



APPRENTICESHIP REVIEW LITHUANIA

Signposting the apprenticeship path
in Lithuania



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THEMATIC COUNTRY REVIEWS

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Foreword

A key deliverable agreed by Ministers in charge of VET in Riga in June 2015 is to promote work-based learning in all its forms, with special attention to apprenticeships. This should involve social partners, companies, chambers and VET providers and should stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship.

European Union, Member States and social partners broadly promote the development of policies and programmes that ensure the availability of high-quality apprenticeships to young people and adults. Apprenticeships, and similar schemes with a strong work-based component, are an important aspect of the countries' response to high rates of youth unemployment. High quality apprenticeships are also geared to developing knowledge, skills and competences that are attractive to the labour market; they help the young and adults get a firmer foothold in the labour market.

The apprenticeship thematic country reviews launched by Cedefop in 2014 should be read in this perspective. Each exercise is an effort by Cedefop to contribute to strengthening social dialogue as a means to attract more learners, social partners and VET providers to the added value that apprenticeships offer. I firmly believe that work-based learning is an effective stepping stone into the labour market but I also strongly advocate apprenticeships: the process itself links work and learning experiences in a way that enables the learner to become a worker and remain a lifelong learner.

Apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning were also part of the set of measures proposed by the Bruges communiqué (Council of the European Union and European Commission, 2010), which called upon the Member States to increase the attractiveness, quality and efficiency of their vocational education and training (VET) systems through a number of strategic objectives and short-term deliverables. Launched in 2013 to address the problem of persistently high youth unemployment in many EU countries, the European alliance for apprenticeships (EAfA) aims to mobilise key EU and national stakeholders around a number of initiatives focusing on improving the quality of apprenticeships and promoting their benefits. Apprenticeship is also one of the key actions included in the 2013 implementation plan of the European youth guarantee initiative.

In this policy context, and specifically to support the EAfA, Cedefop is rethinking the role of apprenticeship and work-based learning for young people and adults.

To this end, Cedefop initiated, upon the request of national authorities, a more direct link on VET-related issues with a number of Member States (by 2015 Malta, Lithuania, Greece, Italy and Slovenia are engaged with Cedefop on apprenticeship reviews).

In May 2014, Cedefop organised, together with the European Commission, a conference to steer countries towards partnerships on developing apprenticeship. This was followed by launch of the thematic reviews (TCRs) in which Cedefop brings its expertise to support countries that undertake reforms of their apprenticeship systems or are on their way to developing such systems as part of their formal education and training. Between May 2014 and May 2015, Cedefop piloted two TCRs on apprenticeship in two volunteer countries, Malta and Lithuania. In 2015-16 three more countries (Greece, Italy and Slovenia) will review their initiatives on apprenticeship programmes.

With these thematic reviews, Cedefop acts as a critical friend and facilitates dialogue and exchanges of views and opinions among the representatives of the national public authorities in charge of apprenticeship, social partners, and representatives of education and training institutions. Cedefop also adopts a participatory, bottom-up approach where the views of those directly involved in implementing the apprenticeship system (VET teachers, companies, in-company trainers, students in compulsory education as potential apprentices, current and former apprentices) are collected and brought forward to the attention of system-level stakeholders and policy-making forums.

The TCRs produce detailed country-specific knowledge on apprenticeship as part of the formal systems of education and training. We hope the reviews continue to stimulate national dialogues and bring closer together the worlds of education and work.

We believe that they will help national policy-makers, social partners, and practitioners improve the quality of apprenticeships, prepare highly skilled workers, and ultimately contribute to job creation and growth. Apprenticeship can only work if strong partnerships exist at all levels and benefits are understood by all stakeholders. Cedefop and the European Commission will ensure that the knowledge gained is shared among the countries through specific policy learning fora where this knowledge is disseminated and countries learn from one another.

Sharing knowledge is only part of the process in promoting apprenticeships. Work at national and local levels will ultimately make or break these initiatives. It is where European citizens live, that our efforts should find fertile ground for implementation.

James J. Calleja
Director

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This report is the result of cooperation between Cedefop and the steering group representing Lithuanian national stakeholders.

Irina Jemeljanova (Cedefop expert) managed the project, conducted many interviews and site visits, refined the analyses and drafted this report. Ramona Carmen David Craescu (Cedefop expert) and Antonio Ranieri (Head of Department for Learning and Employability, Cedefop) provided valuable feedback throughout the process.

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Executive summary

Executive summary

This is a final report of the thematic country review (TCR) on apprenticeship in Lithuania conducted between May 2014 and March 2015 by Cedefop in cooperation with national stakeholders. The review is part of a pilot of Cedefop's cooperation with individual Member States undertaking reform of their apprenticeship systems or on their way to developing such systems as part of their formal education and training. The review draws on the outcomes of a wide consultation with stakeholders in Lithuania: representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), Ministry of Social Security and Labour (MSSL) and Ministry of Economy (ME); education and training institutions; industry sector organisations and individual companies; trade unions, youth and parents' organisations; teachers, trainers and students. The views of various stakeholders are summarised and integrated in relevant chapters of the report. Recommendations from the review will help the country to establish its apprenticeship system but also will gradually expand knowledge of contextual factors determining or hampering success of apprenticeship initiatives.

European and national developments drew increased attention to apprenticeship in Lithuania and set some expectations. Apprenticeship is one of the priorities of the national strategy on education 2013-22 and one of the measures of the national programme for increasing employment 2014-20. Providing quality apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning, and strengthening partnership with the private sector, are among the country-specific recommendations for Lithuania in 2014 to increase the employability of its young people.

Lithuania is in the process of searching for an apprenticeship model that would best suit its traditions and context.

The review focused on four priority areas of analysis set by the steering group: governance structures; the participation of and support to companies; cooperation among learning venues; and quality assurance. The review showed that the regulatory framework for apprenticeship within the VET system is quite enabling to setting up apprenticeship programmes, for example:

- (a) apprenticeship has been set as one of the forms of organisation of formal vocational education and training (VET) since 2008 (Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, 1997);

- (b) new sectoral qualification standards and modular programmes are being developed;
- (c) traditionally, schools and companies cooperate to ensure work placements for VET students;
- (d) the government invested in developing VET infrastructure: 25 out of 41 planned sectoral practical training centres equipped with the most up-to-date machinery and technology are already operational;
- (e) mechanisms for social partner involvement are in place and there is interest and need for qualified workforce from industry.

However, apprenticeship has not yet gained its position as a clear pathway in Lithuanian VET and there is a long way to go. Most VET programmes are school-based, while the actual scope of apprenticeship is small. All apprenticeship programmes are implemented in projects funded by the ESF and youth guarantee.

A number of challenges need to be overcome through systematic approaches and information and communication:

- (a) the dual status of an apprentice as a student and as an employee needs to be further clarified;
- (b) planning for apprenticeships based on the labour market analysis does not happen; this prevents estimating necessary resources;
- (c) implementation provisions are missing or not clear to all stakeholders;
- (d) the expectations and perception of apprenticeship differ significantly among stakeholders;
- (e) apprenticeship is not well promoted to potential students, their parents and companies;
- (f) there are no clear cost-sharing or compensatory measures in place to incentivise companies to take apprentices.

The Government of Lithuania, most prominently the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), is working hard to make it work. New amendments to the regulations are in the final stages of approval (at the time of report preparation).

The review suggests that actions be undertaken in four directions, possibly in parallel:

- (a) clarifying the vision for apprenticeship and defining the status of apprentices for all schemes;
- (b) building up the enablers:
 - (i) coordinating the existing effort of the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, and Ministry of Economy and the social partners;

- (ii) explaining existing provisions;
- (iii) starting small through a national pilot project in selected sectors and selected VET providers;
- (iv) steering the use of the sectoral practical training centres to the benefit of all;
- (v) mainstreaming the results of past projects;
- (vi) improving the use of the e-diary;
- (c) raising awareness and explaining what exists and what is expected:
 - (i) creating a one-stop shop for stakeholders, especially, for companies;
 - (ii) developing a comprehensive communication strategy for apprenticeship;
 - (iii) improving vocational guidance and counselling;
- (d) fine-tuning and further coordinating regulation based on the progress of implementation.

The review provides detailed country-specific information and suggestions but only the country can act. The pathway to apprenticeship should be well signposted to all stakeholders and lead to recognised qualifications and better employability.



1. Introduction

Introduction

As part of their strong commitment to combatting youth unemployment, the European Union (EU) and its Member States promote and support the development of policies and programmes to ensure the availability of high quality apprenticeships. Apprenticeship is seen as an effective instrument to improve smooth and sustainable transitions from school to work. By alternating school and work, apprentices develop practical knowledge and skills that are relevant to the labour market and that employers are looking for. In apprenticeship, learners also develop the soft skills (communication, problem solving, judgment, leadership, flexibility, teamwork), which employers often refer to as lacking when they discuss skill mismatches in the labour market. These skills are more difficult to acquire in a traditional school setting.

Conceived in 2012, the European alliance for apprenticeships (EAfA) was launched in July 2013 as a joint initiative by DG Education and Culture and DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (European Commission, 2015a). The EAfA is conceived as an umbrella for a broad variety of initiatives that stakeholders can undertake to improve the quality, supply and image of apprenticeship across the EU. The EAfA measures are funded through the European Social Fund (ESF), the youth employment initiative, Erasmus+ and a variety of other EU funding mechanisms, resources and networks. For example, the European Investment Bank can provide loans to companies to set up new apprenticeship schemes.

In line with EU policies, Cedefop supports cooperation at European level, among the Member States, and interacts with individual countries that wish to foster the development of high quality apprenticeships. In 2014, Cedefop started pilot in-depth reviews of the national developments on apprenticeship in Lithuania and Malta, the first two countries to volunteer to set their VET systems to the review.

In Lithuania, European and national developments drew increased attention to apprenticeship and set some expectations. The Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (second half of 2013) brought the issue to the attention of a wider public; it also served as a source of inspiration to the social partners and of peer pressure on national authorities for further action. Apprenticeship is one of the priorities of the national strategy

on education 2013-22, one of the measures of the national programme for increasing employment 2014-20 (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2013), and the national reform programme 2014 (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2014) It has an important place in the memorandum of cooperation for implementation of youth guarantee initiative ⁽¹⁾. An inter-ministerial group initiated by the Prime Minister of Lithuania worked in 2014 to develop amendments to legal acts necessary to encourage implementation of apprenticeship in the country.

Providing quality apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning, and strengthening partnership with the private sector, are also among the country-specific recommendations for Lithuania in 2014 to increase the employability of its young people.

The policy framework has been supportive to the development of apprenticeship in Lithuania where apprenticeship has been set as one of the forms of organisation of formal vocational education and training (VET) since 2008 (Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, 1997). Following the Council declaration of 15 October 2013 (Council of the European Union, 2013) on the European alliance for apprenticeships, the Lithuanian government (in partnership with national stakeholders) committed itself to increasing the quality, attractiveness and supply of apprenticeships through:

- (a) strengthening the work-based dimension of VET;
- (b) strengthening the capacity of VET providers and companies to implement work-based VET;
- (c) increasing attractiveness and permeability of VET (EAfA, Lithuania, 2014).

However, apprenticeship has not yet gained its position as a clear pathway in Lithuanian VET and there is a long way to go. The Government of Lithuania, most prominently the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), is working hard to make it work. Cedefop came to support this effort; but only the country itself can act.

(¹) The memorandum was signed on 14.1.2014 by ministries of education and science, social security and labour, economy and agriculture, and the social partners and other stakeholders (including Lithuanian Youth Council, Lithuanian National Union of Students, Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania, Investors' Forum, Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists, Lithuanian Business Confederation, Lithuanian Business Employers' Confederation, Association of Lithuanian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Crafts, Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation, Lithuanian trade unions *Solidarumas* and the Lithuanian Labour Federation): <http://www.ldb.lt/jaunimui/naudinga/JaunimoGarantijos/2014-01-14%20JGI%20%C4%AFgyvendinimo%20bendradarbiavimo%20memorandumas.pdf>





2. Rationale and methodology

Rationale and methodology

The main objectives of Cedefop's thematic country review are as follows:

- (a) at national level, in cooperation with national stakeholders, to carry out in-depth review of apprenticeship in the country to identify its specific strengths and challenges and present a set of policy recommendations for ensuring quality apprenticeships;
- (b) at European level, to increase the evidence base which can support policy- and decision-makers in European countries at different levels in designing and implementing policies and measures for developing and/or improving quality apprenticeships; and also to support comparison across countries.

Identifying specific national key policy challenges as a focus of the analysis and evaluation is essential to meaningful policy recommendations. These recommendations will help the country to establish its apprenticeship system but also will gradually expand knowledge of contextual factors determining or hampering success of apprenticeship initiatives.

Cedefop applied a review methodology specifically designed for the project that relies on three key principles:

- (a) a common analytical framework;
- (b) an inclusive, participatory and collaborative approach and policy learning;
- (c) an evolving and iterative approach.

