



EXPECT - Exchanges of Practices in Education for Climate Targets

5th PEER LEARNING ACTIVITY – Latvia, 4th and 5th April 2022

Minutes

VET reform in Latvia – from policy to practice

Ms. Ilze Buligina, Ministry of Education and Science, Department of Vocational and Adult Education, senior expert

In total, there are 55 VET institutions in Latvia with 27 990 students. In the new planning period, 4 priorities were developed to be as clear and simple as possible.

This year 3-months long training was organised to all VET institutions. The aim of this was to develop Investment and Development Strategy for each VET institution, including green approaches into it.

Children in general and VET education have the same exams and same opportunities to enter the HEIs after the completion of the education.

Questions:

When students make a choice in which direction they will study?

Students make choice after finishing the 9th grade of primary school (general education) and they can select in which direction they will go – general secondary education or professional secondary education. By that time, they are 15-16 years old. Until this age, all students have the same programme in all schools.

What stands behind the choice of the students taking general or vocational education?

Lack of awareness about the vocational education makes lots of students take general education. But this is changing in the recent time and vocational education is becoming more and more prestigious.

Many parents still think that vocational training is the same as in the Soviet years and they advise their children to go to a HEIs. But most of the times, children are not prepared for that or do not want to do it. Instead of wanting become a lawyer, they are willing to become a chef at the restaurant, but due to the influence of the parents, they still take general education and head for HEIs afterwards.

How flexible is the system of micro credentials?

In Latvia, term “unit of learning outcome” is being used more frequently than “micro credentials”. For “micro credentials” there are following criteria: -) it has to be linked to labour market; -) it does not necessarily have to form a qualification or a part of it; -) it should be linked to a digitalisation; -) preferably to have a digital badge/certificate.

What did you do in order to make WBL more attractive to companies?



A lot of money was invested. ESF project was developed with a budget of 22 million EUR, where subsidies for both – companies and VET schools are foreseen. Additionally, it foresees that companies pay salary to students. But this is not a sustainable solution, as the project ends in 2023.

The Climate Friendly XII Latvian Student Song and Dance Festival

Ms. Inese Liepinga, National Centre for Education, Senior officer

Latvian Student Song and Dance Festival is the largest cultural and art festival in Latvia, taking place since 1960. To organise events more environmentally friendly, it includes waste recycling and sorting, as well as different learning activities.

In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions, this event was moved to 2021. But in 2021 nothing changed and it was decided to organise event virtually. Even though the format changed, the planned activities remained. One of them included Climate calculator for students, which allows to be more environmentally friendly and educates students on daily choices that affect environment. Similar tool was also created for organisers to allow to measure the climate impact of any event.

Questions:

Are you willing to organise this again but only face-to-face?

Yes, definitely. The next festival will take place in 2025, as it happens every 5 years.

What is the age of students taking part?

The participation is targeted at the youth from general or vocational education institutions, but not at the students from HEIs. The age of students is usually from kindergarten age up until 20 years of age. After finishing school, children usually get involved into other band/dance school/choir for adults.

Does it mean that whole population of Latvia is somehow involved into dancing or singing?

Yes, it can be defined in such way. If you cannot sing, you dance.

Does this also include instrumental music?

Yes, almost every kind of instrument is involved.

Are students from HEIs feel discriminated that they cannot participate in this festival?

No, because they take part in the adult singing and dancing festival.

Are the singing and dancing clubs usually located at the schools?

It depends. These kinds of clubs can be located at schools or at the cultural houses, or in the musical schools.

Is it funded publicly or by state?

Usually, for each municipality there is a subsidy, meaning it works as a mixed model. They can pay salaries to the teachers and premises, training materials. It is usually free to take part.

The GLOBE programme and PULCHRA project for climate education in schools

Ms. Inese Liepinga, Children's Environmental School, Member of the Board

Children's Environmental School (CES) is the oldest NGO working with environmental education in Latvia. Right now, the CES is implementing two projects.



The GLOBE programme was launched in 1995, by NASA in US. 4 areas are investigated in this project, which are atmosphere, biosphere, soil, and hydrosphere. Activities usually take place outdoors and are very practical. Recently, mobile apps were started to being used in order to ensure participation of more participants.

