
Lithuania

VET in Europe – Country report

2012

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1. External factors influencing VET

1.1. Structure of population

Based on the data of Lithuanian Department of Statistics (Statistics Lithuania), at the beginning of 2012, the estimated population of Lithuania amounted to 3 199 771, i.e. 44 800 (1.4%) less than at the beginning of 2011. The impact of negative net international migration accounted for 85% of the decline and negative natural decrease accounted for 15% of the decline.

53.6% of the total population is women. Lithuanians account for 83.7% of population, Poles for 6.6%, Russians for 5.3% and other nationalities for 4.4%.

Almost one third of the population (29.7%) is under 24 years old, while the population aged 25-64 accounts for 53.8% and the ones over 65 accounts for 16.5% of the total population. The population of Lithuania is ageing, i.e. the number of elderly people (aged 60 and older) and their share compared to the total population is increasing. At the beginning of 2012, the population aged 60 and older amounted to 22.1%, while at the beginning of 2007 this group amounted to 20.4% of the total population. The ageing of the society will remain an important concern in the future; based on forecasts of Statistics Lithuania, in 2010-25 the number of persons over 65 will increase by 15%, while the number of population aged 15-64 will decrease by 10%. It can be presumed that in the long-term perspective employees will bear a heavier burden to support retirees.

Based on calculations of Statistic Lithuania, in 2001-10 the population number decreased by 178 700 due to negative net migration. In 2011, international net migration remained negative as the number of emigrants from Lithuania exceeded that of immigrants by 38 200. However, in 2011, compared to 2010, the number of immigrants increased three times (by 10 500). Almost every second emigrant is aged 20-29 and this share is increasing (41.8% of the emigrants in 2011 as compared to 30.9% in 2007). This negatively affects the composition of the labour force. Besides, more intensive emigration manifests itself in the shortage of skilled labour which may hinder economic growth in Lithuania in the long run.

1.2. Educational level of population

The education level of the Lithuanian population is rather high. Based on the labour force survey data on the educational attainment of the population, in 2011, 93% of the population aged 25-64 had attained at least upper secondary education and 34% the tertiary education attainment level. This is one of the highest education attainment rates in Europe.

In Lithuania the share of the population aged 30-34 having completed university education is increasing every year: in 2009 it was 40.6%, in 2010 43.8%, and in 2011 45.8%. On the other hand, due to decreasing birth rates and emigration the number of students in higher education institutions is decreasing (see Section 2.2.2). To retain the share of young individuals aged 30-34 with higher or equivalent education is one of the priorities of the National Reform Programme of Lithuania which summarises the main structural reforms to eliminate obstacles to economic growth and achieve national targets under the Europe 2020 Strategy. The document sets the target to retain this indicator at above 40% by 2020.

Taking into account the educational attainment level of the population aged 20-24, Lithuania has almost reached the 2012 benchmark established in the Provisions of the National Education Strategy 2003-12 (90% of population aged 20-24 having attained upper secondary education level or above)(see Table 1).

The benchmark regarding early school leavers is in principle also reached (see Table 1): in 2011 the share of the population aged 18-24 with, at most, lower secondary education and not in further education and training totalled 7.9% and was considerably lower than the EU-27 average (Lithuanian benchmark for 2012 is 9%; EU 2020 benchmark less than 10%). The National Reform Programme of Lithuania states reducing the number of early school leavers as one of the main national aims. It repeats the target to keep the share of early school leavers at below 9% in 2020.

Lifelong learning levels are rather low - the indicator on the participation of the population aged 25-64 in education and training over the past four weeks is behind other EU countries (Table 1) and behind the EU 2020 benchmark (15%). Besides, as illustrated by the labour force survey, a rather large share of the employed population (in 2011 311 000 or 22.9%) has completed general primary, lower or upper secondary education programmes and does not have a

vocational training background. Therefore adult vocational training and qualification upgrading is one of the largest challenges of the education and training system.

Table 1. Education and lifelong learning indicators

	2009	2010	2011	EU average, 2011
Share population aged 20-24 having attained upper secondary education level or above, %	86.9	86.9	86.9	79.5
Share of early leavers from education and training (persons aged 18-24), %	8.7	8.1	7.9	13.4
Share of the population aged 25-64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, %	4.5	4.0	5.9	8.9

Source: Eurostat and Statistics Lithuania database of indicators. Available from Internet: <http://db1.stat.gov.lt/statbank/default.asp?w=1280>

1.3. Economy and labour market indicators

According to Statistics Lithuania, the gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 5.9% in 2011 and Lithuania returned to the ranks of the fastest growing economies in the EU after an interval of several years.¹ Despite its strong growth last year, the Lithuanian economy has not yet recovered to its pre-crisis level. At the end of 2011, the national GDP was 5.9% lower than in 2007 and 8.5% lower than in 2008.

An analysis of which economic sectors generate the largest amount of value added shows the importance of the manufacturing industry (MI) for GDP growth. In 2011 value added in the sector rose by 10.6% compared to the previous year and the entire MI made up 20.4% of the national GDP. Sectors which focus more on the domestic market also contributed to the economic growth: domestic trade, transport, hotels and restaurants account for nearly a third of the national GDP (31%).

In 2011 there were 1.371 million persons employed in Lithuania and their number compared to 2010 has increased by 27 200. In 2011 the employment level of the population 15-64 was 60.7%

¹ DnB. Lithuanian Economic Outlook, 2012

and it increased by 2.9% compared to the previous year. Under the conditions of the economic slowdown, the average employment level has decreased by 6.5% (57.8% in 2010, as compared to 64.3% in 2008). The largest share of people is employed in trade, industry and the education sectors (see Table 2). During 2011 the largest increase of employees was in transport and industry.

Table 2. Employed population (aged 15 and over) by economic activity

Economic sector (NACE rev2)	Employed, thous.	%
A Agriculture, forestry and fishing	116.6	8.5
B Mining and quarrying	2.8	0.2
C Manufacturing	212.6	15.5
D Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	14.5	1.1
E Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	13.2	1.0
F Construction	93.7	6.8
G Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycle	246.8	18.0
H Transportation and storage	100.7	7.3
I Accommodation and food service activities	35.5	2.6
J Information and communication	27.9	2.0
K Financial and insurance activities	19.8	1.4
L Real estate activities	13.7	1.0
M Professional, scientific and technical activities	51.5	3.8
N Administrative and support service activities	44.9	3.3
O Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	83	6.1
P Education	146.5	10.7
Q Human health and social work activities	92.4	6.7
R Arts, entertainment and recreation	21.2	1.5

Source: Labour force survey data. Statistics Lithuania database of indicators. Available from Internet: <http://db1.stat.gov.lt/statbank/default.asp?w=1280>

In 2011, the unemployment rate stood at 15.4%; down by 2.4% compared to 2010. In 2011 there were 248 800 unemployed; their number compared to 2010 has decreased by 42 300 (14.5%).

Long-term unemployment remains an urgent topic. There were 129 100 long-term unemployed persons in 2011. Every second unemployed (51.9%) is affected by long-term unemployment (i.e. being unemployed for more than a year). This number rose by 7% compared to 2010.

Youth (persons aged between 15 and 24) unemployment rate in Lithuania is one of the largest in the EU. The indicator stood at 32.9% in 2011 and at 35.1% in 2010. Such a high unemployment rate is partly caused by the higher education prestige among the Lithuanian population - the percentage of students among young people in the country is much higher than in many other European countries and not many are eager to work and study at the same time.

1.4. Influence of external factors on VET

One of the problems Lithuania is facing is a rapid emigration due to which the number of people, especially young persons and qualified persons, is decreasing. Therefore vocational education and training (VET) is given a task to prepare for attractive and quality initial and continuing VET services; the need for which is increasing and will increase more in the future.

