines of action and activities of education institutions or quality criteria for the implementation of an education programme in 2011 and 2018, conclusion may be drawn that they have changed only slightly, i.e., the criteria provided for in Sub-paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2 have been separated, whereas the criterion provided for in Sub-paragraph 5.2 has been supplemented (see Table 5).

Table 5. Activity areas and quality criteria of education institution subject to evaluation during accreditation⁷⁰

Education institution's activity areas	Quality criteria
Activity area 1 – Study content (institution's implemented education programmes)	-
Activity area 2 –Teaching and learning	2.1 Teaching quality
	2.2 Learning quality
	2.3 Evaluation as part of study process
Activity area 3 – Education achievements	3.1 Learner achievements in daily work
	3.2 Learner achievements in state examinations
Activity area 4 – Support for learners	4.1 Psychological and social-pedagogical support
	4.2 Ensuring learner safety (security and work safety)
	4.3 Support for personal development
	4.4 Support for career education
	4.5 Support for differentiation of study work
	4.6 Support for learners with special needs
	4.7 Cooperation with learner's family
Activity area 5 – Environment at the institution	5.1 Micro-climate
	5.2 Physical environment and accessibility
Activity area 6 – Institution's resources	6.1 Equipment and material and technical provision
	6.2 Human resources
Activity area 7 – Work organisation, management and quality assurance at the institution	7.1 Self-assessment of institution's work and development planning
	7.2 Institution's management work and human resources management
	7.3 Cooperation with other institutions

Along with these quality criteria, also eight EQAVET quality indicators were included in vocational education quality assessment, as provided for in Section 25 of the Cabinet Regulations:

“25. A vocational education institution or an education institution implementing a vocational education programme (except for education institutions implementing a professional orientation education programme), shall include in the descriptions of the criteria referred to in Paragraph 22 of this Regulation, as provided for in the self-assessment report, the information on education quality indicators:

- 25.1 participation of educators in in-service training;
- 25.2 participation of learners in vocational education programmes;
- 25.3 graduates with completed vocational education;
- 25.4 graduate employment;

⁷⁰ Section 22 of Cabinet Regulations No 831 "Procedure for accrediting education institutions, examination centres, other institutions set out in the Education Law, general and vocational education programmes and evaluating professional activity of the heads of education institutions" (in force since 23.12.2016). See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/287602>. Since 21 September 2018, the new title of the Cabinet Regulations is in force.

- 25.5 use of acquired skills in work settings;
- 25.6 involvement of groups at risk in vocational education;
- 25.7 identification of demand for vocational education programmes in labour market; and
- 25.8 promotion of access to vocational education programmes.”

Thus, the assessment of vocational education quality in compliance with EQAVET principles is fostered. A significant innovation is the development of systems for surveying graduate employment.

3.2 Higher Education

Compared to 2011, significant changes have been introduced in the quality assessment of higher education. In general, one of the main objectives of the reforms is to reinvigorate the document “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG)⁷¹, as developed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), European Students’ Union (ESU), European University Association (EUA), European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE). According to it, the agencies for accreditation of higher education institutions and education programmes should be independent institutions. In the response to this, the amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995) were made in 2014, which stipulated that since 2015, quality assessment function would be delegated to the Academic Information Centre by establishing the Quality Agency for Higher Education (AIKA) in this regard. At the time the previous Self-Assessment Report (2011) was being prepared, the accreditation of higher education institutions and colleges (HEIs) and education programmes was carried out by the Higher Education Quality Assessment Centre (1995-2013), whereas from 2013 to 2015, accreditation process was organized by the Ministry of Education and Science.

Amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995) were made, a range of Cabinet Regulations was drafted and approved, and different methodologies for organising study programme licensing, evaluation of study fields (nationally called “directions”) and assessment of HEIs were developed to include the ESG standards and institutional changes in the respective laws and regulations.

The establishment of LQF has helped HEIs to define specific expected learning outcomes, according to which the content of study courses and assessment criteria are developed (see Chapter 2 of the Report). The compliance of learning outcomes is analysed when evaluating study fields and higher education institutions. The Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges, and study directions”⁷² (in force since 30.07.2015) stipulated that one of the aspects of internal quality assurance system to be assessed have to be the compliance of study programmes with the following requirement:

“Study programmes shall be developed so that they comply with the set aims and expected learning outcomes. The qualification to be completed in a study programme shall be clearly defined and explained, and it shall refer to the correct level of national qualifications framework of higher education and, thus, also to the qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area”. (Version in force until 27.07.2017)

⁷¹ “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG) (2015). Brussels, Belgium. https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

⁷² Cabinet Regulations No 407 “Regulations on accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges, and study fields” (in force since 30.07.2015, the last amendments in force since 28.07.2017). See <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/275560-augstskolu-koledzu-un-studiju-virzientu-akreditacijas-noteikumi>.

The development of LQF in various ways facilitates the internationalisation of higher education in Latvia, the validation of qualifications completed abroad, and the mobility, which, in turn, promotes efficient development of higher education.

Higher education quality assurance **is the responsibility of the following institutions:**

Academic Information Centre – Quality Agency for Higher Education (AIKA)⁷³ ensures licensing of study programmes, accreditation of HEIs and study fields, quality monitoring and improvement. AIC is a full member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education – INQAAHE (since October 2015), the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education – CEENQA (since May 2016), European Consortium for Accreditation – ECA (since June 2017), CHEA (Council for Higher Education Accreditation in the United States) International Quality Group – CIQG (since January 2018) and ENQA (since 21.06.2018). As a result of ENQA evaluation, by the end of 2018, AIC has been included in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education – EQAR.

Higher Education Quality Assurance Council ensures strategic management and planning of the organisation of licensing of study programmes, accreditation of HEIs and study fields by AIC. The chairperson of the Council is elected by the Council for the term of five years. The composition of the Council includes State Secretary of MoES, Director of AIC, chairperson of the Council of Higher Education, Chairperson of Latvian Rectors' Council, Chairperson of Association of Latvian Colleges, Director General of Employers' Confederation of Latvia, President of Student Union of Latvia, Chairperson of Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees, a representative of Association of Art HEIs of Latvia, Chairperson of Latvian Council of Science, Chairperson of Management Board of Latvian Agriculture Organisation Cooperation Council, a representative of Council of National Economy, Chairperson of Council of Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, President of Latvian Medical Association, and a representative of a foreign accreditation agency registered in EQAR. The secretarial tasks of the Council are undertaken by AIC.

Ministry of Education and Science (MoES)⁷⁴ during the licensing of study programmes or the accreditation of study fields, at the request by AIC, provides information on HEIs, which are included in the State and MoES registers. Following the receipt of a copy of the decision made by the study accreditation or licensing commission, it provides AIC with a license or, as the case may be, a certificate of study field accreditation, as signed by the minister of education and science.

Council of Higher Education (CHE)⁷⁵ examines the application of a HEI on its accreditation, makes the decision on the accreditation of HEI or its refusal, and forwards the decision to MoES for the approval, as well as approves the methodology for the assessment of HEIs, as developed by AIC, and publishes the methodology on its website. CHE is also entitled “to examine the materials regarding the assessment and accreditation of a study field implemented by any higher education institution” and “to request extraordinary accreditation of any higher education institution or study field”⁷⁶. CHE is an independent organisation, the 12 members of which are approved by the Parliament (Saeima) for the term of four years. The composition of CHE includes the minister of education and science (ex-officio) and one delegated representative from Latvian Academy of Sciences, Association

⁷³ Website of the AIKA. See: www.aika.lv/en

⁷⁴ Website of MoES. See: <http://izm.gov.lv>.

⁷⁵ Website of the CHE. See: <http://www.aip.lv/>

⁷⁶ Section 71, Paragraph 1 and 2 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (in force since 1.12.1995; the recent amendments came into force on 1.04.2018). See: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=37967>.

of Art HEIs of Latvia, Association of Education Managers of Latvia, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Association of Latvian Colleges, Latvian Rectors' Council, Association of Professors of Latvian Higher Education Institutions, Employers' Confederation of Latvia, Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees, Student Union of Latvia, as well as local governments and other HEIs founded by other legal and natural entities.

Latvian Council of Science, at the request of AIC, submits a report on doctoral study programmes submitted for licensing, as provided for in Section 16, Paragraph 7 of the Law on Scientific Activity⁷⁷ (2005).

External Quality Assessment

Licensing of Study Programmes

As provided for in the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995), the licensing of a study programme means “the granting of rights to a higher education institution or a college or their branches to implement a specific study programme”⁷⁸. The procedures for licensing are laid down in Cabinet Regulations “Regulations regarding licensing of study programmes”⁷⁹. A license is required for the implementation of any study programme. Within one year after licensing of a study programme a HEI has to start implementation of the relevant study programme.

The HEI has to submit the application for licensing to AIC in compliance with the methodology for licensing of study programmes⁸⁰. Licensing of study programmes is carried out by three sectoral experts approved by AIC, who visit the respective HEI and prepare a joint report. Based on this report, the Study programme licensing commission makes the decision on licensing or refusal to issue a license. Pursuant to Section 55² of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995), in case of affirmative decision, the HEI receives a license signed by the Minister for Education and Science. If a decision on the refusal to license a study programme is taken, the HEI is entitled to submit an application for licensing of a study programme corresponding to the relevant study field no earlier than six months thereafter. However, amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995), adopted on 21 June 2018, will come into force on 1st January 2019, which stipulate that in case of the refusal to license a study programme, the HEI is entitled to submit an application for licensing of a study programme in the corresponding study field only after it has eliminated the deficiencies detected by the Study quality commission”.

To receive the license for the implementation of a study programme in a new study field, the HEI has to submit an application on the opening of a new study field to the Ministry of Education and Science. The Cabinet of Ministers has to take a decision by evaluating the resources of the HEI, as well as the compliance of the study field with the State development priorities. On 1st January 2019, amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995), adopted on 21st June 2018, will come into force, which stipulate that the decision on the opening of new study field at the HEI will be taken by the founder, evaluating the resources of the HEI, and with regards to HEI founded by the State – also the compliance with the state development priorities.

⁷⁷ Law on Scientific Activity (in force since 19.05.2005; the recent amendments came into force on 11.11.2017). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=107337>.

⁷⁸ Section 1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (in force since 1.12.1995; the recent amendments came into force on 1.04.2018). See: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=37967>.

⁷⁹ Cabinet Regulations No 408 “Regulations regarding licensing of study programmes” (in force since 30.07.2015, the recent amendments in force since 1.06.2018). See: <http://likumi.lv/ta/id/275563-studiju-programmu-licencesanas-noteikumi>.

⁸⁰ Website of AIC. Methodology for the organisation of licensing of study programmes. See: <http://www.aic.lv/portal/content/files/SPLicencesanasOrganizesanasMetodika.PDF>.

Accreditation of Study Fields

According to the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995), the accreditation of a study field is “an inspection with the purpose of determining the quality of the resources of a higher education institution or a college and the ability to implement a study programme corresponding to a specific study field in accordance with laws and regulations. The accreditation of the study field of HEI gives the HEI the right to issue a state recognised diploma of higher education for successful completion of a study programme corresponding to the relevant study field”. The procedures for accreditation of study fields are laid down in Section 55³ of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995), the Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges, and study fields”⁸¹ and the Methodology for the assessment of study fields⁸².

A study field has to be accredited within two years after starting the implementation of the first study programme corresponding to this study field (Section 553, Paragraph 1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions). To initiate the accreditation of a study field, the HEI has to prepare an application, by attaching information on the HEI and study programmes relevant to the study field, as well as the self-assessment report of study field. After the examination of the respective documentation and following the accreditation visit at the HEI, an expert group consisting of five experts has to prepare a joint report based on which the Study Accreditation Commission has to make the decision on the accreditation (or the refusal of accreditation) and its period. A study field is accredited:

- for six years;
- for two years – if a non-conformity of resources and abilities of the HEI with the requirements of laws and regulations are detected during the process of accreditation of the study field, but drawbacks may be eliminated within the scope of the time period of the study field accreditation. During this time period, the HEI has to eliminate the detected deficiencies and provide a report on their elimination.

Study accreditation commission may also recommend the HEI to close an individual study programme corresponding to this study field. After the Study Accreditation Commission has made the decision, an accreditation form for the study field signed by the minister of education and science has to be issued to the HEI.

Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Colleges

As provided for in the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995), accreditation of a HEI is the “assessment of the work organisation and quality of resources of a higher education institution or a college as a result of which it is granted the status of a state recognised higher education institution or a college”. A HEI is entitled to issue state recognised diplomas for the completion of the relevant study programme if the following conditions have been fulfilled:

1. The relevant HEI is accredited.
2. The relevant study programme is accredited.
3. The constitution of the higher education institution or the by-law of the college has been approved by the Parliament (*Saeima*) or accordingly by the Cabinet of Ministers.

⁸¹ Cabinet Regulations No 407 “Regulations on accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges, and study fields” (in force since 30.07.2015). See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/275560-augstskolu-koledzu-un-studiju-virzienu-akreditacijas-noteikumi>.

⁸² Website of AIKA. The Methodology for Assessing Study Directions. See: <https://www.aika.lv/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/The-Methodology-for-Assessing-Study-Directions-1.pdf>.

The procedures for accreditation are provided for in Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges, and study fields” and the Methodology for the assessment of higher education institutions and colleges⁸³. Similarly as in accreditation of study fields, the HEI has to prepare an application. An expert group consisting of seven experts examines the respective documentation and following the accreditation visit at the HEI prepares the joint report. The decision on accrediting (or refusing an accreditation of) the HEI has to be taken by the Council of Higher Education (CHE).

After receiving the decision by CHE regarding the accreditation, the HEI receives the accreditation form signed by the Minister for Education and Science. If the HEI does not ensure the study base, information base as indicated in the accreditation, as well as quality of studies in conformity with the requirements referred to in Section 55, Paragraph 1 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995) or, significant violations of laws and regulations have been detected in the activities of the HEI, the Minister for Education and Science has the right to issue an order on an extraordinary accreditation, revocation or cancellation of the period of accreditation or the accreditation of the HEI. Prior to issuing the order the CHE has to provide a reasoned opinion⁸⁴.

Compared to 2011, significant changes to the procedures for external quality assessment have been made:

- The transition from accreditation of study programmes to accreditation of study fields since 2012 in accordance with the Cabinet Regulations No 668 “Regulations on accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges and study fields” (in force from 19.10.2012 until 30.07.2015). All study programmes of Latvia fall into 29 study fields⁸⁵.
- Since 1st July 2015, licensing and accreditation is organised by the Quality Agency for Higher Education (AIKA) established within the framework of AIC. Prior to that, quality assessment was carried out by MoES, which took over this function from the Higher Education Quality Assessment Centre in April 2013 (which had organized accreditation since 1994). One of the main objectives for the establishment of a new institution was to ensure independence of accreditation agencies in compliance with the requirements of ESG.
- Members of the commission for accreditation of studies and licensing of study programmes are selected by competition in compliance with pre-established criteria (previously, delegates from certain organisations). Also the selection of experts is carried out in compliance with predefined conditions and they are selected and approved by AIKA.
- Following the assessment, the expert group prepares a joint report, not individual reports.
- In general, all the licensing and accreditation procedures, and functions and rights of the individuals and institutions involved are defined in more detail, thus

⁸³ Website of AIKA. Methodology for the Assessment of Higher Education Institutions and Colleges. See: http://www.aika.lv/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Ail_assessment_methodology_ENG.pdf.

⁸⁴ Section 9, Paragraph 3 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (in force since 1.12.1995; recent amendments in force since 1.04.2018). See: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=37967>.

⁸⁵ Academic Education Centre – Latvian NCP (2013). Referencing of Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area. Situation Assessment, p. 12-15. See: http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/LQF_evaluation_of_situation_2013.pdf

making the assessment process more transparent and unbiased⁸⁶.

Internal Quality Assessment

External and internal quality assessment is closely interrelated, as self-assessment reports are analysed by accrediting study fields and education institutions. As provided for in the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995)⁸⁷, HEIs have to implement their internal quality assurance system, within the scope of which:

1. A policy and procedures for assuring the quality of higher education have to be established.
2. Mechanisms for the creation of their study programmes, internal approval, and monitoring of activities and their periodic inspection have to be developed.
3. Criteria, conditions, and procedures for the evaluation of student results enabling reassurance of the achievement of expected learning outcomes, have to be developed and made public.
4. Internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring qualifications and work quality of the academic staff have to be developed; and
5. HEIs have to ensure that information regarding student results, graduate employment, satisfaction of students with their study programme, work effectiveness of the academic staff, available study funds and their disbursement, essential indicators of HEI's activities is compiled and analysed.

The content and structure of a self-assessment report have to comply with the requirements laid down in the Cabinet Regulations⁸⁸. Furthermore, the report has to be prepared in compliance with the guidelines developed by AIC.

Criteria for Assessment of Education Quality, Compared to 2011

Licensing of Study Programmes

The new Cabinet Regulations “Regulations regarding licensing of study programmes” (in force since 30.07.2015) broadly retain the criteria for the assessment of study programmes, defined in the previous Cabinet Regulations (see Annex 8 to the Report). One of the most significant changes is the requirement for each member of academic staff to have at least three publications published in peer-reviewed journals within the last six (and not five) years. Moreover, at least three persons with Doctor's degree, involved in the development of a doctoral study programme, must be experts in the relevant sector, approved by the Latvian Council of Science.

Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Colleges

Annex 3⁸⁹ to the Cabinet Regulations sets out the criteria for the assessment of HEIs. See the comparison with the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012) in Annex 9 to this Report. In general, the new Cabinet Regulations are more detailed. They lay down the requirements for material and technical provision and teaching staff of HEIs more precisely, as well as include the ESG standards for internal quality assurance⁹⁰.

⁸⁶ Silka, J. (2015). Regulatory changes in the quality assessment system in higher education. Outreach seminar for higher education institutions. See: http://www.aic.lv/portal/content/files/All_14102015_Jolanta.pdf.

⁸⁷ Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (in force since 1.12.1995; recent amendments in force since 1.04.2018). See: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=37967>.

⁸⁸ Sub-paragraph 2.5 of Cabinet Regulations No 407 “Regulations on accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges, and study fields” (in force since 30.07.2015, recent amendments came into force since 28.07.2017). See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/275560-augstskolu-koleddzu-un-studiju-virzienu-akreditacijas-noteikumi>.

⁸⁹ *ibid*

⁹⁰ Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) (2015). Brussels, Belgium. http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf.

Accreditation of Study Fields

Annex 9⁹¹ to the Cabinet Regulations sets out the criteria for the assessment of study fields. See the comparison with the previous Cabinet Regulations in Annex 10 to this Report. Similar to the assessment of HEIs, the new criteria for the assessment of study fields are more detailed than the previous ones, and they include the ESG standards for internal quality assurance.

⁹¹ Sub-paragraph 2.5 of Cabinet Regulations No 407 “Regulations on accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges, and study fields” (in force since 30.07.2015, recent amendments came into force since 28.07.2017). See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/275560-augstskolu-koledzu-un-studiju-virzienu-akreditacijas-noteikumi>.

4. Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning

The Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning⁹² (20.12.2012) 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. Education institutions have to facilitate the access to formal education, ensure the validation of learning outcomes achieved through non-formal and informal learning in line with the learning outcomes to be achieved in formal education, and award the respective amount of credit points.

