VOCATIONAL TRAINING SYSTEM IN LITHUANIA: FEASIBILITY STUDY

Project VET for Employment, No. 2014-1-LV01-KA202-000522

Financed by the European Commission according to the sub-activity Strategic Partnership for vocational education and training of the action Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practice under the ERASMUS + programme.

Drafted by:
Dr. Gintautė Žibėnienė
Nijolė Daujotienė
Vaidas Daujotas

Vilnius, 2015
FOREWORD

The present feasibility study on vocational training system in Lithuania (hereinafter - the Study) was prepared within the framework of the project VET for Employment financed by the European Commission according to the sub-activity Strategic Partnership for vocational education and training of the action Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practice under the ERASMUS + programme.

The purpose the Study is to review the current situation of vocational training in Lithuania and introduce the vocational training system in a Member State of the European Union, and present guidelines and alternatives for the development of the Lithuanian vocational training system.

The objectives of the drafters of the present Study was to review the vocational training system in Ireland as a system potentially suitable to refer to in an attempt to improve the vocational training system in Lithuania. For that purpose efforts were made to review the main features of the Irish and the Lithuanian vocational training systems while identifying the similarities between the two systems. The drafters of the Study equally attempted to identify the noteworthy features of the Irish vocational training system, and their applicability in developing the vocational training system in Lithuania. Therefore, the Irish vocational training system was selected for the purpose of more detailed comparison. Ireland is a country in a number of respects close to Lithuania, the country similar in size, population, the ethnic composition of its population. Although at the time of drafting the present Study the economy of Ireland was more advanced than in Lithuania, on 1 January 1973, when acceding the European Union Ireland was the poorest country of the Community. Subsequently, this European country made itself distinguished for its specifically fast economic growth rates.

According to the Law on Vocational Education and Training (effective version of 2007), the Lithuanian vocational educational system is comprised of the primary vocational education, continuing vocational education and vocational guidance. Therefore, the present Study also discusses the most important issues and challenges in the area of vocational guidance. The Study specifically distinguishes apprenticeship as a prospective aspect, as a matter worth discussing and a suitable way for the youth to easier get integrated in the labour market and get better prepared for the today's and tomorrow's jobs.

The objective of the present Study is to analyse the vocational training system in Lithuania and discuss the guidelines for the development of vocational training in Lithuania.

Tasks of the Study:
1. Discuss the vocational training system in Lithuania.
2. Introduce the vocational training system of the selected European country while identifying its links to the vocational training system in Lithuania.
3. Identify the alternatives for the Lithuanian system of vocational training, and present the guidelines for the implementation of one of the alternatives with a view to improving the vocational training system.

Study methods: overview of the sources (completed studies, prepared reports, legal acts, etc.), analysis, an analysis of good practise examples in Lithuania and in the EU Member States concerned.
The Study consists of the Foreword, interpretation of concepts and the following Sections:

Discussion of the principal parameters of the Lithuanian vocational training system. The Section identifies and discusses the reasons that triggered changes in the Lithuanian vocational training system, presents an overview of the concepts and the regulation of the Lithuanian vocational training, identifies the participants of the Lithuanian vocational training, their responsibilities and functions, vocational training programmes and licensing, qualifications and the supporting documents, evaluation of competences, granting of qualifications. Significant attention is devoted to the discussion of apprenticeship in Lithuania and diagnosing of arising problems. The Section includes a discussion of vocational guidance and counselling, establishment of sectoral centres in Lithuania, enhancing of attractiveness of vocational training, vocational training quality assurance, funding of vocational training, incentives and the current situation in the Lithuanian labour market.

The vocational training system of the selected European country and its adaptability for Lithuania. This Section of the Study presents the motives for the selections from the viewpoint of vocational training a country whose vocational training experience would be relevant for Lithuania. The Section introduces the vocational training system in Ireland, discussion of the regulation of the vocational training system in the country, its participants, their responsibilities, functions, funding, also the process of drafting the descriptions of qualifications, identification of future skill needs, links to the Lithuanian vocational training systems, development of apprenticeship, and the most important issues in the vocational guidance (in relation to vocational training).