Lithuania is gradually recovering from the economic crisis, but to support recovery a more active introduction of innovations into all sectors of the economy, including traditional branches, is necessary. The VET system should turn out employees who are capable of working with new innovative technologies. For this reason a network of sectoral practical training centres is being established (see Section 2.2.3), efforts are made for more active cooperation with social partners in shaping qualifications and VET curricula (see Sections 3.2, 3.3, 3.4), for assessing VET learners competences (see Section 3.4), for managing and organising VET provision (see Sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.4.1), for updating VET teachers technological competences (see Section 2.2.6), and for improving career education quality and accessibility (see Section 4.5).

With the aim of solving youth unemployment problems in 2012 an action plan was prepared and approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. The action plan includes measures for improving the balance between the education system supply and labour market demand; shaping the working skills of the youth taking part in the education system, training of the youth according to formal and non-formal VET programmes; supporting youth entrepreneurship and self-employment; and supporting youth employment. To implement this action plan the Lithuanian Labour Exchange (*Lietuvos darbo birža*, LLE) has restarted projects for young unemployed persons' training and on-the-job training, and set up a system where a part of young employees' salaries is subsidised, while the Ministry of Employment is organising the creation of a medium-term forecast system on the needs for human resources and the creation of a system for monitoring links between qualifications and jobs.

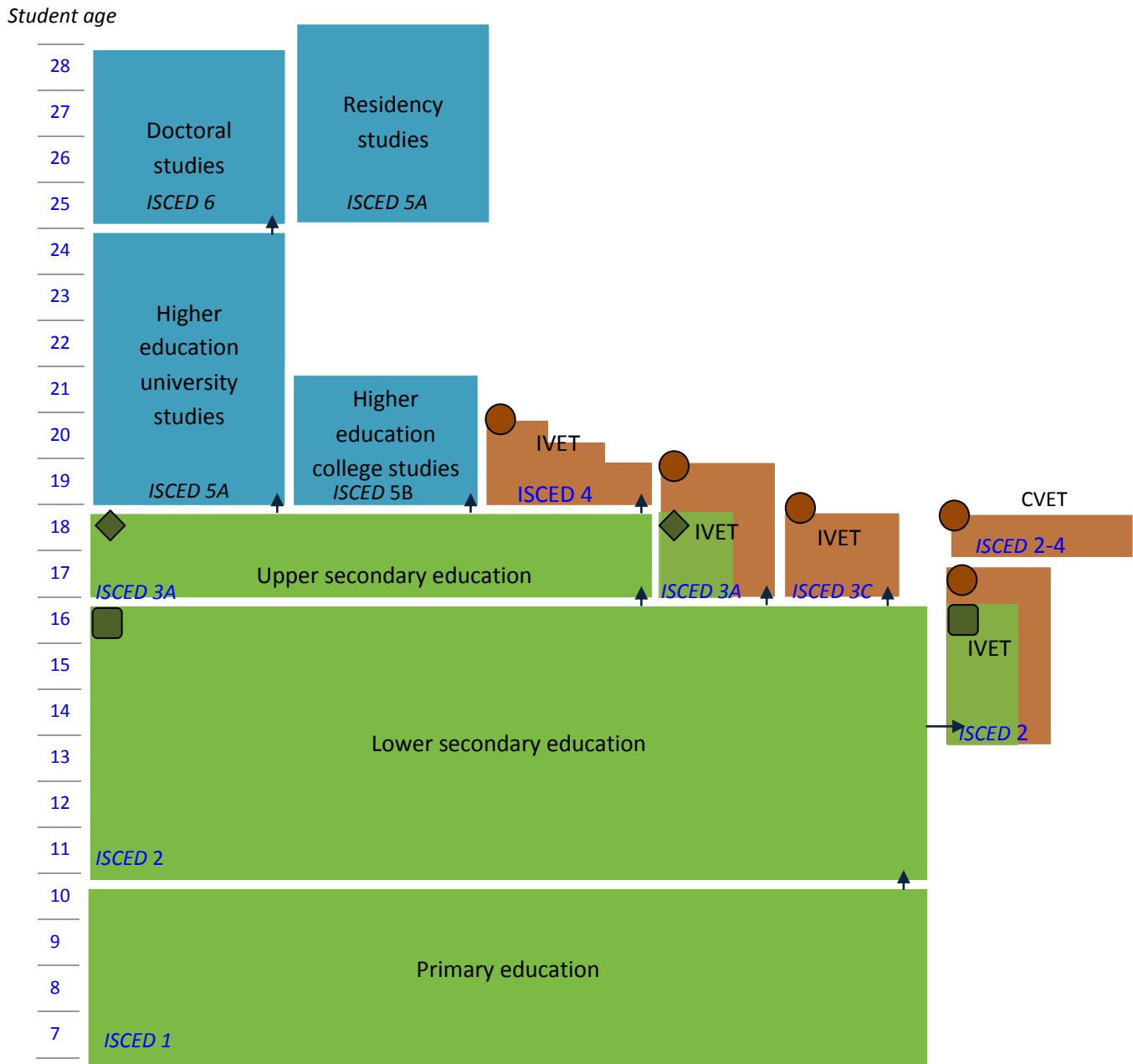
2. Providing vocational education and training in a lifelong learning perspective

2.1. Diagram of the national education and training system

The Lithuanian education system consists of traditional general education (pre-school, pre-primary, primary, lower and upper secondary education), initial vocational education and training (VET) (lower, upper secondary and post-secondary education), continuing VET and higher education (college and university studies). As stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania (1992), education is compulsory for persons under the age of 16. The compulsory education is associated with the completion of lower secondary education (ISCED 2), after which students can choose upper secondary general education or VET programmes at ISCED 3 level (leading to a qualification or to a qualification and a school leaving (maturity) certificate). Those who fail to graduate from lower secondary education may enter VET programmes or youth schools at ISCED 2 level. Graduates of upper secondary level programmes leading to a maturity certificate (either vocational or general education-oriented) may enter either post-secondary vocational training (ISCED 4) or higher education (ISCED 5) programmes. The diagram of the education and training system is presented in picture 1.

In 2010 the Government of the Republic of Lithuania approved the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework (LTQF) that defined an 8-level qualifications system covering all education sectors. The LTQF was developed based on the system of dividing learning outcomes into levels, which already existed in the Lithuanian education system: three education levels in the general education sector, four VET attainment levels in the VET sector and three study cycles in higher education. The levels of qualifications are arranged hierarchically, with regard to the underlying competence of the qualifications, the ways of acquiring the qualifications as well as the criteria defining the levels of qualifications: complexity, autonomy and variability of activities for which a person with certain qualifications is ready. The LTQF includes qualifications for working and learning, the main purpose of which is to prepare a person for further learning. Examples of such qualifications can be qualifications acquired upon completion of general lower or upper secondary education programmes.

Picture 1. Lithuanian education and training system



Further education route
 Certificates awarded after completing general education or VET programmes:
 basic school certificate maturity certificate qualification certificate

Primary education - *pradinis ugdymas*
 Lower secondary education - *pagrindinis ugdymas*
 Upper secondary education - *vidurinis ugdymas*
 IVET - *pirminis profesinis mokymas*
 CVET - *tesinis profesinis mokymas*
 Higher education college studies - *aukštosios neuniversitetinės studijos*
 Higher education university studies - *aukštosios universitetinės studijos*
 Doctoral studies - *doktorantūros studijos*
 Residency studies - *rezidentūros studijos*

In 2010 the referencing of the LTQF to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) was started. During this process a direct correspondence between the 8 LTQF and EQF levels was established based on the comparison of the LTQF and the EQF. The national report on referencing the LTQF to the EQF and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area was published in 2012. Its updating is foreseen for 2013.

