



# HANDBOOK

## OF ESTONIA - LATVIA CROSS-BORDER WORK-BASED LEARNING



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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT FOR ESTLAT WBL

ESTLAT WBL Project was developed and implemented to address the labour market and youth unemployment issues in the ESTLAT cross-border region. Project's aim is to support the cross-border mobilities of VET trainees in work-based learning (WBL) settings, based on cooperation between vocational education and training (VET) schools and enterprises in Latvia and Estonia. As a result the ESTLAT WBL initiative and activities provide higher flexibility for the labour market: opportunity to seek employment across borders for VET graduates, and for companies - to have bigger choice in seeking qualified labour.



*Project Partners on its 1st kick-off meeting in Riga, September 2018*

**ESTLAT WBL PROJECT PARTNERS AND THEIR ROLES IN THE PROJECT:**

<p><b>Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry</b>  <a href="https://www.chamber.lv/en">https://www.chamber.lv/en</a></p>  <p>The Latvian Chamber          of Commerce and          Industry</p>	<p>Lead partner and coordinator of ESTLAT WBL Project.              LCCI found host companies in Latvia; organised cross-border visits of company representatives and matching events; managed and coordinated all the communication activities.</p>
<p><b>Smiltene VET Centre, Latvia</b>  <a href="https://www.smiltenestehnikums.lv/">https://www.smiltenestehnikums.lv/</a></p>  <p>SMILTENES          TEHNIKUMS</p>	<p>Smiltene VET Centre selected and supported trainees in mobilities to Estonia; organised visits of VET tutors to Estonia and ensured participation of VET tutors in workshops.</p>
<p><b>Vidzeme Technology and Design Vocational School (formerly Cēsis VET Centre), Latvia</b>  <a href="https://www.vtdt.lv/">https://www.vtdt.lv/</a></p> 	<p>VTDT selected and supported trainees in mobilities to Estonia; organised visits of VET tutors to Estonia and ensured participation of VET tutors in workshops.</p>

<p><b>Tartu VET Centre, Estonia</b>  <a href="https://khk.ee/">https://khk.ee/</a></p> 	<p>Tartu VET Centre selected and supported trainees in mobilities to Latvia; organised visits of VET tutors to Latvia and ensured participation of VET tutors in workshops.</p>
<p><b>Voru County VET Centre, Estonia</b>  <a href="https://www.vkhk.ee/">https://www.vkhk.ee/</a></p> 	<p>Voruma VET Centre selected and supported trainees in mobilities to Latvia; organised visits of VET tutors to Latvia and ensured participation of VET tutors in workshops.</p>
<p><b>Valga County Vocational Training Centre, Estonia</b>  <a href="https://www.vkok.ee/">https://www.vkok.ee/</a></p> 	<p>Valgama VET Centre selected and supported trainees in mobilities to Latvia; organised visits of VET tutors to Latvia and ensured participation of VET tutors in workshops.</p>
<p><b>CIVITTA, consulting company, Estonia</b>  <a href="https://civitta.com/">https://civitta.com/</a></p> 	<p>Civitta developed Needs analysis; found host companies in Estonia and coordinated matching; organised visits of Estonian company representatives to Latvia and matching events in Estonia.</p>
<p><b>Baltic Bright, consulting and training company, Latvia</b>  <a href="http://qualityplacements.eu/">http://qualityplacements.eu/</a></p> 	<p>Baltic Bright provided expertise on WBL methodology, developed training programme and delivered partnership-building workshops for WBL tutors; coordinated language support; followed up on results of mobilities; ensured quality evaluation and management.</p>

## 2. BACKGROUND AND PREPARATION FOR ESTLAT WBL

The Preparation stage of ESTLAT WBL initiative started with NEEDS ANALYSIS during which industries and companies in cross-border regions in Latvia and Estonia were identified with the following criteria:

- Readiness to cooperate with neighbour country in Work-Based Learning settings;
- Long-term interest and motivation in maintaining cross-border partnerships;
- Representing sectors important for border regions: tourism and hospitality, retail trade, wood and timber industry, IT and other industries.

**Civitta developed “ESTLAT WBL Employers’ Needs Report”<sup>1</sup> and below is the summary of the main findings:**

Although hiring a young inexperienced individual can seem challenging, employers can benefit from an internship too. Several studies demonstrate that one of the main motivating aspects of internship programmes from the enterprises' point of view is the relatively inexpensive labour and the opportunity to tap into a pool of potential employees.

### OFFERING AN INTERNSHIP – PROS AND CONS

- **Future employees:** Internships provide excellent opportunities to meet prospective employees. Moreover, seeing the interns in action and getting the first impression of how they would fit into the team can provide a much better overview of the prospective employee rather than reading the resumes of the applicants. Considering the contribution, expenses, time, etc. the enterprises invest in the interns, one of the aspects that the enterprises count on is the interns' willingness to work for the enterprise after graduating.
- **Workload:** On one hand, taking on an intern will provide the enterprise with an extra set of hands, and thereby reducing the workload of the employees. On the other hand, enterprises may fear that the workload increases with the added mentoring responsibility.
- **(In)experience:** One of the concerns the enterprises face that may lead to opting against hiring interns is their inexperience, especially when the work requires skills of a specialist. However, when there is a lack of skilled workers in the job market, taking on an apprentice provides an excellent opportunity to train potential future employees.
- **Enterprise’s image:** The advertising factor of participating in internship programs can't be underestimated. Employers can gain brand recognition and improved community relations through internship programmes, as well as augment employee morale. Moreover, supporting the work market enterers gaining valuable qualifications will improve enterprises' image.