Alternatives for the vocational training in Lithuania and their discussion. Section 3 of the Study identifies the targets in the development of vocational training on the State level on the basis of the analysis of the underlying legal acts. The Section includes a substantiation of priorities in vocational training and discusses a number of alternatives for the improvement of vocational training. The Section identifies the most appropriate alternative and submits proposals for the implementation of the alternative.

The Study includes a section on conclusions and appendices supporting or specifying the ideas presented in the Study.

The Study was prepared by: Nijolė Daujotienė, Vaidas Daujotas, Assoc. Professor, Dr. Gintautė Žibienienė
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The process of the reforms launched in the Lithuanian vocational training system after Lithuania regained its independence is highly affected by the EU education policy; such reforms essentially mean changes in the organisation of vocational training, roles of the participants, functions and interpersonal relations: the optimisation of the vocational training was concurrently followed by the reorganisation of vocational training institutions from budgetary institutions to public vocational training institutions, decentralisation of managements; one more important development was the created national qualification framework, establishment of sectoral practical training centres, introduction of apprenticeship.

2. The development of apprenticeship was identified as a viable and promising area designed to develop vocational training. However, the development is still being impeded by lack of relevant legal acts, the theoretical modelling of apprenticeship is still inadequate, because:
   - although the theme of apprenticeship has been implemented in several projects, a number of theoretical papers of different volume has been published touching upon and exploring the possibilities for the introduction of apprenticeship in Lithuania, still there is a lack of analytical, well-reasoned discussions, observations or prognoses.
   - there has not been any well-reasoned discussion on the ways or methods for the introduction of apprenticeship in Lithuania, how apprenticeship should be adopted and integrated in the Lithuanian vocational training system, or what are its prospects in the country;
   - no analysis on the costs and benefit of the introduction of the vocational apprenticeship training system in Lithuania has been carried out or published;
   - the development of apprenticeship is also impeded by the unclear and somewhat declarative definitions of the implementation and development of apprenticeship in national level documents: the National strategy on education for 2013-2020 does refer to the importance of the introduction of apprenticeship, the Action plan for the development of vocational training for 2014-2020 provides for an obligation to draw up and test recommendations 'on the implementation of the form for the organisation of the apprenticeship vocational training', nevertheless, the document for the implementation of the Government Programme (Priority measures for the implementation of the Programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania for 2012-2016) apprenticeship is not mentioned whatsoever, therefore it justifies a conclusion that strategic documents do not provide a consistent approach towards apprenticeship, or provide for actual implementation actions.

---

1 Item 117 of the Priority measures for the implementation of the Programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania for 2012-2016, 2013. The document provides that the Ministry of Education and Science, in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour will have to approve and implement a vocational training development action plan, however, there is no reference to apprenticeship in the plan. The plan refers to a reform of the vocational training institution network having regard to prospects for the development of individual economic sectors in individual regions; training of teachers in different professions and the organisation of their internship at actual working places; attraction of high qualification employees working in production to work as teachers of specific professions; students practices, entrepreneurship promoting initiatives, implementation of the European and the national qualification framework by transforming the vocational training programmes
• the development of apprenticeship in Lithuania is also impeded by the absence of traditions in applying this form of training, insufficiently clear or comprehensive legal regulation of apprenticeship;

• unclear, or an absent system governing financial or information support for entities willing to organise training in the form of apprenticeship, it remains unclear what incentives will be made available for such entities.

3. In relation to the development of apprenticeship the issues that were identified 10 years ago remain outstanding – insufficient legal base, unclear system for funding apprenticeship, insufficient or inconsistent interest in developing this training form.

4. In Lithuania, the legal acts required for the development of entrepreneurship are being created very slowly; however, an analysis of the relevant legal acts suggests that the legal acts on vocational training in their new wording will accelerate the development of apprenticeship, because:

• the Law on Vocational Education and Training (effective version of 2007) defined the environments for apprenticeship training, formalised the training form, however, the Law remained silent on the status of apprentices, or contracts governing such status;

• the Description of the requirements for contracts on vocational training and their registration (2010) already provided for requirements for the form of the organisation of vocational apprenticeship training, for the structure and the content of vocational training, defined the obligations of the parties (apprenticeship organiser, apprentice and the vocational training institution, including the obligation of the apprenticeship organiser (employer) to conclude with the apprentice an employment contract, in addition to the requirement that the contracts on vocational training of school vocational training organisation form or the apprenticeship vocational training organisation form, amendments or supplements of such contracts are registered in the Training Contracts registration Journal of the vocational training provider;