Qualifications of levels 1-4 are acquired by completing vocational education and/or general education programmes.

Level 5 qualifications are acquired by completing training programmes intended for persons with a professional qualification as well as fixed-duration professional experience, and higher education programmes not leading to a degree (except residency). At the moment these qualifications are not awarded.

Level 6 qualifications are acquired by completing cycle one of university or college studies and, in the cases and according to the procedure specified in the legislation, by completing study or requalification programmes not leading to a degree. Level 7 qualifications are acquired by completing cycle two of university studies or integrated study programmes, in the cases and according to the procedure specified in the legislation, by completing study or requalification programmes not leading to a degree. Level 8 qualifications are acquired by completing doctoral studies. In addition, it is established that all levels qualifications may be acquired by gaining professional experience or by independent study.

At present the referencing of the concrete qualifications of the LTQF levels is being started. In order to relate Lithuanian qualifications and training programmes to the European context, in this report in some cases LTQF and EQF levels are indicated when describing qualifications and training programmes. This is done on the basis of theoretical comparison of learning outcomes formulated in training programmes with the LTQF and EQF level descriptors.

2.2. Government-regulated VET provision

2.2.1. Key characteristics of government-regulated VET provision

As stipulated in the Law on Vocational Education and Training (1997, new edition - 2007), the Lithuanian VET system covers initial VET (IVET), continuing VET (CVET) and vocational guidance (please see Section 4 for more information about vocational guidance).

VET programmes are designed for different age and educational background students. Initial VET is intended for the acquisition of a first qualification. In IVET, students are provided with opportunities of acquiring a qualification and completing general lower or upper secondary education.

CVET is designed for the improvement of a person's existing qualification, acquisition of a new qualification or gaining a competence needed to implement specific jobs (functions) as regulated in legal acts.

From 2002 VET curricula in Lithuania are competence-based, with clearly defined training objectives. IVET programmes are developed by VET providers in cooperation with representatives of employers. When developing programmes, the providers follow VET standards and general requirements approved by the Minister for Education and Science. Formal CVET is implemented following national programmes.

VET in Lithuania is school-based; however, practical training and training in enterprises constitute the major part of the training. For example, in IVET practical training comprises 60-70% of the total time allocated to teaching vocational subjects, of which 8-15 weeks is organised in a company or a school-based workshop simulating working conditions.

A new edition of the Law on VET legitimates apprenticeship as a form for VET organisation. However this training form is rarely applied in practice. In 2013 it is foreseen to allocate national and European structural funds for special projects for the apprenticeship development.

Social partners participate in shaping the content of new qualifications, qualification standards and VET programmes, in assessing that VET programmes correspond to the labour market needs and in organising practical training. They also take part in organising and implementing assessment of qualifications.

2.2.2. Offer of VET programmes

In IVET the following VET programmes registered in the Study, Training Programmes and Qualifications Register (*Studiju, mokymo programų ir kvalifikacijų registras*) are delivered:

- programmes at lower secondary education (ISCED 2 level) for students having no lower secondary education;

- programmes at upper secondary education (ISCED 3C level) for students having completed lower secondary education and not seeking to complete upper secondary general education;
- programmes at upper secondary education (ISCED 3A level) for students seeking to complete upper secondary general education;
- programmes at post-secondary education (ISCED 4 level) for students having completed upper secondary general education.

Graduation from these programmes leads to the LTQF and EQF levels 3-4 qualifications. Average learning duration, qualification certificates and further learning and career opportunities are summarised in table 3.

Table 3. Formal IVET and CVET programmes

	ISCED level	Average duration	Certificates awarded ²	Further learning and career opportunities
Programmes at lower secondary education level	ISCED 2	2-3 years*	Qualification certificate; certificate of lower secondary education	Further training in VET institution or general education school; Access to labour market
Programmes at upper secondary education level	ISCED 3C	2-3 years **	VET diploma	Access to labour market
Programmes at upper secondary education level	ISCED 3A	3 years	VET diploma; maturity certificate	Access to higher education/ college or university study programmes; Access to labour market
Programmes at post-secondary education level	ISCED 4	1-1,5 years	VET diploma	Access to higher education/ college or university study programmes; Access to labour market
Continuing VET (labour market training) programmes	ISCED 2,3,4	Up to 1 year	Qualification certificate	Access to labour market

² From 2012/2013 school year procedure and documentation for qualification and learning validation has changed. All persons who have received assessment of their competences needed for specific qualification will be awarded qualification certificate indicating qualification level according to the LTQF and the EQF

NB * Programme duration depends on whether a programme is designed for those willing to complete general lower-secondary education and whether it is targeted at students with special needs.

** Programme duration depends on whether a programme is targeted at students with special needs.

Those having no general lower or upper secondary education are provided with the opportunity to acquire it together with a vocational qualification. Thus VET programmes help to return early school leavers to the education and training system. After completing general upper secondary education and having gained a vocational qualification VET students may continue their studies at higher education institutions. In recent years the conditions to apply to higher education were improved for successful VET graduates.

Admission to IVET programmes

Vocational training programmes are designed for students over 14 years. The main requirement for students is to have a necessary educational attainment level. Entrants may freely choose training programmes and their providers all over the country.

Each VET provider plans enrolment of students to state funded VET programmes on the basis of local labour market needs and submits the plan to the Minister for education and science. The summed up student enrolment plan is discussed in the VET Council (see Section 2.2.4.1) and after that approved by the Minister for education and science.

Participation in IVET

It should be noted that the popularity of VET programmes in Lithuania is slightly increasing. Due to decreased birth numbers and emigration, the number of students in general education schools during 2009-11 has decreased by 11%, whereas the number of students in higher education institutions has decreased by 15%. At the same time, as seen from the data in table 4, the number of students in VET has changed insignificantly.

The majority of VET students participate in ISCED 3 level VET programmes that are carried out together with the general upper secondary programme and are intended for the acquisition of a qualification and a maturity certificate. The least popular programmes are for those students having lower secondary education and wishing to acquire only a vocational qualification

(ISCED 2). Around 500-600 students are participating in these programmes annually. It should be also noted that the popularity of post-secondary non-tertiary programmes (ISCED 4 level) is increasing, especially among adults who enter vocational schools having further education or work experience. Detailed information about participation in VET programmes is provided in the table below.

Table 4. Participation in IVET

	2009	2010	2011
Total number of students			
Total number of students	47 886	49 489	46 530
Entrants	22 659	22 193	20 134
Graduates	12 327	13 758	15 479
Programmes at lower secondary education level			
Total number of students	5 390	4 942	4 160
Entrants	3 392	3 056	2 695
Graduates	1 803	1 854	1 847
Programmes at upper secondary education level			
Total number of students	31 408	30 847	28 196
Entrants	11 945	10 553	9 007
Graduates	7 060	7 847	7 906
Programmes at post secondary education level			
Total number of students	11 088	13 700	14 174
Entrants	7 322	8 584	8 432
Graduates	3 464	4 057	5 726

Source: Statistics Lithuania database of indicators. Available from Internet:

<http://db1.stat.gov.lt/statbank/default.asp?w=1280>

CVET covers so-called labour market training programmes (*darbo rinkos mokymo programas*) (see table 1). The main requirement for learners is to be over 18 years old. Programmes are designed for persons with various educational attainment levels; it may be required to have a certain qualification or work experience. Duration of the programmes is not longer than 1 year, depending on the target group and the complexity of the qualifications. The programmes are intended at:

- the acquisition of a vocational qualification;
- the acquisition of an additional vocational qualification;
- gaining a right to implement specific jobs or functions.

