

OECD Skills Studies

# OECD Skills Strategy Implementation Guidance for Latvia

DEVELOPING LATVIA'S EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT  
GUIDELINES 2021-2027

REPORT SUMMARY





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# Foreword

People's skills are at the heart of Latvia's vision for the future.

As megatrends such as globalisation, technological progress, and demographic changes, as well as most recently COVID-19, transform jobs, how societies function and how people interact, the impetus for getting skills right is growing. People will need higher levels of skills and a well-rounded set of skills, including cognitive, social and emotional, and job-specific skills, for success in work and life. At the country level, skills are an important instrument for strengthening competitiveness, boosting productivity and fostering innovation. However, skills matter not only as an economic investment, but are also essential for the health, well-being and social cohesion of a population.

To pave a path to future success, Latvia has developed the Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027 (referred to in this report as the "EDG"), which puts education and skills policies at the forefront of the political agenda. The EDG sets the scene of how Latvia seeks to equip its citizens with the skills to flourish in work and society.

During this OECD Skills Strategy Implementation Guidance phase, Latvia has laid a strong foundation for the implementation of the EDG. Evidence on the strengths and weaknesses of Latvia's education and skills systems has informed the prioritisation of relevant policies in the guidelines. A wide range of Latvian actors across ministries, levels of government, education and training providers, employers, trade unions, the non-profit sector, and learners have been engaged to develop the EDG, demonstrating their commitment to work together. Furthermore, substantial resources have been earmarked to finance the policies presented in the guidelines.

Looking to the future, more can be done to position Latvia to successfully implement the EDG and prepare for the guidelines that will take its place. As the COVID-19 crisis has made clear, the future is uncertain, and all plans must be designed to be responsive and adaptable to overcome future challenges and seize future opportunities. With this in mind, Latvia could take further steps to strengthen its strategic planning.

The policies outlined in the EDG, when implemented with the support of all relevant actors, should allow Latvia to bridge the skills gaps and equip citizens of all ages with the skills they need to make the most of future opportunities.

Based on an analysis of Latvia's current situation, as well as the findings from widespread engagement with relevant actors in Latvia, the OECD has developed a number of concrete recommendations to help Latvia develop and implement the EDG.

The OECD stands ready to further support Latvia as it seeks to implement better skills policies for better lives.

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# Executive summary

## OECD-Latvia collaboration on the OECD Skills Strategy project

Building on the OECD Skills Strategy Assessment and Recommendations phase, the *Implementation Guidance* phase has supported Latvia in the development of the Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027 (EDG). A whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach has been applied in Latvia involving all relevant ministries and levels of governments, as well as a wide range of stakeholders in order to build a shared understanding of which policy actions and indicators should be included in the EDG. The OECD has used international, national and other data sources, information gathered from government and stakeholder representatives, as well as expertise from across the OECD, including the Centre for Skills team, the Indicators of Education Systems team and Foresight team. The project drew upon concrete examples of education strategy development from other countries to provide important lessons for Latvia. This process provided input and shaped the recommendations featured in this current report.

The findings and recommendations of the Implementation Guidance Phase, as featured in this “OECD Skills Strategy Latvia Implementation Guidance: Developing Latvia’s Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027” report, have been a major input to the development of Latvia’s EDG. As Latvia’s EDG was developed concurrently with the Implementation Guidance Phase, many of the findings and recommendations of this report have already been taken into consideration in Latvia’s EDG. Some recommendations also go beyond the development of the EDG and are relevant for the implementation of the EDG.

The OECD was asked to provide input to Latvia’s EDG in two key areas:

### **1. Guidance on developing Latvia’s EDG and selecting EDG policy actions (Chapter 2)**

Latvia’s EDG is a strategic document that describes Latvia’s objectives for education and skills policy in the medium term, as well as the policy actions it plans to implement to achieve these objectives. The benefits of the EDG being well-defined include aligning policy actions with policy objectives, providing clarity about what needs to be done by whom and by when, communicating the priorities, and holding all relevant actors accountable for implementing the policy actions and achieving the policy objectives.

A number of trends shape the skills needs and opportunities of Latvia. Megatrends such as globalisation, technological progress, population ageing, and migration, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, are driving significant changes in skills needs in society and the economy. Given this context, the OECD provides guidance on the implications of this policy context for the selection of policy actions that advance the objectives of the EDG.

In developing the EDG, Latvia has considered the proposed policy actions of the “OECD Skills Strategy Latvia Recommendations and Assessment” report, which were developed based on input from a broad range of actors, as well as an in-depth assessment of Latvia’s education and skills system. As the context has significantly changed due to the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic, this report provides further complementary guidance on the policy actions that Latvia should consider taking to respond to the

pressures that the pandemic has generated. This complementary guidance has also been considered by Latvia in developing the EDG.

This report also features four further suggestions for how Latvia could develop and implement its EDG:

- **Include policy actions at the system level.** Give consideration to system level policy actions in order to address challenges that affect the entire education and skills system and not just a specific level of education.
- **Define responsibilities and timelines.** Identify the responsible actors for a policy action based on their capacity and disposition towards supporting the policy action and collaborating in its implementation. Create a timeline with short-term and long-term policy actions.
- **Identify funding implications.** For each policy action, estimate the required financial resources, identify the responsible funding party, and assess the funding source sustainability.
- **Strengthen strategic planning.** Consider multiple possible future scenarios, assess their risks, and strengthen the overall resilience of the education and skills system to adapt to future changes.

## ***2. Guidance on improving Latvia's indicator system and selecting EDG indicators (Chapter 3)***

Latvia's EDG needs to be accompanied by a robust indicator system to monitor implementation progress. This would provide reliable, accurate and timely information on the human and financial resources invested in skills, how education and skills systems operate and evolve, and the returns on investments in skills.

An assessment of Latvia's current indicator system reveals gaps in Latvia's ability to measure progress towards the achievement of its objectives. For example, indicators could be developed to track funding for lifelong learning, distinguish between drop-outs due to emigration and for other reasons, monitor student progression through education, measure the quality of early childhood education and care, and provide additional background information on students, such as their home language and disability status.

This report presents a list of potential indicators for the EDG and an overview of further considerations. The OECD, together with government and stakeholder representatives, reviewed a total of 181 possible indicators and then prioritised between 10-12 potential indicators across each of the five levels of education, for a total of 54 potential indicators. Specific suggestions are made for improving certain indicators and developing alternative indicators. Many of these indicators have been adopted in the EDG.

This report features five further suggestions for how Latvia could strengthen its indicator system:

- **Link indicator databases.** Facilitate data exchanges between indicator databases through a unique identification number for each individual, which allows data on this individual to be linked across various databases.
- **Improve the quality of indicator data.** Strengthen data validation processes by conducting regular quality checks of the data collection system and adopting digital technologies.
- **Benchmark indicators.** Set the target value to be sufficiently ambitious to inspire and mobilise action, but at the same time not so unrealistic as to demotivate actors. Consider adopting annual targets for some indicators.
- **Raise capacity to make use of indicator data.** Support research institutions to provide capacity to fully use the available national and international indicators.
- **Improve the dissemination of indicator data.** Improve the dissemination of information generated by the indicators through a user-friendly platform serving a wide audience of users.

# 1 Summary and Recommendations

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This section presents the main findings and recommendations of the OECD Skills Strategy Implementation Guidance project in Latvia. This project, and the first phase of the Skills Strategy Assessment and Recommendations project, were designed to support Latvia in the development of its Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027 (EDG). This section summarises the OECD's guidance in two areas, each of which are the subject of a separate chapter in the full report: 1) guidance on developing Latvia's EDG and selecting EDG policy actions; and 2) guidance on improving Latvia's indicator system and selecting EDG indicators.

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## 1. Introduction

The main goal of the Education Development Guidelines (hereafter referred to as the “EDG”) is to guide Latvia’s efforts in providing a high-quality and inclusive education and training system for all its citizens, and to support sustainable national growth. The EDG covers all levels of education and all types of learning. It is a medium-term policy planning document developed by the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia that defines the policy objectives, policy actions, timelines, responsible actors, related finances and policy targets for the next seven years for education and skills policies. The EDG is being developed in collaboration with relevant ministries and a wide range of stakeholders, such as the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, the Employers’ Confederation of Latvia, the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and various other institutions and associations (see the Annex for the full list). Once completed, the EDG will be submitted to the national parliament (Saeima) for approval.

The EDG will be designed to help Latvia achieve its national and international commitments. As Latvia is a member of international communities, such as the European Union (EU), the OECD and the United Nations, it has agreed to and is held accountable for making progress towards achieving collective goals, including in the area of education and skills. As Latvia is expected to regularly report progress towards implementing required actions and achieving shared goals, the EDG has to be aligned with these international commitments. This means, for example, integrating the skills relevant to international commitments into the EDG and using consistent terminology and indicators to measure national progress in these areas. The EDG must also support the achievement of the goals of Latvia’s other major strategies and plans for national development, many of which have education and skills related goals and commitments. These include the Sustainable Development Strategy to 2030, the National Development Plan (2021-2027), and sectoral strategies in the areas of, for example, science, technology and innovation. By aligning and co-ordinating these strategies, Latvia can create synergies and ensure complementary policy actions.

