

Comparative study report

Automatic Recognition between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

2015



Co-funded by
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The study was conducted by the Academic Information Centre (Latvia) in cooperation with Archimedes Foundation (Estonia) and Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC, Lithuania) in 2015.

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The opinions expressed are those of the author(s) only and should not be considered as representative of the European Commission's official position.

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Abbreviations

AIC	Academic Information Centre (Latvia)
DS	Diploma Supplement
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EKKA	Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (Estonia)
ENIC	European Network of National Information Centres on academic recognition and mobility
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines for Higher Education
EstQF	Estonian Qualifications Framework
HEI	Higher education institution
KPMPC	Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre
LQF	Latvian Qualifications Framework
LTQF	Lithuanian Qualifications Framework
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centres
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
QF-EHEA	Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area
SKVC	Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (Lithuania)
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
UNESCO/CEPES	UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education

Introduction

Aware of the importance of improving recognition processes, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Ministers committed themselves to the long-term goal of automatic recognition of comparable academic degrees in the Bucharest Communiqué, adopted in April 2012.

The main objective of the project “Automatic Recognition between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania” (1.08.2014-31.03.2016) was to analyse the legislation and practices of recognition in the Baltic countries and to search possibilities for simplified and more efficient academic recognition procedures between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Specific task of the project was to propose necessary measures and steps related to the recognition of foreign qualifications to the ministries of education of the Baltic countries in order to introduce procedures and practice of automatic recognition.

To reach the objective of the project and have evidence which qualifications may be subjected to the automatic recognition in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania desk study was conducted. The study focused on the succeeding issues:

- Development of education systems (since regaining independence);
- Legislation and recognition procedures;
- The role of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) for the automatic recognition;
- The role of European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) for automatic recognition;
- Diploma Supplement (DS) for automatic recognition;
- Quality assurance for automatic recognition;
- Learning outcomes of higher education qualifications;
- Higher education qualifications and their components;
- Analysis of case studies and recognition practices;
- Analysis on feasibility, conditions and forms of automatic recognition.

As a result this comparative study report was prepared giving information about results obtained during the desk research. The comparative study consists of ten chapters and conclusions.

The second important objective of the project was analysis of the existing Agreement among the Government of the Republic of Estonia, the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the academic recognition of educational qualifications in the Baltic Educational Space (concluded in 2000), in order to prepare proposals for the respective national authorities for revision of the agreement taking into account possibilities of automatic recognition of qualifications between the Baltic countries.

In terms of expected impact the results of the project should raise awareness on prerequisites for automatic recognition of academic degrees in the Baltic countries, determine the feasibility and conditions for automatic recognition, propose mechanisms how to implement the relevant procedures and practices, and finally promote recognition of qualifications for the mobility of inhabitants.

1 Development of education systems (since regaining Independence)

The development of education systems since beginning of 1990-ties in the three Baltic countries was explored in order to provide an overview of the present situation. The results of study indicate that the structure and historical background of these education systems are rather similar, although some differences may be observed as well. Information about higher education access qualifications is provided in Table 1.

In all the three countries the number of years for general education programmes leading to a certificate is 12 years. In Estonia and Latvia basic education takes 9 years and general secondary education takes 3 years, in Lithuania there is 4 years primary education, 6 years lower secondary education and 2 years upper secondary education.

Secondary school leavers have to pass three state examinations in Estonia, four state examinations in Latvia and varying number of state examinations depending on the year of graduation, but not lower than two, in Lithuania.

Table 1. Higher education access qualifications

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
General secondary education			
Number of years for education programmes leading to a certificate	9 – primary education 3 – secondary education Total 12	9 – primary education 3 – secondary education Total 12	4 – primary education 4+2 – lower secondary education 2 – upper secondary education Total 12
Systems of final (national) examinations for upper-secondary education	3 compulsory examinations – Estonian or Estonian as second language, mathematics, foreign language	4 compulsory examinations – in Latvian, mathematics, a foreign language and at least one elective	The number of examinations varies by the year of graduation, but is not lower than 2
Types of institutions providing general secondary education	Gymnasium (<i>gümnaasium</i>), school (<i>kool</i>), college (<i>kolledž</i>), lycée (<i>lütseum</i>), or other	Secondary school (<i>vidusskola</i>), gymnasium (<i>ģimnāzija</i>), evening school (<i>vakarskola</i>), vocational secondary school (<i>profesionālā vidusskola</i>), technical school (<i>tehnikums</i>) and some colleges (<i>koledža</i>)	Secondary school (<i>vidurinė mokykla</i>), gymnasium (<i>ģimnazija</i>), and vocational education and training school (<i>profesinė mokykla</i>)
Titles of awarded qualifications in original language (including information about previous qualifications)	<i>Gümnaasiumi lõputunnistus</i> and <i>Riigieksamitunnistus</i> (since 2009 <i>Riigieksamitunnistus</i> (state examination certificate) is in electronic format)	<i>Atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību</i> and <i>vispārējās vidējās izglītības sertifikāts</i> (for centralised exams)	<i>Brandos atestatas</i>
Vocational education providing access to higher education			
Types of education programmes giving direct access to HE	Vocational secondary education where a programme includes general secondary courses (at least 40 weeks) in addition to vocational programme	Vocational secondary education including general secondary education part	Integrated vocational education and general secondary education programmes

Table 1 continued

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
Duration of studies (years)	not less than 3	4	usually 3
Final examinations	4 examinations – 1 qualification examination and 3 as for general secondary education	5 examinations – 1 qualification examination and 4 as for general secondary education	3 examinations – 1 qualification examination and 2 as for general secondary education (number of obligatory examinations varies by year of graduation)
Titles of qualifications giving access to higher education	<i>Diplom</i> (Diploma of Specialised Secondary Education, until 1994 admission), <i>Lõputunnistus kutse- ja keskhariduse omandamise kohta</i> (Certificate of Vocational and Secondary Education, 1995-1998 admission), <i>Lõputunnistus keskerihariduse omandamise kohta</i> (Certificate of Specialised Secondary Education, 1995-1998 admission), <i>Lõputunnistus põhihariduse baasil kutsekeskhariduse omandamise kohta</i> (Certificate of Vocational Secondary Education Based on Basic Education, 1998-2005 admission), <i>Lõputunnistus kutsekeskhariduse omandamise kohta</i> (Certificate of Vocational Secondary Education, since 2006 admission) or <i>Kutsekeskhariduse lõputunnistus</i> (Certificate of Vocational Secondary Education, new programmes since 2013 admission)	<i>Diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību</i> (Diploma of vocational secondary education) and <i>vispārējās vidējās izglītības sertifikāts</i> (Certificate of general secondary education) awarded for passing state centralized exams	<i>Brandos atestatas</i> awarded together with <i>Profesinio mokymo pažymėjimas</i> (Certificate of Vocational Education)
Grading system			
Grading scale for school level	Unified grading system in 5-point scale: 5 – very good; 90-100%, 4 – good; 75-89%, 3 – satisfactory; 50-74%, 2 – unsatisfactory/fail, 1 – poor/fail	Unified grading system in 10-point scale: 10 with distinction; 9 excellent; 8 very good; 7 good; 6 almost good; 5 satisfactory; 4 almost satisfactory; 3-1 unsatisfactory	Unified grading system in 10-point scale: 10 with distinction; 9 excellent; 8 very good; 7 good; 6 almost good; 5 satisfactory; 4 almost satisfactory; 3-1 unsatisfactory
Grading scale for state examinations	100-point scale; since 2014 the passing score is 1 point	Since 2013 results are expressed in percentage that shows a proportion of correct answers scored in points against the maximum points possible, the passing score is 5%	Since 2013, the state examinations are graded on a criterion-referenced scale with 100 as the highest and 16 as the lowest passing score

In school system, in Estonia there is a unified grading system in 5-point scale, while in Latvia and Lithuania there is a unified grading system in 10-point scale. Both in Estonia and Lithuania there is a 100-point scale for state examinations, however, in Lithuania the lowest passing score is 16 and in Estonia – 1 point (since 2014). In Latvia, since 2013, results of state examinations are expressed in percentage showing the proportion of correct answers scored in points against the maximum points possible (5% is the lowest passing grade).

The recent history and present structure of higher education is rather similar in all the Baltic countries. Reforms in higher education started immediately after the reestablishment of independence of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 1991 and accelerated afterwards.

Higher education in the Baltic countries is organized in the structure of three cycles (EQF levels 6-8) as defined by Bologna process. The short cycle (EQF level 5) is implemented only in Latvia.

The first cycle (EQF level 6) leads to the award of a Bachelor degree¹ or a corresponding qualification. The volume of studies varies from 180-240 ECTS credits (3-4 years of full-time studies). There are also professional programmes with nominal duration 4.5 years in Estonia. Holders are eligible to further studies towards a Master degree.

The second cycle (EQF level 7) leads to a Master degree² or a corresponding qualification. The volume of studies varies from 60-120 ECTS credits (1-2 years of full-time studies). The total volume of the course of study of the two cycles is no less than 300 ECTS credits (5 years of full-time studies) in Latvia and Estonia, while in Lithuania the volume may be minimum 270 ECTS credits (4.5 years of full-time studies). In all the three countries Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine³ studies are not divided into two cycles, and a Master or a corresponding qualification or equivalent degrees are awarded to graduates.

The third cycle (EQF level 8) leads to the award of Doctor's degree⁴ after three to four years of study and following the public presentation of a thesis/project.

Bologna process has an important role in all the three countries since late 1990-ties. The Baltic countries were among those 29 countries that signed the Bologna Declaration on June 19, 1999 and are participants of the European Higher Education Area launched during the Bologna Ministerial Anniversary Conference on April 27 and 28, 2012 in Bucharest. The summary of Bologna tools may be seen in Table 2.

The National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) in all the Baltic countries consist of eight reference levels and impart all stages and types of education. They were successfully referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning: Latvia – on November 10, 2011, Estonia – on February 7, 2012 and Lithuania – on July 30, 2012. The level descriptors were developed in line with the EQF descriptors and based on learning outcomes.

European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is fully implemented in Estonia and Lithuania, but the amount of Latvian credit points has to be multiplied by 1.5 to recalculate in ECTS credits. One Latvian credit point corresponds to the amount of the workload of one week full-time studies (40 points for acad. year). Part of Latvian higher education institutions (HEIs) already uses the ECTS credits as the law does not forbid it.

In the Baltic countries it is the obligation of all higher education institutions to issue a Diploma Supplement (DS) in the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. All the Baltic countries have external higher education quality assurance agencies. In addition to the evaluation

¹ EQF level 6 qualifications in the Baltic countries: *Bakalaureus, Rakenduskõrghariduse diplom, bakalaura diploms, profesionālā bakalaura diploms un augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms, profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms un augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms, Bakalauras, Profesinis bakalauras.*

² EQF level 7 qualifications in the Baltic countries: *Magister, Arstikraad, Hambaarstikraad, Farmaatsiamagister, Loomaarstikraad, Arhitektuurimagister, Tehnikateaduste magister, Haridusteaduste magister, Maģistra diploms, Profesionālā maģistra diploms un augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms, Profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms un augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms, Magistras.*

³ In addition, in Estonia Pharmacy, Architecture, Teacher Education and Civil Engineering studies, and in Lithuania – Pharmacy studies are not divided into two cycles.

⁴ EQF level 8 qualifications in the Baltic countries: *Doktor, Doktora diploms, Mokslo daktaras, Meno daktaras.*

and accreditation of HEIs, in Estonia and Latvia accreditation is done by fields of studies, in Lithuania – by study programmes. In the Baltic countries learning outcomes are compulsory part of descriptions of the higher education study programmes, and NQFs also are based on the learning outcomes.

Table 2. Implementation of the Bologna process tools

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
National Qualifications Framework (legislation, levels, descriptors)	8-level EstQF – based on learning outcomes – was established in 2008, with the Occupational Qualifications Act. The descriptions of the qualification levels are identical with the EQF level descriptions. EstQF was successfully referenced to the EQF in 7.2.2012	8-level LQF imparts all stages and types of education. In 2010, the level descriptors – based on learning outcomes – were included in Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers; in 2015, with amendments to the Education Law, LQF legally was defined. LQF was successfully referenced to the EQF on 10.11.2011	8-level LTQF – based on learning outcomes – was developed in the course of three years and approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania in 2010. LTQF was successfully referenced to the EQF on 30.7.2012
ECTS	Since 2009, ECTS is fully implemented. One ECTS credit corresponds to 26 hours of student's work. The workload of one year full-time studies is 1560 hours which corresponds to 60 ECTS credits	Since 2004, one Latvian credit point corresponds to the workload of one week full-time studies (40 points for acad. year). Recalculating in ECTS credits, the amount of Latvian credit points has to be multiplied by 1.5	Since 2011, ECTS is implemented. One ECTS credit corresponds to around 27 hours of student's work. The workload of one year full-time studies is 1600 hours, which corresponds to 60 ECTS credits
Diploma Supplement (including level of qualifications for which is awarded)	Since 2004 the DS is mandatory; two DSs – one in English and one in Estonian – are automatically issued to all graduates of professional higher education, master and doctoral programmes, but for bachelor – the DS in Estonian automatically, but in English upon request	Since 2004 the DS is mandatory for all HE qualifications. Two DSs – one in English and one in Latvian – are automatically issued to all graduates of higher education	In 2004, the DS was legally introduced at a national level, since 2006 it has been delivered automatically to all graduates of LTQF level 6 and 7 both in Lithuanian and English
Quality Assurance (since when, competent institution, programme/ institution accreditation, accreditation period)	Since 2009 Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency (EKKA) conducts institutional accreditation of HEI and quality assurance of study programme groups once in 7 years. The decision is made by the EKKA Quality Assessment Council	A new HE accreditation and quality management model has been implemented in 2011. Now accreditation is done by fields of studies, not by separate study programmes. Depending on the results of evaluation the accreditation is given either for 6 or 2 years. The Agency responsible for organization of the accreditation process is Academic Information Centre (AIC, since 1.07.2015)	SKVC as an external quality assurance agency is operating since 1995. SKVC is responsible for accreditation of all study programmes and all HEIs. Depending on the results of evaluation the accreditation is given either for 6 or 3 years, or a non-accreditation decision is made

Table 2 continued

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
Learning outcomes (types, levels)	Generic learning outcomes were introduced in 1.01.2009 and subject specific outcomes were developed by the HEIs by 1.09.2009. Outcomes are described in the annex to the Government Regulation "Standard of Higher Education". Subject specific learning outcomes together with outcomes for each module and course are integral part of a study programme	Since 2011, learning outcomes are compulsory part of the HE study programmes, but already from 2005 general learning outcomes were elaborated for the NQF of HE. Learning outcomes are described in two levels: LQF level descriptors (Cabinet of Ministers Regulations), and learning outcomes of study programmes (developed by HEIs)	Learning outcomes are described in: LTQF (approved by the Government); Study Cycle Descriptors (approved by the Ministry); Study Field Descriptors (approved by the Ministry); Study programme descriptions (approved by the HEI). Referencing of LTQF showed, that the majority of programmes provided in the formal education system are either already based on learning outcomes or, in cases where it is not yet implemented, the new arrangements are underway

2

Legislation and recognition procedures

The main international legal instrument for academic recognition is the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region (the Lisbon Recognition Convention) adopted on April 11, 1997 in Lisbon. It covers academic recognition of access qualifications to higher education, higher education qualifications and study periods. All the Baltic countries had ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention by 1999. Subsidiary texts, adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee, are important documents considered in the recognition procedures. Most recently, European Area for Recognition Manual (EAR Manual), endorsed by ministers of education in Bucharest (2012) and satellite texts, e.g. EAR Manual version for higher education institutions (EAR-HEI Manual), which outline the current best practice in the field of recognition, serve for improvement of approaches.

