
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE
LITHUANIA





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This VET in Europe report is part of a series prepared by Cedefop's ReferNet network.

VET in Europe reports provide an overview of national vocational education and training (VET) systems of the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. The reports help to understand VET's main features and role within countries' overall education and training systems from a lifelong learning perspective, and VET's relevance to and interaction with the labour market.

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CHAPTER 1.

External factors influencing VET

1.1. Demographics

Lithuania has a population of 2 888 558 inhabitants (Statistics Lithuania, 2016). This is 1.1% less than at the beginning of 2015 and 14% less than in 2005. The main reasons for the population decrease are emigration and natural decrease.

High emigration creates a shortage of skilled labour and hinders future economic growth. At the same time, the share of immigrants increased and reached 0.8% of the total population in 2015. Many emigrants (36.4%) are between 20 and 29 years old and this has a negative affect on the composition of the labour force. This figure was 30.9% in 2007.

Lithuanians account for 87% of the population, Poles for 5.6%, Russians for 4.7% and other nationalities for 2.7%. There are more women (54%) than men. Almost one third of the population (27.9%) is younger than 24 years, while 53.7% of the population is aged 25-64.

At the beginning of 2016, the population aged 65 and older was 19%. In 2005–15, the number of elderly persons increased by 3.3 per cent. Ageing will remain an important concern for the future. According to Statistics Lithuania, in 2017-30 the number of people aged over 65 will increase by 10.4%. The number of those aged 15-64 will decrease by 31%. It is likely that in the future, the employed population will have to bear a heavier burden to support retirees.

1.2. Education attainment

The education attainment is one of the highest in Europe. Based on labour force survey data, in 2015, 91% of 25 to 64 year olds had attained at least upper secondary education and 35% reached tertiary level.

The share of the population aged 30-34 that has completed higher education is increasing every year (Table 1). However, due to a negative natural population increase and emigration, the number of students in higher education institutions is decreasing. In 2012-16, the total number of students in higher education institutions has decreased by 21% and this was the case for both, university study programmes (the decrease by 23%) and VET-type non-university higher education programmes (the decrease by 18%, see Section 2.2.1.5 for more information). Retaining the share of 30 to 34 year olds with higher education or equivalent is a priority of the national reform programme (European Commission, 2016) and the national education strategy 2013-22 (Lithuanian Parliament, 2013).

The latter document sets the target to retain this indicator at above 48% by 2022, which is higher than the 2020 European Union (EU) target.

Considering the educational attainment level of the population aged 20 to 24, Lithuania has almost reached the 2012 benchmark established in its 2003-12 national education strategy, with 90% of population aged 20 to 24 having attained upper secondary education level or above (Table 1). The same benchmark is set in the national education strategy 2013-22.

The benchmark on early leavers from education and training has also been reached (Table 1): in 2015, the share of early leavers from education and training was lower (5.5%) than the EU28 average (national benchmark for 2022 is 8%; the EU 2020 benchmark is less than 10%).

Participation in lifelong learning was lower than in the majority of other EU countries (5.8%, Table 1) and below the EU 2020 benchmark (15%). Also, a large share of the adult population aged 25-64 (26% in 2015) has completed general education programmes and not vocational education and training (VET). Increasing access to lifelong learning and VET for adults and increasing their qualification level is a challenging task for the education and training system.

Table 1. **Education and training 2020 indicators (%)**

	2013	2014	2015	EU average, 2015	EU 2020 target	National target
Share of the population aged 20-24 having attained upper secondary education or above	90	91.4	90.9	82.7	n.a.	2022: 90
Share of the population aged 30-34 having completed university studies (or equivalent)	51.3	53.3	57.6	38.7	40	2020: >48.7
Share of early leavers from education and training (persons aged 18-24)	6.3	5.9	5.5	11.0	< 10	2022: < 8
Share of the population aged 25-64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey	5.9	5.1	5.8	10.7	15	2022: 12

Source: Eurostat database.

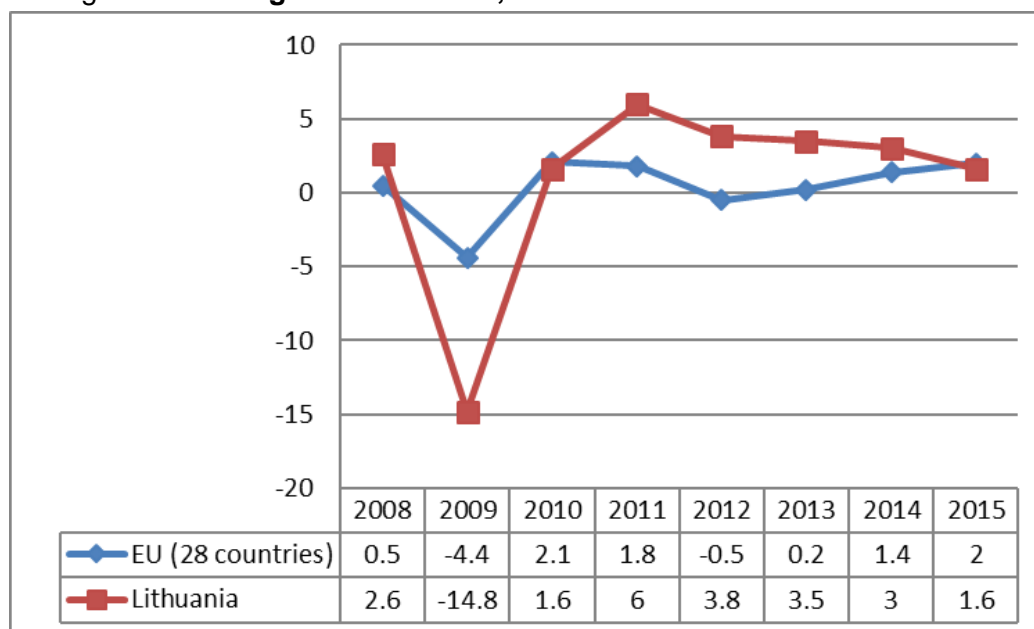
<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database> [accessed 31.8.2016].

1.3. Economy and labour market indicators

According to Eurostat, gross domestic product (GDP) increased by 1.6% in 2015 compared with 3% in 2014. The increase was slightly below the EU average (Figure 1). Increasing consumption and growth of investments contributed to

GDP growth, while the reduced export of goods and services had a negative impact on the growth of the economy (Lithuanian Ministry of Economy, 2016).

Figure 1. **GDP growth rate in %, 2008-15**



Source: Eurostat database. <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database> [accessed 31.8.2016].

In 2015, the wholesale and retail trade, transportation, accommodation and food services as well as manufacturing industry had the largest impact on GDP growth. In construction and real estate activities a minor decline was observed compared with the previous year (Lithuanian Ministry of Economy, 2016).

Table 1. **Employees (aged 15 and over) by economic activity, 2015**

Economic sector (NACE* rev2)	(000)	%
A Agriculture, forestry and fishing	121.1	9.1
B Mining and quarrying	2.3	0.2
C Manufacturing	202.8	15.2
D Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	10.6	0.8
E Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	14.0	1.0
F Construction	105.0	7.9
G Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycle	224.6	16.8
H Transportation and storage	100.1	7.5
I Accommodation and food service activities	34.0	2.5
J Information and communication	27.2	2.0
K Financial and insurance activities	18.6	1.4
L Real estate activities	14.5	1.1
M Professional, scientific and technical activities	52.4	3.9

Economic sector (NACE* rev2)	(000)	%
N Administrative and support service activities	48.4	3.6
O Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	81.6	6.1
P Education	132.2	9.9
Q Human health and social work activities	89.8	6.7
R Arts, entertainment and recreation	28.4	2.1
S Other service activities	25.8	1.9
T Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use	1.2	0.1
U Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies	--	--

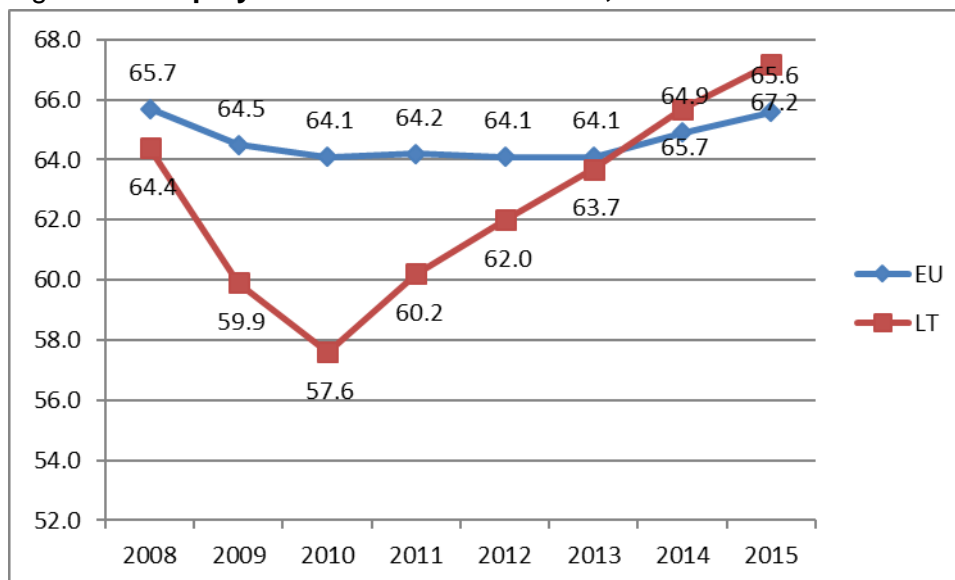
NB: * Classification of economic activities in the European Community.

