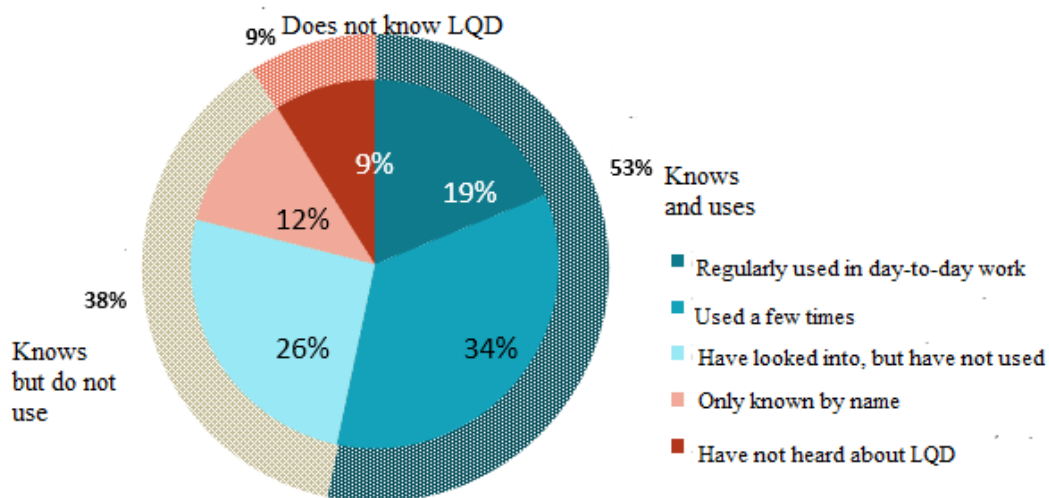


„Visibility and use of the Latvian Qualifications Database in Latvia”

Academic Information Centre (AIC) in cooperation with SIA „RAIT Custom Research Baltic” conducted a study (July-November 2019) with an aim to explore how and for what purpose Latvian education policy makers, implementers and their social partners (target audience) use Latvian Qualifications Database (LQD). The research data was collected and conclusions were drawn from 3 sources: Computer Assisted Web Interviews (CAWI), Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and a working seminar, that was organized by AIC on November 7, 2019). To reach the aim of the study, four main objectives were identified:

- 1) Determine if promotion activities have reached the target audience;
- 2) Explore how and for what purpose the target audience uses LQD;
- 3) Determine if the content of LQD meets the needs of the target audience;
- 4) Explore the target audiences’ views on future use of LQD.

The CAWI survey showed that a significant majority of respondents are informed about LQD (91%), only 9% had not heard about it before, also slightly more than half of respondents (53%) use LQD on daily basis.



Although it can be concluded that the promotion activities have been sufficient to reach the current target audience of LQD, the visibility activities could be improved as of 26% of respondents who did not know about LQD, 67% mentioned that they could use it in the future. Also further promotion activities should include more information on opportunities provided by LQD as 10% of those that did know about LQD, but had not used it, indicated that will use it now that they have explored information and functions provided in LQD.

FDG also pointed out two unique characteristics of LQD that could be included in promotion information:

1. LQD provides information describing Latvian education system and qualifications translated in English.
2. LQD provides precisely structured regulatory enactments regarding education systems in the context of qualifications.

Data show that the majority (76%) of respondents use information on qualifications in their day-to-day work. Reasons vary as shown in table below:

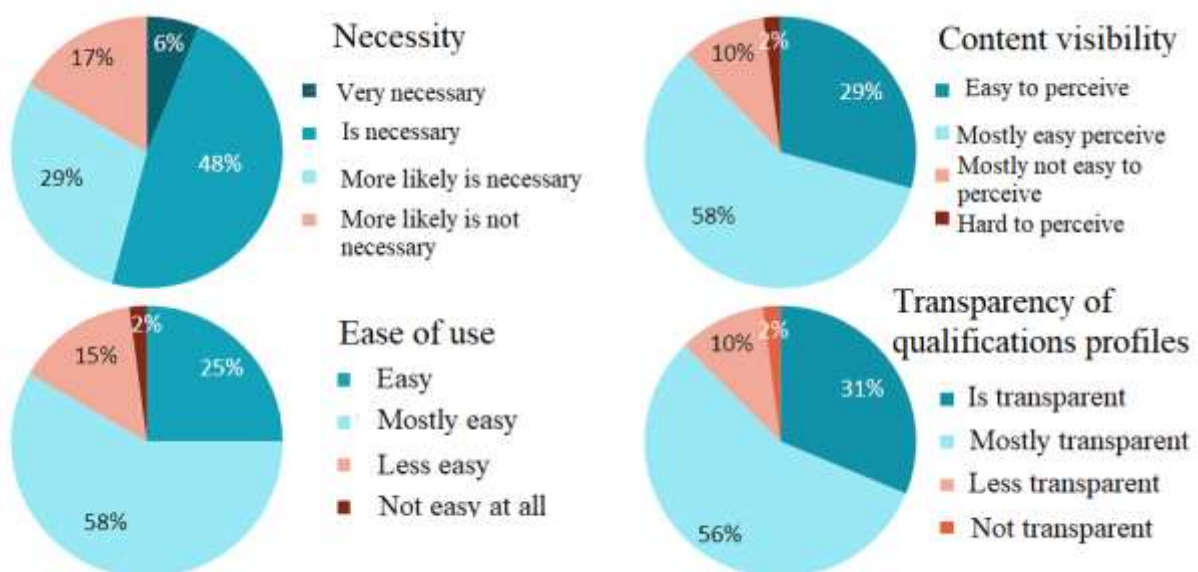
Reasons for searching information about qualification