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<sup>1</sup> Please see full version of the report at <http://qualityplacements.eu/about-estlat-wbl/>

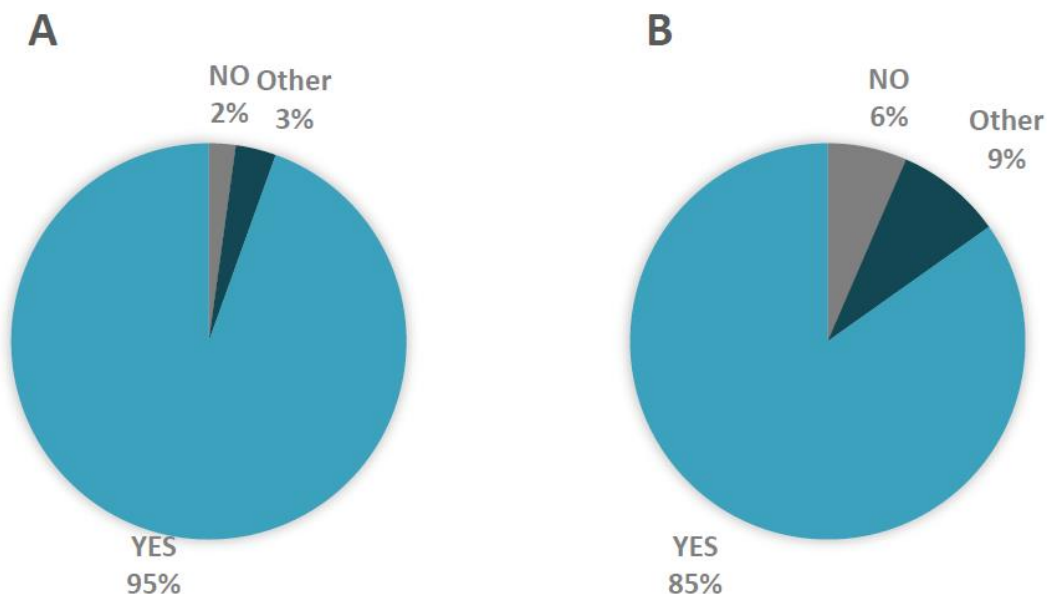
- **International interns:** Some extra challenges arise with hiring international interns, such as cultural and language barriers. Nevertheless, a foreign specialist in the team could bring new ideas and contacts from foreign countries, and the company can find a new employee with a good knowledge of the target market and a foreign language, thereby opening doors to international markets.

## **ENTERPRISES' PROBLEMS, EXPECTATIONS AND NEEDS RELATED TO THE JOB MARKET AND INTERNSHIPS:**

- Finding skilled specialists and people with relevant work experience has become an ever-increasing concern for public and private enterprises. According to a survey conducted in 2016 by Estonian Employers' Confederation, an overwhelming majority of the enterprises pointed out that there is a lack of over 50% qualified employees within the enterprise. The findings also highlighted that the new job market entrants lack general skills and practical experience, causing employers' dissatisfaction with the job market. Similarly, according to a survey by the Latvian Employers Confederation, 70% of employers have significant trouble finding employees, highly-skilled employees in particular.
- Education and vocational training systems are expected to equip individuals with the skills needed to succeed in today's labour markets, but general dissatisfaction with the job market refers to a substantial mismatch between the needs of the enterprises and the education system. There is also a clear imbalance of theoretical and practical education, where the majority of the study period focuses on the theory.
- Matching supply and demand can also be achieved through boosting cross-border labour mobility. The scarcity of skilled specialists on the job market causes the flow of foreign labour to increase in Estonia and Latvia. Although the language barrier continues to be a significant problem in hiring foreign workers, several international enterprises, and especially start-ups, welcome foreign workers and use English as their primary language at work.
- In general, the main factors hindering the readiness to hire interns is the lack of resource – the high workload of mentors, leaving no time for supervising, scarce payment opportunities and covering all the costs that are involved with the internship.
- Another thing often pointed out by the enterprises is the mismatch between the timing – enterprises are more motivated to hire interns when there is a seasonal job, but times may overlap with the exam session or school break.
- Also, a few aspects that seem to be problematic for the enterprises is that the curricula differ from real life and the practice objectives are unclear for trainees. Enterprises have also highlighted that although they would like to hire interns, many positions require specific knowledge or skills – technical or competency requirements.

- Some other factors that prevent offering a traineeship programme include the work assignments may require access to business secrets that the company cannot allow, the assignments are subject to age limits, and the customers may not want a low-skilled trainee who works slowly and can make mistakes.

Nevertheless, companies generally have a good attitude towards workplace-based learning, and according to a comprehensive study conducted by Praxis, involving 500 Estonian enterprises, many employers are ready to accept more trainees than schools can provide. Another two studies conducted by The Estonian Employers' Confederation demonstrate further that enterprises are open to internship programmes (Figure 1)<sup>2</sup> which raises the question, why only a small percentage of them offer internships.