Source: Statistics Lithuania database of indicators.

<http://osp.stat.gov.lt/web/guest> [accessed 31.8.2016].

In 2015, 67.2% of the population aged 15 to 64 were in employment, an increase of 1.6 percentage points compared with the previous year (Figure 2). Most people are employed in the trade, industry and education sectors (Table 2). During 2015, the largest increase in the number of employees was observed in construction, human health and social work activities. Employment in industry, education and information and communication sectors was also increasing.

Figure 2. Employment rate in EU28 and LT, 2008-15



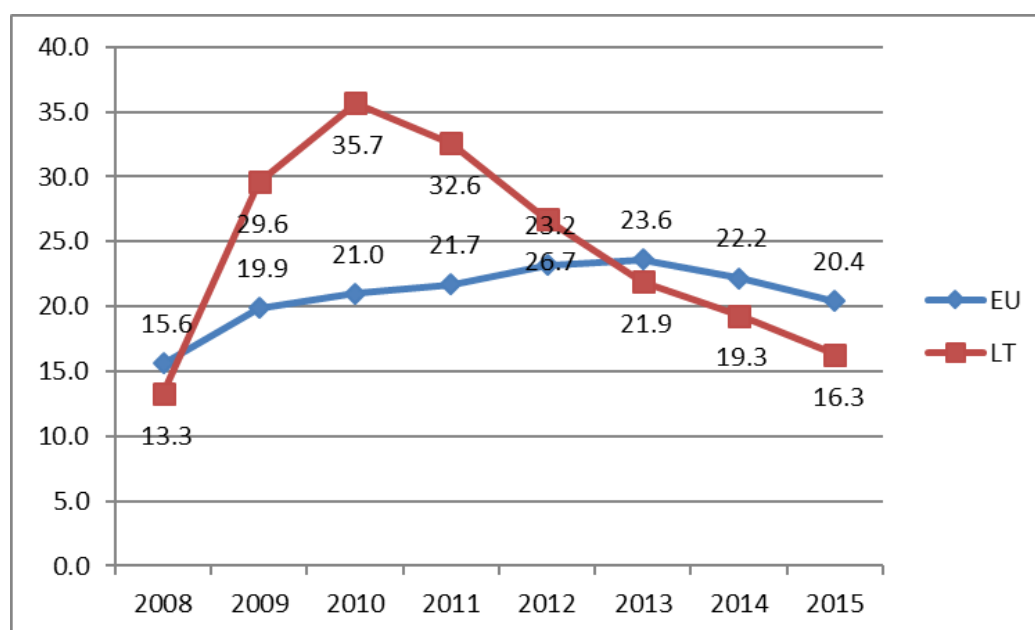
Source: Eurostat database. <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database> [accessed 31.8.2016].

In 2015, the unemployment rate was 9.1%; 1.7 percentage points less than in 2014. The average annual number of registered unemployed persons has decreased by 15 thousands, down to 158.2 thousands. However, similar to previous years, almost half (43%) of the unemployed were affected by long-term

unemployment (being unemployed for more than a year). Long-term unemployment remains a policy concern. More than one third of the unemployed are those with a vocational education background (39%). The unemployed with higher education (both, academic and VET-type) and upper secondary general education attainment was 24% and 22% respectively and with lower secondary education level – 15% (Lithuanian Labour Exchange, 2016).

Tackling high youth (15 to 24 year olds) unemployment (16.3% in 2015 compared with 19.3% in 2014) is a national policy priority. (Figure 3).

Figure 3. **Youth unemployment rate, 2008-15**



Source: Eurostat database. <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database> [accessed 31.8.2016].

In 2013 the Government approved the employment programme for 2014-20 (Lithuanian Government, 2013). It aims at 73% employment by 2020 by supporting the creation of jobs, increasing the correspondence of the labour force qualifications to the needs of the labour market and improving the integration of current working population into the labour market. The programme foresees improving the quality and accessibility of guidance and counselling services, acquisition of relevant skills in the education and training system, improving the system of competence assessment and recognition as well as better lifelong learning services. It aims to offer young people under the age of 25 years a good quality offer of employment, continuation of education and training, including VET, apprenticeship or traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. The programme includes measures to retain elderly and disabled persons in the labour market, including education and

measures for unemployed to return to employment. It also foresees strengthening in-company work-based learning.

The youth guarantee initiative (YGI) implementation plan (Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour, 2013) sets out various measures for improving youth employability and their integration into the labour market for 2014-20. Examples of such measures include:

- improving guidance and counselling services quality and accessibility;
- creating a system to identify inactive youth not in employment, education or training (NEETs);
- entrepreneurship support;
- providing more work-based learning opportunities.

Within the YGI actions, the network of youth labour centres (*jaunimo darbo centrai*) was expanded since 2013, from 11 (established between 1999 - 2013) to 37 in 2016. In addition, for young unemployed persons several targeted YGI projects were launched in 2015-16. For example, the project 'Discover yourself' (*Atrask save*) ⁽¹⁾, supports 35 000 unemployed young persons and NEETs with a variety of measures, such as guidance and counselling, identification of personal characteristics and skills assessment, site visits to companies, traineeships in companies and volunteering activities. The 'New start' project ⁽²⁾ offers VET courses, subsidised employment and workplace learning to more than 13 000 young persons. The measures implemented and started have led to positive changes and youth unemployment has significantly decreased from 35.7% in 2010 to 16.3% in 2015 and is below the EU28 average (20.4%).

Lithuania is recovering from the economic crisis, but to support recovery a more active introduction of innovation in all sectors of the economy, including traditional branches, is necessary. To face this challenge, initial and continuing VET (IVET and CVET) should be attractive and of good quality and the VET system should prepare employees for working with innovative technologies. In recent years a network of sectoral practical training centres has been established to offer a better quality practical training (Section 2.2.3). A high priority is put on making cooperation with employers more sustainable in shaping qualifications and VET curricula (Sections 3.2 and 3.3), assessing VET learners' competences (Section 3.4), overseeing VET governance and provision (Sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3) and updating VET teachers' technological competences (Section 2.2.6).

⁽¹⁾ Discover yourself (2015-18): <https://jaunimogarantijos.lt/lt/jaunimo-garantiju-projektai/projektas-atrask-save/54>

⁽²⁾ New start (2015-18): <https://jaunimogarantijos.lt/lt/jaunimo-garantiju-projektai/projektas-naujas-startas/61>

1.4. Professional regulation

In Lithuania, relatively few professions are regulated (doctors in medicine, architects, pilots, teachers, social workers, beauticians, managers of theatres, museums, libraries etc.). Some of these professions are covered by Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications ⁽³⁾. For other professions requirements are set by national legislation (e.g. a higher education degree and a certain qualification or area of qualification). In some cases, legislation defines alternative qualifications that may be recognised for a specific profession. Legislation may also set the required duration of professional experience (especially for management positions). For example, the position of managers of national level libraries requires having at least 3 years management work experience in the area of cultural or information society services, managers of VET institutions should have at least 3 years of professional experience in the area of VET programmes delivered by VET institution. There are also a few professions that require VET training (for example, masseur, first health-care professionals – paramedics, drivers).

