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ESTLAT-WBL

A person in silhouette stands on a rock in a grassy mountain landscape. A large, stylized 'V' graphic is overlaid on the scene, with the person standing within it. The background shows rolling hills and mountains under a clear sky.

Cross-Border Work-based Learning in Estonia and Latvia
Employers' viewpoint
ESTLAT-WBL project report

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION BETWEEN ESTONIA AND LATVIA	3
3. ENTERPRISES’ PREPARATION, NEED AND WILLINGNESS TO HIRE INTERNS IN ESTONIA AND LATVIA	4
3.1. Offering an Internship – Pros and Cons	4
3.2. Enterprises’ Problems, Expectations and Needs Related to the Job Market	5
3.3. Enterprises’ General Experience in Providing Traineeships to Vocational Learners and Cooperation with VET Institutions	6
4. ENTERPRISES OFFERING AN INTERNSHIP IN SOUTHERN ESTONIA AND NORTHERN LATVIA REGIONS	9
4.1. Southern Estonia region	9
4.2. Northern Latvia region.....	10
5. INTERNSHIPS IN ESTLAT WORK-BASED LEARNING PROJECT	11
6. SUMMARY	17
7. REFERENCES	18
8. ANNEX – QUESTIONNAIRE TO ENTERPRISES	20

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1. INTRODUCTION

A work-based learning is a tripartite cooperation system involving schools, enterprises, and students. In general, internships are seemingly most beneficial to students, providing them with a combination of networking opportunities, specialized education, and relevant work experience. Thereby, giving them an advantage in the job market. Although hiring a young inexperienced individual can seem challenging, employers can benefit from an internship too. Several studies demonstrate that one of the main motivating aspects of internship programmes from the enterprises' point of view is the relatively inexpensive labour and the opportunity to tap into a pool of potential employees. However, there are many more benefits that enterprises can gain from internships outweighing the cons.

In addition to national work-based learning experience, long-term cooperation between employers and VET schools across borders will lead to greater integration and flexibility of labour markets, more employment opportunities for young people and bigger pool of talents for employers. This will also lead to improved cooperation and integration in the region, especially focusing on sectors important for border regions, and increased entrepreneurs' understanding and practical skills in work with apprentices.

ESTLAT-WBL project aims to support the cross-border work-based learning (WBL) mobilities of vocational education students, based on cooperation between vocational education and training (VET) schools and employers on both sides of Latvia-Estonia border.

This report presents wider background of Estonia-Latvia cooperation in the field of work-based learning as well as viewpoints and needs of enterprises in cross-border region, who are willing to participate in WBL system and have a long-term interest in it, their readiness to cooperate with neighbour country VET schools and learners in WBL system, the benefits, obstacles and their needs in offering WBL. The report includes the challenges and opportunities for future.

2. CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION BETWEEN ESTONIA AND LATVIA

The geographic proximity, close history, cultural similarities and friendly relations between Estonia and Latvia have paved the way to the constant evolvement of the close cooperation, and steady growth in the trade and tourism sector. The collaborative relations of two neighbouring countries are further supported in many fields by the European Commission advocating multiple level cross-border interactions and funding interaction initiatives, such as projects and programmes (the Estonia-Latvia Programme 2012-2020 received 38M EUR from the European Regional Development Fund to initiate joint projects in the focus areas entrepreneurship, heritage, tourism, environmental awareness, water management, small harbours, labour commuters, Valga-Valka centre). Furthermore, to enhance the bilateral cross-border cooperation, in 2004, the Estonian-Latvian Intergovernmental Commission was established, to develop a strategy for Estonian-Latvian interactions within EU border cooperation programmes. The main objective of the policy was to facilitate the border-crossing procedure and create a supportive environment for enterprises in the border regions within several areas, including social and medical services; transport, energy, and environmental protection; education, tourism and sports, and transportation.

In addition to the regular meetings of the heads of the state and relations at the executive level, frequent communication is taking place between other state institutions and among the business

community. According to the Estonians Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Latvia remains among Estonia's five main cooperation partners. Latvia is a continually growing export market for Estonian products, as well as services. Latvia was the third trade partner with Estonia at 8.8%. In 2017, the import of Latvian products to Estonia amounted to 8,4% of total imports.¹ Closer cooperation between the neighbours also allows for more efficient usage of resources, facilitating a new quality of development in the economy level that will make the two co-operating partners more attractive for international partners. Moreover, a project – Delbi was initiated, which promotes partnership and cross-border cooperation between Estonian and Latvian companies and relevant B2B matchmaking intending to facilitate trading or joint-venture with companies.²

The tourism sector has also surged between the two countries in recent years. The trends show a considerable increase in the number of Latvian tourists, mostly visiting Tartu, Pärnu, and Saaremaa. The number of Estonian families visiting Sigulda, Jurmala, and Riga has also increased over the years. According to a study by Enterprise Estonia (EAS), the main tourist attractions are thematic centres, such as the Science Centre AHHA in Tartu and Lottemaa in Pärnu.³ The wide selection of spas is also attracting Latvian visitors to Pärnu during winter.

One of the factors hindering the communication between the two nations is the limited usage of neighbours' language. The knowledge of each other's language is relatively low, creating a strong language barrier, which impedes the mobility of students and workers. However, there are a few possibilities to learn Estonian, which can be acquired at the Estonian school in Riga; Latvian language courses are offered at the University of Tartu Language Centre and in a couple of Estonian schools in the border regions. In addition, the younger generation generally has a high fluency in English, and the majority of the older generation speaks Russian.

The tighter relations and cooperation between the two nations are more likely to evolve near the border regions where already frequent mobility exists and communities can form easily, illustrated by the close relations between Valka and Valga. A Joint Secretariat was established, which co-ordinates their cooperation and communication on an everyday basis. The Valka/Valga slogan "1 City, 2 States" embodies the vision that is implemented by educational and cultural projects between the two countries, as well as projects aimed at a more profound integration into the EU.

