

Achieving the Lisbon Goal:

The Contribution of Vocational Education and Training Systems

Country Report: Lithuania¹

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Theme 1: Progress of national VET systems towards meeting the challenges of Lisbon

1. Strategies and barriers for improving the status, flexibility and attractiveness of Initial VET (IVET)

a) Raising the Status of IVET

In order to raise the status of the IVET, the government, social partners and VET providers are pursuing the following eight strategies:

1. Adjustment of policies of initial and continuous vocational education in a consecutive and coherent manner as a support structure for lifelong learning motivation and processes. The real situation in this field does not correspond to the expectations of learners or social partners;
2. In a lifelong learning perspective the Lithuanian VET System has particular strengths and weaknesses: at the one side, the system has a modern structure - 4 types of curricula in vocational schools have been implemented, corresponding to the third level of VET. "Higher vocational schools" provide the vocational education at the 4th level and universities and colleges operate in the system of the higher education. At the other hand, there are no developed possibilities for continuous vocational training and learning, since there are no flexible transitions from the vocational training system to the higher education. Either there are developed ways of the recognition of the competences and qualifications acquired in non-formal and informal ways. The process of the designing vocational training standards is being considered as too slow. The situation has slightly improved through the re-design of "higher vocational schools" to colleges and thereby establishing a sector of higher non-university studies in Lithuania. This sector offers possibilities of compensational studies for former graduates of the "higher vocational schools" enabling them to receive a non-university level higher education diploma;
3. The improvement of the accessibility of VET for the all social groups, including the members of socially excluded groups;
4. Development of the non-university higher education sector while at the same time expanding the network of colleges providing the better accessibility to higher education in the regions;
5. Enhancing social partnership between the VET providers and employers as well as their organizations aiming at the better match between the demand and supply of skills;
6. Assurance of the transparency of vocational education and training by preparing standards of the vocational education and disseminating the information on vocational training curricula;
7. Increasing the budget of VET by adding additional sources ;
8. Improvement of training quality by implementing and developing a quality assurance system, the further development of the training of vocational teachers and

continuous improvement of their qualifications. The following main measures of training quality assurance can be distinguished: a. the development of occupational standards, b. development of new VET curricula and modules referring to the occupational standards and c. the development of a methodology for the internal quality assurance. By applying this methodology, vocational schools execute internal evaluation and self-analysis of their activities. The external assessment of training quality is implemented through the regular assessment of curricula which is being carried out each 5-7 years.

b) Improving the attractiveness of IVET

The Lithuanian system of vocational education and training seeks to get away from the traditional image of the system for the development of the low skilled labour force to satisfy the needs of the centrally planned economy.

One of the most important factors improving the attractiveness and social reputation of the vocational education system are the guidelines, which are accepted and approved for the implementation by the system of vocational education and training of Lithuania: "Lifelong Learning Memoranda" of 2001, "Report of the European Council in Lisbon" of 2001, as well as the "Resolution on the European Cooperation in the Field of Vocational Education" approved by the European Council in , "Declaration of the Ministers of Vocational Education and Training" and other documents.

One of the most important strategic tasks in this regard is the wider dissemination of information on vocational education and training in the media and press and the use of social partnership approaches between vocational training institutions, companies, regional and local governments. Another strand is the enhancement of the motivation of the learners and students through the provision of the better employment and career possibilities, which could be assured through the improvement of the training quality.

Vocational education and training gains attractiveness through offering skills and qualifications needed in the national and EU labour markets. Therefore, the participation of the vocational training schools in the different EU programmes and projects (Leonardo da Vinci, PHARE), especially the success in the different exchange programs can have and had a very positive influence on the improvement of the attractiveness of the initial vocational education and training both for the employers and future students. There can be mentioned the following successful projects which influence improvement of the status, flexibility and attractiveness of the VET:

- a. PHARE 94 and PHARE 97 programmes of vocational education reform. The main results of these programmes are the development of the training contents and curricula, training of the VET teachers, creation and development of VET standards, establishment of the new, modern, systematic and multilevel concept of VET teachers' training.
- b. Leonardo da Vinci projects. One example is the project which was implemented by the Centre of Vocational Education and Research of the Vytautas Magnus University in 1999: "Systematic organization of continuing development of VET personnel".
- c. the project initiated by the European Training Foundation : "Reshaping the focus and structure of teacher/trainer training in the Lithuania and Latvia" which

implementation started in 1999. This project consisted of the following components: a) opening of VET schools to the world of work – integration of theory and practice of the mentor activity in VET teacher education; b) organisational development within schools – methods of continuing development; c) training of teachers educators – parameters of Lithuanian vocational teacher training strategy; d) modernisation of teaching and learning methods; e) building of the network of teachers/trainers training – promotion of the national VET teacher training network and connecting it to CEDEFOP VET TT net.