Health care sector specialists (doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, odontologists and others) are required to have a licence for their professional activity. A list of licenced specialists is published on the website of the State Health Care Accreditation Agency under the Ministry of Health (<http://www.vaspvt.gov.lt>). In several professions (for example, social workers, teachers), employed persons can undergo certification (*atestacija*). During certification, skills, knowledge and competence are assessed against set criteria after which the corresponding qualification is awarded. A higher level qualification is linked to higher remuneration. Persons requesting certification for a higher level qualification must provide evidence of in-service training. Legislation may also define the required duration of in-service training (for example, for teachers, health-care specialists, public servants).

⁽³⁾ see also: http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/regprof/index.cfm?action=regprofs&id_country=20&quid=1&mode=asc&maxRows=*#top

CHAPTER 2.

Providing vocational education and training in a lifelong learning perspective

2.1. The national education and training system

The Lithuanian education system comprises general education (primary, lower and upper secondary education), initial VET (IVET) at lower, upper and post-secondary levels, continuing VET (CVET) and higher education (college and university studies).

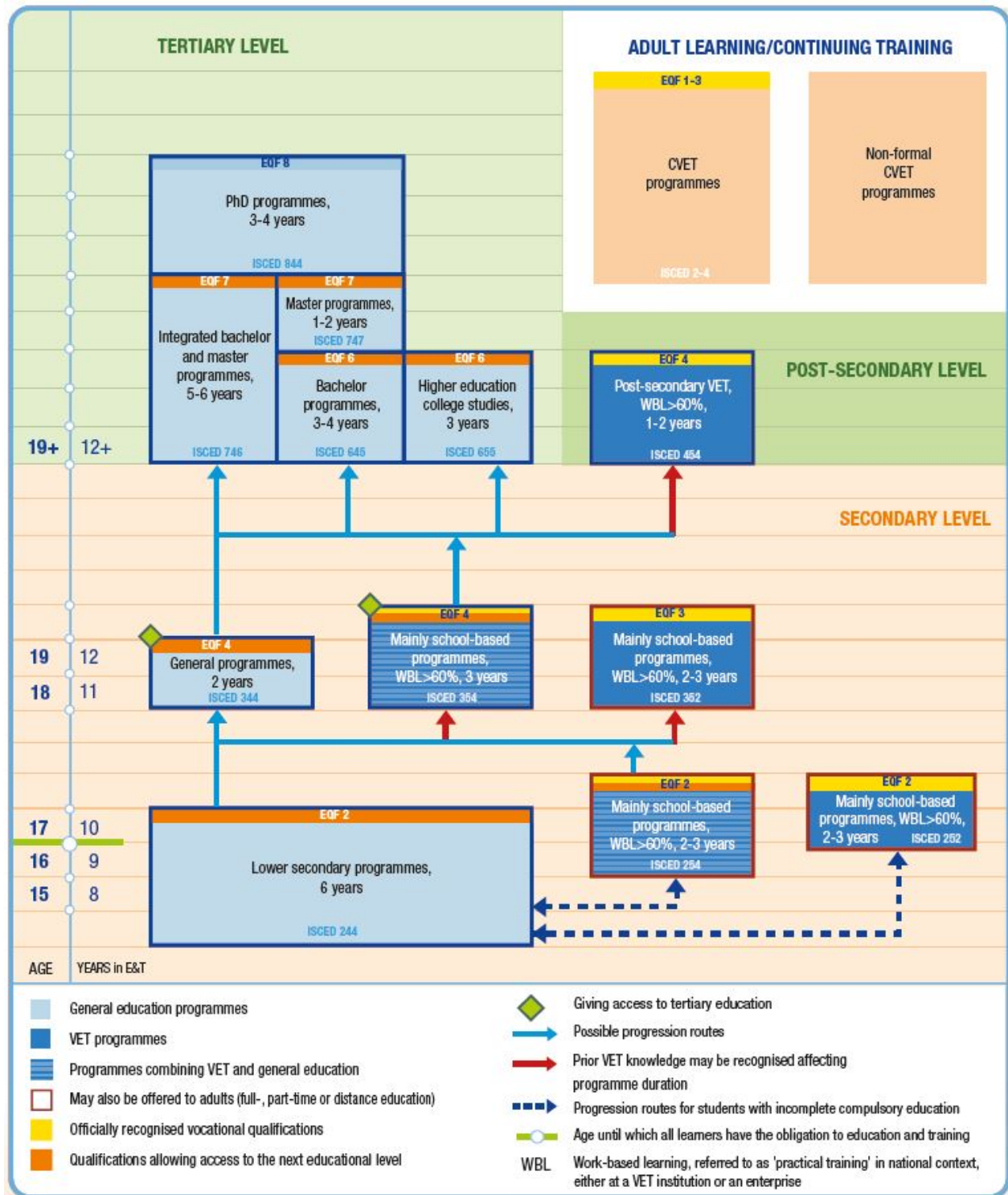
As stipulated in the Constitution (1992), education is compulsory until age 16 and it ends with the completion of lower secondary education (ISCED level 244) leading to a basic education certificate (*pagrindinio išsilavinimo pažymėjimas*) at EQF level 2. Learners can choose between three upper secondary education types:

- general education two-year programmes (ISCED 344) leading to the upper secondary education leaving certificate (*brandos atestatas*), also known as *matura* (EQF level 4);
- two- to three-year VET programmes (ISCED level 352) leading to an EQF level 3 VET qualification; and
- three-year VET programmes (ISCED 354) leading to an EQF level 4 VET qualification and at the same time to the *matura* certificate, which allows access to higher education.

Those without lower secondary education may enter VET programmes or youth schools (ISCED 252 and 254) leading to EQF level 2 qualifications.

Graduates of upper secondary programmes leading to a *matura* certificate (either vocational or general education-oriented) may enter either post-secondary VET (ISCED 454) leading to EQF level 4 VET qualification or higher education (ISCED 6) programmes leading to EQF levels 6-8. In the future, VET qualifications at EQF level 5 will be available for those with EQF level 4 VET qualification and at least three-year work experience (more information in Section 2.2.1). The education and training system is presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4. VET in Lithuania's education and training system



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Lithuania.

2.2. Government-regulated VET provision

VET programmes are designed for learners of different ages and educational backgrounds. In IVET, learners have an opportunity to acquire their first vocational qualification and, at the same time, complete general lower or upper secondary education. CVET enables a person to improve an existing qualification, acquire a new qualification or gain the competence needed to perform a specific job (function) as regulated by legislation.

Most IVET in Lithuania is school-based; however, practical training in schools and training in enterprises constitute a major part of the programme. For example, in IVET practical training comprises 60% to 70% of the total time allocated to teaching vocational subjects, of which 8 to 15 weeks is organised in a company or school-based workshop simulating working conditions. Apprenticeship is implemented on a very small scale and mainly through projects financed by the EU funds (Section 2.2.5).

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

2.2.1. VET programmes types

In IVET, VET programmes included in the 'study, training programmes and qualifications register' (*Studijų, mokymo programų ir kvalifikacijų registras*) are provided at:

- lower secondary education level not leading to a basic education certificate (ISCED 252);
- lower secondary education level leading to a basic education certificate (ISCED 254);
- upper secondary education level for learners having completed lower secondary education, not leading to upper secondary general education *matura* certificate (ISCED 352);
- upper secondary education level leading to upper secondary general education *matura* certificate (ISCED 354);
- post-secondary education level for learners who have completed upper secondary general education (ISCED 454).

Average study duration, qualification certificates and further learning and career opportunities are summarised in Table 2. Information about VET programmes and qualifications is available in the open information, counselling and guidance system (AIKOS, <http://www.aikos.smm.lt>) web portal.

Table 2. **Formal IVET and CVET programmes**

	ISCED-P 2011 level	Average duration	Certificates awarded	EQF level	Further learning and career opportunities
Programmes at lower secondary education level	252	2-3 years(*)	VET diploma	2	Access to labour market
Programmes at lower secondary education level	254	3 years	VET diploma; basic school certificate	2	Further training in VET institution or general education school; Access to labour market
Programmes at upper secondary education level	352	2-3 years*	VET diploma	3	Access to labour market
Programmes at upper secondary education level	354	3 years	VET diploma; <i>matura</i> certificate	4	Access to higher education/college or university study programmes; Access to labour market
Programmes at post-secondary education level	454	1-2 years	VET diploma	4 (**)	Access to higher education/college or university study programmes; Access to labour market
CVET programmes	2-4	Up to 1 year	VET diploma	1-3	Access to labour market

NB. (*) Programme duration depends on whether the programme is targeted at learners with special needs.

(**) a new 2-year pilot programme at EQF level 5 is also being piloted since 2016/17

Source: ReferNet Lithuania.

