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Optimisation of Latvian VET institutions' network – from past to present

Peer-learning event by ETF for Eastern Partnership developments
Ilze Buligina, Ministry of Education and Science, Republic of Latvia
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Main Reforms in Vocational Education from 2014

School Network

- Optimization of VET schools
- Modernization of VET institutions

Curricula Reform

- **1st PHASE (2010-2015)** - 56 modular programs, 32 qualification exams
- **2nd PHASE (2016-2021)** - 185 modular programs, 206 qualification exams.
- **2017** - Modular programmes set in Law on VET

Education Quality Monitoring

- **EQAVET** criteria
- Development of the education quality monitoring system
- **VET graduate tracking**



Governance Cooperation

- **2015** - Sectoral Expert Councils,
 - VET school Councils
- Employers' Organisations involved in approval of VET school development plans, programme content, governance etc.

Capacity in Adult Education

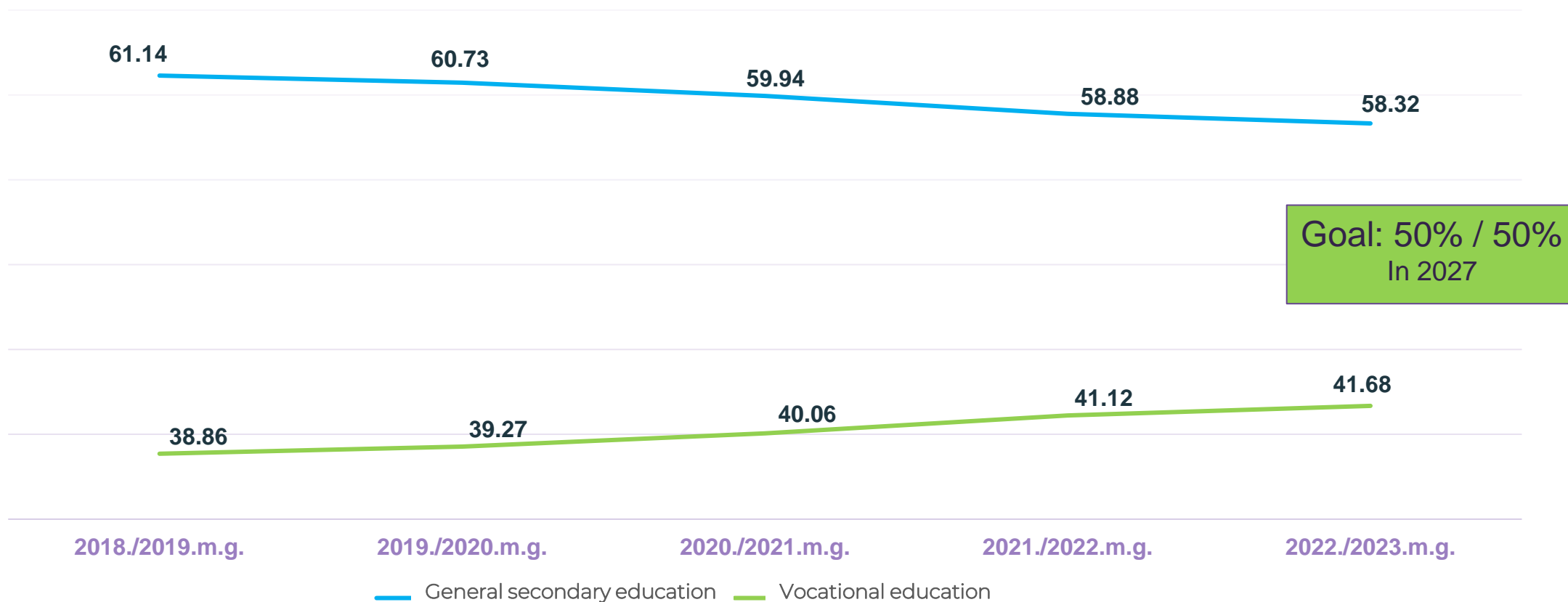
- AE in VET schools' development and financing strategies
- Methodological support and peer-learning for VET schools to ensure relevant and flexible AE
 - Modular programmes

