

The VEE has upgraded its SWOT analysis as follows

Abbreviations:

BIOR – Institute of Food Safety, Animal Health and Environment

BOVA – The Baltic Forestry, Veterinary and Agricultural University Network

EAEVE – European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education

LBTU – Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies

LU – Latvia University

LVB – Latvian Veterinary Association

NIRI – National Institute of Research and Innovation

OSCE – Objective Structured Clinical Examination

RSU – Riga Stradiņš University

RTU – Riga Technical University

VEE – Veterinary Education Establishment

VTH – Veterinary Teaching Hospital

Strengths:

- Sole study program of its kind available in Latvia.
- The National accreditation system of the LBTU study programmes envisages the inclusion of foreign experts, which ensures internationally compatible evaluation practices.
- EAEVE approved study program.
- The study program is offered both in Latvian and English.
- International cooperation in research and study process (ERASMUS, BOVA).
- Graduates (veterinarians) are in demand in the labour market.
- Good geographical location of VEE with a good transport infrastructure (in the central part of Latvia, close to the capital and main airport), which allows easy access both for students and animal patients.
- Close professional cooperation with the stakeholders (including research universities – RSU, LU, RTU, scientific institutes BIOR, NIRI, and professional organisation – LVB).
- Infrastructure suitable for achieving day-one competencies.
- A modern, well-equipped simulation laboratory supporting practical skill development.
- Up to date hospital facilities and equipment of the VEE.
- Possibilities to use the Teaching and Research farm “Vecauce” with a built-in Veterinary block for practical training and agreements with several neighbouring agricultural animal farms for student-training
- Clinical training integrated in the study process.
- Practical training in food hygiene control and meat inspection in slaughterhouses.
- The possibility to organise laboratory and clinical work in small student groups (~8 students), to have a more individual approach.
- OSCE included in the study program.
- Final thesis based on scientific research during studies.
- Enthusiastic staff with high scientific potential and foreign language skills.

- Relatively young teaching staff with, including persons holding a Doctoral degree and international experience (the median age 38.9 years).
- The academic staff of VEE is involved in the clinical work in the VTH.
- Staff involvement in governmental working groups.
- Teaching staff active in preparing publications for professional veterinary medicine and agricultural journals.
- Students and academic staff have access to scientific databases.
- LBTU and VEE provides various professional development and qualification improvement courses for the teaching staff.
- Stable state-financing for study places.
- The use of a new approach of EBVS to veterinary specialization through a credit-based modular pathway to allow for a more flexible route to achieving specialist status - two members of the teaching staff are supported for training in – Small Ruminant Medicine and in Anaesthesiology.
- Stable number of student admissions despite the demographic decline in the country.

Weaknesses:

- Limited infrastructure, particularly in One Health and clinical research related areas.
- Uncompetitive remuneration for the staff.
- Ensuring staff succession, in some areas of veterinary medicine.
- Excessive budget centralization, insufficient flexibility.
- There are too few diplomates, and the budget for staff professional training is insufficient.
- Too low government funding for state-financed study places.

Opportunities:

- Long and productive cooperation and exchange of experience with the VEE in other countries;
- Expanding international cooperation; involvement in various international projects thus increasing scientific potential.
- Attracting top-quality lecturers from abroad to enhance professional excellence.
- Use of the geographical localization - in the centre of the Baltic region for more cooperation possibilities.
- Interest of international students to study Veterinary Medicine in VEE because of good study opportunities and modern clinical infrastructure.
- Stable need for qualified newly graduated specialists in the country.
- Plans to develop more postgraduate education programs for veterinarians.
- Latvian association of veterinarians (LVB) works on the introduction of the grade “Veterinary specialist recognised by LVB”.

Threats:

- Geopolitical situation.
- Restructuring of state budget to increase finances for defence needs. Limited national funding for higher education; restricted state budgets may limit investments in modern equipment, teaching technologies, research infrastructure and staff development.
- Increasing costs of maintaining clinical and laboratory facilities. Veterinary education requires expensive, continuously updated infrastructure (simulation labs, diagnostic technologies, clinical equipment etc.), which can strain resources.
- Insufficient national funding for fundamental science in general and especially for the research in non-productive animals.
- Risks of staff overload and burnout, difficulties with replacements.
- Insufficient provision of laboratories and practical training facilities in the case of a growing number of students.
- Medium to low level of preparedness of newly admitted students entering the study program „Veterinary Medicine", resulting in a relatively high drop-out rate.
- Emerging epidemiological risks.