



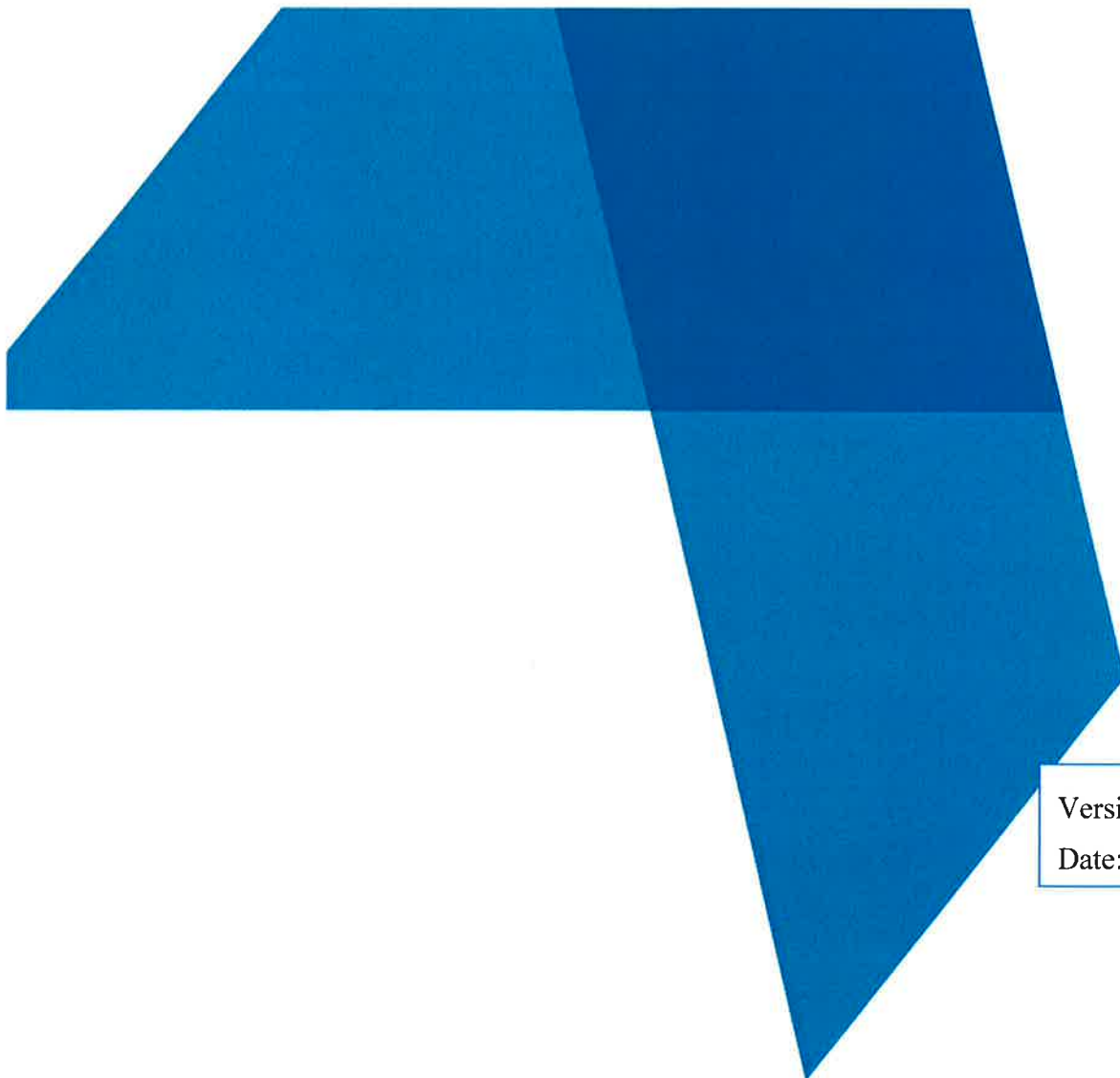
European Union  
European Regional  
Development Fund

**SKILLS+**  
Interreg Europe



**SKILLS+**

**ACTION PLAN FOR LATVIA**



Version 3  
Date: 20/09/2019





Vides aizsardzības un reģionālās attīstības ministrija

Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional  
Development of the Republic of Latvia



European Union  
European Regional  
Development Fund



## Part I - General information

Project: SKILLS+

Partner organization: The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia (Ministry)

Other partner organizations involved (if relevant): N/A

Country: Latvia

NUTS2 region: Latvia

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## Part II - Policy context

### The Action Plan aims to impact:

Investment for Operational Programme „Growth and Employment 2014 - 2020”.

