“Learning from and with one another”

The educational systems of the countries bordering the Baltic Sea

- Overview of the countries’ educational systems
- Synopsis of the educational systems
- Theses on the further development of educational policy in the Baltic Region
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</tbody>
</table>
1. **Significance of qualifications for craft trades and the SME sector**

The Hanseatic Parliament pursues the overarching objective of promoting economic competitiveness and cooperation within the SME sector of the economy of the Baltic Region with a particular focus on providing sustainable support for small and medium-sized companies (SME’s). High-level, general and vocational qualifications which enjoy international recognition are the crucial prerequisite in this field.

The main aims of cooperation in the Baltic Region are the promotion and preservation of cultural diversity and learning from one another. For this reason, the Hanseatic Parliament also pursues the following important activities in the interests of small and medium-sized companies:

- promotion of the exchange of experience and information and learning from and with one another;
- arranging and advising on best practice examples;
- drawing up concepts for the further development and strengthening of both the Baltic Region as a whole and of individual sub-regions;
- joint promotion of objectives relating to increasing effectiveness.

**Aspects of the requirement for skilled workers**

These fundamental objectives naturally apply to an extremely wide range of themes and remits. One prominent field of activity for the craft trades and the SME sector in the Baltic Region is concerned with general and vocational education, the reasons for this being as follows.

- Small and medium-sized companies are the backbone of the economy of the Baltic Region. They represent more than 99% of companies, provide around 70% of jobs and are indispensable in terms of exercising a stabilising effect on society.

- In terms of achieving success, skilled workers in SME’s are of even more critical importance than is the case within larger companies. The requirements placed on qualifications are high and continue to rise. Particularly within the context of globalisation, SME’s in the Baltic Region can only avail themselves of the opportunities on offer if they are able to operate at a high level of innovation and quality, a prerequisite for this being the highest level of qualifications.

- In order to take advantage of opportunities for growth and in the light of the prevailing age structure of employees, small and medium-sized companies require a growing number of well-qualified workers. The decline in the birth rate is, however, resulting in a dramatic fall in the number of school leavers in the medium to long term. There will inevitably be a considerable increase in the degree of competition between SME’s on the one hand and larger companies, universities/institutes of higher education and government bodies on the other as each seeks to secure the services of qualified young people, the threat being that the craft trades in particular could lose out.
Craft trades and other areas of the SME sector are already being squeezed into lower levels of the qualifications scale. There is an increasing tendency for such companies only to be able to obtain school leavers not in possession of a sufficient level of qualification to enable them to embark upon vocational education and training or else who are not in a position to undergo demanding VET without pre-vocational preparation. In Germany, for example, 60% of young people undergoing training have a lower secondary school leaving certificate, fewer than 4% being in possession of an upper secondary school leaving certificate.

From the point of view of the young people (and their parents), this is accompanied by a significant decrease in the attractiveness of vocational education and training, a development which has already led to worrying low depths being plumbed in some Baltic states. In Poland, for example, only around 12% of school leavers still go on to vocational education and training.

Although there are differences across the countries within the Baltic Region, the fundamental thrust of these developments is largely similar in terms of direction, meaning there can be no expectation that it will prove possible to obtain an adequate number of well qualified young people and employees from neighbouring states. Such an approach would also not be conducive to the development of the Baltic Region as a whole.

All of this makes the improvement of general education qualifications, an increase in the level of quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training and continuing developments within initial and continuing VET systems a major responsibility and central focus of the promotional functions of craft trades companies and the SME sector within the Baltic Region, thus also rendering this a significant task area for the Hanseatic Parliament.

Aspects of the requirement for entrepreneurs and managerial staff

The challenges outlined are particularly reflected in the field of entrepreneurs and managerial staff. There is already currently a significant gap in this area in small and medium-sized companies. Demographic developments and increased competition between the different sectors of the economy will bring about a considerable increase in this shortage of entrepreneurs in future.

The requirements placed on company management are high and are constantly rising. In the light of globalisation and the EU, international knowledge and experience are also increasingly in demand. Entrepreneurs and management staff working in SME’s need to have soundly based theoretical qualifications as well as good vocational training and practical experience.

Until now, SME’s have mainly drawn upon the system of initial and continuing vocational education and training to provide their up and coming entrepreneurs and managers. Such training routes are, however, strongly losing their appeal in many of the countries bordering...
the Baltic. As a result of the concomitant demographic change, SME’s as a whole are able to attract fewer and fewer young people (supply problem) and are increasingly being forced to rely on young people with an inadequate level of training (quality problem), the latter being extremely limited in their suitability for the assumption of demanding managerial tasks.

The processes of internationalisation and market liberalisation have put the squeeze on continuing vocational education and training courses in individual countries. Young people are exhibiting an ever-greater preference for university level education. Since such courses are predominantly theoretical in nature and largely neglect the practical requirements of SME’s in particular, the high numbers of students are not capable of producing a sufficient amount of suitable entrepreneurs and up and coming managers. The furtherance of the entrepreneurial spirit and qualified training for entrepreneurs are increasingly becoming the critical factors.

Securing up and coming entrepreneurs, management staff and high levels of innovation is becoming a crucial question of survival for small and medium-sized companies in the Baltic region, and this makes the promotion of this the highest priority for small and medium-sized and craft trade companies.

Aspects of internationalisation

The craft trades sector today achieves the lion’s share of its turnover on local and regional markets and will continue in future to maintain the focus of sales within a radius of 30 kilometres surrounding the location of the company. Important significance, however, is increasingly being accorded to large scale markets which are becoming ever more international in nature. In order to be able to benefit from the opportunities and challenges resulting from internationalisation, the gaining of international experience during vocational education and training and the transnational exchange of trainees and workers need to be both facilitated and afforded sustainable support. This is a process which will provide a parallel fostering of innovation, learning from one another and economic competitiveness within the Baltic Region.

Both international periods of training and international activities on the part of skilled workers are of especial importance to the SME sector of the economy, and to craft trades in particular, the reasons for this including the following.

- A considerable amount of potential remains untapped within the field of foreign trade activity.
- Foreign persons who are or were active within a company represent a particular conduit by which cross border activities are initiated or promoted.
- Transfer of know-how also primarily takes place via individual persons. “New forms of itinerant journeymen and master craftsmen” enable encrusted structures to be broken down and sustainable support to be provided for innovation.
- Both learning from one another and the further development and increasing the quality of initial vocational education and training are being afforded an intensive level of support.
The crucial prerequisites for the achievement of such positive economic effects relate to:

a) the recognition of periods and components of training spent and acquired abroad;

b) the mutual recognition of both initial and continuing VET qualifications.

Small and medium-sized companies need to gear themselves up for an enhanced level of international cooperation, and this is something which must be clearly reflected within vocational qualifications. International exchange, the promotion of international knowledge and experience and the innovative further developments and extensive increases in quality in the field of vocational training the latter brings with it represent excellent starting points for fostering both economic competitiveness in the Baltic Region in general terms and specifically within the SME sector.
2. **Overview of the educational systems**

The crucial factor determining the future economic development of the Baltic Region will be the development opportunities afforded to small and medium-sized companies. In principle, the Baltic SME’s have good opportunities for growth and show a marked potential for the securing of existing and the creation of new jobs. Qualified young people for vocational education and training and effectively performing employees with a high level of qualifications are the essential prerequisite which will enable the sector to avail itself of these opportunities. The SME sector in general and craft trades in particular are displaying an unlimited level of willingness to commit themselves in a concentrated way to vocational education and training and offer excellent future opportunities to all young people able and willing to undertake training. Energetic further development of educational policy and investment in education are the most important measures for the economic and societal development of the Baltic Region.

In the interests of promoting learning from and with one another and in order to develop targeted starting points for further developments in educational policy, a Working Group from the Hanseatic Parliament is, within the scope of an INTERREG Project, also undertaking an analysis of the educational systems in the countries bordering the Baltic and dealing with proposals relating to the targeted further development and increased quality of education in the Baltic Region. The specific focus of these considerations is on general education and VET, higher education merely being included in a supplementary fashion and with particular reference to its relevance in terms of transitions and admission conditions.

The following surveys provide a brief description of the general education and VET systems in the countries bordering the Baltic.

The information has mainly been taken and collated from the following sources.