Learners without general lower or upper secondary education have an opportunity to acquire it together with a vocational qualification. Thus VET programmes help to bring early leavers from education and training back into education or training. After completing general upper secondary education and having acquired a vocational qualification, VET learners may continue their studies in higher education. In recent years, conditions allowing access to higher education have been improved for successful VET graduates (Section 4.2.2).

Starting from 2016 a new type of VET programmes (ISCED 454) leading to EQF level 5 qualifications was introduced. As a pilot, a two-year duration training programme for hospitality services administrators (*svetingumo paslaugų administratorius*) was chosen and in 2016 a first group of 25 students started

their learning. A VET diploma (EQF level 4) and three-year work experience is required to enter the programme.

2.2.1.1. *Admission to IVET programmes*

VET programmes are designed for learners over 14 years of age. Entrants may choose programmes and providers from all over the country.

Before the beginning of a new school year each VET provider plans the number of VET students to be enrolled in state-funded VET programmes based on local labour market needs. The enrolment plan is submitted to the Ministry of Education and Science. The national student enrolment plan is discussed in the VET Council (Section 2.2.2), and then approved by the Minister for education and science.

2.2.1.2. *Participation in IVET*

Popularity of VET programmes is increasing slightly. Due to the decreasing birth rate and emigration, the share of learners at all levels of education (EQF 1-8) has decreased by 15.2% between 2010 and 2015. During this period the number of learners in general education decreased by 19.4% and those in higher education by 28.7%. At the same time, the number of VET learners at all VET levels has decreased by 5.9%. Compared to general education sector, negative trends in population decrease does not influence participation in VET so greatly and VET even seems to be able to attract relatively more students each year (see Table 3).

Around the same number of learners participate in ISCED level 3 upper secondary VET programmes and ISCED level 4 post-secondary non-tertiary VET programmes. Both programmes lead to a vocational qualification at EQF level 4 and graduates of ISCED level 3 programmes in addition to it receive a *matura* certificate which allows access to higher education. The popularity of ISCED level 4 programmes has substantially increased in recent years, especially among adults who enter VET with education or work experience. The least popular programmes are those at ISCED 2 that only offer a vocational qualification at EQF level 2. Around 300 to 600 students participate in these programmes annually. Detailed information about participation in VET programmes is provided in Table 3.

Table 3. **Participation in IVET**

		2010	2013	2014	2015
Total number of students in IVET (000)		49.4	45.6	46.5	46.5
Programmes at lower secondary education level	Total number of students (000)	4.9	4.9	5.0	5.3
	Share of VET students, compared to GE orientation students, %	2.2	2.6	2.7	3.0
Programmes at upper secondary education level	Total number of students (000)	30.8	23.0	21.6	20.5
	Share of VET students, compared to GE orientation students, %	28.4	26.7	26.8	27.2
Programmes at post-secondary education level	Total number of students (000)	13.7	17.7	19.9	20.7

Source: Statistics Lithuania database of indicators.
<http://osp.stat.gov.lt/web/guest> [accessed 31.8.2016].

Formal CVET covers programmes with various educational attainment levels for learners who are older than 18 (Table 3). They may be required to have a certain vocational qualification or work experience to enrol in. The duration of programmes is less than one year but depends on the target group and complexity of the qualifications. These programmes may lead to a:

- vocational qualification;
- competence to perform jobs or functions regulated by law.

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

2.2.1.3. *VET for people with special needs*

IVET and CVET for people with special needs is organised according to individual learning plans with other VET students or according to specially tailored VET programmes at ISCED levels 2 to 4 which lead to EQF levels 1 to 4. According to data from Statistics Lithuania, there are around 1 300 learners with disabilities enrolled in IVET (1 346 in 2015, 1 334 in 2014, 1 150 in 2013). Most are in ISCED level 2 programmes. This would roughly correspond to around 3% of total VET learners, and according to Statistics Lithuania, number of persons with disabilities in VET is twice as high as in higher education institutions.

More than 40 CVET programmes for learners with special needs are listed in the 'study, training programmes and qualifications register'. These programmes are offered in VET institutions and other institutions licensed to provide them.

2.2.1.4. VET programmes for the unemployed

Training for the unemployed and for those who have been notified of dismissal is organised via formal CVET programmes listed in the 'study, training programmes and qualifications register'. The local public employment service (PES, *teritorinės darbo biržos*) is responsible for training the unemployed. In 2012, a new procedure approved by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour for training the unemployed came into force. The unemployed and those notified of dismissal are referred to training providers, which they have chosen from the list published on the PES website. Training programmes are organised taking into account the specific needs of employers. Most unemployed persons follow programmes agreed with employers, who are obliged to hire the unemployed persons for a period of at least 6 months after training. Where it is agreed with the employer, practical training is organised at the workplace (Section 2.4 for funding).

2.2.1.5. VET in higher education

Higher VET is formally a part of higher education and includes three to three year and half college study programmes (ISCED 655) leading to a professional bachelor degree (corresponding to EQF level 6). College study programmes are provided by colleges (*kolegija*) – a type of higher education institution.

A *matura* certificate is required for entry to this type of programmes and rules of progression to EQF level 7 programmes (ISCED 747) are decided by universities (i.e. some universities may require college graduates to attend a one-year supplementary study programme). Work-based learning (practical placement in companies and other kinds of practical training in colleges) constitutes at least one third of the study programme where practical placement lasts roughly a half of year (30 ECTS credits). For comparison, in university study programmes (ISCED 645), the volume of practical placement should be at least 15 ECTS credits.

Information about number of colleges and their students is provided in Table 5. Number of students in higher VET programmes is gradually decreasing due to a negative birth rate and emigration. If compared to a total number of students in higher education, a share of students in higher VET remained stable and even slightly increased in recent years (38-39%).

Table 5. **Participation in higher VET**

	2010	2013	2014	2015
Total number of colleges	23	24	24	23
Total number of students in higher VET (000)	53.3	43.6	41.5	39.8
Share of students in colleges, compared to total number of students in universities, professional bachelor and bachelor degrees (%)	36	38	38	39

Source: Statistics Lithuania database of indicators. <http://osp.stat.gov.lt/web/guest> [accessed 30.6.2017].

2.2.2. VET governance

Ministry of Education and Science

Legislation delegates responsibility for shaping and implementing VET policy to the Ministry of Education and Science (SMM). Its main functions include approval of:

- the procedure for implementing formal VET programmes (Lithuanian SMM, 2012);
- the annual plan for implementing formal VET programmes (Lithuanian SMM, 2015);
- student enrolment in state-funded VET programmes;
- the procedure for developing and licensing formal VET programmes (Lithuanian SMM, 2010a).

The Ministry also issues licences for providing formal VET and accredits competence assessment institutions.

Ministry of Economy

A special role in developing human resources has been given to the Ministry of Economy. It participates in creating and implementing human resources development policy, VET policy, and organises research on future skill needs and disseminates its results for career counselling purposes. Other ministries can also participate in developing and implementing education and training policy by submitting proposals for legal acts on education and training, and participating in working groups that draft legal acts. Some ministries (such as the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Ministry of Agriculture) contribute to developing and implementing initial as well as continuing education and training programmes.

Qualifications and VET development centre

The Qualifications and VET development centre (*Kvalifikacijų ir profesinio mokymo plėtros centras*, KPMPC; until 2010 known as the Methodological Centre for VET) organises development of standards and training programmes. KPMPC

also collects and analyses information on VET, designs methodologies for developing VET and assesses and develops VET quality. It also acts as the national quality assurance reference point for VET (EQAVET) and the national EQF coordination point.

Advisory institutions

Advisory institutions also play an important role in designing and implementing VET development policy. The most important advisory institutions are:

- The vocational education and training council (Profesinio mokymo taryba), a collegial institution that advises national education authorities on solving strategic VET issues. It consists in equal parts of representatives of State governance and municipal institutions and organisations representing employer and employee interests;
- the central professional committee (Centrinis profesinis komitetas), a collegial, cooperation-based advisory body that coordinates strategic issues concerning development of the qualifications system. Its main roles are to initiate the legislation necessary for development and maintenance of the qualifications system; initiate revision of the LTQF; establish priority sectors for the qualifications system; discuss and suggest decisions regarding the qualifications system's structure; advise the KPMPC on ensuring correspondence between qualifications and labour market needs; accredit competence assessment institutions; link national qualifications with the EQF and other issues. The committee consists of 19 members. The Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministries of Economy and Agriculture, the Association of Local Authorities, the KPMPC, the Centre for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Universities Rectors' Conference, the Colleges Directors' Conference and the VET Institutions Association delegate one representative each; ten are delegated by social partners.