The PULCHRA project is funded by Horizon 2020 programme. Project consists out of 10 EU countries, with network of 50 schools. The main focus of this project is cities. Learning consists out of different challenges which are connected to cities.

Eco-Schools programme in Latvia

Ms. Līva Stāde, Eco-Schools programme coordinator in Latvia

The Eco Schools programme consists out of 7 steps. In Latvia, there are around 200 eco schools. Eco-Schools programme implements different project in Latvia, which are aimed to raise awareness and understanding about circular economy, waste recycling and sorting, reducing food waste. Activities in these projects are done in a practical way and involves children/students of schools. E.g., to reduce the food waste in schools, students marked their school menu, in order for school to understand what students do and do not like.

Questions:

Is there any kind of follow for this initiative that involves students from VET education?

In the programme, students of different ages are involved. For each age category, activities are adjusted more for their age. For example, the one who are organising activities in the universities are particularly university students, not teachers like in primary schools.

Are there annual meetings for VET schools in this programme?

Yes, every year there is organised one big and common event, where certificate and green flag is presented to the schools in each field. Additionally, lots of seminars are being organised for the teachers. For children different forums are organised, usually twice a year (summer and winter). Also, exchange of experience is being organised.

Is there a participation fee to take part in this programme?

Yes, there is a fee. It depends on the number of students. And school must start to pay a fee from 3rd year of participation.

Do young people that take part in Eco Schools programme, also have an access to the GLOBE programme software?

Yes, children have an access to all tools.

Do you have any approach to empower students to take part?

We have developed training materials for children on: -) how not to feel devastated; -) how to deal with your emotions; -) how to accept the fact on what is happening; -) how can you contribute, etc. But yes, this is a hot topic to work on.

I start with myself for “Cleaner Latvia”. Practical involvement in environmental education organised by Green belt

Ms. Aija Caune, SIA “Zaļā josta”, Project director



The Green Belt is in the market for 20 years and provides to enterprises everything that is related to the management of packaging, harmful waste and electrical engineering.

According to the law, it is foreseen that company has to provide environmental education for enterprises and society. 4 educational events must take place a year.

The company has an initiative “I start with myself”. The idea is to change habits of an individual, by changing the thinking about particular things they use in everyday life, e.g., plastic bags, packaging.

Other initiative is “I have my own”. The idea is simple – individual must have reusable things, e.g., coffee mugs, shopping bags, water bottles, etc. In other words, things that can be used multiple times in order to reduce waste.

Questions:

What is the main objective of your company?

To ensure the processing of collected and recycled materials, e.g., waste, paper, batteries, hazardous and harmful waste. Additionally, we are providing environmental education in all schools, including vocational schools. Schools are also involved into practical tasks. With different schools in Latvia, we also have a cooperation agreement.

The interests of young people and their views on the priorities on the agenda of Latvian decision-makers over the next 10 years in environmental, nature and climate issues

Ms. Laura Treimane, WWF Latvia, Climate Policy Officer

WWF Latvia conducted research on environmental education in youth, in 2021.

Research was conducted for young people (16-25 years old). It revealed that majority (91%) thinks that it is very important for Latvia to contribute to global environmental and nature crisis mitigation.

Additionally, WWF Latvia is implementing project “Advocacy academy”. The aim of this is to train and educate young people to defend their interests, and help them to gain faith in their abilities to make decisions.

Questions:

Do you see that this model (Advocacy academy) could be adjusted to other countries?

I have not seen any other project like this abroad. The main problem, why young people are not involved into civic activities in Latvia, is that young people have a lack of faith in themselves. They do not believe that they can change something. The main point of the academy is to motivate and inspire the young people, so they have a faith that they can influence something on a local, national or even European level.

Is the academy outside of the institutional structures of education?

Yes, it is a non-formal education.

Do you have a direct link to the national authorities?

As a result of the research was that we established informal working group and mapped all the stakeholders involved into the environmental education, both – formal and non-formal. Currently we are trying to cooperate with governmental institutions, have meetings with stakeholders, etc. to find solutions to the research.