The analytical framework includes some characteristic features that are present to different extents and in different combinations in existing (well-functioning) systems of apprenticeship. The framework does not offer a single model to follow but is based on a variety of models and systems that work. The set of features identified in the framework have a purely operational function and are in no way to be interpreted as 'necessary conditions'. Nor is the framework an exhaustive list; it may evolve as the review progresses.

The analytical framework comprises the following areas that are further translated into more detailed explanatory statements (Table 1).

Table 1. Cedefop’s thematic country reviews on apprenticeships: analytical framework

Distinguishing features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • systematic long-term training alternating periods at the workplace and in an education and training institution or training centre; • an apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage or allowance); • an employer assumes responsibility for the company-based part of the programme leading to a qualification. 	
Areas of analysis	Operational descriptors
Place in the ET system	Apprenticeship is defined and regulated in a legal framework (a legally regulated and recognised learning path).
	Apprenticeship leads to a formally recognised qualification, covering both learning in the education and training institution and in the company.
	Apprenticeship offers both horizontal and vertical pathways to further specialisation or education at higher levels.
Governance structures	Roles and responsibilities of the key players (the State, social partners, schools, VET providers, companies) at national, regional, local levels are clearly defined and distributed: decision-making, implementation, advisory, control.
	One coordination and decision-making body is nominated.
	Social partners understand and recognise the importance of apprenticeship to a skilled labour force.
	Employer and employee representatives are actively engaged at all levels.
Training content and learning outcomes	Curricula and programmes are developed based on existing qualification standards and/or occupational profiles.
	Standards are broader than the needs of companies and are expressed in learning outcomes.
	The content and expected outcomes of company and school-based learning are clearly distributed and form a coherent sequence.
	Qualification standards/occupational standards/curricula are regularly evaluated and updated.
	Curricula define the alternance between learning venues and duration.
	(Minimum) requirements to access apprenticeship programmes are stipulated.
Final assessment is common for both learning venues and independent.	

Areas of analysis	Operational descriptors
Cooperation among learning venues	There is cooperation, coordination and clear distribution of responsibilities among the venues as well as established feedback mechanisms.
	A school, a company and an apprentice together develop a training plan, based on the curriculum and qualification standard.
	A training plan ensures that learning in the company covers the full set of practical skills and competences required for a qualification.
	There are mechanisms to ensure continuity of learning in both venues, including in case of a company's failure to provide training during the course.
	One of the venues takes up (is designated by law) the coordinating role in the process.
Participation of and support to companies	Rights and obligations of companies providing training are legally stipulated.
	There are strategies, initiatives in marketing apprenticeship and informing companies of benefits of taking apprentices, related responsibilities and available incentives.
	There are minimum requirements for companies willing to provide apprenticeship places and/or an accreditation procedure.
	There is a system of support (non-financial) to companies (especially SMEs).
	There is recognition, and even award, for companies that provide quality apprenticeships.
	Employers' organisations play a key role in engaging and supporting companies.
Requirements and support to teachers and in-company trainers	Companies have to assign a qualified staff member (tutor) to accompany apprentices.
	There are stipulated requirements for qualification and competences of an apprentice tutor.
	An apprentice tutor in a company has to have qualification in the vocation he/she trains for.
	An apprentice tutor in a company has to have some proof of pedagogical/didactic competence.
	There is a provision of training for in-company trainers to develop and update their pedagogical/didactic and transversal competences.
	There are mechanisms for cooperation and exchange between in-company trainers and VET teachers in schools.
	There is a clear indication who (teacher or trainer) has ultimate responsibility for apprentices' learning.

Areas of analysis	Operational descriptors
Financing and cost-sharing mechanisms	Apprenticeship companies pay wages as defined in the contractual agreement between the company and the apprentice and/or indirect costs (materials, trainers' time).
	The State is responsible for financing VET schools and/or paying grants to engage apprentices.
	The duration and organisation of apprenticeships is such that it allows companies to recuperate the investment through apprentices' work.
	There are incentives (subsidies, tax deductions) to encourage companies to take on apprentices, generally and/or in specific sectors or occupations.
	Social partners cover part of the costs (direct and/or indirect).
Quality assurance	Quality assurance mechanisms exist at system level as well as at the level of training companies and schools.
	Responsibilities for quality assurance are shared. It is clear who is in charge of what aspects of quality assurance.
Apprentice's working and learning conditions	Rights and obligations of apprentices are legally stipulated.
	Apprenticeship is an attractive option for learners.
	There is a reference point (responsible body) that informs the apprentice of rights and responsibilities of all parties and supports him/her in case of problems.
	An apprentice has an employment contract with the company and enjoys all rights and benefits of an employee and fulfils all responsibilities.
	A training contract is signed between a company, a school (training centre) and an apprentice that defines the training programme.
	An apprentice is protected in case of company failure (bankruptcy, for example) to provide training.
	An apprentice has access to guidance and counselling services.
Responsiveness to labour market	There are institutional procedures that allow apprenticeship to respond to or to anticipate the needs of the labour market.
	Outputs and outcomes of apprenticeship are regularly monitored and evaluated.
	Ex-ante and/or ex-post impact evaluation of apprenticeship are in place.

Source: Cedefop.

These areas were used throughout the review as a frame of reference for the data collection instruments and process, analysis and reporting.

The inclusive, participatory and collaborative approach is organised on two levels:

(a) steering of the review and validation.

The Ministry of Education and Science nominated a steering group that represented the MES, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (MSSL), the employers and trade unions and VET providers. The steering group was involved in all project activities and facilitated the delivery of results. They identified the priority areas of analysis for the review and collaborated with the Cedefop team to ensure access to valid and reliable information and key actors in the country. The steering group validated the findings and ensured the relevance and ownership of the results of the review;

(b) stakeholder involvement.

At different stages of the review, a broader range of actors representing stakeholders in the country were involved (Table 1). More specifically, individual and groups of relevant stakeholders were involved in in-depth discussions on the strengths, weaknesses, areas for improvement, solutions and policy, institutional, and organisational implications for the apprenticeship systems in the country. During the implementation, consultations with stakeholders took place in three consecutive rounds. A total of 95 persons were interviewed, including those who took part in seven roundtables (Table 2).

Table 2. **Stakeholders involved, by group and number**

Group of stakeholders	Number of persons interviewed
Young people	18
VET-providers (directors, deputy directors and teachers)	25
Companies (directors, HR managers or in-company trainers)	27
Industry (chambers, employers' organisations, sector organisations)	10
Trade unions (teacher's trade unions and sector trade unions)	7
Territorial offices of Lithuanian PES	3
Parents' organisations	2
Youth organisations	2
Researcher	1
Total	95

Source: Cedefop.

An iterative and evolving approach was applied, where each round had its own objectives but also informed the following round(s). The first round consultations took place in September and October 2014: this was used to collect factual information from the implementation level stakeholders (practitioners and beneficiaries). More specifically, the following groups of stakeholders were interviewed:

- (i) young people (apprentices, students and graduates from different schemes: pilot projects, school-based schemes, schools with apprenticeship-like schemes and Lithuanian labour exchange (public employment services (PES)) supported active labour market policy measures (ALMPMs), later in the text referred to as students or learners;
- (ii) VET providers (directors, deputy directors and teachers from schools offering school-based VET with practical training or apprenticeship-like training in companies and those offering pilot apprenticeship projects), later in the text referred to as VET providers or VET representatives;
- (iii) branches of Lithuanian PES that are active in implementing the ALMPMs for on-the-job training;
- (iv) companies (directors, human resource managers or in-company trainers of companies that offer practical training places for students as well as of those that do not).

Building on the findings of the first round, a second round of consultations was carried out in November and December 2014. Representatives of VET schools (mostly deputy directors), industry (chambers, employers' organisations, sector organisations), trade unions (teacher's trade unions and sector trade unions), parent and youth organisations discussed challenges and their current and (possible) future role in provision of quality apprenticeships in Lithuania.

The third round of consultations took place in February 2015 and consisted of three roundtables with policy-makers, social partners, experts and other system level actors to discuss possible solutions and recommendations.

The outcomes of these three rounds are integrated in the relevant sections of this report.





3. Context

3.1. Labour market

The initial impact of the economic crisis has been particularly severe for the Lithuanian labour market, especially for young people. Following the crisis, overall unemployment rose sharply and peaked at 18.1% in 2010 while youth unemployment reached an unprecedented 35.7% in the same year (Statistics Lithuania, 2015), exceeding by more than half the EU average.

Table 3. **Unemployment rate in Lithuania: young people (aged 15 to 24), 2008-14, %**

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
LT	13.3	29.6	35.7	32.6	26.7	21.9	19.3
EU-28	15.6	19.9	21.0	21.5	23.1	23.5	21.9
Ratio (LT/EU-28)	0.9	1.5	1.7	1.5	1.2	0.9	0.9

Source. Eurostat (2015).

Today youth unemployment is still high, notwithstanding a decreasing trend (Table 3) and going below the EU average (the pre-crisis ratio). The government's aim is that by 2020 this indicator will not exceed 16% (Ministry of Social Security and Labour, 2015).

Forecast economic growth is not expected to affect the employment in Lithuania in a significant way; it will only slightly increase by 2025 without reaching the pre-crisis level. This does not mean, however, that there will be no opportunities for jobs for young people and adults: the replacement demand forecast is expected to provide 14 times more job opportunities than newly created jobs. Therefore, the need for qualified and skilled workers will continue and, even become more prominent. Most job opportunities are forecast in craft, building, metal, machinery, electrical traders; these are occupations covered by VET programmes (Cedefop, 2015).

Table 4. Skill needs forecast 2013-25, by level of qualification, in thousands

Level of qualification	2013	2025 projected	Net change demand	Replacement required	Total
Low qualification	76	75	-1	45	44
Medium qualification	629	516	-113	358	245
High qualification	584	742	158	214	372
All qualifications	1 290	1 333	44	617	661

Source: Forecasting skill supply and demand (Cedefop, 2015).

At policy level, apprenticeship is understood as a measure to increase youth employment, especially of low-qualified youths. Therefore, it is also one of the key actions in the youth guarantee implementation plan for Lithuania (Ministry of Social Security and Labour, 2013) and some ALMPMs aimed at motivating vulnerable young people to get into the labour market or formal education. For employers, apprenticeship can help address serious skill mismatches and lack a qualified workforce to stay competitive.

3.2. Economic sectors

Services comprise an important share of the Lithuanian economy. Employment in services in 2013 accounted for 66% of the total, industry for 18%, construction and agriculture 8% each. Manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles, agriculture and forestry, transportation and storage, construction and human health and social work are the sectors that employ the most in the country. Since apprenticeship-type training is usually offered by manufacturing companies, while most jobs in Lithuania are in the services sector, the future of apprenticeship is likely to include and depend more on services. Agriculture is also important for the Lithuanian economy, with good cooperation traditions with VET schools.

The review involved representatives from a number of sectors including engineering, logistics and warehouse services, car repair, hotels and restaurants, construction, textiles, heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC), beauty salon services, electronic industry, information and communication technology and utilities (electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply). The main rationale was to cover sectors that are relevant for apprenticeships and have a good balance between manufacturing and services.

3.3. Enterprise size

Almost having collapsed between 2008 and 2009 (real GDP fell by 14.8%), the Lithuanian economy is in a steady but not yet complete recovery and ranks among the fastest growing economies in the EU (GDP grew by 3.7% in 2012 and by 3.3% in 2013 ⁽²⁾).

The economy is mostly based on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are more important to the economy than to the economies of most EU countries (European Commission, 2014). SMEs comprise 99.8% of all enterprises, with 90.4% being micro enterprises. More important, SMEs employ 76.5% of the workforce compared to 66.9% in the EU-28 (Table 4).

Table 5. **SMEs in Lithuania: key data**

Type	Number of enterprises			Number of employees			Value added		
	Lithuania		EU-28	Lithuania		EU-28	Lithuania		EU-28
	Number	%	%	Number	%	%	Billion	%	%
Micro	121 502	90.4	92.4	220 761	25.8	29.1	2	14.6	21.6
Small	10 442	7.8	6.4	215 375	25.2	20.6	3	23.5	18.2
Medium	2 165	1.6	1.0	218 124	25.5	17.2	4	30.7	18.3
SMEs	134 109	99.8	99.8	654 259	76.5	66.9	9	68.8	58.1
Large	282	0.2	0.2	200 425	23.5	33.1	4	31.2	41.9
Total	134 391	100.0	100.0	854 684	100.0	100.0	13	100.0	100.0

NB: Estimates for 2013 produced by DIW Econ, based on 2008-11 figures from the structural business statistics database (Eurostat). The data cover the 'business economy', which includes industry, construction, trade, and services (NACE Rev. 2 sections B to J, L, M and N).

Source: Based on Eurostat, structural business statistics database (European Commission, 2015b).