Social partners ⁽⁴⁾

Social partner organisations are involved in VET policy development through the VET Council and the Central Professional Committee; they have the right to

⁽⁴⁾ The Law on Vocational Education and Training (Parliament, 1997) identifies social partner organisations as institutions of employers (the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists, the Lithuanian Business Employers' Confederation), institutions of business self-government (the Lithuanian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Crafts, the Chamber of Agriculture of Lithuania) and organisations representing the interests of employees (Lithuanian Confederation of Trade Unions, the Lithuania Trade Union Solidarumas, the Lithuanian Labour Federation). The law stipulates that other institutions can be approved by the Government to act as social partners.

initiate development of new qualifications, qualifications standards and VET programmes. Social partner representatives participate in devising the content of VET curricula and assessing VET programmes with regard to their correspondence to labour market needs, organising learners' practical training and in assessing the competences acquired. Since 2003, social partners have been responsible for organising final assessments of acquired competences for obtaining qualifications. Since 2012, accredited competence assessment institutions (*kompetenciju vertinimo institucijos*) have been organising assessment of competences acquired by learners in formal VET programmes (see Section 3.4 for more information).

2.2.3. Formal VET providers

The Law on VET (Parliament, 1997) 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) authorised to develop and implement VET programmes. VET providers may accept learners and provide formal VET programmes after receiving a licence from the Ministry of Education and Science. VET providers may have licences for both IVET and CVET.

According to the data of the Ministry of Education and Science, in 2016, there were 72 IVET providers, of which 70 were public. In addition, four public labour market training centres and 200 institutions, whose main activity is other than VET, specialise in CVET (SMM data of August, 2016).

To use training funds and resources more efficiently, the network of IVET and CVET providers is being reformed since 2015. Priorities include developing larger regional VET institutions, and strengthening institutions where sectoral practical training centres have been created, merging IVET and CVET institutions and changing State-run VET institutions into self-governing ones.

By the end of 2015, 42 sectoral practical training centres have been opened. A sectoral practical training centre is a type of VET institution equipped with modern facilities from one or several fields. The main aim of these centres is to assure that learners gain practical skills that match labour market needs using the latest technologies and equipment. These centres are open to VET and HE students, employees in enterprises, vocational teachers, etc.

Decentralisation of VET governance started in 2003 through reorganisation of State VET institutions into self-governing ones (*viešoji įstaiga*). This change enables different stakeholders (enterprises, social partners, regional and municipal government, etc.) to participate in governing VET providers. Their new status also increases their financial independence. In 2016, 26 IVET providers were self-governing and it is planned to continue the reorganisation in the future.

2.2.4. Apprenticeship training

VET legislation (Parliament, 1997 and Lithuanian SMM, 2012) provides a legal basis for apprenticeship. However, apprenticeship has still not gained its position as a clear VET pathway and receives little attention from VET providers and companies. The reasons for this are the lack of apprenticeship traditions in the country, labour market features (SME (small- and medium-sized enterprises), limited availability of economically strong enterprises, economic decline and shrinking employment), and volatile economic development and a subsequent decrease of investments to VET. Another important obstacle for apprenticeship is the absence of support mechanisms (both financial and non-financial) for companies employing apprentices or offering other forms of work-based learning.

In IVET, few schools currently implement small scale apprenticeship-type programmes for carpenters, roofers, confectioners, cooks, locomotive drivers and java programmers. In CVET, a large ESF project has been implemented (2013-15) by the Vilnius Jerusalem Labour Market Training Centre and by four labour market training centres. This pilot project trained more than 1 300 apprentices in the health care, accounting, landscaping, mechanics, logistics and services sectors and provided policy and practice recommendations for the implementation of apprenticeship-type programmes.

Recently, there has been a substantial shift in political support for the apprenticeship system in Lithuania. Measures for apprenticeship system development have been included in all major VET and employment policy documents: the national strategy on education 2013-22, the national programme for the increase of employment 2014-20, the youth guarantee initiative implementation plan (2013) and the VET development action plan 2014-16. In 2014-15 Lithuania participated in a thematic country review on apprenticeships launched by Cedefop aimed at proposing a roadmap for quality apprenticeships. The review has drawn on the outcomes of a wide consultation with stakeholders, provided a detailed country-specific analysis of factors facilitating apprenticeship and challenges, and suggested which actions could be undertaken in the future.

2.2.5. Quality assurance mechanisms

The national approach for improving VET quality assurance is set out in the VET quality assurance system concept (2008). This concept took into account the experience of Lithuania and other European countries as well as the common quality assurance framework for VET in Europe and the European quality assurance reference framework for VET (EQAVET). The concept laid down how quality in VET is to be assured and outlined the institutions involved, their responsibilities and foreseen activities. When implementing the concept and ESF projects, VET providers have introduced internal quality assurance systems and

external assessment of VET programmes was implemented providing recommendations for VET programmes quality assurance at national, sectoral and schools level. Aligning the VET quality assurance system with EQAVET is ensured through activities for developing a quality culture for VET providers, promoting PDCA (plan–do–check–adjust), known as the ‘quality circle’ nationally, encouraging and supporting regular self-assessment of VET providers. PDCA is embedded into VET provision and is regarded as the backbone of VET quality assurance.

Other measures to assure VET quality at State level are:

- design and approval of VET standards and sectoral qualifications standards, which are the basis of VET programmes and assessment of learner achievements (for more information see Section 3.2).
- design and registration of training programmes, issuing licences. The programmes have to follow standards (VET or sectoral qualification standards, see section 3.2 and 3.3 for more information). Training programmes are designed by the KPMPC or by any other VET provider. In the latter case, the quality of the training programmes must be checked by the Qualifications and VET development centre (KPMPC). If the programme receives a positive evaluation it is included in the study, training programmes and qualifications register’. A licence to carry out a registered programme is issued to a VET provider if it has sufficient resources to implement the 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 Ministry of education supervise the teaching process and activities, and audit activities, while the State audit office performs random checks of educational institutions, during which the rationale of their activities is also analysed;
- independent assessment of knowledge, skills and competences to acquire a qualification. Since 2003, the assessment process has been detached from training programmes, and until 2012, was performed by chambers of commerce, industry and crafts and chambers of agriculture. Since 2012, assessment of the formal competences of VET learners has been organised by accredited competence assessment institutions (for more information see Section 3.4).

2.2.6. Vocational teachers and trainers ⁽⁵⁾

There are two types of teachers in IVET institutions: general education subject teachers (*bendrojo ugdymo dalykų mokytojai*) and vocational teachers (*profesijos mokytojai*). On average, vocational teachers represent more than half of all teaching personnel (Table 6).

Table 6. Teaching personnel in IVET institutions

School year	Teaching personnel, total*	Of which, vocational teachers	
		Total	%
2013/14	3 633	2 082	57.3
2014/15	3 581	2 044	57.1
2015/16	3 507	2 011	57.3

NB: * Teaching personnel covers general education subject teachers, vocational teachers, class teachers, school principals and deputy principals.

Source: Statistics Lithuania database of indicators. <http://osp.stat.gov.lt/web/guest> [accessed 29.08.2016].

In CVET, theoretical and/or practical VET is provided by vocational teachers. Institutions that focus on training employed and unemployed people (such as labour market training centres) may introduce additional positions for trainers, for example, practical training managers (instructors).

2.2.6.1. VET teacher training and professional development

VET teachers must have a vocational and a pedagogical qualification or must have participated in a basic course on pedagogy and psychology. VET teacher training follows a consecutive model whereby a vocational qualification is studied first, followed by studies on pedagogy. Teachers without a pedagogical qualification, irrespective of their educational attainment level, are offered a 120-hour course on pedagogy and psychology. These courses are organised by accredited institutions and companies. Additionally, universities provide programmes for the pedagogical education of vocational teachers.

Updating their technological competences is a priority for the continuing professional development of VET teachers. In 2010-15 a related project was implemented (*Profesijos mokytojų ir dėstytojų technologinių kompetencijų tobulinimo sistemos sukūrimas ir įdiegimas*). In cooperation with employers and their organisations around 100 training programmes in 12 sectors of the economy were implemented. As a result of this project around 700 VET teachers and

⁽⁵⁾ see also: Vaitkutė, L. (2016). *Supporting teachers and trainers for successful reforms and quality of vocational education and training: mapping their professional development in the EU-Lithuania*. Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series. http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2016/ReferNet_LT_TT.pdf

college lecturers were trained to work with state-of-the-art technological equipment.