The cross-border cooperation between the two small countries is strengthened by numerous projects, programmes, that encourage more students and workers to mobility; and the enlivened collaboration in tourism and business sector serve the best interests of both nations.

3. ENTERPRISES' PREPARATION, NEED AND WILLINGNESS TO HIRE INTERNS IN ESTONIA AND LATVIA

3.1. OFFERING AN INTERNSHIP – PROS AND CONS

FUTURE EMPLOYEES | Internships provide excellent opportunities to meet prospective employees. Moreover, seeing the interns in action and getting the first impression of how they would fit into the

¹ [Latvia, overview](#), Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed on April 19th, 2019.

² [Delbi 2](#), accessed on April 19th, 2019.

³ [Ahhaa keskuses, Lottemaal ja Pärnu spaades vastanud Läti turistid 2015.- 2016.a. välisküllastajate uuringu põhjal](#), EAS uuring, , accessed on April 19th, 2019.

team can provide a much better overview of the prospective employee rather than reading the resumes of the applicants. Considering the contribution, expenses, time, etc. the enterprises invest in the interns, one of the aspects that the enterprises count on is the interns' willingness to work for the enterprise after graduating. According to a study conducted by The Estonian Employers' Confederation involving Estonian enterprises, almost 70% of the respondents highlighted the importance of the intern becoming a future employee after graduating.⁴ This aspect becomes even more prominent when enterprises face a decision whether to hire an international intern, because of the decreased likelihood of them moving and starting a career in a foreign country. A study by TalTech, however, indicates that more than 50 percent of international students' in Estonia plans to stay and look for a job.⁵

WORKLOAD | On one hand, taking on an intern will provide the enterprise with an extra set of hands, and thereby reducing the workload of the employees. On the other hand, enterprises may fear that the workload increases with the added mentoring responsibility.

(IN)EXPERIENCE | One of the concerns the enterprises face that may lead to opting against hiring interns is their inexperience, especially when the work requires skills of a specialist. However, when there is a lack of skilled workers in the job market, taking on an apprentice provides an excellent opportunity to train potential future employees.

ENTERPRISES' IMAGE | The advertising factor of participating in internship programs can't be underestimated. Employers can gain brand recognition and improved community relations through internship programmes, as well as augment employee morale. Moreover, supporting the work market enterers gaining valuable qualifications will improve enterprises' image.

INTERNATIONAL INTERNS | Some extra challenges arise with hiring international interns, such as cultural and language barriers.⁶ Nevertheless, a foreign specialist in the team could bring new ideas and contacts from foreign countries, and the company can find a new employee with a good knowledge of the target market and a foreign language, thereby open doors to international markets.

3.2. ENTERPRISES' PROBLEMS, EXPECTATIONS AND NEEDS RELATED TO THE JOB MARKET

The continued economic growth and the subsequent decline in unemployment in recent years, finding skilled specialists and people with relevant work experience has become an ever-increasing concern for public and private enterprises. According to a survey conducted in 2016 by Estonian Employers' Confederation, an overwhelming majority of the enterprises pointed out that there is a lack of over 50% qualified employees within the enterprise. The findings also highlighted that the new job market entrants lack general skills and practical experience, causing employers' dissatisfaction with the job market.⁷ Similarly, according to a survey by the Latvian Employers Confederation, 70% of employers have significant trouble finding employees, highly-skilled employees in particular.⁸

Education and vocational training systems are expected to equip individuals with the skills needed to succeed in today's labour markets, but general dissatisfaction with the job market refers to a

⁴ [Eesti tööandjate valmisolek ja takistused õpipoisiõppe ja praktikakohtade pakkumiseks](#), Tööandjad, Tallinn 2016, accessed on April 23rd, 2019.

⁵ [Üle poole TTÜ välistudengitest kavatseb Eestisse tööle jääda](#), Tallinna Tehnikaülikool, 14.07.2015, accessed on April 22nd, 2019.

⁶ Martin Laine, [Välistudengitel napib praktikat](#), Pärnu Postimees, 20.11.2015, accessed on April 19th, 2019.

⁷ [Eesti tööandjate valmisolek ja takistused õpipoisiõppe ja praktikakohtade pakkumiseks](#), Tööandjad, Tallinn 2016, accessed on April 23rd, 2019.

⁸ Aiga Pelane, [Number of foreigners working in Latvia grows steadily](#), Public broadcasting of Latvia, 30.03.2017, accessed on May 15th, 2019.

substantial mismatch between the needs of the enterprises and the education system. There is also a clear imbalance of theoretical and practical education, where the majority of the study period focuses on the theory. Although the theoretical knowledge is crucial for the students' competencies, practical skills are valued by employers. Thus, the combination of students' experiences gained in (higher) education and the experiences acquired at a workplace should be prioritized.

Matching supply and demand can also be achieved through boosting cross-border labour mobility. The scarcity of skilled specialists on the job market causes the flow of foreign labour to increase in Estonia and Latvia.⁹ Although the language barrier continues to be a significant problem in hiring foreign workers, several international enterprises, and especially start-ups, welcome foreign workers and use English as their primary language at work.