As provided for in the recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (2012), the validation procedure consists of four distinct phases:

1. Identification of learning outcomes – the previous experience of the candidate is identified via consultations;
2. Documentation of learning outcomes – the candidate's experience is documented to make the learning outcomes more transparent;
3. Assessment of learning outcomes – the candidate's achieved learning outcomes are officially assessed and analysed;
4. Certification of learning outcomes – the results of the assessment are certified by means of a document (qualification or credit points), which may lead to a partial or full qualification.

One of the principles the Member States must comply with, when developing the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, is the compliance with the National Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

4.1 Vocational Education

The procedure for the assessment of learning outcomes achieved outside of formal education system regarding professional qualifications, which correspond to the LQF levels 2-4, was already summarised in the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012). At the time, the procedure had established in the previous year; thus, the stakeholders did not have sufficient experience and enough data available to evaluate the efficiency of the procedure. In this Self-Assessment Report, the procedure for the assessment of learning outcomes (see Figure 1) is described based on the European Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (2012).

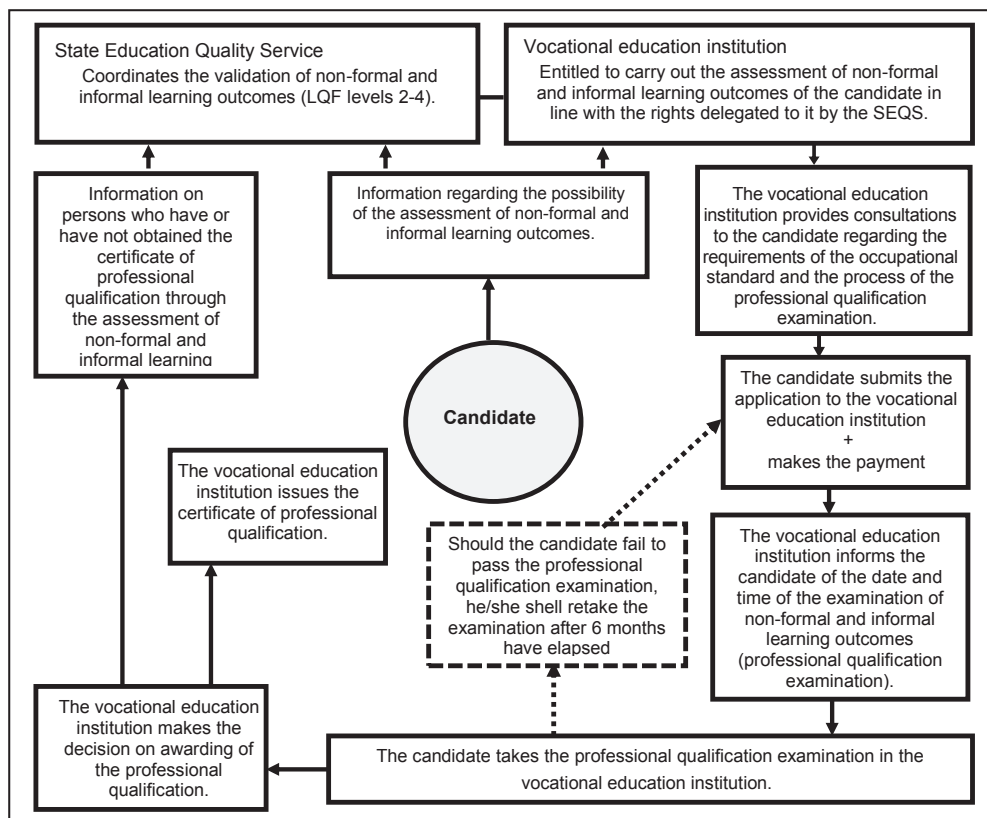
On 22 February 2011, the Cabinet Regulations "Procedure how professional competence acquired outside formal education system is assessed" (in force since 9.03.2011)⁹³ were approved. The assessment of professional competence gives an individual the possibility to have their learning outcomes achieved throughout life validated and, by passing the professional qualification examination, obtain a state recognised document certifying the completion of a professional qualification (LQF levels 2-4). An individual may receive a confirmation of qualification (certificate of professional qualification), but the document is not related to the certification of the acquirement of the relevant formal vocational education programme's content, for instance, the diploma of vocational secondary education. These Cabinet Regulations do not apply to professions, in which the assessment of learning outcomes is regulated by special laws and regulations,

⁹² European 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)

⁹³ Cabinet Regulations No 146 "Procedure how professional competence acquired outside formal education system is assessed" (in force since 9.03.2011); amendments in force since 1.09.2011). See: <https://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=226788>.

such as the Law on Regulated Professions and Recognition of Professional Qualification (2001)⁹⁴.

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



The procedure for the assessment of learning outcomes achieved outside of formal education system does not directly prescribe that the learning outcomes achieved by the candidate have to be identified or that the candidate is required to provide documentary evidence for the previously achieved learning outcomes. The professional experience of an individual is determined during consultations regarding the requirements of the relevant occupational standard and the procedure of professional qualification examination, and such consultations are provided free of charge. In an education institution delegated by the State Education Quality Service (SEQS) to carry out the assessment of the achieved learning outcomes, such consultations are provided by a competent consultant.

The consultant prepares the candidate for the assessment process, by informing them of the assessment procedure, its content, assessors, and the assessment criteria. During the consultations, which is provided free of charge, the learning outcomes achieved by the candidate may be identified by way of debates or an interview. By using

⁹⁴ Law on the Regulated Professions and the Validation of Professional Qualifications (in force since 20.07.2001; last amendments in force since 1.01.2018). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=26021>.

⁹⁵ The lists of institutions carrying out the evaluation of professional competence and the list of professional qualifications are available on the website of the SEQS. See: <https://ikvd.gov.lv/arpus-formala-izglitiba/profesionalas-kompetences-novertesana>.

the declarative method, which is based on an individual's independent identification and recording of competences, during the consultations, by way of a dialogue, the consultant verifies, whether and how learning outcomes are applied in work settings. To verify to what extent candidate's professional competences are used in work settings and how learning outcomes were achieved, a "skills audit" in form of a self-assessment may be carried out. Candidate's previous experience is documented by themselves or by the consultant. Candidate's self-assessment questionnaire allows for the identification of learning outcomes achieved in professional and personal experience in compliance with the relevant occupational standard.

The assessment of non-formal and informal learning outcomes of an individual by way of a professional qualification examination is subject to a fee. The content of the examination is developed and the examination itself is organised by a vocational education institution delegated by SEQS. Passing of the examination leads to a state recognised qualification – the individual receives the certificate of professional qualification (LQF levels 2-4), according to which he/she may pursue the relevant profession. The assessment process is organised similarly as in formal education programmes. The vocational education institution sets up the examination commission consisting of employers in the relevant sector. Unbiased and professional approach to the assessment of candidates by the professional qualification examination commission, may be a decisive factor regarding the quality and credibility of the results of learning outcome assessment. In each assessment process, an individual approach to assessing the candidate's learning outcomes is used.

In the period 2011-2017, the certificate of professional qualification, acquired through validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, was issued to 5543 individuals; 2316 out of those had completed LQF level 3 qualification and 3227 – LQF level 4 qualification. The validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes was carried out in 77 professional qualifications, which equals to approximately half of the opportunities offered by education institutions. Since no great demand for LQF level 2 qualifications may be observed in labour market, validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in the qualifications corresponding the aforementioned level has not been carried out.

As suggested by validation statistics, the demand for a specific professional qualification is defined by:

1. requirements set by laws and regulations regarding the qualification of individuals working in the respective field (47% of qualifications completed in this way (LQF levels 3-4));
2. initiative of employers to employ qualified professionals;
3. compliance of the education of state institution employees with the requirements for the relevant professional qualification; and
4. interest of individuals in professions needed on labour market.

Within the ESF project "Developing the Sectoral Qualifications System and Increasing Efficiency and Quality of Vocational Education" (2010-2015) implemented by SEDA, the expenses of the assessment of professional competences were reimbursed to 80 persons who passed the professional qualification examination. Since autumn 2017, SEDA in collaboration with local governments, education institutions and the State Employment Agency (SEA) has been implementing the ESF project "Development of Professional Competences of Employees"⁹⁶ (1.01.2017-31.12.2022), in the framework of

which individuals (aged at least 25) are able to have the expenses, related to validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (LQF levels 2-4), reimbursed (in amount of 90%; employees from a disadvantaged background may be reimbursed for 100% of their expenses). By June 2018, altogether 92 persons were reimbursed for their expenses, whereas 14 persons received a refusal.

4.2 Higher Education

In Latvia, the validation of learning outcomes achieved in previous learning and professional experience in higher education started in 2012, and procedures are based on European Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012) and legal framework in Latvia as follows:

- Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995);
- Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the validation of learning outcomes achieved in previous education or professional experience”⁹⁷ (in force since 13.01.2012; amendments in force since 28.07.2017).

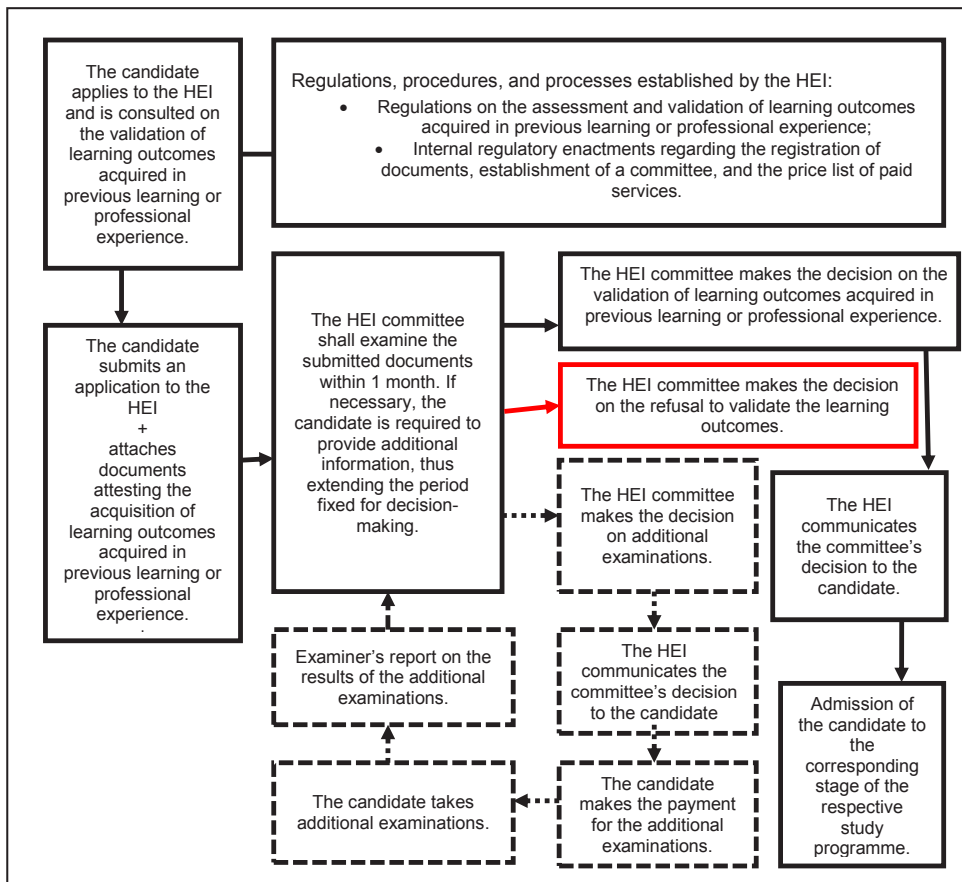
In the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012), a short description of procedures for the validation of learning outcomes achieved in non-formal and informal learning in higher education, as defined by the aforementioned laws and regulations, was given. At that time, HEIs had not yet gained sufficient experience, and there was a lack of information required to ensure an unbiased assessment of the efficiency of procedures.

The Cabinet Regulations, which include all four validation phases (identification, documentation, assessment and certification), prescribe the procedures by which the learning outcomes achieved in previous learning or professional experience (in higher education) are assessed and validated, as well as the validation criteria. See the procedure in Figure 2.

⁹⁶ ESF project “Development of Professional Competences of Employees” (No 8.41.0/16/l/001). See: http://viaa.gov.lv/lat/pieauguso_izglitiba/par_projektu.

⁹⁷ Cabinet Regulations No 36 “Regulations on the validation of learning outcomes achieved in previous education or professional experience” (in force since 13.01.2012; amendments in force since 28.07.2017). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=242653>.

Figure 2. Schematic representation of the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (LQF levels 5-7)



The procedure prescribes that the committee established by the HEI within one month has to examine the documents attesting achievement of learning outcomes 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 is carried out by using a common approach towards the application of rights, and no candidate is forbidden to use their rights. From 1st August 2011 until 1st January 2018, only maximum 30% of credit points from a study programme could be granted, validating learning outcomes achieved in professional experience. However, along with the amendments to the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995,) this restriction was removed.

The decision on the compliance of the knowledge, skills, and competences acquired by the individual 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. Learning outcomes achieved in previous learning or professional experience, which have been validated, do not count as a final examination of the relevant study programme, state examination or final examination – a qualification examination or doctoral thesis.

Knowledge, skills, and competences acquired in professional experience may be

validated in the part of the study programme comprising 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, attesting the acquirement of practical skills.

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

- Continuing education programme, professional development education programme or any other education programme (except for basic education, secondary education or higher education programme) 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.
- Knowledge, skills and competences acquired in other forms of non-formal and informal learning (such as self-education) may be validated also in study programmes preparing 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 acquirement of theoretical knowledge.

No common price list is set 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 HEIs. For instance, a HEI establishes a price list regarding the validation of specific non-formal and informal learning outcomes, but the price payable for additional examinations, as specified by the committee, is applied in compliance with the prices of paid services stipulated for the relevant academic year.

An individual 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 learning outcomes by laying down the amount of study courses and modules to be additionally completed, and the respective tests, as necessary.

In order to improve the knowledge of how to implement the validation of learning outcomes achieved in previous learning and professional experience at HEI, in 2015-2016, the Ministry of Education and Science implemented the project “Validation of Prior Learning” (Erasmus+ KA3 project). To clarify the situation, a survey among HEIs was conducted. As suggested by survey’s outcomes, not all HEIs have started the implementation of validation of learning outcomes achieved in previous learning and professional experience. Furthermore, they have different understanding of and experiences in validation procedures.

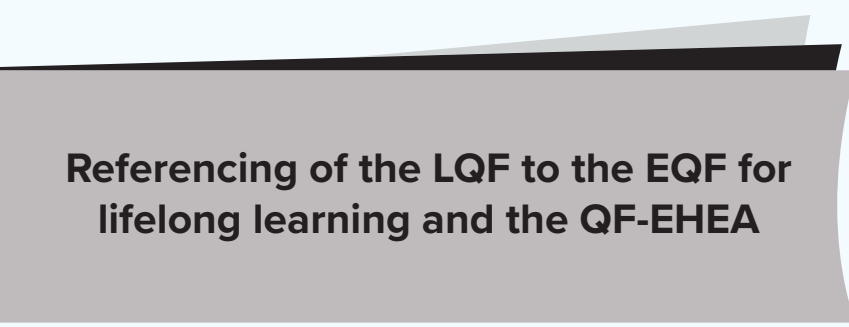
During the project, recommendations for higher education institutions on the validation of learning outcomes achieved in previous learning or professional experience were elaborated and amendments to the respective laws and regulations were drafted, to ensure the compliance of the procedures with the European Council Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012).

However, learning outcomes achieved during a study programme, are validated in compliance with the Cabinet Regulations “Procedure for the initiation of studies in subsequent study stages” (in force since 24.11.2004; recent amendments in force since 14.08.2018)⁹⁸.

⁹⁸ Cabinet Regulations No 932 “Procedures for the initiation of studies in subsequent study stages” (in force since 24.11.2004; recent amendments in force since 14.08.2018). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=96800>.



PART II



**Referencing of the LQF to the EQF for
lifelong learning and the QF-EHEA**

5. Compliance of Referencing Process with EQF Criteria

1. The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process are clearly determined and published by the competent authorities⁹⁹

The main competent authority is the **Ministry of Education and Science (MoES)**, which is the leading state regulatory authority in the field of education and science, MoES implements common state policy and development strategies in education, as well as develops policy planning documents and legal regulations in the field of education (Education Law, 1998). Information on the responsibilities and competence of MoES stipulated by the legislation is published on the website of the Ministry: <http://izm.gov.lv>.

In 2008, MoES delegated the functions of the National Coordination Point for referencing the national qualifications framework to the EQF to the foundation “**Academic Information Centre**” (AIC). AIC was established in 1994 by MoES and the Institute of Mathematics and Computer Science of the University of Latvia. The functions and work tasks of AIC are stipulated in a delegation agreement concluded with MoES, and these functions are published on the website of AIC: <http://www.aic.lv>.

The tasks of the **Latvian National Coordination Point for referencing LQF to EQF** were initially defined in compliance with the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (23.04.2008). Over the time, these tasks have been adapted to the development of education system, and they are publicly available on the website of Latvian NCP: <http://www.nki-latvija.lv>. The link to the website of Latvian NCP is available on the websites of both MoES and AIC.

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

As already mentioned in the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012), in 2009 and 2010, LQF level descriptors were developed in compliance with EQF level descriptors. In 2010, the working group set up by MoES approved eight level descriptors, which in October of the same year were included in the legislation by making the respective amendments to Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the education classification of Latvia”. At present, LQF level descriptors are stipulated in Annex 1 to the Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the education classification of Latvia” (in force since 16.06.2017), as well as Paragraph 81 of the Education Law (with amendments in force since 16.07.2015).

Since the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012), several arrangements have been made; thus, giving rise to discussions on LQF level descriptors. Furthermore, in 2013, the study “Referencing of Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for European Higher Education Area” was conducted, which included also proposals on changes to the level descriptors of LQF levels 1-4 by adapting them to socio-economic requirements.

The outcomes of discussions and the aforementioned study were taken into consideration when preparing amendments to the Vocational Education Law in 2015, which stipulated that Latvian professional qualification levels are referenced to LQF levels

⁹⁹ The criteria are outlined in Annex III to the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning. See: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604\(01\)&rid=7](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604(01)&rid=7)

(see section 1.1). The outcomes of the aforementioned study contributed to the revision of LQF level descriptors in 2017, which were included in the new Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the education classification of Latvia” (in force since 16.06.2017). LQF level descriptors were specified in such a way in order to preserve a clear link between the LQF and the EQF level descriptors (see Annex 11).

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

Establishing the LQF provided strong incentives for the transition to learning outcomes, although the learning outcomes, in terms of the laws and regulations, were first defined in the Education Law, which came into force on 1st June 1999. The understanding of the stakeholders of learning outcomes as statements regarding what a learner knows, understands, and is able to do on completion of a learning process, was strengthened by the arrangements for the establishment of the LQF. Since the establishment of the LQF gave rise to the discussions among the stakeholders on the role of learning outcomes in education, amendments to the legislation were made accordingly. The link between the learning outcomes approach and the development of the LQF is also determined by the amendments of 18 June 2015 to the Education Law (in force since 16.07.2015), which define the LQF and the respective learning outcomes.

The application of learning outcomes in education is ensured by state education and occupational standards or the requirements for professional qualifications, state examination system, as well as accreditation of education institutions and education programmes.