Graduation from these programmes leads to LTQF/EQF level 1-3 qualifications. Practical training comprises 60-80% of the training. It is recommended that half of the time allocated for practical training should be spent in a real work environment.

National level data about participation in formal labour market training programmes is not collected. It should be also noted, that adults increasingly choose formal VET programmes oriented towards youth training as described above. ISCED 4 VET programmes are especially popular: persons aged 24 and older account for around a quarter of those entering IVET programmes at post-secondary level.

VET for persons with special needs

IVET and CVET for persons with special needs is organised according to individual learning plans together with other VET students or according to specially tailored ISCED level 2-4 VET programmes. According to data from Statistics Lithuania, around 1 000 students with disabilities are students in VET schools (994 in 2011, 1 116 in 2010, 1 016 in 2009). Students with special needs are offered 22 tailored programmes, the most popular of which are decorators (constructors) and cooks. The majority of students are at ISCED 2 level programmes.

More than 40 CVET programmes for special needs students are registered in the Study, Training Programmes and Qualifications Register. These programmes are implemented in vocational schools, labour market training centres and other institutions licensed for the provision of these programmes.

VET programmes for unemployed

Training of the unemployed and those noticed of dismissal is organised via formal CVET programmes registered in the Study, Training Programmes and Qualifications Register. From 2012 a new procedure for training for the unemployed has come into force. The unemployed and those noticed of dismissal are referred to training providers which they have personally chosen from the training providers list published on the LLE website. According to new procedure training is organised taking into account very concrete needs of employers. The major part of the unemployed are following programmes agreed with an employer and after training the employer is obliged to employ the unemployed person for a period not shorter than 12 months. In case of agreement with the employer, practical training is organised at the work place.

2.2.3. Formal VET providers

The Law on VET stipulates that a VET provider may be any VET institution, a freelance teacher or any other provider (general education school, enterprise, organisation whose main activity is other than VET) that is entitled to develop and implement VET programmes. VET providers may accept students and start implementing formal VET programmes after receiving a licence from the Ministry of Education and Science. VET institutions may have licences for both IVET and CVET.

Based on the data from the Open Information, Counselling and Guidance System (*Atvira informavimo, konsultavimo ir orientavimo sistema, AIKOS*: <http://www.aikos.smm.lt>), there are 88 VET institutions, the main activity of which is VET provision. In 2012, 74 institutions (vocational schools - budgetary and self-governing, colleges) implement IVET programmes; 72 of them are public. In addition to IVET providers, 260 institutions, the main activity of which is other than VET, have licences for CVET. However, data about CVET is not collected and thus, no reliable data is available to indicate how many providers implement CVET programmes.

With the aim of the optimal and efficient use of training funds and resources a reform of the network of initial and continuing VET providers is carried out. The priority activities for optimising the network are the transfer of VET schools with low number of students to municipalities, strengthening larger regional VET institutions and those institutions where sectoral practical training centres are being created, merging IVET and CVET institutions and changing the status of state-run VET institutions into self-governing ones.

A sectoral practical training centre (SPTC) is a VET institution or its department equipped with modern practical training facilities from one or several areas. The main aim of the SPTC is to assure that learners, using the latest technologies and equipment, gain practical skills matching the needs of the labour market. These centres are open to students from VET, higher education institutions, employees from sector enterprises, vocational teachers, etc. Until 2014, 42 SPTC are planned to open.

VET management decentralisation was started in 2003 through the reorganisation of state VET schools into self-governing institutions (*viešoji įstaiga*). This change enables different stakeholders (enterprises, social partners, regional and municipal government, etc) to participate

in the management of VET providers. The new status also increases their financial independence. In 2012, 20 VET providers have the status of self-governing institutions and in future the reorganisation will be continued further.

2.2.4. Main characteristics of VET system management and funding

2.2.4.1. Management

The laws of the Republic of Lithuania delegate the responsibility for the shaping and implementation of the VET policy to the Ministry of Education and Science, MES. The main MES functions include approval of general VET plans and procedures for formal VET, approval of students' enrolment to state-funded VET programmes, issuing of licences for provision of formal VET, approval of procedure for the development and licensing of formal VET programmes, and the accreditation of competences assessment institutions.

Special powers in the development of human resources are given to the Ministry of Economy, commissioning it to participate in the creation and implementation of the human resources development policy, to participate in the creation and implementation of the VET policy, as well as to organise research of the future skill needs and to disseminate its results in the course of the vocational guidance. Other ministries also have a possibility to participate in the development and implementation of the education and training policy by submitting proposals for passing legal acts on education and training, and participating in workgroups that draft the legal acts. Some of the ministries (e.g. the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Agriculture) actively participate in developing and implementing initial as well as continuing education and training programmes.

The Qualifications and VET Development Centre (QVETDC, *Kvalifikacijų ir profesinio mokymo plėtros centras*; until 2010 it was known as the Methodological Centre for VET) under the MES performs Qualifications Management Institution's functions as established in new edition of Law on VET, including the organisation of VET and qualifications standards development. It also accumulates and analyses information on VET and human resources development, designs methodologies for the development of VET, assesses and develops VET quality and functions as the Quality Assurance National Reference Point for VET and the EQF National Coordination Point.

The organisation of training for the unemployed is the responsibility of the local labour exchanges (*teritorinės darbo biržos*).

Advisory institutions also play an important role in the formation and implementation of the VET and qualifications system's development policy. The most important advisory institutions are as follows:

- The Vocational Education and Training Council of Lithuania, VETCL (*Profesinio mokymo taryba*) is a collegial institution that advises national education authorities on solving strategic issues of VET. The VETCL in equal parts consists of representatives of state governance and municipal institutions and organisations representing employers' and employees' interests.
- The Central Professional Committee, CPC (*Centrinis profesinis komitetas*) is a collegial, cooperation-based advisory body that coordinates strategic issues pertaining to the development of the qualifications system. The main functions of the CPC are to initiate the development of draft legislation, necessary for the development and maintenance of the qualifications system; to initiate the renewal of the LTQF; to establish priority sectors for the formation of the qualifications system; to discuss and suggest decisions regarding the qualifications system's formation issues; to advise the QVETDC on assuring correspondence between the qualifications and the needs of the labour market; to issue accreditations of competence assessment institutions; to link national qualifications with the EQF and other issues. CPC consists of 18 members. The Ministries of Education and Science and Economy and Agriculture, the Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania; the QVETDC and the Centre for Quality Assurance in Higher Education have delegated one representative each; 3 members are delegated by national education self-management institutions (namely, the Lithuanian Universities Rectors' Conference, the Lithuanian Colleges Directors' Conference and the Lithuanian VET schools Association); 9 members are delegated by social partners.

Social partners are involved in VET policy formation through the VETCL and CPC; they are delegated the right to initiate the development of new qualifications, qualifications standards and VET programmes. Representatives of social partners participate in setting up the content of VET curricula and assessing VET programmes with regard to their correspondence to the needs of the labour market, in the organisation of students' practical training and in assessing

competences acquired. From 2003 social partners are responsible for the organisation of the final qualification assessment.

From 2012 accredited competences assessment institutions (*kompeticijų vertinimo įstaigos*) organise the assessment of competences acquired by learners of IVET programmes (see Section 3.4 for more information).

2.2.4.2. Funding

Funding for formal IVET is allocated from the State budget in accordance with the methodology of calculating training costs per student as approved by the Government (2008). This methodology determines the level of direct funding needed for training per learner enrolled in a formal training programme for one VET academic hour. The unit costs (the so-called 'pupil's basket') include allocations for staff salaries and social insurance, in-service training of teachers and funding for the acquisition of various training resources and for indispensable practical training material. The latter category depends on the level of materials necessary for each specific programme. The unit costs are assigned to the VET provider on the basis of the actual number of students which is multiplied by the number of hours for the implementation of the programme and costs of a training hour. Unit costs for students with special needs are defined separately.