3.3. ENTERPRISES' GENERAL EXPERIENCE IN PROVIDING TRAINEESHIPS TO VOCATIONAL LEARNERS AND COOPERATION WITH VET INSTITUTIONS

Rather low interest in VET students among Estonian enterprises was starting to enliven in 2005 with the European Social Funds (ESF) project "Implementing a workplace-based learning form (apprenticeship) in the VET system," involving 185 companies. By 2014, the number of companies involved was 256 within the academic year.¹⁰ A new programme to better align employers' needs and development of vocational and higher education was created by the Ministry of Education and Research in 2017 with the support of ESF.¹¹ Innove Foundation is implementing the programme with the aim to support the development of vocational and higher education in meeting labour market needs. Internship and work-based learning programmes are being developed and implemented and opportunities for additional language learning offered. To build the image and promote vocational education, vocational skills festival Young Master, which includes competitions is organised.¹²

In Latvia, the EU Erasmus+ programme project WBL-Baltic, implemented during 2014-2017, was one of the most impactful projects laying the foundations for internship programmes. Following the lead of Germany, Austria, and the other two Baltic countries, Latvia introduced the concept and legal framework of work-based learning in 2016. However, it was rather hindering for the enterprises at first, who struggled with the tight criteria – the enterprise had to pay salary or a stipend, and the tutor had to have professional and pedagogical competence.¹³ In the frame of the ESF project, a total of 2169 enterprises in Latvia and 38 VET schools signed an intention agreement to participate in WBL.¹⁴

In general, the main factors hindering the readiness to hire interns is the lack of resource – the high workload of mentors, leaving no time for supervising, scarce payment opportunities and covering all the costs that are involved with the internship. Another thing often pointed out by the enterprises is the mismatch between the timing – enterprises are more motivated to hire interns when there is a seasonal job, but times may overlap with the exam session or school break. Also, a few aspects that seems to be problematic for the enterprises is that the curricula differ from real life and the practice objectives are unclear for trainees. Enterprises have also highlighted that although they would like to hire interns, many positions require specific knowledge or skills – technical or competency

⁹ [Ministry wants to bring in 2,000 foreign workers via Enterprise Estonia](#), ERR, 21.03.2018, accessed on April 24th, 2019.

¹⁰ [Eesti hariduse ja tööturu vajaduste kokkusobitamine](#), Töandjate Keskliit 2015, accessed on April 22nd, 2019.

¹¹ [Õpipoisiõpe](#), Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, accessed on April 20th, 2019.

¹² [Education Projects](#), Innove, accessed on April 20th, 2019.

¹³ [Country specific needs analysis report for three Baltic countries - Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia](#), Erasmus+ Programme, BAFA, 2017, accessed on May 14th, 2019.

¹⁴ ILP4WBL report.

requirements. Some other factors that prevent offering a traineeship programme include the work assignments may require access to business secrets that the company cannot allow, the assignments are subject to age limits, and the customers may not want a low-skilled trainee who works slowly and can make mistakes.¹⁵

Nevertheless, companies generally have a good attitude towards workplace-based learning, and according to a comprehensive study conducted by Praxis, involving 500 Estonian enterprises, many employers are ready to accept more trainees than schools can provide.¹⁶ Another two studies conducted by The Estonian Employers' Confederation demonstrate further that enterprises are open to internship programmes (Figure 1)^{17, 18}, which raises the question, why only a small percentage of them do.

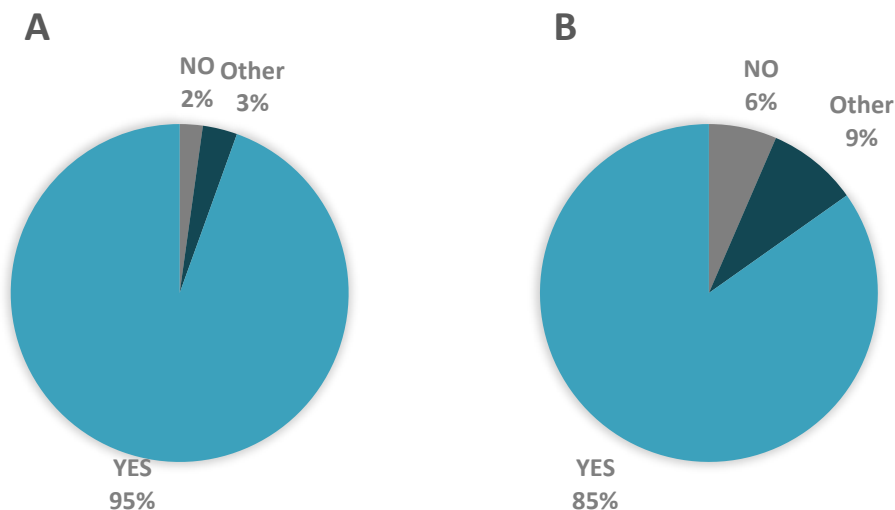


FIGURE 1: ENTERPRISES' WILLINGNESS TO OFFER INTERNSHIP TO VET STUDENTS

The number of enterprises offering internship decreases noticeably when it comes to international students (Figure 2).¹⁹ According to a study conducted by Estonian Employers' Confederation, only 32% of the enterprises would hire foreign interns, the rest are hesitant to do so. The main reason is usually the language barrier and therefore purely practical (for example, instruction in English), but also organizational factor comes into play, e.g. employee prejudices.²⁰

¹⁵ [Eesti hariduse ja tööturu vajaduste kokkusobitamine](#), Töandjate Keskliit 2015, accessed on April 22nd, 2019.

¹⁶ Mihkel Nestor, Kirsti Nurmela, [Kutseharidus ja muutuv tööturg](#). Töandjate uuringu lühikokkuvõte. PRAXIS 2013, accessed on April 23rd, 2019.

¹⁷ [Eesti hariduse ja tööturu vajaduste kokkusobitamine](#), Töandjate Keskliit 2015, accessed on April 22nd, 2019.

¹⁸ [Eesti tööandjate valmisolek ja takistused õpipoisiõppe ja praktikakohtade pakkumiseks](#), Töandjad, Tallinn 2016, accessed on April 23rd, 2019.

¹⁹ [Eesti hariduse ja tööturu vajaduste kokkusobitamine](#), Töandjate Keskliit 2015, accessed on April 22nd, 2019.

²⁰ Toomas Tamsar, [Välisstudengid Eestisse praktikale ja tööle](#), Äripäev, 15.08.2018, accessed on April 22nd, 2019.