Gradual recovery from the crisis requires more innovation in all businesses which puts companies in need of more employees, in general, and high-skilled and innovative employees in particular. Improving the skills and innovation base remains one of the biggest challenges for SMEs in Lithuania. There is a need for engineering and scientific skills and ensuring that training better reflects the needs of SMEs (European Commission, 2014).

The review aimed at involving companies of different sizes, focusing on SMEs.

⁽²⁾ Eurostat (2015). *Real GDP growth rate*.

3.4. VET in Lithuania

Lithuanian VET ⁽³⁾ is part of a well-structured, straightforward and potentially permeable education and training system together with general education (pre-school, pre-primary, primary, lower and upper secondary) and higher education (colleges and universities) (Cedefop ReferNet Lithuania, 2013). Most VET programmes are school-based, meaning that they are undertaken in accredited institutions. The main way of work-based learning (perceived as apprenticeship-like schemes by most stakeholders) is a practical component of school-based VET programmes: a student first enrolls in a training programme in school, receives theoretical training and school-based practical training, and only then goes to a company. The final practical training (*baigiamoji praktika*) in company is the longest alternance period in VET programmes.

The VET system (Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, 1997, Article 5) consists of:

- (a) initial vocational education (IVET) aimed at acquiring an initial qualification;
- (b) continuing vocational education (CVET) to update or upgrade an existing qualification, acquire a new one or some competence needed to perform a function;
- (c) vocational guidance.

The VET system aims at:

- (a) helping individuals acquire a qualification and competence corresponding to the current level of technology, science, economy and culture, find a job in the changing labour market;
- (b) creating opportunities for lifelong learning to upgrade qualifications and requalify;
- (c) providing access to quality education and training and vocational guidance (Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, 1997, Article 3).

Formal vocational training programmes (both IVET and CVET) are provided by:

- (a) 74 State VET providers, of which 26 have companies in their governing boards;
- (b) five labour market training centres (LMTC) (specialised in CVET but some providing IVET programmes as well);

⁽³⁾ More detailed information on the Lithuanian VET system can be found in *VET in Europe: country report Lithuania* (Cedefop ReferNet Lithuania, 2013).

- (c) two private VET providers;
- (d) 234 other institutions (including companies) licensed to implement VET programmes.

These institutions can also provide non-formal VET programmes.

Most secondary school graduates enter universities while the rest either enter VET (around one third of all graduates) or do not continue with their education and training. Of all VET students, 56% are in VET programmes at upper secondary level, where students learn vocation and acquire secondary education, while 44% are in post-secondary programmes.

Table 6. Initial VET system overview

Programme type	Number of State VET schools	Number of VET programmes	Number of students
Upper secondary VET (3-4 years, after basic education)	71	90	22 181
Post-secondary VET (1-2 years)	75	99	20 444

Source: Data extracted from the education management information system (Ministry of Education and Science, 2015).

Although a negative perception of VET is still strong, in the past few years the number of students entering it has increased: recently, it has stabilised to 20 000-22 000 students. Also, in recent years university graduates have come to VET schools and companies to requalify and receive practical training that would lead them to employment.

To improve the situation, Lithuania aims to:

- (a) increase the proportion of practical training in companies up to 60% in all VET programmes (currently it should be at least 30%);
- (b) attract more students to VET through better relevance of qualifications to labour market needs and better cooperation between businesses and VET;
- (c) increase the participation of adult learners in education and upskilling through incentives and better offer.



4. Current apprenticeship and stakeholder view

Current apprenticeship and stakeholder view

4.1. Understanding apprenticeship: examples

Lithuania is in the process of searching for an apprenticeship (*pameistrystė*) model that would best suit its traditions and context. For the purpose of the TCR in Lithuania, apprenticeship has been analysed as a form of VET against the following distinguishing features (Box 1).

Box 1. Understanding apprenticeship in Lithuania

Apprenticeship includes systematic long-term training with alternating periods at the workplace and in an education and training institution or training centre.

According to the Law on VET (Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, 1997, Article 15), apprenticeship in Lithuania is one of the forms of organising VET: 'vocational education shall be organised in school and apprenticeship forms'. Amendments to the regulatory framework are currently under way, aimed at paving the way to apprenticeship.

An apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage or allowance).

According to the Order regarding VET contracts and their registration procedure (Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Social Security and Labour, 2010), two contracts are to be concluded before the start of the apprenticeship:

- an employment contract between a company and an apprentice that regulates training at the workplace;
- a trilateral contract between the training company, a VET institution and the apprentice that defines the school-based part of the training programme.

An employer assumes responsibility for the company-based part of the programme leading to a qualification.

According to the existing regulations (Ministry of Education and Science, 2012, Article 36), a company needs to ensure that the workplace has adequate equipment, tools and other technology for learning and that safety measures are observed. Companies also are responsible for nominating a competent person to supervise students.

The scope of apprenticeship in Lithuania is small, so the review examined a broader context and the existing arrangements (including those for practice in companies at the end of VET programmes) either as potential enablers to be further used and built on or as obstacles to overcome by regulation, information, and guidance.

Apprenticeship in IVET under the MES is confined to a small-scale apprenticeship programme implemented by one of the few private VET schools, the craftsmanship school (*Sodžiaus Meistra*). It is an apprenticeship scheme based on alternance (two weeks in school and two weeks in company) for students with primary (ISCED 1) or lower secondary (ISCED 2) qualification level for carpenters, roofers, confectioners and cooks. In 2013/14 school year, the scheme had 54 participants.

Other apprenticeship-type training in Lithuania is mainly implemented in projects and schemes supported by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the youth guarantee funds. Apart from motivational activities, young people are supported directly to obtain missing skills at the workplace or anchor in the labour market, including through subsidised employment where the State pays their salary. Other projects help the young unemployed take part in vocational training (Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour, 2015). These projects are implemented through the labour market training centres (LMTCs) rather than VET centres and schools.

Some of these measures are actually apprenticeships based on working and training contracts. They are usually short-term, up to six months (linked to funding provisions, learners get a grant) but they take place in the MES accredited VET providers and can lead to formal or non-formal qualifications. Within the ALMPMs, young and adult unemployed participate in vocational training leading to formal qualifications through bipartite agreements with territorial PES, and tripartite agreements with territorial PES and companies. According to statistics from the MSSL ⁽⁴⁾, 11 206 unemployed persons or persons notified of dismissal have participated in vocational training, 66% of them in formal VET programmes.

The largest project so far is being implemented by the Vilnius Jerusalem labour market training centre and by four labour market training centres in Vilnius, Panevėžys, Klaipėda and Šiauliai. This is the closest to an apprenticeship scheme in the country (Box 2).

(⁴) Conference *Practical training: role of apprenticeship in forming practical skills*, Vilnius, 23 April 2014.

Box 2. Project: organisation of vocational training through apprenticeship form in a labour market training centre

The project is implemented by the Vilnius Jerusalem LMTC and by four LMTCs in Vilnius, Panevėžys, Klaipėda and Šiauliai. Students are employed by companies and alternate learning in companies and in the training centre. The project provides CVET in construction, construction mechanics (operators of various specialised machines), transport, welding, hotels, restaurants and tourism, ICT, manufacturing, business administration, and personal and social care services. Before signing a trilateral contract, the company and the training centre agree on an individual training plan and a schedule that will allow the learner to attend classes. Training follows VET programmes approved by the MES and usually lasts up to six months, with a maximum duration of one year. An estimated 900 learners will be trained by June 2015. Although the experience of the project informed many of the discussions held during the review, it should be noted though that provision of almost individualised training programmes would be challenging to implement in the regular VET system.

More information available at: <http://pameistryste.lt/pameistryste/> (in Lithuanian).

The Ministry of Economy (ME) has its own projects and schemes that include apprenticeship-type models. For example, the ME has published a detailed proposal, development of apprenticeships and sectoral competences (*Pameistrystės ir sektorių kompetencijų ugdymas*) (Ministry of Economy, 2014) ⁽⁵⁾, with the aim to promote non-formal apprenticeships to develop sectoral competences in regions. Support will be provided to SMEs (to compensate training costs on fixed lump sum or cost per working hour basis) and trade/branch organisations. In the latter, training should be provided for young specialists or those on a first employment contract; wages for employees of trade/branch organisations and training procurement as well as training tools costs for member companies are supported. The ME does not run its own training system and the apprenticeship schemes are partly linked to MES accredited providers.

Some individual companies implemented their own apprenticeships: most of them have cooperation with, or are branches of international companies

⁽⁵⁾ Available in Lithuanian at:

http://www.ukmin.lt/web/lt/es_parama/2014_2020/zmog_istek_priemones/pameistrystes [accessed 6.7.2015].

from countries with established apprenticeship systems, such as Denmark and Germany.

In the previous programming periods (2007-13), several projects were implemented, including a project on trainer training. The results have not been widely disseminated.

The following sections discuss findings on the four priority areas of analysis set by the steering group: governance structures; the participation of and support to companies; cooperation among learning venues; and quality assurance.

4.2. Governance structure, roles and responsibilities of key actors

Effective governance of apprenticeship programme operation should clearly define and distribute the roles, rights and responsibilities to all key players at national, regional and local levels:

- (a) who sets the strategy and takes decisions?
- (b) who is in charge of implementation?
- (c) who is in charge of monitoring?
- (d) who coordinates?

Developing apprenticeship is a multi-stakeholder exercise, in which a crucial element is the active participation of policy-makers and social partners (employers and trade unions) at all levels. The success of the process depends on joint understanding of the value of apprenticeship in preparing qualified employees, meeting the needs of employers, reducing unemployment and increasing the competitiveness and innovation of the economy at large.

4.2.1. Responsible ministries

Three ministries – MES, MSSL and ME – are responsible for VET-related issues. With the MES having overall responsibility for developing VET policies in the country, the MSSL takes the lead in implementing ALPMs for the unemployed, including the youth guarantees, and the ME takes charge of human resource development and support to enterprises. Within their mandates, the three ministries implement apprenticeship (and apprenticeship-type) schemes to three distinct target groups. The three systems are different in terms of procedures and requirements.

The thematic country review created a platform for cooperation among the ministries involved, with two being represented in the steering group. Members of the steering group have become members of the VET council (see p. 28). It is crucial that the ministries should come to a common definition of apprentice and set a uniform legal framework within their remits. Defining an apprentice and introducing a new type of contract – an apprenticeship contract that would cover both employment and training rights and responsibilities of apprentices, companies and VET providers – is a long-expected measure by employers, especially, those who are willing to take students but find it difficult to employ them in learning.

4.2.2. Social partners

The social partners have been involved in the VET system since 1997 (Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, 1997). They participate in:

- (a) the Vocational Education and Training Council of Lithuania (Profesinio mokymo taryba) that advises national education authorities on strategic issues of VET;
- (b) the Central Professional Committee (Centrinis profesinis komitetas) that coordinates strategic issues regarding qualifications system development (including the forthcoming sectoral qualifications standards);
- (c) sectoral professional committees that work at branch/sector level ^(e).

The social partners provide their views on apprenticeship at national and regional levels; some develop and promote possible approaches and many have also contributed to this review. However, it is not clear whether supporting apprenticeship is a distinct part of their agenda.

4.2.2.1. Employer organisations

Employer and industry organisations have recently become more active in finding their way into decision-making processes and shaping vocational and higher education in the country. Some companies and most trade/branch organisations were actively arguing for further development of apprenticeships. However, employers are not uniform in their position and often promote interests specific to their sector, occupation or even company and do not cover general system level. In an interview, one employer suggested that all occupation-specific training should be through apprenticeship and fully delegated to employers, while general education and basic skills should remain

^(e) More information on the sectoral professional committees available in Lithuanian at: http://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/?page_id=1253 [accessed 6.7.2015].

with the school. At local level, a few companies take more responsibility for VET by becoming shareholders of self-governing vocational schools (about one third of schools) or participate in projects with State-funded schools. Employer organisations can act on the interface between VET system and individual companies; this would also strengthen sectoral gains.

Employer and industry organisations can be more active in:

- (a) becoming shareholders of self-governing vocational schools;
- (b) fulfilling the role of intermediary institution for apprenticeships (chambers could take such a function);
- (c) building skills anticipation and management capacities in sectoral clusters of companies;
- (d) providing systemic vocational orientation in secondary schools;
- (e) building an internet database of key actors and their experiences in apprenticeships.

4.2.2.2. *Trade unions*

Low unionisation in the country with only around 10% of workers being members of trade unions, is an issue as well as the low capacity of the unions themselves. On the positive side, the role of trade unions in the social dialogue is important: what is collectively agreed at national level applies to all employed in the relevant sectors. Trade union action in VET in general and in apprenticeship in particular usually focuses on promotion of relevant discussions, inclusion of apprenticeship-related provisions in collective agreements, and monitoring of work safety, workload and other relevant aspects of apprentices' working conditions. Trade unions are active in international initiatives related to apprenticeship and contribute wherever possible in the national context. For example, the Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation (LTUC) is participating in a project on setting up a European quality framework for apprenticeship and work-based learning, launched by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).