All the goals inherent to the projects were implemented in coherence with each other seeking for synergy of their results. Therefore, they are considered as the successful projects which had a significant positive influence for the status of the VET, its flexibility and attractiveness.

c) Increasing the flexibility of IVET

The main strands of enhancing the flexibility of IVET are the increase of flexibility of the organisation of vocational education and training as well as the increasing individualisation and flexibility of vocational training curricula.

Improvement the organisational flexibility of the vocational education and training system and enhancing its correspondence to the needs of the professional work.

After the period the centralised and centrally planned economy and big industrial enterprises the VET system has been essentially transformed aiming at adapting it to the new needs of the changing economy and social conditions. The main criteria of the improvement of flexibility of the vocational education and training system and its coherence with the needs of the labor market are the following: matching occupational profiles in enterprises and on the labor market, considering the interests of the youth and adults, assuring the quality and the economic effectiveness of VET. Major changes occurred in within the optimisation of the network of the vocational training institutions: the agricultural vocational schools were transferred to the jurisdiction of the ministry of education and science in 2000. In order to assure better accessibility of high quality higher education and vocational qualifications in the regions as well as in order to meet the growing demand for skilled workers in regional labour markets beginning from 2000, the process of optimisation of the network of higher vocational schools has been launched through mergers of several higher vocational schools to vocational colleges and transforming their vocational training curricula to non-university higher education. Similarly, due the growing needs of the local economy for skilled human resources, smaller and non-effective vocational schools are being united to bigger regional vocational education centres. The representatives of the employers, trade unions, municipalities and regional governments are invited to take a more active part in the establishment and development of these centres. One of the most important mission of these newly created vocational training institutions – colleges and vocational training centres is to expand the lifelong learning possibilities in the regions and to assure a coherent development of human resources and thereby enhancing the coherent social and economical development of the regions. The above mentioned groups make use of the opportunities provided by the increased flexibility and accessibility of vocational education and training institutions. However, there are some obstacles limiting the full use of those opportunities. First of all, there is an underdeveloped regional social-economical development policy, posing serious problems for the vocational training in the lagging regions and secondly, social partnership between employers, trade

unions, local governments and VET institutions is still weak, due to a lack of traditions and experience in this field.

Other important aspect of the flexibility of vocational education and its correspondence to the needs of the labour market is the decentralisation of the education and training contents. At the beginning of the VET reform the centralised way of determining training contents was abolished and this function was delegated to the vocational training institutions. Since up to 1996 the planning of the demand for vocational training had not been based on any labor market surveys and forecasts. At the beginning the design of vocational training curricula was a challenging task for vocational schools. Therefore, from 1998 the design of a system of the vocational education standards has been initiated. In this vocational competences are being defined as well as training goals and aims. Beginning from 2000 sectoral surveys have been initiated under the vocational education reform program supported by PHARE. In order to meet the expectations and needs of employers as well as learners vocational training modules have been introduced.

The renewal of the contents of vocational education and training with regard to the development of key skills, lifelong learning, improvement of employment possibilities and other aspects of the human resources competitiveness.

In the process of the design and renewal of the vocational training curricula bigger attention is drawn to the development of key skills – foreign languages, information technologies, communication and cooperation skills, abilities to learn and others. It is commonly accepted, that the practical training shall constitute not less than 70 percents of the training hours of the vocational subjects. Regarding to the subjects and their contents almost in all the vocational training curricula there have been introduced subjects for the development of entrepreneurship skills and abilities. The contents of the vocational training is designed referring to the development of the concrete competences, curricula of the wide contents is given the priority against the narrow specialisation. There is an orientation towards the changing needs for the key skills.

Labour market vocational training has also been updated. A survey, carried out by the Centre for Vocational Education and Training Research at the Vytautas Magnus University shows evidence for the progress in the design of vocational training curricula for the labour market. 23,4 percent of the vocational schools teachers and experts evaluate the design of those curricula positively before the reform and 80,9 percents of the teachers assess the present situation in the design and implementation of the vocational training curricula for the labor market positively.

This change can be explained with the fact, that vocational training has become an important instrument of active labour market policies and the need for the continuing vocational training has increased in the labour market. The new needs and demands for the vocational training curricula enhanced the fast process of the design and redesign of the vocational training curricula.