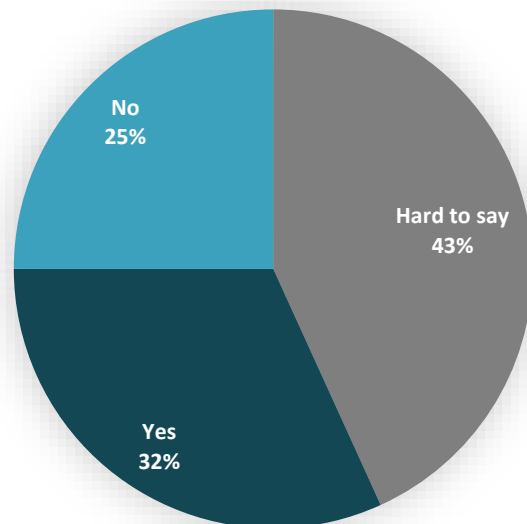


FIGURE 2: ENTERPRISES' WILLINGNESS TO HIRE INTERNATIONAL INTERNS

According to a study, the companies that have not taken on interns in recent years point out the low interest of apprentices to come to practice in their company. The respondents also highlighted that one of the primary concerns with apprenticeship programmes is the little social maturity and general attitude of young people in VET. The reputation of vocational education is further harmed by a few cases where young people, who are starting the VET studies have not obtained the necessary basic knowledge and their attitude is not suitable for the labour market. Those few bad experiences tend to be generalized to the entire vocational education system.²¹ It was also mentioned that a lack of time and suitable mentors to supervise the trainees are few other aspects enterprises struggle with.

Close cooperation and communication between enterprises and VET schools could stimulate the participation of enterprises in work-based learning programmes. According to a study, the main reason for the lack of cooperation between VET institutions and enterprises is the passivity of both parties. However, over 70% of enterprises consider it necessary to cooperate with vocational schools. In the manufacturing industry in particular - 100% of the respondents emphasize the importance of cooperation with VET schools.²²

In general, enterprises rate interactions with VET schools good: 7.9% of the responding companies are very satisfied with their cooperation with VET institutions; 39.3% rated the interactions functional; 29.2% satisfactory; 5.6% bad and 14.6% lack of cooperation, no respondents rated collaboration to be terrible.²³ Besides internships, cooperation between VET schools and enterprises exists in many forms (Figure 3), most commonly enterprises receive school excursions and send employees to the VET institution for in-service training^{24, 25}.

²¹ Mihkel Nestor, Kirsti Nurmela, [Kutseharidus ja muutuv tööturg](#). Tööandjate uuringu lühikokkuvõte. PRAXIS 2013, accessed on April 23rd, 2019.

²² Ibid.

²³ [Eesti hariduse ja tööturu vajaduste kokkusobitamine](#), Tööandjate Keskliit 2015, accessed on April 22nd, 2019.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Mihkel Nestor, Kirsti Nurmela, [Kutseharidus ja muutuv tööturg](#). Tööandjate uuringu lühikokkuvõte. PRAXIS 2013, accessed on April 23rd, 2019.

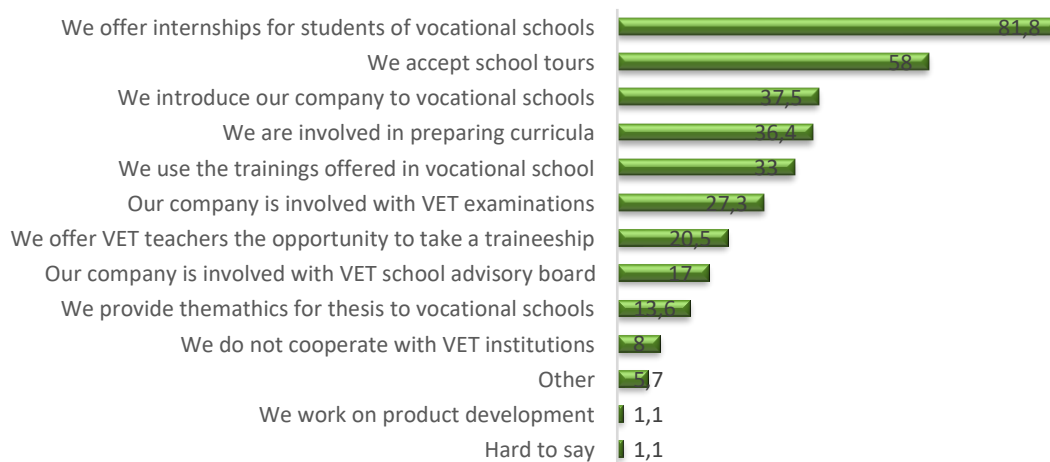


FIGURE 3: CURRENT COOPERATION BETWEEN ENTERPRISES AND VET SCHOOLS, %

The general low awareness about internship possibilities decreases the number of enterprises offering the training programme - 22% of entrepreneurs who did not provide apprenticeships to VET students were not aware of the option. The results of the study indicate the lack of cooperation between enterprises and VET schools. VET institutions should introduce more apprenticeship opportunities to companies. But companies themselves could also be more willing to announce their wishes to schools.²⁶

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

4. ENTERPRISES OFFERING AN INTERNSHIP IN SOUTHERN ESTONIA AND NORTHERN LATVIA REGIONS

4.1. SOUTHERN ESTONIA REGION

In South Estonian region bigger cities like Tartu have more internship possibilities to offer compared to smaller cities/towns, which tend to have more production industry traineeship programmes. The summer capital Pärnu, with its touristic attractions and spas, opens possibilities for a short-run job

²⁶ Mihkel Nestor, Kirsti Nurmela, [Kutseharidus ja muutuv tööturg](#). Tööandjate uuringu lühikokkuvõte. PRAXIS 2013, accessed on April 23rd, 2019.

during the tourist peak season. Especially in the hospitality sector, where different language skills is an advantage. Besides that, thematic centres welcome young individuals, such as the Science Centre AHHAA and Estonian National Museum (ERM).