- www.dija.de
- www.oraprod.eurydice.org/index.shtml
- www.europa.eu.int/ploteus/portal/home.jsp
- www.bildungsserver.de
- www.bibb.de
- www.europaserviceba.de
- www.zeus-baltic.info
- www.internationale-kooperation.de
2.0 Introductory statistical overviews

Economy

Germany exports more than the other 10 countries combined, but has the lowest rate of
growth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GNP ($)</th>
<th>Economic growth (%)</th>
<th>Workforce</th>
<th>Exports ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>182,709,000,000</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>2,870,000</td>
<td>73,060,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2,105,421,000,000</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>41,630,000</td>
<td>893,300,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>7,520,000,000</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>660,000</td>
<td>5,701,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>143,800,000,000</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2,660,000</td>
<td>61,040,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>10,914,000,000</td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>1,170,000</td>
<td>3,569,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>16,536,000,000</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>1,630,000</td>
<td>8,880,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>203,940,000,000</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>2,380,000</td>
<td>76,640,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>211,785,000,000</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>15,820,000</td>
<td>75,980,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>397,433,220,000</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>71,830,000</td>
<td>162,500,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>266,667,000,000</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>4,460,000</td>
<td>121,700,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>16,700,000,000</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>4,305,000</td>
<td>11,470,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education

Although Germany nominally has the highest spending on education, in comparative terms it
is in fifth and last place amongst the traditional EU countries and Norway. Remarkably, Ger-
many has the lowest rate of students and the highest rate of illiteracy compared with all the
other countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Educational spending ($)</th>
<th>Educational spending ($) per inhabitant</th>
<th>Students per 1000 inhabitants</th>
<th>Illiteracy (%) (Population aged over 14)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>18,533,311,000</td>
<td>3,412</td>
<td>27.06</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>119,878,300,000</td>
<td>1,454</td>
<td>25.96</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>395,434,500</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>47.27</td>
<td>0.20</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>7,845,638,700</td>
<td>1,501</td>
<td>53.57</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Latvia</td>
<td>418,783,000</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>42.35</td>
<td>0.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>1,153,425,300</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>32.25</td>
<td>0.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>15,974,352,400</td>
<td>3,478</td>
<td>42.67</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>12,642,687,800</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>47.11</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>15,884,895,000</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>50.90</td>
<td>0.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>23,022,872,800</td>
<td>2,558</td>
<td>36.10</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>1,156,119,900</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>37.86</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taken from: www.welt-in-zahlen.de
2.1 The educational system in Denmark

From: www.ciriusonline.dk/Default.aspx?ID=3825

1) ISCED 97 - International Standard Classification of Education - classification of educational levels developed by Unesco.
### Explanation of the Danish educational system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Pre-school</th>
<th>The so-called nursery school class, from the age of 5, voluntary.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2. Primary and lower secondary school | Children begin school at the age of six or seven.  
The primary and lower secondary school (elementary school) is an integrated, comprehensive school. Children are not streamed according to ability or social background.  
In Denmark, there are 9 years of compulsory teaching rather than 9 years of compulsory schooling. This lack of compulsory schooling makes it possible for children to be taught at the so-called free schools. A good half of all pupils subsequently attend a 1-year 10th class concluding with an extended leaving examination which represents the equivalent of the German intermediate school leaving certificate. |
| 3. Upper secondary education | Since 2001, pupils have been able to decide for themselves whether they wish to continue their school education at a further education upper secondary school institution. These upper secondary school based courses of education are either general or vocationally related in nature. In the case of the general vocational courses there is a choice between a three-year upper secondary school course, a 2 or 3-year foundation college or a 2-year foundation course.  
Alternatively, there is the opportunity to attend a three-year vocational upper secondary school (commercial or technical upper secondary school). |
| 4. Vocational education and training | Vocational education and training courses are of 3 - 4 years’ duration. They commence with a school based basic training course, which is followed by dual based main training. Access to basic training is guaranteed. A choice may then be made between 7 occupational fields: technology and communication, buildings and facilities, craft trades and technology, food production, gastronomy, engineering, transport and logistics, services, trade, industry and commerce, office management and banking. An individual training plan and training and careers guidance form a fixed component of basic training.  
Since 1993, there has been a 2-year specialist basic training courses specifically aimed at individual young people, and since 1995 a 2-year free youth training programme which is put together by the young people themselves from at least three different components of existing or new training forms.  
Further qualifications may be obtained via numerous educational courses offered by various providers. |
| 5. Higher education | There are three types of institute of higher education: academies, which offer short (2 to 3 years) courses of study, colleges, which provide courses of study of 3 to 4 years’ duration at Bachelor level and universities, at which Bachelor and Masters degrees and doctorates may be obtained. Alongside the upper secondary school leaving certificate, many completed courses of vocational education and training also lead to a higher education entrance qualification. |
2.2 The educational system in Germany

Explanation of the German educational system

1. **Pre-school**
   - From the age of 5, voluntary

2. **Primary and lower secondary school**
   - Primary school is of 4 years' duration. As far as transfer to further schools is concerned, the basic principle is freedom of choice by parents.
   - A choice exists between the following types of school:
     - Comprehensive school: integrates all general educational qualifications: lower secondary school leaving certificate, intermediate school leaving certificate and upper secondary school leaving certificate. Comprehensive schools are relatively thin on the ground in most federal states.
     - Lower secondary school: leads to the lower secondary school leaving certificate after 5 years. Due to the low attendance rate, this type of school is increasingly becoming a "sink school" in most federal states.
     - Intermediate secondary school: leads to the intermediate secondary school leaving certificate after 6 years.
     - Upper secondary school: leads after 8 or 9 years (depending on the federal state) to the Abitur (upper secondary school leaving certificate).

3. **Upper secondary education**
   - Concludes in 8 - 9 years subsequent to primary school (depending on the federal state) with the Abitur (upper secondary school leaving certificate). After conclusion of the upper secondary school pathway at a comprehensive school or at an intermediate secondary school, it is possible to transfer to a 2 to 3 year upper secondary school based upper secondary level. In most federal states, a switch from 13 to 12 years of schooling is underway.
   - Alongside the classical upper secondary schools, there are 3-year vocational upper secondary schools which conclude with the Abitur (upper secondary school leaving certificate) and pre-vocational training in a chosen specialist direction.
Compulsory schooling or training takes place until the age of 18. About 20 - 35 % of pupils within a year group conclude their general education with the Abitur. Around 10 % of each cohort fail to achieve a school leaving certificate.

4. Vocational education and training

There are no entry requirements of any kind, even pupils who fail to achieve a school leaving certificate being entitled to pursue vocational education and training. Most occupations, however, have high prerequisites in terms of previous education. Up to 15 % of school leavers are unable to undergo VET without further vocational preparation.

60 % of initial vocational education and training takes place within the dual system, which combines in-company training with attendance at a state-run vocational school. Duration of training is between 3 and 3 ½ years, 2 years in a very small number of individual occupations. VET is based on framework regulations stipulated by the state, but is organised autonomously by means of a process of self-administration on the part of trade and industry, the chambers enacting examination regulations and conducting journeyman or skilled worker examinations.

Vocational qualifications may also be obtained at specialist schools or academies, these usually concluding with a state recognised qualification. Continuing vocational training courses leading to a recognised qualification may also be pursued at specialist schools or academies.

Continuing vocational training is predominantly not subject to state regulation, qualifications being structured by the state on an individual basis. This structuring is primarily undertaken by the chambers within the scope of the process of self-administration on the part of trade and industry, the chambers also being responsible for conducting continuing training examinations. The prerequisite for embarking upon master craftsman training is to have completed initial VET in the respective occupation. A recent development is that there is no longer any requirement for occupational experience as a journeyman in order to be admitted to the master craftsman examination. Certain continuing training qualifications (such as master craftsman) provide entitlement to pursue a freely chosen or subject related course of higher education study at universities, Universities of Applied Sciences or Universities of Cooperative Education.

5. Higher education

There are various forms of institutes of higher education.

Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences:
Entry requirements are the Abitur (upper secondary school leaving certificate), other higher education entrance qualifications or certain continuing training qualifications (such as master craftsman). In Germany, a changeover is currently ongoing to Bachelor and Masters courses of study, the aim being to complete this process by 2010. Doctorates may only be obtained at universities.

Universities of Cooperative Education:
Type 1 Universities of Cooperative Education form part of the tertiary sector. Entry requirements are in line with those operated by universities and Universities of Applied Sciences. Universities of Cooperative Education offer practically oriented Bachelor courses of study, it being possible within the dual system to combine a course of vocational education and training with a Bachelor course. A Bachelor qualification achieved at a University of Cooperative Education is completely equivalent to a Bachelor degree obtained at a university or University of Applied Sciences and therefore confers the entitlement to embark upon a Masters course of study. Masters courses of study cannot be pursued at a University of Cooperative Education.
### 2.3 The educational system in Estonia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20+</td>
<td>Bakalaureuse ja magistripõe</td>
<td>Integrated curriculum for Bachelor’s and Master’s study at universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Bakalaureuse ja magistripõe</td>
<td>Bachelor’s and Master’s study at universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Kutseksharidus</td>
<td>Vocational secondary education after general secondary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Kutseksharidus</td>
<td>Vocational secondary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Kutseksharidus</td>
<td>Vocational secondary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Kurskealane eelkoolitus</td>
<td>Basic vocational education and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Kurskealane eelkoolitus</td>
<td>Basic vocational education and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Põhiharidus</td>
<td>Basic education</td>
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<td>Põhiharidus</td>
<td>Basic education</td>
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<td>Põhiharidus</td>
<td>Basic education</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Alusharidus</td>
<td>Pre-primary education</td>
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<td>Alusharidus</td>
<td>Pre-primary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Alusharidus</td>
<td>Pre-primary education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Explanation of the Estonian educational system**

1. **Pre-school**
   - From the ages of 3 - 7, attendance is voluntary.

2. **Primary and lower secondary school**
   - Compulsory schooling begins at the age of 7 and continues until the conclusion of the 9-year basic education (the equivalent of lower secondary school in Germany) or until the age of 17. Compulsory schooling is divided into the primary level (primary school classes 1 - 4) and secondary level I (classes 5 - 9).

