Republic of Latvia

Cabinet

Regulation No. 374

Adopted 4 July 2023

**Regulations Regarding the Implementation of the Activity 4.2.2.5 “Participation in International Large-scale Assessments in Education for the Development and Provision of Education Quality Monitoring System” under the Specific Objective 4.2.2. “Improve the Quality, Inclusiveness, Efficiency, and Relevance of Education and Training Systems in the Labour Market, Including through the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning to Support the Acquisition of Key Competences, Including Entrepreneurial and Digital Skills, and Promoting the Introduction of Dual Learning Systems and Apprenticeship” of the European Union Cohesion Policy Programme 2021–2027**

*Issued pursuant to*

*Section 19, Clauses 6 and 13 of the Law on Management of European Union Funds for the 2021–2027 Programming Period*

**I. General Provisions**

1. The Regulation prescribes:

1.1. the procedures for implementing the Activity 4.2.2.5 “Participation in international large-scale assessments in education for the development and provision of education quality monitoring system” (hereinafter – the Activity) under the specific objective 4.2.2. “Improve the quality, inclusiveness, efficiency, and relevance of education and training systems in the labour market, including through the validation of non-formal and informal learning to support the acquisition of key competences, including entrepreneurial and digital skills, and promoting the introduction of dual learning systems and apprenticeship” (hereinafter – the Specific Objective) of the European Union Cohesion Policy Programme 2021–2027;

1.2. the objective of the Activity;

1.3. the financing available to the Activity;

1.4. the requirements for a European Social Fund Plus project (hereinafter – the project) applicant and co-operation partners of the project;

1.5. the conditions for the activities to be supported and for the eligibility of costs;

1.6. the conditions and procedures for the application of simplified costs.

2. The objective of the Activity shall be to ensure participation in the international large-scale assessments in education and programmes conducted by international organisations for the development of education policy and the assessment of the implementation and impact of the policies.

3. The target group of the Activity shall be the State authorities responsible for the development of education content, the supervision of the implementation thereof, and the implementation of international research in the field of education and science policy.

4. The objective of the Activity shall be achieved by implementing the activities to be supported and referred to in Paragraph 18 of this Regulation and achieving the following supervision indicators by 31 December 2029:

4.1. output indicator – the number of State administration or public service institutions and services at the national, regional, or local level which have received support – 1, including one institution by 31 December 2024;

4.2. outcome indicator – the number of institutions that have implemented improvements to the quality, efficiency, and alignment of education and training systems with the labour market – 1;

4.3. national indicators:

4.3.1. the number of supported international research cycles where participation has been ensured – 8, including announcement, dissemination, and analysis of the results of at least two research cycles by 31 December 2024;

4.3.2. participation in three international programmes has been ensured;

4.3.3. secondary study of data obtained in eight research cycles has been conducted by providing data-based response to a specific action policy issue.

5. The indicators referred to in Sub-paragraphs 4.3.1, 4.3.2., and 4.3.3 of this Regulation shall be achieved through the following:

5.1. participation in the following eight international research cycles:

5.1.1. the OECD PISA 2025, the Programme for International Student Assessment, conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development;

5.1.2. the OECD TALIS 2024, the Teaching and Learning International Survey, conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development;

5.1.3. the IEA TIMSS 2023, the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement;

5.1.4. the IEA PIRLS 2026, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement;

5.1.5. the IEA ICILS 2023 and ICILS 2028, the International Computer and Information Literacy Studies, conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement;

5.1.6. the OECD PIAAC 2022–2023, the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies study, conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development;

5.1.7. the IEA ICCS 2027, the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study;

5.2. participation in the following three international programmes:

5.2.1. the OECD INES, the Indicators of Education Systems programme, conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development;

5.2.2. the OECD CERI, the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation operational programme, conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development;

5.2.3. the EC SGIB, the programme for the Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks of the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture of the European Commission;

5.3. conducting secondary study of data obtained in the following eight research cycles:

5.3.1. OECD PISA 2022;

5.3.2. OECD TALIS 2024;

5.3.3. OECD PIAAC 2022‒2023;

5.3.4. IEA PIRLS 2021;

5.3.5. IEA TIMSS 2019 and IEA TIMSS 2023;

5.3.6. IEA ICILS 2023;

5.3.7. IEA ICCS 2022.

6. The Activity shall be implemented in the form of a limited selection of project application.

7. The functions of the responsible institution within the scope of the Activity shall be carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science (hereinafter – the responsible institution).

