

Country Report LATVIA

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1. Background and Country Context

There is a school based VET system in the Baltic countries. After the collapse of the Soviet system and transformation to the market economy the system of practical training in enterprises was ruined. It has taken years to establish new networks of practical training for VET students and apprentices in enterprises. For the moment a new action plan that concerns better co-operation between schools and enterprises and recognition of the informal education is under discussion.

On the basis of the EUROTRAINER survey (only 6 answers) it remained unclear whether the area of in-company training is totally unregulated and there are no formal qualification certificates for the trainers. It seems that regulations concern only in-company training centers established by large enterprises. The interviewed representative of the Ministry of Education and Science said: "The colleges created by big companies should be registered according to the laws. The status of the companies that take school apprentices for practice is also defined. For instance, teachers from in-company colleges have the same obligations as teachers from the VET schools: improve their qualification during three years". The Law on Vocational Education also states that starting from September, 2004, only persons with pedagogical education will have the right to teach at VET schools. In the same competences of in-company trainers who do not work at the colleges are not regulated.

As there is a lack of laws, standards and state support in this area, everything depends on the enterprises' will and activity and there are big differences how trainers/supervisors in companies work and what kind of competences they have. There is also no official statistics or quantitative data on trainers working in enterprises available.

The separate investigation is needed for big enterprises that establish their own training centers and solve a great amount of educational problems by themselves. For instance, KNAUFE – construction and building, Latvenergo, Latvtelekom have their own colleges and invite teachers from the schools and experts from other enterprises to give lectures there. These colleges give certificates. If they wish they apply for the state licensing and their graduates get national certificates. The last one is not obligatory. Colleges do it if they wish to get some financial support from the state. For instance when the unemployment office is looking for trainers for its clients.

2. How is the work and training of trainers organised?

The trainers are usually full-time employees in the enterprises and hold the job position as a trainer or teach apprentices as an additional job. Becoming a trainer in most cases is not restricted for people not having qualification certificate of adult educator. However, they should have subject-specific/ technical skills and a combination of pedagogical and social competences. Most often trainers follow the company-specific standards and closely co-operate with the management. Thus as in other Baltic countries, the self-initiative of enterprises plays a crucial role in continuous and in-company training. If the in-

company trainers teach pupils from VET schools they also follow the recommendations of vocational education. It worth mentioning that compared to Lithuania, trainer activities have a small positive impact on the salary, but propose better career possibilities and help to avoid working routines. On the state level there are no concrete measures in order to regulate and to improve the quality of in-company training. As it was mentioned before, only status of trainers from in-company colleges is regulated in a case that a company wants to get state recognition.

The training of trainers is not systematically embedded into the formal education. Some VET schools have tight cooperation with enterprise trainers and are arranging training courses for the trainers in enterprises. Usually trainers are learning in the process of work and on seminars organised by equipment producers.

1. How is the work and training of trainers financed?

The training of trainers rests on the shoulders of the companies. Firstly, employers should pay extra salaries to in-company trainers, in addition their equipment is at a risk and the pupils spend their materials. Secondly, nobody is confident if it is a write way of treating new employees by teaching them: you never know if he/she stays with you during next three years or goes to the competitor because of extra 100 EUR. Thirdly, according to the opinion of the interviewed employers' representative, there is no proper attention to these problems at the policy level. He brought an example: "An Unemployment Agency had a project with unemployed people having practice within companies. It was a crucial question: who will manage the practice and who will pay for this? The state proposed only 3 Lts per hour (~4,2 EUR) to compensate".

How much money is invested in the training of trainers (percentage/GDP(gross domestic product)?

No data available.

Who benefits from the work of trainers (average income of trainers, cost-benefit analyses per enterprise/sector/region/nation)?

No data available.

Which role does the work and training of trainers play as a means for economic development?

For the moment lack of labour is one of the most serious obstacles in a way to higher economic growth as a lot of young people left Latvia after its entering the EU. Thus the question of qualified skilled workers is a very important one and needs systematic approach and attention from the state side.