An agreement among the Governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on the Academic Recognition of Educational Qualifications in the Baltic Educational Space was signed in Tallinn on February 18, 2000. The agreement follows the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention; it is the implementation instrument concerning the correspondence of the qualifications in the three countries and specifies the principles of provision of information. Besides that the governments of the three Baltic countries have signed agreements on creation of a common Baltic higher educational space on December 8, 2000 and of a common Baltic upper general secondary education and vocational (up to higher education level) education space on July 10, 1998 (in force since 16.07.2001).

In all three Baltic countries recognition of qualifications is regulated at national level by respective laws or lower level legislation. These legal acts are the national overarching legal instruments in implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. They integrate the main principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention into the national legislation. Information about international and national legislation regarding recognition of qualifications is given in Table 3.

The ENIC/NARIC offices in the Baltic countries function in accordance with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its subsidiary instruments. The main tasks and activities, resources and expertise of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian ENIC/NARIC correspond to the guidelines expressed in the Joint ENIC/NARIC Charter of Activities and Services.

However, some differences in tasks of offices exist. The recognition decisions for the purposes of further study and/or employment issued by the Lithuanian ENIC/NARIC office are legally binding, while documents issued by the Estonian and Latvian ENIC/NARIC offices have status of a recommendation for the higher education institutions and also for employers in non-regulated professions. One of Estonian ENIC/NARIC office functions is assessing study periods, which is not among the tasks of Latvian and Lithuanian ENIC/NARIC offices. The Estonian and Latvian ENIC/NARIC offices are responsible for assessing doctoral degrees, whereas it is not among the tasks of the Lithuanian ENIC/NARIC to assess and recognise the third Bologna cycle qualifications (EQF level 8). Information about tasks of national ENIC/NARIC offices in assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications is provided in Table 4.

Table 3. Legislation regarding recognition of qualifications

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
The Lisbon Recognition Convention adopted on 11.04.1997	Ratified on 10.02.1998	Ratified on 20.07.1999	Ratified on 15.10.1998
Agreement between the Baltic countries signed on 8.12.2000	Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia, the Government of the Republic of Estonia and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the creation of a common educational space in higher education within the Baltic countries		
Agreement between the Baltic countries signed on 18.02.2000	Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia, the Government of the Republic of Estonia and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the academic recognition of educational qualifications in the Baltic educational space		
Agreement between the Baltic countries signed on 10.07.1998, in force since 16.07.2001	Agreement among the Government of the Republic of Latvia, the Government of the Republic of Estonia and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the creation of a common educational space in general upper education and vocational (up to higher education level) education within the Baltic countries		
Overarching present national regulation	Government Regulation No. 89 "Criteria and Procedures for Assessment and Academic Recognition of Foreign Qualifications and for Use of Title of Qualification Granted in Foreign Education System" (adopted on 06.04.2006)	Article 11 ¹ of the Education Law (1998), Articles 84 and 85 of the Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995), Law on Scientific Activity (in force since 19.05.2005.) for the recognition of doctoral degrees	Articles 17 and 51 of the Law on Higher Education and Research (2009), Resolution No. 212 "Regulations for Recognition of Education and Qualifications Concerning Higher Education Awarded after Completion of Foreign and International Education Programmes", adopted by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on 29.02.2012
Lower level regulation (institutional regulation)	Procedure for the assessment of foreign qualifications is laid down in "General procedures for the evaluation of foreign qualifications". The Estonian ENIC/NARIC has an internal regulation based on the Government Regulation – General Procedures and Criteria for the Assessment of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications and Qualifications Giving Access to Higher Education (adopted by the Board of Archimedes Foundation)	AIC's recommendations on criteria and procedures for the assessment of foreign qualifications in Latvia are described in two manuals "Recognition of foreign qualifications. Guide for recognition specialists" (2002) and "Diploma Recognition" (2008)	The most recent document: the Methodology for Assessment of Education and Qualifications Concerning Higher Education and Acquired Under Educational Programmes of Foreign Countries and International Organizations, issued by the order of SKVC of 28.05.2012, No. V-48. The Methodology for grades conversion and establishment of comparison between subjects, issued by the order of SKVC of 18.05.2012, No. V-46. The Description of administrative process of qualifications recognition within Internal SKVC Quality Manual, originally issued on 24.05.2011 with subsequent revisions

Table 4. Tasks of the Baltic ENIC/NARIC offices in assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
Providing information about education systems	v	v	v
Providing information about access qualifications	v	v	v
Providing information about HE qualifications	v	v	v
Assessing access qualifications	v	v	v
Assessing periods of studies	v		
Assessing higher education qualifications (except doctoral degrees)	v	v	v
Assessing doctoral degrees	v	v	
Providing information about regulated professions	v	v	
Information point for professional recognition	v	v	
Contact point for professional recognition	v	v	
Training for HEIs and other stakeholders	v	v	v
National ENIC/NARIC	Academic Recognition Information Centre, established as a structural unit of the Archimedes Foundation in 1997 by the Government of the Republic of Estonia	Academic Information Centre (AIC), non-profit institution established in 1994 by the Ministry of Education and Science and University of Latvia, Institute of Mathematics and Computer Science	The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) established in 1995 by the Ministry of Education and Science
Status of the document issued by the ENIC/NARIC offices	Recommendation for the HEIs and also for employers in non-regulated professions.	Recommendation for the HEIs and also for employers in non-regulated professions.	Two types of documents can be issued: 1) academic recognition decisions for the purposes of further study and/or employment issued upon the request of an individual holder of a foreign qualification and 2) advisory recommendation statements issued upon a request of an institution (employer and/or a HEI, which can independently make the final recognition decision)

In Estonia and Latvia the competent recognition authorities are higher education institutions and employers depending on the purpose of recognition, but in Lithuania the competent recognition authorities are authorised higher education institutions, employers and the Research Council of Lithuania – for academic recognition of foreign doctoral degrees in science/art. In Estonia and Latvia competent recognition authorities for doctoral degrees are employers, including HEI.

Information about competent academic recognition authorities for access qualifications, for higher education qualifications, for doctoral degrees is provided in Table 5.

Table 5. Competent recognition authorities for access qualifications, for higher education qualifications, for doctoral degrees

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
Assessment body for academic recognition (except doctoral degrees)	Academic Recognition Information Centre (can be also HEIs)	Academic Information Centre	Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education; authorised HEIs (those, which obtained a relevant right from the Ministry of Education) – for the purposes of further study, the scope of the decision is limited to the purpose of admission to its programmes
Assessment body for academic recognition of doctoral degrees	Academic Recognition Information Centre (can be also HEIs as employer)	Academic Information Centre	Research Council of Lithuania
Competent authorities for academic recognition (except doctoral degrees)	Higher education institutions	Higher education institutions	The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education; authorised HEIs (those, which obtained a relevant right from the Ministry of Education) – for the purposes of further study, the scope of the decision is limited to the purpose of admission to its programmes
Recognition authorities for doctoral degrees	Employers (including HEIs)	Employers (including HEIs)	Research Council of Lithuania
Assessment body for non-regulated professions	Academic Recognition Information Centre (can be also employers)	Academic Information Centre (can be also employers)	The Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, employers
Competent authorities for professional recognition of non-regulated professions	Employer		

The Baltic countries practise a similar methodology in the recognition of qualifications, based upon the Council of Europe and UNESCO Revised Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications (2010) adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee. Common recognition criteria and procedures are also influenced by the European Area for Recognition Manual (EAR Manual, 2012). Criteria for assessment and recognition are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Criteria for assessment and recognition

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
A. Status of institution			
Type and competence of the awarding institution	v	v	v
Recognition of the awarding institution in home country	v	v	v
Accreditation or any other quality assurance of the awarding institution	v	v	v
B. Assessment of individual qualification			
General access requirement to the programme (previous education)	v	v	v
Accreditation or any other quality assurance of the programme	v	v	v
Nominal duration and/or workload of the programme	v	v	v
Graduation requirements	v	v	v
Profile	v	v	v
Level of the programme in the national education system (qualifications framework)	v	v	v
Function of the qualification (formal rights the qualification gives to the holder for further studies)	v	v	v
Learning outcomes	v	v	v
Level	Level is used to determine the place of a qualification in its country of origin and its relation to other qualifications within that system (admission requirements and access to further studies). It is also used to determine appropriate level of qualifications in host country. It means that, if possible, foreign qualifications are placed on the same level as in host country		
Workload	Number of credit points for the whole duration of the programme	Number of credit points for the whole duration of the programme	Number of credits and, if credits are not available, the duration of the programme

Table 6 continued

		Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
Quality	<i>Institutional</i>	The institution has to be recognised and/or accredited in compliance with the legislation and/or requirements of the country of origin		
	<i>Programme (or groups of programmes)</i>	Quality is assessed by a competent authority	The programme has been accredited by competent authorities of the country of origin according its legislation	If applicable, the institution should have the right to offer this type of programme and/or the programme should be accredited in compliance with the requirements of the country of origin
	<i>Students' performance</i>	All grades are at least on minimum pass	Student's marks in the studied subjects	Student performance is considered when it has a direct relation to further rights (academic and/or professional)
Profile		Encompasses the orientation of the programme and qualification (academic or professional)	Encompasses the orientation of the programme and qualification (academic or professional)	Encompasses the orientation of a qualification (professional and/or academic; subject specific and/or general, etc.), including further professional and/or academic rights granted by the qualification
Learning outcomes		"Learning outcome" is defined as a statement of what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after successful completion of the programme	"Learning outcome" is defined as a statement of what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after successful completion of the programme	"Learning outcome" is defined as a statement of what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after successful completion of the programme
Formal rights		The holder has the right to continue the studies in the home system of education	The holder has the right to study at respective level or work in the respective profession and position	It is not considered as a separate criterion, rather it is looked at when considering the level and profile of a qualification

Procedure for assessment of qualifications consists of the following stages that are similar in all the Baltic countries:

- Identification of the value of a qualification in the country of its origin;
- Identification of the level of a qualification in the country of its origin;
- The comparison of a qualification with a similar qualification issued in the respective Baltic country, i.e. profile, workload, quality, and learning outcomes with respective requirements established in respective Baltic country.

Minor differences are concerning time limits for assessment and also the fees (starting from August 2015 in Latvia the assessment is not free of charge as it is still in Estonia and Lithuania). More details about procedure for assessment and recognition are given in the Table 7.

Table 7. Procedure for assessment and recognition

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
The applicant for assessment	The application for assessment may be submitted by the individual, but also be submitted by an employer, by a HEI or by any other institution to which a foreign education credential has been presented	The application for assessment may be submitted by the individual, by an employer, by a HEI	The application for assessment may be submitted by an individual. Requests for an assessment in the form of recommendation are accepted from all institutions (e.g. employers or HEIs)
Documents to be submitted for academic recognition (including translations)	1) Application (in Estonian, English or Russian); 2) personal identity document; 3) original diploma/certificate or a certified copy; 4) authorised translation into Estonian, English or Russian if the diploma/certificate is not in one of these languages; 5) original transcript and/or other additional documents or their certified copies; 6) authorised translation into Estonian, English or Russian if the transcript or additional documents are not in one of these languages. When seeking assessment for a higher education qualification, documents with supplements attesting to previous education, beginning with the first post-secondary qualification, should be attached. The educational institution or the employer, with the qualification holder's consent, shall submit the following documents to the Estonian ENIC/NARIC: all documents enumerated above or their copies certified by the educational institution or the employer as "KOOPIA ÕIGE" ("TRUE COPY"); a written request for assessment	Originals or certified copies of educational document and diploma supplement (transcript of records). If necessary translations and legalization can be asked. 1) Application (in Latvian, English or Russian); 2) personal identity document; 3) original diploma/certificate or a certified copy; 4) authorised translation into Latvian, English or Russian if the diploma/certificate is not in one of these languages; 5) original transcript and/or other additional documents or their certified copies; 6) authorised translation into Latvian, English or Russian if the transcript or additional documents are not in one of these languages 7) Documents providing information about the change on name/surname	An application (in Lithuanian or English); a personal identity document; a document attesting to a foreign qualification; a supplement/ supplements to the document; a document(s) proving the change of the name and/or surname (if applicable)
Time limits	30 days	1 month, in case additional information is needed, the term might be prolonged for max. 4 months	1 month, in case additional information is needed, the term might be prolonged for max. 3 months

Table 7 continued

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
Fee for the assessment	Free of charge	Since 3.08.2015, evaluation of foreign degree or qualification is EUR 41.00 (price per statement)	Free of charge
Procedure for appeal	The applicant has the right to appeal the outcome of the assessment of a foreign qualification prepared by Academic Recognition Agency. The applicant shall file a written appeal with the Academic Recognition Agency within 30 days of the date of the statement, stating the reason for the appeal. The applicant has the right to appeal to the Administrative Court according to the national legislation	The applicant has the right to appeal the outcome of the assessment of a foreign qualification prepared by the Academic Information Centre during 1 month from the date of issue of the statement. The applicant has the right to appeal to the Administrative Court according to the national legislation	Regulations of Interinstitutional Appeals Committee (for decisions made by SKVC and Research Council of Lithuania) at the Ministry of Education and Science approved by the Ministerial order No.V-519, of 21.03.2012. The Regulations of Interinstitutional Appeals Committee (for decisions made by HEI) at SKVC approved by order of Director of SKVC on 4.04.2012. In both cases, appeals should be filed within 14 calendar days after receipt of a decision. In both cases two outcomes are possible: 1) to reject an appeal and to uphold the decision made; 2) to rule the institution, which issued a decision, to do a repeated evaluation and recognition. The applicant has the right to appeal to the Administrative Dispute Commission, and also to the Court directly according to the national legislation

3

The role of NQFs for the automatic recognition

Work on National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) in the Baltic countries started in 2004/2005. In Estonia an 8-level EstQF was established in 2008, with the Occupational Qualifications Act. In Latvia the foundations of 8-level LQF were laid with the amendments to the Cabinet of Ministers No 990 “Regulations on the Latvian education classification” in October 2010 by referencing the Latvian qualifications to the corresponding LQF level. The LQF was officially defined by the Amendments to the Education Law in June 2015. In 2007, the first draft of the Lithuanian national qualifications framework was published and the Government approved the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework by its Resolution No. 535 on May 4, 2010. To date there are no programmes registered on LTQF level 5, but it is expected that the situation will change after passing the new Law on Higher Education and Research.

Comparison of Estonian, Lithuanian and Latvian qualifications frameworks indicates that the three countries have developed NQFs with identical structures and the same number of levels suited to the national education systems and referenced to the EQF. In Latvia and Lithuania education qualifications have been included in the NQF, while in Estonia – both education and occupational qualifications.

The NQF provides a way to compare qualifications and describe the relation between the different levels of national education system, and the level and learning outcomes of specific qualifications. More information about NQFs is provided in Table 8.