8. The total funding intended within the scope of the Activity shall be equal to EUR 6 835 606, including the European Social Fund Plus funding in the amount of EUR 5 810 265 and the State funding in the amount of EUR 1 025 341. The maximum eligible amount of the European Social Fund Plus funding shall not exceed 85 % of the total eligible funding of the project.

9. In the project application, the total funding available for the implementation of the Activity shall not exceed EUR 5 776 088, including the European Social Fund Plus funding in the amount of EUR 4 909 674 and the State funding in the amount of EUR 866 414.

10. The responsible institution may, according to the decision of the European Commission on the mid-term review, propose to increase the total funding available for the Activity up to the planned total amount of the funding referred to in Paragraph 8 of this Regulation.

**II. Requirements for the Project Applicant and Co-operation Partners**

11. Within the scope of the Activity, the Ministry of Education and Science shall be the project applicant.

12. The project applicant shall prepare the project application in accordance with the requirements specified in the project application selection regulations and submit it to the co-operation institution within the term specified in the invitation, using the electronic environment of the Cohesion Policy Fund Management Information System. After entry into an agreement with the co-operation institution on the project implementation, the project applicant shall become the beneficiary (hereinafter – the beneficiary).

13. The beneficiary shall ensure participation in the following:

13.1. the international research cycles referred to in Sub-paragraph 5.1 of this Regulation, involving higher education institutions and scientific institutions that implement education programmes in the study field “Education and Pedagogy”, and in the case referred to in Sub-paragraph 5.1.6 of this Regulation, also in the study field “Sociology, Political Science, and Anthropology”, as co-operation partners in the project implementation;

13.2. the research programme referred to in Sub-paragraph 5.2.1 of this Regulation, involving the Central Statistical Bureau as a co-operation partner in the project implementation;

13.3. the secondary studies of data obtained in the research cycles referred to in Sub-paragraph 5.3 of this Regulation, involving higher education institutions and scientific institutions as co-operation partners in the project implementation.

14. The co-operation partners referred to in Paragraph 13 of this Regulation shall participate in the implementation of international research cycles, programmes, and secondary study of the data obtained in research cycles, performing the activities specified in the co-operation contract for the implementation of supporting activities (hereinafter – the co-operation contract). When preparing the co-operation contract, the beneficiary shall evaluate the requirements laid down in the contract or guidelines of the international organisation to ensure that the activities referred to in Sub-paragraph 18.1 of this Regulation are performed.

15. The beneficiary shall be responsible for the fulfilment of the obligations of the co-operation partners in the project implementation and for the functions implemented by the co-operation partners in the project, including avoiding the risk of double funding. The beneficiary shall ensure communication and exchange of documentation between the co-operation partners and the co-operation institution related to the project introduction. The beneficiary shall concurrently ensure the absence of a conflict of interest, i.e., ensure that each co-operation partner has signed a certification of the non-existence of a conflict of interest.

16. In addition to the conditions referred to in Paragraph 14 of this Regulation, the co-operation partners shall ensure involvement of students of higher education institutions and applicants for a doctoral degree as well as at least one researcher who is in employment relationship with another higher education institution or scientific institution in the relevant field of study and has experience in conducting international studies in the respective area for the purpose of implementation of each international research cycle referred to in Sub-paragraph 5.1 of this Regulation.

17. The beneficiary has an obligation to justify in the project application the selection of the co-operation partners referred to in Paragraph 13 of this Regulation, indicating the mechanism of the involvement of each co-operation partner, the need, and the conformity of their competence with the planned activities to be supported, and also to enter into the co-operation contract with each co-operation partner. The co-operation contract shall include at least the following conditions:

17.1. the activities to be supported and implemented by the co-operation partner and the scope thereof;

17.2. the procedures and terms for submitting reports and other information;

17.3. the payment procedures for the implementation of the activities to be supported and referred to in Paragraph 18 of this Regulation and for covering the eligible direct and indirect costs referred to in Paragraph 19 of this Regulation.