The following preconditions for the flexibilisation of initial vocational education and training exist:

1. Involvement of social partners through their participation in the Vocational Education and Training Council of Lithuania, regional councils of vocational education and training and commissions at the labour market agencies;

2. The broad policy strategy of vocational education and training follows the principle of collegiality, where each social partner expresses its opinion and suggestions to the Vocational Education and Training Council of Lithuania in setting the requirements for the vocational training curricula and modules, as well as the final examinations;

3. Policies and strategies of vocational education and training put emphasis on the regional interests in the field of the vocational education and training. This is being assured by regional councils of VET and by offering initiatives for the development of new professions and specializations. Typical “regional” interests are the following: development of the practical training and skills of the vocational teachers; design of new curricula of training and studies; organization of the assessment and recognition of acquired skills and competences, reconstruction of the infrastructure of the practical training in the vocational schools and training centres.

d) Main barriers to achieving these objectives

The main barriers to achieving the abovementioned goals are the following:

1. Different policies of vocational education and training are not always well aligned. E.g. VET financing policy does not enhance the reform of the vocational education. Comparatively scarce financing of VET limits the efforts of the reform of VET reform to improve the quality of training, to develop the technical and technological basis of practical training, to develop the vocational and pedagogical skills of the VET teachers as well as to disseminate the information on the positive changes and experiences;

2. Lack of initiative from the side of VET staff with regard to gaining new experiences in the fields of renewal of training contents, development of vocational and pedagogical skills, quality development and management of training, dissemination and sharing of positive experiences;

3. Lack of social partnership traditions, weak relations between the vocational training institutions and employers.

4. Structural lacks, such as with regard to the assessment of non-formal and informal learning, and lack of experiences with and and motivation to lifelong learning.

2. Reducing the number of early school leavers

a) School leavers at the earliest opportunity and with few or no recognised qualifications

The following trends can be observed when looking at the changes of the drop out rates from secondary level vocational education:

Statistical data shows that the percentage of young people leaving general secondary education early has not changed significantly. In the period from 1995 to 2001 this group constituted 1,3 percent of the population 1 percent in 2000-2001. However, the percentage of young people leaving vocational training with few or no recognised qualifications in the same period was much higher and there can be noticed a growth of number of early school leavers: in 1995-1996 they constituted 8,4

percents and in 2000-2001 11,8 percents. In order to reduce the number of the young people leaving education or training without or with few recognised qualifications legal, social and financial measures have been initiated. One of those measures is the introduction of a strict control of obligatory secondary education and the devolution of the legal responsibility to the parents.

b) School leavers of formal education with low levels of basic skills at the age of 15

Social services and municipalities take care of children from social risk groups and implement different social and pedagogical support measures to return these children to school. A wide range of support for children from socially violated groups, including the provision of food, learning materials, temporary living place, taking care of their free time, etc. is being planned. Special attention is being given to children from ethnical minority groups, in order to improve their integration into society while sustaining and developing their cultural identity (Roma).

3. Increasing VET at tertiary level

One of the most important measures to establish or improve technological and vocational qualifications at the tertiary (higher) educational level is the development of non-university level higher education. The establishment of vocational colleges is originated by real needs of the regional labour market for a skilled and educated labour force. Colleges increase the accessibility of the higher education while at the same time aiming at providing young people with qualifications and skills meeting labour market demands. Another distinctive contribution of the colleges in this regard is their launched program of the compensatory studies which give former students of higher vocational education the possibility of gaining the higher education diploma while updating their qualification.

4. Incentives for employees to update knowledge & skills

c) Initiatives and measures of government

A lack of initiatives and measures from the side of government is attested by Lithuanian VET experts. At the level of jurisdiction employers are not responsible for the development of the skills and competences of their workers and thereby preventing the risk of unemployment. They are not obliged to finance the training of the employees. At the moment the governmental initiatives in the field of updating knowledge and skills of the working population exist principally on the level of declarations and setting of strategies. For example, "The Guidelines of the Education Development" prepared with the initiative of the President in 2001 envisage the establishment of a modular system of adult education which is supposed to foster flexibility of adult education services and motivate employees to take part in the updating of knowledge and skills.

d) Initiatives and measures of employers

Employers' engagement in lifelong learning support depends on the size of the company and the field of activities. Big industrial companies which were originate in the former planned economy industrial enterprises and successfully passed the process of the economic restructuring in some cases sustained former training infrastructures and personnel. In addition some of them try to establish alliances and closer co-operation with vocational schools, colleges and universities.

