

# OECD *Multilingual Summaries* OECD Skills Strategy Latvia Assessment and Recommendations

*Summary in English*



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# Executive summary

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

This National Skills Strategy (NSS) project analyses the performance of Latvia's skills system and provides tailored recommendations for improving. This analysis and advice will support the development of Latvia's National Medium-term Strategy for Education and Skills for 2021-2027. The project was launched at the Skills Strategy Seminar in Riga in September 2018 with the Latvian Minister and State Secretary of Education and Science and representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Economics, Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre, employer associations, trade unions and the European Commission. Two workshops were held in February and May 2019 that convened a wide range of stakeholders, including unions, employers, sectoral training providers, education institutions, academics and government representatives. Eight focus groups and bilateral meetings with stakeholders and experts also took place. This process provided input and shaped the recommendations featured in this current report.

## Key findings and opportunities for improving Latvia's performance

Four important themes emerged from this project:

- **Building capacity to improve the teaching workforce:** Latvia has engaged in an ambitious curriculum reform that involves a transition to a competency-based curriculum to better equip students with the skills they need to thrive in the 21st century. For this initiative to bear fruit, the skills of the ageing teaching workforce must be updated, the selection of candidates to the teaching profession should be reviewed, and a new life cycle approach to professional development, which is tightly linked to teacher appraisal, must be set out.
- **Ensuring a sustainable funding mechanism for adult learning:** Latvia has piloted many projects related to adult learning that are largely financed by European Structural Funds. This has allowed Latvia to expand counselling services for adults, support companies with providing training and upgrade the infrastructure of the vocational education competence centres, among other programmes. In order for these initiatives to be sustainable in the long term, funding sources should be broadened. Latvia could consider piloting a shared training fund in some sectors that employers contribute to and can draw from.
- **Creating incentives to retain and attract skilled workers:** Population ageing combined with the high emigration of skilled workers pose serious challenges to Latvia's ability to respond to changing skills demand. Skills shortages have increased in recent years and are evident in certain high-

skilled occupations including engineers, various types of professionals and top managers. In response to these shortages, Latvia needs to improve working conditions and stimulate wage growth in high-demand occupations, while also taking a more active approach to recruiting foreign talent.

- **Monitoring and building capacity for coherent skills policies:** The institutions and individuals involved in Latvia's skills system require sufficient human and financial resources to fulfil their roles and collaborate with each other. To ensure that skills policies are co-ordinated, the state needs to better understand and respond to current capacity constraints in ministries, agencies and municipalities, as well as among key stakeholder groups. Government and social partners should form partnerships and invest to build their capacity for evidence-based, innovative and coherent skills policies.

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 below, and are elaborated in subsequent chapters.

### ***Priority 1: Strengthening the skills outcomes of students (Chapter 2)***

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:

- Building capacity to improve the teaching workforce
- Fostering continuous quality improvement from early childhood education and care (ECEC) to secondary education
- Improving equity between urban and rural areas
- Strengthening vocational education and training (VET)

### ***Priority 2: Fostering a lifelong learning culture (Chapter 3)***

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:

- Raising awareness about adult learning
- Reducing barriers to adult learning
- Expanding provision of adult learning
- Raising the quality of adult learning

### ***Priority 3: Reducing skills imbalances in the labour market (Chapter 4)***

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:

- Strengthening the responsiveness of the tertiary education system to changing skills demand
- Retaining talent in Latvia by stimulating sustainable wage growth and improving working conditions
- Facilitating internal mobility and attracting skilled workers from abroad

#### ***Priority 4: Strengthening the governance of the skills system (Chapter 5)***

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 and Skills Strategy 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 territorial reforms.

- Strengthening strategies and oversight for skills policy
- Improving co-operation at different levels of government and with stakeholders
- Building an integrated monitoring and information system on skills
- Raising, targeting and sharing investments in lifelong learning