Partner Countries – Desk Research Exercise (VINFL)
***please note, the aim of this template is to collate information on VINFL in national and prison contexts from **already completed research**, such as policy and academic papers. The purpose of this form is not to collect original research – the teacher survey will begin this process.*

Partner Country:	Latvia
Organization:	EPPEA
Representative:	Aina Vilcane–Association chairperson

Provide an outline of the prison system in your country (maximum 500 words)
- You should include information such as global prisoner numbers, estates, and trends.

There are three regime types in Latvian prisons - closed (divided in lower, medium and higher level), semi-closed (divided in lower and higher level) and open prisons for adults, as well as institutions for juveniles. In closed prisons, as well as in remand prisons, prisoners are often kept in cells for 23 hours a day, only being allowed to leave the cell for a one hour exercise a day. In open prisons prisoners may move freely around the territory of the prison and have the right to leave the prison for 2-5 days a month with the permission of the prison governor. A crucial element for the court in determining the regime of the prison where the prisoners start serving their sentence is the gravity of crime.

The Council of Europe Committee for Prevention of Torture has heavily criticized the Latvian prison system for shortcomings with regard to health-care of prisoners, lack of independence of investigation of cases of ill-treatment, absence of long-term strategy to tackle inter-prisoner violence, as well as for stringent regime and lack of activities for prisoners, in particular for life-sentenced prisoners.

During the last years particular attention has been paid to establishing of re-socialization system in prisons, and in 2013 the government finally accepted the Cabinet of Ministers regulations n. 191 on the Procedure of the Implementation of Prisoners Re-socialization. Every prisoner's file now includes a section on re-socialization. Risk and needs assessment is conducted with regard to every person placed in prison, and a re-socialisation plan is drafted together with the prisoner, including possibilities of education, employment, consultations with social worker, psychologist, chaplain.

Prison population total (including pre-trial detainees/remand prisoners)	4 745 *at31.12.2014 (national prison administration)*
Prison population rate (per 100,000 of national population)	239 *based on an estimated national population of 1,986,000 at end of 2014 (from Eurostat figures)*
Pre-trial detainees/remand prisoners (percentage of prison population)	1 469 - 31.0% *(31.12.2014)*
Female prisoners (percentage of prison population)	343 - 7.2% *99 –pre-trial ; 244 – serve sentences (31.12.2014)*
Juveniles/minors/young prisoners incl. definition (percentage of prison population)	38 - 0.8% 15 – pre-trial; 23 serve sentences *(31.12.2014 - under 18)*

Foreign prisoners (percentage of prison population)	1.8% *(31.12.2014)*
Official capacity of prison system	7 970 *(31.12.2014)* [1]

Outline arrangements for prison education in your country (maximum 500 words)
- You should include some information regarding the accessibility of education, opportunities, class sizes, resources, challenges.

Prerequisites of prisoner education:
Legislation. The Latvian Constitution, Education Law, General Education Law, Vocational Education Law, Latvian Penal Code, Procedure of Detention Law.
Philosophy Latvian prison education planning policy bases on following principles:
• The principle of availability: all prisoners must be ensured with access to education, which consists of general education, vocational education, creative and cultural activities, physical activities, social and educational opportunities for access to information in libraries and information opportunities provided by modern communication technologies
• The principle of separation: Education for prisoners should be like the education provided for similar age groups outside of prisons. Prisoners must have as wide possibility to choose training subjects as possible.
• The principle of development: Prisoner education must be evolutionary. Its mission is to develop the personality as a whole, taking into account social, economic, cultural and developmental characteristics and needs.
• The principle of continuity and succession: Education offered in prisons should provide possibility to continue the education in another prison and integrate in the total public education system after release from prison.
• The principle of re-socialization: Education is one of the most important element of resocialization process.
Prisoners training needs
Partners (institutions)
Infrastractions

In the education initiatives in 2014 are generally involved 1 242 (26 % of the total prison population) prisoners, from them:
Formal education programs:
530 prisoners (214 – basic education, 316 – secondary education);
Vocational education – 706 prisoners;
Higher education – 6 prisoners

- Informal education programs - 969 prisoners (20 % of the total prison population[1]

In the frames of ESF project "Prisoners pedagogical correction programs developing, approbation and realization" 8 prisons were adjusted to 20 training rooms, provides customized training room facilities (furniture, equipment, tools).