Work-Based Learning

- **2015** - WBL set in Law on VET
 - **2016** - WBL regulations adopted
- **2016-2023** - WBL Project implementation (Unit Costs adopted, special trainings for enterprise trainers)

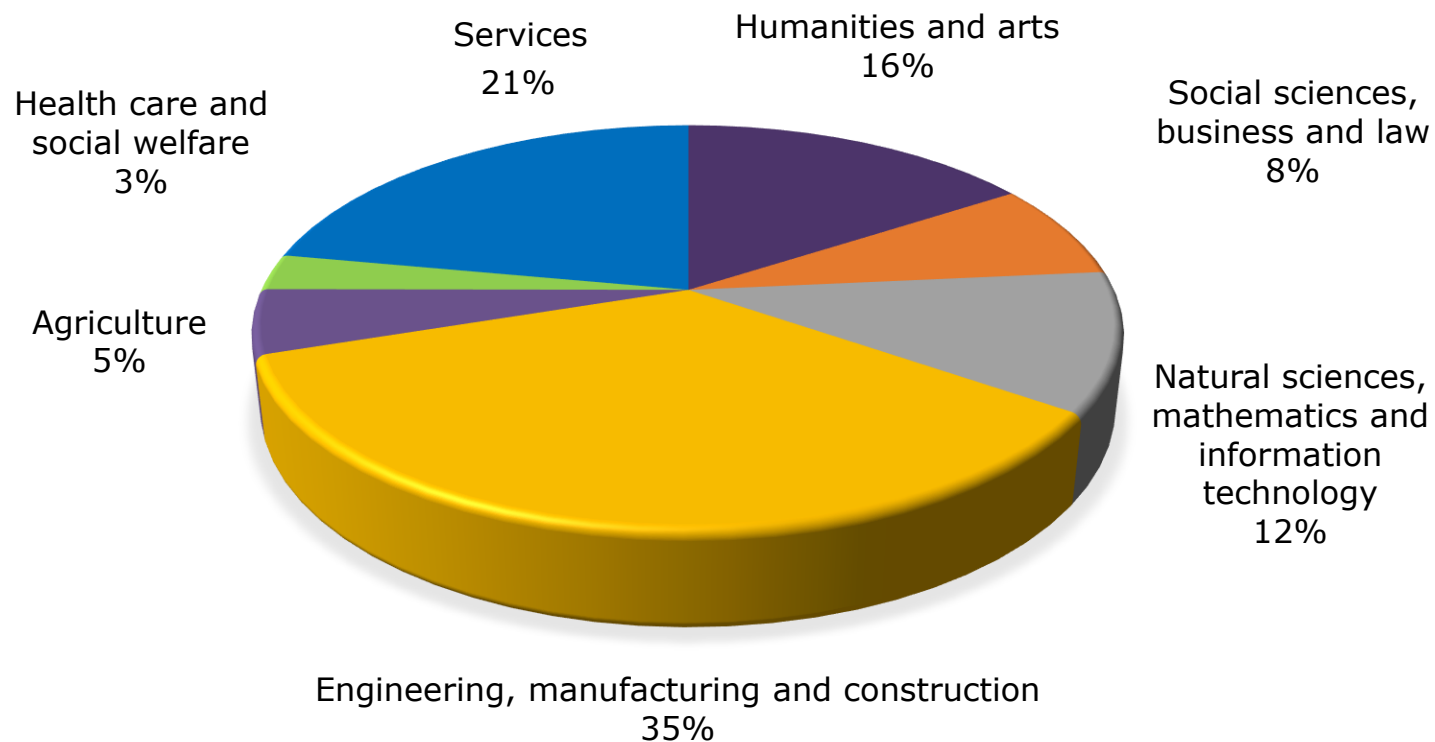
Students proportion in general secondary education and vocational secondary education

STUDENTS (%) in secondary education



VET SNAPSHOT 2023/24*

VET students by education thematic groups



EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS **53**

Incl.: MoES – 28, MoC – 9,
Municipalities – 7, Private – 4,
other ministries – 5

STUDENTS **27 605**

Incl. in the institutions
subordinated to the MoES –
83% (22 847)

Source: National Education Information System (VIIS), 05.10.2023.