Compared to the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012), no significant changes have been introduced in state general education standards regarding the introduction of learning outcomes approach. Meanwhile, the aims of general education programmes set out in state education standards are rather general and reflect the core values of society and the main lines of action which education institutions and their teaching staff should focus on, when implementing education programmes. Therefore, these aims cannot be changed frequently or radically to ensure sustainability and continuity of education, but in cases where an outcome-based approach is implemented, the aforementioned must be determined in the documents regulating the content of education. For the time being (2018), one of the main priorities of the general education policy is to transform the content of general education into a competence-based education.

Several amendments to the state vocational education standards regarding the introduction of learning outcomes in vocational education have been made – on 8 March 2016¹⁰⁰ and 19 September 2017¹⁰¹. For instance, the strategic aim of vocational secondary education and vocational education was broadened, i.e., on the completion of an education programme, a learner must have acquired competences comprising knowledge, skills

¹⁰⁰ Cabinet Regulations No 144 “Amendments to Cabinet Regulations of 27 June 2000 No 211 “Regulations on the state vocational secondary education standard and the state vocational education standard”” (in force since 1.09.2016). See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/280842-grozijumi-ministru-kabineta-2000-gada-27-junija-noteikumos-nr-211-noteikumi-par-valsts-profesionalas-videjas-izglitiba-standar>

¹⁰¹ Cabinet Regulations No 564 “Amendments to the Cabinet Regulations of 27 June 2000 No 211 “Regulations on the state vocational secondary education standard and the state vocational education standard”” (in force since 22.09.2017). See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/293661-grozijumi-ministru-kabineta-2000-gada-27-junija-noteikumos-nr-211-noteikumi-par-valsts-profesionalas-videjas-izglitiba-standar>.

¹⁰² Cabinet Regulations No 633 “Procedure on the development of occupational standard, professional qualification requirements (if occupational standard is not approved for an occupation) and sectoral qualifications framework” (in force since 30.09.2016). See: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=285032>.

and attitudes defined by the respective occupational standards or the requirements for professional qualifications. The content and the procedures for the development of occupational standards are stipulated by the new Cabinet Regulations¹⁰² (in force since 30.09.2016), which also introduced the requirements for professional qualifications and provide the legislation for the establishment of sectoral qualifications frameworks. In fact, the occupational standards always define the knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes required to pursue a professional activity. As a consequence of the amendments to the Vocational Education Law¹⁰³ (in force since 7.07.2017), the key elements of vocational education programmes have changed. From now on, the programmes have to contain expected learning outcomes. Moreover, modules and modular programmes were introduced. For the purpose of the aforementioned Law, the term “module” refers to a part of a professional qualification, which is based on learning outcomes as a measurable and demonstrable set of knowledge, skills and competences.

Since 2011, learning outcomes in higher education form an integral part of higher education programmes. Compared to the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012), a range of amendments have been made to the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995)¹⁰⁴ by introducing the term “learning outcomes”, which refers to “a set of knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired on completion of a study programme, study module or a study course” (with amendments in force since 1.08.2011), and by complementing the structural elements of study programmes, courses and modules. Therefore, amendments to the existing Cabinet Regulations were approved or new Cabinet Regulations were adopted in order to ensure the application of learning outcomes in the study process, for instance, changes in the content of Diploma Supplement¹⁰⁵ (in force since 19.04.2013) which from now on contains a reference to learning outcomes. As provided for in the new State standard of second level professional higher education¹⁰⁶ (in force since 12.09.2014), the achievement of learning outcomes is one of the main objectives of study programmes. Furthermore, learning outcomes are included in the content of study programmes, process and assessment criteria. For more information on learning outcomes, see Chapter 2 of the Report.

In the context of learning outcomes, state education and occupational standards are of great importance, as according to the requirements laid down therein, LQF level descriptors were developed in 2009 and 2010, which in October 2010 were included in the Cabinet Regulations. As already mentioned in the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012), in the Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the education classification of Latvia” (in force since 13.06.2017), learning outcomes for each LQF level are described as follows::

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

Compared to the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012), no significant changes have been introduced to the procedures for the validation of non-formal and informal learning

¹⁰³ Amendments to the Vocational Education Law (in force since 6.07.2017). See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/292030-grozījumi-profesionalas-izglitibaš-likuma>.

¹⁰⁴ Law on Higher Education Institutions (in force since 1.12.1995; recent amendments in force since 1.04.2018). See: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=37967>.

¹⁰⁵ Cabinet Regulations No 202 “Procedure by which state recognised education documents certifying higher education are issued” (in force since 19.04.2013). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=256157>.

¹⁰⁶ Cabinet Regulations No 512 “Regulations on the state standard of second level professional higher education” (in force since 12.09.2014). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=268761>.

¹⁰⁷ Cabinet Regulations No 146 “Procedure how professional competence acquired outside formal education system is assessed” (in force since 9.03.2011; amendments in force since 1.09.2011). See: <https://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=226788>.

outcomes, except for the fact that stakeholders have managed to gain more experience and established practice in vocational and higher education over the time. Since March 2011¹⁰⁷, each individual is able to have their knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside of formal education validated and to obtain professional qualification corresponding to LQF levels 2-4. In higher education (LQF levels 5-8), the procedures¹⁰⁸ for the validation of learning outcomes achieved in previous learning or professional experience were officially approved in January 2012. Consequently, all higher education institutions established rules and set up procedures for the validation of learning outcomes achieved in previous learning or professional experience. For more information on the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, see Chapter 4 of the Report.

As for credit systems at the level of laws and regulations and education system, since 2012, no significant changes have been made, i.e., credit points are used only in higher education. However, a wide range of measures has been undertaken over time, which facilitate the development of a credit system also in vocational education. Latvian credit point in higher education is defined as a one-week full-time study workload, thus one study year in full-time studies equals to 40 credit points. The transfer of Latvian credit points into the credit points of European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) requires multiplication by a factor of 1.5. Several arrangements have been made to introduce the ECVET principles in vocational education, especially with due regard to international mobility. For more information on credit systems, see section 1.6.

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

The referencing of the education system of Latvia to the EQF for lifelong learning and the QF-EHEA started in 2009. The referencing process was transparent, and all main stakeholders were involved in the respective discussions.

As a result of the referencing process, eight-level LQF was established, and all Latvian formal education qualifications in general, vocational, and higher education sector were linked to the LQF/EQF. This process was transparent, as all stakeholders were involved either in the establishment of the LQF or the consultation process with due regard to the introduction of the LQF. However, due to the fact that developing the qualifications framework contributed to the initiation of long-term improvements of several processes, which was not possible within the timelines set in the EQF Recommendation 2008, decision was made to organise the referencing process in two phases. The first Self-Assessment Report (2012) dealt with the description of linking the formal national education qualifications with the LQF and the referencing of the LQF to the EQF, which marked the conclusion of phase 1 (2009-2011).

As mentioned in the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012), phase 2 was planned to be implemented from 2013 to 2015. However, several corrections were made in the course of the development of the education sector. In 2013, Academic Information Centre (AIC) conducted the situation analysis, describing the outcomes of the study in the report “Referencing of the Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area”¹⁰⁹. This report also contributed to the establishment of the regulatory basis for the

¹⁰⁸ Cabinet Regulations No 36 “Regulations on the validation of learning outcomes achieved in previous education or professional experience” (in force since 13.01.2012; amendments in force since 28.07.2017). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=242653>.

¹⁰⁹ Academic Information Centre – Latvian NCP (2013). Referencing of Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area. Situation Assessment. p. 12-15. See: http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/LQF_evaluation_of_situation_2013.pdf.

LQF.

Consequently, phase 2 of the referencing process (2013-2018) entailed a wider range of issues related to the improvement of the qualifications framework. The LQF allowed for the development of not only a comprehensive qualifications framework, but also 15 Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks, which include the entire scope of vocational education. The Employers' Confederation of Latvia, in collaboration with the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, establish Sectoral Expert Councils (SEC) consisting of representatives from all professional associations and sectoral crafts societies. The SEC develop Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks in compliance with LQF. Setting legal framework for the LQF continued – the LQF and the necessary definitions were included in the Education Law, the Vocational Education Law, and the Law on Higher Education Institutions, and the compatibility of professional qualification levels with the qualifications framework levels was established.

Irrespective of the changes to the LQF and the education system since 2011, the procedures used for inclusion of qualifications in the LQF are still transparent and comprehensible for all stakeholders.

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

Similar to the time of the development of the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012), also for the time being (2018), all qualifications in Latvia, that are included in Latvian Qualifications Framework, are subject to quality assessment. The education quality assurance system applies to the entire formal education system. AIC, just like the Quality Agency for Higher Education (AIKA), the Council of Higher Education (CHE), and the State Education Quality Service (SEQS) follow the European principles and guidelines, which are referred to also in Annex IV of the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.

AIC organises quality assessment in higher education, CHE monitors the quality of higher education, whereas the SEQs coordinates the quality assessment in basic and secondary education, as well as ensures the supervision of education by the state.

As referred to in Chapter 3 of this Report the quality assurance system for the education of Latvia complies with the principles on quality assurance, provided for in Annex IV to the Recommendation on the EQF.

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

Education quality assurance bodies and other authorities involved in phase I of the referencing process, have already agreed with the amendments to the Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the education classification of Latvia” (2008), approved in October 2008, which defined the placement of Latvian education qualifications in the LQF. The representatives of quality assurance agencies not only participated in the consultation process held when the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012) was developed and approved, but also contributed to its development. Education quality assurance bodies, AIC and SEQs, participate in developing the Updated Self-Assessment Report (2018).

Education quality assurance bodies have played an important role in both phases of the referencing process during national discussions and conducted studies to take into consideration and reflect accurately the matters related to education quality assurance. Moreover, this cooperation has strengthened over years.

7. The referencing process should involve international experts

In the preparation of this Self-Assessment Report, other international experts than those participating in the development of the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012) were involved. However, they were selected by following similar principles. Three experts represented different countries – a neighbouring country, a country with similar experience, and a country, which is not a neighbouring country. These experts had experience in the EQF, development and introduction of SQF, education in general, education system of Latvia, as well as vocational and higher education. In 2017, international experts were involved in the consultation process by sharing their experience in the establishment of a qualifications framework, and they also participated in the discussion of and commenting on the draft report.

Three international experts:

- Juraj Vantuch, Slovak National Observatory of Vocational Training;
- Kulli All, Ministry of Education and Science of Estonia;
- Karolina Pietkiewitz, higher education expert and project manager of European Students' Union until June 2017.

8. The competent authority or authorities should certify the referencing of the national qualifications frameworks or systems with the EQF

This Updated Self-Assessment Report was developed by the Academic Information Centre acting as the Latvian NCP, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science, social partners, and other interested parties. Thus, all stakeholders support the information included in the Report. The Report will be published and available on the website of MoES (www.izm.gov.lv), Latvian NCP (<http://nki-latvija.lv>), LOQ/PLOTEUS portal, Latvian ENIC/NARIC (www.aic.lv), and EHEA (www.ehea.info).

As already mentioned, the official referencing of the LQF to the EQF in 2010 was ensured by the Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the education classification of Latvia”, which in 2017 were replaced by the Cabinet Regulations with the same title. The legal framework for the LQF was set by the amendments to the Education Law (in force since 16.07.2015), which defined the LQF and its levels. Since the laws and regulations are binding for all education stakeholders, the referencing of the LQF to the EQF has full support of all competent authorities.

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

Latvian NCP has created a website (<http://nki-latvija.lv> or <http://nqf-latvia.lv>) with information on the referencing process, as well as the electronic versions of the previous Self-Assessment Report (2011 and 2012), and this Report (to be published). This Report will be published also on LOQ/PLOTEUS portal (<https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/lv>) and the websites of Latvian ENIC/NARIC (www.aic.lv) and EHEA (www.ehea.info).

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

The documents certifying completion of higher education (since 2013) and the vocational education and professional qualification (since 2017) contain a reference to the relevant level of qualifications framework. As for general education, however, no discussions have been arranged on this matter so far.

In higher education, new Cabinet Regulations¹¹⁰ were approved in April 2013, by which Annex 7 of the Regulations was supplemented with provisions on the EQF/LQF including the sample of the Diploma Supplement. As a result of these additional provisions, the higher education Diploma Supplement provides a comprehensive explanation in regard to the referencing of higher education qualifications to EQF and LQF levels. According to these Cabinet Regulations, a higher education Diploma Supplement has to contain a reference to the “level of the European/Latvian Qualifications Framework or the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area”. For more information on these Cabinet Regulations, see Annex 6 to this Report.

In April 2015, significant amendments to the Vocational Education Law¹¹¹ (1999) were made concerning the LQF. They prescribed that all vocational education documents, issued since 1st January 2017, have to contain a reference to the LQF. Pursuant to the amendments to the Vocational Education Law (1998), also the Cabinet Regulations “Procedure by which state recognised documents certifying vocational education and professional qualification and documents certifying acquisition of a part of an accredited vocational education programme are issued”¹¹² (in force since 2.07.2005; amendments in force since 8.04.2016) were updated. Annexes 1-4 to the Regulations include the samples of documents certifying vocational education and professional qualifications, where the professional qualification level is followed by a reference to the relevant LQF level. For more information on references to EQF/LQF levels in education documents, see section 1.2 of this Report.

The Cabinet Regulations of 2017 “Regulations on the education classification of Latvia” (in force since 13.06.2017) include provisions about the first and second classification level and their comparison with the LQF, EQF, and the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-2011). All institutions issuing education documents in Latvia, apply these regulations to indicate the respective LQF/EQF level.

¹¹⁰ Cabinet Regulations No 202 “Procedure by which state recognised education documents certifying higher education are issued” (in force since 19.04.2013). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=256157>.

¹¹¹ Amendments to the Vocational Education Law (adopted on 23.04.2015; in force since 15.05.2015). See: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/273942-grozījumi-profesionālas-izglītības-likuma>.

¹¹² Cabinet Regulations No 451 “Procedure by which state recognised documents certifying vocational education and professional qualification and documents certifying acquisition of a part of an accredited vocational education programme are issued” (in force since 2.07.2005; amendments in force since 8.04.2016). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=111580>.

6. Compliance of Self-Assessment Process with Criteria and Procedures of EHEA

In the context of the Bologna Process, several changes in the higher education system of Latvia have been made since 1999. In Latvia, the Bachelor's and Master's degrees as such were introduced as soon as in 1993, and, in compliance with the Bologna criteria – since 2000, alongside the short-cycle higher education. Single-stage Doctor's degree was introduced in 1998. Alongside with the establishment of the LQF in 2010, Latvian qualifications framework for higher education was approved, which corresponds to LQF levels 5-8. Since 2012, a wide range of amendments has been made to the existing laws and regulations, as well as new Cabinet Regulations, which regulate Latvian qualifications framework for higher education and its transparency, have been adopted (see Part I of this Report).

The qualifications framework for higher education covers three study cycles:

1. First cycle studies (basic studies), which lead to a Bachelor's degree (LQF level 6).
2. Second cycle studies which lead to a Master's degree (LQF level 7).
3. Third cycle studies which lead to a Doctor's degree or professional Doctor's degree in arts (LQF level 8).

The short-cycle studies (LQF level 5) form a part from the first cycle. There are also long-cycle study programmes, which lead to the qualification of a medical doctor, dentist, pharmacist, and veterinary and the second cycle degree.

Compliance of LQF with the QF-EHEA¹¹³

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

The LQF includes basic, general, and higher education qualifications. Both the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012) and the Updated Self-Assessment Report (2018) characterise the referencing to the EQF and the QF-EHEA. In view of the aforementioned, this criterion meets the EQF criterion 1 (see Chapter 5). Since 2012, no significant changes have been introduced with regard to the responsibilities of the competent authorities in the context of Latvian qualifications framework for higher education.

One ministry in Latvia is the leading state regulatory authority in the entire field of education and science – **the Ministry of Education and Science** (MoES), which is responsible for introducing the Bologna reforms in Latvia.

Since 2008, **the Academic Information Centre** has been acting as the National Coordination Point for referencing of the national qualifications framework to the EQF, as delegated by MoES.

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

The Latvian qualifications framework for higher education covers all three Bologna process cycles – Bachelor (includes the short cycle), Master and Doctoral studies. During

¹¹³ Boloņas kvalifikāciju ietvarstruktūras darba grupas 2005.gadā izstrādātie septiņi kritēriji. Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks (2005). A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area 2005, http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/WG_Frameworks_qualification/71/0/050218_QF_EHEA_580710.pdf

the years 2009-2010, the so-called Dublin Descriptors (2002-2004), Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956), and EQF level descriptors were used when elaborating level descriptors for higher education. Consequently, general definitions of learning outcomes in line with the qualification to be achieved at the end of each Bologna cycle were developed. In 2017, as LQF level descriptors were clarified, no significant changes were made. Therefore, still a clear link may be observed between the qualifications in the national framework and the level descriptors of the QF-EHEA (see Annex 12).

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

The cycle descriptors of the Latvian qualifications framework for higher education are based on learning outcomes – statements of what a learner knows, understands, and is able to do on completion of a learning process. In terms of Latvian level descriptors and the content (see Annex 1), conclusion may be drawn that the descriptors have been established in form of statements by defining knowledge, skills and competences that a learner should demonstrate after having completed the relevant level qualification.

Compared to the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012), no significant changes have been introduced concerning higher education credits. Latvian higher education uses credits, which are transferred into the ECTS. The amount of one study year in full-time studies equals to 40 Latvian credit points where the transfer of Latvian credit points into the credit points of ECTS requires multiplication by a factor of 1.5. Pursuant to Cabinet Regulations “Procedure by which state recognised education documents certifying higher education are issued”¹¹⁴ (in force since 19.04.2013), the Diploma Supplement issued by HEIs to the graduates have to contain both the number of credit points acquired for each respective study course or study module and the learning outcomes achieved in the respective study programme.

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

The establishment of Latvian qualifications framework for higher education started in 2004 and was concluded in 2010 when higher education qualifications and their cycle descriptors were integrated in the LQF. To ensure transparency of referencing process, all higher education stakeholders – the Ministry of Education and Science, the Council of Higher Education, the Latvian Rectors' Council, the Students' Union of Latvia, the authority responsible for assessing the quality of higher education, and the Academic Information Centre – were involved. The consultation process took place in 2006-2010, entailing a wide range of conferences and seminars, which allowed for efficient exchange of opinions.

Since the time the previous Self-Assessment Report was published (2012), no significant changes have been implemented in the qualifications framework for higher education, i.e., the existing qualification levels have not been changed. In 2018, a new qualification was introduced – professional Doctor's degree in arts.

Validation of previous learning, and of non-formal and informal learning outcomes form a significant part of Bologna reforms, and, since the publishing of the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012), Latvia has managed to improve this process considerably.

Validation process of previous learning and professional experience was started in 2012, and procedures are based on the Council Recommendation on validation of non-

¹¹⁴ Cabinet Regulations No 202 “Procedure by which state recognised education documents certifying higher education are issued” (in force since 19.04.2013). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=256157>.

formal and informal learning (2012), as well as the Law on Higher Education Institutions (adopted in 1995; amendments in force since 1.08.2011), and Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the validation of learning outcomes achieved in previous education or professional experience”¹¹⁵ (in force since 13.01.2012; amendments in force since 28.07.2017). With a view to improve the knowledge of the representatives of HEIs regarding the introduction of the validation of learning outcomes achieved in previous learning and professional experience in the HEIs, during the years 2015-2016, MoES implemented the Erasmus+ project “Validation of Previous Learning”. For more information see section 4.2.