The OECD has supported Latvia in developing its Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027 through the OECD Skills Strategy Latvia project, which has been conducted in two phases: the *Assessment and Recommendations* Phase (2018-2019) and the *OECD Implementation Guidance* Phase (2019-2020).

The *Assessment and Recommendations* Phase identified priority areas for action for Latvia and made concrete recommendations for improving Latvia’s performance in developing relevant skills and using skills effectively. This phase analysed the performance of Latvia’s education and skills system and provided tailored recommendations for its improvement. Based on this analysis, as well as input from stakeholder engagement activities in Latvia, the OECD developed a number of concrete recommendations, which are featured in the OECD report “OECD Skills Strategy Latvia: Assessment and Recommendations”, published in December 2019 (OECD, 2019<sup>[1]</sup>).

The findings of the *Implementation Guidance* Phase, which are summarised in this publication “OECD Skills Strategy Implementation Guidance for Latvia: Developing Latvia’s Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027” are a major input to the development of Latvia’s EDG. The OECD was asked to provide guidance and input to Latvia’s EDG in two key areas:

1. Guidance on developing Latvia’s EDG and selecting EDG policy actions (see Chapter 2 in the full report).
2. Guidance on improving Latvia’s indicator system and selecting EDG indicators (see Chapter 3 in the full report).

Each chapter in the full report describes the elements of an effective selection process, presents an assessment of relevant contexts, discusses the proposed policy actions or indicators, and provides practical suggestions of what Latvia could consider for next steps.

The remaining part of this section introduces Latvia's EDG (Sub-section 2), discusses how it relates to other international and national commitments (Sub-Section 3), and describes how Phase I (Sub-Section 4) and Phase II (Sub-Section 5) of the OECD Skills Strategy Latvia project have contributed to the development of Latvia's EDG, it also presents the recommendations of Phase II.

## 2. Latvia's Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027

Skills are vital for enabling individuals and countries to thrive in an increasingly complex, interconnected and rapidly changing world. Countries in which people develop strong skills, learn throughout their lives, and use their skills fully and effectively at work and in society are more productive and innovative and enjoy higher levels of trust, better health outcomes, and a higher quality of life. Skills policies play a central role in paving countries' development path by, for example, easing the adoption of new technologies and helping firms move up the value-added chain; they also make countries more attractive to foreign direct investment and tend to help foster more tolerant and cohesive societies.

To ensure that countries are able to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing world, all people need access to opportunities to develop and maintain strong proficiency in a broad set of skills. These skills include cognitive skills, social and emotional skills, job and occupation-specific skills, and digital skills. The process of skills development is lifelong, starting in childhood and youth and continuing throughout adulthood (Box 1). Skills development occurs not only formally in schools and higher education, but also non-formally and informally in the home, community and workplaces.

### Box 1. OECD definitions of "skills"

#### Definition of skills

**Cognitive skills** involve the understanding, interpretation, analysis and communication of complex information and the ability to apply this information in situations of everyday life. These skills are general in nature and relevant for all kinds of occupations. They are considered necessary to provide a foundation for effective and successful participation in the social and economic life of advanced economies.

**Social and emotional skills**, also known as non-cognitive skills, soft skills or character skills, these are the skills involved in working with others (friendliness, respect, caring), in achieving goals (perseverance, self-control, passion for goals) and in managing emotions (calmness, optimism, confidence). They are based on recognised taxonomies in personality psychology, particularly the "big five" factors (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness).

**Job and occupation-specific skills** refer to technical skills that are demanded in the context of workplaces. Unlike cognitive and social and emotional skills, they are not relevant for or portable between all occupations, but are specific to one occupation. They are typically reflected in the qualification a person holds and are valued by employers.

**Digital skills** are considered technical skills, although they entail cognitive ability to enable the understanding, interpretation, analysis and communication of digital content. They are applied in a variety of different occupations and are increasingly pervading the social aspects of everyone's life.

Sources: OECD (2019<sup>[2]</sup>), *OECD Skills Strategy 2019: Skills to Shape a Better Future*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264313835-en>; OECD (2020<sup>[3]</sup>), *Strengthening the Governance of Skills Systems: Lessons from Six OECD Countries*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/3a4bb6ea-en>.

The EDG is developed under Latvia's Education Law (Paragraph 18 of Section 14<sup>1</sup>), which gives the Cabinet of Ministers the authority to design an education strategy. The EDG is designed to support Latvia's relevant national and international commitments (see Sub-Section 3). Some of the actions in the EDG continue on from the previous EDG 2014-2020, while others are new. The EDG is developed by the Ministry of Education and Science in collaboration with other skills-relevant ministries, such as the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Economics, among others, and a wide range of stakeholders, such as trade unions, the Employers' Confederation of Latvia, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and various other institutions and associations (see the Annex for a full list of stakeholders). The EDG will be submitted to the national parliament (Saeima) for approval towards the end of 2020.

### 3. The EDG and Latvia's international and national commitments regarding skills

The EDG is designed to help Latvia achieve its international commitments, which include those at the European level and beyond (Table 1). As Latvia is a member of international communities, such as the European Union, the OECD and the United Nations, it has agreed and is held accountable to making progress towards achieving collective goals and participating in shared actions in the area of education and skills. These include the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), in particular SDG4 on education; the actions of the New Skills Agenda for Europe and the European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (2020); the principles and rights of the European Pillar of Social Rights; and the targets of the EU Semester. As Latvia is expected to regularly report progress on these actions and goals, the EDG must be aligned with these international commitments. This means, for example, integrating the skills relevant to international commitments into the EDG and using consistent terminology and indicators to measure national progress in these areas. This will also put Latvia in a position to benchmark itself against other peer countries, identify its strengths and weaknesses, and participate more proactively in peer learning. This would provide valuable insights that could inform and guide Latvia's implementation of the EDG.

The EDG must also support the achievement of Latvia's other major goals for national development, which are described in various strategic documents, such as the Growth Model for Latvia: People First, the Sustainable Development Strategy to 2030, and the National Development Plan 2021-2027 (Table 1). It is important that the EDG is coherent and consistent with these strategies, and that any skills-related targets that have been set in those documents are also included in the EDG. The EDG must also be consistent with education and skills relevant projects such as Latvia's Smart Specialisation Strategy 2021-2027, which is part of Latvia's National Industrial Policy Guidelines and also has skills relevant components. By co-ordinating the development of the EDG with relevant strategies and policies it will be possible to identify areas for synergy and to ensure that the policy actions in various strategies are complementary. There are also relevant projects on specific components of the education and skills system, for example the education monitoring project within the Ministry of Education and Science that seeks to develop a monitoring system with specific indicators for measuring education quality by 2023. As indicators on education quality are also relevant for the EDG, it is important to co-ordinate the development of such indicators and reflect upon how they can be incorporated into the EDG.

**Table 1. Overview of relevant international and national commitments for Latvia's EDG**

Commitment	Description
<b>International</b>	
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)	At the centre of this agenda are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which all countries are called on to achieve collectively. One of these goals is SDG4 on education, which covers 10 targets and 11 indicators. Education topics covered by this SDG include: access to quality early child education and care (ECEC) for all; equal access to technical, vocational and tertiary education; a substantial increase in the number of youth and adults with relevant skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship; eliminate gender disparities; build and upgrade education facilities; and increase the supply of teachers.