**III. Activities to be Supported and Eligible Costs**

18. The following activities shall be supported within the scope of the Activity:

18.1. the implementation of the international research cycles and programmes referred to in Paragraph 5 of this Regulation and the secondary study of data obtained in research cycles which is applicable to both the beneficiary and the co-operation partner, including the following:

18.1.1. ensuring national participation in international research cycles and data analysis programmes;

18.1.2. implementation of the international research cycles and data analysis programmes, including provision of research data and submission thereof to the relevant international institution, and also preparation of data for publication, including in international databases (where applicable);

18.1.3. preparation for publication of a report on the first results of the international research cycles and data analysis programmes, publication, and presentation thereof, and also validation of national data and information in reports prepared by international institutions;

18.1.4. conducting of secondary study of data obtained in the international research cycles;

18.2. the project management and ensuring that it is implemented where applicable to the beneficiary;

18.3. the information on project implementation and the publicity measures applicable to the beneficiary;

18.4. measures for shaping the impact of research results, including information on research results, involvement in the development of strategic documents, guidelines, and other documents, and also measures for involving target groups in the use of research results applicable to the beneficiary.

19. The following types of costs shall be planned within the scope of the Activity:

19.1. direct eligible costs which are directly connected to the implementation of project activities and necessary for the achievement of project results, and this connection is clearly comprehensible and provable;

19.2. indirect eligible costs which are not directly connected to the achievement of project results, but support and ensure corresponding circumstances for the implementation of project activities and the achievement of project results;

19.3. unforeseen costs.

20. The direct eligible costs referred to in Sub-paragraph 19.1 of this Regulation shall include the following items of costs:

20.1. costs of remuneration for the beneficiary’s personnel involved in project management and implementation in accordance with the simplified cost methodology approved by the responsible institution which has been agreed upon with the managing authority;

20.2. costs for the acquisition or lease of workplace equipment (office furniture and equipment, computer programs and licenses) for the beneficiary’s personnel involved in project management and implementation, and also for the creation of new workplaces or the renewal of the existing workplaces if the equipment of the existing workplaces has been worn out and is being written off, shall be planned not to exceed EUR 3000 per workplace throughout the planned project implementation period. If the personnel is employed at normal working hours, the acquisition or lease costs of the workplace equipment shall be eligible in the amount of 100 per cent. If the personnel is employed part-time or in accordance with the principle of part-time eligibility, the acquisition or lease costs of the workplace equipment shall be eligible in proportion to the distribution of the workload in percentage;

20.3. costs of domestic official travel and business trips for the beneficiary’s personnel involved in project management and implementation for the purpose of ensuring the activities to be supported and referred to in Paragraph 18 of this Regulation. The standard scale of unit costs approved by the managing authority in accordance with the methodology of the managing authority “Methodology for the Calculation and Application of the Standard Scale of Unit Costs for Official Domestic Travel Costs for the Implementation of the Operational Programme “Growth and Employment” and the European Union Cohesion Policy Programme 2021–2027” shall be applied to the costs of official domestic travel and work (business) trips;

20.4. costs of official travel abroad in accordance with the laws and regulations laying down the procedures for reimbursing expenses related to official travel for the beneficiary’s project manager and personnel involved in project implementation for the purpose of implementation of the activities to be supported and referred to in Paragraph 18 of this Regulation if they are clearly related to the achievement of the project result, and also for the official responsible for the project and the delegate nominated by Latvia in research and programme executive boards if they are clearly related to the objective of the project;

20.5. costs of transport services (fuel costs, hire of vehicles, purchase of transport services, use of public transport, except for the compensation for the use of a personal vehicle of an employee in respect of mileage) for the beneficiary’s personnel involved in project management and implementation for the purpose of ensuring the activities to be supported and referred to in Paragraph 18 of this Regulation. Fuel costs of a passenger vehicle and costs of public transport of regional intercity and regional local relevance shall be covered in accordance with the conditions contained in the methodology of the Ministry of Finance “Methodology for the Calculation and Application of the Standard Scale of Unit Costs for 1 km Costs for the Implementation of the Operational Programme “Growth and Employment” and the European Union Cohesion Policy Programme 2021–2027”;

20.6. participation fees of the international studies and programmes referred to in Sub-paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2 of this Regulation shall be atrributable to the beneficiary;

20.7. translation and publication costs for the beneficiary, including costs for issuing informative distribution materials, and also costs for the organisation and implementation of seminars and conferences for the purpose of ensuring the activities to be supported and referred to in Paragraph 18 of this Regulation;

20.8. service and supply delivery costs for the beneficiary for the purpose of ensuring the activities to be supported and referred to in Paragraph 18 of this Regulation;

20.9. costs of information and publicity measures for the beneficiary in accordance with Articles 47 and 50 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy (hereinafter – Regulation No 2021/1060), for the purpose of ensuring the activities to be supported and referred to in Sub-paragraph 18.3 of this Regulation;

20.10. development and provision of communication strategy for the project and communication measures related to the content of the activities to be supported and referred to in Paragraph 18 of this Regulation for the beneficiary.