Table 8. Information about the NQFs

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
Date when referencing report presented to the EQF Advisory Group	7.02.2012	10.11.2011	30.07.2012
Situation regarding implementation of the NQF (legislation)	8-level EstQF was established in 2008, with the Occupational Qualifications Act. EstQF is a comprehensive framework, consisting of four sub-frameworks for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • general education qualifications; • vocational education qualifications; • higher education qualifications; • occupational qualifications 	8-level LQF, including all stages and types of education, was established by the amendments to Cabinet of Ministers Regulations of 05.10.2010. The LQF was legally strengthened by the amendments to the Education Law in 2015 (definition of LQF and general level descriptors). New Cabinet Regulations will be elaborated to determine more detailed level descriptors of LQF (2016)	Comprehensive 8-level LTQF was launched by Resolution of Government on 4.05.2010. More detailed description of LTQF levels pertaining to higher education was developed and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science on 21.11.2011
Level descriptors (structure)	Qualification is described in terms of learning outcomes, expressed in three categories: knowledge, skills and competence (understood as the degree of autonomy and responsibility)	Descriptors are based on learning outcomes that are expressed in three dimensions: knowledge (knowledge and comprehension); skills (ability to apply knowledge, communication, general skills); competence (analyses, synthesis, and assessment)	Descriptors are based on learning outcomes that are expressed in three dimensions: complexity of activities (understood as variety of tasks and degree of responsibility); autonomy of activities (describes changes in the activity organization and nature of subordination); and variability (describes activities in terms of changing technological and organizational environment)

4

The role of ECTS for automatic recognition

European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is fully implemented in Estonia (from 2009/2010) and Lithuania (from 2011/2012), while in Latvia the national credit system is still used, and for recalculating in ECTS credits the number of Latvian credit points has to be multiplied by 1.5.

In Estonia one ECTS credit corresponds to 26 hours of the student’s work including contact-based study, independent work and practical placement and the assessment of learning outcomes, the workload per one academic year is 1560 hours or 60 ECTS credits. In Lithuania one ECTS credit corresponds to approximately 27 hours of the student’s work that includes contact-based study, independent work and practical training and the assessment of learning outcomes, the workload per one academic year is 1600 hours or 60 ECTS credits.

In Latvian official credit system one credit point corresponds to the amount of the workload of one week full-time studies (40 points for acad. year). Part of Latvian HEIs already uses the ECTS credits as law does not forbid it. The ECTS credit allocation is based on the workload students need in order to achieve the expected learning outcomes.

Credits are taken into consideration in the process of recognition and could be useful for automatic recognition. Credits quantitatively describe learner achievements. They are awarded after successful completion of programme or module. Credits measure the volume of learning based on the achievement of learning outcomes and their associated workload measured in time. Information about ECTS in the Baltic countries is summarised in Table 9.

In all the Baltic countries the consistency of the workload with the learning outcomes is subject to quality assurance process. All three countries adhere to the principle that credit points are awarded only for the achieved learning outcomes. It is not possible to earn credits if a student has failed in the assessment process.

Table 9. Information about role of ECTS in the Baltic countries

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
Legal regulations	Universities Act (1995); Professional Higher Education Institution Act (1998)	Law on Higher Education Institutions (1995)	Law on Higher Education and Research (2009)
Introduction of ECTS	Fully introduced since 2009/2010 academic year to all higher education programmes (including Doctoral programmes). Use of learning outcomes is an essential element	Part of HEIs has already switched to the ECTS as law does not forbid it; the rest uses national credit system. Still the use of learning outcomes is an essential element	Use of ECTS is spread over the LTQF levels 6 and 7, however, is rather limited in LTQF level 8. Use of learning outcomes is an essential element
Date of implementation	ECTS was implemented on 01.09.2009	National credit system was implemented in 1995	ECTS was implemented in academic year 2011/2012
Amount	One ECTS credit corresponds to 26 hours of the student’s workload. The workload per one academic year is 1560 hours or 60 ECTS credits	In official credit system one credit point in Latvia corresponds to the amount of the workload of one week (40 academic hours) full-time studies (40 points for acad. year). Recalculating in ECTS credits, the amount of Latvian credit points has to be multiplied by 1.5	One ECTS credit corresponds to approximately 27 hours of the student’s workload. The workload per one academic year is 1600 hours or 60 ECTS credits
Application of the ECTS in recognition practice	The workload on ECTS (if the ECTS is implemented and used) is one of the assessment criteria	The ECTS is an integral part of the recognition	The workload in ECTS is used as a demonstration of the achieved learning outcomes

Diploma Supplement for automatic recognition

Diploma Supplement (DS) is mandatory for all higher education qualifications in Estonia and Latvia since 2004, in Lithuania since 2006 (except Doctoral programmes). The DS is issued automatically upon completion of the degree in the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. In Lithuania bilingual DS is issued in Lithuanian and English for graduates of Professional Bachelor, Bachelor, and Master's programmes, while in Estonia and Latvia all higher education graduates receive two DS, one in English and one in the respective national language.

The DS provides a structured overview of information relevant to the evaluation and recognition process and is an instrument to facilitate recognition of foreign qualifications.

The DS describes the respective higher education qualification and the education system to which the qualification belongs. The diploma supplement providing complete information about the profile, level, context, content and status of the studies completed by its holder is an aid to help recognition including automatic recognition. Comparative information about DS in the Baltic countries is included in Table 10.

Table 10. Information about DS in the Baltic countries

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
Introduction of Diploma Supplement	Since 1.01.2004 the DS in the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES is mandatory for all higher education qualifications	Since 2004, the DS in the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES is mandatory for all higher education qualifications	Since 2006, the DS in the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES is mandatory for all higher education qualifications
Law (including previous legislation)	DS is regulated by Government Regulation No.76 "Statute and Form of Diploma and Diploma Supplement" (12.03.2003)	DS is regulated by the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 202 "Procedures for issuing state-recognized certificates of higher education" (16.04.2013)	DS is regulated by the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science (17.11.2011, latest amendments 7.07.2015)
Languages	Higher education graduates receive two DS: one in English and one in Estonian	Two DS are issued automatically upon completion of the degree – in Latvian and English	Higher education graduates receive one DS, issued both in Lithuanian and English
To which qualifications	Both DS are automatically issued to all graduates of professional higher education, Master's and doctoral programmes. The graduates who are awarded a Bachelor's degree will receive the DS in Estonian automatically, but in English upon request	Both DS are automatically issued to all higher education graduates	The bilingual DS is automatically issued to all graduates of Professional Bachelor's, Bachelor's, and Master's, but not of Doctoral programmes

Table 10 continued

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
Structure (content elements) of Diploma Supplement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information identifying the holder of the qualification 2. Information identifying the qualification 3. Information on the level of the qualification 4. Information on the contents and results gained 5. Information on the function of the qualification 6. Additional information 7. Certification of the supplement 8. Information on the Higher Education System of Estonia 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information identifying the holder of the qualification 2. Information identifying the qualification 3. Information on the level of the qualification 4. Information on the contents and results gained 5. Information on the qualification 6. Additional information and sources 7. Certification of the supplement 8. Information on the national higher education system 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information identifying the holder of the qualification 2. Information identifying the qualification 3. Information on the level of the qualification 4. Information on the contents and results gained 5. Information on the function of the qualification 6. Additional information 7. Certification of the supplement 8. Information on the National Higher Education System
Application of the DS in recognition practice	If the DS is issued, the applicant have to present the DS together with a diploma	The DS is an integral part of the recognition	The DS is a transparency tool, providing information both on a specific qualification and the system of higher education
Means of awarding DS (electronic, on paper)	The DS is issued on paper	The DS is issued on paper	The DS is issued on paper

6

Quality assurance for automatic recognition

Higher education institutions (HEI) are held responsible for the internal quality assurance of all their programmes and awarded qualification. External quality assurance relies on the institutional autonomy of HEIs and accountability to both internal and external audiences. The external quality assurance is meant to support public confidence in higher education and help in improving quality of higher education provision. External quality assurance agencies in the Baltic countries were established as early as in 1994/1995.

In Estonia, the Higher Education Quality Assessment Council was formed on April 11, 1995. Later on and in parallel, with the aim to support the Council, the Estonian Higher Education Accreditation Centre was established on September 1, 1997. The binary structure of Assessment Council and Accreditation Centre underwent a major transformation and on January 1, 2009 a new organization was created – Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency (*Eesti Kõrghariduse Kvaliteediagentuur*, since 2015 – Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education, *Eesti Kõrg- ja Kutsehariduse Kvaliteediagentuur*, EKKA), which is a legal successor of the two above mentioned bodies.

In Latvia, foundation “Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre” (*Augstākās izglītības kvalitātes novērtēšanas centrs*, AIKNC) was established on December 28, 1994. AIKNC was functioning as the national external quality assurance agency until 2013, when the Ministry of Education and Science overtook its functions. Starting from July 1, 2015, this responsibility was delegated to the Academic Information Centre (AIC), which is in the process of developing its methodology and organizing relevant activities.

Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (*Studijų kokybės vertinimo centras*, SKVC) was founded on January 24, 1995, and from the inception to the present day it retains two lines of activities – external quality assurance of higher education, and information provision and academic recognition of qualifications.

Comparison of present external quality assurance in Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia shows that in all the three countries implemented procedures are aimed both at the level of higher education institutions and study programmes, however, the ways of carrying programme reviews have slight variations, as well as the term of accreditation decisions is of different length. The models of external quality assurance in all three countries include such elements as institutional self-evaluations, independent expert panels, visits to HEIs, publication of reports and decisions taken, also follow-up activities. Participation of stakeholders and experts from abroad is another common feature of the systems.

Quality is one of essential descriptors of each qualification. Internal quality assurance implemented by higher education institutions in line with expectations of European Standards and Guidelines for Higher Education (ESG) Part 1, and external quality assurance provided by the quality assurance agencies according to the ESG part 2 and 3, underpin national qualification frameworks and provide basis for trust in qualifications awarded in all three countries.

Table 11. Information about the quality assurance

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
Date of establishing first external QA body	11.04.1995	28.12.1994	24.01.1995
Procedures implemented	Institutional reviews, quality assurance of study programme groups	Institutional reviews, quality assurance of study fields	Institutional reviews, quality assurance of study programmes
Maximum length of accreditation issued	7 years	6 years	6 years
Coverage of sectors	EKKA is in charge of quality assurance of vocational education and higher education (EstQF 2-8)	AIC is in charge of quality assurance for higher education (LQF 5-8)	SKVC is in charge of quality assurance of higher education (LTQF levels 6-7); Research Council of Lithuania is responsible for the quality of research (LTQF level 8)
Situation regarding implementation of the ESG	EKKA was positively externally reviewed according to compliance towards ESG in 2013; full membership of ENQA and registration in EQAR granted on that basis	AIC currently holds affiliate status to ENQA, preparations for external review are under way	SKVC was positively externally reviewed according to compliance towards ESG for the first time in 2012; full membership of ENQA and registration in EQAR was granted on that basis

7

Learning outcomes of higher education qualifications

More than five years ago the Estonian HEIs started revision of study programmes in order to provide learning outcomes for all study programmes, their modules and courses. The outcome-based study programmes were launched in academic year 2009/2010.

In Latvia, according to the legal requirements, since 2011, learning outcomes have become a compulsory part of the higher education study programmes. However, already since 2004 higher education sector has worked to develop learning outcomes based Bologna cycle descriptors that were integrated in the LQF descriptors approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in October 2010. HEIs have to formulate learning outcomes for study programmes and courses regarding the requirements set by state education standards and occupational standards (for professional higher education programmes).

In Lithuania from 2009, in parallel to working on draft LTQF, the descriptors of study cycles (encompassing LTQF levels 6, 7 and 8), as well as the new versions of subject benchmark statements were drafted and gradually endorsed. To date, 53 subject benchmark statements are developed and approved, which serve as reference for HEIs, when proposing new or reforming the existing study programmes. Those statements are also used in the course of external quality evaluation by national and foreign experts. Referencing of the LTQF showed that the majority of study programmes provided in the formal education system is either already based on learning outcomes or, in cases where they are not yet implemented, the new arrangements are underway.

The shift towards learning outcomes in higher education may be observed in all the three countries. Yet some differences in the approach how learning outcomes are formulated may be observed. In Estonia and Lithuania at national level learning outcomes are described by study level and field, while in Latvia there are only general level descriptors available, because HEIs – as autonomous institutions – are responsible for the formulation of learning outcomes of their study programmes. Thus, various hierarchy levels of formulated learning outcomes may be observed in the Baltic countries.

More information about learning outcomes of higher education qualifications in the Baltic countries is provided in the Appendix 8.

8

Higher education qualifications and their components

As mentioned above, structure of higher education systems in the Baltic countries is rather similar – consisting of three cycles (EQF levels 6-8); only in Latvia there is also a short cycle qualification (EQF level 5). In order to provide more thorough information about the qualifications, project working group described the qualifications regarding several components. These components (elements of qualifications) are usually considered during the recognition of qualifications. See the overview of the analysis in the table below.

Table 12. Higher education qualifications and their components in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania

Country	Title of qualification in original language (in English)	Access requirements	Structure of
			Components
1	2	3	4
Qualifications of EQF level 5			
LV	<i>Pirmā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms</i> (First level professional higher education diploma)	<i>Atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību</i> (Certificate of general secondary education) or <i>Diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību</i> (Diploma of vocational secondary education)	Theoretical courses Practical placement Final exam (including final thesis)
Qualifications of EQF level 6			
EE	<i>Bakalaureus</i> (Bachelor)	<i>Gümnaasiumi lõputunnistus</i> (Certificate of General Secondary Education) or a corresponding qualification	General, profile and optional courses Practical placement Final exam or final thesis
EE	<i>Rakenduskõrghariduse diplom</i> (Diploma of Professional Higher Education)	<i>Gümnaasiumi lõputunnistus</i> (Certificate of General Secondary Education) or a corresponding qualification	Theoretical, profile and optional courses Practical placement Final exam final thesis
LV	<i>Bakalaura diploms</i> (Bachelor's diploma)	<i>Atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību</i> (Certificate of general secondary education) or <i>Diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību</i> (Diploma of vocational secondary education)	Compulsory part Limited optional part Theoretical courses Final thesis
LV	<i>Profesionālā bakalaura diploms un augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms</i> (Professional Bachelor's diploma and higher professional qualification diploma)	<i>Atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību</i> (Certificate of general secondary education) or <i>Diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību</i> (Diploma of vocational secondary education)	Theoretical courses Special professional courses Optional courses Practical placement Final thesis
LV	<i>Profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms un augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms</i> (Professional higher education diploma and higher professional qualification diploma)	<i>Pirmā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms</i> (First level professional higher education diploma)	Theoretical courses Special professional courses Optional courses Practical placement Final exam (including final thesis)

qualifications	Nominal duration/ workload in total (in ECTS)	Graduation requirements	Type of awarding institution	Function of quali- fication (access to studies, formal rights for employment)
ECTS				
5	6	7	8	9
≥84 ECTS (≤75%) ≥ 24 ECTS ≥12 ECTS (≤10%)	2-3 years; 120-180 ECTS credits	State examination, including the graduation work	College or HEIs	Bachelor, professional bachelor or second level professional higher education programme, employment in the field
≥ 5 ECTS	3-4 years; 180-240 ECTS credits	Final examination or thesis	University	Master programme, employment in the field
≥ 15% ≥ 5 ECTS	3-4.5 years; 180-270 ECTS credits	Final examination or thesis	Professional HEI; university	Master programme, employment in the field
≥ 75 ECTS ≥ 30 ECTS ≥ 75 ECTS ≥ 15 ECTS	3-4 years full-time; 180-240 ECTS credits	State examination, including the graduation thesis	HEI	Master, professional master or second level professional higher education programme, employment in the field
≥ 54 ECTS ≥ 90 ECTS ≥ 9 ECTS ≥ 30 ECTS ≥ 18 ECTS	Min. 4 years full- time/ at least 240 ECTS credits	State examination, including the graduation thesis	HEI	Master programme, employment in the field
≥ 84 ECTS ≥ 90 ECTS ≥ 9 ECTS ≥ 30 ECTS ≥ 18 ECTS	1-2 years. Total duration of HE studies at least 4 years; at least 240 ECTS credits	State examination, including the graduation thesis	HEI	Master programme, employment in the field