In general, internship positions are offered to VET students more often than others by bigger companies.²⁷ Many of these have headquarters located in Tallinn, with subdivisions (and/or work is carried out) across Estonia. These cover various sectors, such as energy (Eesti Enegrgia), water supply and sanitation (Pärnu Vesi), finance and banking (Swedbank AS and SEB bank), telecommunication (Tele2, Telia and Elisa), construction (Merko Ehitus Eesti), textile (Wendre), mechanics (Amserv grupi AS), and media (Postimees).

Big retailers such as Kaubamaja and Selver offer many types of internship positions that vary from financial management, accounting, business analysis, human resource management, information technology, customer service, sales management, sales representative, and more. Selver AS cooperates with many different educational institutions and organizations, providing students with practical learning opportunities. However, Selver, for example, is primarily interested in apprentices with whom it is possible to establish permanent employment relationship in the future. Similarly, to Selver, other big trade enterprises like Rimi and Maxima offer various positions and possibilities for the interns.

Many smaller companies offer an internship too, such as Hanza Mechanics in Tartu specialized in mechanics and electronics; Moller auto in Pärnu, offering archiving and customer service internship positions, Powtec OÜ in Võru, an electrical construction company, who however only accepts interns with a previous basic electricity knowledge.

Work-based learning is also supported by ministries and public authorities – internship positions are offered by the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, the Estonian Rescue Board, to name a few.

Despite the language barrier, many enterprises are willing to hire foreign interns. One of the most outstanding is Ericsson Eesti AS, whose activities in offering internships and supporting international students have been long-term, systematic, and prominent. In the medical field, Tartu university hospital laboratory and the hospital of Pärnu is another excellent example of a good cooperation between international students and enterprises.

4.2. NORTHERN LATVIA REGION

In the frame of the ESF project, a total of total 2169 enterprises in all regions of Latvia representing sectors: transport and logistics, tourism and beauty, agriculture and food production, metalworking, chemical product manufacturing, construction, forestry, printing sector, finance sector, textile product manufacturing, electronics and information communication technologies have signed an agreement to participate in WBL demonstrating the increase in the relevance and growing interest in the enterprises.²⁸

With the enlivened tourism, the possibilities for foreign labour and interns in the tourism and hospitality sector is growing substantially. With the higher number of international visitors, the hotels, resorts, tourism offices, and information centres, restaurants, attractions, all looking to hire over the busy season.

Similarly, to Estonia, bigger companies are more willing to take on interns, as they have more resources and positions to offer, such as Swedbank. In general, enterprises in Latvia offer mostly internship to international students in the IT sector, where the working language is English.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ ILP4WBL report.

International students are often recruited by start-ups, needing the international exposure and advocating for the multicultural team.

Also, some of the companies, have agreements with Latvian VET schools, which means that they are providing an internship for certain number of the students each year. For example, company “Valmiera Glass” are taking mechatronics students each year from Valmieras VET school. It is very good for the school and students, who do not need to spend their time to find a company for internship. On the other hand – if student from another city VET school wants to go for an internship to this particular company and he contacts it a long time before, he might also be rejected, since they have limited positions at the time.

Similarly, as in Estonia, also in this Latvian region, smaller companies are taking trainees for certain positions, like, mechanics or carpenters. But bigger companies are offering more positions for potential internship, like HR, finance, marketing departments and so on. And of course, companies are willing to take trainees, who might stay after the end of the internship to continue as an employee of the company. That is why, some of the companies are not very open to take foreign students for internship, since there is a big chance, that he will not stay there to work.

As for the work-based learning in Latvia, there is a huge project going on, which is being implemented by the LDDK (Latvijas Darba devēju konfederācija – The Employers Confederation of Latvia). In the period 2017-2020 the project has involved more than 2610 enterprises and provided financial support for work-based learning of more than 9600 VET school students. Project is being implemented from 27/01/2017 to 31/08/2023 and the budget for whole project period is 20 572 986 EUR.²⁹

5. INTERNSHIPS IN ESTLAT WORK-BASED LEARNING PROJECT

Altogether 5 Vocational Education Schools and 17 enterprises participate in the ESTLAT WBL project. 2 VET Schools from Latvia – Smiltene Technical School, Cesis Technical and Design School, and 3 VET Schools from Estonia – Tartu Vocational Education Centre, Võru County Vocational Education Centre, Valga County Vocational Education Centre. 12 enterprises from Latvia have offered internship places to Estonian vocational school students and 12 enterprises from Estonia have offered internship places to Latvian vocational school students. In order to receive insight from these enterprises, a questionnaire was distributed among the enterprise tutors. 22 enterprise tutors (out of 24) replied, which makes the response rate extremely good – 91,6%.

THE FIELDS OF PARTICIPATING COMPANIES | To give the vocational schools’ students the best experience and find the most suitable enterprises for the work-based learning, specific companies were searched that matched the professions taught in these 5 VET schools. Therefore, most enterprises participating in the ESTLAT WBL project operate in the field of production / manufacturing both in Estonia and Latvia. There are also a few hotels and catering companies, construction and real estate enterprises, and enterprises active in the fields of agriculture, education, information technology and health care (see Figure 4). Among the distribution shown in Figure 4, three veterinarian enterprises from Estonia participated.

²⁹ ESF projekts «Profesionālo izglītības iestāžu audzēkņu dalība darba vidē balstītās mācībās un mācību praksēs uzņēmumos» Nr. 8.5.1.0/16/l/001 atbilstoši SAM 8.5.1, <http://www.lddk.lv/projekts/darba-vide-balstibas-macibas/>, accessed on January 24th, 2020.