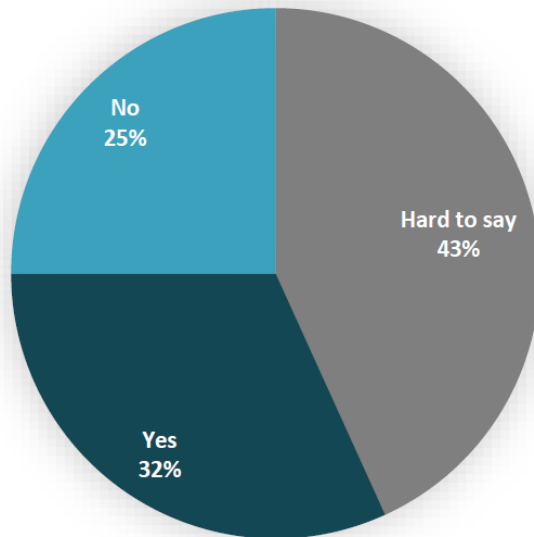


**FIGURE 1: ENTERPRISES' WILLINGNESS TO OFFER INTERNSHIP TO VET STUDENTS**

The number of enterprises offering internships decreases noticeably when it comes to international students (Figure 2). According to a study conducted by Estonian Employers' Confederation, only 32% of the enterprises would hire foreign interns, the rest are hesitant to do so. The main reason is usually the language barrier and therefore purely practical (for example, instruction in English), but also organizational factors come into play, e.g. employee prejudices.

<sup>2</sup> A - The Estonian Employers' Confederation's survey in 2015  
 B - The Estonian Employers' Confederation's survey in 2016

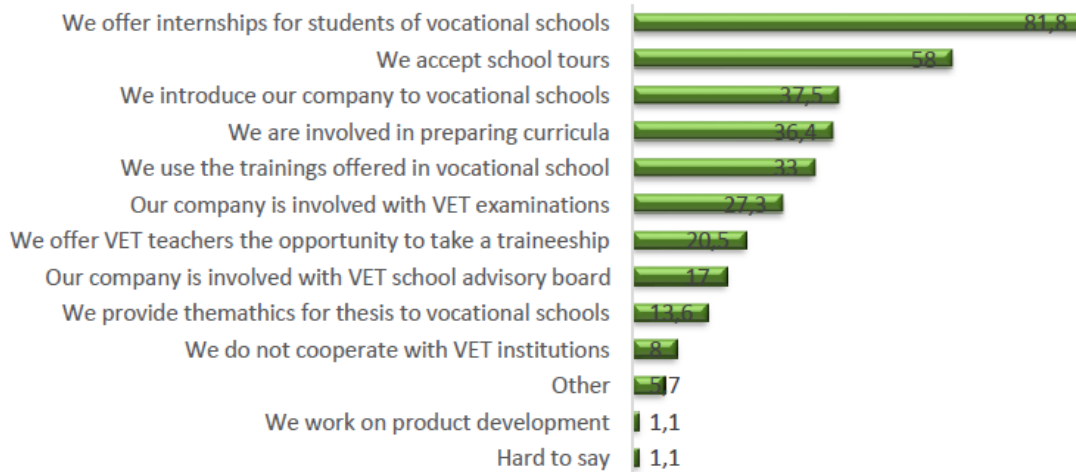




**FIGURE 2: ENTERPRISES' WILLINGNESS TO HIRE INTERNATIONAL INTERNS**

According to a study, the main reason for the lack of cooperation between VET institutions and enterprises is the passivity of both parties. However, over 70% of enterprises consider it necessary to cooperate with vocational schools. In the manufacturing industry in particular - 100% of the respondents emphasize the importance of cooperation with VET schools.

In general, enterprises rate interactions with VET schools as good: 7.9% of the responding companies are very satisfied with their cooperation with VET institutions; 39.3% rated the interactions functional; 29.2% satisfactory; 5.6% bad and 14.6% lack of cooperation, no respondents rated collaboration to be terrible.<sup>23</sup> Besides internships, cooperation between VET schools and enterprises exists in many forms (Figure 3), most commonly enterprises receive school excursions and send employees to the VET institution for in-service training.



**FIGURE 3: CURRENT COOPERATION BETWEEN ENTERPRISES AND VET SCHOOLS, %**

The general low awareness about internship possibilities decreases the number of enterprises offering the training programme - 22% of entrepreneurs who did not provide apprenticeships to VET students were not aware of the option. The results of the study indicate the lack of cooperation between enterprises and VET schools. VET institutions should introduce more apprenticeship opportunities to companies. But companies themselves could also be more willing to announce their wishes to schools.

Most of the enterprises emphasize the fact that if the employer takes part in the teaching, the state must compensate the expenses accompanying the internship. Therefore, public institutions at all levels should recognize the potential of VET-business cooperation and stimulate and facilitate their development. The multiple levels of collaboration between education institutions, policymakers, and enterprises is therefore of paramount importance and would help to close the gap between the supply and the need in the labour market.

**FEEDBACKS OF COMPANIES THAT PARTICIPATED IN ESTLAT WBL PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND HOSTED TRAINEES:**



**FIGURE 5. WHAT ARE/WOULD BE THE MAIN BENEFITS FOR YOUR COMPANY TO OFFER AN INTERNSHIP TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS?**



**FIGURE 6. WHAT ARE THE MAIN OBSTACLES IN OFFERING AN INTERNSHIP TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS?**