Table 12 continued

Country	Title of qualification in original language (in English)	Access requirements	Structure of
			Components
1	2	3	4
LV	Profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms un augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms (Professional higher education diploma and higher professional qualification diploma)	<i>Bakalaura diploms</i> (Bachelor's diploma), <i>Profesionālā bakalaura diploms</i> (Professional Bachelor's diploma) or Second level professional higher education diploma	Theoretical courses Practical placement Final exam (including final thesis)
LT	Bakalauras (Bachelor) Or Bachelor and professional qualification	<i>Brandos atestatas</i> (Maturity Certificate)	Subjects related to the field of study General profile university subjects Elective subject for specialisation in the same study field (area) or a module(s) or subject(s) in another field (area) or general university study subjects, practice or free electives
LT	Profesinis bakalauras (Professional Bachelor) Or Professional Bachelor and professional qualification	<i>Brandos atestatas</i> (Maturity Certificate)	Subjects related to the field of study General profile college study subjects Elective subjects for specialisation in the same field (area) or for a module(s) or a subject(s) in another study field (area) or for general college study subjects, practice, also for the student's free electives
Qualifications of EQF level 7			
EE	Magister (Master)	<i>Bakalaureus</i> (Bachelor) or <i>Rakenduskõrghariduse diplom</i> (Diploma of Professional Higher Education)	Theoretical, profile and optional courses Practical placement Final exam or final thesis

qualifications	Nominal duration/ workload in total (in ECTS)	Graduation requirements	Type of awarding institution	Function of quali- fication (access to studies, formal rights for employment)
ECTS				
5	6	7	8	9
<p>≥ 6 ECTS ≥ 30 ECTS ≥ 15 ECTS</p>	<p>At least 1 year. Total duration of HE studies – at least 4 years; at least 60 ECTS credits</p>	<p>State examination, including the graduation thesis</p>	<p>HEI</p>	<p>Master programme, employment in the field</p>
<p>≥ 165 ECTS (≥78%), incl. practice ≥15 ECTS and ≥12 ECTS final thesis (project) and final examination (if applicable) ≥ 15 ECTS; ≤ 60 ECTS (≤13%)</p>	<p>3.5-4 years; 210-240 ECTS credits</p>	<p>Final thesis (project) Or final thesis (project) and exam(s)</p>	<p>University</p>	<p>Master programme, employment in the field</p>
<p>135 ECTS, incl. practice should be ≥30 ECTS, final thesis (projects) and final examination (if applicable) – 9 ECTS ≥ 15 ECTS from 30 to 60 ECTS</p>	<p>3-4 years; 180-210 ECTS credits</p>	<p>Final thesis (project) Or final thesis (project) and exam(s)</p>	<p>College of higher education</p>	<p>Master programme, employment in the field</p>
<p>≥ 15 ECTS</p>	<p>1-2 years (together with a first cycle degree no less than 5 years); 60-120 ECTS credits (together with a first cycle degree no less than 300 ECTS credits)</p>	<p>Final examination or Master's thesis</p>	<p>University; professional HEI</p>	<p>Doctoral programme, employment in the field</p>

Table 12 continued

Country	Title of qualification in original language (in English)	Access requirements	Structure of
			Components
1	2	3	4
EE	<p>Arstikraad (Degree in Medicine)</p> <p>Hambaarstikraad (Degree in Dentistry)</p> <p>Farmaatsiamagister (Master of Science in Pharmacy)</p> <p>Loomaarstikraad (Degree in Veterinary Medicine)</p> <p>Arhitektuurimagister (Master of Science in Architecture)</p> <p>Tehnikateaduse magister (Master of Science in Engineering)</p> <p>Haridusteaduse magister (Master of Arts in Education)</p>	<p><i>Gümnaasiumi lõputunnistus</i> (Certificate of General Secondary Education) or a corresponding qualification</p>	<p>Theoretical, profile and optional courses</p> <p>Practical placement</p> <p>Final exam (or final thesis for <i>Hambaarstikraad</i>; <i>Farmaatsia- magister</i> and <i>Haridusteaduse magister</i>)</p> <p>Graduation work (<i>Arhitektuurimagister</i> and <i>Tehnikateaduse magister</i>)</p>
LV	<p>Maģistra diploms (Master's diploma)</p>	<p><i>Bakalaura diploms</i> (Bachelor's diploma), <i>Profesionālā bakalaura diploms</i> (Professional Bachelor's diploma), or Second level professional higher education diploma</p>	<p>Compulsory theoretical courses</p> <p>If total 60 ECTS</p> <p>If total 120 ECTS</p> <p>graduation thesis</p>
LV	<p>Profesionālā maģistra diploms un augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms (Professional Master's diploma and higher professional qualification diploma)</p>	<p><i>Bakalaura diploms</i> (Bachelor's diploma), <i>Profesionālā bakalaura diploms</i> (Professional Bachelor's diploma) or Second level professional higher education diploma (after at least 4 year full-time studies)</p>	<p>Special professional courses</p> <p>Scientific courses</p> <p>Practical placement</p> <p>For bachelor graduates</p> <p>For professional bachelor graduates</p> <p>Final thesis</p>
LV	<p>Profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms un augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms (Professional higher education diploma and higher professional qualification diploma)</p>	<p><i>Atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību</i> (Certificate of general secondary education) or <i>Diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību</i> (Diploma of vocational secondary education)</p>	<p>Theoretical courses</p> <p>Practical placement</p> <p>Final thesis</p>
LT	<p>Magistras (Master)</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Master and professional qualification</p>	<p><i>Bakalauras</i> (Bachelor) or <i>Profesinis bakalauras</i> (Professional Bachelor)</p>	<p>Core subjects of the study field</p> <p>Final thesis</p> <p>Elective subjects from among prescribed alternatives the aim of which is to prepare a student for doctoral studies (research, artistic work) or practical activities (professional practice) or to subjects in another field of study in the case of an inter-field study programme, also to general subjects and free electives</p>

qualifications	Nominal duration/ workload in total (in ECTS)	Graduation requirements	Type of awarding institution	Function of quali- fication (access to studies, formal rights for employment)
ECTS				
5	6	7	8	9
5-6 years (long cycle programmes); 300-360 ECTS credits ≥ 5 ECTS ≥ 15 ECTS	Final Examination or thesis	University		Doctoral programme, employment in the field
≥ 18 ECTS ≥ 36 ECTS ≥ 30 ECTS	1-2 years full- time; at least 60 ECTS credits. Total duration of HE full- time studies at least 5 years	State examination, including the graduation thesis	HEI	Doctoral programme, employment in the field
≥ 7.5 ECTS ≥ 4.5 ECTS ≥ 39 ECTS ≥ 9 ECTS ≥ 30 ECTS	At least 1 year; at least 60 ECTS credits. Total duration of HE studies at least 5 years	State examination, including the graduation thesis	HEI	Doctoral programme, employment in the field
N.A.	At least 5 years; at least 300 ECTS credits	State examination, including the graduation thesis (18 ECTS)	HEI	Doctoral programme, employment in the field (after medical studies – medical residency)
≥ 60 ECTS 30 ECTS ≤ 30 ECTS	1.5-2 years 90-120 ECTS credits	Master's thesis Or Master's thesis and exam(s); In the field of arts – artistic project and a corresponding written paper	University	Doctoral programme, employment in the field

Table 12 continued

Country	Title of qualification in original language (in English)	Access requirements	Structure of
			Components
1	2	3	4
LT	Magistras (Master) or Master and professional qualification	<i>Brandos atestatas</i> (Maturity Certificate)	General subjects Subjects of the study field (incl. practice and final thesis) Elective subjects for specialisation in the same study field (area) or a module(s) or subject(s) in another field (area) or general university study subjects, practice or free electives
Qualifications of EQF level 8			
EE	Doktor (Doctor)	<i>Magister</i> (Master) or a long cycle degree	(1) Theoretical, profile and optional courses (2) Independent scientific research or creative work (3) Doctoral work
LV	Doktora diploms (Doctoral diploma)	<i>Maģistra diploms</i> (Master's diploma) or <i>Profesionālā maģistra diploms un augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms</i> (Professional Master's diploma and higher professional qualification diploma)	N.A.
LT	Mokslo daktaras (Doctor of Science)	<i>Magistras</i> (Master)	Exams At least 2 publications in referenced journals or 1 monography Participation in international research events Other as defined by the university
LT	Meno daktaras (Doctor of Arts)	<i>Magistras</i> (Master)	Taught courses in arts Artistic-creative practice Research

qualifications	Nominal duration/ workload in total (in ECTS)	Graduation requirements	Type of awarding institution	Function of quali- fication (access to studies, formal rights for employment)
ECTS				
5	6	7	8	9
<p>≥15 ECTS ≥165 ECTS (of thesis practice ≥18 ECTS) (BA) + 60 ECTS (MA), incl. final thesis (projects) or final examinations ≥15 ECTS <60 ECTS</p>	<p>5-6 years (long cycle programmes) 300-360 ECTS credits (The first part of an integrated study programme (240 credits) attributed to 1st cycle studies and the remaining part – 2nd cycle)</p>	<p>Final thesis (project) Or Final thesis (project) and exam(s)</p>	<p>University</p>	<p>Doctoral programme, employment in the field</p>
<p>2) and 3) ≥ 70%</p>	<p>3-4 years; 180-240 ECTS credits</p>	<p>Doctoral thesis</p>	<p>University</p>	<p>Employment, research</p>
<p>N.A.</p>	<p>3-4 years full-time; 180 ECTS credits</p>	<p>Doctoral exams and promotional work (doctoral thesis or set of scientific papers at a definite topic or a monograph)</p>	<p>HEI</p>	<p>Employment, research</p>
<p>≥ 30 ECTS for taught courses</p>	<p>4 years full-time or 6 years part-time</p>	<p>Doctoral dissertation and exams</p>	<p>University; or universities together with research institutes</p>	<p>Employment, research</p>
<p>≥40 ECTS ≥80 ECTS ≥80 ECTS</p>	<p>4 years full-time; 240 ECTS credits</p>	<p>Arts project</p>	<p>University</p>	<p>Employment, research</p>

9

Analysis of case studies and recognition practices

To assess possibilities concerning automatic recognition of higher education qualifications between the Baltic countries, project working group gathered examples of recognition of qualifications. The examples were taken from the last years in order to show similarities and differences in the recognition practices in the Baltic countries.

Table 13. Analysis of case studies and recognition practices between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

Recognizing country	Title of qualification (in original language)	Awarding country	Awarding institution	Corresponding national qualification	Statement or decision taken
Qualifications of EQF level 5 (in awarding country)					
Estonia	<i>Pirmā līmeņa profesionālā augstākā izglītība</i>	Latvia	College	No corresponding qualification	Recognised as period of study (part of first cycle)
Lithuania	<i>Pirmā līmeņa profesionālā augstākā izglītība</i>	Latvia	College	No corresponding qualification	Recognised as period of study (part of first cycle)
Qualifications of EQF level 6 (in awarding country)					
Estonia	<i>Bakalaurs</i>	Latvia	HEI	<i>Bakalaureus</i>	Recognised
Estonia	<i>Bakalauras</i>	Lithuania	University	<i>Bakalaureus</i>	Recognised
Estonia	<i>Profesionālais bakalauris un augstākā profesionālā kvalifikācija</i>	Latvia	HEI	<i>Rakenduskörghariduse diplom</i>	Recognised
Estonia	<i>Profesinis bakalauras</i>	Lithuania	College of HE	<i>Rakenduskörghariduse diplom</i>	Recognised
Estonia	<i>Profesionālā augstākā izglītība un augstākā profesionālā kvalifikācija</i>	Latvia	HEI	<i>Rakenduskörghariduse diplom</i>	Recognised
Latvia	<i>Bakalaureus</i>	Estonia	University	<i>Bakalaurs</i>	Recognised
Latvia	<i>Bakalauras</i>	Lithuania	University	<i>Bakalaurs</i>	Recognised
Latvia	<i>Profesinis bakalauras</i>	Lithuania	College of HE	<i>Pirmā līmeņa profesionālā augstākā izglītība or Bakalauras</i>	Recognized as Bachelor since July 2015
Latvia	<i>Rakenduskörghariduse diplom</i>	Estonia	HEI University	<i>Profesionālais bakalauris un augstākā profesionālā kvalifikācija</i>	Recognised
Lithuania	<i>Bakalaureus</i>	Estonia	HEI	<i>Bakalauras</i>	Recognised
Lithuania	<i>Bakalaurs</i>	Latvia	HEI	<i>Bakalauras</i>	Recognised
Lithuania	<i>Profesionālais bakalauris un augstākā profesionālā kvalifikācija</i>	Latvia	HEI	<i>Profesinis bakalauras</i>	Recognised
Lithuania	<i>Rakenduskörghariduse diplom</i>	Estonia	HEI	<i>Profesinis bakalauras</i>	Recognised

Table 13 continued

Recognizing country	Title of qualification (in original language)	Awarding country	Awarding institution	Corresponding national qualification	Statement or decision taken
Lithuania	<i>Profesionālā augstākā izglītība un augstākā profesionālā kvalifikācija</i>	Latvia	HEI	<i>Profesinis bakalauras</i> , but the final decision depends on the programme	Recognised on individual basis
Qualifications of EQF level 7 (in awarding country)					
Estonia	<i>Magīstrs</i>	Latvia	HEI	<i>Magister</i>	Recognised
Estonia	<i>Magistras</i>	Lithuania	University	<i>Magister</i>	Recognised
Estonia	<i>Profesionālais maģistrs un augstākā profesionālā kvalifikācija</i>	Latvia	HEI	<i>Magister</i>	Recognised
Latvia	<i>Magister</i>	Estonia	University	<i>Maģistrs</i>	Recognised
Latvia	<i>Magistras</i>	Lithuania	University	<i>Maģistrs</i>	Recognised
Latvia	<i>Magistras</i>	Lithuania	University	<i>Profesionālais maģistrs un augstākā profesionālā kvalifikācija</i>	Recognised
Latvia	<i>Arstikraad Hambaarstikraad Farmaatsiamagister Loomaarstikraad Arhitektuurimagister Tehnikateaduste magister Haridusteaduse magister</i>	Estonia	HEI	<i>Maģistrs</i>	Recognised
Lithuania	<i>Magister</i>	Estonia	HEI	<i>Magistras</i>	Recognised
Lithuania	<i>Maģistrs</i>	Latvia	HEI	<i>Magistras</i>	Recognised
Lithuania	<i>Profesionālais maģistrs un augstākā profesionālā kvalifikācija</i>	Latvia	HEI	<i>Magistras</i>	Recognised
Lithuania	<i>Arstikraad Hambaarstikraad Farmaatsiamagister Loomaarstikraad Arhitektuurimagister Tehnikateaduste magister Haridusteaduse magister</i>	Estonia	HEI	<i>Magistras</i>	Recognised
Lithuania	<i>Profesionālā augstākā izglītība un augstākā profesionālā kvalifikācija</i>	Latvia	HEI	Non-degree granting studies or <i>Magistras</i> depending on the programme	Recognised on individual basis
Qualifications of EQF level 8 (in awarding country)					
Estonia	<i>Doktors</i>	Latvia	HEI	<i>Doktor</i>	Recognised
Estonia	<i>Mokslo daktaras</i>	Lithuania	University or universities together with research institutes	<i>Doktor</i>	Recognised

Table 13 continued

Recognizing country	Title of qualification (in original language)	Awarding country	Awarding institution	Corresponding national qualification	Statement or decision taken
Estonia	<i>Meno daktaras</i>	Lithuania	University	<i>Doktor</i>	Recognised
Latvia	<i>Doktor</i>	Estonia	University	<i>Doktors</i>	Recognised
Latvia	<i>Mokslo daktaras</i>	Lithuania	University or universities together with research institutes	<i>Doktors</i>	Recognised
Latvia	<i>Meno daktaras</i>	Lithuania	University	<i>Doktors</i>	Recognised
Lithuania	<i>Doktor</i>	Estonia	University	<i>Daktaras</i>	Recognised
Lithuania	<i>Doktors</i>	Latvia	HEI	<i>Daktaras</i>	Recognised

Complicated cases from the previous experience of Baltic ENIC/NARIC offices in the recognition of qualifications

The analysis of recognition practice revealed that despite the similarities between higher education systems of the Baltic countries, recognition of some qualifications is difficult as substantial differences have been identified in some cases.