Besides, VET providers under the approved Government investment programme of a respective year may receive funding from the State budget for construction, update of training facilities, etc. Such developments could also be supported from other funds, including European structural and other funds.

VET providers may receive income from physical and legal entities for services provided (e.g. training courses, rent of premises). This income is used for education and training purposes.

Based on the data of Statistics Lithuania of 2011, around 6 700 LTL (EUR 1 940) from the state and municipal budgets were allocated per VET student. In comparison, in general education (all levels) this amount was 6 600 LTL (EUR 1 910) and in higher education - 7 700 LTL (EUR 2 230).

In the general structure of sources of funding (table 5), contribution from the national budget to VET comprises more than 80% of total funding.

Table 5. Sources of funding for vocational schools and their share of contribution, %

	2009	2010	2011
Funding from the State budget, %	89.4	84.4	83.3
Funding from private sources (physical and legal entities), %	8.2	7	8.2
Funding from international organisations, %	2.4	8.6	8.5

Source: Education 2011. Statistics Lithuania, 2012

Funding of CVET and unemployed training

Continuing training of employees is funded by the enterprise or the learner. According to national legislation in certain cases training can be sponsored by the State.

Starting from 2012 a training voucher system was introduced for funding training for the unemployed. A training voucher is a document issued by the labour exchange to an unemployed person in which the local labour exchange commits to pay a selected VET provider (within the limits of the coupon value) for VET services under an agreed VET programme. The unemployed personally choose training providers from the training providers list published on the LLE website.

For organising training for the unemployed three types of contracts are signed: a two-partite (between an unemployed and the local labour exchange) VET contract or a VET and self-employment contract or a tripartite VET and employment contract (between the unemployed person, the local labour exchange and the employer). Based on the data of LLE, in 2012 the majority of the unemployed participated in training according to tripartite contracts. If a tripartite contract is signed, a training programme and its provider is agreed with the employer. After training, the employer undertakes to employ the unemployed person for at least 12 months. If actual costs of training exceed the limits established by the Government, the difference is covered by the learner or the employer.

The same procedure is applied for training of persons who are notified of dismissal.

2.2.5. Quality assurance mechanisms

Provisions for VET quality assurance are set in the Concept of Vocational Education and Training Quality Assurance System (2008). The concept takes into consideration the analysis of experience of Lithuania and other European countries and the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) for VET in Europe. When implementing the concept and measures of the Practical VET Resources Development Programme (see Section 4.1) VET providers are encouraged to introduce internal quality assurance systems (related projects are implemented in 2011-13). External assessment of the implementation of VET programmes has recently started (implementation period 2012-14).

Until a quality assurance system based on self-assessment and external assessment is in place, the following measures are applied to assure VET quality on the state level:

- preparation and approval of standards. VET standards are the basis of VET programmes and assessment of student achievements (for more information see Section 3.2);
- preparation and registration of training programmes, issuing of licenses. A newly-prepared programme is harmonized with a relevant institution representing the employers (e.g. the Chamber of Industry, Commerce and Crafts), then experts (vocational teachers and employers) evaluate the quality of the programme and, in the case of positive assessment, the programme is entered into the Register of Study and Training Programmes and Qualifications. A license to carry out a registered programme is issued to a VET provider, if its resources are sufficient for implementing the registered training programme, and vocational teachers or candidates for vocational teachers meet the requirements prescribed in VET programmes and laws;
- supervision of programme implementation. Relevant divisions of the MES carry out supervision of the teaching process and activities, and audit of activities, while the State Audit Office performs random checks of educational institutions, during which the rationale of school activities is also analysed;
- independent assessment of qualification. The independent assessment of qualifications has been performed since 2003. Until 2012 this was the function of social partners (e.g. Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Crafts and Agriculture). From 2012 assessment of IVET students' competences is organised by accredited competence assessment institutions (for more information see Section 3.4).

2.2.6. Vocational teachers

There are two types of teachers in Lithuanian IVET institutions: general education subject teachers (*bendrojo lavinimo dalykų mokytojai*) and vocational teachers (*profesijos mokytojai*). On average, vocational teachers comprise more than half of teaching personnel (see table 6).

Table 6. Teaching personnel in vocational schools

School year	Teaching personnel, total*	Of which, vocational teachers	
		total	%
2009-10	3 882	2 116	54.5
2010-11	3 962	2 194	55.4
2011-12	3 897	2 120	54.4

Teaching personnel covers general education subjects' teachers, vocational teachers, class masters, school principals and deputy principals

Source: Statistics Lithuania, Database of indicators. Available from Internet:

<http://db1.stat.gov.lt/statbank/default.asp?w=1280>

In CVET theoretical and/or practical VET is provided by vocational teachers. Institutions that focus on the unemployed and employees' training (e.g. labour market training centres) may introduce additional teacher positions, for example, practical training managers (instructors).

VET teachers' training and qualification development

VET teachers working in IVET programmes must have a vocational qualification and a pedagogical qualification or must have participated in a course on the principles of pedagogy and psychology. VET teacher training is organised on a consecutive model where a vocational qualification is studied first, followed by education studies. Teachers who are without a pedagogical qualification, irrespectively of their educational attainment level, are offered a course on the principles of pedagogy and psychology of 120 hour duration. These courses can be organized by different institutions and companies which are entitled to provide them. Additionally, universities provide programmes for pedagogical vocational teachers' education.

The most important area for VET teachers' qualification improvement is the updating of their technological competences. In 2010 a project for the development and implementation of the system for VET teachers' technological competences improvement was started (*Profesijos*

mokytojų ir dėstytojų technologinių kompetencijų tobulinimo sistemos sukūrimas ir įdiegimas), according to the Practical VET Resources Development Programme (see Section 4.1). During the project a model for VET teachers' technological competences improvement was developed based on the experience of previous projects. In cooperation with employers and their organisations it is planned to prepare around 100 training programmes for the development of the newest technological competences in 12 sectors of the economy and to educate 650 VET teachers and college lecturers to work with the most modern technological equipment.

2.3. Other forms of training

In addition to the formal VET leading to state recognised qualifications described in Section 2.2 non-formal VET is conducted. The Law on VET states that the requirements for the non-formal VET programmes and their implementation may be set by the organisation that orders training under this programme or finances any such training. The objectives of VET programmes, admission criteria and duration are different and mostly depend on the target group. The decision concerning the tuition fee is made by the education provider. Non-formal adult education may be provided by all education providers, i.e. a school, a freelance teacher, and other education providers (an agency, company or organisation not having education as its main activity) that are entitled to provide education.

Non-formal VET is widely applied in continuing vocational training and is designed for the acquisition of a vocational qualification or individual competences. It is carried out in various forms: learning in the workplace, attending non-formal training courses, distance learning, etc. In most cases, the following three forms are used for the organisation of CVET:

- non-formal training/learning of employees and self-employed persons initiated by the employer. It is organised in various settings, using forms and programmes chosen by the employer. Some companies have their own qualification frameworks or apply internationally recognised sectoral qualifications and programmes. Such training/learning is funded by a company or agency or a learner. When relevant, tax incentives are used (see Section 4.4);
- training of employees funded by the state budget (e.g. training of public servants and employees in certain economic sectors: health care, agriculture, etc.);
- training of the unemployed and people notified of dismissal. From the beginning of 2012, a training voucher system was introduced (see Sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.4.2) for funding of training according to formal and non-formal education programmes. The unemployed and people notified of dismissal personally choose training providers from the training providers

list published on the LLE website. In October 2012, on the LLE website 109 VET providers were offering around 1 500 non-formal VET programmes with an average duration of 1.5 months.