Since 2012, pre-Bologna qualifications have been referenced to the QF-EHEA, as the Cabinet Regulations “Procedure for referencing degrees and professional qualifications”¹¹⁶ (in force since 2.03.2012) were adopted, which prescribe the procedure for the referencing of higher education degrees and professional qualifications to those provided for in the Law on Higher Education Institutions. The Regulations apply to degrees and professional qualifications conferred both in the Soviet Union and the independent Latvia in the 1990s, if the implementation of the respective study programmes was started before 26 December 2000, when the current legal framework regarding degrees and professional qualifications came into force.

5. The national quality assurance system for higher education refers to the national framework for higher education qualifications and is consistent with the Berlin Communiqué and any subsequent Ministerial Communiqués in the Bologna Process

This criterion is similar to the criterion No 5 for referencing the qualifications framework to the EQF (see Chapter 5).

Similar to the period of development of the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012), also for the time being (2018) the national quality assurance system for higher education refers to the LQF. Quality assurance system covers the entire formal education system. For an education institution to be entitled to award state recognised qualifications included in the LQF, both the awarding body and the relevant education programme must be licensed and accredited (for more information on quality assurance for higher education, see section 3.2).

The Quality Agency for Higher Education (AIKA), which is a structural unit of AIC, and the Council of Higher Education (CHE) rely on the European standards and guidelines while carrying out their activities. CHE monitors the quality of higher education, whereas AIKA organises quality assessment of higher education.

AIC-AIKA is a full member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education – INQAAHE (since October 2015), the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education – CEENQA (since May 2016), European Consortium for Accreditation – ECA (since June 2017), CHEA (Council for Higher Education Accreditation in the United States) International Quality Group – CIQG (since January 2018) and ENQA (since 21.06.2018). As a result of ENQA evaluation, by the end of 2018, AIC has been included in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education – EQAR.

Quality assurance assessment system for higher education is being constantly improved, and the system is consistent with the Berlin Communiqué (2003) and the Standards

¹¹⁵ Cabinet Regulations No 36 “Regulations on the validation of learning outcomes achieved in previous education or professional experience” (in force since 13.01.2012; amendments in force since 28.07.2017). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=242653>.

¹¹⁶ Cabinet Regulations No 142 “Procedure for referencing degrees and professional qualifications” (in force since 2.03.2012). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=244724>.

and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) in the European Higher Education Area (2015). The responsibilities of authorities and organisations involved in quality assessment have been determined. Moreover, the assessment of education programmes and education institutions, including internal and external assessment, student involvement, publishing of the outcomes, system for accreditation, issuing of documents certifying completion of education, referencing procedures, involvement of international experts, as well as cooperation and networking takes place. The procedures for the quality assessment for higher education focus on the assessment of the compliance of the determined learning outcomes with the education programme and the qualification to be obtained.

6. The national framework for higher education and any alignment with the QF-EHEA are reflected in all Diploma Supplements

Since 2004, all documents certifying completion of higher education in Latvia have to be accompanied by a Diploma Supplement (in both Latvian and English), drawn in compliance with the sample provided by the European Commission, the European Council, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO/CEPES).

Compared to 2012, Diploma Supplements contain also information on qualifications framework. In April 2013, new Cabinet Regulations¹¹⁷ were approved, by supplementing Annex 7 to the Regulations, which includes a sample of Diploma Supplement, with provisions regarding the EQF/LQF. As a result of these amendments to the Regulations, the higher education Diploma Supplement provides a comprehensive explanation with due regard to the referencing of higher education qualifications to the EQF and LQF levels. As provided for in these Cabinet Regulations, a higher education Diploma Supplement has to contain a reference to the “level of the European/Latvian Qualifications Framework or the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area”. For more information on these Cabinet Regulations, see section 1.3 of and Annex 6 to this Report.

7. Responsibilities of parties involved in the national qualifications framework for higher education are clearly determined and published

The responsibilities of the parties involved in the qualifications framework for higher education are clearly determined, as publicly available laws and regulations stipulate. All mentioned authorities participated in the discussion of the Updated Self-Assessment Report (2018).

Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), the leading state regulatory authority in the field of education and science, implements common state policies and development strategies in education, as well as develops policy planning documents and legal framework in the field of education, including higher education (Education Law, adopted in 1998). For more information on the responsibilities and competence of MoES, see the website of the Ministry: <http://izm.gov.lv>.

Council of Higher Education (CHE) is an authority developing the state strategy for higher education, ensures the cooperation of higher education institutions, governmental bodies and society concerning higher education development, monitors higher education quality, and ensures quality decision-making in the area of higher education. For more information on the responsibilities and functions of the CHE, see the website: <http://www.aip.lv>.

Academic Information Centre (AIC) is a competent institution ensuring formal

¹¹⁷ Cabinet Regulations No 202 “Procedure by which state recognised education documents certifying higher education are issued” (in force since 19.04.2013). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=256157>.

acknowledgment of the value of a foreign education qualification with a view to access to education and/or employment activities (Lisbon Recognition Convention, 1997). All functions are published on the website of AIC (<http://www.aic.lv>). Since 2008, AIC has been acting as the **National Coordination Point** (NCP) for referencing the LQF to the EQF, providing support and, in collaboration with other institutions and organisations, organising the referencing of national qualifications levels to the EQF. For more information on the tasks of the Latvian NCP, see the website <http://www.nki-latvija.lv>. Since 2015, the Quality Agency for Higher Education (AIKA) is a structural unit of AIC. For more information on the functions of the agency, see the website: <https://www.aika.lv>.

Students' Union of Latvia represents the interests of all Latvian students at national and international level. The organisation is an important partner of higher education policymakers in student matters, especially focusing on the improvement of higher education quality. For more information on the tasks of the Students' Union of Latvia, see the website: <http://www.lsa.lv>.

Latvian Rectors' Council consisting of rectors of all state-accredited higher education institutions is a collegiate advisory body coordinating cooperation between higher education institutions and organising the necessary joint events.

The Employers' Confederation of Latvia (LDDK) is the most important organisation representing employees in Latvia. One of the priorities of LDDK in the attainment of strategic goals set for the period 2014-2020, in order to ensure development of a policy contributing to entrepreneurship and competitiveness of businesses with a view of ensuring the sustainability of state economy, is the need for the improvement of education system quality. For more information on the aims and objectives of LDDK, see the website of the confederation: <http://www.lddk.lv>.

Procedures for Verifying the Compatibility of LQF with the QF-EHEA¹¹⁸

1. Competent state body/bodies should confirm the compatibility of the national framework with the QF-EHEA

Both referencing process phases (2009-2018) involved all education stakeholders; thus, ensuring different insights and the link between the LQF and EQF.

The establishment of the qualifications framework for higher education in Latvia started in 2004. Therefore, when the LQF referencing process began in 2009, the higher education sector had a clearer vision of the national qualifications framework to be established. The cycle descriptors and the relevant higher education qualifications, elaborated by the working group consisting of the representatives of all interested higher education institutions, were integrated in the LQF.

With the support of stakeholders involved in referencing process, in 2010 the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), as the competent authority, prepared the amendments to the Cabinet Regulations "Regulations on the education classification of Latvia" (amendments in force since 9.10.2010), thereby certifying the compliance of the LQF with the QF-EHEA. In 2017, MoES elaborated, in compliance with the developments in education sector, new Cabinet Regulations "Regulations on the education classification of Latvia"¹¹⁹ (in force since 16.06.2017), which, at present, regulate the LQF, including the qualifications framework for higher education.

¹¹⁸ Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks (2005). A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area 2005. See: http://www.ehea.info/media/ehea.info/file/WG_Frameworks_qualification/71/0/050218_QF_EHEA_580710.pdf

¹¹⁹ Annex 1 to Cabinet Regulations No 322 "Regulations on the education classification" (in force since 16.06.2017). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=291524>.

2. Self-certification process should include an agreement with quality assurance bodies recognised through the Bologna Process

From the very beginning of the referencing process in 2009, all quality assurance bodies, which actively contributed to the establishment of the LQF and still participate in its development, were involved::

- Higher Education Quality Assessment Centre – a foundation organising quality assessment in higher education until April 2013, when MoES took over this function. Since 15 July 2015, quality assessment in higher education is organised by an AIC structural unit – Quality Agency for Higher Education (AIKA). One of the main aims for an establishment of a new institution was to ensure the compliance of Latvian quality assessment system with European standards and guidelines.
- Council of Higher Education (CHE) – authority monitoring the quality of higher education.
- State Education Quality Service (SEQS) – authority supervising the quality of basic, secondary and vocational education, as well as ensuring the supervision of education by the State.

The representatives from quality assurance bodies actively participated in the working groups elaborating descriptors of qualifications frameworks, discussing the placement of qualifications in the framework, as well as agreeing with the proposals regarding the initial amendments to Cabinet Regulations, which aimed at approving the LQF in 2010. These authorities also participated in consultation process in the period 2010-2011 by giving their opinion and agreeing with the outcomes of the consultation process. The representatives of quality assurance authorities also participated in events and discussions with regard to the further development of the LQF within phase 2 of the referencing process in the period 2013-2018.

Furthermore, the representatives from the quality assurance bodies contributed to the development of both the previous Self-Assessment Report (2011, 2012) and the Updated Self-Assessment Report (2018). Thus, the representatives from these authorities have been always involved in the arrangements related to the establishment and further development of the LQF.

Quality assurance authorities and other institutions, involved in referencing process, have already officially agreed with the amendments to the Cabinet Regulations of 2008 “Regulations on the education classification of Latvia”, approved in October 2010, until the new Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the education classification of Latvia”¹²⁰ (in force since 16.06.2017) were approved in 2017 and, for the time being, regulates the LQF, including the qualifications framework for higher education. Annex 12 to this Report includes the opinion of the quality assessment agency.

3. Self-certification process should involve international experts

International experts were involved in a wide range of activities in both self-certification process phases (2009-2018). In conferences and seminars organised by the Latvian NCP, they shared their experience in the development of NQFs in their countries.

The Updated Self-Assessment Report of 2018 was reviewed by:

- Juraj Vantuch, Slovak National Observatory of Vocational Training;

¹²⁰ Annex 1 to Cabinet Regulations No 322 “Regulations on the education classification of Latvia” (in force since 16.06.2017). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=291524>.

- Kulli All, Ministry of Education and Science of Estonia.

When selecting the experts, both the location of the country they represent and their experience in education were taken into consideration to provide different insights and to cover a broader range of issues.

Since international experts were invited already at the start of the referencing process, the experience and comments of experts were taken into account when preparing both Self-Assessment Reports. See experts' reports in Annex 13 to this Report.

4. The self-certification should be published and address separately each of the established criteria

Both the initial Self-Assessment Report (2011, 2012) and the Updated Self-Assessment Report (2018) are published and are available on the website of MoES (www.izm.gov.lv), Latvian NCP (<http://nki-latvija.lv>), LOQ/PLOTEUS portal, as well as on the website of Latvian ENIC/NARIC (www.aic.lv) and EHEA (www.ehea.info).

In both reports, each of the seven criteria and six procedures established during the Bologna Process is addressed.

5. The ENIC/NARIC network should maintain a public listing of states that have completed self-certification process

The initial Self-Assessment Report (2011, 2012) and the Updated Self-Assessment Report (2018) are published on the website of ENIC/NARC (www.aic.lv).

6. The completion of self-certification process should be noted on Diploma Supplements issued subsequently by showing the link between the national framework and the QF-EHEA

Since 2013, when the new Cabinet Regulations "Procedure by which state recognised education documents certifying higher education are issued"¹²¹ (in force since 19.04.2013) were approved, higher education Diploma Supplements have to contain a reference to the qualifications framework. Pursuant to these Cabinet Regulations (Annex 7 to the Cabinet Regulations), to emphasize the link between the LQF and QF-EHEA, higher education Diploma Supplements has to contain a reference to "the level of the European/Latvian Qualifications Framework or the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area". For more information, see section 1.3 and Annex 6 to this Report.

¹²¹ Cabinet Regulations No 202 "Procedure by which state recognised education documents certifying higher education are issued" (in force since 19.04.2013). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=256157>.



Annexes

Annex 1. Qualification Level Descriptors in 2018

Annex 2. Education System of the Republic of Latvia

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Annex 1. Qualification Level Descriptors in 2018

Cabinet Regulations No 322 “Regulations on the education classification of Latvia”

Annex 1

In force since 16 June 2017; recent amendments in force since 5 October 2018

Table 2

Descriptors of Knowledge, Skills and Competences of Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF)

The differences in the level descriptors comparing to the Cabinet Regulations No 990 “Regulations on the education classification of Latvia” (in force since 9.10.2010) are marked in bold.

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

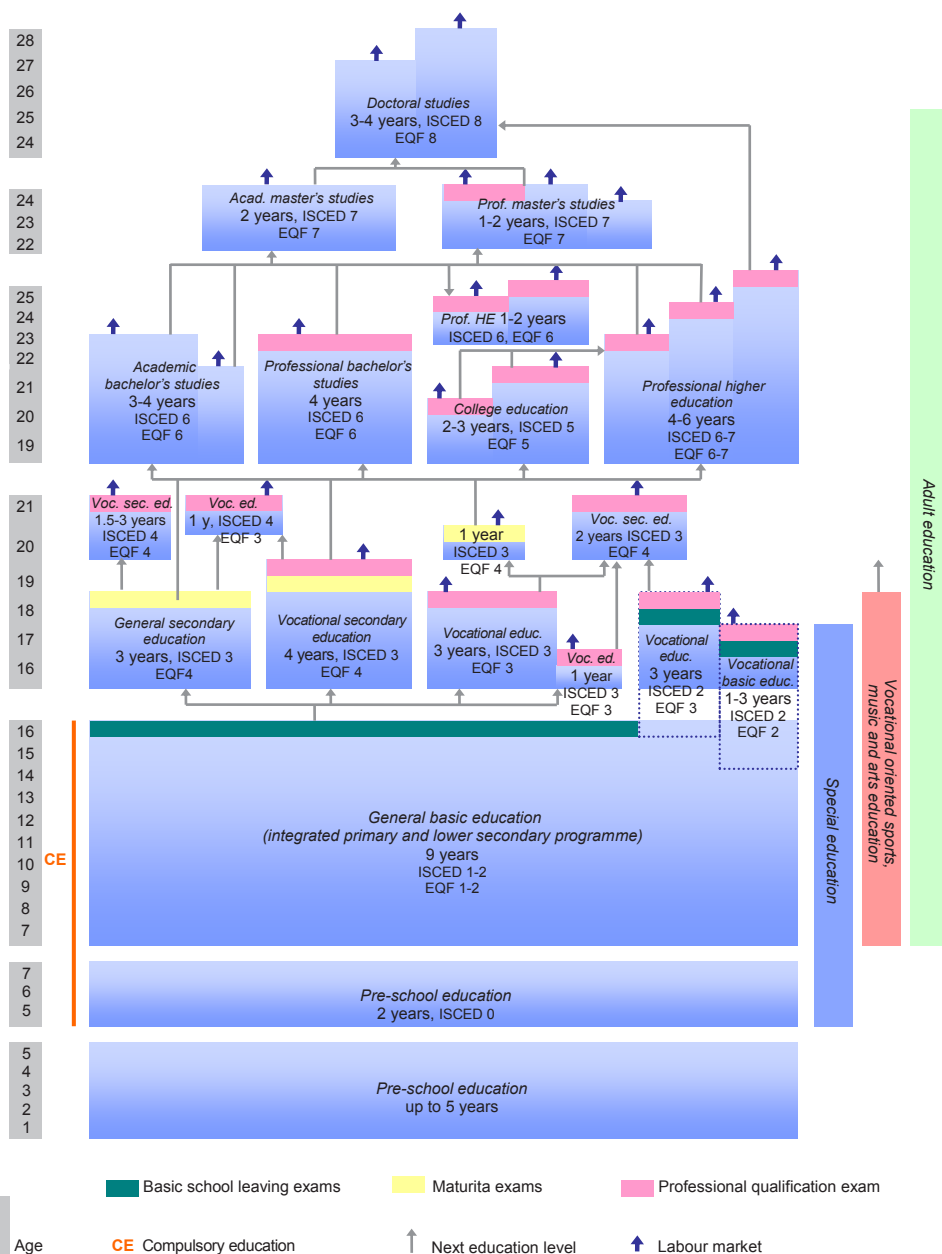
4	<p>Able to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of facts, theories, and causalities which are necessary for personal growth and development, civic participation, social integration and continuing learning</p> <p>Able to comprehend in detail and to demonstrate knowledge of diverse specific facts, principles, processes, and concepts in a specific field of learning or professional activity in standard and non-standard situations.</p> <p>Has good knowledge of technologies and methods for performing work tasks in the profession</p>	<p>Able to plan and organize work, using various methods, technologies (including information and communication technologies), equipment, tools and materials for performing tasks</p> <p>Able to find, assess and creatively use information for performing learning or work tasks and problem solving</p> <p>Able to communicate in at least two languages in writing and orally both in a known and unknown context</p> <p>Able to work independently in the profession, to learn and improve oneself</p> <p>Able to cooperate</p>	<p>Is motivated for further career development, further learning and lifelong learning in a knowledge-oriented democratic, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural society in Europe and in the world</p> <p>Able to plan and perform learning or work tasks in the profession individually, in a team or by managing the teamwork</p> <p>Able to assume responsibility for the quality and quantity of the learning or work outcomes</p>
5	<p>Able to demonstrate comprehensive and specialised knowledge and understanding of facts, theories, causalities and technologies of the relevant professional field</p>	<p>Able, on the basis of analytical approach, to perform practical tasks in the relevant profession, to demonstrate skills that allow to find creative solutions to professional problems, to discuss and provide arguments to practical issues and solutions in the relevant profession with colleagues, clients, and management, able to, with an appropriate degree of independence, to engage in further learning, by improving one's competences</p> <p>Able to assess and improve one's own actions and that of other individuals, to work in cooperation with others, to plan and organize work to perform specific tasks in the relevant profession, to perform or supervise work activities in contexts with unpredictable changes</p>	<p>Able to define, describe and analyse practical problems in their profession, select the necessary information and use it for solving clearly defined problems, participate in the development of the relevant professional field, demonstrate understanding of the role of the relevant profession in a broader social context</p>
6	<p>Able to demonstrate basic and specialised knowledge in the specific field of science or profession and critical understanding of this knowledge, furthermore, a part of this knowledge complies with the highest level of achievement of the relevant field of science or profession</p> <p>Able to demonstrate understanding of the most important concepts and causalities of the specific field of science or profession</p>	<p>Able, by using the mastered theoretical foundations and skills, to perform professional, artistic, innovative or research activity, define and describe analytically information, problems and solutions in the relevant field of science or profession, explain them and provide arguments in discussions with both professionals and non-professionals</p> <p>Is able to structure independently one's own learning, guide one's own and subordinates' further learning and professional improvement, demonstrate scientific approach to problem solving, assume responsibility and take initiative when performing individual work, when working in a team or managing the work of others, take decisions and find creative solutions in changing or unclear contexts</p>	<p>Able to obtain, select and analyse information independently, and use it, take decisions and solve problems in the specific field of science or profession, demonstrate understanding of professional ethics, assess the impact of one's professional activities on the environment and society, and participate in the development of the relevant professional field</p>

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

NB: Each further level of Latvian Qualifications Framework comprises the knowledge, skills and competences defined for the preceding level.