In order to analyse the prospect of implementation of automatic recognition, the Baltic ENIC/NARIC offices reviewed cases of previously evaluated qualifications issued in other Baltic countries. Although in most situations there were no problems to have full recognition of the submitted qualifications, due to some differences in education systems and legislation certain qualifications required additional research. In the paragraphs below these complicated cases are summarised by country.

Qualifications awarded in Latvia

Estonia and Lithuania:

The formal rights conferred by the *Profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms un augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms*, which is a second level professional higher education programme, are not clearly formulated. It is not understandable whether all these diplomas give access to a Master's programme in Latvia. In case there are exceptions, similar exceptions should be made in Estonia and Lithuania.

Furthermore, according to the information provided in the Latvian Diploma Supplement, some of the second level professional higher education programmes provide access to Master's programme only if the compulsory part of *Bakalaura* programme is completed. However, the awarded diplomas do not include sufficient information whether the *Bakalaura* programme part has been completed during the studies.

Qualifications awarded in Lithuania

Estonia and Latvia:

Profesinis bakalauras, which is a qualification of EQF level 6, did not provide direct access to a Master's programme in Lithuania until July 2015. In other countries the degree was recognised as a higher education qualification for labour market or for other purposes where according to the legislation a higher education qualification was required. However, when the Estonian legislation requires a certain qualification or a corresponding foreign degree, recognition of *Profesinis bakalauras* was not applicable.

Until July 2015, in Latvia, *Profesinis bakalauras diploma* could be recognised as *Pirmā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms* (short cycle qualification, EQF level 5) or *Bakalaura diploms* (first cycle qualification, EQF level 6), depending on the number of ECTS credits and profile.

10

Analysis on feasibility, conditions and forms of automatic recognition

The automatic recognition is a rather complicated concept to be introduced into the practice of recognition. So far, automatic recognition has not been discussed or analysed in the Baltic countries. In order to provide some evaluation of this type of recognition, the project working group conducted analysis of potential strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats the stakeholders may face when implementing practices of automatic recognition.

The analysis is rooted in the present situation – what advantages and drawbacks may be observed in the current recognition practice. It should be noted that with taking some steps towards the introduction of automatic recognition, new challenges may emerge.

Table 14. SWOT analysis of automatic recognition

<i>Helpful aspects</i>		<i>Harmful aspects</i>	
Strengths for automatic recognition		Weaknesses for automatic recognition	
<i>Internal origin</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common historical background of education systems in the Baltic countries • Similar circumstances and progress of implementation of the Bologna process tools, e.g. the ECTS, NQFs, quality assurance, the Diploma Supplement • Similar structure and functions of National Qualifications Frameworks • Student and labour force mobility between the Baltic countries • Legal foundations for the development of common Baltic educational space – signed agreements: Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia, the Government of the Republic of Estonia and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the creation of a common educational space in higher education within the Baltic countries (8.12.2000); Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia, the Government of the Republic of Estonia and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the academic recognition of educational qualifications in the Baltic educational space (18.02.2000); Agreement among the Government of the Republic of Latvia, the Government of the Republic of Estonia and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the creation of a common educational space in general upper education and vocational (up to higher education level) education within the Baltic countries (16.07.2001) • Long experience of assessment and recognition of qualifications between Baltic countries • Good sources of information on higher education systems • Well-established systems of education • Close cooperation of the ENIC/NARIC offices and easy access to information 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various changes introduced in the course of time have created some differences in the education systems • Different legal status of statements issued by the national ENIC/NARIC offices • Lack of knowledge and experience about the procedures of automation recognition • Some qualifications are still out of regular EHEA structure • The term “automatic recognition” is still not clear to every competent recognition authority, and there is a room for interpretation • Variations in recognition practices within three countries • Differences in the approaches* towards interpretation of the recognition criteria • Automatic recognition involves decisions on the system level: in cases, when comparability of learning outcomes of specific study programmes should be established (e.g. for admission to the next study cycle or to gain access to professional practice), the evaluation has to be done separately by competent authorities

Table 14 continued

Opportunities for automatic recognition	Threats for automatic recognition
<p><i>External origin</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European initiatives in higher education facilitating conformity of study programmes among EU countries • All Baltic countries have ratified and signed the Lisbon Recognition Convention • Political will to promote the cooperation in education between the Baltic countries • Close cooperation between the Baltic countries in other branches of economy • Existing joint activities and different forms of cooperation between higher education institutions in the region • There are regional samples and experience for automatic recognition of qualifications in Europe • Further implementation of common Bologna tools, which ensure quality assurance and harmonisation • Growing mobility between the Baltic countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of legal regulatory documents concerning the procedures of automatic recognition • Due to some reasons, the automatic recognition might be not embedded in the national legislation after the end of project • Introduction of changes in legislation is lengthy process and/or difficult to achieve • Lack of public awareness regarding the procedures of automatic recognition • Varying levels of the implementation of the Bologna tools • The introduced changes regarding automatic recognition may be affected by changes in the national systems of education, which will require a review table of comparability • Activity of higher education providers, which is not in line with the provisions of the national legislation • Scepticism towards the concept of automatic recognition within the academic and recognition community • The implementation of automatic recognition procedures will require a shift in mentality towards deeper trust and openness to slight differences in the system • The implementation of automatic recognition procedures involves managing expectations related to employment and/or access to further education, which may still be subject to additional specific requirements

* In most cases as the substantial differences are considered: the amount of ECTS, nominal duration, profile, acquired rights etc.

Automatic recognition when introduced will refer only to present qualifications – access and higher education qualifications – described in the report. Perhaps this report could serve as a guide for the recognition of previously awarded qualifications, but this remains under discretion of the countries.

When regarding the practices of automatic recognition, some **general considerations** should be taken into account:

- Automatic recognition refers only to qualifications awarded in the present system – in case of introducing automatic recognition practices between the Baltic countries, the focus should be on qualifications awarded in the framework of current education system;
- Qualifications based on learning outcomes – use of learning outcomes promote transparency of qualifications ensuring their comparability; thus, promoting trust between various national education systems;
- Study programmes based on ECTS or comparable credit systems – combine workload and achieved learning outcomes approach; this aspect is considered in the recognition of qualifications as duration in some cases may serve as one of substantial differences; therefore, for the purposes of automatic recognition, amount of ECTS credits should be clearly defined for the qualifications;
- Launched and implemented NQF which is referenced to EQF – level of NQF/EQF allocated to a qualification provides additional information for credentials evaluators, and it may assist in providing information about qualifications subjected to automatic recognition;

- Quality assurance – both internal and external mechanisms of higher education quality assurance underpin trust in qualifications awarded, as all the qualifications are covered by these mechanisms; ESG represents the common approach towards quality assurance and implementation of ESG creates the basis for trust;
- Formal academic rights of qualification holders – this aspect should be clearly formulated to enforce automatic recognition and avoid some interpretation in the recognition procedures;
- Detailed provisions concerning the qualifications that may be automatically recognized – in order to avoid any misinterpretation concerning the automatic recognition procedures, instructions about qualifications and their components subjected to the automation recognition should be described in precise manner.

To introduce the automatic recognition, some preconditions and obstacles should be regarded. The **necessary preconditions** for automatic recognitions are as follows:

- Qualifications subjected to the automatic recognition are fully recognised on the same level in the three countries;
- No substantial differences exist between the countries in terms of generic principles for the automatic recognition that refer to all situations (not based on single cases);
- The same implementation of automatic recognition has to be ensured in the three Baltic countries in terms of its status, legal effects, provision of information, procedure, etc.;
- Elements of qualifications subjected to the automatic recognition have to be comparable and no substantial differences exist;
- Common understanding between Baltic countries regarding principles of automatic recognition has to be ensured;
- Procedures and practices of automatic recognition have to comply with law in all the three countries or if need be amendments to the legislation should be proposed;
- The scope of automatic recognition should be limited to meeting the general requirements; the fulfilment of specific requirements should be subject to decisions of individual HEIs and/or employers. This should be stressed and clearly communicated to make sure that there are no unsubstantiated expectations.

Obstacles to introducing automatic recognitions are as follows:

- Until July 2015 Professional Bachelor awarded in Lithuania did not give direct access to Master's programmes, and may fail recognition in Latvia as a first cycle degree (EQF level 6) that gives access to a second cycle programme (EQF level 7);
- Legal obstacles may exist, in case the recognition criteria are regulated at national level and there are no exceptions in case of automatic recognition;
- It may be difficult to determine the comparability of the qualifications outside the Bologna B+M+D degree structure; e.g. in Latvia the profile and further academic recognition of non-degree qualifications are not always clear and/or seem to be dependent on the structure and the duration of the programme;
- Developments and/or changes, such as introduction of new qualifications, in the national systems of education and qualification structure, which may affect the comparability of qualifications;
- Some forms of automatic recognition may require substantial changes in legislation, which may be a lengthy and complicated process.

So far, automatic recognition has not been introduced; therefore, according to the SWOT analysis the Baltic countries lack experience concerning practical implementation of automatic recognition. Prior to introducing any changes in legislation of practice, the Baltic countries should discuss and agree about the **possible forms and procedures of automatic recognition**.

The automatic recognition would imply that websites of national ENIC/NARIC offices available for HEIs, employers and other stakeholders include the corresponding qualifications (subjected to the automatic recognition) of Baltic countries. HEIs would not request statements issued by the national ENIC/NARIC. During the evaluation of qualifications, no investigations for substantial differences would be necessary. There would be no need to evaluate the programme content and other inputs.

Qualifications could be subjected to the automatic recognition in full or partial scope:

1. Fully implemented automatic recognition in terms or procedure and decisions:
 - Full elimination of the procedure at the parties involved (person is not asked to come for assessment of ENIC/NARIC office);
 - No statement is issued;
 - The parties involved follow an officially approved table of comparability of qualifications.
2. Partially implemented automatic recognition in terms of procedure, fully implemented in terms of decisions:
 - Full automatic recognition in terms of decisions taken, simplified procedure to check certain points as described below;
 - Informative statement – legal status of the statement depends on national situation – is issued;
 - The parties involved follow an officially approved table of comparability of qualifications.
 - The points to be verified in the simplified procedure are:
 - Status of the awarding education institution;
 - Status of the programme;
 - The authenticity of qualification (reasonable measures should be taken to verify the authenticity of qualification);
 - Whether the qualification is subjected to automatic recognition.
3. Partially implemented automatic recognition in terms of both procedure and decisions:
 - Simplified procedure;
 - Statement is issued;
 - The parties involved follow an officially approved table of comparability of levels and determine the comparability of a qualification.

In terms of this project, the first or second option would provide the most appropriate forms and procedures for automatic recognition. Discussion should be introduced about removing administrative obstacles in case of automatic recognition.

Qualifications suitable for automatic recognition

Taking into account the discussions during the preparation of this report, project working group prepared list of qualifications that may be subjected to the automatic recognition. Regarding some national differences, certain conditions for the automatic recognition were formulated in order to follow the national legal provisions in the Baltic countries.

Table 15. Qualifications of the Baltic countries subjected to the automatic recognition

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania	Notes
Access qualifications (EQF level 4)	<i>Gümnaasiumi lõputunnistus</i> (Certificate of General Secondary Education); <i>Kutsekeskhariduse lõputunnistus</i> (Certificate of Vocational Secondary Education)	<i>Atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību</i> (Certificate of general secondary education) <i>Diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību</i> (Diploma of vocational secondary education)	<i>Brandos atestatas</i> (Maturity Certificate)	N.A.
First cycle (EQF level 6)	<i>Bakalaureus</i> (Bachelor) <i>Rakendus kõrghariduse diplom</i> (Diploma of Professional Higher Education)	<i>Bakalaura diploms</i> (Bachelor's diploma) <i>Profesionālā bakalaura diploms un augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms</i> (Professional Bachelor's diploma and higher professional qualification diploma)	<i>Bakalauras</i> (Bachelor) / Bachelor and professional qualification <i>Profesinis bakalauras</i> (Professional Bachelor) / Professional Bachelor and professional qualification*	In Latvia – automatic recognition applies to <i>Profesinis bakalauras</i> awarded after July 2015 Qualification should provide direct access to Master's studies
Second cycle (EQF level 7)	<i>Magister</i> (Master) <i>Arstikraad</i> (Degree in Medicine) <i>Hambaarstikraad</i> (Degree in Dentistry) <i>Farmaatsiamagister</i> (Master of Science in Pharmacy) <i>Loomaarstikraad</i> (Degree in Veterinary Medicine) <i>Arhitektuurimagister</i> (Master of Science in Architecture) <i>Tehnikateaduse magister</i> (Master of Science in Engineering) <i>Haridusteaduse magister</i> (Master of Arts in Education)	<i>Maģistra diploms</i> (Master's diploma) <i>Profesionālā maģistra diploms un augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms</i> (Professional Master's diploma and higher professional qualification diploma) <i>Profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms un augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms</i> (Professional higher education diploma and higher professional qualification diploma)	<i>Magistras</i> (Master) / Master and professional qualification	In Latvia – nominal duration of higher education studies should be at least 5 years to be awarded Master's degree** Qualification should provide direct access to Doctor's studies
Third cycle (EQF level 8)	<i>Doktor</i> (Doctor)	<i>Doktora diploms</i> (Doctoral diploma)	<i>Mokslo daktaras</i> (Doctor of Science) <i>Meno daktaras</i> (Doctor of Arts)	N.A.

* Automatic recognition is possible to graduates of *Profesinis bakalauras* after July 2015 when rights to have direct access to a Master's programme are in force.

** The Law on Higher Education Institutions, 1995, Article 57, Parts 1-2.

Conclusions

This study explored the education systems, legislation regarding recognition of foreign qualifications and implementation of the Bologna process tools (NQFs, ECTS, DS, quality assurance, learning outcomes) in the Baltic countries.

According to the analysis of present situation of education systems of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, there is a great potential for implementing automatic recognition.

The analysis of the legislation and practices of recognition in all the three countries indicates that there is a sound legal basis for the development of common Baltic educational space – signed agreements: Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia, the Government of the Republic of Estonia and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the creation of a common educational space in higher education within the Baltic countries (8.12.2000); Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia, the Government of the Republic of Estonia and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the academic recognition of educational qualifications in the Baltic educational space (18.02.2000); Agreement among the Government of the Republic of Latvia, the Government of the Republic of Estonia and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the creation of a common educational space in general upper education and vocational (up to higher education level) education within the Baltic countries (16.07.2001).