Training of employees may be funded using EU and enterprises funds under measures of the 2007-13 Human Resources Development Operational Programme (*ŽIPVP*). For example, the aim of the measure 'Improvement of human resources in enterprises' is to improve the qualifications, knowledge and skills of company employees and managers and to develop the ability of employees to adapt to changes in company needs and in the labour market. The measure supports training of employees and managers (training that results in the acquisition and improvement of qualifications, special professional knowledge and skills as well as general skills) and organisation of training at workplaces. It is planned that 63 000 individuals will have taken part in training under this measure by 2015. 172.7 million LTL (EUR 50 million) is allocated for the implementation of the measure. Until October 2012, 149 projects were implemented; the total value of which is 160 million LTL (EUR 46.3 million). Own contribution is necessary for the implementation of projects (for small enterprises - 20%, medium enterprises - 30%, large enterprises - 40%).

In order to better familiarise young people with the world of work, the Law on Education states that modules of VET programmes can be included in general lower and upper secondary education programmes. Some experience in the cooperation between the general education and VET sectors has already been gained, and this could also be attributed to one of the specific forms of VET.

3. Shaping VET qualifications

3.1. VET qualifications in the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework

VET qualifications are attributed to the first five levels of the LTQF in the Lithuanian qualifications system (more details about the LTQF are provided in Section 2.1). The two lowest levels are intended for people who cannot get a higher level qualification for some reason or another, for example, due to disability or poor basic education. Acquisition of an even relatively low-level qualification facilitates people's integration into the labour market and reduces their exclusion. On the labour market the most popular LTQF levels are levels 3 and 4 since acquisition of these qualifications allows individuals to work independently. The main difference between these two levels is that in level 3 the qualification is intended for 'activities consisting of actions and operations in narrow areas' (e.g. cashier, sewing machine operator, painter) and in level 4 it is intended 'for activities consisting of actions and operations in relatively broad areas of activity' (e.g. sales person, tailor, decorator). In addition, a person who acquires a qualification at LTQF level 3 usually works under the guidance of an employee of a higher qualification and is subject to external performance quality control, whereas a person who acquires a qualification at LTQF level 4 is capable of assuming responsibility for the quality of the procedures and outcomes of the performance of his activities.

Most discussions revolve around level 5 qualifications. Employers emphasise the necessity of qualifications of this level. This level is special because it is on the boundary between VET and higher education. Second, no qualifications at this level are currently provided in Lithuania. The description of the LTQF states that 'level 5 qualifications are acquired by completing training programmes intended for persons with a professional qualification as well as fixed-duration professional experience, higher education programmes not leading to a degree (except residency), and/or through professional experience and independent study'. In addition, the description of the level 5 qualification highlights the employee's ability to supervise the activities of lower-qualified staff, plan and assign tasks, oversee the performance of the tasks, provide consultation, and verify performance quality. Thus the LTQF provides two types of VET qualifications at this level:

- experienced, highly skilled low-level managers or foremen;
- highly skilled workers/technicians, whose activity requires large-scale theoretical training.

3.2. Standards defining content of qualifications

3.2.1. VET standards

The VET standards (*profesinio rengimo standartai*) used in the VET system of Lithuania consist of three main interrelated components:

- parameters characterising occupational activities described by defining areas of activities, competences, and the limits of these competences;
- training objectives that define the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve certain competences;
- assessment parameters of vocational competences.

The first component describing functions of the planned occupational activities and vocational competences required for performing these activities is often referred to as the occupational standard and the remaining two components are referred to as the VET standard.

The first VET standards were developed in 1998. Presently 77 standards are legitimated for the VET sector. VET standards were prepared in a centralised manner with the process coordinated by the Qualifications and VET Development Centre (QVETDC). To assure social dialogue in designing VET standards, 14 Industrial Lead Bodies (*Ūkio šakų ekspertų grupės*) were formed, which equally represented employers, trade unions and VET institutions.

The standards that have to be drafted were specified by the Industrial Lead Bodies. Skills needs research was taken into account when making decisions regarding new qualifications and standards (e.g. sectoral research, labour market forecasts, the Employment opportunities barometer of LLE). A standard was drafted by a working group consisting of vocational teachers and professionals of a relevant field. The working group analysed legal documents and VET institutions' experience related to the qualification and carried out qualification researches in companies. The information was then used for the standard content. Draft standards were widely discussed and further improved according to comments received and only after that a relevant Industrial Lead Body endorsed standards. The final versions of standards were approved by the ministers for education and science and social security and labour. After their official approval, VET standards were used as a basis to develop VET programmes and assess achievement of students. Legitimated VET standards are available on the QVETDC website at <http://www.kpmc.lt/Standartai/iteisinti.html>.

3.2.2. Sectoral qualifications standards

When applying the VET standard-based system for regulation of the VET qualifications content, the following problems arise:

- each standard was designed for one specific qualification and the standards have been developed for only one qualification level corresponding to the LTQF level 4;
- since only the VET standard has been nationally validated and preparation of the programmes has been delegated to VET providers, a variety of programmes implementation plans has appeared. This reduces the flexibility of the training.

In order to improve the qualification formation system, in 2007, sectoral qualifications standards (*profesiniai standartai*) were legitimated by the Law on VET. Unlike the VET standard, the sectoral qualifications standard is developed for a particular sector of the economy by describing the most important characteristics of the qualifications at all LTQF levels. It is planned to establish VET sector qualifications competences and their limits and to group competences into units of qualifications. This will be done on the basis of a detailed research of the needs for qualifications in a certain economic sector.

Sectoral qualifications standards will be used in designing the content of VET and assessing whether a person's learning outcomes meet the requirements for a qualification. Identification of the requirements for all levels of qualifications at the same time should improve the permeability between different educational levels and make qualifications formation and improvement more flexible.

It is aimed to involve all relevant stakeholders into the development of qualifications standards. On the national level, the main responsibility for the development and implementation of qualifications system policy is delegated to the MES. The latter is assisted by the Ministry of Economy that organises research of the future skill needs and coordinate recognition of regulated professions. MES together with the Ministry of Economy define the structure of qualifications standards, the procedure for standards development, amendments and supplement and approve standards. When relevant, other ministries and governmental institutions participate in developing qualifications standards.

MES has delegated to the QVETDC the development of qualifications standards (see Section 2.2.4.1 for more detail). To ensure effective social dialogue the Central Professional Committee

(CPC, *Centrinis profesinis komitetas*) and 17 sectoral professional committees (SPC, *Sektoriniai profesiniai komitetai*) has been established at QVETDC. The CPC coordinates strategic issues pertaining to the development of the qualifications system (see Section 2.2.4.1), whereas SPC is responsible for qualification formation issues in concrete sectors of the economy. The main functions of SPC are as follows: to advise the QVETDC regarding sectoral qualifications and competences needed to acquire them, to set priorities for the development of qualifications standards, to endorse standards and to analyse the consistency of training programmes with the requirements prescribed in the standards.

3.3. Formation of VET curricula

Since 2000 VET programmes are developed by VET providers, in cooperation with representatives of employers. When developing programmes, providers follow VET standards and general requirements approved by the Minister for education and science. A programme may include additional competences to satisfy local needs. The development of VET programmes includes research of the skilled labour force needs on the local level. A newly drafted VET programme is subject to approval by a competent employer organisation (e.g. the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts).