Commitment	Description
European Skills Agenda (2020)	This is a shared agenda for the EU, with member states and stakeholders at all levels working together to improve skills outcomes, especially in the context of COVID-19 and taking account of the fact that opportunities to upskill and reskill should be an important part of the recovery. It includes 12 actions organised in four building blocks: 1) a call to join forces in collective action; 2) a strategic set of actions to ensure people have the right skills for jobs; 3) tools and initiatives to support people in their lifelong learning pathways; and 4) a framework to unlock investment in skills. The agenda also establishes four ambitious objectives to be achieved by 2025, based on well-established quantitative indicators.
European Pillar of Social Rights (2017)	This sets out 20 key principles and rights to support fair and well-functioning labour markets. It is structured around three chapters: 1) equal opportunities and access to the labour market; 2) fair working conditions; and 3) social protection and inclusion. To put the 20 rights and principles into practice, the European Commission is launching an action plan, concrete initiatives at the European level, and has set aside considerable financial support from the EU budget, including under the European Social Fund (ESF+), to which the Commission proposes to dedicate EUR 100 billion over the period 2021 to 2027.
<b>National</b>	
The Growth Model for Latvia: People First (2005)	This concept paper describes Latvia's long-term vision for growth over the next 20-30 years and emphasises the knowledge and skills that people need. The priorities are: 1) granting everyone access to secondary education and providing opportunities to pursue vocational and higher education; 2) increasing the number of higher education graduates at masters and PhD level; and 3) increasing the share of students pursuing studies in fields of technology and natural science across all levels of the education system.
Latvia's Sustainable Development Strategy to 2030 (2010)	This is the long-term development strategy for all policy domains, including education. It emphasises the need for a paradigm shift in education in which parents, teachers, students and educational institutions are fully aware of their respective responsibilities in ensuring quality education. The priorities include increasing access to education, improving the governance of the education system, transforming schools into social hubs, improving teaching, introducing ICT in education, and promoting lifelong learning.
National Development Plan 2021-27 (2020)	This is a national development strategy for the country with long-term and mid-term targets. Skills-relevant priorities in the plan include reducing the number of young people with low levels of skills while increasing the share of students with high levels of skills; decreasing the share of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET); improving vocational education and training; increasing the quality of higher education and its appeal internationally; and increasing adult learning participation.
Science, Technology Development and Innovation Guidelines 2021-27 (2020)	These guidelines describe Latvia's strategy to co-ordinate the innovation system and develop its knowledge base and innovation capacity. For this, skills in the fields of science, technology and innovation are important. The guidelines aim to raise the international competitiveness of Latvian science and research; support the modernisation of the education sector; foster an environment conducive to knowledge transfer; strengthen management in the field of science, technology and innovation; and promote demand for science and innovation, as well as socially relevant and open science to address global and local challenges.
Education Quality Monitoring System project	This project, supported with European Social Funds, began in 2018 to develop a monitoring system for the education system by 2023. The project develops and validates prototypes of education quality monitoring tools, which includes specific indicators to assess the quality of education in Latvia. Each of the indicators will be clearly defined, with explanations and methodologies of how to measure them and with benchmarks for 2024 and 2027.
Cohesive Civic Society Development Guidelines 2021-27 (2020)	The overarching goal of this policy is to support the development of a solidarity based and open civic society that stands for the democratic values and human rights specified in the Constitution, the Latvian language and Latvian cultural space. It covers civic education, language policy and youth policy. In the context of the EDG, this strategy is relevant regarding the development of social and emotional skills such as concern for others, goal-orientation and managing emotions.
Digital Transformation Guidelines 2021-27 (2020)	The goal of these guidelines is to develop joint integrated digital solutions and introduce new efficient public services and infrastructure that are integral to the global information society and trends in the EU's digital single market. Digital skills are central to fulfilling this strategy. For the development of digital skills, this strategy refers to the EU Digital Competencies Framework, where digital competence is recognised as the basic competence of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century. Investment in the development of digital competencies throughout the education system in Latvia is recognised as one of the key directions in this strategy.
National Industrial Policy Guidelines 2021-27 (2020)	This is a medium-term policy planning document that covers all sectors of the economy and identifies directions for actions to promote economic growth. Five directions are identified for 2027: the development of human capital, growth in export, business environment, investment in digital and technological infrastructure, and innovation capacity. These guidelines recognise the context of a rapidly changing labour market, the need for employees to constantly acquire new knowledge, and the need for employers to invest in technological development and the education of their employees.
Regional Policy Guidelines 2021-27 (2019)	This is a medium-term strategy for Latvia's regional development. The overarching goal of this policy is to enhance the economic development potential of all regions and reduce their socio-economic disparities. To achieve this goal, one of the directions of action identified is the development of innovation and a knowledge-intensive business environment in the regions. This requires developing, attracting and retaining highly qualified human capital.

Note: This is a non-exhaustive list.

## 4. Phase I: OECD Skills Strategy Assessment and Recommendations

The *Assessment and Recommendations* Phase has provided a solid evidence base for the development of the EDG. The project has promoted greater interaction and exchange among all relevant actors from ministries, levels of government and stakeholders by enabling extensive engagement (Box 2). This process has fostered a shared understanding of the skills challenges and opportunities as a basis for taking co-ordinated actions. The OECD has used international, national and other data sources, information gathered from government and stakeholder representatives, as well as talent and expertise from across the OECD, including experts from the OECD Centre for Skills, the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills and the OECD Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs. The project has drawn upon concrete examples of education and skills policies from other countries, which have provided important lessons, and made specific recommendations in identified priority areas. Representatives from Latvia were also invited to participate in peer-learning opportunities at the OECD to share Latvia's experiences and learn from other countries' experiences. This has helped widen and deepen understanding of policies that have worked. The findings, international practice examples and recommendations from this phase of the project have informed the development of Latvia's EDG. Most importantly, the findings of Phase I have supported the development and prioritisation of the policy actions.

### Box 2. Fostering a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to skills policy: The Assessment and Recommendations Phase

The OECD's Skills Strategy project in Latvia was launched at the Skills Strategy Seminar in Riga in September 2018 by the Latvian Minister and State Secretary of Education and Science. The event included representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Economics, the Cross-Sectoral Co-ordination Centre, employer associations, trade unions and the European Commission. The project involved ongoing oversight and input from an inter-ministerial team co-ordinated by the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science, which was comprised of experts from various other ministries and organisations. Two workshops were held in February and May 2019 that convened a wide range of stakeholders, including trade unions, employers, sectoral training providers, education institutions, academics and government representatives. Eight focus groups and bilateral meetings with stakeholders and experts also took place. In total, the OECD met around 500 stakeholders. The European Commission provided financial support for the project and participated in the skills strategy seminar and in both stakeholder workshops. This process generated inputs that helped to shape the recommendations featured in the "OECD Skills Strategy Latvia: Assessment and Recommendations" report, launched on 19 December 2019.

Source: OECD (2019<sup>[1]</sup>), *OECD Skills Strategy Latvia: Assessment and Recommendations*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/74fe3bf8-en>.

The OECD and the Latvian Government identified four priority areas for improving Latvia's skills performance. The key findings and opportunities for improvement in each of these areas are summarised briefly below, and are elaborated with analysis and tailored recommendations in the chapters of the "OECD Skills Strategy Latvia: Assessment and Recommendations" report (OECD, 2019<sup>[1]</sup>).

### **Priority 1: Strengthening the skills outcomes of students**

Ensuring that young people get a good start in schools is a key investment in the future economic prosperity and well-being of countries. In Latvia, the government dedicates a significant share of its expenditure to education, which denotes a commitment to providing access to quality education and translates into high enrolment rates. Latvia has opportunities to further strengthen the skills outcomes of students by:



1) building capacity to improve the teaching workforce; 2) fostering continuous quality improvement from early childhood education and care (ECEC) to secondary education; 3) improving equity between urban and rural areas; and 4) strengthening vocational education and training (VET).

### ***Priority 2: Fostering a culture of lifelong learning***

A strong adult learning culture is imperative if Latvia wishes to ensure that all individuals are ready to upgrade their existing skills or acquire new skills to adapt to new challenges and opportunities and thrive in an increasingly complex world. Fostering adult learning is a priority for Latvia as it seeks to reach the European Union benchmark of a 15% participation rate by 2020. Latvia has opportunities to foster a lifelong learning culture by: 1) raising awareness about adult learning; 2) reducing barriers to adult learning; 3) expanding the provision of adult learning; and 4) raising the quality of adult learning.

### ***Priority 3: Reducing skills imbalances in the labour market***

As the skills needed in the labour market continue to evolve due to globalisation, digitalisation and demographic change, reducing skills imbalances remains a pressing policy priority. Most employers report that skills shortages are a major obstacle to long-term investment decisions. Shortages appear particularly acute in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and health fields. The emigration of highly educated workers from Latvia is a significant challenge that has contributed to these shortages. Latvia has opportunities to reduce skills imbalances in the labour market by: 1) strengthening the responsiveness of the tertiary education system to changing skills demand; 2) retaining talent in Latvia by stimulating sustainable wage growth and improving working conditions; and 3) facilitating internal mobility and attracting skilled workers from abroad.

### ***Priority 4: Strengthening the governance of the skills system***

Effective governance arrangements are the foundation of Latvia's performance in developing and using people's skills. The success of skills policies depends on the actions of a wide range of actors and sectors at national and local levels. Latvia's Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027 will provide an opportunity to mobilise these actors and co-ordinate their efforts. Co-operation with and between municipalities on skills policy is not systematic, and could be strengthened in the context of Latvia's administrative territorial reforms. Latvia has opportunities to strengthen the governance of the skills system by: 1) strengthening strategies and oversight for skills policy; 2) improving co-operation at different levels of government and with stakeholders; 3) building an integrated monitoring and information system on skills; and 4) raising, targeting and sharing investments in lifelong learning.

## **5. Phase II: OECD Skills Strategy Implementation Guidance**

Building on the Assessment and Recommendations phase, the *Implementation Guidance* phase has continued to support Latvia in the development of its EDG. As before, a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach has been applied in Latvia involving all relevant ministries, levels of governments and stakeholders (Box 3). The purpose has been to encourage greater interaction and exchange among relevant actors to build a shared understanding of which policy actions and indicators should be included in the EDG. The OECD has used international, national and other data sources, information gathered from government and stakeholder representatives, as well as talent and expertise from across the OECD, including education indicator experts from the OECD's Indicators of Education Systems team and from the OECD Foresight team. The project has drawn upon concrete examples of education strategy development from other countries, such as Estonia, which have provided important lessons, and made specific recommendations in identified priority areas. Representatives from Latvia were also invited to participate

in peer-learning opportunities at the OECD to share Latvia's experiences, learn from other country experiences, and widen and deepen their understanding of policies that have worked.