2.3. Other forms of training

In addition to formal VET leading to the State-recognised qualifications described in Section 2.2, non-formal VET is also available. According to legislation the requirements for non-formal VET programmes and their implementation may be set by the organisation that requests training under these programmes or finances any such training. The objectives of non-formal VET programmes, admission criteria and duration are different and mostly depend on the target group. Decisions on tuition fees are made by providers. Non-formal adult education may be offered by any education provider, freelance teachers, and agencies, companies or organisations that do not have education as their main activity but are authorised to provide education.

Non-formal VET is widely applied in continuing VET and is designed for the acquisition of a vocational qualification or individual competences. It is carried out in various forms: learning at the workplace, attending non-formal training courses, distance learning, etc. In most cases, the following three forms are used for organising 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 (Section 4.4);
- training employees funded by the State budget (such as training civil servants and employees in certain economic sectors: healthcare, agriculture, etc.);
- training the unemployed and people notified of dismissal funded through a voucher system introduced in 2012 (Section 2.4) to finance training in formal and non-formal education programmes.

2.4. Funding VET

2.4.1. Funding IVET

Funding for formal IVET is allocated from the State budget. Training costs are calculated per student. The methodology for calculating training costs 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 'student basket') include allocations for staff salaries and social insurance, in-service training of teachers and funding for the acquisition of various training resources, including practical training. The latter category is calculated using a coefficient that varies depending on the programme area. Funding is allocated to the VET provider based on the actual number of learners multiplied by the number of hours for implementing the programme and costs of a training hour. Unit costs for learners with special needs are defined separately.

Among sources of funding (Table 7), the contribution from the national budget to VET comprises around 80% of total funding. The share of funding from international organisations and abroad depends on the availability of European funds. In addition, VET providers under the approved government investment programme for a respective year may receive funding from the State budget for construction, updating training facilities, etc. Such developments could also be supported from other funds, including EU structural funds. VET providers may receive income from physical and legal entities for services provided (such as training courses, rent of premises). This income is used for education and training purposes.

Table 7. Funding for IVET institutions by source (%)

	2010	2013	2014	2015
State budget	84.4	72.4	75.1	82.2
Private sources (physical and legal entities)	7.0	6.8	7.1	9.2
International organisations	8.6	20.8	17.8	8.6

Source: Statistics Lithuania, 2016b.

2.4.2. Funding CVET for training employees

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

To finance training of employees in the private sector, EU and enterprise funds are used. For example, the measure 'improvement of human resources in enterprises' from the 2007-13 human resources development operational programme (ŽIPVP) aimed to improve the qualifications, knowledge and skills of company employees and managers. The measure supported training of employees and managers and organising training at workplaces. In 2008 and 2012 two calls were published by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and the European Social Fund (ESF) Agency to fund employee training. Altogether 240 projects received support valued at around EUR 78 million, of which EUR 54

million was support from the ESF. Companies had to contribute to the projects (small enterprises had to provide 20%, medium enterprises 30% and large enterprises 40% of the total training cost). A similar measure was implemented for public sector employees.

Support from the 2014-20 European Structural Funds will be allocated for several human resources development measures. For example, under a measure called 'Competence Voucher' EUR 56.8 million will be allocated to fund the training of almost 42 000 employees. The projects are planned to be implemented in 2017-23. Another measure called 'Human resources Invest LT' aims to support training of employees of foreign companies operating in Lithuania. A total of EUR 11.6 million will be allocated from European Structural Funds to fund the measure; 49 projects have already started in 2016 and will last to 2023. Companies must contribute funding for both measures (small enterprises will have to provide 30%, medium enterprises 40% and large enterprises 50% of the total training cost).

2.4.3. Funding CVET for training the unemployed

Training costs for the unemployed are mainly covered from ESF support. Starting in 2012 a voucher system was introduced by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour to fund relevant training. A training voucher is a document issued by the public employment service (PES) to an unemployed person. The local PES commits to paying a selected provider – within the limits of the voucher value – for training services under an agreed VET programme. The unemployed person can choose training providers from the list published on the PES website.

There are two types of contracts which may be signed when organising training for the unemployed:

- a bipartite VET contract between the unemployed person and the local PES, In case of a bipartite contract, the unemployed person is referred to a VET programme a list of which is formed on a basis of labour market forecasts and employers surveys. After training, the unemployed person undertakes to work in the position offered by the local PES for at least six months or start own business; or
- a tripartite VET and employment contract (between the unemployed person, local PES and employer). In case of a tripartite contract, a training programme and its provider are agreed with the employer. After training, the employer undertakes to employ the unemployed person for at least six months. If the actual costs of training exceed the limits established by the government, the difference is covered by the learner or employer. The same procedure is applied to training persons notified of dismissal.

CHAPTER 3.

Shaping VET qualifications

3.1. VET qualifications in the qualifications framework

The Lithuanian qualifications framework (LTQF) was developed based on a system of allocating learning outcomes to levels, which already existed in the education system: three education levels in general education, four VET attainment levels and three study cycles in higher education. The eight-level national qualifications framework (LTQF) was approved by the government in 2010. At the same time, referencing of the LTQF to the European qualifications framework (EQF) has started. During this process a direct correspondence between the LTQF and EQF levels was identified.

Levels of qualifications are arranged hierarchically, in accordance with the criteria set: complexity, autonomy and variability of activities which a person with certain qualifications can be expected to carry out.

VET qualifications are attributed to the first five levels of the LTQF in the Lithuanian qualifications system. Qualifications at levels 1-4 are acquired by completing vocational education and/or general education programmes. General education minimal levels are necessary for the achievement of a certain VET attainment level. They can be acquired before or during the VET programme (i.e. integrated into the VET programme).

The two lowest levels are intended for people unlikely to acquire a higher-level qualification for one reason or another, for example, because of disability or poor basic education. Even a relatively low-level qualification makes people's integration into the labour market easier and reduces their exclusion. The most popular LTQF levels on the labour market are levels 3 and 4, offered in upper secondary VET, since acquisition of these qualifications allows individuals to work independently. The main difference between these two levels is that, at level 3, the qualification is intended for activities in narrow areas (such as cashier, sewing machine operator, painter) and at level 4 it is intended for relatively broad areas of activity (such as sales person, tailor, decorator). In addition, those who acquire a VET qualification at level 3 usually work under guidance from an employee with a higher qualification and are subject to external performance quality control, while those who acquire a qualification at level 4 are capable of assuming responsibility for the quality of procedures and outcomes in performing their activities.

Level 6 qualifications are acquired by completing cycle one of university or college studies and, in cases and according to the procedure specified in

legislation, by completing study or requalification programmes not leading to a degree. Level 6 qualifications also include a professional bachelor degree gained after finishing of VET-type higher education programmes (see Chapter 2.2.1.5). Level 7 qualifications are acquired by completing cycle two of university studies or integrated study programmes, in cases and according to the procedure specified in legislation, by completing study or requalification programmes not leading to a degree. Level 8 qualifications are acquired by completing doctoral studies. In addition, LTQF legitimises that qualifications at all levels may be acquired by gaining professional experience or by independent study.

Most discussions revolve around level 5 qualifications (currently being piloted, see section 2.2.1.). Employers highlight the necessity of qualifications at this level. This level is special because it is the boundary between VET and higher education. The LTQF states that 'level 5 qualifications are acquired by completing training programmes intended for people with a vocational qualification as well as professional experience, higher education programmes not leading to a degree (except for medical studies), and/or through professional experience and independent study'. In addition, the level 5 qualification highlights the employee's ability to supervise activities of lower-qualified staff, plan and assign tasks, oversee performance of 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.

In 2015 the first qualifications at this level were registered in the 'study, training programmes and qualifications register' and in 2016 a first programme for training of hospitality services administrators was started.

3.2. Standards defining content of qualifications

3.2.1. VET standards

VET standards (*profesinio rengimo standartai*) comprise three main interrelated components:

- activities and competences describing occupational activities;
- training objectives defining the knowledge and skills necessary to perform occupational activities;
- vocational competence assessment parameters.

The first comprehensive VET standards were developed in 1998. So far 77 standards have been approved for the VET sector. These VET standards were

prepared centrally under the coordination of the Qualifications and VET development centre. To assure social dialogue in designing them, 14 sectoral expert groups (*Ūkio šakų ekspertų grupės*) were formed, comprising employers, trade unions and VET institutions.

