

Call for proposals within the BMBF's Regulations for Government funding "Internationalisation of Vocational Education and Training"

Capacity building for Latvian Partners in the implementation process of VET responsibilities

Background

Reforms in the Latvian Vocational Education and Training (VET) system have been proceeding at great speed over recent years. The starting point had been a vocational school system facing challenges like a low level of prestige, a large number of small establishments, weak links with industry and an absence of modern teaching methods and gaps in regulations for VET. Numerous endeavours have been undertaken over the past five years, such as revision and optimisation of the VET school network, establishment of a framework for social partner involvement and labour market linkage, VET curriculum reform, revision of the legal framework for VET in enterprises and the development and implementation of work-based learning approaches at system level.

Two optimisation phases have seen the number of Vocational Education and Training centers reduce from 58 to 21. Of these, 17 are now centers of excellence. This investment in infrastructure has enabled Latvia to improve quality. Funding from the Latvian state and the European Social fund has been used. Sectoral Expert Councils (SECs) have been established in the twelve most important economic sectors and Conventions as advisory councils at vocational schools with the close involvement of local governments. As the SECs and conventions are a relatively new development, building their capacity is an important issue to be addressed. Latvia's starting point in work-based learning (WBL) was its own Vocational Education and Training model. Cooperation with countries with dual VET systems such as Germany, with the EU and with the Baltic states were taking place in order to transfer ideas for the further development of the country's own system for WBL. The VET system will continue to be primarily school-based with an increasing percentage of programs being implemented also in the WBL mode. Since 2013, a pilot initiative launched by the Latvian Ministry of Education has been pursuing a "bottom-up approach" by inviting Vocational Education and Training institutes to join forces with companies and the social partners (employers and trade unions) to take part in a WBL pilot project. Since then, the Latvian WBL approach has been extensively implemented. The 2015 amendments in VET law defined work-based learning as one of the national VET implementation forms. In July 2016, the government approved the WBL implementing regulations.

Currently, the implementation and roll out is the main focus of Latvian stakeholders. Within the whole process, measures have been taken to ensure the involvement of social partners. The social partners are taking over more responsibilities in the area of VET. The SECs have taken over tasks similar to German chambers /competent bodies in the area of education and training. They are supporting the government and schools in tasks such as the development of the training program content and conduction of exams, as well as ensuring

the quality of training. The SECs are coordinated by the Latvian Confederation of Employers (Latvijas Darba Devēju Konfederācija, LDDK) and by the Council for Co-operation of Agricultural organizations (in th Lauksaimniecības organizāciju sadarbības padome LOSP) in the field of agriculture. Since the implementation process is ample and the new paradigms still in the development stage, Latvian stakeholders are in need of support in order to ensure the most effective approaches when putting these new approaches into practice.

Aims

In this context the BMBF's Regulations for Government funding shall serve to

- conduct a scoping mission with a maximum duration of four months,
- support building an appropriate consortium of German and Latvian partners for a subsequent bilateral project to facilitate implementation of VET responsibilities,
- propose measures for capacity building of the SECs and/or other Latvian bodies to implement their tasks with regard to VET quality assurance.

The scoping mission's main goals are to

- identify existing and/or previous national, European or bilateral initiatives in the above mentioned area and their results, including the already existing Latvian-German initiatives,
- identify needs and demands regarding concrete support for the above mentioned Latvian stakeholders to conduct quality assuring tasks regarding Vocational Education and Training,
- identify German partners who would best offer support with regard to the identified needs.

Expected Results

As a result of the scoping mission, a proposal for BMBF and the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science for a bilateral project is to be drawn up. The project proposal should contain concrete support measures with a timetable and financing plan and suggest where in the Latvian system they should be implemented. This includes naming adequate Latvian partners that should be supported and/or participating in subsequent initiatives. What is more, the project proposal must illustrate how these concrete measures will build on the results of former initiatives put in place through National, European and/or bilateral initiatives or contribute to further development of the Latvian VET stakeholders' capacity.

The results of the scoping mission are to be submitted in German and English, a brief summary is to be submitted in Latvian.