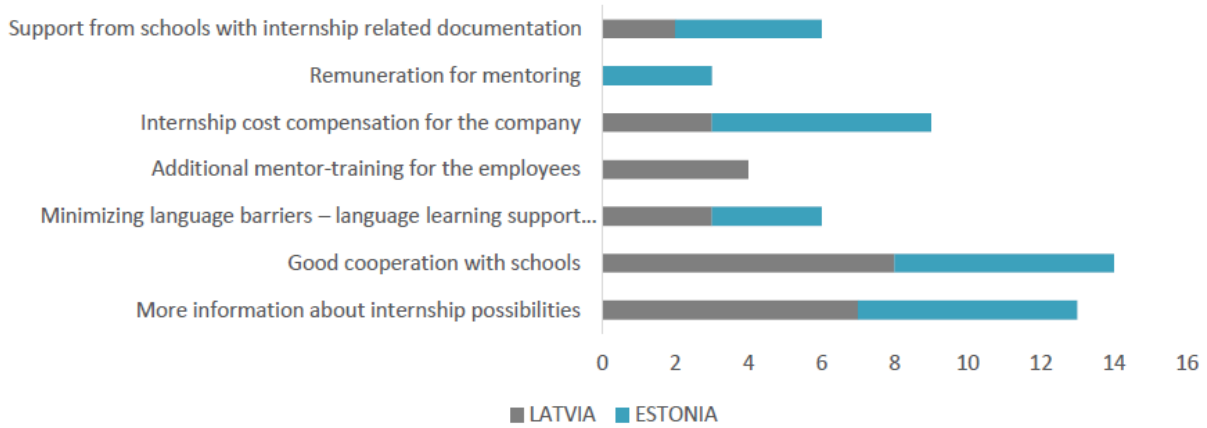


FIGURE 7. WHAT DO YOU, AS A COMPANY, NEED IN ORDER TO OFFER AN INTERNSHIP TO A FOREIGN STUDENT?

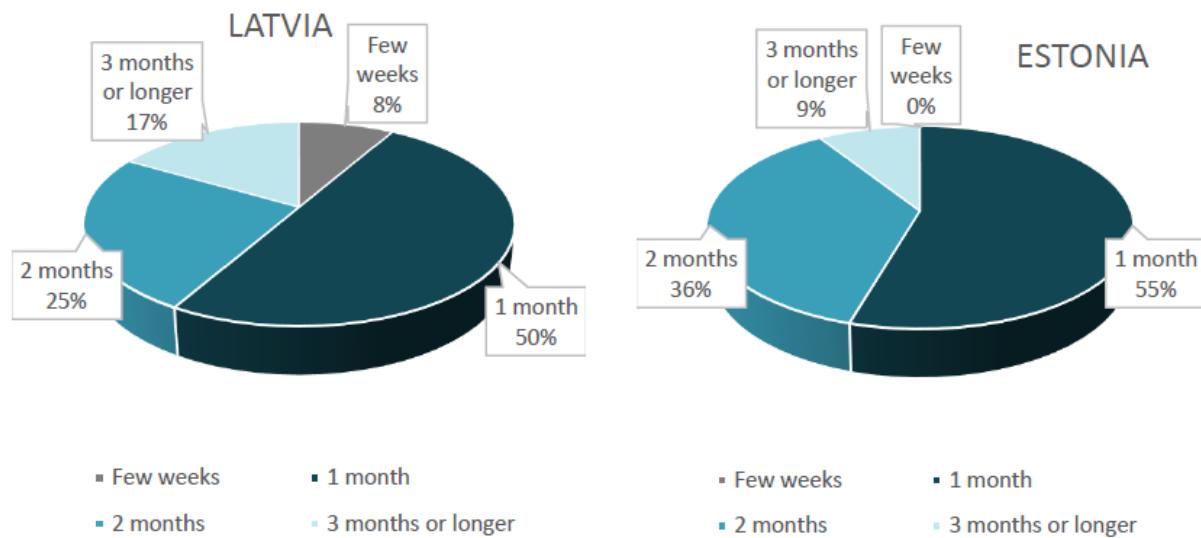
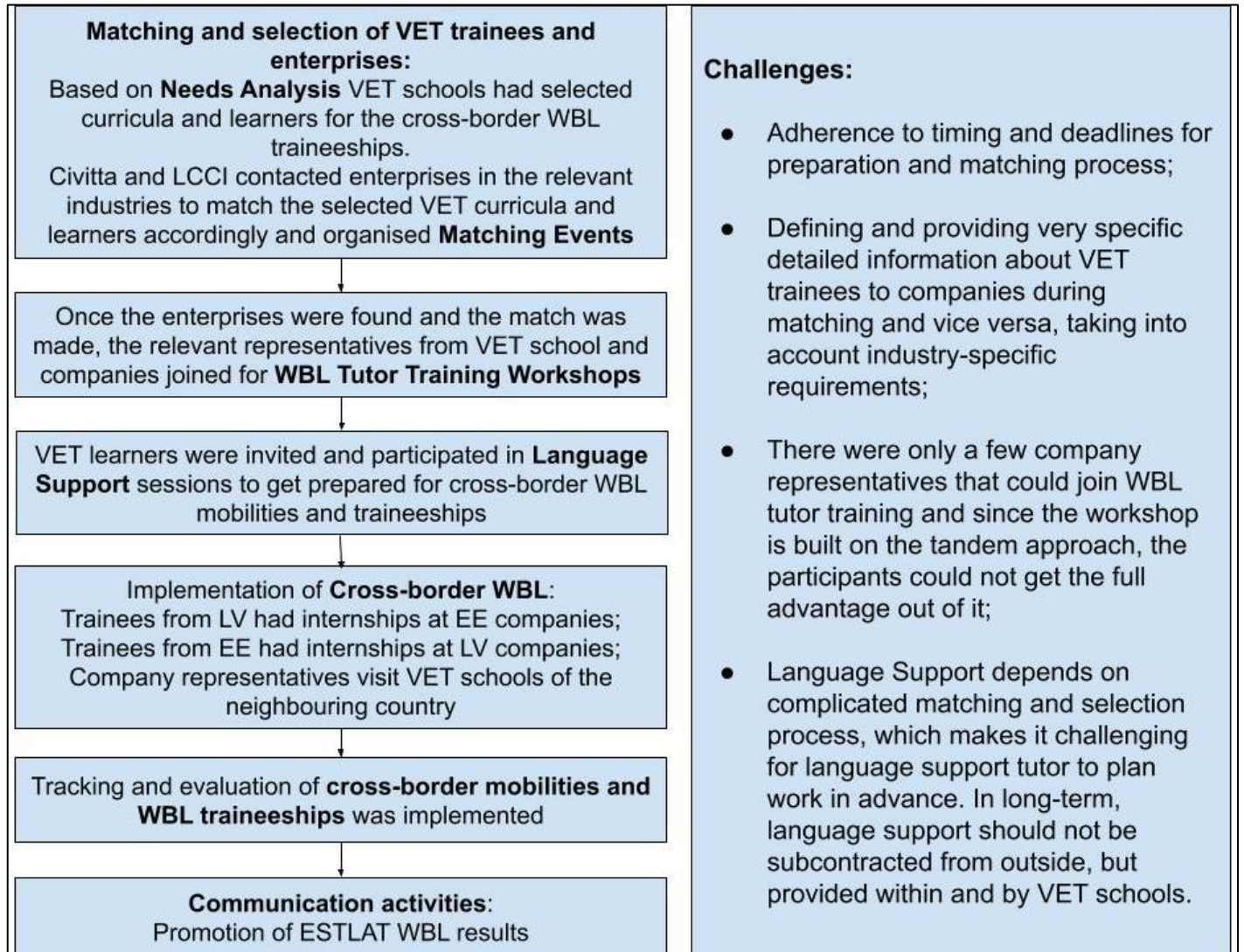