21. The costs of the activities to be supported and referred to in Sub-paragraphs 18.1.2, 18.1.3, and 18.1.4 of this Regulation are planned and attributed to the co-operation partner in accordance with the simplified cost calculation methodology developed by the responsible institution which is agreed upon with the managing authority. The following items of direct eligible costs shall be eligible for the co-operation partner:

21.1. costs of remuneration for the personnel involved in implementation for the purpose of implementation of the activities to be supported and referred to in Sub-paragraphs 18.1.2, 18.1.3, and 18.1.4 of this Regulation on the basis of an employment contract or a work-performance contract. In the case of an employment contract, this shall constitute remuneration and mandatory State social insurance contributions of employer, benefits, and compensations in accordance with the personnel policy of the co-operation partner (except for overtime). In the case of a work-performance contract, it shall constitute a payment to a natural person for a service and taxes related to the work-performance contract;

21.2. costs for the personnel involved in implementation for the creation of new workplaces or the renewal of the existing workplaces, if the equipment of the existing workplaces has been worn out and is being written off, shall be planned not to exceed EUR 3000 per workplace throughout the planned project implementation period. If the personnel is employed at normal working hours, the acquisition or lease costs of the workplace equipment shall be eligible in the amount of 100 per cent. If the personnel is employed part-time or in accordance with the principle of part-time eligibility, the acquisition or lease costs of the workplace equipment shall be eligible in proportion to the distribution of the workload in percentage;

21.3. translation and publication costs, including costs for issuing informative distribution materials, and also costs for organisation and implementation of seminars and conferences for the purpose of ensuring the activities to be supported and referred to in Paragraph 18 of this Regulation;

21.4. service and supply delivery costs for the purpose of ensuring the activities to be supported and referred to in Paragraph 18 of this Regulation;

21.5. acquisition or lease costs for the information technology equipment (hardware, software, licenses, printers, data storage equipment, online provision) necessary for the project implementation, except for the personnel involved in implementation, for the purpose of ensuring the activity to be supported and referred to in Sub-paragraph 18.1 of this Regulation;

21.6. costs of official travel and business trips for the personnel involved in implementation for the purpose of ensuring the activities to be supported and referred to in Paragraph 18 of this Regulation. The standard scale of unit costs approved by the managing authority in accordance with the methodology of the managing authority “Methodology for the Calculation and Application of the Standard Scale of Unit Costs for Official Domestic Travel Costs for the Implementation of the Operational Programme “Growth and Employment” and the European Union Cohesion Policy Programme 2021–2027” shall be applied to the costs of official domestic travel and work (business) trips;

21.7. costs of official travel abroad in accordance with the laws and regulations laying down the procedures for reimbursing expenses related to official travel for the personnel involved in implementation for the purpose of implementation of the activities to be supported and referred to in Paragraph 18 of this Regulation if they are clearly related to the achievement of the project result;

21.8. costs of transport services (fuel costs, hire of vehicles, purchase of transport services, use of public transport, except for the compensation for the use of a personal vehicle of an employee in respect of mileage) for the personnel involved in implementation for the purpose of ensuring the activities to be supported and referred to in Paragraph 18 of this Regulation. Fuel costs of a passenger vehicle and costs of public transport of regional intercity and regional local relevance shall be covered in accordance with the conditions contained in the methodology of the Ministry of Finance “Methodology for the Calculation and Application of the Standard Scale of Unit Costs for 1 km Costs for the Implementation of the Operational Programme “Growth and Employment” and the European Union Cohesion Policy Programme 2021–2027”.

22. The indirect eligible costs of the project shall be attributed to both the beneficiary and the co-operation partner. The beneficiary and the co-operation partner may plan indirect costs as a single item of costs, applying the uniform rate of indirect costs in the amount of 15 % of the direct eligible personnel costs in the project which is only calculated for the costs arising from legal employment relationship.