Innovative and dynamic new companies working in the high tech sector demonstrate their initiatives in establishing partnerships with colleges and universities aiming at the development of their human resources and providing conditions for practical learning of students as well as building a pool for later recruitment. Many small and medium enterprises with scarce financial resources have very limited possibilities to motivate their employees to take part in training, therefore they seek for the support from the labour market agencies and chambers of industry and commerce.

e) *Initiatives and measures of other stakeholders*

Labour market training services and chambers of the industry and commerce are another strand of important actors. Usually, these institutions provide the necessary support for companies and individuals which have a very limited access to the lifelong learning measures. Existing labour market training programmes are not only being used for the updating the skills of unemployed, but also for the training of employees who experience the risk of being unemployed due to their level of vocational qualification. The chambers of commerce and trade usually coordinate different initiatives of co-operation between employers and training institutions.

f) *Examples of the contribution of VET to successfully promoting inclusion*

One of the most important examples of the contribution of VET to successfully promoting inclusion is the involvement of disabled persons by the establishment of special vocational rehabilitation centres and the adjustment of curricula to their needs. Currently there is four of such centres under operation: three in Vilnius and one in Radviliskis. In the rural areas there is no developed structure for vocational rehabilitation. The municipalities and territorial labour market agencies implement some local vocational rehabilitation initiatives but not in a systematic and coherent manner. However, under the use of structural programmes after the EU accession, regional vocational training centres are planning to establish centres of vocational rehabilitation.

5. *Meeting the challenges of an aging population - innovations and initiatives in VET that are being introduced to encourage older people (55+) to remain at work longer and to participate in training and other forms of lifelong learning.*

Older people (55+) present a very problematic group of the Lithuanian labour force due to the lack of the readiness to meet the changing skill demands on the labour market. At the moment the major way to solve this problem is the redirection of unemployed in this age group into labour market training programmes. However, it does not seem to be very effective for rather subjective and objective reasons:

1. Many of the participants are not motivated to acquire the new skills and knowledge, they do not have learning to learn skills and think, that their age is not favourable to acquire new skills and change vocational qualification.
2. At the other hand the problem is re-inforced by employers search for productive and skilled labor force in younger age cohorts who supposedly easier adapt to the changing technological and organizational demands of work.

6. Effectiveness and efficiency of VET

a) Perception of effectivity of VET

The following lines of discussion can be found when looking at the current debate on the effectivity of VET:

a. The mentioned strategic documents illustrate the shift in VET reform, however, the implementation of these strategic documents, according to the opinion of most stakeholders is not satisfactory due to many reasons. First of all, there is a budgetary gap, underdeveloped social partnership between the vocational training institutions and employers, outdated technical and technological infrastructure of training, and a negative image of the VET stemming from the soviet period. However, the VET reform aims at making it more open and open up transitional ways from vocational to higher education;

b. Employers notice growing benefits of vocational training, however, due to slowly growing partnerships between the employers and VET institutions and outdated technological and technical basis for practical training in VET schools there is still a big difference between the needs and requirements of the employers and the provision of vocational training institutions.

c. The recent reorganization of the system of vocational schools with the creation of regional vocational training centres and involvement of employers in the governance of these centres should increase the effectiveness of the vocational training schools in combating youth unemployment at the regional level.

b) Improving management and organisation and effectivity of VET

According to the the Law of vocational education and training the initial vocational training can be financed from the following sources: national budget, budget of the municipalities, fund for vocational; training and other resources. This fund is based on the Law of Vocational Education and Training. However, in practice it does not function due to the lack of financial resources. In future the fund is planned to be filled with a percentage of the profit taxes of companies. During the VET reform vocational schools were invited to develop for-profit activities as the basis for self-financing. However, self financing in 2002 constituted only 9 percent of the total budget of vocational schools. The main investor into vocational education and training remains the state, a very small part of funding is being constituted by the means from international projects and funding of the social partners. An expert survey on VET shows, that many experts (36,4 percent) notice the insufficient transparency of the use of alternative funding sources. All experts indicated that the most important problems in this field is the inefficient use of the finances, shortage of the clear and defined policy of financing and lack of the information on the possibilities to find the alternative sources of financing.

c) Main trends in terms of investment in VET

The increase of the participation of employers can change the possibilities of financing and increase the share of the employers in financing of vocational education and training.

Theme 2 Innovation in Teaching and Learning Processes

7. Improvements in learning processes and contents

In order to spread and multiply innovation in VET it is regarded as particularly important not only to abandon traditional views on learning processes at the side of the teachers and learners, but also to change the system of the training of vocational teachers which at the moment does not fulfil present and future challenges in VET.

Within the last 4 years on the basis of the work in three international projects there has been established a new, modern, multilevel and systematic concept of training of VET teachers. In addition an occupational standard for VET teachers has been created and the regulation of VET teacher training and curriculum has been changed to a more modular structure.