FIGURE 8. PREFERRED DURATION OF THE INTERNSHIP

### 3. PROJECT METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE



#### 4. WBL TUTOR TRAINING AND TRAINING PROGRAMME

As part of the ESTLAT WBL initiative tutors from VET schools and companies joined for cross-border WBL tandem training to strengthen personal contacts and establish a dialogue for a more efficient traineeship implementation and learner support.

##### Why tandem tutor training in ESTLAT WBL?

Partnership building between VET schools and enterprises

Establishing a common understanding of work based learning

VET school tutors visit companies, enterprise tutors visit VET schools

Discussing and agreeing on trainee's Learning Goals and Plans together

VET and company form a support system for the learner during the traineeship

##### AS A RESULT:

- 15 VET Tutors from Estonia participated in joint trainings in Latvia and visited Latvian companies that will host the trainees.
- 12 VET Tutors from Latvia joined tandem training in Estonia and met with workplace representatives who hosted Latvian trainees in Estonia.
- 11 enterprise tutors from Latvia and Estonia participated in WBL and partnership building workshops.

##### The following aspects of the training were marked by participants as valuable:

“Personal contacts, also seeing the site (both, the school and the company of the traineeship), on-site communication and meeting the people involved”

Opportunity for company representatives to see the school's material base and ability to provide students with the necessary knowledge. As well as it is also an opportunity to understand what is important to trainees in the feedback and why.



*VET and Enterprise tutor group discussion at WBL Tutor training workshop in Tartu*

**RECOMMENDATION:**

As the practice shows, the most beneficial and productive training sessions were the ones that had the presence of the respective number of VET tutors to host company representatives, so they could form tandems and establish the dialog before the traineeships.



*WBL Tutors from Estonian VET schools and Latvian enterprises at training workshop in Smiltene*

## 5. LANGUAGE SUPPORT

The aim of Language Support in ESTLAT WBL context is to ensure clear and effective communication during work-based learning (WBL) periods between VET trainees, their VET and workplace tutors, and thus, to encourage long-term cooperation between VET schools and companies across Latvian-Estonian border.



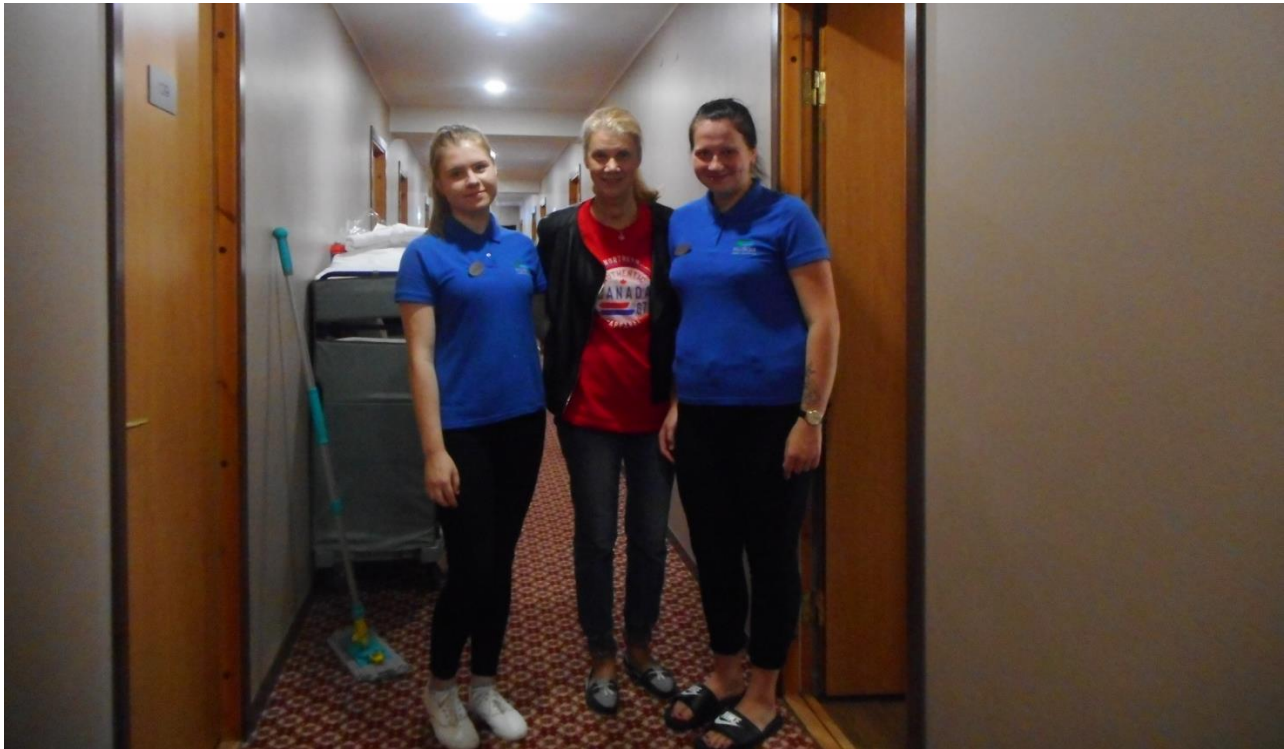
*Language Support sessions in Smiltene VET Centre*