Provided trade unions have more resources and stronger capacity, their future action on apprenticeship could take the following directions:

- (a) monitoring of implementation of practical training in companies in sectors where unions are most active (including metal, food, energy, chemicals, construction, textile and railways);
- (b) information campaigns on workers' rights and benefits in apprenticeship (such as how formal qualification is an important pathway for better career, higher salary, more favourable working conditions, higher intrinsic motivation, higher prestige of an occupation);

- (c) career guidance in secondary schools acquainting students with different occupations and the associated working conditions;
- (d) becoming members of the governing boards of self-governing VET schools and influencing strategic decisions of selected VET training institutions;
- (e) encouraging older workers to supervise apprentices in companies and in this way ensuring transfer of knowledge and skills to the next generation of workers.

4.2.3. VET providers

Article 36 of the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science on procedure for formal VET (Ministry of Education and Science, 2012) outlines how apprenticeship training should be organised:

- (a) the institution or the person providing apprenticeships should have a licence. This implies: institution providing practical training has to be authorised to carry out training activity (training has to be mentioned in its statute) and registered in the database of formal training providers; and relevant persons who will be training apprentice(s) should have completed a course for pedagogical-psychological competences with a duration of 120 hours. This requirement can be waived if a company cooperates with a VET provider;
- (b) theoretical training of an apprentice can be carried out in the VET school based on trilateral agreement between apprenticeship provider, apprentice and VET school;
- (c) apprenticeship is organised at the workplace with adequate equipment, tools and other technological as well as safety measures.

Article 4 of the Order of the MES and of the MSSL on VET contracts (Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Social Security and Labour, 2010) and their registration procedure details the content of the apprenticeship contract and obligations of students, VET provider and company. During the interviews, confusion was observed among key actors about their possible roles, rights and responsibilities when it comes to apprenticeship schemes. Virtually none of respondents referred to these documents.

According to representatives of VET providers, the VET school is currently held responsible for all training-related matters, including the coordination of practical training in companies. Many VET representatives find their current resources inadequate for this responsibility of supervising students in companies; further, they receive resources only to ensure the final practice

(*baigiamoji praktika*) during the last training semester. No additional funding is provided, should they wish to increase the company-based component or take in apprentices from companies. Employers highlighted such issues as missing or unclear regulations (the apprentice status), ambiguous procedures for cooperating with the schools or insufficient involvement in the final assessment in VET. At the same time, private schools, LMTCs and some companies (see apprenticeship projects) appreciated the degree of freedom they have in setting up tailored schemes that meet the needs of their clients.

The main concern of VET providers is that companies are interested in, and can only train for narrow competences needed in their business and would ignore transversal or generic skills. VET providers also want companies to take full responsibility for vocational content and for the implementation of student training plans. Companies believed that schools prepare students very narrowly for occupations while SMEs need workers with broader competences; examples quoted include those who can, when situation requires, switch to work with other kind of machines or to back up their colleagues in a restaurant in case of absence. Companies could take some responsibilities for training content but they believe that the school is in a better position to coordinate the entire content and bring school-based and company-based training together.

Based on the responses of VET representatives regarding apprenticeship, they can take up the following:

- (a) adjust existing programmes (up to 10-20% of the training programme content);
- (b) select and monitor the companies that are eligible to take part in the apprenticeships;
- (c) carry out information campaigns promoting apprenticeships for employers;
- (d) intensify cooperation with companies and in-company trainers, provided additional resources are available for this.

Companies could be more active in:

- (a) implementing practical training in cooperation with VET schools;
- (b) participating in the decision-making of VET schools (e.g. as shareholders);
- (c) ensuring curriculum quality through contribution to drafting new or updating existing training programmes;
- (d) contributing to final assessment, especially, to the assessment of learning outcomes of company-based practical training.

Even though both VET providers and employers are ready to take up certain responsibilities, the questions of capacity and resources to meet these responsibilities to a high standard remain open. VET providers referred most

often to lack of adequate resources to expand and provide more support to company-based learning and work with companies. When roles and responsibilities are defined, they should be supported with adequate financial provisions. The current VET schools funding system makes them interested in keeping the status quo rather than becoming more active in promoting work-based learning. As a result, resistance of VET providers can become a serious obstacle on the way to apprenticeship.

4.2.4. Student and parent organisations

There is currently no active engagement or role for youth and parent organisations that can potentially be agents of promoting and supporting apprenticeship.

Youth organisations are involved in consultations and discussions with policy-makers on issues related to youth and implementation of education reform (such as discussions with the national examination centre on how to improve the examination process), ensuring involvement of young people in the decision-making. Some youth organisations participate in the MES working groups; some contribute to implementing the youth guarantee initiative in Lithuania. However, their responses revealed that they are not very active in anything related to apprenticeship, for example in early vocational guidance for pupils.

Parents' organisations are still developing and mostly work in pre-primary, secondary and higher education; their involvement in VET is limited.

4.3. Participation of and support to companies

It is the opinion of all stakeholders that apprenticeship can only be implemented as a recognised track (not a pilot) when there are enough companies willing and able to take apprentices, young people and adults. It is difficult to say whether a certain critical mass of companies should be achieved but it is clear that the more companies are on board, the more VET students can benefit from labour market-relevant practical training. Companies also provide places for final practice by students in school-based programmes but, with some exceptions, they experience more problems than benefits for their business; they continue doing so because of the need to get new, qualified employees.

4.3.1. Why companies participate

For successful apprenticeship, the rights and responsibilities of companies should be clearly defined in regulatory acts. However, this is not enough. Responsible bodies should inform companies about their rights and responsibilities, as well as available incentives and potential benefits. This should be done in appropriate formats and through trustworthy channels. Employers' organisations are usually most the important intermediaries between the State and companies, while trade unions can act through their members to inform about apprenticeship-related issues and to involve them in training young learners and adults. Financial incentives can be provided; however, experience in other countries shows that, while financial incentives are sometimes very effective to stimulate companies decide to train, company participation in apprenticeships can best be maintained by non-financial incentives and well-developed recognition of their contribution. SMEs usually require more support to increase their training capacity and allow them to take apprentices.

According to the current regulation, any organisation, company or physical person can act as initiator of a vocational training programme, on condition that it meets certain requirements (Section 4.2.3). However, these requirements are VET-school-oriented and are challenging for other possible candidates, especially companies. Requirements can be waived if a training company cooperates with a licensed VET provider, which is usual practice. This can explain the fact that practically none of the companies interviewed had a licence to train. Those few that had it did not use it, usually due to high internal costs of providing training. Other employers were not aware of such requirements.

A provision that, at first sight, enables a company to initiate a VET programme can become an obstacle. Companies can be deterred from providing practical training and work-based learning due to complicated requirements.

As a result, some companies look for alternative ways of getting qualified workers. According to employer representatives, the main driver for the companies to set up pilot projects with VET providers is to get the skilled workers that they need and possibility to promote themselves as potential employers. Most companies interviewed, even those that do not train students, see apprenticeships as an important means of recruitment as they believe that a prolonged 'probation' period is much more reliable than job interview.

Interviews revealed that most companies do not currently look beyond their needs as regards the benefits of apprenticeship. Few employers were

willing to train workers for the benefit of their respective sectors, and the need to attract and retain a sufficient number of qualified workers in them. However, this current focus, of employers training almost exclusively for their own needs, should not be seen as a barrier in developing apprenticeship. This is an enabler, as it demonstrates that they are willing to train and maintain qualified workers, which they do not find in the labour market. Supporting their effort and providing opportunities to benefit from training young people would contribute to making fragmented training in companies a regular activity in the long term.

In the current schemes, VET institutions usually approach companies to ask for work placements for their students or to help with setting up courses or programmes to meet companies' needs. Some VET schools and LMTCs have long-standing cooperation agreements with companies for practical training of their students. Most identified examples of engagement from companies seem to be a bottom-up process: specific training needs related to their type of business are identified by VET providers on request from companies. A good example of such engagement is the IT Academy ⁽⁷⁾ established by joint efforts of ICT association Infobalt, employer EIS Group, MES and Vilnius VET Centre of Technology and Business. There are also few top-down initiatives that either pilot apprenticeship (for example, organisation of vocational training through apprenticeship form in labour market training centres, led by the Vilnius Jerusalem LMTC) or provide relevant consultations (for example, Enterprise Lithuania project, apprenticeship: an opportunity for the growth of export ⁽⁸⁾).

The review identified the following barriers that discourage companies from taking apprentices or students for practical training:

- (a) lack of student motivation: both employer and VET representatives agree that student motivation is low. Lack of motivation was especially stressed by the companies that employ apprentices in the ALMPMs. Company representatives find that young students coming from VET schools have very low motivation as they do not know what they want or would like to become. In contrast, adult learners with some experience in the labour market, after their ups and downs, start to understand that they need a real profession and are more motivated to work hard and become professionals;

⁽⁷⁾ IT Academy (in Lithuanian). <http://itakademija.infobalt.lt/> [accessed 6.7.2015].

⁽⁸⁾ Enterprise Lithuania project (in Lithuanian).

<http://www.verslii Lietuva.lt/lt/paslaugos/paslaugos-eksportuotojams/pameistryste/> [accessed 6.7.2015].

- (b) inability to secure their training investment: company representatives expressed two main concerns over this. First, existing VET programmes are too long and inflexible for them to keep people employed: they prefer shorter options that allow them to get employees onto the production floor or into service faster. They almost unanimously wanted to retain graduates in their company for a certain period of time. Company representatives interviewed indicated that it is hard for them to make an arrangement such as a payback clause to keep trained employees working for a period of time. Some companies do not even know that such options exist. Although these concerns are understandable, it should be noted that:
- (i) in the ALMPMs, where there is a payback clause and learners are obliged to stay in the companies for six months after finishing training, many leave right after the six-month period;
 - (ii) some students pointed out that payback clauses might keep them in companies, but this can also be ensured by good salaries, good working climate in the company, relationships among workers, level of support. Even those students who were satisfied with their learning experiences in the companies thought that they would not recommend them to other students because of the absence of one or several of these factors;
- (c) the requirement for a minimum group of 25 students in VET programmes: this is too high for employers, if they wish to initiate training programmes. Even if they cooperate with a licensed provider, it is considered an obstacle for VET schools to provide the school-based part, especially if the demand for specific occupations is low. While it is not usual practice, however, the Order of the Minister on procedures for organising formal VET (Ministry of Education and Science, 2012, Article 27.4) stipulates that the owner of the provider can agree to smaller groups or merge two groups of different programmes, if it is not possible to fill them or it is in the interest of the labour market. However, no such cases were identified during consultations with VET representatives and companies;
- (d) lack of in-company trainers who meet MES requirements as well as motivation of existing ones: the costs in terms of lost productivity for businesses to engage experienced employees to train apprentices are often very high. Company employees are often not able and/or willing to train others due to workload, issues with confidentiality, risk of possible damage to equipment or fear of possible future competition. Companies consider the requirements set for trainers in companies too demanding to implement: 120 hours of training or three weeks of a qualified employee

time is a significant cost. Few companies indicated that they incentivise their trainers with extra pay and/or other bonuses, such as additional leave, because they consider trainers important for their mission and for their development and competitiveness;

(e) other issues:

- (i) non-training companies interviewed pointed out that if a dual training scheme were implemented in the country, they would be willing to take apprentices;
- (ii) companies are generally not motivated to train the unemployed, some having had unsuccessful experiences, others not even being aware of the benefits of the ALMPMs. Employers need higher-skilled professionals while the unemployed are mainly low-skilled; companies are suspicious of long-term unemployment and harbour stereotypes about the unemployed;
- (iii) recruiting and supporting companies that would be willing to try apprenticeship with young students can increase their employability and, in the long run, reduce the number of unemployed. Knowledge of successful experiences will spread among other companies and will get more on board;
- (iv) companies are reluctant to take students without good theory understanding. This refers not only to the selected occupation but also to generic skills, such as communication, work ethics, foreign language, time management. Practical training in the company will provide apprentices with specific technical knowledge and skills and will define what kind of professional the apprentice will become;
- (v) employers believe that developing entrepreneurial skills in VET students (apprentices, in particular) can potentially contribute to creating a supportive entrepreneurial culture for apprenticeship in the longer term, as apprenticeship graduates, when opening their own businesses, would be more positive about taking up young people.

4.3.2. Selection of companies

The rights and obligations of companies providing training are usually set in tripartite training agreements but not clearly explained at national level. The key question raised by most stakeholders consulted was whether companies can be expected to fulfil all obligations in delivering their part of apprenticeship. The results of the review showed that this question can be tackled by two complementary actions: selection of training companies and use of several companies to deliver the necessary training content.

One solution – widely used in countries with established apprenticeship systems – would be selection (formal or informal) of companies to take apprentices. As it is not currently easy to find companies to take apprentices, selection could be based on minimum requirements and monitoring, alongside feedback from students and teachers. Selection of companies can create higher and more transparent competition among them for better apprentices.