In all three Baltic countries recognition of qualifications is regulated at national level by respective laws or lower level legislation. These legal acts transfer the main principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (as an international treaty), its subsidiary texts (adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee) and provisions of European Area for Recognition Manual (adopted by Ministers of Education) into the national legislations.

The results of study highlight that the implementation of the Bologna process tools (NQFs, ECTS, DS, quality assurance, learning outcomes) shows similar conditions and progress in the Baltic countries.

Comparison of Estonian, Lithuanian and Latvian qualification frameworks indicates that the three countries have developed National Qualification Frameworks based on learning outcomes with identical structures and the same number of levels (8) and referenced to the EQF.

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System is fully implemented in Estonia and Lithuania, while in Latvia the national credit system – compatible with the ECTS – is still used (for recalculating in ECTS credits, the number of Latvian credit points has to be multiplied by 1.5).

The Diploma Supplement in the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES is mandatory for all higher education qualifications of EQF level 6-7 in all the Baltic countries. For higher education qualifications of EQF level 8 Diploma Supplement is compulsory in Estonia and Latvia, but not in Lithuania.

Internal quality assurance implemented by higher education institutions in line with expectations of ESG Part 1, and external quality assurance provided by the quality assurance agencies according to the ESG part 2 and 3, provide the basis for trust in qualifications awarded in all three countries.

Learning outcomes are the basis for study programmes, cycles of qualifications in all the three Baltic countries.

Conclusions about automatic recognition

This report explored higher education qualifications and qualifications giving access to higher education issued in the present education system of the Baltic countries, but not pre-Bologna qualifications.

In order to introduce procedures and practice of automatic recognition, the project working group elaborated a proposal to the ministries of education of the Baltic countries for the necessary measures and steps related to the recognition of the Baltic higher education and access qualifications. Analysis of the existing Agreement among the Government of the Republic of Estonia, the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the academic recognition of educational qualifications in the Baltic Educational Space (concluded in 2000) has been done and proposals for respective

national authorities for revision of the agreement taking into account possibilities of automatic recognition of qualifications between the three Baltic countries have been prepared.

Discussion should be introduced whether in case of implementing automatic recognition between the Baltic countries, the focus should be on qualifications awarded after the legal decisions (e.g. new or amended Agreement between the Baltic countries) concerning automatic recognition are made.

The qualifications subjected to automatic recognition should be awarded within the current framework supported with the implemented Bologna tools.

To ensure transparency, the qualifications are expected to be issued with a Diploma Supplement, which provides information on the following aspects:

- The workload in ECTS – for the purposes of automatic recognition, amount of ECTS credits should be clearly defined for all the qualifications;
- The level and the function of the qualification;
- The status of the awarding institution;
- Learning outcomes (if available) – use of learning outcomes promotes transparency of qualifications ensuring their comparability, thus, promoting trust between various national education systems;
- Links to further information sources.

In case the aforementioned information is not readily available in the Diploma Supplement or is not clearly indicated, the ENIC/NARIC offices of the Baltic countries should provide links to the relevant information on their website.

Qualifications subjected to the automatic recognition have to be fully recognised on the same level in all the three countries.

Formal academic rights of qualification holders should be clearly formulated to enforce automatic recognition and avoid different interpretations in the recognition procedures.

The same implementation of automatic recognition procedures has to be ensured in the three Baltic countries in terms of its status, legal effects, provision of information, procedure, etc.

Common understanding between the Baltic countries regarding principles of automatic recognition has to be ensured.

Procedures and practices of automatic recognition have to comply with the law in all the three countries. The ENIC/NARIC offices of the three Baltic States should facilitate proper implementation of the automatic recognition by providing information and advice.

The scope of automatic recognition should be limited to meeting the general requirements; the fulfilment of specific requirements should be subject to decisions of individual HEIs and/or employers. This should be stressed and clearly communicated to make sure that there are no unjustified expectations of qualification holders.

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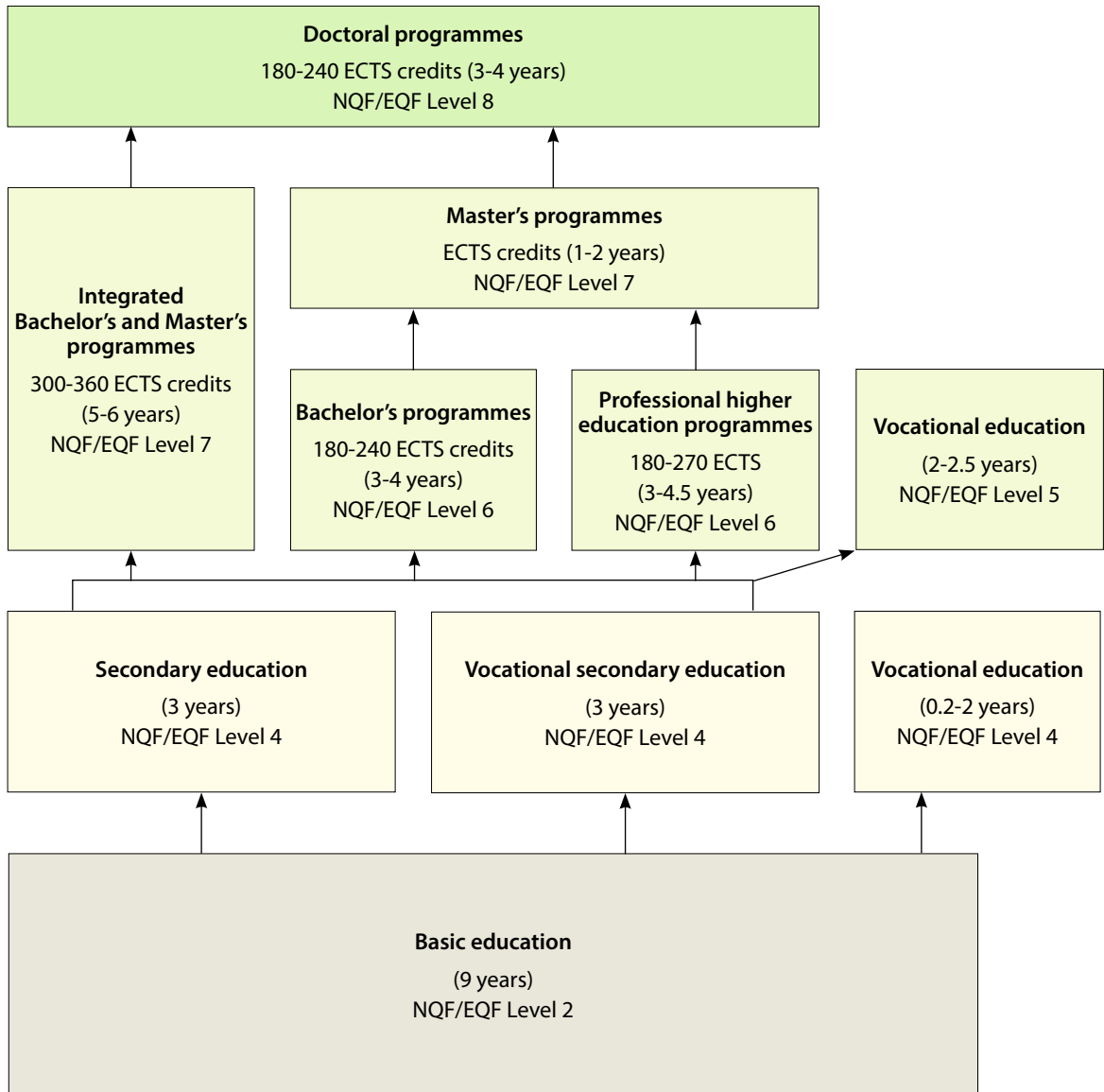
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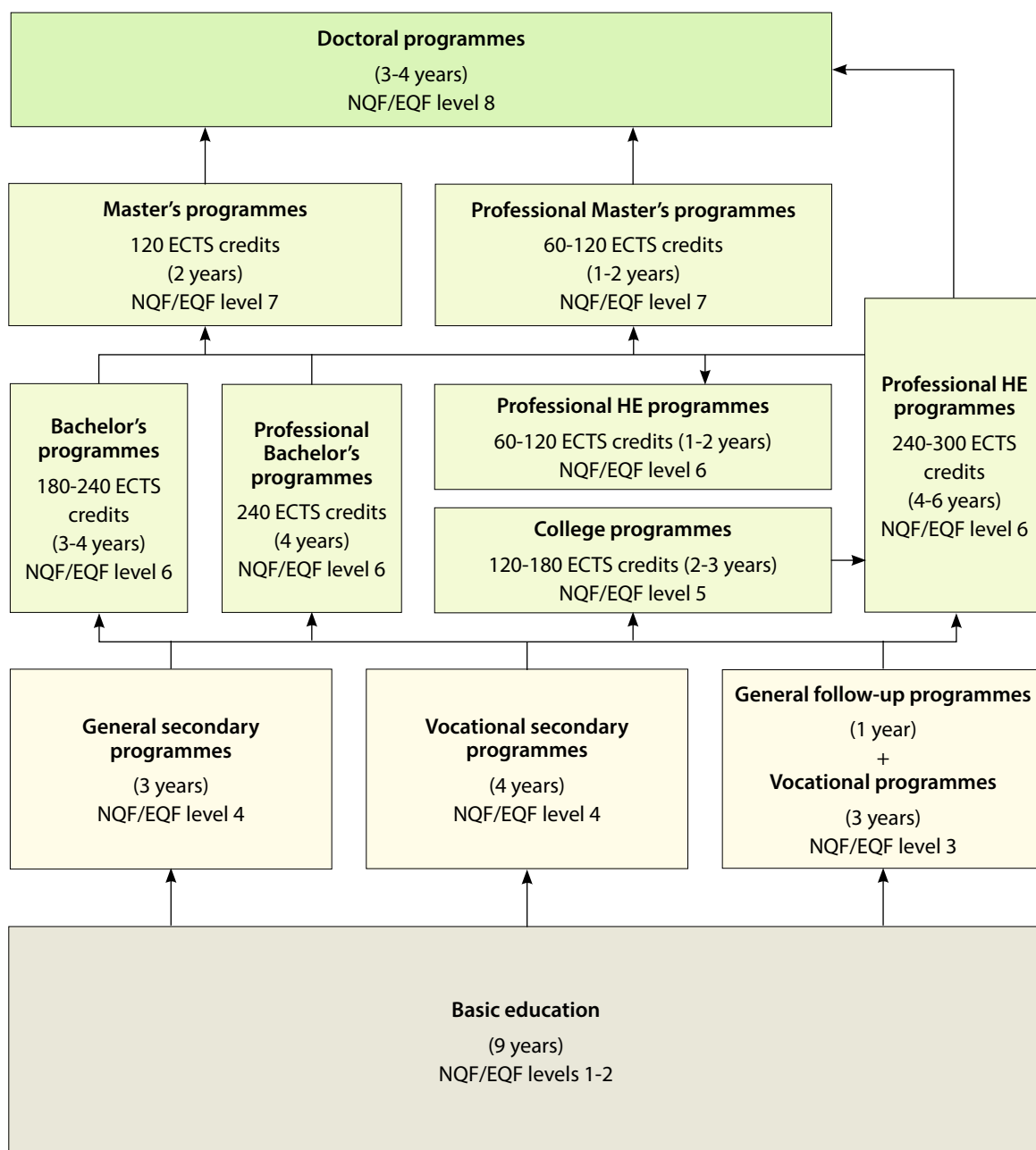
Appendices

Appendix 1. Education system of Estonia



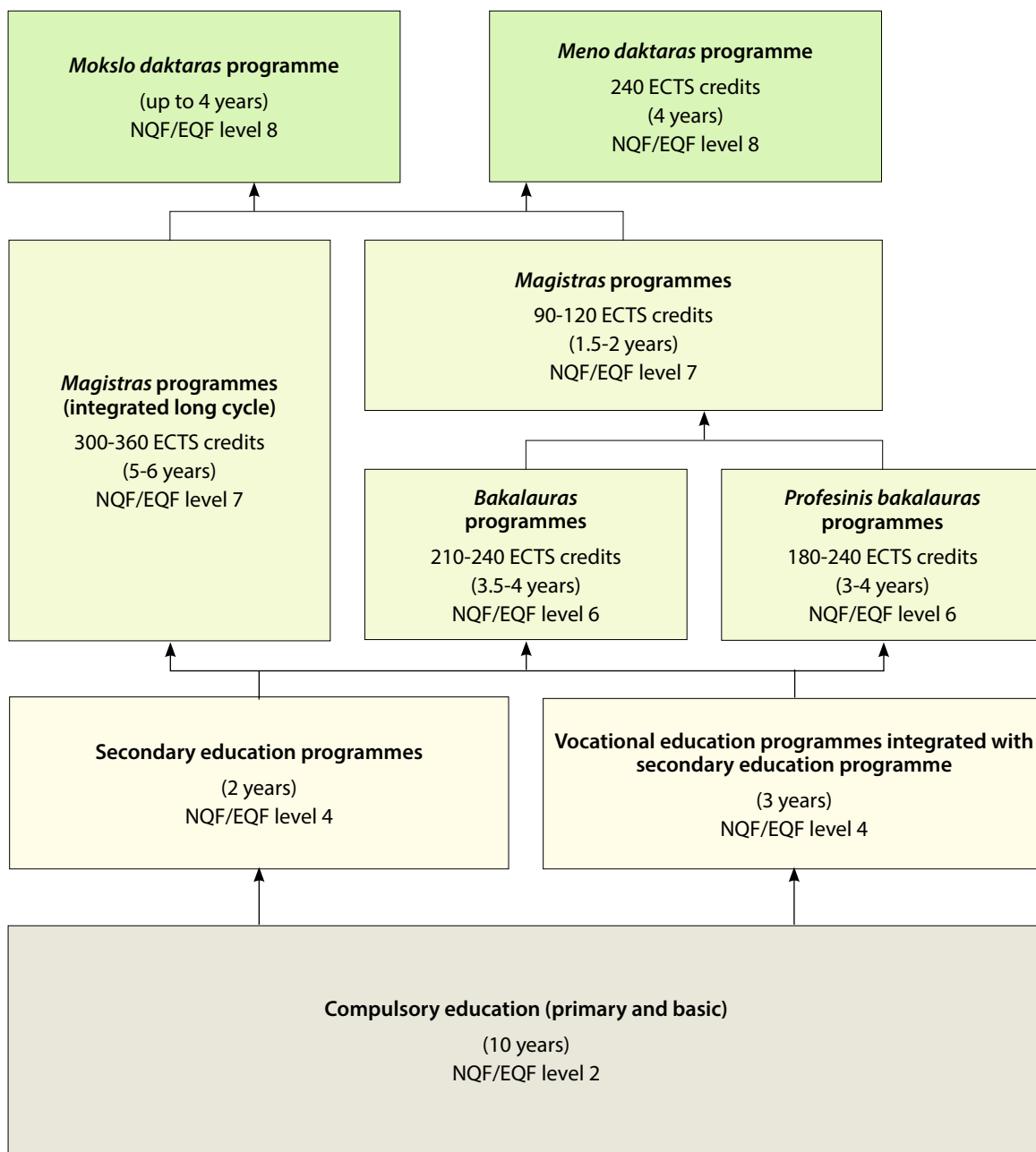
Source: Archimedes Foundation, 2015

Appendix 2. Education system of Latvia



Source: Academic Information Centre, 2016

Appendix 3. Education system of Lithuania



Source: Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC), 2016

Appendix 4. Estonian Qualifications Framework

Placement of Estonian education qualifications and some occupational qualifications in the EstQF