### MAIN PRINCIPLES OF LS:

- It should be called Language Support (not Language Training) as it is meant to offer support in different formats based on specific needs and individual approach.
- It should be seen as voluntary in case the potential participant has sufficient skills for communication with the foreign partner during WBL. Language Support is aimed at improving English language skills for those mobility participants and tutors who have at least A2 or B1 according to CEFRL (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).
- The content of Language Support will not be aimed at general language skills. It will cover 2 main areas: 1) related to organisational matters of mobilities and WBL (e.g., travel, accommodation, host country), 2) related to traineeship itself (specific industry, company, learning plan and learning situations in the company, communication between VET tutor, workplace tutor and VET trainee).



- The format of Language Support can vary based on individual needs and gives flexibility to its users - individual support through skype, internet or face-to-face meetings before and during WBL periods/mobilities. However, as we have seen, a 1-week in-class session is beneficial to establish contact between the learner and Language Tutor.



*Language Tutor Ilze visiting VET Trainees from Smiltene VET Centre in Kubija Hotel*

**The following feedback was received from the VET trainees who had used LS:**

**Ance Skujiņa, Smiltene Technical School, Hotel Specialists:**

“To a very big extent, I agreed to go to Estonia for my practice just to overcome myself and my fear of using a foreign language. Thank you for the English roleplay excersises during our classes. Now, after two weeks, I can say my communication skills have essentially improved. When I cannot catch a phrase in English I just ask to repeat it more slowly, and that works. There have been situations when I just had to speak out and forget my hesitation on the correct wording. Also, I have learned a few basic words in Estonian, and some colleagues have shown their interest in mastering something in Latvian. I find it very pleasing. That has helped in our mutual understanding and daily communication a lot.”

## 6. OVERVIEW OF CROSS-BORDER MOBILITIES AND RESULTS

During ESTLAT WBL Project 2 cross-border WBL mobility flows were implemented:

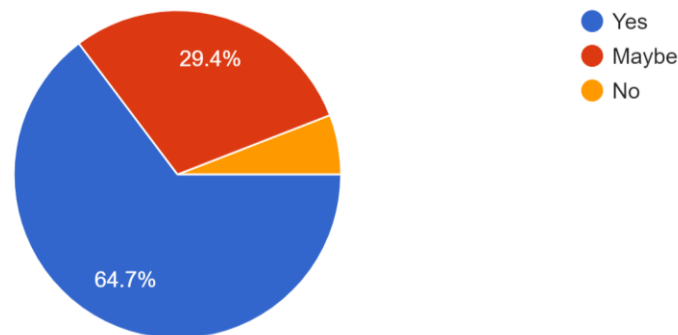
- 1<sup>st</sup> flow in **spring 2019** when **25** Trainees from Latvia had mobilities and internships in Estonian companies, and **24** Trainees from Estonia were hosted by Latvian enterprises;
- 2<sup>nd</sup> mobility flow was in **autumn 2019 – spring 2020** during which **16** Trainees from Latvian VET schools had cross-border WBL mobilities and **13** Trainees from Estonian partner schools had internships in Latvia.

Those mobilities were tracked under Quality Management through collecting feedback from all involved parties - trainees, VET school tutors, enterprise tutors and project partners. Overall feedback of the mobility and traineeship participants from 2 mobility flows suggests that the majority of respondents were satisfied with the cooperation and activities that ESTLAT WBL involved. The following feedback indicates the impact and longevity of ESTLAT WBL as a service for the future.

### FEEDBACK FROM HOST COMPANIES:

Do you think one or all the trainees could be potential employees in the future?

17 responses



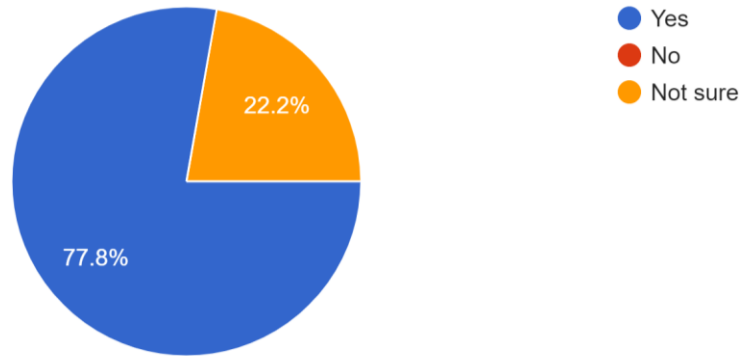
In **65%** of cases companies would like to have the trainees they hosted during ESTLAT WBL as their future employees.