The review did not provide a uniform view on whether the companies should be selected to provide apprenticeship places. Some company respondents said this may reduce the misuse of apprentices, help increase the interest and responsibility of companies, and prevent one or a few bad practices discrediting the whole apprenticeship system. Some employer representatives believe that specified criteria can be applied: experience in the market, a leading role in the sector, experience in implementing apprenticeship-type training, employment of graduates, a properly supported and supervised programme, and cooperation with VET providers.

From the other side, VET representatives argue that any selection procedure can increase the burden for companies and reduce their willingness to take apprentices.

4.3.3. What would help companies

There is a general view that companies are interested in financial support to take in students for practice or apprentices but the review did not fully confirm this. According to employer representatives, financial support is a less important factor for companies compared to quality and motivation of apprentices or other non-financial aspects. Availability of financial support was more often emphasised by representatives of SMEs in the service sector and representatives of companies that do not participate in apprenticeships.

The following non-financial incentives were mentioned by companies:

- (a) flexibility and prompt reaction in VET provision to changes in industry, including modularisation of VET curriculum and opportunity to develop new training programmes/modules for occupations in highly demand or for new occupations (crane operators-machinists or locksmiths/metal-workers-toolmakers);
- (b) when companies take many apprentices, the administrative burden can be taken up by a school or a business support agency;
- (c) information system and promotion campaigns;
- (d) recognition of companies providing high-quality learning, for example, annual conference presenting good practices and awarding best performers;

- (e) the availability of a one-stop shop mediation service for matching apprentice candidates with companies, including motivation tests, identification of specific interests, and apprentice learning needs.

The company representatives consulted also mentioned the following financial incentives as appropriate:

- (a) medium-sized and large companies can be invited to pilot apprenticeship in IVET where their investments could be supported or shared. Based on research, they would see better cost-benefit or quality-price ratios from longer training of students in their companies and would become regular training companies;
- (b) stimulation of investment can be used (proposed by employers): the more a company invests, the more or the larger proportion of costs is compensated. This measure can be of interest to SMEs too;
- (c) loss of productivity resulting from in-company trainers being off their productive tasks can be compensated. There is currently one scheme that would compensate 20% of trainers' time. However, this scheme is also part of an ESF-funded project;
- (d) the State can provide some financial support to cover apprentice transport costs, if a workplace is far from his/her home. Sometimes students prefer to take positions closer to home rather than ones further away with greater learning capacity; companies in small towns also find it difficult to attract students from other places;
- (e) additional resources can be allocated to VET schools and centres to support their marketing activities to recruit companies and to ensure their capacity to cooperate with companies during practical training.

Stakeholders identified various issues that can be compensated through special provisions: tax deductions, compensation for in-company trainers, for training materials, for social security contributions for learners and trainers. However, there was no consensus and not all can be taken on board. Responsible ministries could cooperate to propose a regular funding scheme that is sustainable for the State budget (not only EU funds) and that would support certain aspects of company-based learning; this should be discussed with the social partners and company representatives. If companies know what costs are shared or compensated, they could become more willing to take apprentices.

Employers' organisations, with the exception of few industry associations, rarely play a key role in engaging and supporting companies, yet this could be an important enabler in putting apprenticeship in place in Lithuania.

Employers' organisations can be active in collecting and aggregating training and skill needs from companies and communicating them to VET providers.

4.4. Cooperation among learning venues

The essence of apprenticeship is learning in at least two learning venues: a company (primary) and a VET school. Sometimes a third venue exists to ensure the acquisition of skills and competences that the first two venues cannot provide. Most often this arrangement is necessary when most enterprises are SMEs and have narrow specialisation; in this case an inter-company organisation or a chamber of industry, craft or commerce steps in. In Lithuania, most enterprises are small and their training capacity is low; sectoral practical training centres should be used to the full potential so that apprentices acquire through practice the broader competences required for a qualification.

The review showed many examples of successful cooperation between schools and companies to provide practical training in the current programmes. However, a serious lack of mutual trust and differences in views and expectations between companies and VET providers are observed and need to be addressed.

Both companies and schools have to work in a coordinated and cooperative manner, where responsibilities are clear and with feedback mechanisms. One of the venues should have a coordinating role and overall responsibility for taking the learner through the programme smoothly. This role should be determined by law. The review pointed to an unexpected challenge: VET providers do not cooperate systematically with other VET schools in the same sectors in preparing training programmes. This can be partly explained by competition for students but cooperation among schools from several regions can benefit the sector and mobilise resources needed to adapt programmes to apprenticeship form. Cooperation is also needed for effective use of the sectoral practical training centres meant for learners and teachers from other schools as well.

The Order on VET contracts and their registration procedure (Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Social Security and Labour, 2010) specifies the roles of a school and a company. However, it does not specify how the two should cooperate. The interviews show that, in all existing schemes, VET providers take a formal coordinating role, which can be explained by the fact that the school has ultimate responsibility for

implementing the programme. VET providers also prepare tripartite contracts. In the interviews, all respondents agreed that signing bipartite and tripartite contracts was an easy task and did not present extra load. However, should a training plan be customised and be part of a contract, this can require additional effort and resources.

VET providers would need support, including financial, possibly through reallocation of funding. This should ensure that teachers have enough hours or are paid by full-time equivalent to develop and adjust training plans, and to monitor students' progress in companies by site visits and communication with trainers; a separate position of an apprenticeship coordinator can be established in VET schools, though this might create a risk of becoming an administrator rather than content coordinator.

Most schools have their own informal networks of companies that take their students for practice; some have formal agreements. The same is true of LMTCs but these also take an active role in recruiting companies to participate in their programmes. This tradition can help to set up apprenticeship programmes but the following elements of cooperation need further clarification and development:

(a) matching learners and companies.

Currently, there is no system that would support matching learners and companies or provide information about available programmes and placements. Nor is there a queue of companies that could regularly offer apprenticeship places: employers' representatives spoke most often of the need for such a service. VET representatives pointed to the difficulties of finding places for younger students (under 18 years old) and in small towns where the choice and availability of companies is low. Students pointed out that they usually had to find places themselves; they had one to two weeks to do this and if they did not succeed, school assigned them a place.

Some companies say they are in cooperation with VET schools to find good candidates for practice; however, they do not dedicate a lot of effort to attracting students to their companies. Some companies run their own selection (Box 3).

Employers also believe that schools should run motivation tests and student selection for them. Company representatives emphasised apprentice motivation as a key deciding factor in their employment. If they saw motivated, fast-learning apprentice they were willing to keep them within a company, even if there was no open vacancy. Sometimes companies hurried to employ such persons during apprenticeship (metal, car mechanics);

Box 3. Company approaches to attracting students

One company, when approached by VET teachers, carries out an assessment among all the prospective students: usually there are eight students competing for two positions. The company organises three-tier assessment: initial interview with the personnel manager, a test of technical knowledge, and a second interview with an in-company trainer. The company manager decides based on feedback from the interviewers, the test results and the recommendation of VET teacher.

Another company relies on the training centre to carry out selection of candidates. Then candidates talk to in-company trainers and, if there is a positive outcome, a tripartite contract is signed and the learner enters a CVET programme.

Other companies use innovative approaches to identify and attract talented young people: the young auto mechanic competition or Cinderella competition for young hairdressers.

(b) preparation and induction of learners in companies.

VET providers usually instruct students before they go to companies. This mainly includes explaining them their rights and responsibilities. There is no regulation on what students should know before starting practical training in a company, which causes some dissatisfaction among employers who say that students come unprepared and often do not understand why they are in this company and what they have to do. IVET students mentioned that they did not know what they had to learn in companies and were not aware of a training plan (they assumed though that it might exist and is known to teachers and trainers).

Learner awareness of their rights and how to ensure them is an important aspect. Cases were identified where students did the same routine task for several months and did not demand any change while others, informed about their rights, refused to do some tasks, which were not relevant or requested more relevant and complicated tasks related to their programme. Some uniform guidance material can help.

Apprenticeship is finding its way into VET very slowly and there are concerns on all sides; a longer pre-contract period (about one month) can therefore be considered. All groups interviewed thought it beneficial to ensure effective learning and better motivation: an apprentice-to-be may test his/her expectations and confirm that he/she wants to work in this occupation and in this company; the employer may better assess the

potential employee and, if positive, determine his/her specific training needs; and the VET school may be more effective when developing a training plan;

(c) communication and feedback.

There is a lack of proper mechanism for communication that would ensure what needs to be communicated and how.

Learners believe that the two venues should together ensure that a learner has the conditions to learn and apply the outcome in practice. Learners indicated that the complementarity of learning was good when there was a coordination or correspondence between the theoretical content learned in school and practical training so they were able to apply their learning and also to identify further learning needs. Different expectations of VET providers and companies and lack of structured communication compromises the complementarity of learning:

- (i) companies expect VET schools to provide students with a good theory base, motivate them to work and have generic skills; some in-company trainers and managers pointed out that they would be happy to know what the students know by the time they come to the company and what the company has to train. Employers were strict in requesting constant progress, higher productivity, quality work and quick knowledge acquisition;
- (ii) learners expect VET providers to prepare them to up-to-date standards, teach them about the realities of industry and oversee their in-company experience. Learners stressed that companies provided experience in various real-life situations and materials that they could not access in schools;
- (iii) VET providers often criticised companies for not providing opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in real environments and develop generic skills that go beyond occupation. VET providers also argued that apprentices should rotate between different departments in the company so that they get the chance to develop different competences relevant to their future occupation;

Communication should also cover the feedback on learner progress and performance. The interviews indicate that exchanges on learner progress in companies are usually limited to few telephone calls or emails and, less often, (usually in LMTCs) meetings between VET teachers and in-company trainers. VET providers in pilot projects or LMTCs carry out continuous assessment of learner progress by requiring students to demonstrate their practical skills in areas where some skills gaps were identified and then

discussing these results with apprenticeship companies. Interviews with employer representatives suggest that not all companies monitor the progress of their apprentices. Where they do, in-company trainers usually do this based on consultation with the heads of divisions, administration and other colleagues. According to employer representatives, in-company trainers rarely consult VET teachers on learner progress.

Although most students consulted were satisfied with their experiences in companies, some VET teachers believed that, in some cases, students are used 'as cheap labour force' to do low-skill work with repetitive tasks. In other cases, apprentices carried out limited tasks that did not increase in difficulty over the time.

The use of the students' diary, an electronic tool, is currently rather formal and does not serve any communication purpose. All respondents – learners, trainers, and VET teachers – thought that it could be a good tool for monitoring learner progress, exchanging feedback and coordinating content among the learning venues and the learners.

A qualification certificate is awarded to learners who acquired all competences set in VET standards or vocational standards, regardless of where they acquired them. Award of the certificate is based on the results of the qualification exam, which is enabling for apprenticeship.

The completeness of qualification certificates is an issue: in some sectors it does not give immediate access to a job. Companies pointed out that VET graduates still need to obtain up to nine additional certificates (including hygiene, fire safety, work safety) that are not covered by VET programmes. Companies would like VET providers to include some of these topics in their programmes. The MES can also examine which of the State-regulated requirements can be covered by VET programmes they approve.

Another aspect reported as important in Lithuania is how to ensure comprehensive learning, through the opportunity to have apprenticeship in several companies. There is also the issue of how to ensure continuity of training if a company is not able to employ the learner any more: how to protect the learner and maintain his/her learning achievement.

In IVET and pilot schemes, the VET provider will take care of finding another place for a student. In ALMPM schemes, if company fails to provide training according to the plan, usually the company, if not the territorial PES office, finds another employer for the agreement; the responsibilities of the previous employer are then transferred. If the apprentice fails to assume his/her obligations, the company may sue him/her for damages and seek

another apprentice with the help of the territorial labour exchange office. This is a win-win solution found by companies; however, there are no clear recommendations on how to act in the case of failure of an apprentice to assume his/her obligations.

4.4.1. How to distribute the learning content

Apprenticeship should follow a training plan based on recognised standards and curriculum and should cover the whole set of learning outcomes that a learner needs to get a qualification. Both venues and the learner should agree and be informed of the content of the plan. Both venues should be aware how the content is distributed and who is in charge of what.

In school-based programmes, schools develop standard training plans. However, learners and in-company trainers suggest that these are not communicated to them or regarded as formal, not reflecting real learning in company. One indication of this formal nature of the document is that companies reported finding it difficult to split the plan into eight-hour tasks. Training plans need to be discussed and agreed between the VET provider and a company but there is no guidance on how to do it.

The main basis for the content is a sectoral qualifications standard, which is approved by the MES and agreed with the ME. Standards are competence-based and define learning outcomes for respective qualifications. Initiators of vocational training develop their training programmes in compliance with the relevant standard; training programmes are then assessed by the KPMPC and placed in the registry by the MES. Theoretically, this is a good enabler for training programmes to be adapted to apprenticeship but it needs to be clarified and explained to potential initiators. All standards, qualifications and programmes should be regularly updated.