Formal education qualifications	EstQF level	Occupational groups and occupational qualifications
<i>Doktorikraad</i> (Doctoral degree)	8	Senior specialists, top managers (Principal Architect, Chartered Engineer, ...)
<i>Magistrikraad</i> (Master's degree); and long-cycle higher education qualifications	7	Specialists, managers (Diploma Engineer, ...)
<i>Bakalaureusekraad</i> (Bachelor's degree); <i>Rakenduskõrghariduse diplom</i> (Diploma of Professional Higher Education)	6	Specialists, supervisors (Energy auditor, Career Counsellor, ...)
<i>Kutseerihariduse lõputunnistus</i> (Certificate of Specialised Vocational Education)	5	Technicians and craft masters, front line managers, clerical workers (Electrician, Construction Site Manager, Accountant, ...)
<i>Gümnaasiumi lõputunnistus</i> (Certificate of General Secondary Education); <i>Neljanda taseme kutseõppe lõputunnistus</i> (Certificate of vocational Education Level 4); <i>Kutsekeskhariduse lõputunnistus</i> (Certificate of Vocational Secondary Education)	4	
<i>Kolmanda taseme kutseõppe lõputunnistus</i> (Certificate of Vocational Education Level 3)	3	Skilled workers, machine operators, Service and sales workers, Clerical support workers (Logger, Baker, Carpenter, ...)
<i>Põhikooli lõputunnistus</i> (Basic School Certificate); <i>Teise taseme kutseõppe lõputunnistus</i> (Certificate of Vocational Education Level 2))	2	Elementary workers (Cleaner assistant...)
<i>Põhikooli lõputunnistus</i> (Basic School Certificate) based on simplified programme	1	

Source: Estonian Qualifications Authority, 2015

Degree	Nominal length of programme	ECTS credits	QF-EHEA level	EQF level
<i>Doktor</i> (Doctor)	3-4 years	180-240 ECTS credits	Third cycle	Level 8
<i>Magister</i> (Master)	1-2 years (together with the first cycle programme at least 5 years)	60-120 ECTS credits	Second cycle	Level 7
Degrees of integrated Bachelor's and Master's programmes	5-6 years	300-360 ECTS credits	Second cycle	Level 7
<i>Rakenduskõrgharidus-õppe diplom</i> (Diploma of Professional Higher Education)	3-4.5 years	180-270 ECTS credits	First cycle	Level 6
<i>Bakalaureus</i> (Bachelor)	3-4 years	180-240 ECTS credits	First cycle	Level 6

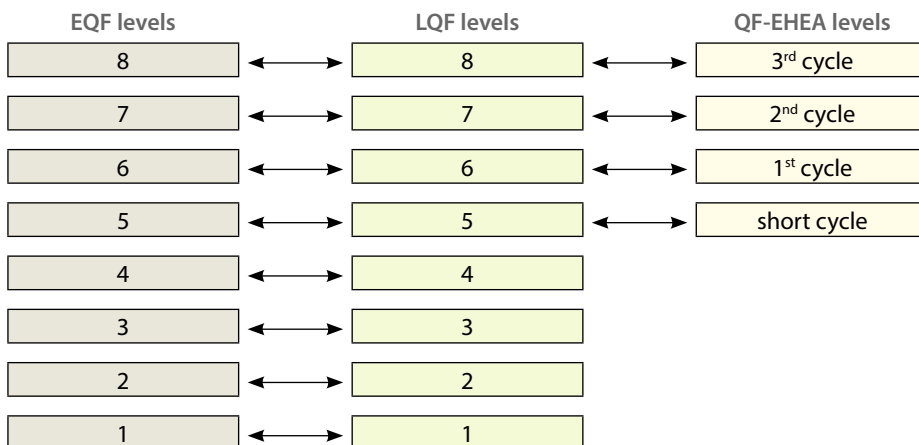
Appendix 5. Latvian Qualifications Framework

The placement of the Latvian formal qualifications in the LQF and EQF*

Latvian education documents (qualifications)	LQF and EQF level
Doctor's diploma	8
Master's diploma Professional Master's diploma Diploma of professional higher education, diploma of higher education, diploma of higher professional qualification (2 nd level professional higher education, the total length of full-time studies – at least 5 years)	7
Bachelor's diploma Professional Bachelor's diploma Diploma of professional higher education, diploma of higher professional qualification (2 nd level professional higher education, the length of full-time studies – at least 4 years)	6
Diploma of first level professional higher education (1 st level professional higher (college) education, the length of full-time studies 2-3 years)	5
Certificate of general secondary education Diploma of vocational secondary education	4
Certificate of vocational education	3
Certificate of general basic education Certificate of vocational basic education	2
Certificate of general basic education (for students in special education programmes for students with mental development disorders) Certificate of general basic education (for students in special education programmes for students with severe mental development disorders or several severe development disorders)	1

* According to the Amendments to Vocational Education Law, approved on 23.04.2015.

The compatibility of LQF/EQF levels with the QF-EHEA levels



Source: Academic Information Centre, 2015

Appendix 6. Lithuanian Qualifications Framework

8	Third cycle studies at universities	
7	Second cycle studies at universities	
6	First cycle studies at universities and colleges	
5		
4	I-VET * Only if GE completed	General education * Matura attestation, i.e. School leaving certificate
3	I-VET/ C-VET	No GE qualifications of this level
2	I-VET/ C-VET	General education * basic education
1	C-VET	No GE qualifications of this level

Source: Qualifications and VET Development Centre, December 2014

The compatibility of LTQF levels with the EQF levels

LTQF	EQF	Bologna QF
8 level	8 level	3 rd cycle
7 level	7 level	2 nd cycle
6 level	6 level	1 st cycle
5 level	5 level	
4 level	4 level	
3 level	3 level	
2 level	2 level	
1 level	1 level	

Appendix 7. Comparison of Structure of Diploma Supplements

In all three countries structure of Diploma Supplement is based on the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES.

	Estonia*	Latvia**	Lithuania***
1.	<p>Information identifying the holder of the qualification:</p> <p>1.1. Family name</p> <p>1.2. Given name</p> <p>1.3. Date of birth (day/month/year)</p> <p>1.4. Personal identification code</p>	<p>Information identifying the holder of the qualification:</p> <p>1.1 family name(s)</p> <p>1.2 given name(s)</p> <p>1.3 date of birth (day/month/year)</p> <p>1.4 student identification number or personal identification number</p>	<p>Information identifying the holder of the qualification:</p> <p>1.1. Family name</p> <p>1.2. Given name</p> <p>1.3. Date of birth (year/month/day)</p> <p>1.4. Personal number/ code)</p>
2.	<p>Information identifying the qualification:</p> <p>2.1. Name of qualification and (if applicable) title conferred (in original language)</p> <p>2.2. Main field(s) of study for the qualification (Name, code and date of registration of study programme in Estonian Education Information System (EHIS), specialization (Major field(s) of study and/or Minor field(s) of study)</p> <p>2.3. Name and status of institution (in original language) (in case of joint diploma names (in the original language or transliteration, if necessary) and status of awarding institutions</p> <p>2.4. Name and status of institution (if different from 2.3.) administering studies (in original language)</p> <p>2.5. Language(s) of instruction</p>	<p>Information identifying the qualification:</p> <p>2.1 name of qualification (in original language)</p> <p>2.2 main field(s) of study for the qualification</p> <p>2.3 name (in original language) and status of awarding institution (in case of a joint diploma – in original language)</p> <p>2.4 name (in original language) and status of institution administering studies in Latvian (in case of a joint diploma – in original language) (if different from 2.3)</p> <p>2.5 language(s) of instruction/ examination</p>	<p>Information identifying the qualification:</p> <p>2.1. Name of qualification and title conferred</p> <p>2.2. Main field(s) of study for the qualification</p> <p>2.3. Name and status of awarding institution</p> <p>2.4. Name and status of institution administering studies</p> <p>2.5. Language(s) of instruction/ examination</p>
3.	<p>Information on the level of the qualification:</p> <p>3.1. Level of qualification (cycle of higher education, level in Estonian and European Qualifications Framework)</p> <p>3.2. Official length of programme</p> <p>3.3. Access requirement(s)</p>	<p>Information on the level of the qualification:</p> <p>3.1 level of qualification</p> <p>3.2 official length of programme (years and credits), start and end date of the acquisition of the programme</p> <p>3.3 admission requirements</p>	<p>Information on the level of the qualification:</p> <p>3.1. Level of qualification (cycle of higher education, type)</p> <p>3.2. Official length of programme</p> <p>3.3. Access requirement(s)</p>

	Estonia*	Latvia**	Lithuania***
4.	Information on the contents and results gained: 4.1. Mode of study 4.2. Programme requirements (incl. learning outcomes of the study programme) 4.3. Programme details (e.g. modules or units studied) and the individual grades/marks/credits obtained (subject and/or modules, title of thesis, upon the decision of institution: subject and/or module code, workload in ECTS credits, date of assessment, grades/marks obtained, name of teaching staff member, total workload in ECTS credits; recognition of prior learning and working experience 4.4. Grading scheme(s)	Information on the contents and results gained: 4.1 mode of study 4.2 programme requirements (programme aims and intended results of studies) 4.3 programme details (e.g. modules or units studied) and the individual grades/marks/credits obtained 4.4 grading scheme and, if available, grade distribution guidance 4.5 overall classification of the qualification (in original language)	Information on the contents and results gained: 4.1. Mode of study 4.2. Programme requirements (incl. learning outcomes of the study programme) 4.3. Programme details (in an additional page) (exams and course credits; workload in ECTS, core and compulsory subjects, specialisation subjects, optional subjects, thesis and/or qualification examinations) 4.4. Grading scheme and distribution guidance, grade distribution within qualification 4.5. Overall classification of the qualification
5.	Information on the function of the qualification: 5.1. Access to further study 5.2. Professional status	Information on the qualification: 5.1 access to further study 5.2 professional status (if applicable)	Information on the function of the qualification: 5.1. Access to further study 5.2. Professional status
6.	Additional information: 6.1. Additional information (incl. external evaluation; in case of a joint diploma, information regarding the joint study programme cooperation contract, etc.) 6.2. Further information sources	Additional information and sources	Additional information: 6.1. Additional information 6.2. Further information sources
7.	Certification of the supplement: 7.1. Date 7.2. Signatures 7.3. Names 7.4. Capacity 7.5. Official stamp or seal	Certification of the supplement: 7.1 date 7.2 given name(s), family name(s), signature(s) 7.3 position(s) of the person(s), certifying the Supplement 7.4 official stamp or seal	Certification of the supplement: 7.1. Date of issue 7.2. Name(s), surname(s), signature(s) 7.3. Capacity 7.4. Seal, Registration No., Diploma supplement code
8.	Information on the Higher Education System of Estonia (according to description certified by the Minister of Education and Research)	Information on the national higher education system [description and diagram]	Information on the National Higher Education System (according to description provided by the Minister of Education and Research – text and scheme)

* Government Regulation No. 76 "Statute and Form of Diploma and Diploma Supplement" (12.03.2003)

** Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No.202 "Procedure by which state recognised education documents certifying higher education are issued"(16.04.2013).

*** Order of the Ministry of Education and Science.

Appendix 8. Examples of learning outcomes of higher education qualifications

	Qualifications	Learning outcomes
Learning outcomes of higher education qualifications – EQF level 5		
Estonia	N.A.	<i>There are no higher education qualifications at EQF level 5</i>
Latvia*	Diploma of first level professional higher education (<i>pirmā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms</i>)	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to demonstrate comprehensive and specialised knowledge and understanding of facts, theories, causalities and technologies of the concrete professional field <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able, on the basis of analytical approach, to perform practical tasks in the concrete profession, demonstrate skills, allowing to find creative solutions to professional problems, to discuss and provide arguments regarding practical issues and solutions in the concrete profession with colleagues, clients and management, able to, with an appropriate degree of independence, to engage in further learning, improving one's competences • Able to assess and improve one's own actions and those of other people, to work in co-operation with others, to plan and to organise work to perform concrete tasks in one's profession or to supervise such work activities, in which unpredictable changes are possible <p>Competence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to define, describe and analyse practical problems in one's profession, select the necessary information and use it for solving clearly defined problems, to participate in the development of the concrete professional field, demonstrate understanding of the place of the concrete profession in a broader social context
Lithuania	N.A.	<i>There are no higher education qualifications at EQF level 5</i>
Learning outcomes of higher education qualifications – EQF level 6		
Estonia**	Bachelor's degree (<i>bakalaureusekraad</i>)	<p>A student shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a systematic overview of the basic concepts, theoretical principles and research methods of the field of study; • be able to identify interdisciplinary relationships; • understand the scopes of application of different specialities of the field of study; • know the theoretical schools, development trends and current problems of the field of study; • be able to formulate problems relating to the field of study and to analyse and evaluate different solutions; • be able to collect information independently by using appropriate methods and means and to interpret it critically and creatively; • be able to select and use appropriate technologies and methods when solving problems of the field of study, and, among other things, be willing to participate in team work and lead it; • have command of the communication skills and information and communication technologies necessary for work; • be able to explain orally or in written form in the language of instruction and in at least one foreign language problems relating to the field of study, and to participate in professional discussions; • be willing to actively participate in the civil society and demonstrate tolerance towards diversity of attitudes and values; • be able to evaluate the role of knowledge and the role and consequences of his or her professional activities in society, with consideration of scientific, social and ethical aspects; • be able to apply the acquired knowledge and skills in work, to continue studies and to undertake continuous independent professional development.

	Qualifications	Learning outcomes
		The learning outcomes achieved on graduation from a Bachelor's programme are in conformity with the general requirements described in the 6 th level of the qualifications framework.
Latvia	Bachelor's diploma (<i>bakalaura diploms</i>) Professional Bachelor's diploma (<i>profesionālā bakalaura diploms</i>) Diploma of professional higher education, diploma of higher professional qualification (<i>profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms, augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms</i>) (the length of full-time studies – at least 4 years)	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to demonstrate the basic and specialised knowledge typical of the concrete branch of science or profession and a critical understanding of this knowledge, moreover, a part of this knowledge complies with the highest level of achievement in this branch of science or profession • Able to demonstrate understanding of the most important concepts and causalities of the concrete branch of science or professional field <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able, by using the mastered theoretical foundations and skills, perform professional, artistic, innovative or research activity, to define and describe analytically information, problems and solutions in one's own branch of science or profession, to explain them and to provide arguments when discussing these with both specialist and non-specialists • Is able to structure independently one's own learning, to guide one's own and subordinates' further learning and improvement of professional qualification, to demonstrate scientific approach to problem solving, to assume responsibility and take initiative when performing individual work, when working in a team or managing the work of other people, to take decisions and find creative solutions under changing or unclear conditions <p>Competence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to obtain, select and analyse information independently and to use it, to take decisions and solve problems in the concrete branch of science or profession, demonstrate understanding of professional ethics, assess the impact of one's professional activities on environment and society and participate in the development of the concrete professional field
Lithuania***	Bachelor's degree (<i>bakalauras</i>)	<p>A student shall possess and demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Knowledge and its application:</i> Integrated knowledge in professional activity and study field providing versatile theoretical knowledge of study field and professional activity based on the new fundamental and applied scientific research results which can be used in extensive interdisciplinary fields of studies or professional activity. • <i>Research skills:</i> Graduate has the ability to gather and analyse data necessary for solving substantial scientific and professional activity issues, and for cultural and artistic creation using scientific evidence and methods of fundamental and applied scientific researches. • <i>Special abilities:</i> Graduate has the ability to plan, organize, implement and assess activities within the context of professions and studies by choosing complex technological, organizational and methodical means in an autonomous manner. • <i>Social abilities:</i> Graduate has the ability to communicate with specialists and society when solving tasks related to professional activity or study field introducing accomplished work and its results. He/she assumes responsibility for the quality and assessment of his/her and subordinate employees' activity following the principles of professional ethics and citizenship. He/she has the ability to communicate the knowledge and comprehension of study and activity field to specialists and other learners.