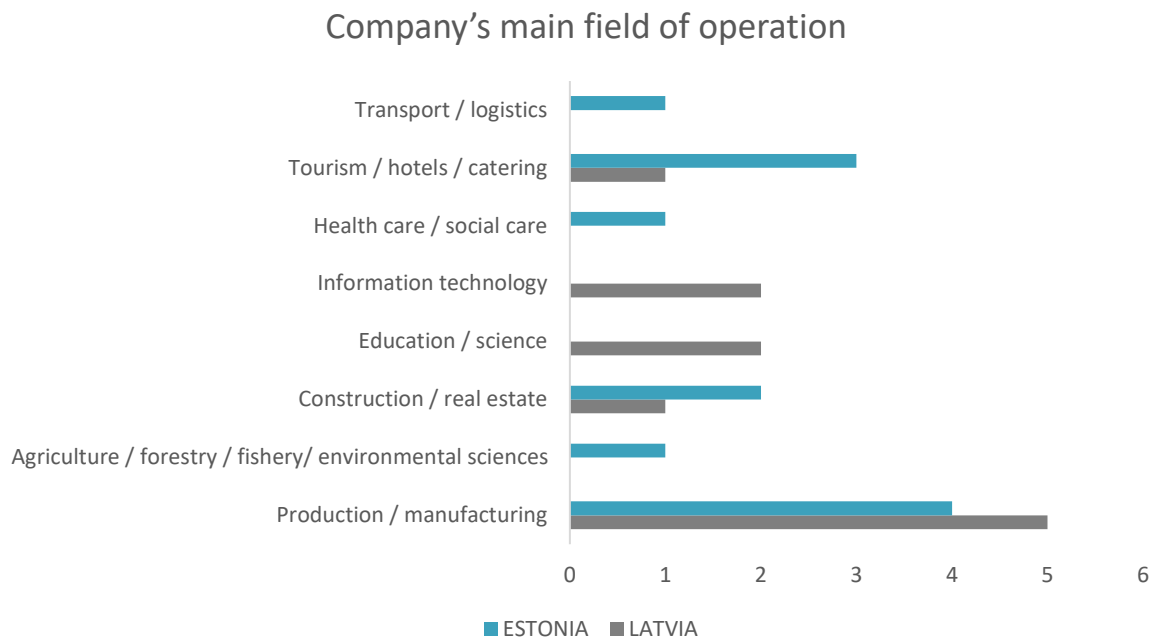


FIGURE 4. COMPANY'S MAIN FIELD OF OPERATION

MAIN BENEFITS | The main benefits for enterprises to offer an internship to international students were quite similar for entrepreneurs from both Estonia and Latvia. The main benefit was said to **support the students in acquiring relevant skills** and **discovering potential future employees**. Also, mentoring experience and the image of the company is considered to improve, when work-based learning is offered to students. Reducing overall employee workload is more important for Estonian companies and finding extra workforce with minimal costs for Latvian companies (see Figure 5). Among other reasons to offer internship, possibility for employees to develop leading skills and exchange views with young people were mentioned.

What are/would be the main benefits for your company to offer an internship to international students?



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

MAIN OBSTACLES | As the enterprise tutors were given the opportunity to list 3 most important factors they consider as obstacles in offering an internship to international students, the variation is quite big (see Figure 6). However, the single most often mentioned obstacle is the **language barrier**. Young students in Estonia and Latvia tend to speak English as their first foreign language, but enterprises do not always have tutors to teach students in English. In more traditional industries, often even Russian is preferred. Therefore, an opportunity for language support has been offered in the ESTLAT WBL project to students as well as to tutors from vocational schools and enterprises.

Estonian companies consider the **lack of information about potential international interns** and **little cooperation with VET schools** as important obstacles for work-based learning, although Latvian companies mention these as well. **Little experience and competence of interns** is a slightly more important obstacle for Latvian companies, although important for both, while only Estonian companies say that little or no mentoring experience of their own employees might be an obstacle.

In many cases, enterprises do not have to pay salary for international students, this is covered from other sources, and presumably this is the cause why only one of the companies has mentioned scarce payment opportunities for interns as an obstacle. However, some Estonian companies view possible internship-related expenses as potential obstacles. Among other obstacles, one Latvian company mentioned too short internship period and one Estonian company legal obstacles in registering international student as a non-paid worker in Estonian Tax and Customs Board.

What are the main obstacles in offering an internship to international students?



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

NEEDS OF ENTERPRISES | Considering the needs of companies in order to offer internship to a foreign student, Estonian and Latvian enterprises are quite similar (see Figure 7). **Good cooperation with VET schools** and **more information about internship possibilities** are the most important factors for enterprises. Enterprises consider direct contact with schools important in offering internship to students. **Cost compensation for the company** related to offering internship and **minimising language barriers** are also considered topics that need attention. Although Estonian companies previously mentioned little or no mentoring experience of their own employees as a potential obstacle, none of them see the need for additional mentor-training for the employees.

What do you, as a company, need in order to offer an internship to a foreign student?

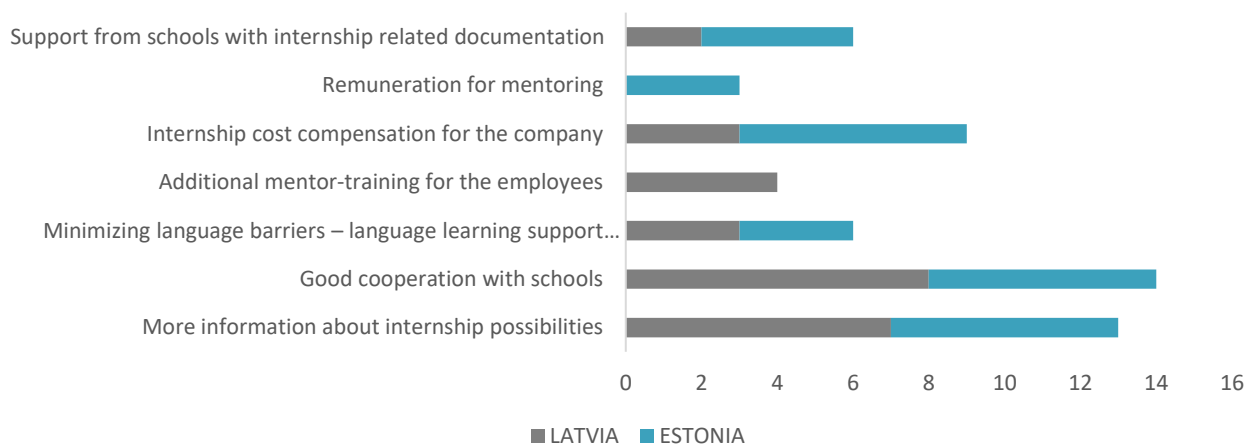


FIGURE 7. WHAT DO YOU, AS A COMPANY, NEED IN ORDER TO OFFER AN INTERNSHIP TO A FOREIGN STUDENT?