4. How are trainers selected and how are human resources allocated?

How many persons are working as a trainer (formally/informally; full-time/part-time; female/male; nationals/foreigners)?

It is extremely hard even to estimate the number of trainers in enterprises as the field is not regulated and no statistics is available. One interviewed said: "It is quite possible that there is even a sufficient number of the trainers in Latvia, but for the moment nobody knows how important they are and how many of them we need. There is no common system that would be responsible for their training, level of knowledge and payment. For

the moment it is just a co-operation between personal department and a concrete employee. In Norway, for instance, each branch creates its own training centre. They have a dual system of VET education their, that is why the role of companies is so important. I find that it is much more advantageous for the economy”.

To become a trainer in most cases is not restricted for people not having qualification certificate of adult educator. Though they should have subject-specific/ technical skills and a combination of pedagogical and social competences. Trainers follow the company-specific training guidelines. If the in-company trainers teach pupils from VET schools they also follow the recommendations of vocational education.

Some companies also hire VET teachers to be in-company trainers.

There are no extra recruitment. As it was mentioned above a person should have some interest and technical skills to start teaching within a company.

In which main occupational areas trainers have specialised?

No data available.

5. How are trainers qualified?

Usually there are no official qualification standards for trainers in enterprises. Everything depends on a person: if he/she is interested in the field, they can self-initiate some continuing learning and update their skills. But if it is a trainer of an official in-company college, he/she works under the same rules as the teachers from VET schools. For them it is also important to have a formal qualification/certificate.

For more information on VET teachers' standards please see (<http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/download/cinfo/cinfo12004/c14zden.html>):

The institutions incorporated in the training are: universities, VET centers, Chamber of Commerce, professional unions, employer organisations, large enterprises.

6. How is the reputation of trainers and how are they integrated in enterprises/society?

How is the work of trainers recognised in enterprises and in the society?

Though it is not possible to make a general conclusion, both interviewed persons were very positive concerning status of in-company trainers.

Interviewee 1: ... They actually represent their company and it should have a significant positive impact on their status.

Interviewee 2: It is prestigious. I even know people that left the Ministry of Education to do this job in enterprises where salaries are better.

Which is the unemployment rate of trainers?

No data available. It should be mentioned that in a situation of a labour shortage unemployment is not an issue in the Baltic States.

7. How innovative is the work and training of trainers?

Is there research about the work and training of trainers and what does it suggest?

According to T T N e t representatives (http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/projects_networks/ero/pb_view.asp?theID=469) VET research institutions in Latvia did not exist before 1990, during 90-ties and are quite marginal today. It was fragmented and had low impact to VET policy. Regular research on VET/HRD in Latvia started in 1996 and was initiated by ETF. The main research activities concentrated on issues that are relevant to priorities set by VET development program and EU strategic documents. Since 2003 the number of VET/HRD research activities decreased due to limited funding, because till 2003 the VET research activities were significantly supported by ETF. The development of VET system in Latvia is stated in the Concept on Education Development 2002-2005 and Vocational education development programme 2003-2005. In 2004 VET research was oriented to VET teachers quality development and progress in VET development in line with economical changes in country. In 2004 Latvia received ESF funding for labour market research, the implementation of the projects have started in 2005. The main funding for VET related research in the next years is starting to come from ESF. The ESF projects' activities are based on priorities stated in Single Programming that deals with analysis of labour market situation and obstacles for entering it. Since 2005 the labour market research is started and is partly finalized.

Which are weaknesses and strengths with respect to the training of trainers? Where is a need for reform?

The biggest issue is that for the moment every company works independently as far much as possible, because state financial support for in-companies training is insufficient. As a result the information about training centres, programs and staff is not transparent and the centres is issuing only local certificates and not obliged to go through accreditation process.

What should be improved:

- Social dialogue at regional and sectoral level.
- Financial and informative support from government.

Are there any 'good practice examples' at company or sectoral level?

Latvenergo (energy company), railway company – they have their own colleges, Grindex (drugs) – they work in very close co-operation with schools, support them financially and through practice.