Annex 2. Education System of the Republic of Latvia

LQF levels in the education system of the Republic of Latvia (2018)



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See more information on the education system of the Republic of Latvia in the previous Self-Assessment Report (2012)¹²².

¹²² Academic Information Centre and the Ministry of Education and Science (2012). Referencing of Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area. Self-Assessment Report. Second Version. Riga: Academic Information Centre and the Policy Coordination Department of the Ministry of Education and Science. See: http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Latvian_Self-Assessment_Report_2nd-version_May-2012.pdf



Annex 3. Classification of Education of Latvia According to ISCED and LQF

Cabinet Regulations No 322 "Regulations on the education classification of Latvia"

Annex 1

In force since 16 June 2017; recent amendments in force since 5 October 2018

Table 1

Qualification Levels 1 and 2 and their referencing to Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF), European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-2011)

First classification level		Second classification level		LQF/ EQF	ISCED-2011 (three-digit codes)	
First digit	Level of education	First and second digit (with/without letter)	Type of education programme		ISCED-P (education programmes)	ISCED-A (qualifications)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0	Pre-school education	01	Pre-school education programmes.		010 ¹	020 ¹
					020 ²	020 ²
1	First stage of basic education	11	General education, programmes of the first stage (grades 1 to 6) of basic education.		100	100
		10V	Professional orientation education, to be implemented parallel to the programme of the first stage of basic education.		100	030
		10T	Continuing vocational education (first level professional qualification), to be implemented without restrictions regarding prior education. Length of studies: at least 480 hours.	2	251	100
2	Second stage of basic education	21	General education, basic education programmes (grades 1 to 9).	1-2	100 ³	100 ³
					244 ⁴	244 ⁴
					243 ⁵	243 ⁵
		23	General education, programmes of the second stage (grades 7 to 9) of basic education.	2	244	244
		22	Vocational basic education, to be implemented without restrictions regarding prior education (first level professional qualification). Length of studies: 1 to 3 years.	2	254	254

		20T	Continuing vocational education (second level professional qualification), to be implemented following full or partial completion of basic education programme. Length of studies: 480, 640 or more hours.	3	351	254
		20P	Professional improvement programme to be implemented after full or partial completion of basic education programme.	2	351	254
		20V	Professional orientation education, to be implemented in parallel with general basic education programme (grades 1 to 9).	2	251	100
3	Secondary education	31	General secondary education, to be implemented following the completion of basic education. Length of studies: 3 years.	4	344	344
		32	Vocational education (second level professional qualification), to be implemented following the completion of basic education. Length of studies: 3 years.	3	353	353
		32a	Vocational education (second level professional qualification), to be implemented following the completion of basic education. Length of studies: 1 year.	3	351	254
		32b	Vocational education (second level professional qualification), to be implemented following a partial completion of basic education programme. Length of studies: 3 years.	3	254	254
		33	Vocational secondary education (third level professional qualification), to be implemented following the completion of basic education. Length of studies: 4 years.	4	354	354
		35a	Vocational education (second level professional qualification), to be implemented following the completion of general or vocational secondary education. Length of studies: 1 year.	3	453	453

		35b	Vocational secondary education (third level professional qualification), to be implemented following the completion of general secondary education. Length of studies: 1.5 to 3 years.	4	453	453
		36	General secondary education, continuation of an education programme (programme code: 32). Length of studies: 1 year.	4	344	344
		37	Vocational secondary education (third level professional qualification), continuation of an education programme (first and second code digit: 32). Length of studies: 2 years.	4	354	354
		30T	Continuing vocational education (second and third level professional qualification), to be implemented following the completion of general or vocational secondary education. Length of studies: 640, 960 or more hours.	3-4	453	453
		30P	Professional improvement, programme to be implemented following the completion of general or vocational secondary education.	4	451	354
		30V	Professionally oriented education, to be implemented parallel to the completion of general or vocational secondary education.	4	351	254
4	Higher education	41	First level professional higher education (fourth level professional qualification), to be implemented following the completion of general or vocational secondary education. Length of full-time studies: 2 to 3 years.	5	554	550

		42	Second level professional higher education (fifth level professional qualification and professional Bachelor's degree) or second level professional higher education (fifth level professional qualification), to be implemented following the completion of general or vocational secondary education. Length of full-time studies: 4 years.	6	655 656 ⁶	650 650 ⁶
		43	Academic education (Bachelor's degree), to be implemented following the completion of general or vocational secondary education. Length of full-time studies: 3 to 4 years.	6	645	640
		44	Second level professional higher education (fifth level professional qualification), continuation of an education programme (programme code: 41). Length of full-time studies: 1 to 2 years. Total length of full-time studies: at least 4 years.	6	655	650
		45	Academic education (Master's degree), to be implemented following the completion of Bachelor's degree or professional Bachelor's degree. Length of full-time studies: 1 to 2 years. Total length of full-time studies: at least 5 years.	7	747	740
		46	Second level professional higher education (fifth level professional qualification), to be implemented following the completion of Bachelor's degree, professional Bachelor's degree or fifth level professional qualification. Length of full-time studies: at least 1 year. Total length of full-time studies: at least 4 years.	6	657	650

		47	Second level professional higher education (professional Master's degree or fifth level professional qualification and professional Master's degree), to be implemented following the completion of Bachelor's degree, professional Bachelor's degree or fifth level professional qualification. Length of full-time studies: at least 1 year. Total length of full-time studies: 5 years.	7	757	750
		49	Second level professional higher education (fifth level professional qualification), to be implemented following the completion of general or vocational secondary education. Length of full-time studies: at least 5 years.	7	756	750
5		51	Doctoral studies (Doctor's degree), to be implemented following the completion of Master's degree or professional Master's degree or as continuation of an education programme (programme code: 49). Length of full-time studies: 3 to 4 years.	8	864	860

NB!

- ¹ Pre-school education programmes to be completed by learners up to 3 years of age.
- ² Pre-school education programmes to be completed by learners aged 3 years and up.
- ³ Education programmes to be completed by learners in grades 1 to 6.
- ⁴ Education programmes to be completed by learners in grades 7 to 9.
- ⁵ Education programmes (fifth and sixth code digit – 58 or 59) completed by learners in grades 7 to 9.
- ⁶ Education programmes, the length of full-time studies of which exceeds 4 years.

Annex 4. Other Amendments to Laws and Regulations since 2011

This table contains amendments to the laws and regulations in the LQF context, which are not mentioned in this report.

Laws and regulations	Amendments
<p>Law on Higher Education Institutions (adopted in 1995; amended on 14.07.2011; in force since 1.08.2011)</p>	<p>Pursuant to Section 3, Paragraph 6 of the Law, the Cabinet of Ministers determines the education classification of Latvia which also has to include a comparison of degrees and professional qualifications, completed in the Republic of Latvia, with the European Qualifications Framework and descriptors of knowledge, skills and competences corresponding to the level of the European Qualifications Framework for graduates of each level of study programme.</p>
<p>Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the state academic education standard” (in force since 16.05.2014)</p>	<p>Pursuant to Paragraph 3 of the Regulations, the strategic aim of study programmes has to consist in ensuring acquirement of theoretical knowledge and research skills by achieving learning outcomes defined in the relevant study programme which comply with EQF level 6 or 7 knowledge, skills, and competences, as stipulated in the education classification of Latvia.</p> <p>Pursuant to Paragraph 4 of the Regulations, the aim of a Bachelor’s degree study programme has to consist in providing a set of knowledge, skills, and competences in compliance with Framework level 6 knowledge, skills, and competences, as stipulated in the education classification of Latvia.</p> <p>Pursuant to Paragraph 15 of the Regulations, the aim of a Master’s degree study programme has to consist in providing a set of knowledge, skills, and competences in compliance with Framework level 7 knowledge, skills, and competences, as stipulated in the education classification of Latvia.</p>
<p>Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the state standard of second level professional higher education” (in force since 12.09.2014)</p>	<p>Pursuant to Paragraph 5 “Main Tasks of Second Level Professional Higher Education Programmes”, Sub-paragraph 5.2 of the Regulations, the main tasks are to ensure the achievement of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences) in compliance with European Qualifications Framework level 6 or 7 knowledge, skills, and competences (hereinafter – Framework), as stipulated in the education classification of Latvia.</p> <p>Pursuant to Paragraph 7 of the Regulation, the scope of a Bachelor’s degree programme has to provide a set of knowledge, skills and competences in compliance with Framework level 6 knowledge, skills and competences, as stipulated in the education classification of Latvia.</p> <p>Pursuant to Paragraph 21 of the Regulation, the scope of a Master’s degree programme has to provide a set of knowledge, skills, and competences, required to pursue professional activity in compliance with Framework level 7 knowledge, skills, and competences, as stipulated in the education classification of Latvia.</p>

Laws and regulations	Amendments
<p>Cabinet Regulations “Procedure on the development of occupational standard, professional qualification requirements (if occupational standard is not approved for an occupation) and sectoral qualifications framework” (in force since 30.09.2016)</p>	<p>Pursuant to Sub-paragraph 5.1 of the Regulation, the National Centre for Education organizes the development or updating of the professional standard or, as the case may be, the requirements for the professional qualification (if no occupational standard has been approved for the relevant profession) in compliance with LQF levels 2-5, as stipulated in the Education Law.</p> <p>Pursuant to Paragraph 6 of the Regulations, the Ministry of Education and Science organizes the development or updating of the professional standard or, as the case may be, the requirements for the professional qualification (if no occupational standard has been approved for the relevant profession) in compliance with LQF levels 6-7.</p> <p>Pursuant to Annex 1 to the Regulation, Paragraph 1 of occupational standard includes the title of the profession and the level of qualification.</p> <p>Pursuant to Annex 2 to the Regulation, Paragraph 1 of professional qualification requirements include the title of the specialisation or the relevant profession and the level of qualification.</p> <p>Pursuant to Annex 3 to the Regulation, Paragraph 1 of sectoral qualifications framework includes a general descriptor of sectoral professions, whereas Sub-paragraph 1.1 includes the level of qualification, and Sub-paragraph 1.2 – a descriptor of the level of the relevant sectoral profession qualification (learning outcomes to be achieved – knowledge, skills, competences, autonomy and responsibility).</p>
<p>Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the state professional higher education standard for obtaining Doctor’s degree and the procedure for awarding a professional Doctor’s degree in arts” (in force since 5.10.2018)</p>	<p>Pursuant to Sub-paragraph 4.3 of the Regulations, one of the main task of a study programme is to ensure the achievement of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences) in compliance with EQF level 8, as stipulated in the education classification of Latvia.</p> <p>Pursuant to Paragraph 8 of the Regulation, the scope of a study programme has to ensure acquirement of knowledge, skills and competences required to pursue professional artistic activity in compliance with EQF level 8 knowledge, skills and competences, as stipulated in the education classification of Latvia.</p>

Annex 5. Assessment of Descriptors of LQF Levels 1-4 and Proposals for Their Improvement (2013)

The proposals were developed within the study “Referencing of Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area” (2013).

For the time being (2013), two different level descriptors are binding in vocational education:

- 1) the one referred to in Section 5 of the Vocational Education Law specifying five professional qualification level descriptors¹²³;
- 2) European Qualifications Framework (hereinafter – EQF) levels and their descriptors referred to in Table 2 of Cabinet Regulations No 990 “Regulations on the education classification of Latvia”, adopted on 2nd December 2008. Table 1 included in the Annex 1 to this Regulation, defines the compliance of a specific EQF level to the level of education and type of education programme.

After due consideration of the classification “First and Second Qualification Level and their Comparison with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-97) and EQF”, as set out in Table 1 included in Annex 1 to the amendments of 5 October 2010 to Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on the education classification of Latvia”, adopted on 2nd December 2008, we suggest amendments as follows:

- 1) As for the section “**First stage of basic education**” for **10T Continuing vocational education** (completion of first level professional qualification), to be implemented by adults without restrictions regarding prior education. This type of education programmes are intended for implementing very simple qualifications (e.g., construction worker, assistant chef etc.) by acquiring basic knowledge and skills required to accomplish predetermined and simple tasks under direct supervision. Therefore, we suggest to establish that this education should correspond to **EQF/LQF level 2**.
- 2) As for the section “**Second stage of basic education**” for **21 General education, basic education** programmes (grades 1 to 9), we suggest to **change** the referencing from **EQF/LQF levels 1 to 3** to **EQF/LQF levels 1 to 2**. Pursuant to Cabinet Regulations No 1027 “Regulations regarding the state standard for basic education and basic education study subject standards”, adopted on 19 December 2006, the primary objectives of basic education programmes are as follows: to provide the completion of basic knowledge and basic skills required for social and personal life, to create a basis for further education of a learner, to encourage harmonious growth and development of a learner, and to promote responsible learner’s attitude towards themselves, the family, society, surrounding environment and the State. The primary tasks of basic education programmes are as follows: to form a preconception and understanding of primary natural

¹²³ Vocational Education Law, Section 5. Levels of professional qualifications:

Five levels of professional qualifications are specified in the education system of Latvia (hereinafter – qualification levels):

- 1) First qualification level – theoretical and practical training, which provides an opportunity to carry out simple tasks in a specific area of practical operation.
- 2) Second qualification level – theoretical and practical training, which provides an opportunity to perform independently qualified artisan work.
- 3) Third qualification level – higher theoretical preparedness and professional skill, which provides an opportunity to carry out specific artisan duties, which also include planning and organising of the work to be implemented.
- 4) Fourth qualification level – theoretical and practical training, which provides an opportunity to perform complicated artisan work, as well as to organise and manage the work of other professionals.
- 5) Fifth qualification level – higher qualification of a specific field, which provides an opportunity to plan and to perform scientific research work in the relevant field.

and social processes, sustainable development processes, moral and aesthetic values, to provide an opportunity to acquire basic knowledge and basic skills in language and mathematics, to provide an opportunity to acquire basic learning abilities and basic skills in using information technologies, to provide an opportunity to acquire knowledge and democratic values necessary for a citizen of Latvia, to provide an opportunity to gain experience in creative activity, to give basic understanding of the cultural heritage of Latvia, Europe and the world, and to cultivate communication and cooperation skills. The comparison with the European level descriptors based on learning outcomes (see “Referencing of Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area”, Second version, P. 56) suggests, that, in light of the basic factual knowledge of the relevant field of study and a range of basic skills required to use information, accomplish tasks and generate solutions to routine problems, as well as competences allowing for work or studies under the supervision with some autonomy, the acquired knowledge, skills, and competences correspond to EQF level 2 to their fullest extent. However, EQF level 3 European level descriptors based on learning outcomes imply stricter requirements which suggest that an individual must have acquired the knowledge of facts, principles and general concepts. At the same time, Latvia must take into account the outcomes of the development of national qualification frameworks of other countries with regard to this education, as well as results of global education surveys (e.g., OECD PISA 2009), which suggest that the mathematics performance among 15-year-olds in Latvia lies well below the EU average, whereas the scientific performance and literacy correspond only to the EU average score¹²⁴. In light of the aforementioned, Latvia has no grounds to classify the knowledge, skills and competences acquired in basic education as corresponding to EQF/LQF level 3, which is higher than in the classifications of other EU member states.

- 3) As for the section “**Second stage of basic education**” for **22 Vocational basic education**, to be implemented without restrictions regarding prior education, we suggest to **change** the referencing from **EQF/LQF level 3** to **EQF/LQF level 2**, as the vast majority of vocational basic education programmes are implemented in special education institutions (60% out of all vocational basic education programmes certified in 2012 were certified for being implemented in special education institutions for persons with special needs), including after completing special basic education programmes for learners with mental disabilities, mental developmental disorders, multiple mental development disorders etc. These vocational basic education programmes ensure acquirement of simple knowledge and skills and completion of the lowest qualification in the relevant field, as well as knowledge, skills and competences, which do not exceed the scope of EQF/LQF level 3 descriptor.
- 4) As for the section “**Secondary education**” for **32 Vocational education** (completion of the second level professional qualification), we suggest the wording for the last phrase as follows: “Vocational education (completion of the second level professional qualification, **to be implemented following full or partial completion of basic education**)” and to reference this qualification to **EQF/LQF levels 2 to 3** in line with the length of studies and admission rules of

¹²⁴ See: http://www.izglitiba-kultura.lv/system/application/uploads/file/LU_petijums_pdf.pdf

the specific vocational education programme for the reasons as follows:

- As suggested by 14 sectoral qualifications descriptors and frameworks, significant differences may be seen between the knowledge, skills, and competences, which correspond the second level professional qualification and are to be acquired in vocational education, and those corresponding the third level professional qualification to be acquired in professional secondary education. Therefore, the competences acquired in vocational education cannot be classified as corresponding the same level as competences acquired in vocational secondary education.¹²⁵
 - As provided for in Section 27, Paragraph one of the Vocational Education Law, the admission procedure is similar to that applicable in professional basic education, namely, a person is admitted to professional basic education and vocational education programmes without limitation of his or her previous education and not earlier than that calendar year, when he or she becomes 15 years old. Since the law takes precedence over Cabinet Regulations, Latvia might face a situation, where the authorities may need to develop vocational education programmes, to which learners without previously completed basic education are to be admitted. Such education programmes would be classified as corresponding **EQF/LQF level 2**.
 - To reference to **EQF/LQF level 3** only vocational education to be implemented in the amount referred to in the first row of Table 1 included in Annex 3 to Cabinet Regulations No 211 “Regulations on the state vocational secondary education standard and the state vocational education standard” – programmes, to which a learner is admitted after the completion of basic education, the duration of which is 3 years.
- 5) As for the section “**Secondary education**” for **35a Vocational education** (completion of the second level professional qualification), to be implemented following the completion of general secondary education, no grounds exist to reference this education to EQF/LQF level 4, as the SQFs do not reveal any approach, by which different levels of knowledge, skills, and competences may be defined for one qualification (e.g., tailor, carpenter, chef, etc.). Therefore, the qualification should be referenced to **EQF/LQF level 3**.
- 6) As for the section “**Secondary education**” for **30T**, we suggest the wording for the fourth column as follows:
- “Continuing vocational education (completion of the third level professional qualification), to be implemented following the completion of vocational or secondary education” for the reasons as follows:
- As provided for in Section 27, Paragraph seven of the Vocational Education Law, a person is admitted to a continuing vocational education programme, which provides an opportunity to complete a third level professional qualification following the completion of vocational or secondary education.
 - Pursuant to the sectoral qualifications frameworks, the knowledge, skills, and competences, which correspond the second level professional qualification (e.g., tailor, chef, hairdresser etc.) and those corresponding the third level professional qualification (e.g., architectural technician, communication engineering technician etc.), in the light of the considerable differences

¹²⁵ See: <http://www.viaa.gov.lv/lat/strukturfondi/12111/>.

between the descriptors of the knowledge, skills, and competences, cannot be referenced to the same EQF/LQF level. Therefore, **only the professions corresponding the third level professional qualifications can be referenced to EQF/LQF level 4.**

After having assessed the compliance of education documents certifying the completion of formal education with EQF/LQF levels, as provided for in the outcomes¹²⁶ of the development of the Latvian Qualifications Framework and the first stage of referencing the existing formal education qualifications to EQF, proposals for the wording of document descriptions were developed (see Annex 2). Furthermore, we suggest to transfer the education document, i.e., certificate of vocational education, as referred to in EQF/LQF level 4 descriptor, to EQF/LQF level 3, as 14 sectoral qualification descriptors and frameworks suggest that significant differences may be seen between the knowledge, skills, and competences, to be acquired in vocational education (second level professional qualification) and those to be acquired in professional secondary education (third level professional qualification). Simultaneously we suggest to make additional entries in EQF/LQF level 2, 3 and 4 descriptors regarding the certificate of professional qualification, as the continuing vocational education programmes are implemented in the first, second, and third level professional qualifications in order to obtain a profession/qualifications.