DURATION OF INTERNSHIP | Estonian and Latvian companies appear to have quite similar preferences when it comes to the length of work-based learning period of students (see Figure 8). Majority of Estonian and Latvian companies prefer to take interns for 1 month, ca 1/3 prefer the internship period length to be 2 months. Only some companies see the internship lasting 3 months or longer. At the same time, none of the Estonian companies have suggested that internship could last less than a month.

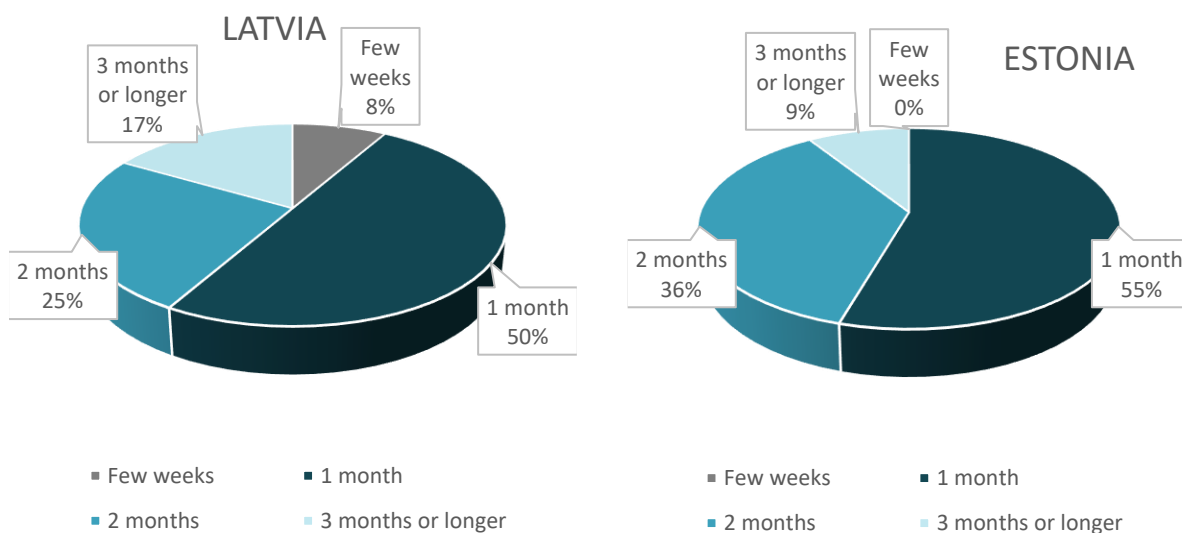


FIGURE 8. PREFERRED DURATION OF THE INTERNSHIP

INFORMATION CHANNELS | Companies were asked what are the best channels for them to receive information about international interns and both for Estonian and Latvian company tutors the best way is to communicate directly with vocational schools, to get offers for work-based learning directly from schools (see Figure 9). In Latvia, also direct personal contacts with interns and availability of

specific databases are often important. Among other channels also social media, e.g. Facebook was mentioned.

What are the best channels for you to receive information about international interns?

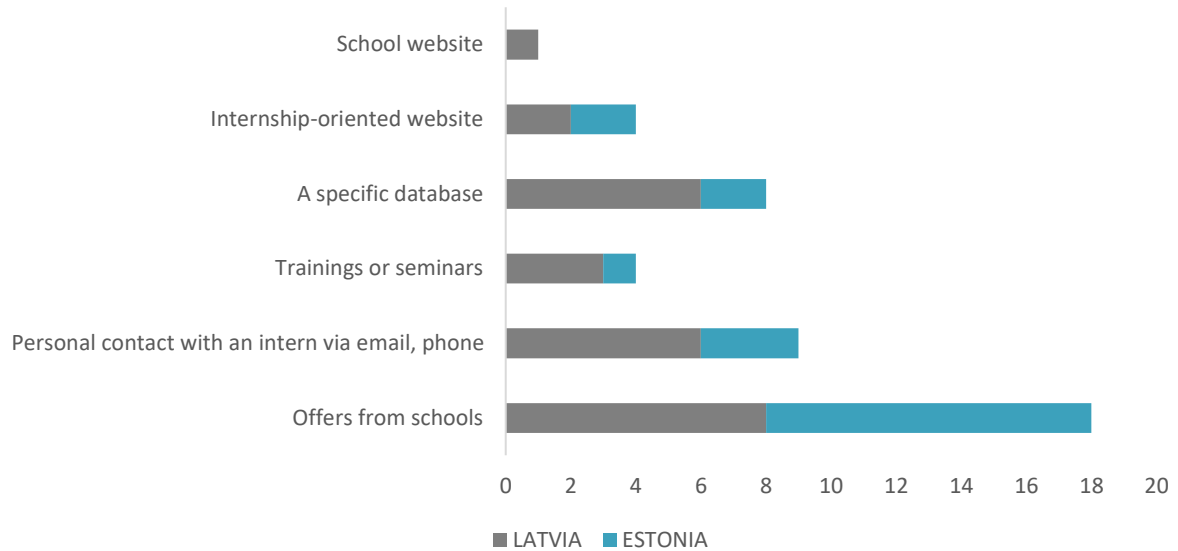


FIGURE 9. WHAT ARE THE BEST CHANNELS FOR YOU TO RECEIVE INFORMATION ABOUT INTERNATIONAL INTERNS?