### **Box 3. Fostering a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to skills policy: The Implementation Guidance Phase**

The *Implementation Guidance* phase was launched by the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science in October 2019 and has engaged representatives from across the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Economics, as well as a wide range of stakeholders such as trade unions, employers, sectoral training providers, education institutions, and academics.

In October 2019, the OECD organised a foresight workshop that convened government and stakeholder representatives to identify emerging socio-economic trends that had skills implications and discuss the potential future impacts, associated opportunities and challenges of these trends for Latvia's EDG.

In November 2019, the OECD facilitated a series of prioritisation workshops and focus groups with government and stakeholder representatives to discuss and identify relevant policy actions for the EDG. This resulted in 87 possible policy actions across the five levels of education (early childhood education and care, general education, vocational education and training, higher education and adult learning).

In February 2020, the OECD organised a series of strategy development workshops with government and stakeholder representatives to further work on these policy actions and prioritise potential policy indicators for Latvia's EDG. The OECD provided participants with a list of 181 possible indicators drawn from international and national sources, encouraged participants to suggest new indicators, where relevant, and facilitated discussions to identify the indicators deemed most important. Through the prioritisation exercise, 10-12 indicators for each level of education were proposed for a total of 55 indicators for the EDG.

The output of these engagement exercises, alongside additional analysis and reflections from the OECD and concrete recommendations for Latvia's next steps in finalising the EDG, are included in this report.

The findings of the Implementation Guidance Phase (which are summarised in this publication "OECD Skills Strategy Implementation Guidance for Latvia: Developing Latvia's Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027") have been a major input to the development of Latvia's EDG. The OECD was asked to provide input to Latvia's EDG in the following key areas:

1. Guidance on developing Latvia's EDG and selecting EDG policy actions (see Chapter 2 in the full report).
2. Guidance on improving Latvia's indicator system and selecting EDG indicators (see Chapter 3 in the full report).

The OECD's input – including key findings and recommendations – to each of these areas is described in greater detail in the chapters in the full report and is summarised in the Sub-Section below. The summary below covers the input that the OECD has provided to date in the development of the EDG, as well as suggestions for further steps that Latvia needs to take to finalise the EDG.

## 1. Guidance on developing Latvia's EDG and selecting EDG policy actions

Latvia's EDG is a strategic document that lays out what Latvia wants to achieve in the medium term in education and skills policies. The benefits of a well-defined EDG include describing the policy actions that Latvia plans to implement to achieve its policy objectives, and providing clarity about what needs to be done by whom and by when.

An effective process for identifying policy actions for Latvia's EDG requires the application of a framework for selecting policy actions and the engagement of all relevant stakeholders in the process. A framework facilitates the selection process by guiding involved actors to consider the feasibility of proposed actions and the extent to which they advance EDG policy objectives. Identification of EDG policy actions requires the engagement of relevant stakeholders as they possess important sectoral knowledge and valuable insights and play an important role in the implementation of the policy actions.

A number of trends shape the skills needs and opportunities of Latvia. Megatrends such as globalisation, technological progress, population ageing, and migration, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, are driving significant changes in skills needs in society and the economy. The OECD provides guidance in Chapter 2 in the full report on the implications of this policy context for the selection of policy actions that advance the objectives of the EDG.

In developing the EDG, Latvia has considered the proposed policy actions of the "OECD Skills Strategy Latvia Assessment and Recommendations" report, which are summarised in the annex of this Report Summary. These policy actions were developed based on input from a broad range of actors and an in-depth assessment of Latvia's education and skills system. As the context has significantly changed since the launch of the report due to the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic, this report provides further complementary guidance on the policy actions that can respond to the pressures that the pandemic has generated.

Chapter 2 in the full report also makes suggestions for how Latvia could further develop and implement the EDG. Latvia should include system-level policy actions, allocate roles and responsibilities to actors for policy actions, set clear timelines for implementation, determine the amount and source of required funding, and strengthen strategic planning to better anticipate and plan for possible changes in the policy context. Further developing the EDG in this way would allow Latvia to implement the policy actions more effectively and ultimately achieve its policy objectives.

**Table 2. Recommendations for further developing Latvia's EDG**

Actions	Recommendations
1. Include policy actions at the system level	<b>Give consideration to policy actions that need to be taken at the system level in order to address challenges that affect the entire education and skills system and not just a specific level of education.</b> Policy actions at the system level include efforts to strengthen oversight for skills policy; improve co-operation across different levels of government; build an integrated monitoring and information system; and increase, better target and share investments in lifelong learning.
2. Define responsibilities and timelines	<p><b>Identify the responsible actors for a policy action based on their capacity and disposition towards supporting the policy action and collaborating in its implementation.</b> In selecting the relevant actors for specific policy actions, consideration needs to be given to identifying actors who collectively have both sufficient capacity (e.g. funding, experience, expertise, networks) to implement the policy action and a favourable disposition towards supporting the policy action and collaborating in its implementation.</p> <p><b>Create a timeline that distinguishes between short-term and long-term policy actions.</b> Such a timeline reflects the different time required to implement different policy actions, but also allows actors to track and demonstrate progress. The timelines should be determined by assessing their respective capacities to implement the policy action, as this can influence how much time would be needed. If a single actor is responsible for multiple policy actions and has limited capacity for implementing them, it may also help to sequence these actions over time.</p>



Actions	Recommendations
3. Identify funding needs	<p><b>Estimate the financial resources required for each policy action.</b> Estimates should be informed by considerations of the complexity of the policy action, the required inputs for implementation, and the ability of responsible actor(s) to effectively use the funding. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and a constrained budget, funding could be prioritised for higher priority policy actions, while lower priority policy actions could be eliminated or reduced in scope.</p> <p><b>Identify for each policy action the party responsible for funding that action and assess the sustainability of the funding source.</b> Funding sources could come from government, employers, individuals and international partner organisations, or a combination thereof. Consider the sustainability of funding sources and confirm that the funding source is available for the entire duration of the planned policy action. Develop contingency plans to adapt the implementation of the EDG if there is a significant drop in funding.</p>
4. Strengthen strategic planning	<p><b>Consider multiple possible future scenarios</b>, anticipate possible changes in society and economy, and explore their potential implications for education and skills policies in Latvia. Explore how multiple developments from other policy sectors (e.g. economy, labour market, health, technology) can intersect and interact with education and skills policies in unexpected ways and may require adjustments be made to the EDG. Encourage openness about the assumptions behind analyses and create an opportunity to evaluate the drivers of uncertainty in Latvia.</p> <p><b>Assess the risks of different possible future scenarios</b> and identify the vulnerabilities in the current education and skills system in adapting to such changes. Identify ways to address the risks and prepare accordingly in the EDG implementation. Make the results of risk assessments available for policy makers to inform decisions and allow them to make explicit trade-off and prioritisation decisions.</p> <p><b>Conduct a resilience systems analysis</b> to identify which parts of Latvia's education and skills system have been most affected by the recent COVID-19 crisis and are most vulnerable to future shocks. This would allow Latvia to prioritise those parts of the system with further support and thus strengthen the overall resilience of its education and skills system and support at-risk groups during and beyond the EDG.</p>

## 2. Guidance on improving Latvia's indicator system and selecting indicators for the EDG

Latvia's EDG needs to be accompanied by a robust indicator system to monitor implementation progress. A robust indicator system for education and skills policies provides reliable, accurate and timely information on the human and financial resources invested in skills, how education and skills systems operate and evolve, and the returns on investments in skills.

An effective process for selecting EDG indicators facilitates consideration of a comprehensive set of high-quality indicators and helps to prioritise them on the basis of their ability to assess progress towards the achievement of the objectives and policy actions of the EDG. It is important to find a reasonable number of indicators, as too many can be costly and administratively burdensome and too few may not allow for a comprehensive assessment of progress towards achieving the policy objectives.

An assessment of Latvia's current indicator system (see Chapter 3 in the full report) reveals gaps in Latvia's ability to measure progress towards the achievement of its objectives. For example, indicators could be developed to track funding for lifelong learning, generate more nuanced information on drop-outs, monitor student progression through education, measure the quality of early childhood education and care quality and provide additional background information on students. Developing these indicators would allow Latvia to identify whether all students are sufficiently supported and have the opportunity to develop their skills.

Chapter 3 in the full report presents a list of potential indicators for the EDG and an overview of further considerations that have been taken into account during the development of Latvia's EDG. The OECD, together with government and stakeholder representatives, reviewed a total of 181 possible indicators and prioritised and discussed in-depth between 10-12 potential indicators across each of the five levels of education,<sup>2</sup> resulting in a total of 54 potential indicators for Latvia's EDG. Where relevant, specific suggestions are made for improving certain indicators and developing alternative indicators.

Chapter 3 in the full report also makes suggestions for how Latvia could improve its indicator system for the EDG. These improvements include linking the various databases, strengthening the data validation process, setting ambitious yet realistic benchmark targets, designating a research institution to fully use the indicators, and disseminating information generated by the indicators through a user-friendly platform. Improving the indicator system in these ways would allow Latvia to make more effective use of the indicators to guide the EDG implementation process.