In 2010 the Description of Order of Designing and Legitimizing of Formal VET Programmes was approved which introduced novelties into the development of VET programmes. One of the changes is the transition to developing national modular VET programmes, based on which school level programmes will be prepared. It is foreseen that QVETDC will organise the preparation or amendment of national modular training programmes. Qualifications standards or, in case of their absence, VET standards, will be used for developing curricula. VET providers and enterprises will have the possibility to initiate and design programmes as well. Currently pilots of modular training are being conducted in a group of schools.

3.4. Evaluation of competences and award of qualifications

A qualification is awarded to a person who has obtained all the competences required for the qualification and set out in the relevant VET standard or the sectoral qualifications standard or in the absence of these, in a VET programme registered in the Register of Study, Training Programmes and Qualifications.

The evaluation of the competences acquired by IVET graduates is separated from the training process. Since 2003, the organisation of the final qualification assessment has been delegated to social partners (e.g. Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Crafts and Agriculture). The evaluation of the competences of CVET graduates is organised by educational institutions and in some cases by social partners.

In 2012, accreditation of institutions that assess competences started. Acquired competences can be evaluated by accredited social partners and other institutions. Until October 2012, eight institutions have been accredited for this function, the majority of which are regional chambers of commerce, industry and crafts and agriculture.

Qualifications are awarded by the VET provider after obtaining the results of the evaluation of competences. Until 2012, graduates from ISCED level 2 VET programmes (intended for people without lower secondary education) were issued a qualification certificate (*kvalifikacijos pažymėjimas*) and graduates from ISCED level 3-4 programmes (intended for people with lower and upper secondary education) were issued a VET diploma (*profesinio mokymo diplomas*). Starting in the 2012-13 school year, qualifications documentation will change and all graduates whose competences are evaluated as required to receive a qualification will be issued qualification certificates. Starting in 2013, the LTQF/EQF level will be specified in the qualification certificates.

VET students who, together with a VET programme, complete the general lower education programme, are awarded a basic education certificate (*pagrindinio išsilavinimo pažymėjimas*) and those who complete the upper secondary education programme and pass school-leaving examinations are awarded a maturity certificate (*brandos atestatas*). Those who fail to complete the general education programme or pass the school-leaving examination are awarded a certificate of learning outcomes.

3.5. Assessment and recognition of non-formal or informal learning

The possibility to evaluate and recognise learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning is legitimised by the laws that regulate education. A number of bylaws are prepared that describe the procedures of the evaluation and recognition process. According to the existing procedure, individuals with at least one year work experience and those over 18 can apply to VET institutions for the recognition of their competences. The level of skills and

knowledge of an applicant and their correspondence to the requirements for the qualification is defined on the basis of VET standards and relevant VET programmes. Further the applicant and the school agree on a timetable of courses as necessary and a final qualification exam. Individuals who successfully pass the final exam are awarded the qualification certificate or qualified worker's diploma.

As mentioned above, social partners and other institutions may become competence assessment institutions that evaluate competences needed for a specific qualification. Such division of responsibilities of providing learning and assessing its outcomes benefits the evaluation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally or at work-place. Competences may be acquired through formal, non-formal learning, as well as through one's professional experience or informal learning. After evaluating competences, they may be recognised as a relevant level qualification or a part of it.

3.6. Quality assurance

Qualifications formation is an important process that helps to prepare qualified workers for the economy and to increase the competitiveness of the country. The following measures for assuring the quality of processes are foreseen:

- involving all stakeholders and social partners in particular into the qualifications formation. The system of CPC and SPC should facilitate this;
- keeping the main principles of transparency in all stages of qualifications formation and awarding: to constantly inform the society about activities, to provide opportunity for sharing opinion, to publicise outcomes;
- opening qualifications system for change. It is foreseen that social partners, VET providers, and other natural and legal persons will be able to initiate new qualifications;
- increasing positive attitudes of the society for self-assessment of knowledge and skills gained through non-formal, informal learning and professional experience and creating conditions to formalise achievements;
- promoting further development of internal quality assurance systems in VET institutions and implementing external assessment of VET programmes implementation (see Section 2.2.5);
- implementing the LTQF and participating in the EQF implementation.

4. Promoting participation in VET

The aim of developing VET is to reach a situation in which it would be considered an attractive and an equal element of the overall lifelong learning system. This chapter focuses on the main measures for reaching this aim, incentives for promoting participation in VET and vocational guidance and counselling services. Additionally, other measures which have been already described in this report are important for increasing the attractiveness of VET, such as, involvement of social partners into the formation of qualifications and VET curricula and the assessment of qualifications (see Sections 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4), reorganisation of the status of state public VET institutions into self-governing ones and thus creating opportunities for employers, municipalities and other institutions to become their shareholders and to participate in management directly (see Section 2.2.3).

4.1. The Practical VET Resources Development Programme for the development of VET quality and attractiveness

With the aim of improving VET quality and its correspondence to labour market needs, the Practical VET Resources Development Programme (*Praktinio profesinio mokymo išteklių plėtros programa*) was approved in 2007. Successful implementation of the programme should contribute to increasing participation in VET. The programme outlines activities for VET development until 2014. It is foreseen to allocate EUR 168 million from the national budget and European structural funds for the action groups set out in the programme. The actions are implemented by the organisations under the MES (QVETDC, Education Development Centre - *Ugdymo plėtotės centras*) and VET providers. The general aim of the programme is to increase the correspondence of VET provision to the needs of the labour market.

In addition there are special aims:

- to increase the flexibility of VET;
- to improve the quality of VET;
- to improve the readiness of learners for practical activity;
- to create conditions for VET teachers to regularly improve their skills;
- to enhance the accessibility of VET;
- to create conditions for learners to improve their skills to adapt to the social environment.

When implementing the programme, national qualifications are being developed (see Sections 2.1, 3.1, 3.2); a modular VET model is being developed and implemented and modular VET programmes in 25 educational fields are being created (see Section 3.3); the infrastructure of 42 sectoral practical training centres is being created (see Section 2.2.3); the technological competences of VET teachers are being updated (see Section 2.2.6); an adult education system is being developed; internal VET quality assurance systems are being introduced in all IVET providers and in a part of CVET providers and external assessment of VET quality is started (see Section 2.2.5).

4.2. Increasing VET attractiveness through strengthening its links with other education sectors

4.2.1. Bringing general education and VET closer

The conditions to obtain general education in VET schools

Students are provided with the possibilities to acquire the lower and upper secondary education together with vocational qualifications. Also, from 2000 through the accreditation of upper secondary general education programmes, technological gymnasiums have been set up at vocational schools. They provide upper secondary and pre-vocational education. Graduates are awarded a maturity certificate. Then they can choose either to stay in a VET institution or continue their training according to VET programmes, or to enter higher education.

Subjects of technologies and VET programmes modules in general upper-secondary school curricula

Students have opportunities to deepen their knowledge on technologies in specific sectors and to develop their practical skills and in such a way to acquire at least a part of skills necessary for a professional qualification at the general education school. Students may choose the following areas of technologies in the 11th-12th grades: textile and clothing; applied art, crafts and design; tourism and nutrition technologies; construction and wood processing; business, management and retail trade; mechanics and repair. Also, there are cases when VET programme modules are included into the general upper education curriculum. Technology subjects and VET programmes modules are recognised as a part of VET programme, when continuing education in VET programme.

Technology matura exam

From 2010 a technology matura exam to be taken at the end of the general upper secondary education programme is organised in the entire country. The exam may be taken by the general education school pupils, and also by the VET students.