6. SUMMARY

ESTLAT WBL PROJECT | ESTLAT work-based learning (WBL) project has been initiated to facilitate cross-border work-based learning between Latvian VET schools and Estonian companies and Estonian VET schools and Latvian companies. **5 participating VET schools** have sent students to **24 enterprises across the border**. To give the vocational schools' students the best experience, specific companies have been searched that match the professions taught in these schools. Therefore, most enterprises participating in the ESTLAT WBL project operate in the field of production / manufacturing both in Estonia and Latvia. There are also a few construction and real estate enterprises, and enterprises active in the fields of agriculture, education, information technology, health care, veterinary care and tourism.

WORK-BASED LEARNING | Learning does not only happen through formal education, it continues particularly in the work place, where specific qualifications are acquired. Therefore, the job market calls for a tight cooperation between enterprises and schools. An overwhelming majority of enterprises are interested in participating work-based learning programmes and have internship positions to offer. However, since the internship usually relies on enterprises resources, a strong support and cooperation system for the enterprises should be established, especially when international or cross-border internships are concerned.

MAIN BENEFITS | The main benefits for enterprises to offer an internship to international students were quite similar for entrepreneurs from both Estonia and Latvia. The main benefit was said to **support the students in acquiring relevant skills** and **discovering potential future employees**. Also, mentoring experience and the image of the company is considered to improve, when work-based learning is offered to students. Reducing overall employee workload is more important for Estonian companies and finding extra workforce with minimal costs for Latvian companies.

MAIN OBSTACLES | The single most often mentioned obstacle is the **language barrier**. Young students in Estonia and Latvia tend to speak English as their first foreign language, but enterprises do not always have tutors to supervise students in English. Estonian companies consider the **lack of information about potential international interns** and **little cooperation with VET schools** as important obstacles for work-based learning, although Latvian companies mention these as well. **Little experience and competence of interns** is a slightly more important obstacle for Latvian companies, although important for both, while only Estonian companies say that little or no mentoring experience of their own employees might be an obstacle.

NEEDS OF ENTERPRISES | The needs of Estonian and Latvian companies in offering internship to foreign students are quite similar – **good cooperation with VET schools** and **information about internship possibilities** are the most important factors. Enterprises consider direct contact with schools important in offering internship to students. **Cost compensation for the company** related to offering internship and **minimising language barriers** are also considered topics that need attention.

DURATION OF INTERNSHIP | Estonian and Latvian companies both prefer to take interns for 1 month, ca 1/3 prefer the internship period length to be 2 months. Only some companies see the internship lasting 3 months or longer.

INFORMATION CHANNELS | For both Estonian and Latvian company tutors, the best way to receive information about international interns is to **communicate directly with schools**, and get offers for work-based learning directly from schools. In Latvia, also direct personal contacts with interns and availability of specific databases are often important. Among other channels also social media, e.g. Facebook was mentioned.

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8. ANNEX – QUESTIONNAIRE TO ENTERPRISES

ABOUT THE COMPANY:

1. Company's name

Insert an answer

2. Company's main field of operation

Select one

- Production / manufacturing
- Agriculture / forestry / fishery/ environmental sciences
- Finance / accounting/ banking / insurance
- Wholesale and retail
- Construction / real estate
- Media/ Culture / arts / entertainment / sport
- Education / science
- Electronics / telecommunication
- Energetics / electricity
- Health care / social care
- Information technology
- Sales /Marketing / advertising
- Tourism / hotels / catering
- Transport / logistics
- Other - specify

INTERNSHIP RELATED QUESTIONS:

3. Does your company offer an internship to vocational students?

- No
- Yes, to local students
- Yes, to international students (e.g. Latvia, Erasmus programme)
 - Specify which nationality

Select one or multiple (local&international)

4. What are/would be the main benefits for your company to offer an internship to **international** students?

Rank 3 choices in order of importance

- Discover potential future employees
- Reduce overall employee workload

- Minimal or no cost for an extra set of hands
- Support the students acquiring relevant skills
- Mentoring is beneficial for the employees
- The intern's native language is beneficial for the company
- Increasing the company's image
- No benefits
- Other – specify

5. What are the main obstacles in offering an internship to **international students**?

Rank 5 choices in order of importance

- Little cooperation between the company and schools
- Lack of information about potential international interns
- Lack of information about the curricula and internship objectives
- Curricula does not meet the needs of the company
- Little experience and competence of interns
- Little or no mentoring experience of your employees
- Lack of mentors/high workload of mentors in your company
- Not enough work to offer to interns
- Interns might access to confidential business information
- Scarce payment opportunities for interns
- Possible internship-associated expenses
- Language barriers
- Cultural differences
- No obstacles
- Other – specify

6. What do you, as a company, need in order to offer an internship to a **foreign student**?

Rank 3 choices in order of importance

- More information about internship possibilities
- Good cooperation with schools
- Minimizing language barriers – language learning support for the employees
- Additional mentor-training for the employees
- Internship cost compensation for the company
- Remuneration for mentoring
- Support from schools with internship related documentation
- Other – specify

7. If your company is willing to offer internship to the international students, what would be the preferred duration?

Choose one

- Few weeks
- 1 month
- 2 months
- 3 months or longer
- We will not offer an internship
- Other -specify

8. What are the best channels for you to receive information about **international** interns?

Rank 3 choices in order of importance

- We are not interested in offering internship positions
- Offers from schools
- Personal contact with an intern via email, phone
- Trainings or seminars
- A specific database
- Internship-oriented website
- School website
- Other – specify