3. **Upper secondary education**
   - Upper secondary education is of 3 years’ duration (classes 10 - 12) and is also state funded. Although the state stipulated curriculum is compulsory for all schools, schools are permitted to offer optional subjects and extended teaching within the compulsory subjects.
   - Upper secondary education concludes with five examinations, three of these being state examinations. Students receive 2 qualifications certificates (one school certificate and one state certificate), which jointly constitute a higher education entrance entitlement. The universities conduct additional entrance examinations.
   - There are also Russian speaking schools at which some of the teaching takes place in Estonian. The proportion of the teaching conducted in Estonian is currently being increased in order to afford students greater opportunity, Estonian being the teaching language at universities and in vocational education and training.
| 4. Vocational education and training | Takes place at vocational schools, which are predominantly state run (no dual system is in operation). Since 1996, the Ministry of education has contained a separate department for VET, which determines the political guidelines, stipulates rules and certifies private educational institutions. The ministries or local authorities are responsible for the outline curricula. The main focus of vocational education and training is the acquisition of occupational competences and practical experience.

Vocational education and training may be pursued by both school leavers of lower secondary school and by those who have completed upper secondary education. There are two different training levels:

**Vocational secondary education:**
After conclusion of lower secondary school, duration 3 years, final certificate provides the entitlement to proceed to higher vocational education and training.

**Higher vocational education and training:**
For pupils who have an upper secondary school leaving certificate, training being of only 2 years' duration and acknowledged by the award of a certificate in higher vocational education and training.

The final certificates awarded by the vocational schools certify that a certain programme has been pursued at a certain level within a certain school rather than in themselves representing any formal qualification. |
| 5. Higher education | Higher education courses of study may conclude with a degree or be pursued via a foundation course of study comprising 3 levels. It is possible to complete Bachelor degrees, Masters degrees and doctorates. Since the higher education reform of 2002/2003, achievements have been evaluated via the ECTS. The fact that Estonian curricula are in line with international standards means that these higher education degrees are also recognised abroad. Higher education courses of study are possible at universities or Universities of Applied sciences. The latter are more practically oriented, the qualifications they award are equivalent to a Bachelor degree and provide entitlement to embark upon a further Masters course of study at a university. |
4.4 The educational system in Finland

From: http://www.fit-for-europe.info/webcom/show_page_ffee.php?wc_c=15993&wc_id=1&wc_lkm=67313

Explanation of the Finnish educational system

1. Pre-school
   For children aged 6 to 7, voluntary

2. Primary and lower secondary school
   9-year, integrated school where basic education (the equivalent of lower secondary school in Germany) is acquired, no separation or streaming of pupils.
   About 50 % of school leavers subsequently go on to upper secondary school, fewer than 10 % failing to achieve a basic educational qualification. These so-called “indentures” may later use practical occupational experience as the basis of a vocational qualification or acquire continuing training qualifications.

3. Upper secondary education
   Upper secondary school has a 3-year course leading to the upper secondary school leaving certificate.
   Students wishing to attend an upper secondary school need to fulfil certain educational attainments during basic education. The individual upper secondary schools themselves set the level of entry requirements.

4. Vocational education and training
   In order to pursue certain VET leading to skilled worker status, certain educational attainments need to be fulfilled during basic education. The level of entry requirements is regulated specifically for every occupation.
There is very limited availability of dual vocational education and training. VET takes place in state/local government training centres and comprises theoretical and practical instruction. There are also compulsory periods of practical experience within a company and specific, practical project work.

Completion of VET confers entitlement to pursue a subject related course of higher education at a polytechnic (University of Applied Sciences) or a university.

Continuing training qualifications (such as comparable with the master craftsman qualification) may be acquired after 4 years of occupational experience and following a course of continuing vocational training.

Initial and continuing vocational education and training are based on state examination regulations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. Higher education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher education courses of study may be pursued at universities or practically oriented polytechnics (Universities of Applied Sciences). Universities offer Bachelor and Masters qualifications. The entry requirements are the upper secondary school leaving certificate or a VET qualification. An entry examination also needs to be passed. The individual universities themselves set the level of requirements in the entry examination.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.5 The educational system in Latvia

Explanation of the Latvian educational system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Pre-school</th>
<th>Since 2002, attendance of the pre-school educational programme for 5 and 6 year old children has been compulsory.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Primary and lower secondary school</td>
<td>9-year basic education within an integrated system, divided into a 4-year primary sector and a 5-year lower secondary level. Transition to the next highest class takes place automatically. Basic education ends after class 9 with a final examination and certificate. Subsequent to this, attendance of upper secondary education or vocational education and training is possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Upper secondary education</td>
<td>Basic education is followed by a 3-year upper secondary education sector, affording the opportunity to choose between 4 different teaching programmes. Regardless of the focus of the programme chosen, the following are compulsory subjects: Latvian language/literature, mathematics, history, 1 foreign language, sport, applied information technology, the basics of economics. Compulsory and optional subjects related to the main focus of the programme account for about 25% of the teaching. Subjects are offered at basic and advanced level, at least one subject having to be at advanced level.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Upper secondary education ends after class 12 with central final examinations (Latvian language/literature, 1 centrally stipulated examination subject which changes on an annual basis and 3 subjects selected by the pupils themselves). A diploma is awarded in respect of general upper secondary education (upper secondary school leaving certificate). If marks at level 4 or better are achieved in at least 12 subjects, the class 12 leaving certificate confers the entitlement to study at universities and institutes of higher education.

| 4. Vocational education and training | Vocational education and training takes place completely within vocational schools. There are 3 sorts of VET.  
1. Basic vocational education and training of 1 to 2 years’ duration: imparting of simple occupational qualification for school leavers who have failed to achieve a school leaving certificate from the 9 years of basic education at the general school. This pathway also enables them to catch up by obtaining their school leaving certificate.  
2. Vocational education and training in a simple vocational school, of 2 to 3 years’ duration: imparting of theoretical and practical knowledge/skills for the pursuit of an occupation. The curricula also contain general educational elements. Completion of training does not confer right of entry to higher education.  
3. Vocational education and training in a further vocational school, of 4 years’ duration: imparting of higher-level occupational knowledge, contains extensive general educational component, passing the course confers right of entry to the Latvian higher education system. Vocational training can also take place within the form of a practically related course of study. The level of qualification thus obtained is lower than that of Bachelor and does not confer the entitlement to further pursuit of studies. |

| 5. Higher education | Opportunities for study exist at universities, colleges and academies. Prerequisite for entry to studies: successful attendance of general secondary education or completion of higher level VET.  
2-tier system divided into university and non-university training, academic and practically related courses of study.  
Colleges offer an academic Bachelor qualification which confers the entitlement to pursue the course of study at a university.  
Bachelor and Masters degrees and doctorates may be obtained at the universities. |
2.6 The educational system in Lithuania

Explanation of the Lithuanian educational system

1. Pre-school
   The pre-school programme is on offer for children aged from 5 to 6 at nursery schools, school nursery schools and primary school, is conducted by qualified teaching staff and is voluntary.

2. Primary and lower secondary school
   School begins at the age of 6 - 7, ten class system for primary and lower secondary education. The 4-year primary school is followed by 6 years of basic education. If a pupil is successful in the final examination, this concludes with a basic education certificate (the equivalent of the intermediate school leaving certificate in Germany).

3. Upper secondary education
   After completion of basic education, a two-year course of upper secondary education may be embarked upon.
   It is also possible to transfer to an upper secondary school upon completion of class 8, this school then continuing until class 12. In classes 11 and 12, pupils are permitted to select subjects in a targeted way in accordance with their personal interests and strengths.
| 4. Vocational education and training | Vocational education and training can be completed in vocational schools by young people from the age of 14. The training comprises the imparting of both theoretical and practical knowledge. Four types of training programme are differentiated.  
Type 1  
For young people from the age of 14 who have not gained a basic education leaving certificate which forms the basis of vocational education and training. This framework also affords the opportunity of gaining the lower secondary school leaving certificate.  
Type 2  
3-year vocational education and training for those who have gained the basic education leaving certificate. They acquire a VET qualification (skilled worker status).  
Type 3  
For those who have passed the upper secondary school leaving certificate, 1 to 2 years of vocational training  
Type 4  
For those who have passed the upper secondary school leaving certificate, 3 to 4 year course of training comprising higher education and occupational qualification. Some modules correspond to Bachelor level, and credit for these may be transferred to a later course of higher education study.  
Vocational education and training, however, is not very popular with young Lithuanians, since it provides only limited knowledge which is no longer sufficient on the current labour market in the form is imparted. Many young people wish to obtain more knowledge about work within the private sector or about self-employment. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Higher education</td>
<td>Lithuania has academic (universities) and non-academic institutes of higher education (colleges). Students gain entry via selection procedures which mostly involve consideration being accorded to marks obtained in the upper secondary school leaving certificate. Higher education is based on the European credit system. The duration of the course of study leading to the acquisition of a Bachelor degree (basic higher education study) is 4 years. This can be followed by a one or two year vocational qualification diploma, such as a teaching qualification or a Masters degree which in turn can be followed by a doctorate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.7. The educational system in Norway

From: http://www.fit-for-europe.info/webcom/show_page_ffee.php?wc_c=16193&wc_id=1

Explanation of the Norwegian educational system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Pre-school</th>
<th>For children aged up to 5, promotion from the age of 1, care in small groups by qualified care staff (at higher education level). Attendance is voluntary.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Primary and lower secondary school</td>
<td>Compulsory schooling begins at the age of 6 and extends for 10 years. 10-year integrated basic education comprising primary level (classes 1 to 4), middle school (classes 5 to 7) and lower secondary level (classes 8 to 10) pursued by all pupils. The purpose of this is to afford equal access to knowledge and the basics of education within the cultural framework system and to learn the basic principles and values of Norwegian society. Since 1997, new curricula have been in place stipulating the imparting of Christian and humanistic values and making Lapp culture a compulsory subject for all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Upper secondary education</td>
<td>At upper secondary schools, the upper secondary school leaving certificate may be obtained in three years (class 11 - 13). A good knowledge of Norwegian is a prerequisite for attendance at this type of school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Upper secondary education encompasses all educational provision between compulsory schooling and higher education study. All young people between the ages of 16 and 19 have a statutory right to further school education of 3 years’ duration leading to a vocational qualification, to entitlement to attend a university or institute of higher education or to a partial qualification. Attendance of further schooling (upper secondary level) is, however, not compulsory.