In the frames of NFI individual project Nr. LV0020 "Zemgale prison re-socialization" classrooms renovation of Jelgava and Jekabpils prisons (theory classes and practical rooms) for professional education programs realization was made.

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[1] (http://www.ievp.gov.lv/images/stories/IEVP_2014_gada_publiskais_parskats.pdf

In the frames of ERDF project "Vocational Education and Training Infrastructure Modernization in prisons" in 8 prisons was carried out, such as teaching space renovation, reconstruction, acquisition of the training equipment and furniture.

Recent study and policy recommendations in your country (maximum 1500 words)
Is there a national strategy for the validation of informal learning (VINFL)? If so, how well developed is this?
Has there been any pre-existing research carried out on the value of informal learning in education?
Does VINFL form part of training for teachers?

According to European Inventory on Validation (CEDEFOP, 2007)[2] Latvia felt into a group of countries with a low level of activity in this area, being at initial stages of development, in which "there is little in terms of policy or practice to facilitate validation".

Nowadays there has been substantial progress at the policy level most recently in the following areas related to validation of non-formal and informal learning:

1) Compatibility has been achieved between the European Qualification Framework and the national qualification framework (NQF): Cabinet of Ministers Decree of October 2010; The qualification requirements are defined in terms of learning outcomes (competences);

2) Amendments to the Law on Vocational Education (June 2010) proposed Article 6 providing that professional qualifications can be awarded to persons who have acquired their skills outside formal education system;

3) Following this amendment, Cabinet Regulations "On Recognition/Assessment of Professional Competences Acquired Outside Formal Education System" have been adopted in February 2011.

In principle, a national system for validating non-formal and informal learning in general education and vocational and higher education has been set up. This system aims to provide diplomas certifying the acquired knowledge and skills through non-formal and informal learning. Previously, validation had a sectoral focus due to the lack of a national system of validation. Now, the national system has been developed and the legislative framework for validation in general education and vocational and higher education has been prepared. Currently, the main activities concern further adjustment of the system. The validation of prior learning and experience is based on learning outcomes/level descriptors that form the NQF levels. The respective regulations of Cabinet ministers stipulate the procedure of validation in general education and vocational and higher education.

EU LLL program's project "Towards an Integrated System for Validation of non-formal and informal Learning: Initiating a national network of Cooperation and Information Exchange" (Val-Net) began in 2012. Project partners are: Latvian National Library, National Centre of Education, Latvian Adult Education Association, Training and Consultancy Centre "Baltic Bright" and Gulbene Library

So we can say the process of validating non-formal and informal education has started in Latvia. The inhabitants of Latvia have had the possibility to validate their professional competences obtained from non-formal education, and the State Service of Education Quality coordinates this process.

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[2] European Inventory on Validation : [online]. 2007.
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/aboutcedefop/projects/validation-of-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory.aspx

Quality Evaluation Department stated that normative documents and financial regulations have been worked out. 350 delegation agreements have been signed with 32 vocational institutions regarding the validation of professional competences obtained from the non-formal education system in 100 professional qualifications.

The State Service of Education Quality is informing individuals and professionals about this possibility in mass media and exhibitions. For dissemination activities, brochures and posters help, as well as cooperation with Expert Councils of different economic sectors.[3]

Is there a national strategy for the validation of informal learning (VINFL)? If so, how well developed is this?