The standards were specified by the sectoral expert groups. Skills needs research was considered when taking decisions on new qualifications and standards (such as sectoral research, labour market forecasts, the PES employment opportunities barometer). Standards were drafted by a working group of vocational teachers and professionals. The working group analysed legal documents and the experience of VET institutions related to qualifications and carried out research on qualifications in companies. The information was then used for the content of the standard. Draft standards were widely discussed and improved according to comments received, and only after that were the standards endorsed by the respective sectoral expert groups. Final versions of standards were approved by the Minister for education and science and the Minister for social security and labour. After official approval, VET standards were used as the basis for developing VET programmes and assessing learner achievement. The approved VET standards are available on the Qualifications and VET development centre website at <http://www.kpmpc.lt/Standartai/iteisinti.html>.

3.2.2. Sectoral qualifications standards

When applying VET standards for regulating VET content in curricula, the following problems arise:

- each standard was designed for one specific qualification and developed for only one qualification level corresponding to LTQF (EQF) level 4.
- since only the VET standard was nationally validated and the preparation of programmes was delegated to VET providers, various curricula appeared. Such variety seriously impedes transfer of learning outcomes and thus reduces mobility between training institutions.

To improve the qualification development system, sectoral qualifications standards (*profesiniai standartai*) were given a legal basis by legislation in 2007. Unlike the VET standard, a sectoral qualifications standard is developed for a particular economic sector by describing the most important qualifications in the specific sector at different LTQF levels (Lithuanian SMM and Lithuanian Ministry of Economy, 2015). For each qualification the standard describes competences that are grouped into units. Within the project 'Formation of qualifications and development of modular VET system' (*Kvalifikacijų formavimas ir modulinio profesinio mokymo sistemos kūrimas*) 10 sectoral qualifications standards were designed (project implementation period: 2010-15). It is foreseen that from 2017

another 14 sectoral qualifications standards will be designed by 2020 with ESF support. Sectoral qualifications standards will gradually replace VET standards.

After sectoral qualifications standards are approved, they will be used to design VET content and assess whether a person's learning outcomes meet the requirements for a qualification. Identifying requirements for all levels of qualifications at the same time should improve permeability between different educational levels and make qualifications development and improvement more flexible.

Many different stakeholders are involved in developing qualification standards. The main responsibility for development and implementation of qualifications system policy is delegated to the Ministry of Education and Science (SMM). SMM, together with the Ministry of Economy, define the structure of qualifications standards, the procedure for standards' development, amendments and supplements and approve the standards.⁶ When relevant, other ministries and governmental institutions participate in developing qualifications standards.

The Ministry of Education has delegated development of sectoral qualification standards to the Qualifications and VET development centre (see Section 2.2.2). To ensure effective social dialogue, the central professional committee and 17 sectoral professional committees (*sektoriniai profesiniai komitetai*) were set up at the Qualifications and VET development centre. The central professional committee coordinates strategic issues pertaining to development of the qualifications system (Section 2.2.2), while sectoral professional committees are responsible for designing qualification standards in specific sectors of the economy (Lithuanian SMM, 2010b). The main roles of these sectoral committees are to advise the Qualifications and VET development centre on sectoral qualifications and the competences needed to acquire them; set priorities for developing qualifications standards; and endorse standards and analyse consistency of training programmes with the requirements prescribed in the standards.

3.3. VET curricula design

Since 2000, VET programmes have been developed by providers, in cooperation with employer representatives. When developing programmes, providers follow the VET standards and general requirements approved by the Minister for education and science. A programme may include additional competences to

⁶ Due to prolonged standard coordination procedures among the Ministries of Education and Economy, the first sectoral qualifications standard was approved in 2017.

satisfy local needs. VET programme development is also informed by research on skilled labour force needs at local level. A newly-drafted VET programme must be approved by a competent employer organisation (such as a chamber of commerce, industry and crafts).

In 2010, legislation on designing and approving formal VET programmes was amended (Lithuanian SMM (2010a). One of the changes is transition to national modular VET programmes, based on which programmes at school level are designed. The Qualifications and VET development centre is responsible for organising the preparation or amendment of national modular training programmes. Sectoral qualifications standards or, in their absence, VET standards, are used for developing curricula. Within the project 'Formation of qualifications and development of modular VET system' (*Kvalifikacijų formavimas ir modulinio profesinio mokymo sistemos kūrimas*) 60 national modular programmes were designed (project implementation period: 2010-15). The Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists and separate sectoral associations of employers were involved in this project. It is planned that a further 70 programmes will be developed with ESF support by 2020. VET providers and enterprises can also initiate and design programmes, but in this case the quality of the training programme has to be evaluated by the Qualifications and VET development centre.

3.4. Evaluating competences and awarding qualifications

A qualification is awarded to a person who has obtained all the competences required as defined in the respective VET standard or sectoral qualifications standard; or, in the absence of these, in a respective formal VET programme.

Evaluation of the competences acquired by IVET graduates is detached from the training process/programme. From 2003 to 2012, organisation of the final assessment was delegated to chambers of commerce, industry and crafts and agriculture. In 2012, a new regulation delegated assessment of competences acquired through formal, non-formal, work-based or informal learning to specifically accredited institutions. These include chambers of commerce, industry and crafts, employers' associations (e.g. associations of constructors, welders), joint stock companies, public organisations (e.g. Policy department, Fire and rescue department, State border guard service). In 2016, 28 institutions were accredited.

Qualifications are awarded by VET providers once they have obtained the assessment results. Graduates whose competences are considered sufficient to

receive a qualification are issued a VET diploma (*profesinio mokymo diplomas*) showing the respective LTQF and EQF levels.

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

Individuals, with at least one-year work experience and older than 18, can apply to VET institutions for recognition of their competences. The skills and knowledge of an applicant are defined on the basis of VET standards or sectoral qualifications standards and relevant VET programmes. The applicant and the school then agree on a timetable of courses as necessary and a final qualification exam. Individuals who pass the exam organised by an accredited competence assessment institution are awarded a VET diploma (more information in Section 3.4). When pursuing VET studies at a higher level prior learning (or VET programme) is recognised as part of their training programme, affecting the duration of the programme.

Most higher education institutions have internal procedures for recognising their students' non-formal and informal learning. The descriptions of procedures are published on the website of the Ministry of Education and Science ⁽⁷⁾. The recognition schemes are applicable for higher education institutions students and adults wishing to receive certification of their knowledge, skills and competence. Institutions may set a maximum limit for credits given for recognised prior learning (usually, 75% of total study programme volume).

3.6. Quality assurance of qualifications design and award

The quality of qualifications design and award is secured by a package of measures summarised below:

- the central and sectoral professional committees' system should promote involvement of all stakeholders, in particular social partners, in developing qualifications;
- adhering to the main principles of transparency at all stages of developing and awarding qualifications: constantly inform society about activities, provide opportunities for sharing opinions, publicise outcomes;

(7) <http://www.smm.lt/web/lt/smm-svietimas/suaugusiujusvietimas/neformaliu-budugytu-kompetenciju-formalizavimas>

- opening the qualifications system to change. Social partners, VET providers, and other natural and legal persons are able to initiate new qualifications.
- encouraging society to become aware of the knowledge and skills gained by non-formal, informal learning and professional experience and create conditions to have them recognised;
- implementing the EQAVET principles by promoting further development of internal quality assurance systems in VET institutions, implementing external assessment of VET programme delivery, applying PDCA ((plan–do–check–adjust, nationally referred to as ‘quality circle’) in the qualifications design process (Section 2.2.6).
- Implementing the LTQF and referencing it to EQF.

CHAPTER 4.

Promoting participation in VET

This chapter focuses on the main incentives in place to make VET an attractive option for citizens, and to promote participation in VET and vocational guidance services.

Improving the image of VET is still a challenge. Traditionally, VET in Lithuania has not been considered prestigious by young persons, their parents and the population in general. As evidenced in Tables 4 and 5, although participation in VET, in contrast to general education and higher education, is currently stable or even increases at post-secondary non-tertiary level, participation in VET at upper-secondary education level remains one of the lowest among EU countries (in 2014, 26.7% in Lithuania, EU28 average 47.4%). This is, first of all, caused by the preference for higher education over VET by young persons and their parents. Another important reason is the fact that funding for general education schools and VET institutions depends on the number of students which leads to competition between these two networks in attracting and keeping learners.