4. Vocational education and training

Vocational education and training is included within the remit of further education (upper secondary level) and is normally of 4 years’ duration. The first two years of training are spent at school, whereas in the specialisation phase (3rd and 4th year of training) practical training takes place in-company. Should insufficient training places be available, a 3rd school-based year must be provided. The final examination (skilled worker status) remains the same, regardless of whether the practical training has taken place at school or in-company. 50% of in-company training time is regarded as such, the other half being spent in ongoing production, where the apprentice is already viewed as a normal worker.

It has become easier for pupils who have completed a course of VET to obtain entrance to a course of study at a university or institute of higher education. From the 3rd year of vocational school, there is the opportunity to pursue courses which lead to the upper secondary school leaving certificate at the end of the 4th year.

5. Higher education

A difference is drawn between universities and other institutes of higher education.

Universities are academically oriented. The changeover to Bachelor and Masters courses has largely been completed. A Bachelor degree may be obtained after 3 years of study, a further 2 years leading to a Masters. This may be followed by a further 3 years to obtain a doctorate. Courses of study in medicine, psychology, veterinary science and theology form an exception to this, other qualifications being retained.

Courses of study at the other institutes of higher education are shorter (2 to 4 years) and more vocationally oriented in nature, offering, for example, such courses as teacher training and engineering. Some institutes of higher education offer the opportunity to obtain a Masters degree, three even having the right to award doctorates.

It is possible to combine courses from universities and other institutes of higher education.
2.8 The educational system in Poland

Polish educational system

* With special schools

MENiS 2004
### Explanation of the Polish educational system

Since 1999, a fundamental reform of the Polish educational system has been underway, the aim being for this to be concluded in 2007. The effect has been a decentralisation of the system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Pre-school</strong></td>
<td>Compulsory schooling begins at the age of 6 in class zero, where the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic are acquired.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Primary and lower secondary school</strong></td>
<td>Primary schooling is of 6 years’ duration and concluded with an examination merely serving as an indicator of the level which has been achieved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary schooling is followed by the 3-year lower secondary level (Gimnazjum), the equivalent of the German intermediate secondary level. This concludes with a compulsory examination where there is no possibility of failure, the marks achieved, however, being of significance in terms of the selection of the subsequent school. These marks form the basis of access to a higher school, some schools conducting additional entrance examinations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The reform of the school system saw the introduction of two compulsory foreign languages for all pupils.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate school education is followed by a choice of attending a general upper secondary school, a specialist upper secondary school, a technical specialist school or a basic vocational school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Upper secondary education</strong></td>
<td>Both the general upper secondary school and the specialist upper secondary schools are of 3 years’ duration and conclude with the upper secondary school leaving certificate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In 2003, 42.7% of young people attended a general upper secondary school, representing an increase of 69% compared to 1990.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aside from general education, specialist upper secondary schools provide broad-based basic vocational education and training in 15 profiles. These include engineering and technology, the environment and agricultural technology, services, culture, transport and forwarding, electro technology and information management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is also possible to attend a 4-year technical specialist school concluding with the upper secondary school leaving certificate and a vocational examination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Since 2005, new regulations have been in place for the upper secondary school leaving certificate. It consists of a central (external) written examination and a decentralised oral component, the latter remaining within the responsibility of the individual schools. Performance in the upper secondary school leaving certificate now determines access to the institutes of higher education, the entrance examinations having been abolished.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Vocational education and training</strong></td>
<td>Vocational education and training is of 2 - 3 years’ duration, takes place predominantly in full-time schools and concludes with an external vocational examination. The possibility exists of acquiring VET within an alternating (dual) scheme in craft trades and commercial companies. Around 10 - 15% of all pupils at vocational schools undergo an apprenticeship in the dual system, attending parallel theoretical lessons in state-run vocational schools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24
Registration of trainees and the implementing and conducting of journeyman examinations is incumbent on the chambers of crafts and trades. VET concludes with an external vocational examination.

After VET, there is the possibility of supplementing education by attending general upper secondary school or technical specialist school.

Fewer and fewer young people are deciding to pursue vocational education and training. The current figure of those completing VET is only 11.5 %, a fall of 75 % compared to the year 1990.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. Higher education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The number of higher education students in Poland is constantly rising. Whereas in 1991 13.1 % of those aged between 19 and 24 were attending an institute of higher education, by 2005 the number had already risen to 48.5 %. In European comparative terms, this figure is one of the highest. About ¾ of all students come from the urban areas and about ¼ from the countryside. Higher education study may take place at a university or at an institute of higher education (Universities of Applied Sciences). 3 to 4 year vocational courses of study, concluding with a bachelor degree, are offered (the universities also providing such courses.) This may be followed by a Masters course of study. Doctorates are possible at institutes of higher education, institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences and at research and development institutes. Institutes are accorded the right to award doctorates on an individual basis. The ECTS is already in use at most institutes of higher education. Since 2005, it has been compulsory for institutes of higher education to issue graduates with a diploma support.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.9 The educational system in Russia

Source: German Federal Employment Agency
# Explanation of the Russian educational system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Pre-school</th>
<th>Attendance is voluntary for children aged between three and six. As well as individual support and special provision, such as an early opportunity to learn a foreign language, the programme contains measures aimed at promoting psychosocial, intellectual and health development.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Primary and lower secondary school</td>
<td>The 9 years of compulsory schooling are divided into a 4-year primary level, although most children complete this in 3 years, not having commenced school until the age of 7, followed by a 5-year main secondary level (comparable with lower secondary school in Germany). This so-called basic general education concludes with a final examination.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3. Upper secondary education | Having completed compulsory schooling, about two thirds of pupils transfer to the 2-year upper secondary level, which leads to university entrance qualification, in order to complete the so-called full intermediate education. No entrance examination is required here. Upper secondary education concludes with a final examination and the conferment of the Attestat (upper secondary school leaving certificate). This upper secondary school leaving certificate is not recognised in Germany, being accorded equivalence with the intermediate secondary school leaving certificate. 

Alongside the conventional schools, there are specialist schools providing more advanced teaching in individual subjects. In the aftermath of Perestroika, two new types of school came into being, the humanities oriented upper secondary school and the technically oriented Lyceum. These schools often work closely together with a university and its teaching staff to provide targeted preparation for the transition to higher education. 

Within the scope of the school reform, the aim is to establish a uniform state examination to take place at the end of upper secondary education by the year 2009, the idea also being that this will replace university entrance examinations. The plan is for a system of profiles along the lines of subject focuses to run alongside the standardised examination. The formation of these profiles is intended to afford more space to pupils’ individual interests and skills and exert a vocational guidance effect in cooperation with institutions outside school (also including vocational schools and institutes of higher education). 

It is further intended to modernise educational programmes within the framework of a uniform educational standard to apply to the whole of the Russian Federation. According to the benchmark set by the PISA study, this will stipulate the state guaranteed minimum competence requirements to be imparted and may be supplemented in terms of content in the regions and within individual schools. |
4. **Vocational education and training**  
Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the vocational education and training system has been in a phase of upheaval. Initial VET is of 2 – 4 years’ duration and mostly takes place in a full-time school (state or private), a practical placement being planned at the end. It is also possible to obtain a VET qualification at a training centre. In-company training, simply involving learning on the job, is in decline.

There are the beginnings of the development of a social partnership integrating employers and trade unions more closely into the process of reform and the modernisation of training plans. The form of the dual system has met with a considerable level of interest, familiarisation with this coming from within the framework of a number of Russo-German cooperation projects.

Very little respect is accorded to VET from within the general population, this being reflected in the low number of young people embarking upon it.

5. **Higher education**  
Around 70 % of those who achieve the upper secondary school leaving certificate opt to go on to higher education studies, the fact that this involves a deferment of military service making higher education studies a particularly attractive option for young men. Since the lowest point in 1993/1994, the number of higher education students has more than doubled to 5.426 million, the number of students per 10,000 inhabitants having risen by half compared to the 1980’s.