¹²⁶ See: http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Latvijas-pasvertejuma-zinojums-2-versija_maijs-2012.pdf



Annex 6. Reference to LQF in Higher Education Diploma Supplements

Cabinet Regulations No 202 "Procedure by which state recognised education documents certifying higher education are issued"

In force since 19 April 2013; recent amendments in force since 5 October 2018.

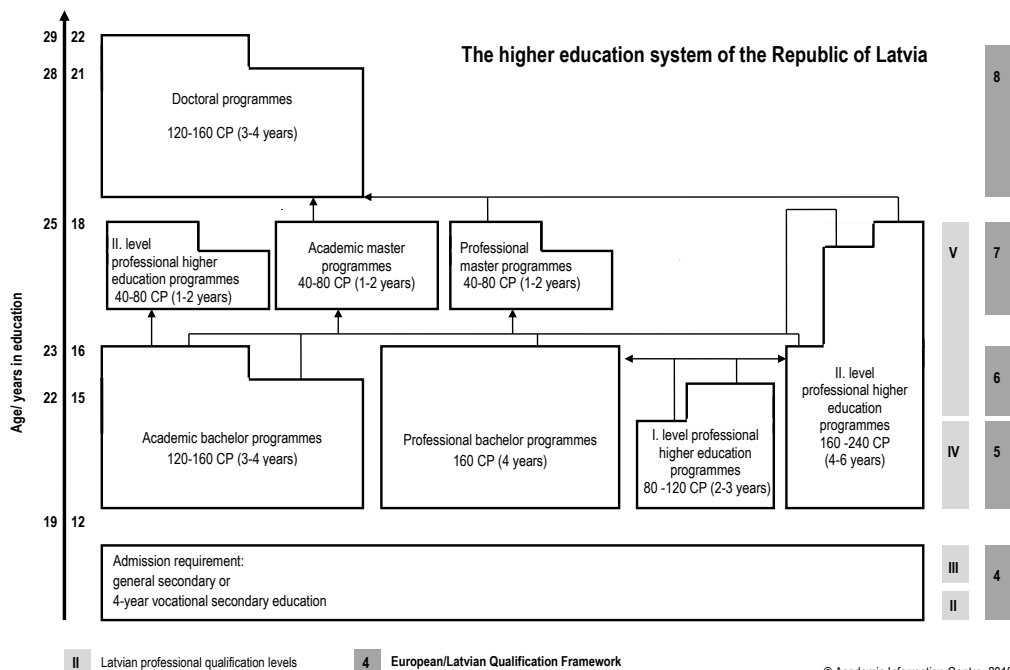
Annex 7

[..]

3 Information on the level of qualification:

3.1 level of qualification;

NB: The level of qualification is indicated in compliance with the information provided for in section 8 of the Diploma Supplement, by specifying the Latvian professional qualification level, European/Latvian Qualifications Framework level or QF-EHEA level. In case of a joint diploma, the level of qualification has to be indicated upon agreement.



[..]

As provided for in the relevant laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia, the higher education programmes are included in the Latvian Qualifications Framework (hereinafter – LQF) and they correspond to the eight levels of the European Qualifications Framework (hereinafter – EQF).

The placement of the education documents certifying the completion of higher education in LQF and EQF

Education documents certifying higher education	LQF and EQF level
1. Diploma of first level professional higher education	5
1.1. Bachelor's diploma 1.2. Professional Bachelor's diploma 1.3. Diploma of professional higher education, diploma of higher professional qualification (second level professional higher education, the length of full-time studies – at least 4 years)	6
2. Master's diploma 2.1. Professional Master's diploma 2.2. Diploma of professional higher education, diploma of higher professional qualification (second level professional higher education, the total length of full-time studies – at least 5 years)	7
3. Doctor's diploma and professional Doctor's diploma in arts	8

[..]

Annex 7. Referencing of Pre-Bologna Qualifications to Bologna Qualifications

Pre-Bologna Qualification	Length of studies (full-time)	Issuing authority	Period of issue	Bologna Qualification
Qualification of higher education		HEIs of the former USSR	Before 1.07.1991	Academic Master's degree (LQF level 7)
Diploma of higher education in the speciality		HEIs of the former USSR	Before 1.07.1991	Professional Master's degree and Latvian fifth level professional qualification (LQF level 7)
Candidate of science or Doctor of science degree		Higher Attestation Commission of the former USSR		Doctor of science degree (LQF level 8)
Academic Bachelor's degree		HEIs of Latvia	From 1.07.1991 until 1.12.1995	Academic Bachelor's degree (LQF level 6)
Academic Master's degree		HEIs of Latvia	From 1.07.1991 until 1.12.1995	Academic Master's degree (LQF level 7)
Qualifications of higher professional education	4 years	HEIs of Latvia	From 1.07.1991 until 1.12.1995	Professional Bachelor's degree and Latvian fifth level professional qualification (LQF level 6)
Qualifications of higher professional education	5 years	HEIs of Latvia	From 1.07.1991 until 1.12.1995	Professional Master's degree and Latvian fifth level professional qualification (LQF level 7)
Qualifications of higher professional education	4 years	HEIs of Latvia	From 1.12.1995 until 26.12.2000	Professional Bachelor's degree and Latvian fifth level professional qualification (LQF level 6)
Qualifications of higher professional education	5 years	HEIs of Latvia	From 1.12.1995 until 26.12.2000	Professional Master's degree and Latvian fifth level professional qualification (LQF level 7)

Annex 8. Comparison of Criteria for Assessment of Study Programmes in 2013, 2016, and 2017

The table gives the annual breakdown of the criteria for the assessment of study programmes, as marked in **bold**.

Paragraph 18 of Cabinet Regulations "Regulations regarding licensing of study programmes" (in force since 25.04.2013)	Paragraph 24 of Cabinet Regulations "Regulations regarding licensing of study programmes" (in force since 30.07.2015)	Paragraph 24 of Cabinet Regulations "Regulations regarding licensing of study programmes" (in force since 25.07.2017)
<p>18.1 The study programme conforms to the study field of the higher education institution or college.</p> <p>18.2 The submitted documents conform to the requirements of the laws and regulations in the field of education (including regulated professions).</p> <p>18.3 The qualification of the academic staff conforms to the conditions for implementation of the study programme and the requirements of the laws and regulations in the field of higher education.</p> <p>18.4 Each member of the academic staff has at least three publications published in reviewed journals within the last five years, including one international publication (if the person has worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period) or artistic innovation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity) or a five-year practical work experience (except for the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions.</p> <p>18.5 The language skills of the academic staff conform to at least level B2 according to the European language levels (division of levels is available on the website www.europass.lv), if it is intended to implement the study programme or its part in a foreign language.</p> <p>18.6 At least five persons with a Doctor's degree in the field of science corresponding or related to a doctoral study programme are participating in the implementation of the study programme, and they have been elected to the relevant higher education institution.</p> <p>18.7 The scientific and pedagogical qualification of the persons with a Doctor's degree referred to in Sub-paragraph 18.6 of these Regulations conform to the criteria laid down in the laws and regulations regarding the assessment of the scientific and pedagogical qualification of an applicant for the position of a professor and associate professor.</p> <p>18.8 The study and informative resources (including the library), as well as financial and material and technical provisions conform to the conditions for the implementation of the study programme.</p> <p>18.9 The content and mechanism for the implementation of the study programme have been developed in accordance with the laws and regulations in the field of higher education.</p> <p>18.10 The content of the study programme conforms to the objectives and tasks of the study programme, as well as the defined learning outcomes.</p> <p>18.11 The content of the study programme conforms to the degree to be obtained, the degree and professional qualification, or the professional qualification.</p> <p>18.12 Graduates will have employment or self-employment opportunities according to the degree or professional qualification to be obtained.</p> <p>18.13 At least three professionals of the relevant field (except for the academic staff of the higher education institution or college) have been involved in the development of the study programme.</p>	<p>24.1 The study programme conforms to the study field of the higher education institution or college.</p> <p>24.2 The submitted documents conform to the requirements of the laws and regulations in the field of education (including regulated professions).</p> <p>24.3 The qualification of the academic staff conforms to the conditions for implementation of the study programme and the requirements of the laws and regulations in the field of higher education.</p> <p>24.4 Each member of the academic staff has at least three publications published in reviewed journals within the last six years, including one international publication (if the person has worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period) or artistic innovation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity) or a five-year practical work experience (except for the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions.</p> <p>24.5 The language skills of the academic staff conform to at least level B2 according to the European language levels, if it is intended to implement the study programme or its part in a foreign language.</p> <p>24.6 At least five persons with a Doctor's degree in the field of science corresponding or related to a doctoral study programme are participating in the implementation of the study programme, and they have been elected to the relevant higher education institution, and at least three of them are experts in the relevant field, approved by Latvian Council of Science.</p> <p>24.7 The scientific and pedagogical qualification of the persons with a Doctor's degree referred to in Sub-paragraph 24.6 of these Regulations conform to the criteria laid down in the laws and regulations regarding the assessment of the scientific and pedagogical qualification of an applicant for the position of a professor and associate professor.</p> <p>24.8 The study and informative resources (including the library), as well as financial and material and technical provisions conform to the conditions for the implementation of the study programme.</p> <p>24.9 The content and mechanism for the implementation of the study programme have been developed in accordance with the laws and regulations in the field of higher education.</p> <p>24.10 The content of the study programme conforms to the objectives and tasks of the study programme, as well as the defined learning outcomes.</p> <p>24.11 The content of the study programme conforms to the degree to be obtained, the degree and professional qualification, or the professional qualification.</p> <p>24.12 Graduates will have employment or self-employment opportunities according to the degree or professional qualification to be obtained.</p> <p>24.13 At least three professionals of the relevant field (except for the academic staff of the higher education institution or college) have been involved in the development of the study programme.</p>	<p>24.1 The study programme conforms to the study field of the higher education institution or college.</p> <p>24.2 Study programme management.</p> <p>24.3 The resources and provisions of the study programme.</p> <p>24.4 The content and mechanism for the implementation of the study programme.</p> <p>24.5 Employment perspectives of the graduates.</p>



Annex 9. Criteria for Assessment of Higher Education Institutions and Colleges in 2012, 2016, and 2017

The table gives the annual breakdown of the differences between the criteria for the assessment of higher education institutions and colleges, as marked in **bold**.

Annex 2 to Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges and study fields” (in force from 1910.2012 until 30.07.2015)	Annex 3 to Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges and study fields” (in force since 30.07.2015)	Annex 3 to Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges and study fields” (in force since 25.07.2017)
<p>1. The aims and objectives of the higher education institution or college, their clarity, attainability, relation with the national tasks, requirements in the field of science, and the aims and objectives of the academic staff of the higher education institution or college as well as with students' interests and needs.</p> <p>4. Provisions and management of the higher education institution or college:</p> <p>4.2 information systems, which comply with the requirements for the implementation of higher education, as well as the material and technical provisions and the provision with qualified study auxiliary staff;</p> <p>4.3 existence of financial resources required for the accomplishment of the tasks and implementation of long-term development plans of the higher education institution or college.</p> <p>3. The academic staff of the higher education institution or college:</p> <p>4.1 implementation of the autonomy and democracy principles adopted by the higher education institution or college, involvement of students in the organization of the everyday activities of the higher education institution or college, internal control system for the assessment of the quality of the work carried out by the academic staff, a system for the improvement of qualifications of the academic staff (academic and general staff) of the higher education institution or college;</p> <p>3.1 the compliance of the academic staff of the higher education institution or college with the requirements for higher education, as provided for in the relevant laws and regulations, and the study courses to be implemented.</p> <p>5. Quality assurance:</p> <p>5.1 operation of the internal quality assurance system at the higher education institution or college;</p> <p>5.2 improvement of the internal quality assurance system, as well as development and discussion of long-term plans on a regular basis;</p> <p>5.3 the perspectives of graduates</p>	<p>1. The aims and objectives of the higher education institution or college, their clarity, attainability, relation with the aims and objectives of science, the academic staff of the higher education institution or college as well as with students' interests and needs. The compliance of the management structure with the requirements of this Paragraph.</p> <p>2. The compliance of material and technical provisions of the higher education institution or college and its branches, as to their quantity and quality, with the study fields in the higher education institution or college, the implemented relevant study programmes, including related research:</p> <p>2.1 conditions for implementing study programmes, premises, infrastructure, laboratories, the necessary equipment, as well as other material and technical provisions;</p> <p>2.2 conditions of studies, leisure, and living, including students' halls of residence provided for by the higher education institution or college.</p> <p>3. The compliance of the resources of the higher education institution or college, and its branches, as to their quantity and quality, with the implementation of study fields and the relevant study programmes, including related research:</p> <p>3.1 informative resources: study and scientific literature appropriate for the implementation of study resources, databases, including for the use outside the premises of the higher education institution or college (access to the library is ensured, informative resources updated, renewed, and the most recent literature acquired);</p> <p>3.2 financial resources necessary for meeting the objectives and implementing the long-term development plans of the higher education institution or college (whether the financial resources are sufficient for ensuring the operation of the higher education institution or college, whether financial planning is performed and additional financing attracted, whether there are plans to allocate resources for expanding library resources and for subscribing electronic databases).</p> <p>4. The compliance of the staff of the higher education institution or college, and its branches, as to their quantity and quality, with the implementation of study fields and relevant study programmes, including related research:</p> <p>4.1 the implementation of the policy for academic staff recruitment and development, and its impact upon reaching the aims set for the operation</p>	<p>1. The aims and objectives of the higher education institution or college, their clarity, attainability, relation with the aims and objectives of science, the academic staff of the higher education institution or college, and, if the study field “Arts” is implemented – also with those of artistic innovation, as well as with students' interests and needs. The compliance of the management structure with the requirements of this Paragraph.</p> <p>2. The compliance of material and technical provisions of the higher education institution or college, and its branches (if any), as to their quantity and quality, with the study fields in the higher education institution or college, the implemented relevant study programmes, including related research, and, if the study field “Arts” is implemented – also such compliance with artistic innovation.</p> <p>3. The compliance of the resources of the higher education institution or college, and its branches (if any), as to their quantity and quality, with the implementation of study fields and relevant study programmes, including related research, and, if the study field “Arts” is implemented – also such compliance with artistic innovation.</p> <p>4. The compliance of the staff of the higher education institution or college, and its branches (if any), as to their quantity and quality, with the implementation of study fields and relevant study programmes, including related research, and, if the study field “Arts” is implemented – also such compliance with artistic innovation.</p> <p>5. The compliance of the internal quality assurance system at the higher education institution or college with reaching the aims of the higher education institution or college, by evaluating aspects in the internal quality assurance system.</p> <p>6. The compliance of the organisation and management of studies with the implementation of the study fields and relevant study programmes of the higher education institution</p>

<p>from the higher education institution or college on the labour market; 5.4 possibilities to continue the studies and financial guarantees in case of the dissolution, reorganization of or other changes to the relevant study programme. 2. Organisation and management of studies: 2.2 students' scientific research activities as a part of study process, students' research associations, contests of students' research work, prizes, awards, special grants; 2.1 conditions of studies, leisure and living of all admitted students, assistance and advice to students, incentives for studies, possibilities to acquire knowledge and skills also outside the study programme. 3.2 relevance of the topic of the scientific work, coordination of the scientific work and creative activities, and collaboration with scientific institutions in Latvia and abroad, and involvement of the scientific staff of the higher education institution or college in the study process; 2.3 international collaboration, participation in exchange programmes and involvement of guest lecturers, the implementation of the exchange programmes for the exchange of the academic staff and students of the higher education institution or college with other higher education institutions or colleges, traineeships in Latvia and abroad.</p>	<p>of the higher education institution or college (whether the criteria for recruiting the academic staff are defined and the development of the academic staff is facilitated); 4.2 the compliance of the qualification of the academic staff with the provisions defined in the laws and regulations in the field of higher education and the compliance with study courses to be implemented (whether professional development of the academic staff is ensured and regular compliance assessment of the qualification of the academic staff is performed); 4.3 the compliance of the administrative and study auxiliary staff of the higher education institution or college for reaching the aims and objectives set for the operation of the higher education institution or college (whether accessibility of the administrative and study auxiliary staff is ensured); 5. The compliance of the internal quality assurance system at the higher education institution or college with reaching the aims of the higher education institution or college, by evaluating aspects in the internal quality assurance system: 5.1 quality assurance policy, its development and publicity whether and to what extent it complies with the following requirement: "Higher education institutions and colleges shall develop a policy for quality assurance, which shall be publicly available and form a part of the institution's strategic management. Internal stakeholders shall develop and implement this policy, by applying appropriate structures and processes and by involving external stakeholders"; 5.2 the development and approval of study programmes, continuous monitoring of the quality of study programmes, assessing, whether and to what extent it complies with the following requirement: "A higher education institution or college shall establish mechanisms for the development and approval of study programmes. The programmes shall be developed in such a manner that they comply with the set aims, inter alia, the intended learning outcomes. The qualification to be completed in the programme shall be clearly defined and explained, and it shall refer to the correct level in the national qualifications framework for higher education and, thus, also to the qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area"; 5.3 ensuring a student-centred study process, the assessment of students' performance, assessing whether and to what extent it complies with the following requirement: "A higher education institution or college shall ensure that the study programmes are delivered in such a manner that they encourage students to take an active role in developing the study</p>	<p>or college, including related research, and, if the study field "Arts" is implemented – also such compliance with artistic innovation. 7. Activities of the higher education institution or college in the field of science and research, and, if the study field "Arts" is implemented – also in the field of artistic innovation; compliance with the implementation of the study fields and relevant study programmes of the higher education institution or college, including related research, and, if the study field "Arts" is implemented – also such compliance with artistic innovation. 8. Activities of the higher education institution or college to ensure the compliance of studies and research, and, if the study field "Arts" is implemented – also the compliance of artistic innovation, with labour market demands. 9. The compliance of international cooperation and internationalisation with reaching the aims of the higher education institution or college, and with the implementation of study fields and the relevant study programmes, including related research, and, if the study field "Arts" is implemented – also such compliance with artistic innovation. 10. Activities of student self-governance. 11. A support system related to education and career development for students of the higher education institution or college to foster their employment.</p>
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process, and the assessment of students shall reflect this approach;

5.4 rules of admission, studying, and graduation, procedures, their publicity and compliance, assessing, whether and to what extent it complies with the following requirement: “A higher education institution or college shall consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student “life-cycle” – student admission, progression, recognition, and conferring the degree.”;

5.5 the mechanism for recruiting the academic staff and their continuous professional development, assessing, whether and to what extent it complies with the following requirement: “A higher education institution or college shall assure themselves of the competence of its teaching staff. Fair and transparent mechanisms shall be used in staff recruitment and professional development”;

5.6 the management of study information: acquirement of data and their use in decision making, assessing, whether and to what extent it complies with the following requirement: “A higher education institution or college shall ensure that it collects, analyses, and uses information necessary for the effective management of study programmes and other activities.”;

5.7 public information: published information about the activities of the higher education institution or college, the content of information, ways of dissemination and feedback from society, assessing, whether and to what extent it complies with the following requirement: “A higher education institution or college shall publish information about its activities (including study programmes). Information shall be clear, accurate, unbiased, up-to-date, and readily available.”;

5.8 periodic external quality assessment, assessing, whether and to what extent it complies with the following requirement: “A higher education institution or college shall conduct periodic external quality assurance.”