Business representatives complained that VET schools rarely devote much time to talking with businesses about their needs or the work methods currently applied in companies. This means that schools often teach students outdated content and work methods that are no longer applicable in modern business environments, so apprentices need to update them as soon as they get a job. Some interviews highlighted a significant gap between what was expected and what was actually learned in the company, with learning in the company more advanced and technologically challenging to learners.

As there are no customised programmes for apprenticeship, it is often a matter of innovation in coordinating the content. In one company, a VET teacher came to the construction site and taught theoretical content for three-four hours per day; then students observed how things are done and worked

under the teacher's supervision. However, this approach is only possible now in projects where sufficient resources are allocated and teachers have time to do so.

There is no uniform approach to alternating time: it varies from one day in school and four days in companies to one to two weeks in school and one to two weeks in companies. School-based programmes have final practice in the last year of the programme where students work in companies all the time. In projects, decisions are made on a case by case basis. In a pilot project in CVET, the alternation pattern can change based on assessment of the learner's progress; if more theoretical preparation is needed, the learner goes back to school.

When putting apprenticeship in place, the MES should define how the alternance should happen. Employers often have their own preferences for theoretical training structures (continuous long-term theoretical training followed by practice or practical training as early as possible to increase the effectiveness of theoretical training at school), and training schedules (training during a day, evening or in the company premises). While for LMTCs (operating on a project or self-funding basis) to adapt to employer needs seems a usual practice, it appears a serious challenge for VET schools. VET providers interviewed expressed concern that apprenticeship will be organised in a chaotic manner and create uncertainty in school functioning in terms of schedules and teacher workload. They also strongly believe that training in school should always be one year, as this is how teaching hours are assigned and calculated.

It should be understood, though, that apprenticeship programmes need to be organised in line with other VET arrangements: for example, the school year will follow the regulation and students will need to enrol in schools accordingly. However, VET providers will need to adapt their schedules to accept students for a few days per week and provide such opportunities while companies will have to adjust the learners' work schedules to allow them attending courses for a few days per week. This will have to be agreed and fixed in apprenticeship contracts. In practical terms, schools will have to arrange classes on some days per week and inform the companies with which they cooperate. Taking into account the fact that schools traditionally have their network of companies in specific sectors this should not be a problem. It can also be agreed with participating employer sectoral organisations and then communicated to schools and companies. Such coordination can also take into account the seasonality of work or possibility to take learners without any prior learning in some sectors (which is currently perceived by some employers and schools as an obstacle).

There is great expectation of the modular programmes currently under development in ministries, VET providers and companies. They believe that modular programmes will support apprenticeship as they would make it easier to distribute training content between the learning venues. Company representatives also look forward to modularisation, though they could not specify how modular programmes can help distribute content between company and school. There is no guarantee that an entire module will be covered by a company. All admitted that guidance is needed from the start on how to apply modules most effectively.

4.4.2. What sectoral practical training centres can do

Sectoral practical training centres have been an important investment by the State (supported by the EU funds) in increasing the quality and attractiveness of VET through a better infrastructure. The centres are equipped with most up-to-date technology and equipment and can become simulated working environments closest to reality. They should support the acquisition of broader competences needed for qualifications but which separate companies (mostly SMEs) alone cannot train.

The centres are organised in existing VET schools and are oriented towards:

- (a) practical training of students at the school and from other schools;
- (b) professional development of teachers from other schools and in-company trainers;
- (c) real production.

The first sectoral practical training centres seem to be experiencing difficulties in recruiting and sustaining highly qualified and experienced VET teachers able to operate and train using top-end technological equipment. Employers expressed similar reservations about a lack of competent VET teachers who could provide high quality practical training in these centres. Employers were not sure whether there were enough teachers with the right skills able to use the new equipment in the centres. These reservations were confirmed by one VET school representative who suggested that most VET teachers cannot operate the modern equipment in sectoral practical training centres.

Employees from companies who seem to be sufficiently qualified and experienced to hold VET teaching positions are not willing to take the work because of conditions; for example, the ratio between work responsibilities and salary is usually much lower than in the private sector. Consequently, VET teachers should be taught to operate the equipment and teach students. This demands greater cooperation with companies in the sector and their trainers,

involvement of in-company trainers and encouragement of professional exchange with VET teachers.

Sectoral practical training centres could also contribute to real production. The motivation of VET teachers to progress could be increased if the centre offers a chance for them to earn additional money by providing training or extra services in addition to main work at school. For example, one VET school interviewed indicated that they allow their VET teachers to use the school's equipment to produce their products after they finished their work in school, and sell them on the open market. Another VET representative revealed that their school wished to employ VET teachers part-time (20 hours per week) as workers providing car repair services. However, there is a regulation that does not allow sectoral practical training centres to have any direct additional revenue (from services other than training) for five years after their establishment.

4.5. Quality assurance

Quality assurance has been set as one of the priority areas for the review. However, as apprenticeship in Lithuania is implemented mainly through projects, it would be premature to discuss the issue in depth, though experience and recommendations from the existing programmes should be thoroughly studied to identify key elements that contribute to quality of learning and its outcomes. Further, the review pointed to a lack of mutual trust between companies and VET providers, which calls for quality assurance mechanisms.

The current system of quality assurance covers school-based VET and is entrusted to the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre (QVETDC)⁽⁹⁾, which implements it with the support of a pool of contracted and trained experts from various VET fields. However, the capacity of the Centre is not sufficient to go beyond minimum requirements.

In case of the ALMPM, territorial PES offices sometimes inspect VET providers (about 5 to 10%) but this is not systematic and it mainly checks compliance with legal requirements. The offices also have limited resources and capacity to perform such checks on a broader scale.

If apprenticeship is to start in IVET and be part of formal pathway, the current quality assurance arrangements in VET will need to be adjusted to

⁽⁹⁾ Qualifications and vocational education and training development centre.
http://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/?page_id=1891 [accessed 6.7.2015].

cover the company-based part as well. The following issues will have to be included in quality assurance procedures:

- (a) assessing capacity of companies and monitoring their performance;
- (b) competences of in-company trainers;
- (c) assessment of learning outcomes gained in companies.

The experience and expertise that will be gained by trade unions through participation in projects assuring quality apprenticeships, will be useful. A body (such as a sectoral organisation) will have to be identified that is in a good position to monitor the quality of company-based learning. In the Netherlands, for example, sectoral centres of excellence accredit companies that provide work placements to students based on a set of criteria agreed among the sectors; accreditation is rather informal and self-regulatory.

Suggested approaches from stakeholders include:

- (a) the need to take into account the quality of outputs and outcomes, such as the number of students employed after apprenticeship, the number of drop-outs, the share of graduates earning higher than average salaries; providers (both companies and schools) are then ranked by these indicators;
- (b) link financial incentives or support, if such is provided, to the quality of apprenticeships; if companies fail to provide high quality apprenticeships, they should receive no support.

Assessment and certification of competences acquired during training is an important element of apprenticeship quality assurance. The existing system of external assessment by sectoral organisations and, lately, some accredited schools (*kompeticijų vertinimo įstaigos*) is a strong enabling factor for evolving apprenticeship programmes that have to lead to vocational qualifications ⁽¹⁰⁾.

4.5.1. Requirements for VET teachers and in-company trainers

Apprenticeship by definition means that an aspiring worker (professional) learns the vocation ‘from the hands of the master’, through constant observation, trying and under supervision of a skilled and experienced worker (professional). Therefore, VET teachers and in-company trainers are crucial to quality learning in apprenticeship and in any work-based learning schemes.

⁽¹⁰⁾ At the moment there are 24 social partners and other stakeholders that have been accredited to carry out assessments of selected competences. A list is provided, in Lithuanian at: http://www.kpmc.lt/?page_id=1488 [accessed 6.7.2015].

Even more essential is their effective cooperation.

Teachers in VET schools and LMTCs all have relevant education in the field that they are teaching and also a pedagogical qualification or certificate. If they do not have pedagogical competence, they take pedagogical-psychological courses.

According to the law, each teacher can use five days per year for continuing professional development (CPD). They can use various options provided by ESF projects. Examples identified include: development and introduction of the system enhancing the technological competences of vocational teachers and lecturers; development of in-service training and retraining of teachers (from the Education Development Centre); enlargement of VET teacher training network into other Lithuanian regions; training of trainers projects DC-NET and Energotrain (from the National Energy Training Centre). Further options are available from employer organisations, companies and manufacturers of materials and equipment, CVET and mobility projects and study visits. Some VET providers also mentioned cooperation with sectoral practical training centres in other regions.

Levels of VET teachers' competences vary, as do available opportunities for them to develop and update these competences. This was confirmed in interviews with learners who spoke of very good teachers, and of those who do not follow the latest developments in the industry and sector and whose teaching methods are old-fashioned. All students reported satisfaction with their in-company trainers and stressed that they learned much more during their company-based practice. Some companies also indicated that some VET teachers were not familiar with how the occupation workplace looks nowadays. Others, in contrast, invite teachers to train their employees and allow them to stay in the company and learn about new things (equipment, materials) so that they can oversee students better.

According to most of the VET teachers consulted, they have not received any specific training from the VET school on how to implement apprenticeships. The overall conclusion of VET representatives was that VET teachers are not prepared to coordinate apprentices and do not have enough resources. This is a critical point; in Lithuanian models of apprenticeship VET providers will continue to have coordinating role.

In all programmes, companies are usually asked to assign a qualified staff member to supervise learners during their training periods in company. Trainers are usually skilled employees in the occupation, managers (human resource or floor managers) or owners in SMEs. Companies do not apply formal requirements for in-company trainers who accompany apprentices.

Representatives of companies reported that in-company trainers are usually chosen intuitively, from their work experience, education background and communication skills needed to guide and assess the work of an apprentice. In other cases, employers indicated that they simply assigned the role of in-company trainer to an employee who likes training others, though this person may not have the most relevant qualifications.

Owners of companies, directors or human resource managers appoint in-company trainers for each shift and/or brigade specialising in certain product/service or working at certain time. If apprentices rotate from one division to another, they work with different in-company trainers. However, some companies try to promote the role of in-company trainer by creating a separate position for this job and launching an internal competition to fill it.

The students interviewed were very satisfied with the work and supervision of trainers they encountered. Their main expectation from the company is that the company assigns an experienced and good trainer who:

- (a) is willing to work with them;
- (b) gives relevant and varied tasks;
- (c) has time to explain things, monitor progress and provide feedback.

The availability of trainer time is the key. In-company trainers and company representatives confirmed that supervising apprentices tends to require a lot of time and attention and this takes some of their productive time.

There are other disincentives for in-company trainers:

- (a) sometimes trainers are not very willing to train students well as they believe that they can train their own potential competitors in the future (this argument was often used in sectors such as hairdressing, construction and car mechanics);
- (b) if the company does not hire any of the trained students, this reduces the motivation of trainers, provided a company is hiring.

There was no uniform agreement among the stakeholders on whether an in-company trainer has to have a qualification in the field. Most employers' representatives underlined the importance of relevant experience as opposed to the 'right' education. Trade union representatives indicated that in-company trainers need to have good knowledge in a particular area and the skills to train other people, which should be provided through additional training.

The MES submitted a proposal to amend the procedure for organising formal VET so that an in-company trainer in an apprenticeship scheme completes a course for pedagogical and psychological basics of 120 hours. There could be specified requirements but if they are not balanced with

relevant support or incentive, it can create problems with the quality of student in-company learning experience and even availability of such training. Companies saw this as an unrealistic demand for them (see Section 4.3.1) while trade union representatives thought that such a programme can be beneficial for those who want to pursue a career as in-company trainer. From the companies interviewed, none has sent their trainers to such a course. Employers believe that, instead of a formal pedagogical qualification, trainers should know industry and company processes, be able to explain them to learners and instruct learners on their tasks. In their view, instructing apprentices is not different from instructing any other new employees and is part of daily practice for many of their employees. They also thought that training competence is often a matter of personal disposition that cannot be acquired through a course. Many employers highlighted the formal nature and low quality of such courses.

If a requirement is set, it will need to be supported with sufficient high-quality provision. Currently, such courses are provided by the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences or training centres. In future, the role of employer and trade union organisation as well as sectoral practical training centres should be considered. Companies that take first steps to introduce in-company trainers should be supported by all actors and by all available means (view of trade unions). Employers suggested that training of trainers should be short, modular, focused on pedagogical skills and flexible, including online resources that trainers could follow when they have time.

EU funding can be used to develop programmes and train in-company trainers and apprentice tutors, as has been done in many EU countries. Employer representatives also thought that such programmes could be very effective but not efficient, as they do not update teacher and trainer competences regularly and continuously. This points to a need for results of such projects to be mainstreamed.