“Once is not enough” or practical circular economy in schools

Ms. Anna Doškina, Chairwoman of the Board, Zero Waste Latvia

In 2020, Zero Waste Latvia launched educational project about the circular economy to educate the young people. This was done on 2 levels – 7-9th grade and 10-12th grade. Project consisted out of the lectures (online and hybrid) and home works students had to carry out. In total, 758 students have been reached so far.

Questions:

Do you work in the vocational education sector, as it produces a lot of waste?

We work mainly with companies. But we think that we are going to start to work with education sector as well in near future.

Do you work with teachers?

We cooperate with a platform “Dzīvei gatavs” (Ready for life). It is a movement in Latvia that promotes non-formal education, and they are the ones who work with teachers. They have a database and they are informing teachers about possible activities. We as an organisation ourselves, unfortunately do not have a capacity.

Do you have any resources that can be shared with schools?

Not yet. At the moment we are working with shareable resources regarding the biowaste collection, that is going to be accessible to everyone in Latvia as it is going to be mandatory next year. But regarding the circular economy, the main problem is that so much is available online and there are many various environmental organisations that have already covered these bases. Since that, we are not sure that something without our own voice will give any added value.

How can VET help companies to become more environmentally friendly?

Companies need guidance. Sometimes the product creation is very separate from understanding what can and what cannot be recycled. Marketing people, who come up with packaging, they do not understand that some things are not recyclable (they are on paper, but not in a real life). And there is no link between them, that can tell them that it cannot be recycled.

Sustainable development issues in the improved curriculum

Mr. Mihails Basmanovs, National Centre for Education, Senior officer

Project “Skola2030” (School 2030), was initiated in 2016 and it is planned that it is going to be finalized in 2030. The aim of the project is to develop, test and subsequently introduce in Latvia such general education content and approach to teaching from pre-school age to secondary school, as a result of which students would acquire the knowledge necessary for life today. skills and attitudes.

Questions:

Is there any platform or something similar, where students can share their research projects with others?

Yes. The curricula foresee the publicity and communication of the project results with the society. It is one of the main criteria of the research work.

How are the companies involved, what are they role in this curriculum?



The companies are directly involved in the preparation of the content for this curriculum. Additionally, companies provide materials and other useful resources that are being taken into the account.

Name of the presentation TBA

Mr. Reinis Kiršteins, Ms. Anete Zemīte, Mr. Adrians Zutis, Ms. Madara Senkane, Bevvax

As bees are crucial to our environment and its number is decreasing, we wanted to do something to get more attention to it. Bee wax wrap was created, which serves the same function as paper wrap but it can be used multiple times.

So far, 59 wraps are sold and additional batch is already prepared to be sold. At the moment, there are no direct competitors. Additionally, 15% of an income is donated to "Save the bees and farmers" fund, in order to give back.

Questions:

When you choose this project, was it mandatory to have something to do with a sustainability?

No, it was not a mandatory. We had to create a student company and we thought that we would like to help to raise awareness for something that we thought was essential.

Does the economics curriculum you follow, cover sustainability and circular economy?

It has too much theoretical part, but it is also very much up to the teachers and their way of teaching.

How many products have you sold?

59 pieces.

Are you looking to hand this company over to someone else who has a potential to scale it up?

We definitely think that if it is handed over to the right person, it can be scaled up to more serious business. Main issue that should be solved – place for production.

Green think tank

Mr. Jānis Lielpēteris, Member of the Board, Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The Green Think Tank was developed with an aim to educate LCCI members on the EU Green Deal as 52% of LCCI members, do not have a full understanding about it. Additionally, it is important to discuss about it as EU Green Deal will affect all industries. Also, all 13 ministries of Latvia are somehow involved and participating in this Green Think Tank.

Questions:

What is the role of LCCI in VET?

From Green Think Tank view, give an evaluated opinion to the policy makers.

Do you have an influence on the curricula of the VET schools?

The short answer is no. We can provide experts for working groups, suggestions to the ministries, but we cannot give our suggestions to change/improve content of the curricula.

Do you think that you can come close to the goal of CO2 emission reduction?



I think that we are in a rather good position in our energy production. In total we have a lot of hydro electric energy (3 hydro plants). In total, it is 42-43% of renewable energy used in Latvia. Also, it is planned to build wind energy farms in forests.