**Name of the policy instrument addressed:** Operational Programme „Growth and Employment 2014 - 2020” Thematic objective (2): Enhancing access to and use and quality of ICT, 1.) Developing ICT products, ICT services and ecommerce, as well as to increase the demand in the ICT sphere.

The aim of the Action Plan (AP) is to improve national policy to promote ICT skills in SMEs, helping SMEs to seize the opportunities offered by the single European digital single market and the digital economy.

Both AP actions refers to the Policy Instrument mentioned in the Application Form, by promoting the growth of public e-service users, improving ICT skills of SME, raising awareness of the need for using digital tools in business. The activities of the AP will contribute to the achievement of the intended results of operational program (OP).

Action 1 consists of an amendment to an existing project, by adding a new training module to its work plan. The Action 1 "Trainings for Small and medium sized enterprises for development of innovations and digital technologies in Latvia" Action 1.2.2.3" "Support to ICT and non-technological trainings as well as trainings for attracting investors" (No. 1.2.2.3/16/1/002) introduces businesses to a new training module regarding the digital strategies for enterprises planned under the OP thematic objective 1 and has indirect impact on the OP thematic objective 2 (2) 2.2.1 (mentioned in the AF). Which means that development of SMEs skills and raising awareness for developing own digital strategies to promote competitiveness is a really important action to achieve the SKILLS+ project aim to enhance the competitiveness of SMEs and it also has an impact on OP 2.2.1. for promoting the improvement of the business environment.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> action of AP will have indirect impact to OP thematic objective (2) 2.2.1. as the Ministry is the managing authority for Digitalization policy in Latvia and does not develop e-services or infrastructure as such, as it is planned in the OP. The new digital strategic direction will be developed to increase knowledge and possibilities for SMEs business digitization and according to the findings from the SKILLS+ project activities and objectives of the new made "strategic direction" will be referred to the OP and there will be impact how funding decisions are taken.



The learning phase of the SKILLS + project provided an opportunity to learn from partner countries' experience and identify missing steps in policy development that would intensify the impact on the planned results of OP in accordance to integration of ICT tools into SMEs' business and e-skills.

### Part III - Details of the actions envisaged

#### ACTION 1

##### 1. The background

There is a digital skills gap between small and large enterprises in Latvia. During the SKILLS+ project the national good practice for e-skills development for SMEs where the ideas and recommendations taken from SKILLS + partners have been used to prepare future training modules (*for example, the importance of developing SME strategies for entrepreneurship*). During the learning stage of the Project the fact that the digital strategies are missing for SMEs and its importance in the development of economy and businesses must be noticed in order to influence their own business and understanding of benefits having from the use of IT tools. Due to encourage SMEs to develop their own digital strategies, the action was developed. The action will be implemented in the frame of the existing project budget and will influence the policy instrument indirectly.

Taking into account the DESI indicators, recommendations of the Peer Review team as well as partner's good practices, the PP3 came to the conclusion that accessibility of ICT tools, e-government and e-services in Latvia is at a relatively high level, but the biggest problem is still low level of SMEs' understanding the benefits of using ICT tools. In this regard the Latvian good practice were identified under the ERDF funding of OP which can be updated with a new training module and supplemented in order to encourage SMEs to develop digital strategies of companies, thus improving productivity and competitiveness in the Latvian and international markets.

According to the Peer Review, hosted in Latvia from 2.10. – 6.10. 2017, recommendations were taken into account during the evaluation process for developing the AP actions. There were experts from Norway, Croatia and Spain participating in the PR. The experts were introduced with the situation in Latvia by presentations as well as study visits in the stakeholder's institutions and also by visiting the one of the most developed cities – Venstpils (*Ventspils Digital centre, University of Ventspils, Candle Factory "Diana" and windows factory "ARBO", which are the most digitalized companies in Ventspils city*).