The application of innovative methods in VET is closely related to the participation of VET schools in the different EU projects, especially Leonardo da Vinci and PHARE.

Support of PHARE was realised through different targeted projects which aimed at the implementation of many innovations in the VET field: In 1993-1994 a program for the development of a labour market vocational training system and a program for the reform of initial vocational training were introduced. In the implementation of this reform program the main attention was given to the renewal of the training contents, preparation of new training materials, the updating of technical and technological basis of practical training. 750 training modules were developed and 300 related learning and training materials were prepared for the catalogue of training modules. Those were spread and disseminated to 450 VET teachers selected from 27 vocational training schools in all the regions and representing all different routes of training.

The methodical support from EU experts and consultants fostered the spread of innovations in the fields of the updating of training contents, development of the new training curricula, quality assurance of vocational training, development of the occupational and vocational training standards, training and skills upgrading of the VET teachers.

However, many innovative ideas related to the turn to a competence based approach and the shift to wards the work-based training processes meet different subjective and objective obstacles: there is lack of initiatives from social partners and employers, outdated technological and technical basis for practical training.

8. Improving the integration of different learning sites; integration of formal and informal learning

The degree of integration of and cooperation between educational providers and companies is still being seen as underdeveloped.

In addition the in lifespan perspective there is to less interchange between working and learning periods. Many employees with lower qualifications, especially from senior age cohorts and unskilled young workers can not maintain constant

employment and the sufficient employment quality, because their employment is too dependent on the changes and fluctuations of the economical situation.

VET is still a very unpopular route among youth, because it is not being conceived as a means to acquire the skills and knowledge for modern work and business processes. Weak development of practical skills and abilities due to outdated and underdeveloped technical and technological infrastructure of practical training is being perceived as one of the most important problems of initial and labour market vocational training. Vocational schools and colleges try to solve this problem by intensifying relationships with employers. However, these efforts are of episodic and unsystematic character.

Higher schools and vocational training schools can easier foster their partnership in the field of human resources development with the following types of employers: a) technologically advanced and high tech companies - chemical industry, pharmacy, biotechnological and electronics sectors; b) export oriented companies (furniture producers), successful service sector companies (vehicle repair, hotels, catering services). This can be explained by the fact, that these employers are more interested to develop their human resources either by hiring high skilled employees from the labour market or by training their own personnel. Therefore they are more eager to establish and develop partnerships with education and training institutions. In the following areas the most intensive cooperation between the vocational training institutions and employers can be noticed: Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipeda.

The main link between learning and working in VET is practical training within the companies. Insufficient attention and motivation of employers for the organization of practical training in companies and a formalised conception of this process stemming from the period of the planned economy significantly weakens the impact of the practical in-service training for the acquisition and development practical skills and competences. In many cases the contents of the work during the practical training does not provide significant potential for learning and does not represent the real technical and technological work conditions.

In many cases employers are not interested to delegate for the trainees the execution of the important work tasks, especially in the cases, when the execution of these tasks require the application of the modern and expensive production technologies and equipment. Due to the lack of the trust between the employers and employees, intentions to reduce the training expenses and many other circumstances the in-service training of the employees in many cases is very limited and oriented mainly to the narrow, company-specific work tasks.

There are no programmes established for students without the necessary prior credentials. Continuing vocational training of adults is also underdeveloped. Only 5-10 percents of the adult population of Lithuania participate in programmes of adult education or CVT, while in some EU countries (Sweden, Germany) the share of population participating in adult education exceeds 40 percents. Only 20% of companies plan and carry out training for their employees.

Limited public resources make it necessary that almost all courses of adult training and education have to be funded privately. Besides, the expenses for the education and training are not considered for a reduction in income tax. Having in mind the comparatively low incomes of the Lithuanian population, the continuing vocational

training becomes too expensive and inaccessible in cases when the employers do not exercise any financial support.

In the legal field there are no regulated and stated obligations of the employers and employees regarding the training and skills upgrading (for example, the right to have the vacancies for training purpose). There is no system of the economical and fiscal enhancement of the employers to invest in the training and skills development of their employees.

The establishment of a system for the recognition of informally and non-formally acquired skills and competences is still under development in Lithuania. A system of occupational standards is not yet established. The lack of a system of recognition leads to a low image of informal learning and makes the relationship between the employers and employees more difficult.

Still formal institutional education and training is too closed and training institutions are supposed to be too isolated from each other and defending their own narrow interests.