The introduction of the revised national Lifelong Learning Strategy, Guidelines for Lifelong Learning 2007-2013[4], adopted on 23 February 2007 (revised version adopted on 9 December 2009) states that: "non-formal education and informal learning, including adult learning, regardless of the learner's age and whether they have already completed compulsory education, have begun to achieve more autonomy and weight next to formal learning". However, when it comes to the funding of the planned activities, vast majority of the activities has to be "completed in terms of the existing funding", meaning that no addition is allocated to the new activities.

In order to achieve the aims stated in the above mentioned policy document, the action programme[5] identifies the definition of the procedure of validation of knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside of the formal education system among the tasks to be carried out during the period 2008-2013. One of the sub-aims of this action programme is to conduct measures for ensuring quality education and requires, among others, the following results to be achieved:

■ the introduction of a National Qualifications Framework

■ the introduction of a system of validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The validation of non-formal and informal learning has now begun. The validation system can be divided into the following levels[6]:

1. assessment with the aim to award an elementary or general secondary education attesting document;

2. assessment with the aim to award a vocational qualification that is identical to the qualification that can be obtained by studying at any of the vocational education programmes;

3. assessment within higher education with the aim to make the education process more flexible and accessible.

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[3] http://www.infonet-ae.eu/articles-projects-49/1271-non-formal-education-a-runner-up-in-latvia

[4] 3 Guidelines for Lifelong Learning 2007-2013, (Latvian: Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādnes 2007.-2013.gadam) 23.02.2007, revised 09.12.2009,
http://izm.izm.gov.lv/upload_file/Izglitiba/Muzizglitiba/Pamatnostadnes.pdf

[5] 4 Programme for "Implementation of Guidelines for Lifelong Learning 2007-2013 in 2008-2013" , (Latvian: Programma "Mūžizglītības politikas pamatnostādņu 2007.-2013.gadā" ieviešanai 2008.-2010.gadam), 09.05.2008, revised 09.12.2009,
http://izm.izm.gov.lv/upload_file/Izglitiba/Muzizglitiba/ProgrammaLV.pdf

[6] 6 Website of the Ministry of Education of Science, Republic of Latvia, Recognition of Knowledge and Skills Acquired in Other than Formal Education (Latvian: Ārpus formālās izglītības sistēmas iegūto zināšanu un prasmju atzīšana),
http://izm.izm.gov.lv/nozares-politika/izglitiba/muzizglitiba/7261.html

A working group to ensure the implementation of the validation system of non-formal education was established as part of 'Structural Funds' Development of uniform procedures to improve the quality of vocational education and to involve and educate social partners'. Even though the aim was to research on implementing an overall validation system, the working group mainly focused on vocational education and drafted as a result the below mentioned amendments to the Vocational Education Law, that are currently in force. The same working group also agreed upon the basic principles of implementing a validation system of non-formal learning (based on the draft of the European Guidelines for Validating Non-formal and Informal Learning[7]), and elaborated proposals for the adjustment of legislation for the organization of the validation of non-formal learning.

On 10 June 2010, the Parliament approved amendments in the Vocational Education Law[8] with Section (29.1) declaring the following: ''(1) The assessment of vocational competence shall take into account the requirements of the respective Occupational Standard; (2) The accredited educational institutions and accredited examination centres can be delegated to perform the validation process of competence acquired through non-formal and informal learning; (3) The regulation on the validation process of competence acquired through nonformal and informal learning is defined by the Cabinet of 'Ministers'.

These amendments initiated the need to issue regulation No. 146 on the ''Procedure for the Evaluation of the Professional Competence Acquired Outside Formal Education System' (22 February 2011)[9]. The amendments also set among other competencies of the MoES the competence of ensuring the validation of non-formal learning.

The regulation prescribes the procedure for the validation of the professional competence acquired outside the formal education system, which conforms to the professional competence of the first, second or third level vocational qualification. However (EQF level 2-4) it does not apply to professions, the validation of the professional competence of which is regulated by special regulatory enactments. According to the regulation, the professional competence shall be validated by an accredited educational institution or an examination centre, to which the State Service of Education Quality has delegated the performance of this task.