4.2.2. Measures to improve mobility between VET and higher education

Improved conditions for VET graduates to enter higher education

A Description of Procedure for Ranking of the Best Graduates from Upper Secondary General Education Programmes (2009) defined the selection criteria and procedure for ranking of graduates who apply for higher education and also for funding from the State budget. This document introduces a novelty that applicants to higher education institutions who have graduated from a VET programme under the same field of education exceptionally well or have graduated from a VET programme under the same field of education and have not less than one year of work experience according to the qualification acquired are awarded additional points. This increases their opportunities to receive the 'study baskets' (i.e. funding for studies from the State budget). In 2010 another novelty was introduced that those who are the candidates to the state funded places instead of the three Matura exams may have passed two Matura exams and a final qualification exam which is taken upon the completion of VET programme.

Interinstitutional cooperation

A number of vocational schools cooperate with higher education institutions (colleges, universities) when drafting their study programmes that foresee the continuity of VET programme at tertiary level.

4.3. Incentives for youth VET

Training according to VET programmes for the acquisition of a first qualification is free of charge. IVET students may receive a student grant and other material support. Based on the data of the Education Information Technologies Centre from 2011, around 70% of IVET students receive a student grant. Special needs students who seek to acquire a first qualification and do not receive a student grant receive meals and other material support.

Students whose residence place is different than their learning place are provided with hostel accommodation. Based on the data of Education Information Technologies Centre around 99% of those who need hostel accommodation receive it.

4.4. Incentives for employers

The main financial incentives and instruments for increasing adults' participation in VET are tax incentives, grant schemes, paid and unpaid training leave and payback clauses.

Tax incentives for individuals for both formal and non-formal VET were introduced in 2008. Persons paying income tax may claim these expenses in their annual tax return. Up to 25% of the expenditures for training can be deducted. Where a studying resident of Lithuania is not an income taxpayer or has no possibility to exercise the right to deduct payments for vocational training or studies from their own income, such expenses may be deducted from the income of their parents or other family members.

Tax incentives for legal entities have been in place since 2005. For continuing VET the Law on Corporate Income Tax foresees the possibility for the recognition of allowable deductions for continuing training courses of employees associated with their present occupation.

The Labour Code legitimises that training leave conditions for employees who are studying according to VET programme may be determined in collective agreements or by agreement of the parties.

For funding of VET enterprises and organisations may use the grant scheme under the measures of ŽIPVP, for example the measure 'VP1-1.1-SADM-01-K Improvement of human resources in enterprises' (described in Section 2.3). A similar measure is implemented for civil servants. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture in 2008-12 implemented a project according to the measure 'VP1-1.1-SADM-09-V Reorientation of Workforce in Rural Areas from Agriculture to Other Activities'. During the project persons from rural areas were offered the opportunity to change their activity and qualification and to participate in formal or non-formal VET programmes not related with agriculture. The value of the project was 30.3 million LTL (EUR 8.8 million).

Payback clauses for individuals and future employers were both introduced in 2005. The Labour Code provides general conditions allowing employers to claim compensation from an employee of costs for training over the last year if they quit the job earlier than the predetermined period.

4.5. Vocational guidance and counselling

Main institutions

Nationwide vocational guidance is coordinated by the Lithuanian Students Non-Formal Education Centre (*Lietuvos mokinių neformaliojo švietimo centras*). It provides methodical assistance and consultancy to schools and educational support agencies, participates in the qualification development processes of the pedagogical personnel of schools and educational support agencies, ensures the accessibility of modern methodological and informational tools on vocational guidance, and participates in monitoring vocational guidance for students nationwide. As determined in the Description of the Procedure for Provision of Vocational Guidance (*Profesinio orientavimo vykdymo tvarkos aprašas*, 2012), the main educational institutions that provide vocational guidance services to their students are general education schools and VET institutions.

Other educational institutions (educational psychological services, education support agencies, etc.) are involved in providing vocational guidance to the extent this is related to their functions and actual vocational guidance needs.

In addition to employment intermediation, local labour exchanges also provide career information and counselling services for job seekers and organise meetings with general education and VET students to present prospective professions and aspects of profession choice.

A network of 700 Vocational Information Points (VIPs) has been established by the MES in general education schools and VET providers, libraries, territorial labour exchange offices and other institutions. VIPs provide information services, disseminate published material, and give access to internet and to the education and labour market databases.

The Education Exchange Support Foundation administers the Euroguidance project in Lithuania and disseminates vocational guidance ideas: provides information on education and vocational guidance (good practice examples in both Lithuania and Europe, new methods, etc.), creates various vocational guidance and counselling tools, and organises training seminars for vocational guidance practitioners.

AIKOS system

The Open Information, Counselling and Guidance System (*Atvira informavimo, konsultavimo ir orientavimo sistema*, AIKOS <http://www.aikos/smm.lt>) is the main portal on learning opportunities in Lithuania addressing a wide range of users: students, employees, vocational guidance and counselling personnel with the information on study and training programmes, education providers, qualifications, admission rules, classifications, education and employment statistics and other information. The portal information is provided by the MES, Statistics Lithuania, and LLE.

Organisation and funding

General education and VET institutions are responsible for the organisation of students' career education, provision of vocational guidance and counselling. They appoint a person who manages the work of career specialists, class or group tutors, subject teachers, vocational teachers, social pedagogues, school psychologists, and other professionals, and who coordinates related activities.

In 2012, the career education programme (*ugdymo karjerai programa*) was approved and started to be implemented in schools. It aims to provide conditions for students to develop their career competences necessary for successful selection of further learning, occupation and/or employment. Each school selects an acceptable model for the implementation of the programme. The programme is implemented through its integration in the primary, general lower and upper secondary and VET curricula. Career education can be offered as an optional subject. When implementing vocational guidance, students discuss information about learning and job opportunities through information systems and other tools (e.g. study visits, events, excursions, meetings with representatives of educational institutions, employers and other people) and work experience (*profesinis veiklinimas*). The latter is regarded as activities, works tasters during which students are encouraged to actively learn about different employment areas, specific characteristics of occupations and career opportunities and to accumulate work experience, develop professional motivation, and plan their future career.

When implementing vocational counselling, students learn, assess and discuss their individual characteristics and address issues related to their career planning, such as selection of studies and occupation; VET institutions students receive advice on job search issues.

Vocational guidance is funded from the student's basket and other state and local budgets, sponsors, etc. The project 'Creation and Development of Models for Career Education Services and their Monitoring in General Education and VET' (2010-2014) is supported by EU structural funds and is implemented by the Lithuanian Students Non-Formal Education Centre. In the course of this project, the activities of 750 school career specialists, provision of methodical assistance and consultancy to schools and organisation of work experience initiatives will be financed.

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Lithuanian Students Non-Formal Education Centre (*Lietuvos mokinių neformaliojo švietimo centras*): <http://www.lmitkc.lt>

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List of abbreviations

AIKOS - Open Information, Counselling and Guidance System (*Atvira informavimo, konsultavimo ir orientavimo sistema*)

EQF - European Qualifications Framework

LLE - Lithuanian Labour Exchange at the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (*Lietuvos darbo birža prie Socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos*)

CVET - continuing vocational education and training

ESF - European Social Fund

GDP - gross domestic product

ISCED - International Standard Classification of Education

IVET - initial vocational education and training

LTL - Lithuanian Litas - the currency of Lithuania

LTQF - Lithuanian Qualifications Framework

MES - Ministry of Education and Science (*Švietimo ir mokslo ministerija*)

NACE - Classification of economic activities in the European Community

Statistics Lithuania - The Lithuanian Department of Statistics (*Lietuvos statistikos departamentas*)

QVETDC - Qualifications and VET Development Centre (*Kvalifikacijų ir profesinio mokymo plėtros centras*)

VET - vocational education and training

VIPs - Vocational Information Points (*Profesinio informavimo taškai*)

ŽIPVP - 2007-2013 Human Resources Development Operational Programme (*Žmogiškųjų išteklių plėtros veiksmy programą*)