Taking into consideration the Baseline Study and the Joint Study, both summarizing the situation in Latvia and the other regions and EU members' situation regarding the projects aim, and after assessing the information obtained during the interviews, the peer review team decided that the best recommendations possible for improving Latvia's policy instrument were the following:

- Create recognizable certification for completed courses/trainings;
- Implement existing plans for digital development;
- Create and implement action plans on national and local level.

The recommendations of the experts' evaluation and conclusions of the seen situation were useful and taken into account in the development of the Action Plan. All recommendations were discussed by our national partner group and also defined in the light of our current situation and possibilities to influence indirectly our chosen policy instrument. Based on the Peer Review's assessment, it was concluded that in order to drive business growth, the entrepreneur first needs to understand how to design a digital strategy for the company.

The 1<sup>st</sup> action of the AP developed under 2014.-2020 ERDF funds Operational programme "Growth and Employment" Thematic objective 1 "Research, technological development and innovation" measure No. 1.2.2. Project "Trainings for Small and medium sized enterprises for development of innovations and digital technologies in Latvia" Action 1.2.2.3" "Support to ICT and non-technological trainings as well as trainings for attracting investors" (No. 1.2.2.3/16/I/002) introduces businesses to



a new training module planned regarding the digital strategies for enterprises as well as the introduction of the LIKTA certificate for trained entrepreneurs within the framework of the project.

On June 14, 2016 the Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia adopted regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers for measure No. 1.2.2. "To facilitate implementation of innovations in enterprises" action No. 1.2.2.3. "Non-technology training and training to attract investors". It is closed call currently (*selection procedure from 03.08.2016. till 05.09.2016*). Implementation of the project takes place from 05.12.2016 to 31.12.2020. It is planned an extension until 31.12.2022.

## 2. Action

Introduction businesses to **a new training module** in the frame of Project "Trainings for Small and medium sized enterprises for development of innovations and digital technologies in Latvia" Action 1.2.2.3" **"Support to ICT and non-technological trainings as well as trainings for attracting investors"** (No. 1.2.2.3/16/I/002).

The project was aimed at raising productivity, innovations and increasing the long-term competitiveness of small and micro-enterprises by teaching them how to effectively apply ICT technologies and e-skills. The planned activity will directly train on the opportunities provided by ICT, how to design and develop a future corporate strategy using ICT that further contributes to the OP's goal. The implementation of AP second activity will promote the competitiveness of SMEs, develop economic activity and productivity of merchants.

Support is provided to small and micro enterprises, self-employed persons in training thematic blocks:

- *Digital skills and ICT solutions for productivity;*
- *The use of ICT tools for SME's competitiveness and development;*
- *Use of ICT solutions for business efficiency and export development.*

In Action 1.2.2.3" **"Support to ICT and non-technological trainings as well as trainings for attracting investors"** (No. 1.2.2.3/16/I/002) it is planned to introduce businesses to a new training module regarding the digital strategies for enterprises as well as the introduction of the LIKTA certificate for trained entrepreneurs within the framework of the project.

**Step 1. Work group has to be set to develop training module regarding the digital strategies of enterprises.**

**Step 2. Developed Program Curriculum.**

**Step 3. Trainings started.**

So far the trainings are planned in 5 regions, big cities of LV. At least 4500 digital skills trainings will be organized for small and micro enterprises. 550 trained entrepreneurs who have acquired a training module on digital capabilities.



### 3. Players involved

Players involved	Role
Ministry of Economics (EM)	Responsible institution for the policy development of SMEs
Non-governmental organization "Latvian Information and Communications Technology Association" (LIKTA)	In charge of projects regarding Digital skills, IT development
Training providers	20 training provider institutions: For Example: <a href="http://bda.lv/bda4/en">Baltic Computer Academy</a> ( <a href="http://bda.lv/bda4/en">http://bda.lv/bda4/en</a> ); <a href="http://www.dzc.lv/en">Computer science Center</a> ( <a href="http://www.dzc.lv/en">http://www.dzc.lv/en</a> ) ; <a href="http://www.zrkac.lv">Zemgale Region Competence Development Center</a> ( <a href="http://www.zrkac.lv">www.zrkac.lv</a> ); <a href="https://www.latinsoft.lv/">Latinsoft</a> <a href="https://www.latinsoft.lv/">https://www.latinsoft.lv/</a>
SKILLS+ project stakeholders	Participate in meetings, local steering committee to develop ideas and work on new project module.