Many stakeholders mentioned an ESF project – practical training of VET schools students to work with modern technologies, 2004-08 (*Profesinių mokyklų mokinių darbo su moderniomis technologijomis praktinis mokymas*) – implemented by the chambers of commerce. The project trained numerous multipliers (trainers' trainers) and tutors in companies, and developed sound methodological materials in cooperation with experts from the Kaunas Vytautas Magnus University. Many of these trainers are still in companies, but there is no information on whether they train students and whether they use materials. It was not possible to get hold of the materials as they were published in few copies. Employers suggested reviewing the existing

resources for in-company training by identifying companies that have trainers with required skills and, consequently, identifying which sectors are more prepared, by validating the competences of trainers acquired while training students and apprentices and by using the materials that had been developed.

There should be a formal mechanism for teachers and trainers to communicate and cooperate. Currently, even though cooperation between company and VET providers takes place, communication between teachers and trainers it is often limited. According to the stakeholders consulted, good cooperation exists but it is based on building interpersonal relations between in-company trainers and VET teachers. Apprentices and representatives of VET schools emphasised that employers recognise the benefits of trainer-teacher interaction, especially, when it leads to closing company skills gaps using apprentice competences.



6. Areas and suggestions for action

Areas and suggestions for action

The review showed that regulatory framework for apprenticeship within the VET system is quite supportive of setting up apprenticeship programmes; some of the seemingly unregulated aspects (heard from all stakeholder groups) are actually part of various regulatory acts. However, these provisions are not well known or visible to those who wish to take this path (be it learners, companies, or VET providers). They see the road but no road signs.

The existing VET system provides important enablers; however, there are some critical challenges that sometimes outbalance the enablers (see Box 4).

Box 4. Existing VET system enablers and challenges

Enablers:

- apprenticeship is included in the regulatory framework along with rights and responsibilities of apprentices, companies and VET providers. New amendments are under way to accommodate apprenticeship needs better (p.55);
- new sectoral qualification standards are in the pipeline as well as modular programmes. Procedures for developing and approving new programmes are well defined;
- there is a tradition and ways of cooperation between companies and schools; many teachers and in-company trainers also have experience of cooperation. Some experience has been gained through ESF-funded projects;
- 41 sectoral practical training centres will be eventually available, 25 of which are already operational;
- mechanisms for the social partners' involvement are in place. Some employers' organisations have become very active and supportive of apprenticeship and in-company training. They are ready to invest if some training related expenses are compensated by the State;
- there is positive growth in the economy while youth unemployment is still high, especially among low-qualified youths. Companies in some sectors are in urgent need of qualified employees from VET professions; many companies are not satisfied with learners coming from the ALMPM schemes;



- final assessment of learning outcomes is conducted externally. Social partners and companies show interest in being more involved in competence assessment;
- ALMPMs that include training are linked and comply with the VET regulations.

Challenges:

- the dual status of an apprentice as a student and as an employee is declared but not explicitly clarified;
- lack of planning for apprenticeships prevents estimating necessary resources;
- obvious lack of implementation provisions and their communication to stakeholders, more specifically, companies and VET providers: they are not aware of differences in apprenticeship and final practice of students; many of them believe that the field is completely unregulated. There is also a misconception that apprenticeship would be implemented on a year-round basis;
- VET providers are not ready and, possibly, unwilling to accept apprentices into their programmes. This can be caused though by lack of guidelines and by lack or perceived lack of resources;
- companies are looking for quick-fix solutions and do not see the potential benefits in training apprentices. There are no clear cost-sharing or compensatory measures in place to incentivise companies to take apprentices;
- the experience and products gained in the EU-funded projects are not taken on board.

The review suggests that the Ministry of Education and Science, in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and the Ministry of Economy, find a balance between regulation, information and making existing provisions work, including taking action in four major directions:

- (a) clarifying the vision;
- (b) building up on the enablers;
- (c) informing and guiding about what exists and what is expected;
- (d) fine-tuning and coordinating regulation as things progress.

5.1. Clarifying the vision

The Government of Lithuania has made its strategic choice of apprenticeship as an effective way to aid the transition of young people and adults into jobs. This created high expectations and hopes among employers and learners but

also some confusion about the relevant concept of apprenticeship in the national context. According to employers, apprenticeship should be implemented in a top-down manner, which implies that State support and guidance are expected; such an approach is also relevant to VET providers as they operate in the MES regulatory field. Therefore, it is up to the MES, which has overall responsibility for VET in cooperation with the other ministries, to make explicit statements about the vision of what Lithuanian apprenticeship will be.

The review suggests that the following be put forward (Box 4):

Box 5. **Apprenticeship in Lithuania: vision**

- Apprenticeship is one of the pathways in the VET system; it will not replace school-based VET. Apprenticeship will only involve some VET students in initial VET.
- Apprenticeship leads to the same qualifications as those acquired through school-based learning.
- Apprenticeship is applied both in initial and continuing VET and is open to young people and adults.
- Apprenticeship will be targeted to some occupations and sectors of economy. At the beginning, it can help satisfy the immediate needs of companies for skilled employees. The gains to the companies will bring them on board but will also benefit learners and, society in the long term.
- Apprenticeship will be implemented by some schools, possibly, by the ones equipped with the sectoral practical training centres.
- Apprenticeship will start as a national pilot; the Ministry of Education and Science and the social partners will monitor its progress. Once the processes are set, they will work to expand apprenticeship to other sectors.
- Apprenticeship is a joint endeavour of the State, VET providers and companies.

5.1.1. Defining the status of apprentice and introducing an apprenticeship contract

An opportunity is opening to overcome one of the main barriers to successful apprenticeship in Lithuania, as the MSSL plans to amend employment law and the labour code to embrace apprentices and the apprenticeship contract. Apprenticeship, though part of the formal VET system, operates between education and employment. As all the three ministries will be consulted, they should take advantage of this opportunity to accommodate all existing contexts where apprenticeship is or will be implemented. The status of an

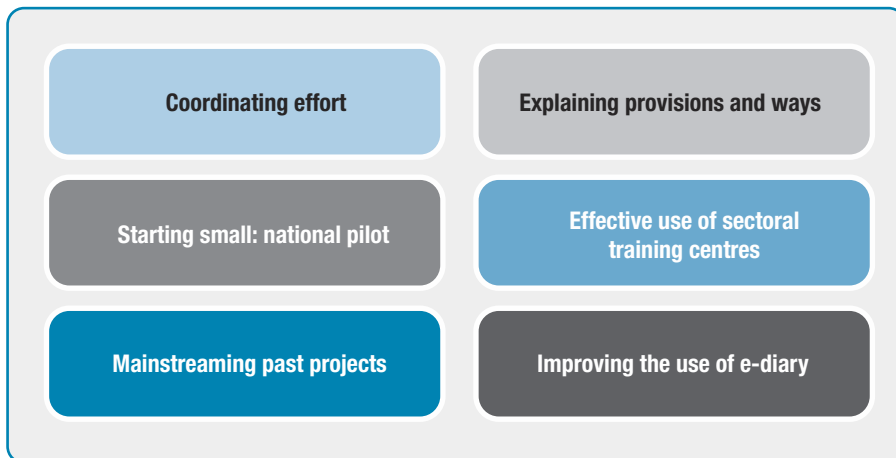
apprentice should be defined jointly (it should not only apply to the unemployed) and apprenticeship contracts should be applied in all training contexts, where learning takes place in at least two venues. An apprenticeship contract should:

- (a) bring together education and employment;
- (b) cover apprentice working conditions, including remuneration (or a grant);
- (c) include a learning component, even a training plan;
- (d) mention the assignment of a trainer.

5.2. Building up on the enablers

The current VET system has many provisions in place that can, if properly used, help put apprenticeship on track, especially in IVET. Several projects and initiatives have been implemented in the country. This set of actions provides a pointer to what the Ministry of Education and Science can put to better use.

Figure 1. **Building blocks for better apprenticeship**



Source: Cedefop.

5.2.1. Coordinating the effort

The three ministries (MES, ME and MSSSL) with three different portfolios and rules should cooperate more closely, to avoid creating gaps or duplications in administration of various initiatives related to apprenticeship and fragmenting

the returns on significant investment, including from the EU funds. The ministries are cooperating within formal provisions for agreement on documents and in the framework of inter-ministerial groups. However, it seems that there should be a standing forum on the development of apprenticeship where they would exchange information on the planned activities, outcomes of projects implemented or State-funded schemes, address the lessons learned and feed them into their apprenticeship schemes and mainstream good practice, whenever possible, in all contexts.

Before the regulation is balanced, the review shows the need for a centrally nominated coordinating body to provide guidance on how to implement apprenticeship. Such a body should provide case-by-case guidance for those VET schools and companies that plan to implement apprenticeship and develop comprehensive and consistent guidance materials (see point below). It would collect the aggregated needs of employers and identify gaps in VET supply. Respondents suggested giving this task to the QVETDC. However, the responsible ministries can consider other options, for example, delegating this role to employer organisations as regards support to companies.

5.2.2. Explaining provisions and ways

The review identified that it is, in principle, possible to set up apprenticeship programmes within the current regulatory framework, but it requires some improvisation and acquisition of alternative funding, especially for companies. The lack of clarity is one of the reasons why apprenticeship in its true sense is currently only possible through EU-funded projects. The interviews showed that there is room and willingness among VET providers and companies to take up some responsibilities but there is also confusion: not all stakeholders are aware of their rights and responsibilities and of what they can do.

It is advisable to create a group of MES experts, practitioners and social partner representatives to develop guidelines and informative material on how to build an apprenticeship programme, explaining the necessary requirements and available provision:

- (a) how to apply the current procedures for formal VET, for training contracts and others;
- (b) how to adapt an existing VET programme to its implementation through apprenticeship;
- (c) how to ensure complementarity and continuity of training in different learning venues.

The guidelines should be specific for companies and VET providers but also address areas where they need to work together. In the end, the success of apprenticeship in Lithuania will depend on mutual trust rather than on regulation. For example, although schools understand the value of practical training in real work environments for students, they are not ready to organise training programmes for students in alternation schemes. They need guidance and procedures on how to do it and also clarification on funding provisions.

The experience of the Vilnius Jerusalem LMTC and other VET providers and companies that significantly contributed to implementing apprenticeship pilot schemes should be taken into account.

This work will identify gaps in regulation as some areas where regulation is not clear enough or where regulation needs to be amended will become obvious.

Guidance materials can be developed also for apprentices, VET teachers and in-company trainers:

- (a) a student/apprentice handbook that would explain how they should act before, during and after the experience in company or across the programme. The following seemed important to learners and helpful for them to know their rights, expectations for practical training, ways to stand up for their rights, what to do in case of problems. Students stressed that it is important to show initiative and motivation. The task can be accomplished by a volunteer school or schools or social partners; the key is to involve students in developing such handbook;
- (b) teachers can benefit from explaining how apprenticeship differs from a regular programme, what they should tell apprentices, how they should organise cooperation with trainers in the company, how they can benefit from this cooperation, how to provide feedback. Teachers and trainers should be involved in developing such material. There could also be material for general education teachers, once the apprenticeship pathway is clear ⁽¹¹⁾;
- (c) a handbook for in-company trainers in a similar format to that described above for teachers. One handbook can developed for both; this way both teachers and trainers will have a better idea of their tasks;
- (d) all these materials can be online in attractive and interactive formats.

⁽¹¹⁾ An example from the UK can be seen in the guide *Apprenticeships: a guide for teachers and support staff*, developed by Unionlearn, a trade union organisation (Unionlearn and Trade Union Congress, 2014). <https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/apprenticeships-guide-teachers-and-support-staff> [accessed 6.7.2015].

5.2.3. Starting small: national piloting in IVET

The experience with apprenticeship in Lithuania so far shows that it cannot be implemented in all sectors, in all qualifications and at all levels at the same time. The following major barriers prevent stakeholders from exploring the possibilities of formal provision:

- (a) lack of common understanding;
- (b) concerns of VET providers about their resources and resulting passive position;
- (c) limited participation of companies due to lack of clarity, cost-sharing and non-financial support.

MES representatives also highlighted the challenge of estimating and setting a possible target number for apprenticeship. Without this target, it will be difficult to plan and allocate necessary funding.

Parallel to developing guidelines (which are needed in all scenarios), the MES and the social partners should start implementing apprenticeship programmes in IVET on a small scale. This idea was also put forward during the consultation with stakeholders: to start small and where most needed, where the demand for workforce would stimulate supply to adapt and take up new forms. This seems the only way for apprenticeship in IVET to start working. Building on results, the experience can then be extended broader.

5.2.3.1. *Selecting sectors/occupations, discussing and agreeing with employers*

Industry representatives indicate that not all sectors of the Lithuanian economy are equally ready and able to engage in apprenticeships. Sectors indicated as most ready were engineering, energy, food, hotels and restaurants, and possibly transport and construction. Although, so far, companies have been involved in taking students for practice, they have been hesitant in employing VET students without prior knowledge. At the same time, they take low-skilled unemployed within the ALMPMs and are not fully satisfied with the outcomes, so there is potential for these sectors to benefit from quality apprenticeship programmes.