Has there been any pre-existing research carried out on the value of informal learning in education?

EU LLL program's project "Towards an Integrated System for Validation of non-formal and informal Learning: Initiating a national network of Cooperation and Information Exchange" (Val-Net).

EduEval project
Evaluation for the Professional Development of Adult Education Staff
Project Number: 538743-LLP-1-2013-IT-GRUNDTVIG-GMP[10]

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[7] European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning, 2009,
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_resources/Bookshop/publication_details.asp?pub_id=553

[8] Amendments in the Vocational Education Law adopted by Parliament on 10.06.2010 (Latvian: Grozījumi Profesionālās izglītības likumā) http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=212500

[9] 5 Regulation no. 146 " Procedure for the Evaluation of the Professional Competence Acquired Outside Formal Education
System", adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers on 22 February 2011 (Latvian: Kārtība, kādā novērtē ārpus formālās izglītības sistēmas apgūto profesionālo kompetenci)
http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=226788

[10] http://www.edueval.eu/download/pdf/latvia_research_report_2.0.pdf

Trends and Issues in Adult Education Evaluation: The Latvia Case

Gilberto Marzano, Velta Lubkina, Svetlana Usca, Rezekne University of Applied Sciences, Rezekne, Latvia; Tamara Pigozne, University of Latvia, Riga, Latvia[11]. The research presents the results of an investigation conducted in Latvia within the scope of the European Union's (EU) Evaluation for the Professional Development of Adult Education Staff (EduEval) project concerning the evaluation of adult education. The investigation started in 2014, with a methodology based on the review of current literature, analysis of statistic data and official documents, Web analysis, and a sampling based on semi-structured interviews. The results of this research show that in Latvia, adult education is generally connected to the business sector, and is considered a means by which to acquire useful skills for career progression or for retaining employment.

The majority of adult educators acting within non-formal learning environments are self-taught professionals, and there are no officially consolidated policies for the evaluation of adult education. However, Latvian educators and researchers largely agree about the necessity of introducing quality control in the adult education process, and in recent years, much progress has been made to develop a framework for the evaluation of adult educators.

Does VINFL form part of training for teachers?

No, VINFL is not usually part of training for teachers. However, there is a general agreement on the growing importance of recognising learning outcomes of informal learning.

Are you aware of pre-existing research that has been carried out into the need for and potential benefits of VINFL, particularly in prisons? (maximum 1000 words)

No

Give examples of **good practice in informal learning activities/projects in prisons** and **community justice settings** (maximum 1000 words)

Agency for International Programs for Youth is subordinated by the Minister of Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia. The objective of the Agency is to promote youth voluntary service, activities and mobility (e.g. with EU, Eastern Partnership, MEDA countries, etc.). The Agency implements non-formal learning and information programmes and projects targeted at youth and those working with youth, and supports the link between non-formal learning and lifelong education.

During the year 2014 Youth International Agency realized informal learning activities for young persons who serve the sentence in the prisons. The aim of these activities was to improve the young people who are in the prison life skills and to promote the persons' who worked with this target group development of the skills in the field of social inclusion. It was the only possibility for youngsters in the prison to meet young people from the freedom and realize common activities. The learning activities took place in 4 prisons, realizing 14 initiative projects with the support of Youth International Agency. The main subject of the activities were Society and Social Roles, Mediation utt.

For example, it was implemented the project "Doodle for my near", where 10 prisoners - young people aged 18-30 years, serving the sentence with the remainder of their prison

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[11] http://www.davidpublisher.org/Public/uploads/Contribute/55f2735927b21.pdf

time less than 2 years, created from wood materials toy things for their loved ones - their children, cousins, friends' children, etc together with youngsters from youth centers.

The training activity "Mediation – Mission is (im) possible" organized by EPPEA association took place at the wing for lifers. The common activities for prisoners: art works, theatre, photo essays helped to improve communication skills.