For work (without specifying)	28,57%
For work: Licensing, accreditation, updating the content of education programmes or occupational standards	27,47%
Employment in the education sector, for information purposes (project implementation, information provision/clarification, addressing specific issues)	19,78%
Clarification of the level of qualifications, general information on LQF and EQF	7,69%
For non-work informative purpose	5,49%
Information on learning opportunities for private and work related reasons	5,49%
Do not look for information regarding qualifications	5,49%

Survey data underlined that Latvian education information landscape is fragmented. Data shows that respondents use variety of information sources to find all necessary components to perform their work, most used sources of information are: website of National Centre for Education (40%) and Academic Information Centre (39%), as well as LQD (33%).

CAWI data shows that most used LQD section is “Education system” (94%) - 43% of users are looking for overall information on Latvian education system, 32% users also visit this section to follow changes in education field, but some (6%) to find LQF/EQF levels or compare to other databases (6%). Second most used section is “About Database” (77%) - 41% use it to gain overall information about LQD, 5% to access links to other information sources provided there. Section “Glossary” (48%) is used for searching terminology in the context of LQF/EQF and section “Search qualification” (48%) – for accessing comprehensive information on qualifications.

Survey shows that 83% of respondents did not have difficulties while using LQD, and, is viewed by the majority of respondents as easily accessible and transparent (87%) as shown in image below. However, not only survey, but also FGD noted that LQD might be hard to use for novice users as some of respondents mention that they had to “get used to” the database.



Most of the respondents did not think that major improvements are needed in LQD. However, some suggestions were made (table below) of which several have already been implemented during and/or after the publishing of the study results. The improvements made were the development of qualification comparison tool, statistics tool, as well as inclusion of visual information in user-friendly language. Respondents provided information on what they find is lacking in the below mentioned sections of LQD:

„About Database”	
No improvements needed	82%
Include visual information, information in a user-friendly language	13%
Additional information (more links to other information sources, highlight information “Database data”)	5%
„Education system”	
No improvements needed	77%
Include visual information, information in a user-friendly language	17%
Information on succession of qualifications	6%
„Glossary”	
No improvements needed	61%
Information should be updated and new terms added on a regular basis, there should also be clear reference to the sources and information on the last revision	35%
Information in user-friendly language	4%
„Search qualification”	
No improvements needed	65%
Additional information/easier to find information (information on: historic qualifications, broad information for qualifications without occupational standards, easily accessible information about providers)	18%
Improvements to search function (speed of response)	13%

Survey data suggests that LQD users would prefer that information in section “Events” would reflect changes in Latvian education and database itself, not only seminars and events organised about database. This has been implemented after publishing the Study. Strong need for User guide was suggested, that in some part have been added to section “Questions/answers”, by providing short videos and explicit information on most functions of LQD.

Study revealed several non-section based suggestions that have been noted by respondents as useful for further use of LQD by respondents. These suggestions can be grouped in themes:

- 1) User Experience – LQD User Guide, more transparent information layout (heading hierarchy, highlighting with colour and font size), more convenient qualification matching options, and making the search tool more intuitive and flexible.
- 2) Complementing information - comparison tool; complement LQF/EQF levels table with vocational qualification levels; more precise references to sources of information as well as dates of revision; include visual and wider textual information characterising Latvian educational system (Latvian education system scheme); provide statistics; clearer information on who is the holder of database, so it is more trusted.

As some of the proposed suggestions of improvement for LQD indicate, target audience sees LQD as source of information that they are keen on using in the future. Survey data also shows that of those who have not used database so far, would do it in the future, but 40% of respondents who had not heard about LQD before, noted that they would use this database for work purpose as a tool to clarify information not only about qualifications, but also education system and qualifications frameworks.

To explore the necessity for future promotion activities, respondents were inquired whether the target audience of LQD should be expanded. Data does not provide clear answer to this question. 83% do agree that LQD is a needed source of information in Latvian education landscape for people working in education field, however, 6.25% are doubtful with regards to expansion of the target audience (outside education field). Respondents' opinions on the possible audience indicate that the target audience might be wider and include not only Latvian educational policy makers, implementers and their social partners (target audience so far), but all who work in or with education field as well.

Survey also provided information on how to best reach existing and future users of database. Almost half of CAWI respondents (46%) suggested that stronger promotion of LQD in social media (such as Twitter and Facebook) would reach wider count of potential users. But information should be more targeted to reach all who would benefit from LQD, such as education providers, career counsellors, people working with unemployed, specialists in the field of education etc.