**Table 3. Recommendations for further improving Latvia's indicator system for the EDG**

Actions	Recommendations
1. Link indicator databases	<b>Facilitate data exchanges between indicator databases through a unique identification number for each individual, which allows data on this individual to be linked across various databases.</b> Consideration should be given to linking Latvia's various administrative databases where information relevant to education and skills policy can be found. These include the State Education Information System, the Unemployment Accounting and Registered Vacancy Information System, as well as databases of EU funded projects (e.g. Information system for the professional competence project (SO 8.4.1)), among others.
2. Improve the quality of indicator data	<b>Strengthen data validation processes by conducting regular quality checks of the data collection system and adopting digital technologies.</b> Regular data collection quality checks, which are based on transparent and clear standards, should ensure that consistent concepts, definitions and methodologies are applied in data collection. Adopting various digital technologies, such as data collection software, school information systems, database management systems and data analytics applications, should be explored for more accuracy, reliability and timeliness of data.
3. Benchmark indicators	<b>Set the target value to be sufficiently ambitious to inspire and mobilise action, but at the same time not so unrealistic as to demotivate actors.</b> Target values should be chosen based on criteria such as government priorities, peer average, available resources, international performance standards and past trends. If any indicators from the previous EDG are being used for the new EDG, their benchmark values should be reviewed in relation to the evaluated mid-term values in order to determine a realistic benchmark target in the new EDG. <b>Consider adopting annual targets for some indicators.</b> Complementary to the mid-term and final year target values, Latvia could also consider annual targets for some important indicators. This would provide more frequent feedback on progress towards the achievement of objectives and, by extension, highlight where corrective action may need to be taken to achieve those targets. At the same time, more frequent data collection is labour intensive and comes at a cost. The potential benefits and costs should thus be weighed carefully.
4. Raise capacity to make use of indicator data	<b>Support research institutions to provide capacity in fully using the available national and international indicators.</b> The research institutions should analyse progress in implementing the EDG and regularly publish reports informing and guiding implementation. They should provide training to other government officials on how to use information generated by indicators so that the most appropriate indicators are used for the policies considered and so that the information is used with the nuances and limitations of indicators in mind.
5. Improve dissemination of indicator data	<b>Improve the dissemination of information generated by the indicators through a user-friendly platform serving a wide audience of users.</b> The platform should be accessible through a variety of channels (e.g. website, mobile) and provide up-to-date information in plain language. The platform should centralise information on skills needs and available learning opportunities, career guidance services, and funding support. The information should be available in disaggregated format so that it can be tailored to the specific needs of various users.

## References

- OECD (2020), *Strengthening the Governance of Skills Systems: Lessons from Six OECD Countries*, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/3a4bb6ea-en>. [3]
- OECD (2019), *OECD Skills Strategy 2019: Skills to Shape a Better Future*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264313835-en>. [2]
- OECD (2019), *OECD Skills Strategy Latvia: Assessment and Recommendations*, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/74fe3bf8-en>. [1]

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The Latvian Education Law is available in the Latvian language at: <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=50759>.

<sup>2</sup> Five levels of education: 1) early childhood education and care; 2) general education; 3) vocational education and training; 4) higher education; and 5) adult learning.

## Annex A. Proposal of EDG policy actions

This annex presents the OECD's proposal of policy actions for inclusion in Latvia's EDG framework. The OECD was specifically asked to participate in the process for identifying potential policy actions for the policy objectives, which were chosen by Latvia through internal consultations. Clarifying actors and timelines, and describing the funding implications were not discussed during these consultations as Latvia discussed these internally at a later stage.

In order to discuss relevant policy objectives and policy actions for Latvia's EDG Framework, a series of workshops and focus groups were held in Riga in November 2019. The workshops convened representatives from various ministries and stakeholders (e.g. employers, education and training providers, trade unions, academics, and civil society organisations) to discuss and identify a set of policy objectives and policy actions relevant for Latvia's EDG. While the OECD team delivered the opening keynote presentation in the workshop, based on the findings and recommendations of the 2019 OECD assessment and recommendations report, the discussions were facilitated by the Latvian project team and took place in working groups organised by level of education, ranging from early childhood education and care to adult learning. The reason for dividing the groups in this way was to make best use of the expertise and experience of participants who were often specialists and responsible for a specific level of education. The results from the workshops were then field tested with a broader group of stakeholders during focus groups, which were also organised by level of education and led by the OECD. As the findings from the workshops and focus groups were still preliminary at the time of writing, they are not featured in this report. Instead, the proposed policy actions based on the recommendations of the 2019 "OECD Skills Strategy Latvia Recommendations and Assessment" report are presented here, as these have been developed with a broad range of actors during the extensive engagement processes of Phase I of the OECD Skills Strategy project, and are based on an in-depth assessment of Latvia's education and skills system. As the context significantly changed due to COVID-19 after Phase I was completed, further guidance from Phase II is provided as to how the proposed policy actions may be applicable in the current context. Phase II recommendations are complementary to the Phase I recommendations, and therefore the recommendations of both phases should be considered.

At the time of the consultations, the specific policy objectives were identified on a conceptual level and were further developed and discussed by the Ministry of Education and Science based on the input received during consultations with stakeholders, and taking into account the 2019 OECD assessment and recommendations report conclusions and recommendations. The four policy objectives identified as a result of the consultation process and further work from the Ministry of Education and Science are:

1. Highly qualified, competent and excellence-oriented teachers and academic staff.
2. Modern, high-quality and labour market oriented education.
3. Support for everyone's achievement.
4. Sustainable and effective governance of education system and resources.

In line with how the consultations were organised, the policy objectives and policy actions are listed by level of education: 1) early childhood education and care (ECEC); 2) general education (primary to secondary education); 3) vocational education and training (VET); 4) higher education; and 5) adult learning.

For each level of education, a table shows for each objective the relevant OECD findings from the 2019 "OECD Skills Strategy Latvia: Assessment and Recommendations" report. Most, but not all, levels of education have relevant OECD assessments and recommendations for each policy objective, depending

on whether the objective was covered in the report (OECD, 2019<sup>[1]</sup>). For simplicity and clarity of presentation, each OECD assessment and recommendation is associated with a single policy objective, but a recommendation may nevertheless be considered as relevant for multiple policy objectives.

## Early childhood education and care

The first years of life provide the foundations for an individual's future attitudes, behaviours and skills, and support their future skills development. The Latvian government recognises that investment in high-quality ECEC pays dividends in terms of children's long-term learning and development.

Columns 1 and 2 in Table A A.1 show a summary of the findings from the 2019 “OECD Skills Strategy Latvia: Assessment and Recommendations” report. As the context has significantly changed since the launch of the report due to the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic, column 3 provides further complementary guidance on the policy actions that can respond to the pressures that the pandemic has generated. This is based on the recent OECD publications ([www.oecd.org/education/](http://www.oecd.org/education/)) related to COVID-19 and education.

**Table A A.1. Early childhood education and care: Relevant assessments, recommendations and guidance from Phases I and II of the OECD Skills Strategy project**

P/O	Assessments (Phase I)	Recommendations (Phase I)	Guidance (Phase II)
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a shortage of public places for ECEC in urban areas, especially Riga, and long waiting lists. This can disproportionately disadvantage families with lower income who have less access to private alternatives due to the relatively higher costs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide means-tested support from municipalities to reduce the financial burden associated with ECEC for families from the lower end of the income distribution who do not have access to a public pre-primary school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve accessibility of ECEC for 1-4 year olds. Due to the pandemic there may be more families struggling financially for whom the cost of ECEC is difficult to bear. Access for essential personnel (e.g. healthcare workers, transit workers) should also be prioritised.</li> </ul>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no national standards for school leaders and ECEC staff to inspire, assess and guide them in their professional development. Latvian law specifies that it is the responsibility of the school leader to organise yearly teacher appraisals; however, there is no specific rule on how they should be done or on how they inform teacher professional development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop occupational standards for school leaders and ECEC staff. Ensure that developed standards are aligned with the new curriculum. Develop national guidelines for appraisal and link them to teachers' professional development to initiate a life cycle approach to professional development, rather than a mere performance-based pay system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include occupational standards that relate to health and safety in order to provide and maintain a safe work environment. This could include, for example, requiring ECEC staff to follow hygiene guidelines, requiring workers to stay home when sick, cleaning the ECEC institution regularly and thoroughly, and limiting the number of people in the ECEC institution at any given time.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A national assessment instrument to monitor child development and ECEC quality is absent. Control of ECEC institutions is relatively limited once they have obtained their license.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a national assessment tool to monitor child development and ensure ECEC quality. Such an instrument could support the external evaluation of ECEC institutions and inform the Ministry of Education and Science about early childhood education and care quality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the national assessment tool to track students' physical health, social and emotional needs and other special needs. This would help identify ECEC institutions that may have a disproportionately larger share of at-risk children who may need additional support.</li> </ul>

Note: P/O refers to policy objective: 1) highly qualified, competent and excellence-oriented teachers and academic staff; 2) modern, high-quality and labour market oriented education; 3) support for everyone's achievement; and 4) sustainable and effective governance of education system and resources.

Source: OECD (2019<sup>[1]</sup>), *OECD Skills Strategy Latvia: Assessment and Recommendations*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/74fe3bf8-en>.