6 The **compliance** of organisation and management of studies for the **implementation of the study fields of the higher education institution or college and study programmes and the relevant study fields**, as well as the related research and/or artistic innovation:

6.1 study fields, the relevant study programmes;

6.2 the number and the composition of students, changes, indicators of duration of studies, and students which do not complete their studies (“drop-out rate”);

6.3 criteria for student matriculation, admission in subsequent study stages, and the recognition of learning outcomes achieved in prior learning or professional experience;

	<p>6.4 activities of students' self-governance;</p> <p>6.5 study, research and/or artistic innovation, social, advisory activities;</p> <p>6.6 students' scientific research activities and/or artistic innovation as a part of study process, students' research associations, contests of students' research and creative work, prizes, awards, special grants;</p> <p>6.7 conditions of studies, leisure and living, assistance and advice to students, incentives for studies, possibilities to acquire knowledge and skills also outside the study programme.</p> <p>7. Activities of higher education institution or college in the field of science and research or artistic innovation, its compliance with the implementation of study fields of the higher education institution or college, and the relevant study programmes, as well as related research:</p> <p>7.1 the strategy and organisation of scientific activities or artistic innovation;</p> <p>7.2 results and achievements in science or artistic innovation;</p> <p>7.3 the linkage of research or artistic innovation and learning;</p> <p>7.4 cooperation with Latvian and international partners in science and research or artistic innovation.</p> <p>8. Activities by the higher education institution or college to ensure the compliance of studies and research with labour market demands:</p> <p>8.1 the perspectives of graduates from the higher education institution or college on the labour market and forecasts for the following six years;</p> <p>8.2 cooperation with the graduates' employers;</p> <p>8.3 a career support system at the higher education institution or college.</p> <p>9 The compliance of international cooperation and internationalisation for reaching the aims of the higher education institution or college, the implementation of study fields and the relevant study programmes, as well as related research:</p> <p>9.1 the policy of international cooperation and internationalisation of the higher education institution or college, its implementation and impact upon study and research process;</p> <p>9.2 international certificates, accreditations, etc. of study programme or institution;</p> <p>9.3 quantitative indicators of international exchange students and academic staff;</p> <p>9.4 criteria and procedures for assessing and recognising parts of higher education completed abroad, credit points and education documents obtained abroad, as well as their compliance with the Council of Europe convention – Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, adopted on 11 April 1997.</p>	
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Annex 10. Criteria for Assessment of Study Fields in 2012, 2016, and 2017

The table gives the annual breakdown of the differences between the criteria for the assessment of study programmes, marked in **bold**.

Annex 6 to Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges and study fields” (in force from 19.10.2012 until 30.07.2015)	Annex 9 to Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges and study fields” (in force since 30.07.2015)	Annex 9 to Cabinet Regulations “Regulations on accreditation of higher education institutions, colleges and study fields” (in force since 25.07.2017)
<p>1. Aims and objectives, clarity, attainability and transparency of study programmes of the related study field.</p> <p>2. Management of the study field: 2.1 compliance with the principles of democracy in managing the study field and study programmes, clearly defined obligations, and the interaction between administrative staff, academic staff and students.</p> <p>6. Resources and provision of the study field: 6.1 financial resources for ensuring the implementation of study programmes of the related study field and activities of student self-governance, as well as for ensuring research (creative) activities of academic staff. Control over the use of financial resources and sustainability. 6.2 qualification and professionalism of academic staff of the higher education institution or college involved in the study field, the compliance with the implementation of the study programmes of the related study field; 6.3 methodological, informative (including library resources) and material technical provisions for the study field, their compliance with the provisions of laws and regulations that regulate professions to be obtained.</p> <p>2.2. Collaboration with other higher education institutions or colleges, scientific institutions, international organisations, and the exchange of the academic staff and students from other higher education institutions or colleges abroad and in Latvia.</p> <p>5. Scientific research (creation) work of academic staff and students of the higher education institution or the college: 5.1 involvement of the academic staff in scientific research (creation) work, relevance of topics of scientific research work and relation to the content of study field and related study programmes, publication of research work in international available and reviewed editions (for example, in exhibitions, shows, performances) or practical use, involvement in innovative activities. Relation of doctoral study programmes (if such are implemented) to associated grants and (or) projects. 5.2 Involvement of students in scientific research (creative work), relation of topics of scientific research work to aims of studies and expected learning outcomes, involvement of students in national and international research and creative (artistic) projects.</p>	<p>1. Relevance, aims and objectives of the study field and relevant study programmes as a whole and their clarity, attainability and compliance with the general strategic development of the higher education institution or college.</p> <p>2. Management of the study field: 2.1 effectiveness of management structure of the study field; 2.2 compliance with the principles of democracy in managing the study field and study programmes, clearly defined obligations and responsibility of administrative staff, academic staff and students.</p> <p>3. Resources and provision of the study field: 3.1 financial resources for ensuring implementation of study programmes of the related study field and activities of student self-governance, as well as for ensuring research (creative) activities of academic staff. Control over the use of financial resources and sustainability. 3.2 qualification and professionalism of academic staff of the higher education institution or college involved in the study field, compliance with implementation of study programmes of the related study field; 3.3 methodological, informative (including library resources) and material technical provisions for the study field, their compliance with the provisions of laws and regulations that regulate professions to be obtained.</p> <p>4. Organisation of scientific research in the framework of the study field and scientific research (creation) work of academic staff and students of the higher education institution or the college: 4.1 organisational and institutional structure of scientific (creation) work, resources allocated for research; 4.2 involvement of academic staff in scientific research (creation) work, relevance of topics of scientific research work and relation to the content of study field and related study programmes, publication of research work in international reviewed editions, international publicity, for example, in exhibitions, shows, performances and/or practical use, involvement in innovative activities. Relation of doctoral study programmes (if such are implemented) to associated grants and (or) projects; 4.3 Involvement of students in scientific research (creative work), relation of the topics of scientific research work to the</p>	<p>1. Relevance, aims, and objectives of the study field and relevant study programmes as a whole and their clarity, attainability and compliance with the general strategic development of the higher education institution or college.</p> <p>2. Management of the study field.</p> <p>3. Resources and provision of the study field.</p> <p>4. Organisation of scientific research and, in case of study field “Arts”, – also of artistic innovation, in the framework of the study field and the scientific research work, and, in case of study field “Arts” – also of artistic innovation, of the academic staff and students of the higher education institution or the college.</p> <p>5. Compliance of cooperation and internationalisation with reaching development aims of the study field, implementation of study programmes of the related study field, and relevant research, and, in case of the study field “Arts”, also with artistic innovation.</p> <p>6. Effectiveness of internal quality assurance system for reaching development aims of the related study field, by assessing definite aspects in internal quality assurance system.</p> <p>7. Activities of student self-governance.</p> <p>8. Reciprocal compliance between study programme's title, degree, professional qualification or degree, and professional qualification to be completed, aims and objectives and terms of admission.</p> <p>9. Content of studies.</p> <p>10. Resources and provision of study programme.</p> <p>11. Employment perspectives of programme's graduates.</p> <p>12. Implementation of recommendations (if such had been given) provided for a particular study programme in the framework of previous licensing of a study programme or accreditation of study field (if such had been conducted).</p>

<p>7. Quality assurance and guarantees:</p> <p>7.1 Annual discussions on positive and negative features of study field and relevant study programmes, about changes, development possibilities and plans, continuous functioning of internal system of self-assessment and quality improvement.</p> <p>7.2 Compliance of internal quality assurance system with provisions defined in Standards and Guidelines developed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education for ensuring quality in the European Higher Education Area.</p> <p>7.3 Possibilities to continue studies and financial guarantees in case any of study programmes in the related study field is closed or reorganised or if other changes occur.</p> <p>4. Assessment of studies and knowledge:</p> <p>4.1 up-to-date methodology for the implementation of a study programme, a clear summary of expected learning outcomes, problem solving, and use of computers, multimedia and internet;</p> <p>4.2. support for students, consultations provided by academic staff, academic management and strengthening of study incentives;</p> <p>4.3 impartiality of methodology for assessment of knowledge, skills and competences and their use for improvement of study process; and</p> <p>4.4 compliance of methodology and criteria for assessment of knowledge, skills and competences with the requirements of laws and regulations.</p> <p>3. Content and organisation of studies:</p> <p>3.1 Compliance of study content with aims and objectives of study programme. Compliance of study content with degree, degree and professional qualification or professional qualification to be awarded, with provisions of qualification framework and legal provisions regulating professions.</p> <p>3.2 Compliance of study programme with the related study field and their individual parts with the provisions on developing the Latvian and common European Higher Education Area, including the comparison of every study programme of the related study field with one Latvian programme of the same level in the relevant study field (if a similar study programme is implemented in Latvia) and at least two programmes of higher education institutions or colleges that are recognised by a state of the European Union</p> <p>8. Implementation of recommendations received during the previous accreditation of the study field (if such has been conducted).</p>	<p>aims of studies and the intended learning outcomes, the involvement of students in national and international research and creative (artistic) projects.</p> <p>5. Compliance of cooperation and internationalisation with reaching the development aims of the study field, implementation of study programmes of related study field, and relevant research:</p> <p>5.1 cooperation with other higher education institutions or colleges, scientific institutions, and international organisations;</p> <p>5.2. cooperation and internationalisation policy of higher education institution or college, its implementation, and its impact upon studies and research within the study field;</p> <p>5.3 international certificates, accreditations, etc. of study programme or institution;</p> <p>5.4 qualitative indicators regarding international exchange of students and academic staff; and</p> <p>5.5 criteria and procedures for assessing and recognising parts of higher education completed abroad, credit points, and education documents obtained abroad, as well as their compliance with the Council of Europe convention adopted on 11 April 1997 Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region that refer to higher education.</p> <p>6. Effectiveness of internal quality assurance system for reaching development aims of related study field, by assessing the following aspects in internal quality assurance system:</p> <p>6.1 Quality assurance policy, its development and publicity whether and to what extent it complies with the following requirement: “Higher education institutions and colleges shall develop a policy for quality assurance, which shall be publicly available and shall be a part of institution’s strategic management. Internal stakeholders shall develop and implement this policy, by applying appropriate structures and processes and by involving external stakeholders.”</p> <p>6.2 Development and approval of study programmes, continuous monitoring of programme quality, assessing, whether and to what extent it complies with the following requirement: “A higher education institution or a college shall establish mechanisms for the development and approval of study programmes. Programmes shall be developed in order to comply with the aims that have been set, inter alia, the intended learning outcomes. The qualification to be awarded after the programme’s completion shall be clearly defined and explained, and it shall refer to the correct level in the national qualifications framework for higher education and, thus, also to the qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area.”</p> <p>6.3 Ensuring a student-centred</p>	
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study process, evaluation of student performance, assessing whether and to what extent it complies with the following requirement: “The higher education institution or the college shall ensure that study programmes be delivered in order to encourage students to take an active role in developing study process, and assessment of students shall reflect this approach.”

6.4 Rules of admission, studying and graduation, procedures, their publicity and compliance, assessing, whether and to what extent it complies with the following requirement: “The higher education institution or the college shall consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of student “life cycle” –student admission, progression, recognition and conferring the degree.”

6.5 Mechanisms for recruiting academic staff and their continuous professional development, assessing, whether and to what extent it complies with the following requirements: “A higher education institution or a college shall make sure about the competence of their teaching staff. Fair and transparent mechanisms shall be used in staff recruitment and professional development.”

6.6 The management of study information: acquirement of data and their use in decision-making, assessing, whether and to what extent it complies with the following requirement: “The higher education institution or the college shall ensure that it collects, analyses and uses information necessary for effective management of study programmes and other activities.”

6.7 Public information: published information about activities of the higher education institution or the college, content of information, ways of dissemination and feedback from society, assessing whether and to what extent it complies with the following requirement: “A higher education institution or a college shall publish information about its activities (including study programmes). Information shall be clear, accurate, unbiased, up-to-date and readily available.”

6.8 Periodic external quality assessment, assessing whether and to what extent it complies with the following requirement: “A higher education institution or a college shall conduct periodic external quality assurance”.

7. Implementation of recommendations received during the previous accreditation of the study field (if such has been conducted).

8. Reciprocal compliance between study programme’s title, degree, professional qualification, or degree and professional qualification to be awarded, aims and objectives, and terms of admission.

9. Study content:

9.1 The compliance of the content of studies with the aims and objectives of the study programme. Compliance of study content with degree, degree and

	<p>professional qualification, or professional qualification to be awarded, with the provisions of qualification framework and legal provisions regulating professions.</p> <p>9.2 Compliance of the plan of the study programmes of the related study field with the aims and objectives of the study programme.</p> <p>9.3 Compliance of the study programme of the related study field and its parts with the provisions on developing the Latvian and common European Higher Education Area, including the comparison of every study programme of the related study field with one Latvian programme of the same level in the relevant study field (if a similar study programme is implemented in Latvia) and at least two programmes of higher education institutions or colleges recognised by a state of the European Union.</p> <p>10. Resources and provision of the study programme:</p> <p>10.1 Financial resources for implementing the study programme and ensuring activities of student self-governance, as well as research (creation) activities of academic staff. Control over the use of financial resources and sustainability;</p> <p>10.2 Qualification and professionalism of academic staff of the higher education institution or the college involved in the study programme, compliance for implementing the study programme.</p> <p>10.3 Methodological, informative (including library resources) and material technical provisions of the study programme, its compliance with provisions of laws and regulations regulating the professions to be obtained.</p> <p>11. Employment perspectives of the study programme's graduates.</p> <p>12. Implementation of recommendations (if such had been given) provided for a particular study programme in the framework of the previous licensing of a study programme or accreditation of the study field (if such had been conducted).</p>	
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Annex 11. Comparison of EQF and LQF Level Descriptors

	EQF level descriptors (2017)	LQF level descriptors (Cabinet Regulations, 2017)	LQF level descriptors (Education Law, 2015) ¹²⁹	LQF/ EQF level
K	Basic general knowledge	Able to demonstrate elementary knowledge , which manifests in recognition and recollection	Able to demonstrate elementary knowledge and use it to perform basic practical tasks under supervision of a professional	1
S	Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks	Able to use elementary practical and cognitive skills under direct supervision by using simple tools Able to perform simple tasks which are repetitive as to their content and predictable		
R/C	Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context	Able to perform simple tasks in a structured environment , to function in a limited context Able to perform elementary tasks following a model, able to master basic self-care skills		
K	Basic factual knowledge of a field or work or study	Able to demonstrate basic knowledge set in a field of work or specific subject syllabi in reference to the relevant field of professional activity or learning	Able to demonstrate basic skills and use them to perform simple practical tasks in the relevant field with some autonomy or under supervision of a professional	2
S	Basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools	Able to use basic cognitive and practical skills which are necessary to perform tasks by using relevant information, and solve routine problems by using basic rules and means Able to understand the consequences of own actions with regard to self and others.		
R/C	Work or study under supervision with some autonomy	Able to perform tasks under supervision of a professional, individually, in a working group or partly independently Able to participate in setting some learning or work objectives and planning the course of action		
K	Knowledge of facts, principles, processes, and general concepts , in a field of work or study	Able to demonstrate the knowledge of facts, principles, processes, and general concepts and to use them in a field of learning and professional activity Able to understand various types of information about materials, equipment, technologies in the relevant field of learning or specific profession	Able to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and use it to perform a range of tasks in an unchanging and stable environment, taking responsibility of the work outcome	3
S	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials, and information	Able to use various cognitive and practical skills which are necessary to perform tasks and to solve problems by selecting appropriate basic work methods, means, materials, information, and technologies		
R/C	Take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study Adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems	Able to be aware of and assume responsibility for performing work or learning tasks When solving the tasks, is able to adjust one's actions to circumstances and assume responsibility for the result of work		

¹²⁷ Some other countries also focus on referencing the education system to the EQF (and QF-EHEA), but in contrast to Latvia, ISCED levels are set uniformly equal to EQF levels.

¹²⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetailDoc&id=10973&no=2>.

¹²⁹ http://www.ehea.info/media/ehea.info/file/WG_Frameworks_qualification/71/0/050218_QF_EHEA_580710.pdf

K	Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study	Able to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of facts, theories, and causalities which are necessary for personal growth and development, civic participation, social integration, and continuing learning Able to comprehend in detail and to demonstrate knowledge of diverse specific facts, principles, processes, and concepts in a specific field of learning or professional activity in standard and non-standard situations Has good knowledge of technologies and methods for performing work tasks in the profession	Able to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and independently plan and organize work in the relevant field, taking responsibility, working individually, in a team or by managing the work of other individuals	4
S	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study	Able to plan and organize work, using various methods, technologies (including information and communication technologies), equipment, tools and materials for performing tasks Able to find, assess, and creatively use information for performing learning or work tasks and problem solving Able to communicate in at least two languages in writing and orally in a known and unknown context Able to work in the profession, learn and improve oneself Able to cooperate		
R/C	Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change Supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities	Is motivated for further career development, further learning and lifelong learning in a knowledge-oriented democratic, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural society in Europe and in the world Able to plan and perform learning or work tasks in the profession individually, in a team or by managing the teamwork Able to assume responsibility for the quality and quantity of the learning or work outcomes		
K	Comprehensive, specialised, factual, and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge	Able to demonstrate comprehensive and specialised knowledge and understanding of facts, theories, causalities and technologies of the relevant professional field	Able to demonstrate comprehensive and specialised knowledge in the relevant field Able to use an analytical approach to solve practical problems within a field of work in a changing environment	5
S	A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems	Able on the basis of analytical approach to perform practical tasks in the relevant profession, to demonstrate skills that allow to find creative solutions to professional problems, to discuss and provide arguments to practical issues and solutions in the relevant profession with colleagues, clients, and management, able to, with an appropriate degree of independence, to engage in further learning, by improving one's competences Able to assess and improve one's own actions and that of other individuals, to work in cooperation with others, to plan and organize work to perform specific tasks in the relevant profession, to perform or supervise work activities in contexts with unpredictable changes	Able to demonstrate understanding of the scope of one's own activities in a broader social context, to participate in the development of the relevant field, and to evaluate one's own actions and those of other individuals	
R/C	Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change Review and develop performance of self and others	Able to define, describe and analyse practical problems in their profession, to select the necessary information and use it for solving clearly defined problems, to participate in the development of the relevant professional field, to demonstrate understanding of the role of the relevant profession in a broader social context		

