

# Country Report LITHUANIA

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## 1. Background and country context

There is a school based VET system in the Baltic countries. After the collapse of the Soviet system and transformation to the market economy the system of practical training in enterprises collapsed. It has taken years to establish new networks of practical training for VET students and apprentices in enterprises. A representative of the Lithuanian Methodological Center for VET schools said that when in the 1990-tes the reformation of VET education was taken place the in-company trainers topic was not relevant as nobody including politicians did not understand its importance. As a consequence Lithuanian pupils spend 15 weeks on practice during their studies.

It should be also mentioned about other consequences of VET reform in Lithuania (<http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/download/cinfo/cinfo12004/c14z6en.html>). In the 1990s putting in place a VET system to meet labour market needs was constrained by the specific situation in the country. The economy has been undergoing a radical restructuring from centralised planning to a free market and schools have needed to promote vocational education and training, traditionally of low prestige.

As a result, links between vocational education and training and the economy were rather formal: it became difficult to ensure the same standard of qualification for graduates from different VET schools. Therefore, it was decided to separate education and training from the final qualification assessment. This function was delegated to the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts. The experiment began in 1998; in 2003 the final assessment of qualifications in initial education and training was organised by the chamber for the whole country. The first steps in transferring responsibility for the final assessment of qualifications for labour market training to the Chamber have also been taken.

The method of final assessment commits schools to maintaining more strictly the qualification requirements set by the state and to paying more attention to meeting labour market needs. The participation of all the interested parties - employers, employees and school representatives - in the assessment stimulates further social dialogue.

In 2003 one more quite radical reform began: Lithuania started decentralising responsibility for vocational schools (<http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/download/cinfo/cinfo22005/c25f3en.html>). As a result the shareholders in some schools became privately-owned enterprises. For instance, Vilnius Builder Training Centre partly belongs to a construction enterprise. Until recently companies considered providing support to a state-financed school as a form of charity; but with the company now owning shares, the material and intangible assets of the institution become part of the assets of the company. In participating in the administration of a public institution, the enterprise is in fact investing in training its own workers. In turn, this allows the VET institution to use the company's equipment and specialist knowledge. Such a relationship between an enterprise and a vocational school is highly relevant to builder training in Lithuania. Construction companies are modernising their equipment and technologies while vocational schools lack state-of-the-art equipment in their classrooms and workshops.

Still currently practical training is under development process as Lithuania is suffering from the labour shortage and a great amount of sub-contracting works that do not leave human and time resources for apprentice-learning. Though with the support of EU funds the Chamber of Commerce initiated a project for in-company trainers that consists of a special pedagogical module. There were 3000 candidates for this program and after conversations and tests 1000 instructors was chosen for further participation. In a year the training will be finished and pupils from the VET centers will do to this instructors for practice. The similar project is already done in Estonia.

As the field of practical training is very weakly regulated and there are no national standards regulating requirements for the competences of the trainers, it depends on the policy of different companies, there are big differences how trainers/supervisors in enterprises work and what kind of competences they have. As the field is not regulated there is also no official statistics or quantitative data on trainers working in enterprises available.

The separate investigation is needed for big enterprises that establish their own training centers and solve a great amount of educational problems by themselves. For instance such training centers exist in the Ahema factory that produces fertilizers, and Lithuanian oil-refining company.

## **2. How is the work and training of trainers organised?**

The trainers are usually full-time employees in the enterprises and teach apprentices as an additional job. They are not formally recruited and it is hard to estimate time they spend on the pupils. To become a trainer in most cases is not restricted for people not having qualification certificate of adult educator. Though they should have subject-specific/technical skills and a combination of pedagogical and social competences. Trainers follow the company-specific training guidelines or guidelines provided by the management. If the in-company trainers teach pupils from VET schools they also follow the recommendations of vocational education. In-company trainer activities have a positive impact on the salary and propose better career possibilities. On the state level there are no concrete measures in order to regulate and to improve the quality of in-company training.

The training of trainers is not systematically embedded into the formal education. Some VET schools have tight cooperation with enterprise trainers and are arranging training courses for the trainers in enterprises. There are also big differences between SMEs and big enterprises. Often the big enterprises have their own training centres with internally established standards and/or rules for trainers, having better or worse contacts with schools / education system.

As it was mentioned before the Chamber of Commerce initiated a programme for in-company trainers that consists of a special pedagogical module.

## **3. How is the work and training of trainers financed?**

The training of trainers rests on the shoulders of the companies. Though some European money is available within the new project mentioned before.

***Which role does the work and training of trainers play as a means for economic development?***

For the moment lack of labour is one of the most serious obstacles in a way to higher economic growth as a lot of young people left Lithuania after its entering the EU. Thus the question of qualified skillful workers is a very important one and needs systematic approach and attention of the state.

**4. How are trainers selected and how are human resources allocated?**

***How many persons are working as a trainer (formally/informally; full-time/part-time; female/male; nationals/foreigners)?***

It is extremely hard even to estimate the number of trainers in enterprises as the field is not regulated and no statistics is available. Part of trainers work as trainers “not officially” recognised as trainers.

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Some companies also hire VET teachers to be in-company trainers.

There are no extra recruitment. As it was mentioned above a person should have some interest and technical skills to start teaching within a company.

***In which main occupational areas trainers have specialised?***

No data available. Though it is possible to assume that oil-refining companies have narrowly specialised trainers.

**5. How are trainers qualified?**

There are no official qualification standards for trainers in enterprises. Everything depends on a person: if he/she is interested in the field, they can self-initiate some continuing learning and update their skills.

The institutions incorporated in the training are: VET centers, Chamber of Commerce, professional unions, employer organisations.

**6. How is the reputation of trainers and how are they integrated in enterprises/society?**

***How is the work of trainers recognised in enterprises and in the society?***

It is hard to estimate as importance of in-company trainers became recognized only a couple of years ago. According to the interviewed opinion, the following years will indicate real recognition and high attention to this topic.

***Which is the unemployment rate of trainers?***

No data available. It should be mentioned that in a situation of a labour shortage unemployment is not an issue in the Baltic States.

**7. How innovative is the work and training of trainers?**

***How is the quality and efficiency of trainers' training assessed?***

It is hard to say, as it is assessed on the irregular basis.

***Is there research about the work and training of trainers and what does it suggest?***

Dienys Vincentas, Beleckiene Giedre and Vaitkute Lina ([http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/projects\\_networks/ero/pb\\_view.asp?theID=451](http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/projects_networks/ero/pb_view.asp?theID=451)) VET research in Lithuania is not widely developed. Only a few institutions are undertaking research activities, and there is no nationally coordinated VET research program. Universities are mostly focusing their research on the quality of training (curriculum development, didactics, teacher training, etc.). Other institutions are more involved in topics related to the analysis of labour market needs and transition from school to work. A number of national VET system development projects were started in 2005 with the support from European Social Fund. They include research, development of methodologies, models and systems and are directly linked to national VET policies.

***Which are weaknesses and strengths with respect to the training of trainers?***

***Where is a need for reform?***

The biggest weakness is absence of any legal regulations and recognition of importance, status and needs of in-company trainers.

The following suggestions for reform were made:

- it is a need for general guidelines developed for in-company trainers (including training process, roles and tasks and responsibilities) and common understanding (the state and employers) on the importance of training of trainers.
- thus it is needed to put the issue of trainers' qualification on the agenda of the Ministry of Education and Science.
- to support and develop further the initiatives of the Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Crafts in the field of training of trainers.

***Are there any 'good practice examples' at company or sectoral level?***

Big enterprises with their own training centres.