* Initial vocational education programmes, incl. ESF funded and tuition fees



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Background

Optimisation of VET institutions' network in several phases **since 2010 - and still ongoing**

Why optimisation?

Central question – effective planning and utilisation of resources

Alongside with this – improved education quality and accessibility

... and **in 2004 EU structural funds became available** with Latvia's accession to the EU

Policy approach in Latvia:

- ✓ **Concept** „Raising the Attractiveness of Vocational Education and Training and Involvement of Social Partners to Secure the Quality of Vocational Education” (confirmed by the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of **16.09.2009**, Nr 629)
- ✓ **Guidelines** “Optimisation of the Vocational Education Institutions' Network 2010 – 2015)” (confirmed by the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of 6.01.2010, Nr 5)



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Looking back retrospectively...

The main phases for optimisation of VET institutions' network

Planning, resources, figures, results, challenges...



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Investment in VET 2007-2013 and 2014.-2020

289,3 milj. EUR
in the infrastructure and study environment of 30 VET institutions

Investment priorities: Complex support to VET institutions' network optimisation and modernisation of the learning environment in VET program implementation in relevant sectors of the national economy

Result: Fully modernised VET programs in metalworking, mechanical engineering and other manufacturing sectors, construction, energy, creative industries, ICT. Partially modernized VET programs in services sector. Complex renewal of the infrastructure, including ensuring at least one high-quality students' dormitory in each technical school.



Recommendations for subsequent investment

- ✓ Ensure the **sustainability of investments** made under EU funds 2007-2020, including by **preventing risks of significant change**.
- ✓ Investments in infrastructure modernization only by **increasing service delivery capacity**, after a comprehensive assessment of the capacity of the already modernized infrastructure.
- ✓ EU funds 2021-2027 investments have a strong emphasis on the **"green component"**