Since the end of the Soviet Union, there have been considerable changes in the higher education landscape. Many former institutes have been elevated to the status of a university, and numerous private institutes of higher education have come into being.

State institutes of higher education often conduct very difficult entrance examinations. Failed applicants have the option to pay a fee to study at state-run or private institutes of higher education. The quota set by the Ministry of Education of a maximum of 25 % of fee-paying students per state institute of higher education is being sizeably exceeded, the average figure being approximately 44 %. Just under 11.6 % of students currently attend the comparatively extensive private institute of higher education sector, the latter being accorded a lower level of esteem than the state sector.

Within the scope of the Bologna Process, Bachelor and Masters qualifications are being introduced nationwide and run parallel to the traditional degree qualification.
2.10 The educational system in Sweden

From: http://www.fit-for-europe.info/webcom/show_page_ffee.php?wc_c=16273&wc_id=1&skipsurvey=1

Explanation of the Swedish educational system

1. Pre-school
   For those aged 6 (pre-school classes), attendance is voluntary.

2. Primary and lower secondary school
   Compulsory schooling begins at the age of 7. It is possible for children to start school at the age of 6 on parental request.
   9-year, largely standardised compulsory schooling is the obligatory form of schooling at primary level and at lower secondary level. Compulsory schooling is divided into 3 levels: lower level, intermediate level and upper level. Each level comprises 3 school years. Only at upper level does a limited amount of differentiation take place.

3. Upper secondary education
   The 3-year upper secondary school imparts both general and vocational education. Many upper secondary schools offer special courses for the acquisition of basic, low-level vocational qualifications. The final certificate represents a higher education entrance qualification.
Local authorities are obliged to provide training and vocational guidance, a work placement and a certain extent of teaching to young people between the ages of 16 and 18 who do not apply for a place at upper secondary school, do not receive a training place within the apprenticeship system or who do not enter employment. The plan is to raise the age limit for this to 20 in future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Vocational education and training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocational education and training largely takes place in full-time school institutions at upper secondary level. Alongside the study and vocationally oriented upper secondary schools, there is apprentice training, a combination of teaching in the core subjects offered at upper secondary school and a practical course of vocational education and training which takes place in-company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In 1991, Parliament decided on wide-ranging reforms for upper secondary schools, especially with relation to their vocationally related training courses. Cooperation is being sought between the various training providers, forms of training and local authorities to improve training provision and raise quality. The underlying idea is for as many training providers as possible to be accorded the opportunity to avail themselves of teaching room and equipment. Since the reform, training provision has been organised along 16 training routes which are binding for the whole country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The overall effect of the reform is to increase the integrative character of the upper secondary school through standardisation of duration at 3 years and also standardising the core general education subjects. In vocational education and training, some practical parts of training have been relocated to the companies. It is planned that the respective vocational practical components will constitute at least 15% of training taking place within the pre-vocational training routes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. Higher education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher education study is possible at universities and institutes of higher education. Alongside the possibility of a first degree course of study of up to 4 ½ years’ duration and a doctorate building upon a first degree course of at least 2 years, many institutes of higher education offer short courses, some of which have previously been taught as special courses at upper secondary schools and have been upgraded in terms of organisation by their relocation to the field of higher education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those finishing upper secondary school with sufficient knowledge of Swedish and English and those aged over 25 who are in employment and have at least 5 years of occupational activity and have knowledge of English at upper secondary school level are entitled to apply for a higher education place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.11 The educational system in Belarus

Explanation of the Belarusian educational system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Pre-school</th>
<th>Participation in pre-school education is voluntary.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Primary and lower secondary school</td>
<td>Children begin school at the age of 6. Attendance of 10 years' schooling is compulsory, this schooling being divided into a 4-year primary stage and a 6-year main secondary level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Upper secondary education</td>
<td>A majority of Belarusians attend further education, where a changeover from 11 to 12 school years is now largely complete. There are various forms of school where the upper secondary school leaving certificate may be obtained: conventional schools, schools providing more in-depth teaching in certain subjects, vocational-technical schools, grammar schools and lycées. Grammar schools and lycées enjoy the best reputation. A prerequisite of attending these schools is completion of a final examination at main secondary level. There are also private schools, mostly lycées, which are of high repute but very costly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4. Vocational education and training

Vocational education and training is open to those who have completed lower or upper secondary education as well as to persons who are in possession of practical occupational experience. VET mainly takes place in the form of courses provided by the state employment agency, training in the workplace also being possible. Duration of training depends on prior learning. Those who have completed upper secondary education complete VET in one year, whereas others take 3 years. The curriculum comprises general education, vocational and occupation-specific subjects and practical training. Multiple qualifications are on the increase, 43% of those completing training in 1996 doing so with a double qualification.

The National Ministry of Education and sectoral and regional ministries are responsible for vocational education and training. The competences of the Ministry of Labour are limited to continuing training. VET is wholly state funded.

Higher VET may be acquired at higher vocational schools, polytechnics and colleges. In terms of level, this qualification lies between a skilled worker and an engineer and confers the entitlement to commence a higher education course of study. Higher technical colleges conclude with a qualification at B.A. level.

Problems are the obsolete technical equipment at many learning venues, the lack of cooperation with universities and the difficulty in finding a job experienced by those completing VET.

### 5. Higher education

Upon passing an entrance examination, higher education courses of study may be commenced free of charge at state-run colleges and universities.

The following qualifications may be obtained: degree and Bachelor (after 4 to 5 years), using a B.A. as a basis for proceeding to a Masters (1 to 2 years) and subsequently a doctorate (minimum of 3 years). Graduates of state universities are allocated a compulsory job by the state for a period of two years, an alternative being paying a fee to study at state or private educational institutions.
3. **Synopsis of the educational systems**

3.1 **General education**

**Nursery school**

There are nursery schools in all the countries presented, albeit with significant differences in levels of provision. They are available for children aged from 3 to 6 or 7 (depending on the age at which they start school). Attendance is voluntary.

*Conclusion and implications:* learning begins at a very young age; nursery schools should be viewed as places where infants can learn and develop through play rather than being viewed as mere child-minding facilities.

**Pre-school**

A pre-school exists in virtually all countries, mostly being intended for children who are in the last year before starting school. Estonia, where children aged between 3 and 7 can attend pre-school, represents the exception. Pre-school attendance is generally voluntary. Latvia has compulsory pre-schooling (for children aged 5 to 6), and Poland operates so-called zero classes, where children learn the rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic from the age of 6.

*Conclusion and implications:* compulsory pre-schooling of 1 year’s duration (from the age of 5) seems an aim worth pursuing.

**Compulsory schooling**

In the countries bordering the Baltic, compulsory schooling is of between 9 and 10 years’ duration and begins when children start school (at the age of 6 or 7). Russia also has compulsory schooling of 9 years’ duration, although only 8 of these are generally fulfilled, primary school education mostly being shortened to 3 years. Only in Denmark is there compulsory teaching rather than compulsory schooling. This enables attendance at so-called free schools.

In the Scandinavian countries, there is an express guarantee of further training after completion of compulsory schooling. In Sweden, this right refers to a further 3 years of school education (until the age of 18), an extension of this until the age of 20 being planned. Germany has compulsory training (school based or vocational) until the age of 18.

*Conclusion and implications:* As far as compulsory schooling is concerned, a general right to training until the age of 18 seems appropriate.
Primary and lower secondary education

In all the countries surveyed, primary and lower secondary education (lower secondary or middle school) is of between 9 and 10 years’ duration. The only exception is Russia, where the period of schooling is 8 years.

There are significant differences in the way in which the period of schooling is divided. In the Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, there are 9 years of basic education which is standardised and pursued by all children without any degree of differentiation. Only in Sweden are there slight differentiations in the final 3 years.

Other countries differentiate more strongly between primary, lower secondary and middle school during the 9 to 10 year period of basic education. Primary school in Poland comprises 6 years. In Germany, Lithuania, Russia and Belarus, this period is 4 years, considerably shorter. In these countries, there are a multitude of forms of lower secondary education subsequent to the primary phase. Germany enables a choice to be made between lower secondary schools, intermediate secondary schools, grammar schools (upper secondary schools) or comprehensive schools. In Poland, the 6-year period of primary schooling is followed by middle school of 3 years’ duration. In Russia and Belarus, there is a 5 or 6 year period of middle school, this mostly taking place at one and the same school, notwithstanding the formal division into primary and lower secondary phases.

The mix of integrated and selective approaches represents the major difference between the school systems. In an integrated school system, all pupils pursue together general schooling of 9 to 10 years’ duration (mostly referred to as basic education). In selective school systems, a division of pupils takes place after the end of primary school. The former type of school is particularly prevalent in the Scandinavian countries, the latter being particularly marked in Germany.