The MES signed cooperation agreements with some sectors. These can be invited to pilot IVET apprenticeship in their companies where they can see whether they benefit from longer-term training of students in companies. As an alternative, the MES can invite public utilities companies to take part: water supply, energy and power supply, municipal enterprises, especially, in the regions. Another approach could be to establish apprenticeship programmes in the new occupations not yet covered in existing VET provision. However,

the process of developing a programme in the absence of a relevant standard would be difficult to achieve.

Experience and research from other countries can be used to explain benefits (as an example, see Annex 1). It is important to agree that companies employ apprentices (either with an employment or apprenticeship contract, if this is in place).

5.2.3.2. *Setting targets, timeframe and funding*

Discussing with companies their needs and training capacity will help set a target for the pilot project. This number will be used to identify the schools that would participate. If possible, the MES could consider earmarking funding for such a pilot; if it is not possible, see how current financial provision can be redistributed to support VET providers and learners. Ideally, a cost-sharing model should be agreed with the employers.

5.2.3.3. *Selecting or nominating schools in the relevant sectors*

There are schools in the relevant sectors that have long-standing cooperation with employer organisations and companies and are well known. Some of these will be selected or nominated if they agree that they would work with companies and adapt their VET programmes and schedules for apprentices. It is advisable to give preference to schools with sectoral practical training centres as they are well-resourced and usually open to innovation.

5.2.3.4. *Bringing the two venues together, agreeing on the model and programme(s) and setting a framework of cooperation*

Such a framework, if successful, can be further promoted to other stakeholders. As the review suggests, it has been difficult for companies to hire students, especially, very young ones (under the age of 18). There are many underlying issues to solve and there is no capacity or willingness to do so; there is no urgent need to press for it in the context of apprenticeship. The stakeholders suggest that such students should study in school contexts, at least until they reach the age of 18. The obvious preference of employers for short-term programmes (seemingly quick-fix solutions to the need for qualified workforce) suggests that apprenticeship should first be established in one/two-year post-secondary VET programmes. As their preferred programme length is six to nine months, it is feasible to get companies on board.

5.2.3.5. *Developing and agreeing on training plans and responsibilities for delivering.*

The MES or QVETDC staff should support this process as funding and

resource issues will have to be addressed, especially, with regard to VET providers.

5.2.3.6. *Monitoring and promoting knowledge-sharing to other employers and VET providers*

The MES and social partners should closely monitor implementation of the small-scale project and use acquired experience to involve more employers and VET providers in providing apprenticeship programmes and to expand them to other sectors and occupations.

Figure 2. **Starting small: a national apprenticeship project**



Source: Cedefop.

5.2.4. **Steering effective and efficient use of sectoral training centres to the benefit of all**

The role of sectoral practical training centres needs to be better communicated and further developed. The challenge is to ensure that they are used to full potential from the start; the equipment and technologies become outdated very quickly nowadays. Operation of the centres should be better coordinated to achieve more benefit and to use equipment fully to get returns on investment.

For apprenticeship, the possibility and feasibility that some of the centres would employ students could be considered. Students take part in productive work, for example, in the meat, confectionery, beauty, hotel, restaurant and other programmes. It is more challenging in electrical and electronic sectors

where real production does not take place in the centre (options can be considered, nevertheless). Although the centres cannot make profit from activities other than training for five years after ESF funding, an option is for the centres to come up with business plans (to be developed by business studies students).

5.2.5. Mainstreaming results of the past projects

Development of apprenticeship relies very much on EU-funded projects. Their experience is useful, as are their methodologies, materials, and approaches. Many stakeholders from VET providers and companies referred to the project 'practical training of VET schools students to work with modern technologies' (2004-08) (*Profesinių mokyklų mokinių darbo su moderniomis technologijomis praktinis mokymas*) on competence development of company trainers.

The methodological material and training course that was designed and delivered could be recovered, updated and used in the new activities. The pool of trained mentors and trainers can also be reactivated and involved in developing apprenticeship programmes, testing them or training other trainers.

5.2.6. Improving the use of e-diary

Many references were made to actual and potential use of the student diary. All stakeholders considered that it should be used as a real communication tool between learners, VET providers and companies. The MES, in cooperation with VET providers and company representatives, can revise the tool and align it to the VET programmes and training plans.

5.3. Informing and guiding

5.3.1. Creating a one-stop shop for stakeholders

The review pointed to a clear need for information exchange and matching services. Creating a one-stop shop (a centralised service based on cooperation among the three ministries, State-funded or cost-shared) could help build adequate resources and capacity. The source can be created by the MES, the QVETDC or any other agency or social partners' organisations. This would be the place where learners, companies and schools get information on main aspects of apprenticeship (including the guidelines referred to in point 5.2.2) and find out about available programmes and apprenticeship places; where company or student needs could be associated with the right VET schools, including in the same region. For

matching purposes, the existing tool *Gera praktika* that companies use to find interns from higher education can be considered as a basis; this can save resources developing a new tool and can also bring closer VET and higher education.

5.3.2. Developing a comprehensive communication strategy for apprenticeship

Apprenticeship is widely discussed in Lithuania today. However, there are no clear messages and understanding among stakeholders how it differs from existing VET and why the government tries so hard to implement it. Some respondents mentioned a few strategies and initiatives for marketing apprenticeship and informing companies and learners about the benefits, related responsibilities and available incentives, but these are fragmented and generally ineffective.

The MES, MSSL and ME, together with the social partners, should combine their resources to develop a comprehensive and structured communication strategy to explain and promote the concept among all stakeholders and society at large. The signed memorandum of cooperation for the implementation of the youth guarantee foresees promoting apprenticeship by disseminating good practice and initiatives, providing financial support to companies training VET students, and providing recommendations on further development of apprenticeship in Lithuania. As implementation of this guarantee falls under the MSSL, it is important that the MES and ME find ways of cooperating and disseminating good practice from all relevant contexts.

The communication strategy should take the issues beyond the discussions in well-established groups of stakeholders to learners, their parents, youth organisations and, possibly, others. Communication units in the ministries can work, but it is advisable to outsource the work to a specialised agency.

The communication strategy would:

- (a) explicitly state the MES vision of apprenticeship in cooperation with the responsible ministries, explain its place, role and scope of apprenticeship in education and training system in Lithuania, and its link to the labour market;
- (b) help establish a common language in communicating on apprenticeship;
- (c) promote professions suited to apprenticeship;
- (d) inform about key actors and their role;
- (e) inform about available funding and how to apply for it;

- (f) explain the expected gains and benefits for all stakeholders;
- (g) provide suggestions for disseminating good practice, nothing motivates more than a word of mouth from peers;
- (h) identify most appropriate ways and channels for disseminating information;
- (i) reach beyond the usual VET actors. For example, the review identified the potential for more active role for parents' organisations, youth organisations and pupils unions (Box 5).

Box 6. Using the potential of parents' and youth organisations

Parents' organisations are evolving but so far have not been active in promoting apprenticeships; they are open to embrace and promote VET.

Youth organisations should be empowered to promote VET in general and apprenticeship-type training in particular, via the Lithuanian youth information and counselling system that is designed to help young people find information about education and job opportunities. This system can also be explored in the context of matching support (see page 50).

The pupils' union is encouraging young people to choose VET. They currently collect opinions or success stories of young VET graduates on their career. The union wants to make these stories public so that everyone can see that VET graduates have a bright future. This is one of their first projects promoting VET and they do it using their own resources. However, they will try to find partners for the dissemination planned in 2015.

The strategy could be implemented in two stages:

- (a) first, aimed at companies to attract them to participate and potential apprentices to raise their interest;
- (b) when the path is signposted, addressing other learners and parents.

5.3.3. Improving guidance and counselling

Vocational guidance is part of the VET system. However, the review clearly indicated the need to strengthen a comprehensive and regular career guidance system that should operate from earliest possible stage of education. Some employers suggest that it should start from primary school. Lack of career guidance and awareness about labour market reality and about VET occupations seems to be one of the main reasons for learners' motivation problems, emphasised both by VET providers and companies.

Other stakeholders think as follows:

- (a) employers stress the importance of early reflection and choice of future professions that can attract and better prepare young people to work in industries;
- (b) LMTC and PES representatives point to the absence of an institution that would provide opportunities for the unemployed persons to test themselves against various occupations and choose which would be most appropriate for them;
- (c) youth organisations echo the above suggestion that young people should have access to programmes where they would get acquainted with a profession/occupation; for example, spend a week in a VET school or a company or a sectoral training centre);
- (d) such initiatives as ‘shadowing’, ‘employee for one day’, ‘school of young policy scientists’ can be extended to VET occupations.

5.4. Fine-tuning regulation

Many things are already regulated in the general framework, with amendments to existing regulations underway with a view to making apprenticeship function. However, during the review, it also emerged that changes in regulation take place too often, which does not allow putting things into place.

After the key challenge of defining the status of apprentice is addressed, it is worth trying on a small scale. The experience would inform further decisions.

The following aspects might need further regulation in the longer term:

- (a) identifying and delegating some functions and responsibilities to the social partners (after negotiation and agreement) in implementing apprenticeship, both at decision-making and implementation levels;
- (b) defining how the coordinating learning venue is nominated. In the current arrangement, the responsibility for coordinating cooperation with the company is likely to stay with schools, unless delegation of responsibilities is regulated otherwise;
- (c) describing possible models of alternance between the two venues, specifying when apprenticeship can start. Based on the findings of the review, it seems that a pre-apprenticeship period would be needed, which includes two aspects:

- (i) students would spend some time in school (three to six months depending on the sector and programmes) to acquire theoretical basics of the profession;
- (ii) students would spend some time in company prior to the employment agreement; this would allow both company and learner to assess the match;
- (d) functioning of the sectoral practical training centres;
- (e) defining a minimum number of students in a group in VET programmes.





6. Concluding remarks

Concluding remarks

Apprenticeship definitely has a place in education and training in Lithuania. As a form of VET organisation, it is hardly found in IVET, which is predominantly school-based, but is implemented in continuing VET and non-formal learning on a small scale, and mainly through projects financed by the EU funds. In the review, almost all interviewees (companies, teachers, in-company trainers, students) agreed that practical training is the most important for the future employment of young people.

Apprenticeship should become a pathway to an explicitly defined goal – acquiring a recognised qualification – but this pathway should be well signposted. All players (the State, employers’ organisations and trade unions, VET providers and companies) must get on board. They must use the full potential of apprenticeship, not only to overcome youth unemployment, but also to attract more learners of all ages to vocational training, and improve skills for employability in Lithuania.

List of abbreviations

ALMPMs	active labour market policy measures
CDP	continuing professional development
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
EAfA	European alliance for apprenticeships
ESF	European Social Fund
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
FLESTU	Federation of Lithuanian Education and Science Trade Unions
IVET	initial vocational education and training
LINPRA	association of Lithuanian energy industry
LMTC	labour market training centres
LTUC	Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation
ME	Ministry of Economy
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MSSL	Ministry of Social Security and Labour
PES	public employment services
QVETDC	Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre
SME	small and medium-sized enterprises
TCR	thematic country reviews
VET	vocational education and training

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ANNEX 1

Benefits of work-based learning

Learner	Development of craftsmanship and deep professional expertise (*)
	Builds skills and competences required to operate in a workplace including transversal ones: communication, team work, problem solving
	(More) Informed career choices
	Develop career management skills
	Improved self-confidence and motivation
	First working experience which facilitates entry to the labour market
Employer	Positive impact on supply of qualified labour
	Addresses skills gaps through tailor-made training (*)
	Positive effect on recruitment and retention
	Improved productivity and performance (*)
	Positive effects on employed staff development
VET providers	Improved attractiveness of VET programmes
	Better quality of VET programmes and of learning outcomes
	Enhancement of relevance and responsiveness of VET
	Positive effect on teaching staff competences and development
	Better cooperation between VET schools and businesses
Society	Skilled labour force which responds better to labour market needs
	Positive contribution to youth employment (*)
	Cost-sharing of VET between the State and employers
	Combined governance of VET (*)
	Contribution to innovation and creativity
	Has the potential to strengthen social inclusion and improve equal opportunities

(*) These benefits are particularly attributed to work-based learning approaches where the period of time spent in the workplace is substantial, such as apprenticeship.

Source: European Commission (2013). *Work-based learning in Europe: practices and policy pointers*.

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APPRENTICESHIP REVIEW LITHUANIA

Signposting the apprenticeship path in Lithuania



The publication is the final report of the thematic country review of apprenticeship in Lithuania. The report is based on information and views gathered in consultation with stakeholders in Lithuania (representatives of ministries, social partners, VET providers, companies, students, teachers and trainers). The review took place between May 2014 and March 2015 at the request of the Ministry of Education and Science of Lithuania. The report presents analysis of findings on main features, enablers and challenges of apprenticeship in Lithuanian VET, including the views of stakeholders at different levels. It proposes four directions for action to make apprenticeship a reality in the country: clarifying the vision, building on the enablers, improving information and communication about apprenticeship, and fine-tuning regulation on the way.

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