4.1. VET development action plan

In 2014 the action plan for developing VET for 2014–16 (Lithuanian SMM, 2014c) was approved to identify areas for VET development and propose a preliminary list of projects of strategic importance for VET development. The following measures are foreseen in the action plan that will continue until 2022 through projects supported by EU funds and the national budget:

- optimisation of the network of VET institutions and effective use of infrastructure;
- optimisation of the supply of VET programmes and improvement of the quality and relevance of these programmes;
- improvement of the system for the assessment and recognition of competences;
- improvement of training of teachers working in VET institutions;
- improvement of management and training quality in VET;
- provision of guidance and counselling services.

All these measures are aimed at improving the image of VET as an education sector of high quality. A project to promote the public image of VET and lifelong learning is also foreseen (2017-20); this will include various promotion events,

campaigns, skills competitions, etc. A total of EUR 4 million has been assigned to fund the project.

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

4.2.1. Bringing general education and VET closer together

As explained in Section 2.2, learners are able to acquire lower and upper secondary education together with vocational qualifications. Learners in general education also have the possibility to deepen their knowledge on technologies in certain fields and develop their practical skills. In 11th and 12th grades they may choose from general education modules in 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, some general upper secondary curricula include VET programme modules. When learners continue their studies in VET, the above-mentioned fields and VET modules are recognised as part of their VET programmes.

Since 2010, a technology subject can be part (on an optional base) of the *matura* exams at the end of upper secondary general education. It is possible to learners in either general or vocational streams to replace one general education subject with the technology subject.

4.2.2. Measures to improve mobility between VET and higher education

VET graduates who have finished upper secondary education programmes and who choose to continue in higher education have a few advantages over students coming from general education. Selection criteria and procedures for ranking graduates who apply for higher education are defined annually in a specific regulation (Lithuanian SMM, 2014b). This regulation awards an additional enrolment point for graduates from VET in the same field of studies who performed exceptionally, or who have at least one year of work experience in this field. This additional point increases their chances of being admitted to a State-funded study place in colleges and, from 2018, to universities.

In addition, to enter higher education institution at least three *matura* exams have to be taken. For example, from 2016 Lithuanian language and mathematics exams are compulsory for those willing to receive state funding for their studies. For VET graduates who want to enrol in technological HE programmes, the final qualification exam may be recognised as a third *matura* exam.

Many IVET institutions have agreements regarding continuation of VET graduates studies in higher education institutions. They also cooperate with higher education institutions (colleges, universities) in drafting study programmes that ensure continuity of VET programmes at tertiary level.

4.3. Incentives for youth

VET to acquire a first qualification is free of charge. IVET learners may receive a small student grant (EUR 11-28) and other material support. Based on data from Statistics Lithuania, around 49% of IVET learners received such a student grant in 2015. Socially disadvantaged learners who do not receive the grant are provided free meals and other material support.

Learners who do not live near the learning institution are provided with hostel accommodation. Based on data from the Centre for Information Technologies in Education, around 99% of those who need hostel accommodation receive it (Statistics Lithuania, 2016).

4.4. Incentives for employers and employees

To support participation in CVET tax incentives, grant schemes, paid and unpaid training leave and payback clauses are applied.

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 training expenditure can be deducted. When a studying resident of Lithuania is not an income tax payer or has no possibility to exercise the right to deduct expenditure for VET or studies from their own income, such expenses may be deducted from their parents' or other family members' income.

Tax incentives for legal entities have been in place since 2005. The Law on Corporate Income Tax (Parliament, 2001) allows deductions for continuing training courses of employees that are linked to their present occupation.

The Labour Code (Parliament, 2002) sets out training leave conditions for employees participating in a VET programme, to prepare and take exams and tests, for consultations, etc. All employees who participate in formal education programmes are entitled educational leave while retaining their average salary. Since 2015, according to the Labour Code, employees may be granted training leave for up to 5 working days per year to participate in non-formal adult education (Section 2.3).

To finance VET, enterprises and organisations may use the grant schemes available from EU structural funds (Section 2.4.2).

Payback clauses for individuals and future employers were both introduced in 2005. The provisions of the Labour Code allow employers to claim compensation from an employee for the costs of training over the past year if they quit their job before a previously agreed time.

4.5. Guidance and counselling

4.5.1. Main institutions

As defined by the Vocational Guidance Act (Lithuanian SMM and Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour, 2012) the main educational institutions that provide guidance services (career education, information and counselling) to their learners are general education schools and VET institutions. Municipalities are responsible for organising and coordinating guidance services within their territory.

Nationwide guidance and counselling is coordinated by the Lithuanian Students' Non-Formal Education Centre (*Lietuvos mokinių neformaliojo švietimo centras*). The centre is responsible for methodological assistance and advice to schools and educational support agencies and is involved in training career guidance staff. It ensures accessibility to modern guidance and counselling tools, and takes part in nationwide monitoring of guidance services for learners.

With the Centre for Information Technologies in Education, the Lithuanian Students' Non-Formal Education Centre is responsible for providing quality information on learning opportunities and career planning on the main national web portal on learning opportunities, *AIKOS* (*Atvira informavimo, konsultavimo ir orientavimo sistema*, <http://www.aikos/smm.lt>). This is an open information, guidance and counselling system, which addresses students, employees and guidance and counselling personnel. It informs on education and training programmes, providers, qualifications, occupations, admission rules, classifications, education and employment statistics. Other education institutions (pedagogical and psychological services, education support agencies, etc.) are involved in providing guidance services to the extent this is related to their functions and actual guidance needs of learners.

The Education Exchange Support Foundation manages the Euroguidance project and disseminates information on good practice examples in Lithuania and other European countries, new methods, creates various guidance and counselling tools and organises training seminars for guidance practitioners.

Local PES also provide vocational information and counselling services for jobseekers in addition to employment mediation. Youth labour centres of PES

organise info-days on career issues, job fairs, Youth Guarantee promotion events and help students and graduates with finding a job or traineeship.

4.5.2. Organisation and funding

General education and VET institutions appoint a coordinator who manages guidance-related activities of career guidance staff, class or group tutors, teachers/vocational teachers, social pedagogues, psychologists, and other support staff.

In 2014, a career education programme (*ugdymo karjerai programa*) was approved by the Minister for education and science for implementation in general education and VET institutions starting from September, 2014 (Lithuanian SMM, 2014a). The programme aims to help learners develop career management skills. It can be integrated into primary, general lower and upper secondary and VET curricula and can take the form of optional subjects or extracurricular activities.

Learners can acquire career-related information on learning and job opportunities through information systems and various other activities such as study visits, excursions, meetings with representatives of educational institutions, employers and other people and other events. Vocational activation (*profesinis veiklinimas*), during which visits to enterprises and lectures are organised, is regarded as one of the most important aspects. Learners are encouraged to experience and learn about different types of work, employment areas, specific characteristics of occupations and career paths. Vocational counselling services help learners to identify and discuss individual needs and preferences, and advise them on issues related to career planning, choice of training or studies, employment and job search.

Vocational guidance is funded from the 'student basket' (Chapter 2.4.1) and other national and local budgets, sponsors, etc. In 2010-15 an ESF project was carried out by the Students' Non-Formal Education Centre during which more than 1600 career guidance staff was employed in general education and VET institutions and trained. Funding was also provided for the development of guidance programmes and tools. It is estimated that in this project more than 163 000 learners received guidance and counselling services. Similar initiatives will be carried out in the upcoming ESF programming period (planned in 2018).

List of abbreviations

CVET	continuing vocational education and training
EQAVET	European quality assurance reference framework for vocational education and training
EQF	European qualifications framework
GDP	gross domestic product
ISCED	international standard classification of education
IVET	initial vocational education and training
KPMPC	Kvalifikacijų ir profesinio mokymo plėtros centras [Qualifications and VET development centre]
LTQF	Lithuanian qualifications framework
PDCA	‘Plan–do–check–act’ or ‘plan–do–check–adjust’, referred to as ‘quality circle’ nationally
PES	Public Employment Service, Lithuanian Labour Exchange [Lietuvos darbo birža]
Local PES	Local public employment service [teritorinės darbo biržos]
SMM	Švietimo ir mokslo ministerija [Ministry of Education and Science]
SME	Small- and medium-sized enterprises
Statistics Lithuania	Lithuanian Department of Statistics [Lietuvos statistikos departamentas]
VET	vocational education and training
YGI	Youth guarantee initiative
ŽIPVP	Žmogiškųjų išteklių plėtros veikslių programa [2007-13 human resources development operational programme]

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