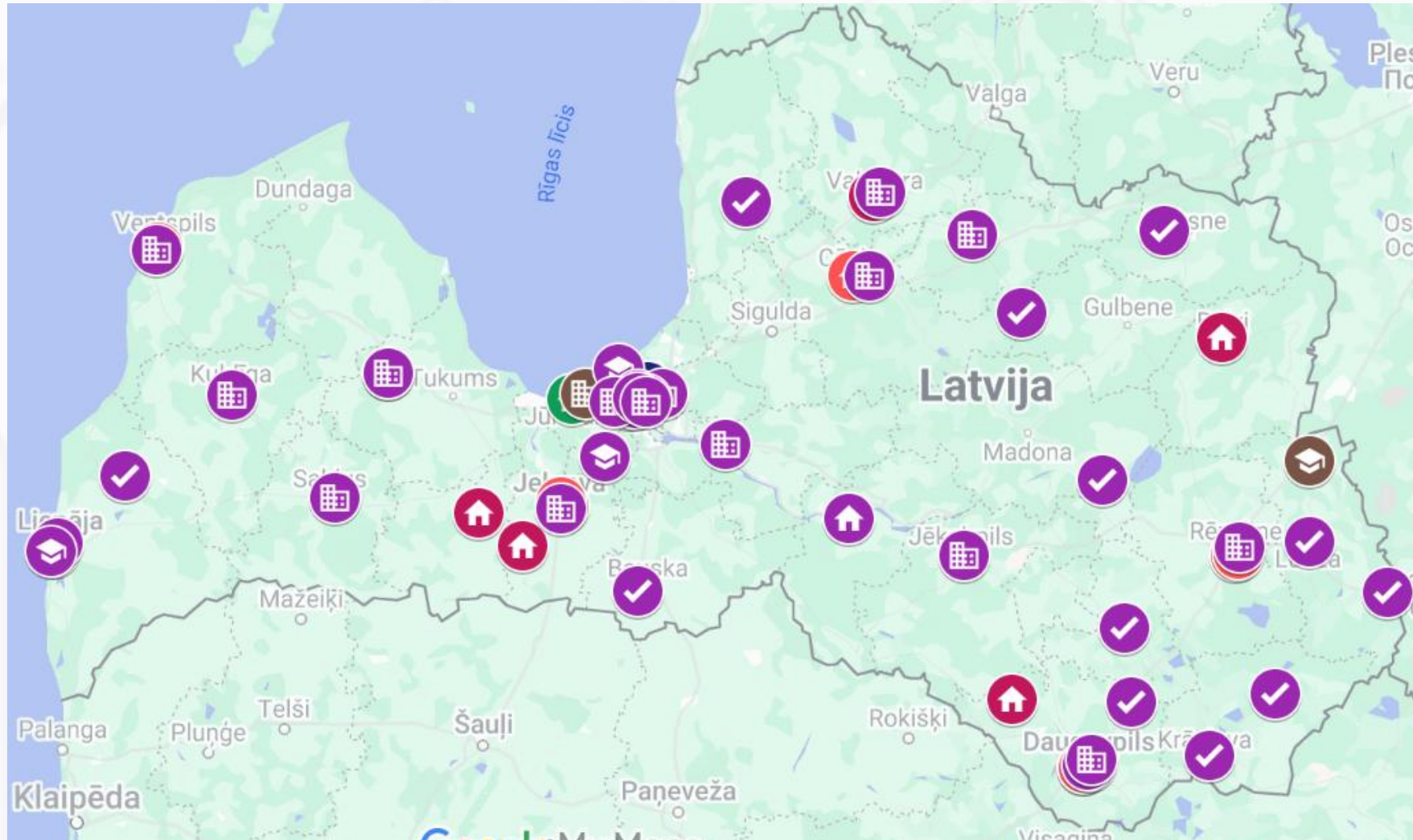
- ✓ Ensure **equal quality of learning environment** throughout the vocational education system.
- ✓ EU funds 2021-2027 investments must include a **digital component**, ensuring a systemic approach to the digitalization of vocational education institutions.
- ✓ We must move towards strengthening the existing **investments** – both in **infrastructure** and in the **content** of the curriculum – in the vocational education system.



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Profesionālās izglītības iestāžu tīkls

https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1FZU-TQYOa3IPPXOF58S9eXb1rT_dBI8&usp=sharing





Results and challenges we are facing

As a result of the optimisation the prestige of VET schools has grown significantly. Modern infrastructure and equipment, competitive VET programs

However – two sides of one coin...

- **On the one hand** the concentration of resources has allowed to substantively improve the VET quality and attractiveness. **On the other hand** in the remote regions VET is often not chosen by students due to socio-economic factors, despite its increasing attractiveness. VET institutions are not so close geographically anymore, causing:

- Additional transport cost and costs for the dormitory
 - Costs for subsistence outside the family
- With the **increasing strategic specialisation** this challenge may become even more prominent.
- Sometimes the **availability of places** does not coincide with the **availability of the dormitory**
- **Communication has to be improved**, since sometimes youngsters are encouraged by families and local stakeholders to remain with their communities, being concerned to 'lose' them (in the context of demographic challenges). However, the locally available offer is not always the best (or desired) choice for the young person.



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Conclusions. Way forward.

In Latvia the overall VET reform has been **successful**.

The VET institutions' network optimisation has been implemented hand in hand with a **comprehensive VET content reform** that in many ways has contributed to the increased attractiveness and prestige of VET in Latvia.

Due to the **modern infrastructure** and **study environment**, as well as **labour market relevant VET offer** the **attractiveness and prestige** of VET has **increased substantially** over the past 15 years.

Now **green** and **digital solutions** are high on the agenda, as well as **increased focus on STEM** programs



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Thank you!

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