Adults can not take national and school leavers examinations if they are not enrolled in formal institutions. In this way their ability to learn independently is neglected. Training curricula of adult training centres and schools are not flexible enough and modular training is not enough developed. Therefore, adults are being trained according to curricula of general education ignoring prior experience and adult learners needs.

The possibilities of adults without higher education credentials to participate in consecutive continuous studies or requalifying studies in universities are very limited. There is no system, which would permit to transfer credits from one parallel institution to another or from the lower institutional level to the higher.

The still low level of participation of social partners (employers, trade unions, other NGO's) in the process of vocational education and training reinforces the high risk of unemployment and uncertainty regarding the quality of skills and qualifications.

Referring to the estimations of the Institute of the Social Research of the Labour market agency the demand for different types of adult vocational training in 2005 will reach 10.0000. However, the present system of continuous vocational training is not enough developed and can not assure the accessibility and continuity of learning and training.

9. Evaluation and quality assurance of VET provision

a) Processes and outcomes – quality on the individual level

The following systems of evaluation and quality assurance of vocational education and training can be distinguished for the assessment of competences and knowledge of the individuals:

1. Established co-operation and division of functions between the vocational schools and chambers of commerce and industry.
2. Established requirements for the qualification examination:

To finish the course of theoretical and practical training and accomplish the practical training in the company, the permission for the qualification examination is discussed

in the council of the teachers and formalized with the order of the school director. The theoretical knowledge is evaluated before practical skills and abilities. Integrated forms of assessment such as presentation and portfolios are being introduced, especially for the assessment and recognition of the informally acquired competencies and skills. Before the exam there are prepared data bases for grades, teaching journals, marks and notes on practical performance and characteristics of productive practice.

Assessment organization during the process of studies (both in the vocational schools and colleges)

1. In the process of training and learning the knowledge and abilities of the students are assessed after the finishing of the each topic of training. The evaluation is being carried out under the use of a system of 10 marks scale.
2. At the end of the 1st semester students have an intermediate examination composed of vocational subjects and practical training.
3. The vocational qualification is issued after passing the qualification examination.
4. The accomplishment of a practical project is evaluated after its presentation. The final evaluation result of the practical project is determined by a common decision of the commission of examinations. In case of disagreements between the members of commission the final decision is held by the chairman of commission.

Assessment mechanisms implemented in the process of training:

1. The qualification examination consists of 2 main parts: assessment of theoretical knowledge, which is being carried out in written form. The tasks for the written examinations are prepared by the chambers of commerce, industry trade in agreement with the vocational schools. The examination card consists of 5 tests of at least 10-20 questions for 5 areas of vocational training. The prepared tasks are put into envelopes, which are being closed and sealed by the representatives of the chambers of commerce and trade.
2. The assessment of the practical project consists of the evaluation of the prepared practical project.
3. The theoretical and practical knowledge and skills are assessed using a 10 grades scale.
4. The written examination and practical tasks are assessed by each member of the commission. Each member of the commission then summarizes the assessment grades for each question or task and derives the mean of his evaluation. After summarizing the assessment grades of each members of commission the final assessment grade is derived and registered in the protocol of the examination.

Assessment bodies:

The final assessment is organized and managed by the examination commission. The commission is constituted and confirmed under the leadership of the chamber of commerce and trade. The commission is composed of 1 representative of the occupation, who represents the chairman, 1 vocational teacher, and 1 employer representative. The vocational teacher is being selected by the vocational school director. The director of school also sends the secretary for the qualification examination.

b) Institutional quality management

c) *Systems' monitoring and evaluation*

In 1998 the VET quality assurance system has been introduced. In 1999 a quality manual has been issued to the higher vocational schools, in 2000 a similar document was prepared for quality assurance in the vocational schools. Beginning from the year 2000 experts from the Centre of Methodology for Vocational Education and Training provide the methodical support for vocational schools in the development of quality assurance. At present, with the support of the PHARE program and foreign partners the Ministry of Education and Science of the Lithuanian Republic together with the Labour Market Training Service and regional governments are preparing the implementation of an internal system of vocational education quality supervision and management. The establishment of this system is based on the following principles: quality assessment must be separated from the training process, qualification assessment institutions must have the necessary human and material resources, the assessment of qualifications must be based on occupational standards, the qualification assessment criteria and procedures must be valid and trustworthy, the assessment of qualifications must be accessible for all interested candidates and there has to be established an internal system of the vocational education quality assurance. For this purpose a special institution for the provision of support for vocational schools in the self assessment of the quality of training as well as for the evaluation of the training curricula was established: the Centre of Methodology for Vocational Education and Training at the Ministry of Education and Science of Republic of Lithuania.