” Company’s Tutor feedback was received as follows:

*“The traineeship was organized very precisely, all the jobs that were required for the trainees to do were eventually done without any problems. Only one thing that could be improved - technical English skills. Sometimes students didn't know the names of the tools in English, but it was a minor problem.”*

Would you like to have cooperation with this school in the future?

18 responses



**78%** of companies that hosted trainees mobilities during the Project would like to have cooperation with the partner VET school in the future.

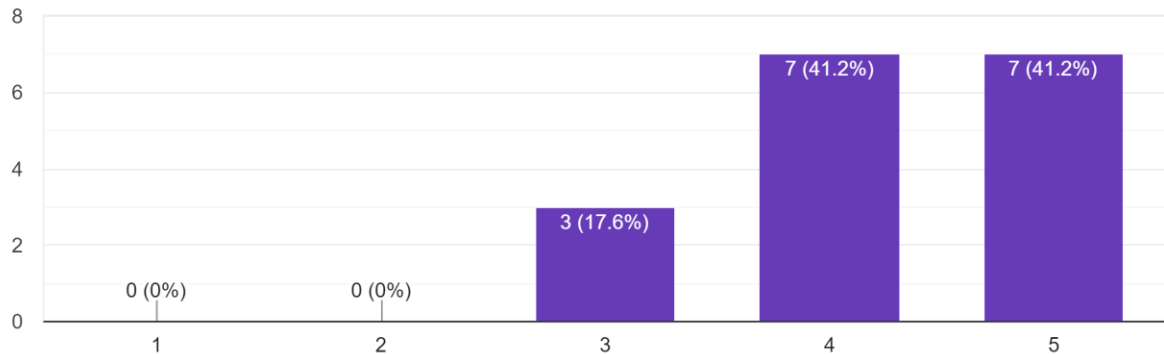


*Mechatronics trainees from Tartu VET Centre at the Latvian company “Sakret”*

### FEEDBACK FROM VET SCHOOLS:

Were you satisfied with the cooperation between you and the company? Choose between 1 (completely unsatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied)

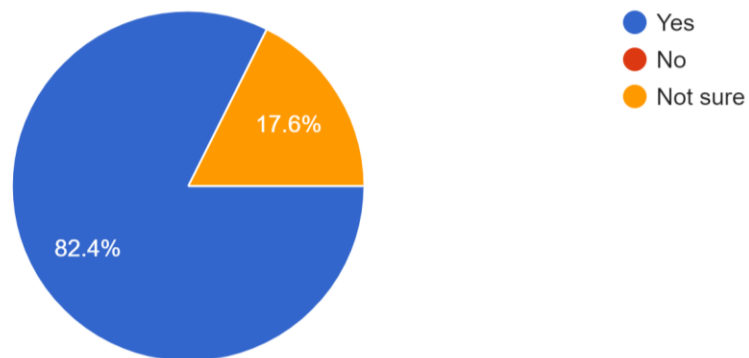
17 responses



**82%** of the VET school representatives were satisfied or very satisfied with the cooperation with the companies during learner mobilities and WBL traineeships.

Would you like to have cooperation with this company in the future?

17 responses



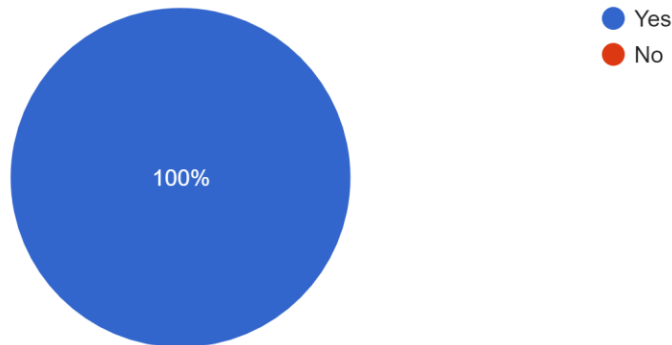
**82%** of VET tutors that were involved in the course of cross-border mobilities would like to continue cooperation with the neighbour country's companies;

**100%** of respondents from matchmaking events from VET and the business sectors agreed that Estonian and Latvian vocational students can do cross-border traineeships.

### FEEDBACK FROM TRAINEES:

Were you satisfied with the guidance and support from the company?

40 responses



**100%** of all trainees were satisfied with guidance they have received from the company during their WBL traineeship. Besides **65%** of trainees that were involved in training said that they would like to work in the company that hosted their traineeship.

IT Trainee acknowledged:

”

*“The communication with the company was very good. One of the best IT companies where I have been.”*



*Bakery trainees from Tartu VET Centre at the Latvian company “Nomedā” (Sala cafe)*

## 7. OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE COOPERATION

To implement further ESTLAT WBL traineeships and ensure the spin-off of the Project results after its closure the following funding opportunities can be used by the VET schools and companies to support learner mobilities and cover their living expenses while being abroad:

- Erasmus+ programme VET mobility projects
- National grants and funding programmes supporting WBL initiatives
- Companies willing to pay to trainees, so they can cover their accommodation and daily expenses

**Companies also shared their ESTLAT WBL plans for the future:**

**Mārcis Slavinskis** from Latvian company “**Baltijas Jumis**” wishes to continue cooperation with VET schools from Estonia. He said:



“Work-based learning is an educational strategy that provides trainees with real-life work experiences where they can apply academic and technical skills and develop their employability. Estonian – Latvian work-based learning project gave the opportunity to our company educate the number of international trainees through real work practice. During the EST LAT WBL we learned to match industry demands, country and company standards, trainee training, and skills-based on experience. Thanks to this project our company has developed a work-based learning system which we can apply for local trainees as well.”