Conclusion and implications: Although selective systems aim to provide more targeted and better promotion of specific strengths, the reality seems to be that these individual strengths are afforded only a low level of support. Within individual countries, the impression arises that the aim is for everyone to learn the same things using the same methods. The subsequent result is a marked levelling approach. Notwithstanding the fact that selective school systems operate a high level of structuring and exclusion, targeted fostering of the elite and sustainable support for the less able takes place only to a limited extent. In individual countries within the Baltic Region, it is already the case today that over 15% of school leavers are viewed as being incapable of pursuing vocational education and training. This figure is clearly on the increase. And, in the absence of far-reaching reforms in the coming years, it is certainly conceivable that the proportion of school leavers experiencing a lifelong lack of opportunity will reach 20 percent. And yet every person has at least one strength which, if recognised and supported within the educational framework, affords everyone a good chance in economic life if deployed in the correct area.
Individual support is primarily determined by the use of a specific pedagogical approach, something which appears in principle to be possible within all forms of school (with or without selection). SME companies require the field of general education to provide preparation for life generally rather than a narrowly defined economic orientation or any kind of specific pre-vocational training. Those completing general education need to have a good mastery of basic cultural techniques such as reading, writing and arithmetic as well as needing to possess such personal and social skills as willingness to learn, openness, the ability to cooperate and motivation. This knowledge and these skills, however, are required to come to terms with life in general terms rather than being an exclusive requirement of trade and industry. Integrated schools systems seem to lend themselves particularly well to the acquisition of personal and social skills and the ability to learn from one another.

Upper secondary education

Upper secondary education is of 2 - 3 years’ duration in all countries bordering the Baltic. Many countries, such as Denmark, Germany, Poland and Finland, provide a choice between general and vocational upper secondary schools. At all upper secondary schools in Sweden, vocational education and training is imparted at greater or lesser levels of intensity. The Baltic States, Russia and Belarus have only general education upper secondary schools, although these schools may offer a subject related focus.

In the countries surveyed, upper secondary education concludes with the upper secondary school leaving certificate, which confers the entitlement to proceed to a higher education course of study. In individual countries, entrance to higher education is also dependent on supplementary tests or entrance examinations.

Conclusion and implications: The various forms of pedagogy and the contents imparted are much more significant than the various school structures. The educational systems have been over-intellectualised in many areas and have become too top-heavy. In many fields, only quite specific, one-sided skills are fostered, and educational systems are running the risk of becoming a specialist institution which is not providing holistic education and support to young people. The general educational character of vocational education and training needs to be balanced against the one-sided educational ideal. General education also needs to cover the training of every kind of intellectual, artistic and manual skill in equal measure. In order to achieve this, it is imperative to introduce technical teaching, learning through practical activities and a holistic form of pedagogy. Education needs to address all the senses. If this does not happen, no real learning can take place.

It is of benefit to pupils and an advantage for their later working life if vocational elements are imparted, including at upper secondary schools. This enables interest in a vocational activity to be enhanced and will generate more young people learning an occupation. A polytechnic orientation in general education is the best approach for the fostering of all young people and all talents, irrespective of craft trades.
3.2 Vocational education and training

Duration of training is between 2 and 4 years. In virtually all countries bordering the Baltic, training takes place in full-time schools. Practical elements are acquired via work placements, project work and in training workshops. The dual training in Germany represents an exception to this (around 60 percent of vocational training courses being conducted in this fashion). In the German system, an apprentice has a training contract with one or several companies, the theory being acquired at an external, state-run vocational school. Denmark and Norway operate a mixed form, beginning with basic training at a vocational school followed by the main element of the training, which takes place in-company. If sufficient training places are not available in Germany, Denmark and Norway, VET also takes place in a school-based way with integrated work placements. In Poland, a dual form of training is possible alongside school-based training, although only 10 – 15 percent of trainees took this up in 2003. In Sweden, at least 15 percent of training time must take place in companies, an increase of this proportion to 20 percent being under discussion.

**Conclusion and implications:** it is apparent that a significant expansion of practical periods of training in companies, a further improvement in theoretical teaching and better coordination of practical and theoretical training are of particular importance in terms of increasing the quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training.

The majority of the countries do not have any entry requirements for vocational education and training. Some countries deviate from the pattern. In Estonia, a lower secondary school leaving certificate is required to commence VET. Finland has occupationally specific requirements in terms of prior learning which are stipulated at different levels in respect of the individual occupations.

**Conclusion and implications:** the introduction of standardised, pan-Baltic entry requirements stipulated in an occupationally specific way should be investigated.

Some countries have provision of training courses at different levels (such as Latvia and Lithuania). The lowest level is open to young people not in possession of a school leaving certificate, imparting simple VET qualifications over a period of 1 – 2 years. Intermediate training comprises 2 – 3 years and imparts practical and theoretical qualifications. A top level imparts demanding qualifications for the more able (such as those in possession of an upper secondary school leaving certificate). In Denmark and Sweden, there is guaranteed basic training for everyone, irrespective of prior learning.

**Conclusion and implications:** the craft trades sector in particular is predestined to provide training for lower ability young people. It is prepared to do so and demonstrates commitment to this socio-political task. The crafts trades sector must not, however, become the sole specialist for the training and integration of the less able. It also re-
quires a high and increasing supply of the best. As far as the targeted further development of vocational education and training is concerned, the creation of differentiated training courses with various entry requirements and different training levels within the framework of an open, permeable system is an urgent task.

The training systems in Russia and Belarus are going through a process of upheaval. The collapse of the Soviet Union has brought about disintegration of the structures which had existed hitherto and of the close degree of cooperation with major companies. Obsolete teaching content and equipment are a contributory factor to the loss of prestige and level of VET. Russia is showing considerable interest in the dual system and is working together with German partners in the vocational education and training reform process. Social partnerships are slowly emerging. In Belarus, vocational education and training largely takes place in state-run full-time schools.

**Conclusion and implications:** within the framework of the reform process ongoing in Russia and Belarus, intensive learning from the experiences of other countries in the Baltic Region is both possible and appropriate. The imparting of information, the exchange of experience, the development of partnerships and other promotional activities are both suitable paths to pursue and in the interests of the other countries bordering the Baltic. Cooperation in the educational field also fosters economic cooperation in a sustainable way.

In most countries bordering the Baltic, vocational education and training concludes with a recognised final examination on the basis of state examination regulations. In Denmark, Latvia and to a particularly marked extent in Finland, this also confers the entitlement to commence a subject-related course of higher education study. In Sweden, such a higher education entrance qualification applies to those in employment who are aged at least 25 and have 5 years’ occupational experience. In extreme cases (such as in Estonia), VET concludes with a final certificate which does not represent any kind of formal qualification.

**Conclusion and implications:** vocational training courses in all countries in the Baltic Region should conclude with official final examinations which enjoy mutual recognition on the basis of comparable standards. The upgrading of VET together with the express according of equivalence with higher education qualifications and the creation of greater permeability between vocational education and training and higher education studies is also of the utmost urgency.

In the majority of countries bordering the Baltic, vocational education and training has lost a great deal of its attractiveness, manifold complaints ensuing in respect of low levels, a lack of quality and an insufficient amount of practical knowledge and experience. In Poland, for example, only 11% of school leavers opted for VET in 2003. In individual countries (such as in Germany and the Scandinavian countries), intensive
endeavours are being undertaken to bring about improvements. In Sweden, all vocational schools without exception have been allocated the level of an upper secondary school. Alongside an upgrading of vocational education and training and an increase in the quality of theoretical teaching, a particular course being pursued is the expansion and optimisation of practical training.

**Conclusion and implications:** the falling popularity of vocational education and training represents a major problem in all countries bordering the Baltic. Young people find it more worthwhile to complete their upper secondary school leaving certificate and embark upon a course of higher education. This problem is being exacerbated by the demographic development. The craft trades sector is particularly badly affected. Young people prefer to enter higher education or pursue training in other branches of trade and industry in the so-called “white-collar occupations”. As far as the promotion of the craft trades and SME sectors in the Baltic Region are concerned, any kind of increase in attractiveness and improvement in quality within VET are urgent tasks.

Very different systems exist in the field of continuing vocational education and training. In Germany, continuing VET is overwhelmingly non-state regulated, the organisation of continuing training schemes and the conducting of the relevant examinations being central functions of self-government on the part of trade and industry (the chambers). In the majority of the countries, state-run or private economy systems exist with vocationally oriented training centres such as Universities of Cooperative Education, technical colleges, polytechnics and colleges enabling higher vocational qualifications and more or less smooth transitions to universities and institutes of higher education.

**Conclusion and implications:** continuing vocational training should primarily be a task of self-government on the part of trade and industry and be subject only to limited state regulation. Important points are, however, increases in quality, more transparency, smooth transitions to general and higher education and mutual recognition of qualifications on the basis of comparable standards. The work being conducted by the EU on the creation of a European Education Area with a European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and a European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) could represent a good basis for the establishment of innovative, unbureaucratic, high-quality systems within the Baltic Region.
3.3 Higher education courses of study

Higher education study is possible at universities and institutes of higher education providing more practice-oriented training. Within the context of the alignment of European educational systems, the process of introducing Bachelor and Masters courses of study is far advanced in the majority of countries bordering the Baltic. A Bachelor degree is obtained after a period of study of 3 – 4 years’ duration, this being followed by a 1 – 2 year course of academic study culminating in a Masters degree. Subsequently, a doctorate is then possible.

In a series of countries, completion of upper secondary education (upper secondary school leaving certificate) is in itself sufficient to enable commencement of a course of higher education study at a university or institute of higher education. In some countries (such as Denmark, Germany, Finland and Sweden), the system is more permeable, universities and institutes of higher education also being accessible to persons in possession of certain initial or continuing vocational education and training qualifications and to those in employment with several years of occupational experience.