During the reform of the vocational education there has occurred many significant changes in the quality assurance of vocational education: in the period of 2001-2003 there were developed 231 occupational standards, 346 vocational training curricula and 38 vocational training institutions were assessed: 31 higher vocational school and 7 vocational schools. Quality assurance of studies is an integral part of the process of establishing a non-university level higher education system – the transition to colleges from former higher vocational schools.

In the process of the establishment colleges were selected after institutional self analysis, which received the status of college and received the right to prepare the curricula of studies. The colleges established after this stage received the right to implement the new curricula of studies without the external selection. The assessment of the curriculum of studies is constituted by two stages: partial assessment and comprehensive assessment. During the partial assessment internal experts analyse the curricula of studies and seek to find whether these curricula of studies correspond to the requirements for consecutive studies approved by the minister of education. If it is stated, that assessed curriculum of studies corresponds to these requirements, the Centre for the Quality Assessment of Higher Studies executes a comprehensive assessment of the curricula by organising an evaluation visit in order to assess, how curricula of studies are implemented, as well as to assess the qualification and experience of the pedagogical staff. Afterwards the experts provide their conclusions on the shortages and non-conformities of the curricula and together with the representatives of the school discuss the possibilities of improvement. Also the match with occupational is being assessed. By 2001 the curricula of the non-university higher education were assessed by the Centre of Methodology for Vocational Education and Training and beginning from 2001 this function is shifted to the Centre for the Quality Assessment of Higher Studies.

10. Professional development and status of teachers and trainers

In the field of the professional development and training of teachers the methodological and strategic level is very well developed whereas the practical level of training of teachers and trainers is considered to be underdeveloped.

Methodological level – prepared strategic documents:

1. In 1999 there was conducted research on the pedagogical competences of VET teachers within the framework of the vocational education reform program supported by PHARE. This led to the establishment of a 2 years modular and integrated training curriculum to provide VET teachers with initial vocational education and training with a pedagogical qualification.

2. In 2001 an occupational standard for VET teachers was prepared in the framework of a project funded by the European Training Foundation. In addition a vision for VET teachers' training in Lithuania and the schedule of its implementation measures was prepared.

3 The results of a research project on VET reform in Lithuania and Latvia carried out by the Centre for Vocational Education and Research of the Vytautas Magnus University shows, that during the reform of the vocational education and training system there took place significant quantitative changes (increase of the number of VET teachers participating in the training and qualification development) as well as qualitative changes (the upgrading of qualification of the VET teachers became systematic, there were provided new vocational and pedagogical competences, applied modern methods of training and skills upgrading). Results of research show, that 23,4 percents of the surveyed VET teachers experts positively evaluate the state of the system of the qualification development of the VET teachers before the reform, while the present state in this field is positively evaluated by 76,6 percents of the VET teachers. Most of the respondents – 94-100 percents see the significant positive changes in the development of the VET teachers competences during the reform.

4. Mechanisms of assessment of non-formally acquired competences of VET teachers are under development.

5. Implemented modular curriculum of the training of VET teachers is oriented to the concrete pedagogical competences and their fields, needed not only for the young teachers, but also for all teachers seeking to upgrade their competences. Modular training of the VET teachers allows to apply contents of the initial pedagogical training in the system of the continuing studies of VET teachers and to transfer the part of the pedagogical training to the vocational schools. This mechanism improves the accessibility of the acquisition and development of the pedagogical qualification and helps to adapt to the individual possibilities and work intensity of the learners.

Practical level of VET teachers training

Due to the shortage of funding and insufficient social partnership with employers the practical level of the VET teachers training and their professional development does not correspond to the new challenges. The infrastructure of the VET teachers training and qualification development is not developed. 27 percent of VET trainers do not

have any pedagogical qualification. The development of qualifications of the VET teachers is not implemented referring to the research of the training needs. The employers in many cases do not participate in the development of the vocational qualifications of VET teachers.

Lithuania implemented the model of the consecutive training of the VET teachers, which separates the acquisition of vocational and pedagogical qualifications: the vocational qualification is acquired at colleges or universities, then a 3 years work phase according to the acquired qualification has to follow. The pedagogical qualification is being acquired after the employment at the vocational school and the pedagogical qualification follows the modular curriculum of the VET teachers training implemented by universities. However, due to the absence of earmarked funding the effectiveness of this system is very limited. The expert survey on vocational education shows, that 36,4 percent negatively assess the effectiveness of measures to motivate VET teachers to professional development and upgrading their qualifications. 27,3 percents negatively evaluate the development of the infrastructure for VET teachers training and professional development.