**Aivo Jõgiaas**, Member of the Board of **KM Element OÜ** (Kodumaja, <http://www.kodumaja.ee/en>) had also shared his plans for the future of ESTLAT WBL:



“KM Element OÜ has given the opportunity for internship in our house factories to five students from Cesis vocational school in Latvia. The experience gained was new and challenging for both parties, but certainly useful. The biggest problem with foreign trainees is the language barrier, as few employees speak English professionally. Despite the potential difficulties, the use of trainees is a value for any company and we are ready to practice it also in the future.”

## 8. CONTACTS FOR ESTONIA-LATVIA PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

### LATVIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

For VET schools from Estonia LCCI may help in finding companies for internships in Latvia.

Homepage: <https://www.chamber.lv/>

#### Contacts:

Policy Department  
Tel: +371 67201105  
[lobijs@chamber.lv](mailto:lobijs@chamber.lv)

EU Projects Department  
Tel: +371 67201153  
[esprojekti@chamber.lv](mailto:esprojekti@chamber.lv)



The Latvian Chamber  
of Commerce and  
Industry

### CIVITTA

VET schools from Latvia may ask Civitta's help in finding companies for internships in Estonia.

Homepage: <https://civitta.ee/>

#### Contacts:

Reesi Lepa - Head of International Projects  
Tel: +372 735 2802  
[reesi.lepa@civitta.ee](mailto:reesi.lepa@civitta.ee)

Marge Laansoo - Project Coordinator  
Tel: +372 735 2802  
[marge.laansoo@civitta.ee](mailto:marge.laansoo@civitta.ee)



## SMILTENE VET SCHOOL PIKC Smiltenes tehnikums

### Location:

45 km from Estonia border; 103km from Kubija Hotel & Nature SPA, Võru, 65526 Võru maakond, Estonia;  
50km from Valga Loomakliinik OÜ, Tartu 79c, Valga, 68206 Valga maakond, Estonia

### ESTLAT WBL Project Coordinator:

Madara Ciemiņa, Tel: +37122419814,  
[madaraciemina@gmail.com](mailto:madaraciemina@gmail.com)

### Vocational curricula:

- Road worker
- Food and beverage service specialist
- Retail Workers
- Accounting
- Waiter
- Bartender
- Aeromechanic
- Veterinarian assistant
- Hotel service specialist
- Farming





## VORU COUNTY VET CENTRE Võrumaa Kutsehariduskeskus



**Location:** Väimela, Võru parish, Võru county  
65566, Estonia.

4 km away from Võru City, 5 km away from  
company Wermo, 78 km away from Latvian  
border (Valka), 56 km to Ape.

**ESTLAT WBL Project Coordinator:**

Siret Lillemäe, Tel: +372 78 508 21,  
[siret.lillemae@vkhk.ee](mailto:siret.lillemae@vkhk.ee)

**Vocational curricula:**

- Construction
- IT
- Mechatronics
- Metal processing
- Wood processing
- Business services and commerce
- Tourism, catering and hospitality services



**VIDZEME TECHNOLOGY AND DESIGN VOCATIONAL SCHOOL**  
**Vidzemes tehnoloģiju un dizaina tehnikums**



**Location:** Priekuļi, Priekuļi parish, Priekuļi county,  
 6 km away from Cēsis city, 90 km away from capital Riga,  
 80 km away from Estonian border and Valga

**ESTLAT WBL Project Coordinator:**  
 Inara Alksne, Tel.+371 296 316 96,  
[Inara.alksne@vtdt.edu.lv](mailto:Inara.alksne@vtdt.edu.lv)

**Vocational curricula:**

- Carpenter
- Assistant Product Designer
- Assistant clothing designer
- Customer Service Specialist
- Car / Vehicle mechanic
- Agricultural mechanization technician
- Telecommunications technician
- Crop Technician
- Cook
- Computer Systems Technician
- Electrician
- Software technician



## VALGA COUNTY VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE Valgamaa Kutseõppekeskus



**Location:** Loode street 3, Valga, 68206, Estonia  
The main building and the dormitory lie about 100 metres from the national border between Estonian and Latvia in the outskirts of Valga/Valka.

**Responsible contact for students' internships abroad:**

Kaidi Loos, Tel: +372 53842280, [kaidi.loos@vkok.ee](mailto:kaidi.loos@vkok.ee)

**ESTLAT-WBL project coordinator:**

Rainer Kuutma, Tel: +372 5246710,  
[rainer.kuutma@vkok.ee](mailto:rainer.kuutma@vkok.ee)

**Vocational curricula:**

- Car mechanics
- Cooks
- Cabinet makers
- Logisticians (both in warehousing and freight forwarding)



## TARTU VET CENTRE Tartu Kutsehariduskeskus



**Location:** Kopli 1, Tartu 50115 Estonia  
(1,5 km to nearest partner company Tarmetec OÜ and 88 km to the Latvian border Valka town)

**Contact information:**  
for traineeship proposes [project@khk.ee](mailto:project@khk.ee)

**ESTLAT WBL Project Coordinator:**  
Andrei Atškasov, Tel: +372 7361894,  
[andrei.atskasov@khk.ee](mailto:andrei.atskasov@khk.ee)

### Vocational curricula:

- Construction and wood work
- ICT
- Business and commerce
- Light industry, beauty servicing and home servicing
- Tourism
- Hospitality and catering
- Food processing technology
- Industrial technology
- Car maintenance