### 4. Timeframe

Project Activities	Time in months
Work group has to be set to develop training module regarding the digital strategies of enterprises	02/ - 03 - 2019
Developed Program Curriculum	02/2019 – 06/2019
Trainings started	06/2019 - 12/2020

### 5. Costs

Total amount of the project is 2 764 537 EUR

### 6. Funding sources

70% of the ERDF and 30% of co-financing of businesses



## ACTION 2

### 1. The background

During the implementation of the SKILLS + project, through analysis, studies, stakeholder's work groups and evaluation processes of the situation in Latvia, the PP3 came to the next conclusion that there is necessary strong digital strategical direction for SMEs. The European Commission has indicated that if national ICT tools are well developed, including for SMEs, but they are not sufficiently used, there is a need for policies to promote their use, which results in the SKILLS + project focusing on activities that would affect the optimization / replenishment of the policies of 2.2. Thematic Objective (TO).

There are no separate, simply perceived national digital strategy for entrepreneurs in Latvia, which could contribute to the achievement of the Policy Instrument's goal. Digital controversy is fragmented and difficult to perceive, as a result of which entrepreneurs are reluctant to use the ICT solutions offered by either government or non-governmental organizations. These conclusions have served as a basis for developing Action Plan activities.

There is a really good example of Norway partner with the project of eTrøndelag which is Trøndelag County Authority's toolbox for regional digital development and contributes to the creation of new or enhanced services in both private- and public sectors. In 2016 digitalisation/digital development is implemented and stressed as an imperative strategic element in the County Authority's policies. The Peer Review in Trøndelag showed that the policy strategy in region is very well developed, strongly implemented and have strong impact on SMEs development and cooperation which made the Ministry to have chosen it as a good practice.

In this regard the development of the strategic direction of business digitization in Latvia has been recognized by including this action in the SKILLS+ Action plan to reach the target audience, to provide knowledge and support for SMEs. Skills + project has provided valuable impulses for further policy development in the country, thanks to the good partnership practices and experiences, seeing the success of cooperation between all actors of involved parties, cooperation and evaluation of the different national situations and opportunities.

### 2. Action

#### **Development of the strategic direction of business digitization in Latvia.**

**Step 1. Work group has to be set – up consisting of politicians and NGOs.**

**Step 2. Developed key activities, attracted funding to achieve the objectives of the plan. Plan approved.**



### 3. Players involved

Players involved	Role
All ministries	Policy makers
Non-governmental organization "Latvian Information and Communications Technology Association" (LIKTA)	Main actor of the IT industry who could influence IT companies to cooperate in teaching processes and give an input to the AP from the business side
Latvian IT Cluster	View from the IT sector side, practical side
Latvian Employers' Confederation	Represents employers in Latvia
Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Direct cooperation with the businesses, also participate in teaching processes
Union of Local Authorities of Latvia	Have departments of development of businesses in the municipalities in that way easier to reach the audience
Planning Regions	Very good communication platform for politicians and businesses

### 4. Timeframe

Project Activity	Time in months
Work group has to be set – up consisting of politicians and NGOs.	09/2019
Developed key activities, attracted funding to achieve the objectives of the plan. Plan approved.	09/2019-12/2020

### 5. Costs

Costs could include the remuneration of developers of the strategic direction of business digitization (*strategic direction*). There are expected that the staff will be involved (*2 people half- time each*) which would work on development of the strategic direction and which supposed to take a year.

### 6. Funding sources

National funding. Costs for development of the strategic direction will be drawn up according to the staff involved and would cost around € 35,000 per year. It would influence Operational Programme indirectly.



**Part IV – Endorsement and signature**

The SKILLS+ Action plan (AP) was approved by the SKILLS+ project Stakeholder's (SH) work group protocol No 1, signed by the SH group representatives on 4th October 2018 and signed electronically by the Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of Latvia which is in charge of the development of Information Society, including e-skills, e-government, digitalization of the processes in Latvia on 25.02.2019.

Please, find the Action Plan and Protocol (only in Latvian) on the Ministries' web page >>>

Name and surname of the signatory: Mr. Uģis Bisenieks

Function of the signatory: Acting Deputy State Secretary

Name of the organization: Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development  
 of Republic of the Latvia

Signature (stamp):



Place and Date:

Riga, 30<sup>th</sup> September