Theme 3 Building European Competences for a European Labour Market

11. Challenges & policies in relation to the Lisbon employment strategy

a) Main challenges to achieving the Lisbon employment objectives

The European Commission report on the employment creation in the Europe prepared by Wim Kok in 2003 stresses the following challenges to achieving the Lisbon employment objectives for Lithuania: The effectiveness of active labour market policies helping unemployed to get back into employment has to be increased. For this reason it is necessary to modernise employment services, improve the quality and accessibility of training aiming to develop the geographical and professional mobility of the unemployed persons. In addition the Development of a lifelong learning structure and reducing the number of the school drop-outs has high priority on the agenda. Participation in training, especially for low skilled unemployed is to be increased. Also the need is stressed to stronger involve employers in the development of the lifelong-learning processes.

b) Policies and strategies being developed to tackle these challenges

The following policies and strategies of regional employment services aim to tackle these challenges:

1. The development of the skills of unemployed facing the biggest difficulties and problems to enter the labour market: programmes of vocational training, support of

employment, group work search practices, updating of the skills of the long-term unemployed;

2. Reducing regional differences of employment by implementing the programmes of unemployment prevention, vocational training, fostering local employment initiatives, as well as the measures to match the labour supply and demand, such as *the bank of talents, a labour exchange on the internet, measures to enhance the first step into the labour market*;

3. Modernization of public employment services is implemented through the programmes “The personnel development of the employment services of Lithuania”, the implementation of the active labour market policies, the development of a modern IT system in the employment services, labour market research development, participation in international projects and measures of quality assessment of the activities of employment services.

4. The development of competences of the labour force aiming for growth of the economy. This aim is being realised through the implementation of the programmes of unemployment prevention, vocational training, support of employment, labour market research development, participation in international projects, enhancing free movement of the labour force.

5. Preparation of the EU membership – implementation of the programmes “free movement of the persons” and joining the EURES network.

c) Obstacles standing in the way of reform of VET in relation to achieving the Lisbon objectives

The following obstacles in the way of reform of VET in relation to the development of lifelong-learning and competitiveness of the human resources are being distinguished in the research literature:

a. Lack of funding for vocational education and training. This concerns insufficient public funding and inability of schools to find and develop ways of the self-financing. This problem prevents the modernisation of the technological and technical infrastructure of vocational training in order to reduce the technological gap between the training and real work situations.

b. Lack of social partnership and, especially, the involvement of employers in the development of vocational education and training, both in the development of the technological and technical infrastructure of practical training and the development of the training contents.

c. Lack of training and qualification development of the VET teachers, concerning both the development of the vocational and pedagogical qualifications.

d. Underdeveloped quality system of the vocational training, especially in the vocational schools.

e. Absence of systems of qualifications, unfinished system of occupational standards, lack of the transferability and assessment of the skills and qualifications between educational institutions. The occupational standards are developed by the Centre of the Methodology of Vocational Training together with the experts from the different occupational fields.

12. Involving stakeholders

a) Role of stakeholders or social partners in the planning of VET at national, sector and company level

Regional and national level

At the regional level the vocational training strategies and policies are implemented by the regional councils of vocational education and training, which are responsible for expertise, consulting, targeted measures of training curricula, initiating the new vocational training curricula, raising initiatives in the development of the practical training and the renewal of the technical infrastructure of training.

At the national level there are initiatives of the cooperation between the employers, sectoral organizations and the vocational training institutions (Cooperation agreements between the colleges of the Kaunas and Vilnius , the Lithuanian timber producers association and the Lithuanian association of chemistry production companies). Other important actors at this level are Chambers of the Industry, Commerce and Trade which established the co-operation with the vocational schools and colleges at the regional and national level. However, these initiatives are rather episodic.

Sectoral level:

The main actors at the sectoral level are the expert Commissions of the Branch of Economy constituted from the main employers of the sectors of economy, representatives of the vocational schools and local government. These Commissions decide the questions related to curriculum design, assessment of qualifications and competences, development and implementation of new training programmes and the development of occupational standards.

Company level:

The main stakeholders at the company level are employers. Employees in many cases have very limited possibilities to make the independent decisions regarding training needs and aims. The role of the trade unions is also rather limited, they are more active only in the bigger companies.

b) Actions to anticipate and recognise skills and qualifications needs

None

13. Transparency, recognition & mobility

a) Credit frameworks

b) Reforming qualifications framework

c) Implementation of Europass

For the moment there are no significant measures implemented to establish above mentioned mechanisms. All these mechanisms are included in the vocational education and training development strategies, related to the integration of Lithuania to the European labour market.

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