In Finland, Russia and Belarus, institutes of higher education conduct entrance examinations. In Russia and Belarus, students who fail are still afforded the opportunity to study, although they are then obliged to pay tuition fees.

Upon completion of vocational education and training in some countries, it is possible to attend a non-academic institute of higher education or academy. These courses, however, represent continuing vocational training, which should be allocated a status somewhere between VET and higher education study, rather than a university or higher education course of study providing recognised academic qualifications.

**Conclusion and implications:** within the context of the far-reaching reforms in accordance with the Bologna Process and the large scale introduction of Bachelor and Masters courses of study, Bachelor courses should be offered in a much more practically oriented way and on a dual basis.

VET featuring a high degree of permeability and smooth transitions to higher education study will be accorded a much higher level of significance and needs to establish itself as an independent qualifications field. This represents another area where the Baltic Region has the potential to take on a pioneering role via innovative concepts closely related to trade and industry.
4. **Theses on the further development of educational policy in the Baltic Region**

The lack of any improvements and the absence of reforms are, in many cases, attributed to the scarcity of public resources. Such “cheap” excuses and defensive attitudes are the result of incorrect setting of priorities, a lack of creativity and an extensive inability to bring about reform. Firstly, educational investment in young people needs to be accorded the very highest level of priority, particularly in the Baltic Region. Secondly, it is by no means the case that comprehensive reforms must, of necessity, result in higher expenditure. The above average pro capita spending on general education in individual countries (such as Germany) does not in any way lead to the highest level of educational success. The savings in education brought about by the falling pupils rolls have the potential to open up space for reform.

The prevailing educational system in a number of countries is strongly utilitarian in its orientation. In many areas, there is a failure to address individual support and elite education as well as a lack of holistic schooling of all intellectual, manual and social skills. Both the educational system and economic life run the risk of producing an end human product where an increasing number of people are unable to achieve the requirements set, fall victim to attempts to make everyone the same or, finding their existing competences remaining unexploited, ultimately become excluded in many cases. The foremost principle should not be that people are adapted to fit systems. The systems need once again to become more human and learn to understand that every person is an individual creation and, as such, is deserving of support and esteem.

Although the Pisa studies have acted as a wake-up call, the initial impact in individual countries has been to spark off a debate on structural reforms. New educational structures are certainly required, but will have very little impact alone. Simply creating new structures cannot bring about sustainable improvement in the absence of wide-ranging cultural reforms. Further development of cultures will virtually inevitably lead to the growth of new structures too.

4.1 **Theses on the further development of cultures**

1. Learning begins at a very early age and is initially a central task within families. A considerable proportion of families are experiencing an increasing amount of difficulty in coming to terms with this. Deficits from home life are passed on into the schools, which, in turn, are barely in a position to compensate for or overcome these problems. Ultimately, within the scope of vocational education and training, companies become a repair workshop for the families and schools and, in the light of increasing requirements and rising cost pressures, are less and less able to cope with the situation.
2. Families need to be afforded the utmost level of support across all political fields. This also involves the development of family-like structures and forms of cooperation amongst non-family members. Widespread introduction of whole-day childcare ensures that both parents are able to continue their employment activities. This will have a positive effect on the falling birth rate, since a decision not to have children is often a result of balancing family and career and having two breadwinners also enables a financial basis to be secured. In the Scandinavian countries, this model has largely been implemented. In Denmark, all children aged over one are able to attend a nursery. The aim is to use nursery schools and schools to create a form of parents’ school, offering a platform for the exchange of experience both between the parents themselves and the nursery school teachers and providing a venue for further training.

3. A sufficient number of crèche and nursery school places is required, which should be seen as places where infants can learn and develop through play rather than being viewed as mere child-minding facilities. The carefree play of our children decides our future. For children, play is a serious process which is fun. Learning also needs to be fun, regardless of the age level. It needs to generate hunger for more rather than satiating, needs to open up perspectives rather than coming to a conclusion, it needs to arouse curiosity and provide a reason for perseverance, thus enabling former pupils to discover later in life something of which their teachers had no intimation.

The skill of learning through play needs to be more widely exploited. The introduction of bilingual nursery schools ensures early access to foreign languages. This facilitates the learning of further languages and is of significance for future close cooperation within the Baltic Region, an area characterised by a multitude of countries and languages. The highest priority should also especially be afforded to children who have a different first language, thus enabling linguistic barriers to be broken down by the time schooling begins.

4. Compulsory pre-schooling of 1 year’s duration should be introduced. This ensures that children from problematic families receive early support and learn how to behave. It also assists children who have a different first language to have a command of the language of the home country before commencing schooling. It is the very young school cohorts which require the best pedagogy, the smallest group sizes and the highest level of attention rather than the older year groups.

5. Schools must not be allowed to be an isolated learning venue which is not intensively integrated into the surrounding social, societal and economic environment. School needs to be closely interwoven into decentralised structures, enabling it to become a central focus for the everyday lives of all, needs to enter into sponsorship arrangements with companies in the local area and needs to involve craft trades master craftsmen and trainers from companies in lessons as a matter of
course. Short periods of work experience, of perhaps a week's duration, spent by pupils in companies are scarcely able to portray a realistic picture and do not allow sufficient practical learning.

6. Smaller schools are manageable, promote direct interaction and enable better integration into the social environment. Large schools do not necessarily perform better and are not necessarily more cost-effective. In trade and industry too, it is becoming increasingly clear that decentralisation, flexibility and initiative promotes innovation and cuts costs, especially if the intensive use of modern information technologies is involved. The optimum company size and, by the same token presumably the optimum school size, is shifting downwards.

7. Individual schools and the individual teaching staff who work in them need to possess a high level of independence and personal responsibility. Working with an overall budget, schools are largely able to decide for themselves how their funds will be used. Teaching staff must not be selected and imposed on schools by institutions higher up the hierarchical chain. Schools need to be able to decide on both the recruitment and dismissal of teaching staff themselves. Temporary employment contracts for teaching staff may be appropriate and may give rise to a more intensive exchange between activities in schools and in trade and industry. Performance related remuneration should be a matter of course.

8. Teachers are entrusted with the most important thing a society can have, namely its children. Teachers require support, respect and esteem and deserve trust. They need to have the freedom to support the children and carry through the development remit they have been accorded.

9. Initial and further teacher training needs further development. A holistic pedagogy is required, individually structured in order to support individual pupils in accordance with their personal skills and talents. This also particularly requires distinct diagnostic competence on the part of teaching staff in order to find out the current levels of individual pupils and identify both their strengths and which individual achievement aims can be pursued. In teacher training, therefore, more weight needs to be accorded to pedagogical elements. In order to address all the pupils' senses, it is also essential to impart artistic and manual skills to teachers. Every teacher should be required to present evidence of completion of a course of vocational education and training which, if undertaken in the form of a dual course of study, would by no means have to result in longer duration of training and study.

10. There should be a reduction in the growing amount of material taught rather than allowing schools to impart an ever greater amount of specialist knowledge. The main emphasis should be on the teaching of broad-based, basic knowledge. Specialisation can be taught at further education schools, in higher education and during vocational education and training. It is initially vital to have a good mastery of basic cultural techniques such as language, reading, writing and arithmetic. Artis-
tic and manual skills need to be promoted alongside intellectual abilities. Lan-
guage is by no means restricted to a country’s home language alone. It should be
obligatory to learn at least two foreign languages. This should take place via
teaching in the language, such as mathematics lessons in English, rather than
teaching languages as “isolated” subject. As well as English, a language from the
Baltic Region should be learned. The increased establishment of bilingual
schools, especially in border areas, enables school attendance in neighbouring
countries. An expansion of pupil exchanges between the countries bordering the
Baltic will strengthen regional identity as well as at the same time establishing the
basis for close cooperation in the future.

11. The general school system also particularly needs to promote personal and social
competences. In order to do so, a pedagogical approach and forms of learning
are required which develop such skills and characteristics in a natural way and as
a matter of course rather than specific teaching subjects. Pupils learning with and
from one another within the classroom community experience different strengths
and weaknesses, developing tolerance, consideration for others and the ability to
cooperate. An individually structured pedagogy with specific learning objectives
and stages of learning promotes both self-confidence and mutual trust as well as
a sense of achievement and motivation. Independent learning through practical
activities and the fact that pupils need to deal with various groups of people within
this process support independence, communications skills, the ability to view the
big picture and a sense of purpose. Project and group work enables pupils to
practise trouble shooting in teams and receive training in personal responsibility.
Both subject achievement and social behaviour should be evaluated by the end of
basic education.

12. Uniform quality standards describing what should be learned in which class and
tested by independent, neutral institutions are important. The results of these in-
spections should provide teachers with guidance as to where they stand with their
pupils whilst also promoting competition between schools and fostering orientation
to the best and schools’ learning from one another rather than serving as a basis
for pupils’ school reports or exclusion criteria.
4.2 Theses on the further development of structures

The development of new educational structures must be preceded by cultural reforms. The latter will almost inevitably lead to sensible structures. On the basis of the analysis of the educational systems in the countries bordering the Baltic, the following main points relating to forward-looking structures may be outlined.