23. Unforeseen costs of the project incurred for the performance of additional works or the provision of services, or those that have become necessary for the project implementation due to an increase in participation fees and unforeseeable circumstances, may be planned by the beneficiary as a single item of costs, not exceeding 5 % of the total direct eligible costs of the project referred to in Sub-paragraph 19.1 of this Regulation. Prior to incurring such expenses, the beneficiary shall agree upon the use of unforeseen costs with the co-operation institution, as stipulated in the agreement on project implementation.

24. Costs of value added tax shall be eligible both for the beneficiary and the co-operation partner if they are non-recoverable in accordance with the laws and regulations in the field of tax policy.

25. When commencing the project implementation, the simplified cost types referred to in Sub-paragraphs 20.3 and 20.5 of this Regulation shall be applied to the costs referred to in this Chapter. The responsible institution shall develop the simplified cost methodology referred to in Sub-paragraph 20.1 and Paragraph 21 of this Regulations by the time of the selection of project application. The simplified costs shall be applied according to the specified time of entry into effect and conditions thereof.

26. If the horizontal simplified cost methodology enters into effect during the project implementation and it is mandatory for all projects within the 2021–2027 programming period of the European Union funds, it shall be applied in the Activity.

**IV. Conditions for the Implementation of the Activity**

27. The costs intended for the implementation of the activities to be supported and referred to in Paragraph 18 of this Regulations shall be eligible from 1 January 2022:

27.1. the project shall be implemented within the scope of the Activity in accordance with the agreement on project implementation, but not later than by 31 December 2029;

27.2. costs of the co-operation partner, the University of Latvia, in the ICILS 2023 shall be eligible starting from 1 January 2022 in accordance with the Cabinet Protocol Decision of 17 May 2022 (Minutes No. 27, Paragraph 33);

27.3. costs of the co-operation partner shall be eligible from the day of entry into the co-operation contract or agreement on the implementation of a specific study, unless otherwise specified in the relevant document;

27.4. costs of the co-operation partner shall be eligible from the day of entry into a memorandum of understanding on co-operation in the implementation of a specific study and pre-financing, unless otherwise specified in the memorandum of understanding.

28. The Ministry of Education and Science shall establish a project supervisory board for the supervision of the project implementation by inviting therein at least one representative from the responsible institution, the National Centre for Education, the State Education Quality Service, and, if necessary, other organisations and authorities. Representatives from other organisations and authorities, including the managing authority and the co-operation institution, may also be included in the project supervisory board in the status of an observer. The operation of the project supervisory board shall be determined by the by-laws developed and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. The first meeting of the project supervisory board shall be convened not later than three months after entering into the agreement on the project implementation.

29. The beneficiary shall, at least once every 12 months, submit to the project supervisory board a report on the progress of the project implementation, including on the monitoring indicators referred to in Sub-paragraph 4.3 of this Regulation, providing feedback from co-operation partners and other involved parties, and shall present results of the project implementation to the project supervisory board.

30. In the process of the project implementation, institutions or groups of researchers (including from abroad) may be involved in the status of experts and consultants if their activities are related to participation in international studies and the analysis and use of the results obtained from studies and data accumulation processes for shaping education policy. Experts and consultants shall be involved by applying the Public Procurement Law.

31. The beneficiary shall ensure information and publicity measures in accordance with Articles 47 and 50 of Regulation No 2021/1060 and the procedures by which the authorities involved in the management of European Union funds ensure the introduction of these funds during the 2021–2027 programming period, and the communication and design guidelines for the 2021–2027 programming period of the European Union funds and the Recovery Fund.

32. Any costs of price increase incurred during the project implementation shall be covered by the beneficiary from its own funds, except for the costs referred to in Paragraph 23 of this Regulation.

33. Procurements of goods and services for the needs of the project implementation shall be conducted in accordance with the laws and regulations in the field of public procurements (by applying socially responsible and innovative public procurement where applicable), implementing an open, transparent, non-discriminatory procedure that does not restrict competition.

34. By using the public funds allocated within the scope of the project, the beneficiary and co-operation partners shall implement projects that are not related to the performance of economic activity in accordance with the activities of non-economic character specified in the Communication from the Commission – Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation (Official Journal of the European Union, 28 October 2022, No. C414).

35. The beneficiary shall ensure clear separation of the financial flow and type of activities of project implementation from other financial flows and types of activities of the beneficiary.

36. The territory of the Republic of Latvia is the place of project implementation.

Prime Minister A. K. Kariņš

Minister for Education and Science A. Čakša