	Qualifications	Learning outcomes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Personal abilities:</i> Graduate has the ability to study in an autonomous manner in his/her Professional activity and study field and plan the process of learning. He/she perceives moral responsibility for the impact of his/her activity and its results on public, economic and cultural development, wellbeing and environment. <p>The learning outcomes achieved upon graduation from a Bachelor`s programme are in conformity with the general requirements described in the 6th level of the Lithuanian qualifications framework</p>
Estonia**	Diploma of professional higher education (<i>rakendus kõrghariduse diplom</i>)	<p>A student shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a systematic overview of the basic concepts, theoretical principles and research methods of the field of study; • be able to identify interdisciplinary connections in scopes of application of different fields of study; • know current problems and potential applications of the field of study; • be able to formulate problems relating to the field of study and to analyse and evaluate different solutions; • be able to collect information independently by using appropriate methods and means and to interpret it critically and creatively; • be able to select and use appropriate methods and technologies when solving problems of the field of study within given frameworks, and to model and/or assess potential results on the basis of given information; • show initiative in initiating projects as well as responsibility, leadership and team work skills in implementation thereof; • have command of the communication skills and information and communication technologies necessary for work; • be able to explain orally or in written form in the language of instruction and in at least one foreign language problems relating to the field of study, and to participate in professional discussions; • be willing to actively participate in the civil society and demonstrate tolerance towards diversity of attitudes and values; • be able to evaluate the role and consequences of professional activities in society, with consideration of social and ethical aspects; • be able to apply the acquired knowledge and skills in work, willing to engage as a specialist or undertaking in his or her field of profession; • be able to undertake continuous independent professional development. <p>The learning outcomes achieved on graduation from a professional higher education study programme are in conformity with the general requirements described in the 6th level of the qualifications framework.</p>
Latvia	N.A.	<i>Learning outcomes are the same for all EQF level 6 qualifications</i>
Lithuania***	Professional bachelor's degree (<i>profesinis bakalauras</i>)	<p>A student shall possess and demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Knowledge and its application:</i> Knowledge in professional activity providing practical knowledge of the activity field and based on the newest scientific evidence which can be used for determining and solving complex specific or abstract issues related to the activity field. • <i>Research skills:</i> Graduate has the ability to gather and analyse data necessary for solving specific issues related to professional activity and innovation development. • <i>Special abilities:</i> Graduate has the ability to plan, organize, implement and assess practical activities in specific fields of professional activity by choosing technological, organizational and methodical means in an autonomous manner.

	Qualifications	Learning outcomes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Social abilities</u>: Graduate has the ability to communicate with professionals and other persons when solving tasks related to Professional activity. He/she assumes responsibility for the quality of his/her and subordinate employees' activity following the principles of professional ethics and citizenship. He/she has the ability to communicate the knowledge and comprehension of activity field to the learners. • <u>Personal abilities</u>: Graduate has the ability to study in an autonomous manner in his/her professional activity field. He/she perceives moral responsibility for the impact of his/her activity and its results on public, economic and cultural development, wellbeing and environment. <p>The learning outcomes achieved on graduation from a professional bachelor study programme are in conformity with the general requirements described in the 6th level of the Lithuanian qualifications framework</p>
Learning outcomes of higher education qualifications – EQF level 7		
Estonia	Master's degree (<i>magistrikraad</i>)	<p>A student shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have systematic overview and broad knowledge of concepts, theories and research methods of the field of study; • know the theoretical development trends, current problems and potential applications in the field of study; • have in depth-knowledge in a narrower research field of the field of research; • be able to identify and create interdisciplinary connections; • be able to independently and creatively identify and formulate problems and /or research questions related to the field of study and be able to solve them with appropriate measures within given timeframes and within limited information, using of knowledge of other fields as necessary. • be able to select and use appropriate methods and technologies when solving problems of the field of study, and to model and/or assess the potential results; • be able to critically evaluate his or her activities when solving problems and/or research questions of the field of study; • be prepared to work in an area of activity requiring professional qualifications, showing initiative, responsibility, leadership and team work skills; • be able to hand down with competence his or her knowledge by teaching, instruction or in another manner; • be able to present and reason orally or in written form in the language of instruction and a foreign language essential for his or her field of study the problems relating to the field of study, conclusions and the underlying theories, and to participate in relevant discussions of both corresponding specialists and non-specialists; • be willing to actively participate in the civil society and demonstrate tolerance towards diversity of attitudes and values; • be able to act ethically in complex situations, be aware of the ethical aspects, possibilities, restrictions and social role of his or her activities and be able to provide reasoned assessment in issues concerning his or her field of study; • be able to evaluate his or her need, and the need of others, of continuing education and professional development, and have command of effective methods necessary for independent study; • be able to continue studies or participate in research, act as a specialist or developer in his or her field, including internationally. <p>The learning outcomes achieved on graduation from a Master's study programme are in conformity with the general requirements described in the 7th level of the qualifications framework.</p>

	Qualifications	Learning outcomes
Latvia	<p>Master's diploma (<i>maģistra diploms</i>)</p> <p>Professional Master's diploma (<i>profesionālā maģistra diploms</i>)</p> <p>Diploma of professional higher education, diploma of higher education, diploma of higher professional qualification (<i>profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms, augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms</i>) (the total length of full-time studies – at least 5 years)</p>	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to demonstrate advanced or extensive knowledge and understanding, a part of which conforms with the most recent findings in the concrete branch of science or professional field and which provide the basis for creative thinking or research, inter alia, working in the interface of various fields <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to use independently theory, methods and problem solving skills to perform research or artistic activities, or highly qualified professional functions • Able to provide arguments when explaining or discussing complex or systemic aspects of the concrete branch of science or professional field both to specialists and non-specialists • Able to guide independently the improvement of one's own competences and specialisation, to assume responsibility for the results of staff and group work and analyse them, to perform business activities, innovations in the concrete branch of science or profession, to perform work, research or further learning under complex or unpredictable conditions, if necessary, change them, using new approaches <p>Competence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to define independently and critically analyse complex scientific and professional problems, substantiate decisions and, if necessary, carry out additional analysis • Able to integrate knowledge of various fields, contribute to the creation of new knowledge, research or the development of new professional working methods, demonstrate understanding and ethical responsibility for the possible impact of the scientific results or professional activity on environment and society
Lithuania	<p>Master's degree (<i>Magistras</i>) or an integrated long-cycle study programme</p>	<p>A student shall possess and demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Knowledge and its application:</i> The newest knowledge in study or activity field based on fundamental or applied scientific research (research parts of art projects) which he/she is able to use when solving issues in new or unknown environment, performing scientific research or engaging in professional artistic activity, or developing innovations. • <i>Research skills:</i> Graduate has the ability to analyse, synthesize and assess research data necessary for studies, scientific (art) and professional activity and innovation development; he/she has the ability to integrate knowledge, manage complicated situations and make decisions when there is no comprehensive and well-defined information, and assess alternative solutions and possible impact on environment. • <i>Special abilities:</i> Graduate has the ability to use available knowledge and prepare new means (technical, methodical, informational and organizational /managerial) based on it necessary for scientific researches, studies, and implementation of cultural and artistic activity or innovation development. • <i>Social abilities:</i> Graduate has the ability to communicate summarized clear and reasoned information to specialists and other persons and evaluate it critically. He/she assumes responsibility for the quality and assessment of his/her and subordinate employees' activity following the principles of professional ethics and citizenship. He/she assumes responsibility for the improvement of his/her and subordinate employees' activity. • <i>Personal abilities:</i> Graduate has the ability to plan the process of learning in an autonomous manner and choose the direction of improvement in an autonomous manner, and study (learn) in an

	Qualifications	Learning outcomes
		<p>autonomous manner further. Graduate has the ability to use scientific research (artistic activity) data and has experience in research work and has skills of systemic and strategic thinking necessary for autonomous professional activity and scientific research work (artistic activity). He/she has the ability to make innovative decisions assessing possible public and ethical outcome of activity. He/she acts perceiving moral responsibility for the impact of his/her activity and its results on public, economic and cultural development, wellbeing and environment.</p> <p>The learning outcomes achieved upon graduation both from a Master`s study programme and of the integrated study programmes of Bachelor`s and Master`s study are in conformity with the general requirements described in the 7th level of the Lithuanian qualifications framework</p>
Estonia	Integrated long-cycle qualification (<i>magistrikraad</i>)	<p>A student shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have systematic overview and broad knowledge of concepts, theories and research methods of the field of study; • know the theoretical development trends, current problems and potential applications in the field of study; • have in depth-knowledge in a narrower research field of the field of research; • be able to identify and create interdisciplinary connections; • be able to independently and creatively identify and formulate problems and /or research questions related to the field of study and be able to solve them with appropriate measures within given timeframes and within limited information, using of knowledge of other fields as necessary; • be able to select and use appropriate methods and technologies when solving problems of the field of study, and to model and/or assess the potential results; • be able to critically evaluate his or her activities when solving problems and/or research questions of the field of study; • be prepared to work in an area of activity requiring professional qualifications, showing initiative, responsibility, leadership and team work skills; • be able to hand down with competence his or her knowledge by teaching, instruction or in another manner; • be able to present and reason orally or in written form in the language of instruction and a foreign language essential for his or her field of study the problems relating to the field of study, conclusions and the underlying theories, and to participate in relevant discussions of both corresponding specialists and non-specialists; • be willing to actively participate in the civil society and demonstrate tolerance towards diversity of attitudes and values; • be able to act ethically in complex situations, be aware of the ethical aspects, possibilities, restrictions and social role of his or her activities and be able to provide reasoned assessment in issues concerning his or her field of study; • be able to evaluate his or her need, and the need of others, of continuing education and professional development, and have command of effective methods necessary for independent study; • be able to continue studies or participate in research, act as a specialist or developer in his or her field, including internationally. <p>The learning outcomes achieved upon completion of the integrated study programmes of Bachelor`s and Master`s study are in conformity with the general requirements described in the 7th level of the qualifications framework.</p>
Latvia	N.A.	Learning outcomes are the same for all EQF level 7 qualifications
Lithuania	N.A.	Learning outcomes are the same for all EQF level 7 qualifications

	Qualifications	Learning outcomes
Learning outcomes of higher education qualifications – EQF level 8		
Estonia	Doctoral degree (<i>doktorikraad</i>)	<p>A student shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have broad knowledge and systematic overview within his or her field of research and in-depth and up-to-date knowledge within a narrower sphere of the field of research; • understand the meaning and scope of the existing knowledge and research methods of the field of research and between fields so as to extend, reevaluate and formulate them as necessary; • be able to independently and critically analyse, synthesise and evaluate new and complex ideas relating to the field of study, as well as creatively and with scientific accuracy identify and formulate research questions; • have command of research methods of his or her field of research; • be able to act independently a in complex, including international work and study environment, including in research which requires leadership and team work skills, innovative thinking and the ability of making strategic decisions; • be able to initiate, design, implement and critically evaluate research and development projects that lead to new knowledge and new procedural solutions; • be able to provide scientific ethical assessments, show insight into the possibilities and limitations of science, the social role of science and the responsibility of people in the use of scientific achievements; • be able to analyse social norms and relationships, comply therewith and act to change them as necessary; • be able to present orally or in written form the problems and conclusions relating to the branch of science and his or her research, and the underlying theories, both to specialist audiences and in communication with non-specialists, and to present reasons and participate in relevant discussions in the language of instruction and a foreign language essential for his or her field of study, as well as to publish original scientific results in internationally pre-reviewed academic publications or, in fields of study related to arts, creative works for international audience; • have an ability to identify his or her need of further knowledge or skills and support the studies of others both in the context of education and science as well as on a wider social level; • be able to hand down with competence his or her knowledge by teaching, instruction or in another manner. <p>The learning outcomes achieved on graduation from a Doctoral study programme are in conformity with the general requirements described in the 8th level of the qualifications framework</p>
Latvia	Doctor's diploma (<i>Doktora diploms</i>)	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to demonstrate that has knowledge of and understands most topical scientific theories and insights, has mastered research methodology and contemporary research methods in the concrete branch of science or professional field and in the interface of various fields <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to assess and select independently appropriate methods for scientific research, has contributed to the expansion of the limits of knowledge or given new understanding of the existing knowledge and its use in practice, by carrying out an original research of major scope, part of which is on the level of internationally cited publications • Able to communicate both orally and in writing about one's own field of scientific activity (one's own branch) with wider research community and the general public

	Qualifications	Learning outcomes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to improve one's scientific qualification independently, by implementing scientific projects, attaining achievements meeting the international criteria of the branch of science, to manage research or development tasks in companies, institutions and organizations, requiring extensive research knowledge and skills <p>Competence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able, by performing independent critical analysis, synthesis and assessment, to solve significant research or innovation tasks, to set independently research idea, to plan, structure and manage large-scale scientific projects, including projects in international context
Lithuania	Doctor's degree in Arts or Sciences (<i>Mokslo daktaras or Meno daktaras</i>)	<p>A student shall possess and demonstrate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Knowledge and its application</i>: The newest systematic knowledge in the field of scientific research or artistic activity which he/she is able to use when creating new fundamental knowledge and ideas, and solving activity related tasks of the strategic nature. • <i>Research skills</i>: Graduate has the ability to offer, analyse, synthesize, systematize and assess critically new and complex ideas by searching for original scientific strategic solutions and strategic solutions of artistic activity and of having public significance, and by solving complex issues related to science, society and cultural development, professional activity or artistic activity. Graduate has the ability to plan and implement fundamental and applied scientific researches or culture and art projects of a large extent which expand the limits of knowledge significantly. • <i>Special abilities</i>: Graduate has the ability to create original means and instruments of scientific research, studies, cultural and artistic activity and innovation development pursuant to the newest knowledge provided by scientific research. He/she has the ability to do intellectual, artistic and creative work in an autonomous manner. • <i>Social abilities</i>: Graduate has the ability to communicate with peers, scientific society and society by communicating novelties of his/her activity field and prospects of further development and develop creative activity and culture, and encourage technical, public and cultural progress favourable to society development. • <i>Personal abilities</i>: Graduate has the ability to improve and plan further his/her and expert team prospects of studying. He/she assumes responsibility to assess strategic solutions of his/her activity field critically and is able to react promptly to dynamic changes in society, economic, cultural and technological environment, and reveal and develop creative intellectual personal abilities. <p>The learning outcomes achieved upon graduation from a Doctoral study programme are in conformity with the general requirements described in the 8th level of the Lithuanian qualifications framework</p>

* The Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No 990 "Regulations on the Latvian education classification" (amendments 5.10.2010).

** Government Regulation "Standard of Higher Education" (2008).

*** Descriptors of study cycles approved by the Order No V-2212 of Ministry of Education and Science (21.11.2011).