1. Compulsory attendance of pre-schooling of 1 year’s duration with flexible transitions to the school system depending on language skills and the respective individual stage reached.

2. A 9-year, integrated basic education (lower secondary school) retaining all pupils within the same band with no setting or streaming, schooling being compulsory until class 9 (attendance of class 10 leading to the qualification of intermediate secondary school leaving certificate is optional). Many countries in the Baltic Region already have school forms of this type. Integrated schools, especially those in Finland, performed excellently in the PISA Test.

A significantly individually oriented development should be pursued, with additional, targeted further teaching, especially for the less able, and pronounced social learning from one another.

After the 9th year at school (or after the voluntary 10th year leading to the qualification of intermediate secondary school leaving certificate), there follows a division into alternative further educational and training courses:

a) 3-year upper secondary school leading to the qualification of upper secondary school leaving certificate;

b) 4-year vocational upper secondary school leading to the qualification of upper secondary school leaving certificate and the first level of a recognised vocational education and training qualification at the same time;

c) 3-year vocational education and training course, which may be commenced after completion of basic education (or after the intermediate secondary school leaving certificate or upper secondary school leaving certificate).

3. Compulsory schooling or training until the age of 18. After completion of basic education, all young people should attend a further education school or embark on a course of vocational education and training.

4. Although the freedom accorded to parents and young people to choose a certain type of school, VET or direction of study is an important commodity, this must not be allowed to lead to a situation where misplaced ambition or incorrect assessment means children and young people have been virtually forced into forms of education and courses where they have to face up to the fact that they are unwel-
come and unpopular on a daily basis. Such young people gain only a steady stream of negative experiences and disappointments, lose confidence and are educated towards failure.

Whilst according all due respect to freedom of choice, individual strengths, potential and learning progress also need to be determining factors in making transitions to further educational courses. Extremely intensive consultations with parents and young people on this issue are necessary in every case. A far-reaching opening up and permeability of the educational system, enabling everyone to obtain any qualification in different ways, depending on his or her potential, also have a supportive effect. Detours then become the optimum educational route in accordance with individual opportunities rather than being lost time. Such detours increase local knowledge.

5. In terms of making the transition to further levels of qualification, the following conditions should be applied:

a) Transition from primary school to lower secondary school
   Test on mastery of the home language and individual status of development

b) Transition from lower secondary school to upper secondary school
   Individual upper secondary schools should set as a binding entry requirement a minimum level of achievement needing to be attained at lower secondary school (or in the intermediate secondary school leaving certificate). The respective minimum level can be set at varyingly high levels by the individual upper secondary schools.

c) Transition from general education to VET
   Compulsory entry prerequisites comprising differing levels of achievement and aptitude criteria should be stipulated and transparently justified for each individual occupation in accordance with actual requirements.

d) Commencement of a course of higher education
   Each entrance to a higher education course of study (regardless of whether on the basis of an upper secondary school leaving certificate or other entitlements) should be made compulsorily dependent on passing an entrance examination. Each institute of higher education/university should, however, be able to determine the level of requirements contained within the test.
4.3 Theses on the further development of initial and continuing vocational education and training

1. Compulsory entry prerequisites comprising differing levels of achievement and aptitude criteria should be stipulated and transparently justified for each individual occupation in accordance with actual requirements. These criteria help trainers and apprentices. The companies receive more employees who are up to the job, and the young people gain a sense of achievement which has a positive impact on their further development and motivation. There is a significant reduction in the high number of training dropouts and in the danger of ending up in an occupational cul-de-sac.

2. Vocational education and training must pay due regard to individual competences and possibilities and requires far-reaching differentiation. The introduction of various levels affords young people with different prior learning the opportunity of receiving training in line with their abilities:
   a) **Level 1:** Specific vocational training courses for the less able of 2 years’ duration, the main focus being on the facilitation of practical learning, which conclude with an independent, recognised qualification allocated to a level below that of the skilled worker or journeyman examination of today.
   
   b) **Level 2:** Intermediate vocational training courses involving the imparting of practice and theory, of 3 years’ duration and leading to a recognised qualification as skilled worker or journeyman.
   
   c) **Level 3:** Higher vocational training courses for the more able of 3 – 3½ years’ duration, teaching additional qualifications or bringing continuing training forward to form part of initial VET, leading to recognised qualifications allocated to a level above that of the skilled worker or journeyman examination of today.

3. In such a differentiated system of vocational education and training, a high level of permeability needs to be guaranteed. Anyone completing a lower level must be afforded the unrestricted opportunity of achieving a higher level, in accordance with learning progress and achievements actually made and receiving credit for training components already completed. The opposite process must also be possible, involving a change from training courses at a higher level to courses at a lower level, receiving credit for periods of training already covered.
Within a system which is open and permeable in every respect, step-by-step learning in accordance with individual possibilities and competences is achieved. Depending on learning success and individual developments, everyone can, in principle, achieve any initial and continuing vocational education and training qualification, albeit via different routes.

4. To the greatest extent possible, vocational education and training should take place within a dual system, combining practical training in-company with a parallel teaching of theory in vocational schools and ending with a recognised VET qualification. If VET is school-based, practical learning activities under practice conditions and in-company periods of learning need to be incorporated and constitute a minimum of 50% of the training period. Theoretical and practical training need to be closely interlinked. Wherever possible, the teaching of theory should be an accompaniment to practical training. In the case of extensive theoretical themes which need to be taught together in context, longer blocks of teaching can be selected, to a certain extent forming basic theoretical training.

Vocational schools need to operate with the greatest degree of autonomy and display a high level of flexibility, structuring both content and forms of teaching (block or daily instruction, lengths of blocks, project work etc.) in an occupationally specific way closely coordinated with companies. The companies or their representatives should be materially integrated into the organisational and management tasks of vocational schools.

Inter-company training centres, which supplement vocational education and training by offering specific courses, should form a coordinated unit, even if they are operated by different providers.

5. Intensive support must be given to spending a placement of several months' duration abroad during training. This will expand horizons in general, enable international experience to be gained, intercultural competence to be strengthened, contacts to be made and provide a knowledge of working practices and habits abroad. Components of training spent abroad must be accorded unlimited recognition for VET in the home country.

6. The vocational education and training qualifications at three levels should involve state examinations. On this basis, the regulation of the vocational education and training and the conducting of the examinations should, to the greatest extent possible, be transferred to the responsibility of self-administration on the part of trade and industry. The training qualifications obtained need to enjoy mutual recognition in the countries bordering the Baltic.

Appropriate foundations for vocational education and training are currently being laid in the form of the development of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and a European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and
Training (ECVET). These approaches are based on transparency and mutual trust. The main focus is on the crediting of competences and learning outcomes. When implementing such systems, it is particularly important to create unbureaucratic systems, to document qualifications and competences acquired, to certify international recognition or equivalence, to encourage ongoing further learning, to facilitate training and activities abroad and provide motivation to take part in such and to offer companies reliable information and transparency for their personnel decisions.

From their starting position of a stable basis of trust, the partners in the Baltic Region can play a pioneering role in the realisation of unbureaucratic systems and widespread implementation and achieve a head start in innovation.

7. Alongside formal learning and specialist knowledge, informal learning and competences acquired during training are decisive factors in achieving a high level of qualification. For this reason, such aspects need to be documented in certificates, company appraisals and self-assessments. The Euro Pass, which records personal skills, competences and qualifications and can be supplemented in a requirements oriented way, forms a basis for guidance and should be accorded intensive support by the partners in the Baltic Region.

8. Continuing vocational training does not require any state regulation, and should first and foremost remain a task for trade and industry and fall within their responsibility of self-administration. In overall terms, continuing VET requires intensive further development and, in particular, upgrading. The following are examples of starting points in this area.

- Systematic development of certified continuing training modules which can be bundled and which lead to recognised continuing training qualifications
- The creation of continuing training occupations and the development of horizontal career routes
- A higher level of permeability and more intensive interlinking between initial and continuing vocational education and training and between general education and higher education study in particular. Certain recognised vocational training qualifications (such as journeyman or skilled worker examinations including several years of occupational experience or continuing training qualifications (such as master craftsman) should constitute a higher education entrance qualification even if the person concerned has not passed the upper secondary school leaving certificate. If a relevant area of higher education study is undertaken, continuing training courses should be credited towards the duration of study.
• Promotion of international exchange, implementation of occupational activities and continuing training abroad whilst creating the highest possible level of transparency (see 7 “Euro-Pass”).

• Mutual international recognition or establishment of equivalence of continuing training qualifications within the framework of unbureaucratic systems on the basis of EQF and ECVET (see 6).

9. Within the context of the far-reaching reforms in accordance with the Bologna Process and the large-scale introduction of Bachelor and Masters courses of study, Bachelor courses should be offered much more extensively on a dual basis. This will enable the course of study at an institute of higher education or a university to be linked with a course of vocational education and training or a practical activity within a company. The VET concludes with an independent qualification which, to a certain extent, also generates credit points needed for the Bachelor examination. At the same time, lasting endeavours should be undertaken within the framework of the dual system to ensure all students spend parts of their course of study or vocational education and training abroad.