## General education

Strong skills developed in youth not only pave the way to success in higher education and the labour market, but also help foster a culture of lifelong learning that can make individuals more adaptable to future changes. Countries whose youth develop strong skills typically have highly skilled adult populations.

Columns 1 and 2 in Table A A.2. show a summary of the findings from the 2019 “OECD Skills Strategy Latvia: Assessment and Recommendations” report. As the context has significantly changed since the launch of the report due to the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic, column 3 provides further complementary guidance on the policy actions that can respond to the pressures that the pandemic has generated. This is based on the recent OECD publications ([www.oecd.org/education/](http://www.oecd.org/education/)) related to COVID-19 and education.

**Table A A.2. General education: Relevant assessments, recommendations and guidance from Phases I and II of the OECD Skills Strategy project**

P/O	Assessments (Phase I)	Recommendations (Phase I)	Guidance (Phase II)
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>There are no selective criteria for entering initial teacher education or for hiring teachers.</b> Universities are currently working on a new curriculum for initial teacher education programmes that includes standardised entrance criteria and final assessment requirements. The introduction of entrance examinations needs to be carefully balanced with the expected level of teacher salary in a decreasing workforce context, overly stringent hiring requirements may result in a teacher shortage.</li> <li>• <b>The preparation of the teaching workforce needs to be aligned with the new competency-based curriculum.</b> Initial teacher education needs to be aligned with the new curriculum requirements. The incumbent teaching workforce has to be updated on pedagogical practices and assessment methodology. Professional development is mandatory, with teachers and school leaders required to undergo at least 36 hours of training every three years; however, the number of hours of training is low compared to many OECD countries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Base selection for initial teacher education on a mix of criteria and methods.</b> In line with the ambitions of the new competency-based school curriculum and the newly defined teaching standards, teacher education institutions should explore and pilot more elaborate, well-rounded selection criteria and intake procedures that cover a mix of cognitive and socio-emotional skills.</li> <li>• <b>Encourage representation of teachers and support the development of professional teacher associations to raise the quality of teaching and promote the teaching profession.</b> The scope of action of professional teacher associations could extend from defining teaching standards and selection criteria for the teaching profession to programme accreditation, continuous professional development and career paths. In the short term, the professional teacher associations could identify which competences the incumbent teaching workforce is lacking for the successful implementation of the new curriculum and ensure that adequate professional development is provided. In the long term it could sustain the continuous improvement of the teaching profession.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Review the process of selecting students for initial teacher education.</b> Given the challenges of COVID-19, preference should be given to selection methods that can be conducted also online. Criteria for selection should remain consistent with the new competency-based school curriculum and the newly defined teaching standards.</li> <li>• <b>Consider how the professional teacher associations could also support teachers dealing with the pandemic.</b> This would include supporting the availability of sufficient ICT tools in schools and the adoption of ICT in teaching and learning (learning platforms, digital learning resources, etc.). Teachers should develop the skills to be able to implement the new curriculum through remote teaching, if necessary. The professional teacher associations should also help teachers to cope with the virus in terms of recognising risks, implementing appropriate measures (e.g. school hygiene), and communicating effectively with parents to encourage and guide them to support children's education while at home during confinement.</li> </ul>

P/O	Assessments (Phase I)	Recommendations (Phase I)	Guidance (Phase II)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Curriculum reform in Latvia will require a change in teaching and pedagogical approaches.</b> The challenge will be to build the capacity needed to deliver the intentions of the curriculum in the classroom. This will involve teachers being motivated to update their skills and knowledge and to invest significantly in continuous professional development to equip them with the adequate competences. In the long term, adopting a more holistic approach that views the school as a learning organisation would strengthen a life cycle approach to professional development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Develop schools as learning organisations in the long term to empower teachers to put the curriculum into practice.</b> In such schools, teachers, support staff and school leaders benefit from career-long development that is based on research and effective collaboration. This involves moving away from the current model of delivering professional development through courses outside the school setting towards a more collaborative, practitioner-led experience embedded in classroom practice. It also involves reviewing the role and selection of school leaders, as strong pedagogical leadership is pivotal in transforming schools into learning organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Foster learning organisations in schools with strong leadership and an effective use of technology</b> that allows teachers to participate in technology empowered and enhanced professional development activities. Provide training for teachers in using technology for coaching, mentoring and collaboration with peers.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The relative quality of school self-evaluation, and the extent to which this process feeds into the school development plan, is not clear.</b> Self-evaluation has to be conducted every year, include an indicator relative to teacher professional development, and be published on the school or founder website for transparency. Furthermore, founders may not have the capacity to follow-up with their schools effectively once accreditation has been granted.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Consider strengthening the role of the State Education Quality Service (SEQS) to support the self-evaluation of low-capacity schools.</b> All education institutions should have the capacity to lead and appropriately use meaningful self-evaluation so that founders can reflect on the school improvement plan. This can take the form of toolkits that frame self-evaluation distributed to education institutions, or advisory teams visiting the municipality in need.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Support school self-evaluations in the context of Covid-19 as part of the Education Quality Management System in general and vocational educational institutions.</b> These self-evaluations should reveal where schools can do better in reaching out to vulnerable groups, preventing drop-outs, using technology solutions for learning, communicating with parents, introducing health and safety measures, and making contingency plans for different scenarios of length of school closure and expected timing of school reopening.</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Schools in small rural municipalities face challenges attracting young talented teachers.</b> Such schools have fewer financial resources. After graduating, teachers are free to choose where they want to work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Consider designing incentives to motivate highly competent teachers to teach in rural areas.</b> These could be financial incentives set by an external evaluation body like the SEQs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Explore how to use technology to equip teachers in rural areas.</b> Although COVID-19 may make it difficult to provide additional financial incentives to recruit teachers to rural areas in the short term, technology may offer solutions to enhance the teaching of existing teachers.</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>School evaluation and external evaluations need to take into account a broader framework</b> that includes the requirements of the new curriculum to be implemented.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Foster greater policy coherence by embedding school evaluation and external evaluation</b> within a broader evaluation and assessment framework that supports the introduction of the new curriculum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Consider how remote instruction can be taken into account in school evaluation and external evaluation.</b> This may require different approaches in the evaluations that consider the particularities of remote instruction.</li> </ul>



P/O	Assessments (Phase I)	Recommendations (Phase I)	Guidance (Phase II)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>There is no centralised monitoring mechanism</b> that could help identify educational institutions with low student learning outcomes before the regular six-year reaccreditation process, and thus trigger an external evaluation by the SEQS.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Finalise and implement a comprehensive monitoring system</b> that ensures alignment between the different evaluation arrangements (teacher appraisal, school evaluation, system level monitoring). Incorporate the systematic use of the State Education Information System as an input for research to spread best practice and base policy initiatives on scientific evidence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Monitor how schools are coping with the pandemic among other significant pre-defined education quality aspects.</b> This includes procedures for how to deal with sick students or staff, regular health checks, social distancing measures, and how education is provided when schools are closed.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The decision to close an education institution belongs to the municipality.</b> The average rural secondary school in Latvia has 146 students, less than half the OECD average of 369. Municipalities are under local political pressure to maintain their small schools. There is a no national-level set of objectives, nor transparent criteria, for decisions around consolidating schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Define a set of transparent quantitative and qualitative criteria at the national level for decision making around consolidating schools</b> in order to strengthen the founders' responsibility for establishing and operating an efficient school network. This would alleviate the political pressure on school founders and could support the school consolidation process to move forward with certain quality criteria. To establish an efficient network and compensate the closure of schools, the state, in co-operation with municipalities, should develop effective student transportation systems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Consider how technology could be used to provide learning opportunities in municipalities to ensure quality education accessibility to every child.</b> As COVID-19 might mean that a substantial part or all of education is shifted towards remote learning, this could be an opportunity to test technological solutions that could be continued beyond COVID-19 to provide remote learning opportunities in municipalities that have closed schools in the consolidation process.</li> </ul>

Note: P/O refers to policy objective: 1) highly qualified, competent and excellence-oriented teachers and academic staff; 2) modern, high-quality and labour market oriented education; 3) support for everyone's achievement; and 4) sustainable and effective governance of education system and resources.

Source: OECD (2019<sup>[11]</sup>), *OECD Skills Strategy Latvia: Assessment and Recommendations*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/74fe3bf8-en>.

## Vocational education and training

Improving the VET system has been a priority of government in recent years. As a response to skills imbalances in the labour market, the government wants to strengthen the sector's prestige, increase student participation in VET and improve student outcomes.

Columns 1 and 2 in Table A A.3 show a summary of the findings from the 2019 "OECD Skills Strategy Latvia: Assessment and Recommendations" report. As the context has significantly changed since the launch of the report due to the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic, column 3 provides further complementary guidance on the policy actions that can respond to the pressures that the pandemic has generated. This is based on the recent OECD publications ([www.oecd.org/education/](http://www.oecd.org/education/)) related to COVID-19 and education.