K	Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles	Able to demonstrate basic and specialised knowledge in the specific field of science or profession and critical understanding of this knowledge , furthermore, a part of this knowledge complies with the highest level of achievement of the relevant field of science or profession Able to demonstrate understanding of the most important concepts and causalities of the relevant field of science or profession	Able to demonstrate basic and specialised knowledge in the relevant field and use it to perform professional, artistic, innovative or research activity Able to use a scientific approach in problem solving, assuming responsibility and initiative	6	
S	Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study	Able, by using the mastered theoretical foundations and skills to perform professional, artistic, innovative or research activity , to define and describe analytically information, problems and solutions in the relevant field of science or profession , to explain them and provide arguments in discussions with both professionals and non-professionals Is able to structure independently one's own learning, to guide one's own and subordinates' further learning and professional improvement, to demonstrate scientific approach to problem solving, to assume responsibility and take initiative when performing individual work, when working in a team or managing the work of others, to take decisions and find creative solutions in changing or unclear contexts	Able to use a scientific approach in problem solving, assuming responsibility and initiative Ability to take decisions and find creative solutions in changing contexts		
R/C	Manage complex technical and/or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts Take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups	Able to obtain, select and analyse information independently , and use it, to take decisions and solve problems in the specific field of science or profession, to demonstrate understanding of professional ethics , to assess the impact of one's professional activities on the environment and society, and to participate in the development of the relevant professional field			

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

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

*K – knowledge, S – skills, R/C – responsibility and autonomy/competences

Annex 12. Comparison of Level Descriptors of QF-EHEA and LQF

	QF-EHEA level descriptors (2005) ¹³⁰	LQF level descriptors (2017) ¹³¹
First cycle qualification (LQF level 6)	<p><u>Have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study</u> that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by <u>knowledge of the forefront of their field of study.</u></p> <p>Can <u>apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach</u> to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study.</p> <p>Have the <u>ability to gather and interpret relevant data</u> (usually within their field of study) to inform judgments that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues.</p> <p>Can <u>communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both professional and non-professional audiences.</u></p> <p>Have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to <u>continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.</u></p>	<p>Able to demonstrate <u>basic and specialised knowledge in the specific field of science or profession</u> and critical understanding of this knowledge, furthermore, a part of knowledge complies with <u>the highest level of achievement of the relevant field of science or profession.</u></p> <p>Able to demonstrate <u>understanding of the most important concepts and causalities</u> of the relevant field of science or profession.</p> <p>Able, by using the mastered theoretical foundations and skills <u>to perform professional, artistic, innovative or research activity, to define and describe analytically information, problems and solutions</u> in the relevant field of science or profession, to explain them and <u>provide arguments in discussions with both professionals and non-professionals.</u></p> <p>Able <u>to structure independently one's own learning, to guide one's own and subordinates' further learning</u> and professional improvement, to demonstrate scientific approach to problem solving, <u>to assume responsibility and take initiative</u> when performing individual work, when working in a team or managing the work of others, to take decisions and find creative solutions in changing or unclear contexts.</p> <p>Able <u>to obtain, select and analyse information independently, and use it,</u> to take decisions and solve problems in the specific field of science or profession, to demonstrate understanding of professional ethics, to assess the impact of one's professional activities on the environment and society, and to participate in the development of the relevant professional field.</p>
Second cycle qualification (LQF level 7)	<p>Have demonstrated <u>knowledge and understanding founded upon and extends and/or enhances</u> that, typically associated with the first cycle and that provides <u>a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas,</u> often within a research context.</p> <p>Can apply <u>their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments</u> within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study.</p> <p>Have <u>the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgments with incomplete or limited information,</u> including reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments.</p> <p>Can <u>communicate their conclusions, and knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to professional and non-professional audiences</u> clearly and unambiguously.</p> <p>Have <u>learning skills to allow them to continue studies</u> in a manner that may be <u>largely self-directed or autonomous.</u></p>	<p>Able to demonstrate <u>advanced or extensive knowledge and understanding, a part of which conforms to the most recent findings in the relevant field of science or profession,</u> and which provides the <u>basis for creative thinking or research,</u> inter alia, working in the interface between different fields.</p> <p>Able <u>to independently use theory, methods, and problem solving skills</u> required to perform research or artistic activities or highly qualified professional functions.</p> <p>Able <u>to provide arguments when explaining and discussing complex or systemic aspects of the relevant field of science or profession both with professionals and non-professionals.</u></p> <p>Able <u>to manage independently the improvement of one's own competences and specialisation,</u> to assume responsibility for the results of staff and group work and analyse them, to perform business activities, to innovations in the specific field of science or profession, to perform work, research or <u>further learning under complex and unpredictable conditions,</u> and, if necessary, change them, using new approaches.</p> <p>Able <u>to define independently and critically analyse complex scientific and professional problems,</u> substantiate decisions and, if necessary, carry out additional analysis.</p> <p>Able <u>to integrate knowledge of various fields, contribute to the creation of new knowledge,</u> the development of research or professional working methods, <u>to demonstrate understanding and ethical responsibility</u> for the possible impact of the scientific results or professional activity on the environment and society.</p>

¹³⁰ Qualifications framework of the European Higher Education Area. Approved in the conference of European ministers for higher education in Bergen, May 2005.

¹³¹ Table 2 of Annex 1 to Cabinet Regulations No 322 "Regulations on the education classification of Latvia" (in force since 13.06.2017). See: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=291524>. In order to facilitate the comparison of the level descriptors, the rows corresponding to knowledge, skills, and competences have been merged.

Third cycle qualification (LQF level 8)	<p>Have demonstrated <u>a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research</u> associated with that field.</p> <p>Have demonstrated the ability <u>to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity.</u></p> <p>Have made <u>a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication.</u></p> <p>Are capable of <u>critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas.</u></p> <p><u>Can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general</u> about their areas of expertise.</p> <p>Can be expected <u>to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement</u> in a knowledge based society.</p>	<p>Able to demonstrate <u>that has knowledge of and understands the most topical scientific theories and insights, has mastered research methodology and contemporary research methods</u> in the specific field of science or profession and in the interface of various fields.</p> <p>Able <u>to independently assess and select appropriate methods required for scientific research or artistic innovation, has contributed to the expansion of the limits of knowledge or provided new understanding of existing knowledge and its use in practice,</u> by carrying out work of artistic innovation in the field of artistic innovation or an original large-scale research, <u>a part of which is at the level of internationally cited publications.</u></p> <p>Able <u>to communicate both orally and in writing about one's own field of scientific activity (one's own branch) with wider research community and public in general.</u></p> <p>Able to implement artistic innovation projects of international level.</p> <p>Able <u>to independently improve one's scientific qualification,</u> implement scientific projects, by attaining achievements meeting international criteria of the relevant field of science, manage research or development tasks in companies, institutions and organisations that require extensive research knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Able, <u>to independently improve the skills of performing artistically highly valuable works and develop practical skills</u> required to realise unique international ideas and carry out artistic innovation work.</p> <p>Able, by performing independent critical analysis, synthesis, and assessment, <u>to carry out significant research, innovation or artistic innovation tasks</u> in the field of artistic innovation, set independently research idea, plan, structure and manage large-scale scientific or artistic innovation projects, including international projects.</p>
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Augstākās izglītības kvalitātes aģentūra

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09.11.2018

Rīgā

Nacionālais pielīdzināšanas ziņojums “Latvijas izglītības sistēmas pielīdzināšana Eiropas kvalifikāciju ietvarstruktūrai mūžizglītībai un Eiropas augstākās izglītības telpas kvalifikāciju ietvarstruktūrai”

Augstākās izglītības kvalitātes aģentūra (AIKA) tika izveidota 2015. gadā kā Akadēmiskā informācijas centra (AIC) Akreditācijas departaments. Saskaņā ar Augstskolu likumu tās kompetencē ietilpst augstskolu un koledžu akreditācijas, studiju virzienu akreditācijas, studiju programmu licencēšanas, kā arī citu procesu, kas saistīti ar augstākās izglītības kvalitātes novērtēšanu, organizēšanu.

AIKA atbalsta atjaunoto nacionālo pielīdzināšanas ziņojumu “Latvijas izglītības sistēmas pielīdzināšana Eiropas kvalifikāciju ietvarstruktūrai mūžizglītībai un Eiropas augstākās izglītības telpas kvalifikāciju ietvarstruktūrai” un apstiprina, ka pielīdzināšanas ziņojums un tajā aprakstītā kritēriju izpilde ir saskaņā ar attiecīgajiem Latvijas kvalitātes nodrošināšanas pasākumiem, noteikumiem un praksi.

Aģentūras vadītājs

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Rauhvargers', is written over a light blue circular stamp.

Prof. Andrejs Rauhvargers



Annex 14. Reports by International Experts

Report by Kulli All

The review of the Latvian Self-Assessment Report is the result of a long political process, and describes the second phase of the self-assessment process, reforms undertaken and their result in the context of LQF.

The report describes in a clear way the development and implementation of the Latvian National Framework for Qualifications. The description of the self-assessment process since 2011 on page 10 gives a clear overview of the differences with regards to the placement of qualifications on framework.

Annexes 1 and 4 give a clear picture of the differences in qualifications descriptors compared to the regulations at 2011 and regulatory amendments since the first phase of the self-assessment.

From Annex 5 one could get an explanation for the change of the level of basic education from level 3 to level 2. It's said in an open way that one of the reasons for changing the level is a political one- the comparison of levelling of the other countries Basic education positioning. Also there is given an additional reason of changing the level - Latvian PISA results. It raises a wider question – if the PISA (or PIAAC) results are a real proof to support or deny the achievement of intended learning outcomes.

All quality criteria are answered sufficiently in the report and from an external view all criteria are fulfilled. With a view to of referencing process – the work was done on a high level of national consultation and with high political support.

The report gives a very good insight to the formal education system but there is some room for development when it comes to non-formal qualifications e.g. qualifications from other (non-state) education providers.

Finally again congratulations to Latvian colleagues for the efforts and work done – the results are very good.

Küllli All

Report by Juraj Vantuch

This report focuses on reviewing the updated Latvian referencing report to offer the international expert opinion on clarity and credibility of processes undertaken by Latvian National authorities with regard to creation and implementing Latvian Qualification Framework (LQF). Report therefore explicitly addresses respective internationally agreed criteria. Furthermore, it also offers comments to the philosophy underlying to the Latvian approach to the functionality of the qualification framework and to the LQF related changes in education and qualification systems. This report is, therefore, composed as follows:

1. Commenting referencing report structure.
2. Assessment of the response to the EQF and QF-EHEA criteria.

Annex: Commenting the Latvian philosophy of change of education and qualification systems.

1. Commenting referencing report structure

Referencing report is very well structured. Part I.1 offers to the foreign reader the insight into Latvian education system and the progress related to the creation and the implementation of LQF. The dynamics of change as well as pragmatism correctly understanding the importance of gradual development in phases is worth of respect. Part

I.2 reflects “shift to learning outcomes” that is at the heart of recent vocational education transformation processes worldwide and in fact inevitable for compatibility in EU. Part I.3 addresses quality assurance processes that are crucial for building trust in provision of qualifications. In contrast to these two, part I.4 is crucial for future as the validation of non-formal and informal learning will become more and more important due to incoming brutal changes in the labour market weakening traditional profession based training and requiring flexibility in adoption of knowledge and skills.

Indeed, part I of the report is very important for understanding Latvian context, Latvian reforming efforts in the recent decade, and the specificity of the Latvian approach to the implementing LQF (see also Annex concerning this interesting topic). Part II focuses on referencing per se and will be commented in detail elsewhere.

Annexes offer details properly supplementing the main body of the referencing report; however one annex is missing (also in contrast to the earlier referencing report): An annex offering definitions of terms would be very helpful and indeed this kind of glossaries are both useful and often used in referencing reports. E. g. explicit detailed definition of “qualification” is very important for understanding referencing reports and for grasping specificity in national approaches. Making difference between “educational qualification” and “professional qualification” is one of typical specificities that is visible in Latvian approach as well.

The following is to deal with annexes that feature some specificity: Annex 3 is the most important one as it in details, but comprehensively, documents referencing education system to LQF/ EQF. Without this annex, the foreign reader might be easy lost, in particular concerning levelling professional qualifications. This annex is also very instrumental for understanding levelling conceptual framework of LQF and the amount of work needed for analysing respective programmes¹³². Annex 5 is also instrumental for understanding the Latvian approach to NQF and Latvian focus on referencing education system to LQF/EQF, due to offered details of this referencing and related analyses. Annexes 11 and 12 are useful for international experts as they offer comprehensive comparison of LQF and EQF/ QF-EHEA descriptors.

This updated referencing report is clear in documenting meeting required EQF/ QF-EHEA criteria (see detailed assessment in tables below) and offers a clear picture on processes accompanying creation of LQF and its gradual implementation. Gradual expansion of the coverage of qualifications is a pragmatic solution and is in line with the Latvian approach to LQF. Progress compared to earlier periods of LQF implementation as presented by 2012 referencing report is enormous. Besides improvement in the legislative backing, adoption of 15 Sectoral Qualification Frameworks, creation of Latvian Qualification Database (LQD) and full membership of Quality Agency for Higher Education in European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) is worth highlighting. Latvia is among few countries linked to the LOQ/PLOTEUS portal (from 2016 with regularly updated information on Latvian qualifications) and to the ESCO portal (from 2016). The following journal proposals are worth reconsidering:

- add an annex with definitions of crucial terms (Glossary);
- add an annex describing one of 15 Sectoral Qualification Frameworks.

¹³² Some other countries also focus on referencing the education system to the EQF (and QF-EHEA), but in contrast to Latvia, ISCED levels are set uniformly equal to EQF levels.

2. Assessment of the response to EQF and QF-EHEA criteria

The following table offers assessment of respective criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF¹³³.

Table 1. Assessing compatibility with EQF

Criteria	Assessment	Comment
1. The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process, including the National Coordination Point, are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities.	Being met	Progress compared to earlier referencing report is strongly visible in legislative backing of LQF and relevant processes.
2. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the EQF.	Being met	Progress compared to earlier referencing report is strongly visible in coverage of "professional qualifications" and development of Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks. Further progress concerning newly emerging qualifications outside formal education system is expected in the next phase.
3. The national qualifications framework or system and its qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where these exist, to credit systems.	Being met	Similarly to other countries, general education is traditionally seen as not offering qualifications (at least not primarily) and learning outcomes based transformation is seen problematic.
4. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.	Being met	Levelling educational and professional qualifications is fully transparent. Inclusion of newly emerging labour market driven qualifications (i.a. international qualifications) in the NQF (and links in triangle EQF-LQF –relevant SQF) need to be further elaborated in the next phase.
5. The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer (s) to the national qualifications framework or system and are consistent with the relevant European principles and guidelines (as indicated in annex 3 of the Recommendation).	Being met	Quality assurance procedures are traditional, education system based as corresponds to the Latvian approach to the implementation of NQF focusing on referencing education system to EQF. Substantial progress in higher education is documented. Further progress in quality assurance procedures concerning newly created labour market driven qualifications is expected in next phases.
6. The referencing process should include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies.	Being met	Quality Agency for Higher Education statement is annexed.
7. The referencing process should involve international experts.	Being met	
8. The competent national body or bodies should certify the referencing of the national qualifications framework or system with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing and the evidence supporting it should be published by the competent national bodies, including the National Coordination Point, and should address separately each of the criteria.		Latvia is among few EU countries having prepared an updated referencing report. All criteria were addressed separately and there are no doubts about future publishing of the report.
9. The official EQF platform should maintain a public listing of member states that have confirmed that they have completed the referencing process, including links to completed referencing reports.	Being met	Latvia is among few EU countries having prepared an updated referencing report.

¹³³ <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetailDoc&id=10973&no=2>.

Criteria	Assessment	Comment
10. Following the referencing process, and in line with the timelines set in the Recommendation, all new qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications systems, to the appropriate European Qualifications Framework level.	Being met	Respective legislative backing is provided.

The following tables offer assessment of respective criteria and procedures for verifying the compatibility of frameworks with the QF-EHEA¹³⁴.

Table 2. Assessing compatibility QF-EHEA criteria

Criteria	Assessment	Comments
The national framework for higher education qualifications and the body or bodies responsible for its development are designated by the national ministry with responsibility for higher education.	Being met	Already achieved and documented by 2012 Referencing report.
There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications in the national framework and the cycle qualification descriptors of the European framework.	Being met	Already achieved and documented by 2012 Referencing report.
The national framework and its qualifications are demonstrably based on learning outcomes and the qualifications are linked to ECTS or ECTS compatible credits.	Being met	ECTS compatible approach is in place (ECTS = 1.5 Latvian credit points).
The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national framework are transparent.	Being met	Progress since 2012 has been documented.
The national quality assurance system for higher education refer to the national framework of qualifications and are consistent with the Berlin Communiqué and any subsequent communiqués agreed by ministers in the Bologna Process.	Being met	Substantial progress documented, i.a. by membership of the Latvian Quality Agency for HE in the ENQA.
The national framework, and any alignment with the European framework, is referenced in all Diploma Supplements,	Being met	Progress since 2012 has been documented.
The national framework, and any alignment with the European framework, is referenced in all Diploma Supplements,	Being met	Documented.

¹³⁴ http://www.ehea.info/media/ehea.info/file/AWG_Frameworks_qualification/71/0/050218_QF_EHEA_580710.pdf.

Table 3. Assessing compatibility QF-EHEA procedures proposed for self-certification

Procedures	Assessment	Comments
The competent national body/bodies should self-certify the compatibility of the national framework with the European framework	Being met	Progress since 2012 has been documented.
The self-certification process shall include the stated agreement of the quality assurance bodies in the country in question recognised through the Bologna Process	Being met	Substantial improvement in quality assurance is documented, Quality Agency for HE statement is annexed.
The self-certification process should involve international experts.	Being met	
The self-certification and the evidence supporting it should be published and address separately each of the criteria set out.	Being met	Each of the criteria were addressed separately and there are no doubts about future publishing of the report.
The ENIC and NARIC networks should maintain a public listing of States that have confirmed that they have completed the self-certification process.	Being met	Listing will be updated in 2019
The completion of the self-certification process should be noted on Diploma Supplements issued subsequently by showing the link between the national framework and the European framework.	Being met	Progress since 2012 documented

Annex

Commenting the Latvian philosophy of change of education and qualification systems (Reflection on the Latvian approach to the development and the functionality of LQF)

Latvia seems to be the only EU country explicitly referencing its education system to the EQF (and QF- EHEA). LQF is seen as “a significant part of an education system” (page 6), and subsequently referencing is seen as related to the education system - as visible also from the title of the referencing report¹³⁵. Referencing LQF to EQF (and QF-EHEA) is therefore seen as subordinated aspect and addressed as a component of the report (part II). The term qualification is used in a specific way, i.e. there is terminology making difference between educational and professional qualification. This is understandable in the light of troubles of many continental education systems with an Anglo-Saxon notion of “qualification”. Nevertheless a very sophisticated and detailed Latvian approach might be at risk in the future as a consequence of changing needs of labour market redefining requirements across professions and even making traditional professions outdated. Difficulties induced by Latvian formal education (and preparing for professions) centred approach might emerge as a consequence of incoming technological progress. Description of the profession or specialisations of the profession required by law might be hard to set in advance or may cause a frequent updating of regulations. There is a risk that flexibility emerging from changes in the labour market leading to requiring new qualifications (this is e.g. extremely urgent in IT sector) will lead to the domination of private CVT providers who will be able react in a more flexible way than schools. Indeed, Sectoral Expert Councils and already adopted Sectoral Qualification Framework might be very helpful in this, however their robustness and stability is not yet clear.

*Juraj Vantuch, Slovak National Observatory of Vocational Training, ReferNet Slovakia
January 10, 2019*

¹³⁵ Referencing of Latvian Education System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area