**Table A A.3. Vocational education and training: Relevant assessments, recommendations and guidance from Phases I and II of the OECD Skills Strategy project**

P/O	Assessments (Phase I)	Recommendations (Phase I)	Guidance (Phase II)
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only about 39% of students are entering VET after completing basic education. This falls short of Latvia's aim to have 50% of students enter vocational programmes, and the share has not significantly evolved over recent years, despite efforts to make vocational education more attractive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mainstream the “Effective management for VET schools” (SO 8.5.3.) project that promotes, among other aspects, teacher and school leader training to strengthen the capacity of VET school administration and the quality of vocational education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider how to strengthen VET schools' capacity to use online platforms. While online training cannot fully replace in person training, and its effectiveness depends on occupation, it should be used to help keep learners engaged in learning while in-person training is not possible.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only certain companies can participate in the work-based learning (WBL) project. In the newly introduced work-based learning project, a VET student spends at least 25% of the VET programme in a firm, and firms admitting a WBL student receive compensation. However, only companies without a tax debt can participate in the project.</li> <li>The vocational education system as a whole suffers from a lack of prestige. Only 63% of respondents in Latvia perceived VET to provide “high-quality learning”, the second lowest value among EU-27 countries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue strengthening WBL implementation to develop relevant skills for the labour market. Review the financial incentives to encourage small and medium-sized firms to participate in the WBL programme, and simplify the process for receiving financial compensation for work-based learning.</li> <li>Embed career/learning guidance for students and their parents in the education system as a requirement to improve VET take-up and consideration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider wage support programmes to maintain work-based learning. Wage support programmes could be in the form of a subsidy, short-term work schemes, and other types of financial incentives. The wage support should be targeted at small firms that would otherwise not be able to offer work-based learning opportunities.</li> <li>Update guidance information with the latest labour market data, as short-term to long-term projections will have been impacted by COVID-19. Provide information on the most promising VET tracks.</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the 2017/2018 school year, 19% of students from upper secondary vocational education dropped out, compared to around 7.5% of students from general upper secondary education. From a monitoring perspective, the establishment of evaluation systems for the identification of students at risk can allow intervention to take place earlier, can better attend to students' needs and provide adequate guidance, and can prevent drop-out until the student acquires a certain qualification level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a VET tracking system to improve the tracking of drop-outs. Provide incentives to local authorities to monitor students' attendance more closely. More stringent requirements could help boost graduation rates. Enrich the contextual information of vocational education students and define indicators that identify students at risk of dropping out in order to better attend to students' needs and provide adequate guidance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider tracking drop-outs due to COVID-19 in order to provide targeted support to students. Ensure that such involuntary breaks do not result in any fees, repayment or other penalty for the students or providers. Financial and mentoring support may be required so that providers can maintain readiness and be quickly and fully operational post-crisis, and so that learners can resume learning as soon as possible.</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The VET system still relies heavily on funding from European Structural Funds to support work-based learning and sector expert council activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a co-funding instrument to fund sector expert councils for the medium term, aligned with defined performance criteria and methodology. Identify which institutions benefit from sector expert councils and design a collaborative funding mechanism, such as a mutual fund where all institutions contribute to the cost, to ensure the sustainability of these councils, as well as their effective operation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the viability and timing of the co-funding instrument in the current situation. As many firms are adversely affected by the crisis in the short term, the timing of introducing a co-funding instrument for sector expert councils could be delayed to the recovery and growth phase, after COVID-19. At the same time, their effectiveness through clear guidance on performance criteria and methodology should be strengthened.</li> </ul>

Note: P/O refers to policy objective: 1) highly qualified, competent and excellence-oriented teachers and academic staff; 2) modern, high-quality and labour market oriented education; 3) support for everyone's achievement; and 4) sustainable and effective governance of education system and resources.

Source: OECD (2019<sup>[11]</sup>), *OECD Skills Strategy Latvia: Assessment and Recommendations*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/74fe3bf8-en>.



## Higher education

Given the significant skills imbalances, and in particular a shortage of workers with a higher education to fill high-skilled jobs, improving higher education and making it more labour market relevant is a priority for the Latvian government. Recent initiatives include the restructuring of the university management system, strengthening of management capacity and strategy development, and the implementation of the new academic career model.

Columns 1 and 2 in Table A A.4 show a summary of the findings from the 2019 “OECD Skills Strategy Latvia: Assessment and Recommendations” report. As the context has significantly changed since the launch of the report due to the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic, column 3 provides further complementary guidance on the policy actions that can respond to the pressures that the pandemic has generated. This is based on the recent OECD publications ([www.oecd.org/education/](http://www.oecd.org/education/)) related to COVID-19 and education.

**Table A A.4. Higher education: Relevant assessments, recommendations and guidance from Phases I and II of the OECD Skills Strategy project**

P/O	Assessments (Phase I)	Recommendations (Phase I)	Guidance (Phase II)
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Employers in Latvia report that skills shortages are a major obstacle</b> to long-term investment decisions. Compared to other OECD countries, the share of workers in Latvia who are under-skilled for their jobs is high, and more workers are under-qualified than over-qualified.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Raise awareness among higher education management of the importance of career guidance services</b> for promoting sound enrolment decisions, lowering drop-out rates, and facilitating graduate employment in high-demand occupations. The career guidance should be informed by data from forecasting platforms and the Higher Education graduate monitoring system, so that there is a better skills match with the labour market.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Provide guidance to students on what COVID-19 means for the higher education experience and what support mechanisms can be provided.</b> Guidance should be given as to what modalities higher education programmes (on campus, online) are offered, as well as which programmes have promising prospects in the new labour market.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Work-based learning has yet to be introduced in higher education</b> in Latvia, and is only starting to develop in secondary education. Creating work-based learning opportunities for students requires strong engagement with employers. However, employer engagement in a pilot project that developed work-based learning for secondary vocational education was low.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Establish a legal framework for work-based learning in higher education</b> and carry out pilot projects. Assist small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in pooling the responsibilities associated with providing work-based learning opportunities. Consider encouraging the integration of work-based learning in higher education programme curricula by including it as a criterion for the performance-based funding of education institutions (in addition to labour market relevance, and science, technology, engineering and mathematics prioritisation).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Consider the introduction of pilot projects for work-based learning in higher education in sectors less affected by COVID-19.</b> As many sectors are struggling with the current situation, it may at present be more viable to introduce work-based learning in less affected sectors, where work-based learning arrangements with higher education institutions could be piloted safely. Lessons learned through these pilots could then be applied to other sectors, once the economy recovers and grows again.</li> </ul>

P/O	Assessments (Phase I)	Recommendations (Phase I)	Guidance (Phase II)
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Sector expert councils (SECs) face capacity and financial constraints</b> to their participation in the development of occupational standards. These standards set out what someone needs to do and know in a particular occupational area or role, and often form the basis of vocational qualifications. Legislation from 2016 requires that all occupational standards are updated once every five years. However, the process for updating occupational standards in higher education is complicated and costly, and this requirement is not being met. Council members often lack the technical expertise and knowledge to translate skills needs into occupational standards, and could benefit from additional support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Build the capacity of SECs to engage in updating and designing curricula in higher education.</b> This would improve linkages between employers and higher education institutions. Members of SECs should receive financial, technical and administrative support to translate skills needs into occupational standards and qualifications. At the same time, procedures involved in updating occupational standards should be simplified. As SECs develop their capacity they could be involved in the licensing and quality assurance of professional qualifications, as well as in the development of curricula. When involving employers in curriculum development, care should be taken not to neglect key foundational skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Engage SECs in updating and designing curricula in higher education, taking COVID-19 and its ramifications into account.</b> The role of the SEC should be strengthened as they may have key insights into the relevant skills needed in the labour market at present and for the foreseeable future. Given the financial constraints of government and employer resources due to COVID-19, efforts to update occupational standards should be prioritised for sectors with growth potential.</li> </ul>

Note: P/O refers to policy objective: 1) highly qualified, competent and excellence-oriented teachers and academic staff; 2) modern, high-quality and labour market oriented education; 3) support for everyone's achievement; 4) sustainable and effective governance of education system and resources.

Source: OECD (2019<sup>[1]</sup>), *OECD Skills Strategy Latvia: Assessment and Recommendations*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/74fe3bf8-en>.

## Adult learning

A strong culture of lifelong learning, particularly in adulthood, is essential for Latvia to boost the skills of its adults, and can generate a range of personal, economic and social benefits. Adult learning matters for Latvia, as the lack of productivity in workplaces, coupled with demographic trends, are exacerbating skills shortages, thus requiring workers to enhance their skills.

Columns 1 and 2 in Table A A.5 show a summary of the findings from the 2019 “OECD Skills Strategy Latvia: Assessment and Recommendations” report. As the context has significantly changed since the launch of the report due to the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic, column 3 provides further complementary guidance on the policy actions that can respond to the pressures that the pandemic has generated. This is based on the recent OECD publications ([www.oecd.org/education/](http://www.oecd.org/education/)) related to COVID-19 and education.

**Table A A.5. Adult learning: Relevant assessments, recommendations and guidance from Phases I and II of the OECD Skills Strategy project**

P/O	Assessments (Phase I)	Recommendations (Phase I)	Guidance (Phase II)
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>A significant share of adults report scheduling challenges at work as a barrier to participating in adult learning.</b> A common challenge among SMEs, which make up most enterprises in Latvia, is that even when training itself is financed through government funding, employers may still be reluctant to support adult learning participation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Explore the viability of introducing a mandatory requirement for employers to provide or support participation in adult learning for their employees.</b> Employers and unions should be part of the decision-making process of how such a requirement is implemented in practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Provide employers with sufficient support to make the participation of their employees in adult learning possible.</b> Since many employers, particularly SMEs, are currently struggling, they may need additional support to provide adult learning if it is made mandatory.</li> </ul>

P/O	Assessments (Phase I)	Recommendations (Phase I)	Guidance (Phase II)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>A significant share of adults report scheduling challenges at home as a barrier to participating in adult learning.</b> ECEC places only become available for most parents when their children are about 1.5 years old. If there are no alternative care options, such as extended family members, it may not be feasible for adults caring for their young children to participate in training. Providing childcare options near the training site for adult learners may make it easier for parents to participate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Promote collaboration between adult learning providers and municipalities to provide childcare options near to adult learning programmes.</b> This could mean expanding already existing childcare options to make them available during times of adult learning (e.g. evening or weekend). Explore whether, in the context of the territorial reform, the financial capacity of each consolidated municipality could be elevated to provide expanded childcare services. In cases where no public childcare option is available during times of adult learning, consider subsidising the cost of alternative private childcare options for low-income adult learners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Consider the provision of childcare options during times of adult learning programmes.</b> Given the COVID-19 context, adult learning programmes are more likely to be provided remotely, which means that there is no need for childcare options to be located near adult learning programmes. At the same time, childcare options may be more limited due to restrictions in the number of children that can be looked after in a constrained place. This may make it necessary to expand alternative childcare options beyond those that currently exist.</li> </ul>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The quality of non-formal education programmes that do not specifically focus on unemployed adults is not centrally monitored.</b> Public and private educational institutions must apply for a license from the municipality to provide non-formal adult education programmes. Municipalities vary in terms of how the licensing procedure is conducted, including fees, requirements and criteria.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Work with relevant stakeholders to define quality standards, particularly in non-formal adult education,</b> including how they will be measured, how they will be used in evaluation and monitoring, and how adult learning staff will be supported in implementation. Consider transferring responsibility for the licensing of adult learning providers from municipalities to the state to ensure the same quality standards nationwide.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Consider quality standards that include the provision of distance learning as well as health and safety concerns.</b> All non-formal adult education should be provided with the appropriate health and safety measures in place. Distance learning should also be promoted, where possible.</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>A significant share of adults lack motivation to participate in adult learning.</b> Around 35% of adults reported that they did not participate in adult learning and did not want to participate in adult learning. There are a number of different channels through which adults can learn about adult learning possibilities, but they need to be better co-ordinated and targeted at unmotivated adults. Only about 4.7% of unmotivated adults reported having received any information about adult learning opportunities.</li> <li><b>Not all vocational education competence centre (VECC) programmes are actively catering for adult learners.</b> They often lack the management capacity to deal with this new influx of students, and the related budgetary changes in terms of income and expenses. They also find it challenging to actively recruit adult students and compete with private VET providers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Co-ordinate awareness raising campaigns about the value of adult learning through a central body</b> that fosters co-operation across ministries and between government and stakeholders. Such awareness raising campaigns (e.g. "know your rights") targeting unmotivated adults should provide information about the different available adult learning opportunities, how to access them, and their benefits. Such a body should also develop and implement strategies on how to engage and encourage unmotivated adults to raise their participation in adult learning.</li> <li><b>Strengthen the management and pedagogical capacity of VECC to deal with more adult students,</b> including related budgetary and scheduling changes, the tailoring of course offerings to the specific needs of adults, and recruiting adult students through marketing and promotion activities. Make it possible for VECC to provide adult learning opportunities for employed and unemployed adults grouped together.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Raise awareness about the importance for adult learning to deal with the uncertainties of COVID-19 through the central body.</b> Awareness raising campaigns should provide adults with information about what adult learning opportunities exist and which sectors are growing, so that adults who have become unemployed or furloughed can temporarily or permanently transition to a different job/sector. The importance of foundation skills should be emphasised.</li> <li><b>Strengthen VECC capacity in dealing with uncertainty.</b> This requires training in how to budget, schedule and plan when the future is highly uncertain. Provide support to VECC in making contingency plans to be able to deal with different scenarios.</li> </ul>

P/O	Assessments (Phase I)	Recommendations (Phase I)	Guidance (Phase II)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The provision of higher education offerings could be better adapted to the needs of adult learners.</b> Existing modular programmes focus mostly on academic content and should be adapted to the needs of the labour market. Financial support is not available for those studying part time. Adult learners who cannot afford the cost of studying part time, or the loss in income when studying full time, may not be able to pursue studies in higher education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Expand higher education programmes for adult learners.</b> This means enlarging the course offerings in higher education, providing courses in a flexible and modular format in labour market demanded subject areas, providing higher education staff with training to deal with adult students, and offering financial support to part-time adult students who are on a low income.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Support higher education institutions in providing more remote learning opportunities.</b> Courses offered on-campus should adhere to strict health and safety measures. Courses offered online in live or pre-recorded format should be developed. Higher education staff should be supported and trained to teach in various modalities. Digital assessment formats should be developed.</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>A significant portion of the operational expenses of guidance and counselling services is covered by European Structural Funds.</b> There is currently no specific plan for what will happen afterwards and how these services will be funded. This may undermine the long-term sustainability of guidance and counselling services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Make guidance and counselling services financially sustainable.</b> Evaluate current funding mechanisms in terms of effectiveness, equity and alignment with priorities. Consider alternative financing entities, such as municipalities or employers, and cost-saving possibilities through collaboration among public providers (public employment services, State Education Development Agency) and private providers, as well as a more cost-efficient blended career guidance and counselling approach that combines online and offline formats.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Consider how to provide guidance and counselling services online or remotely (e.g. phone calls).</b> Given the limitations of in-person meetings, online and remote counselling services are increasing by necessity. As people get more used to such remote services, this may be a viable financially cost-effective solution in the long term that could be expanded and maintained post COVID-19.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>It is challenging for guidance counsellors to reach under-represented groups,</b> in particular unmotivated adults. While services such as the State Employment Agency receive adults when they engage, outreach activities are mostly invitation-based (e.g. school) or specific events, and unmotivated adults may not be reached effectively through such means alone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Improve guidance and counselling services through providing ongoing training for guidance counsellors</b> so that they can provide services tailored to the specific needs of individuals, as well as reach out to and effectively engage under-represented adults (e.g. unmotivated, low skilled, rural residents). The role of VECC guidance counsellors could be strengthened to raise public awareness about VET among adults and provide individual support for adults in making use of the newly introduced VET modules.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Update guidance and counselling services with the latest labour market information.</b> Guidance counsellors should receive information and training on how the COVID-19 situation affects the job market, and how to engage adults affected by the crisis</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>There is a need for better targeting of financial incentives for employers.</b> Employers are reluctant to invest in adult learning, as other employers could poach the staff once the adult learning participation is completed. There is no common approach across sectors to fund adult learning provision.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Explore piloting a shared training fund in some sectors that employers contribute to and can draw from.</b> Engage employers from the beginning to ensure that there is ownership for such a fund. After the pilot, evaluate the effectiveness of the shared fund and whether it is worthwhile being extended to other sectors. The training fund could be part of a comprehensive support system for employers to support the skills development of their employees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Review the timing of such a shared training fund in the current situation.</b> As employers are adversely affected by the crisis in the short term, the timing of introducing a training fund could be delayed to the recovery and growth phase following COVID-19, or piloted in sectors that have not been substantially affected.</li> </ul>

Note: P/O refers to policy objective: 1) highly qualified, competent and excellence-oriented teachers and academic staff; 2) modern, high-quality and labour market oriented education; 3) support for everyone's achievement; 4) sustainable and effective governance of education system and resources.

Source: OECD (2019<sup>[1]</sup>), *OECD Skills Strategy Latvia: Assessment and Recommendations*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/74fe3bf8-en>.



# OECD Skills Strategy Implementation Guidance for Latvia

## DEVELOPING LATVIA'S EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES 2021-2027 REPORT SUMMARY

In order to pave the path to future success, Latvia has developed its Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027, which identifies key policy initiatives that are critical for skills development. The Guidelines outline how Latvia will equip its citizens with skills to flourish in work and in society. Evidence on the strengths and weaknesses of Latvia's education and skills systems has informed the prioritisation of relevant policies in the Guidelines. A wide range of Latvian actors across ministries, levels of government, education and training providers, employers, trade unions, the non-profit sector and learners have been involved in the development of the Guidelines, demonstrating their commitment to work together to implement these initiatives.

Looking to the future, more can be done to position Latvia to successfully implement the policy priorities and reach the targets encompassed by the Guidelines. As the COVID-19 crisis has reminded us, the future is uncertain and therefore all plans must be designed to be responsive and adaptable to overcome future challenges and seize future opportunities.

Building on the OECD Skills Strategy Assessment and Recommendations phase, the Implementation Guidance phase has supported Latvia in the development of the Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027 by providing guidance on selecting policy actions, improving Latvia's indicator system, and selecting performance indicators.