• the procedure the evaluation of Level I and Level II qualifications acquired by a simplified apprenticeship vocational training organisation form (the Description of the procedure for the evaluation of personal acquired competences, approved by Order No. V-15 of 14 January 2015);

• a more clear definition of modular programmes (a new Description of the procedure for the development and validation of formal vocational training programmes was approved on 23 March 2015), creates the conditions facilitating the development of apprenticeship;

• the document identified the implementation of a vocational training programme or its module in the apprenticeship form, specifications were provided as to the place of the theoretical training of an apprentice, who organises or coordinated practical training of apprentices, in addition to defining a number of other relevant aspects, such as preparation or approval of the practical training programme, training plan and schedule or evaluation of achievements into module programmes, the system for qualification examinations, with a view to ensuring that the qualifications acquired in Lithuania are considered equal to the qualifications acquired in Member States of the EU by way of formal, informal education or by way of self-education.
(Description of the procedure for the formal vocational training, new version of 8 May 2015).

5. A number of vocational training programmes in the area of education such as on architecture and construction, production and processing, computing, personal services or nursing services are distinguished for their increasing diversity; the vocational training programmes in the areas are rather popular and demanded, therefore they could be implemented in the form or apprenticeship training.

6. In Lithuania it is important to develop professional activation at vocational training institutions and ensure its quality – that is an area of specific importance to personal, and in strategic education directions of a number of European countries has been designated as the area intended to be improved due to its research-based efficiency.

7. In Lithuania the issue of provision of Level 5 qualification is not resolved, although employers have been emphasising that as necessary. The undefined status of the qualification of the level between vocational training and higher education creates preconditions for assumptions on still insufficient coherence between the Lithuanian qualification framework and the vocational training system.

8. The analysis of literature references, document analysis and conversations with Irish vocational training specialists allowed distinguishing the following most important features of vocational training in Ireland:

- the strategic objectives of the development of the Irish vocational training target the development of the competences required for the economy of Ireland, promotion of active involvement of groups interested in vocational training, improvement of vocational training, planning of reasonable financing for vocational training, and the improvement of the image of vocational training.

- An important role for the development of vocational training is played by the Expert group on future skill needs by evaluating the studies on the current situation, forecasts for the labour market; the Expert group also consults the Government of Ireland on the changes in the labour market, the current and future needs for skills with a view to developing the economy and business of Ireland.

- The Qualification framework of Ireland is different from that of Lithuania and Europe: Levels 1-2 correspond to Levels 1 of the Lithuanian and the European Qualification Framework, and respectively, Level 3 – to Level 2, Level 4 – to Level 3, Level 5 – Level 4, Level 5 – to Level 4, Level 6 – to Level 5, Levels 7 and 8 0 to Level 6, Level 9 – to Level 7, Level 10 – to Level 8. Level 5-9 qualifications are considered to be professional qualifications.

- As noted by Irish employers, it is important to focus on the improvement of abilities of young specialists to communicate, work in teams, service clients; it is important to develop a preparedness for continuous education, develop the flexibility of the employee and his ability to adapt to the changing requirements

---

2 The Lithuanian National Qualification Framework (2010) defines that such qualifications are acquired 'by studying according to study programmes designed for persons having professional qualification and professional activity experience of pre-defined duration, also non-degree study programmes (except residency programmes), and/or by acquiring professional activity experience or by starting independently'.

3 The Expert group is made up of employers, representatives of trade unions, educational institutions and public authorities appointed by the Minister of education and skills following consultations with the Minister of jobs, enterprise and innovation.
of the working place, develop their organisational abilities (collection, planning, organisation, or problem solution), by dedicating more attention for the development of innovativeness, creativity, systemic thinking, and business ethics, understanding of rules.

- In Ireland apprenticeship has been developed since 1997, by highlighting that an excellently prepared vocational training programme, a high-quality instruction process, and eventually a competent specialist contributes to the competitiveness of an entity. Apprenticeship is specifically popular in construction sector (about 80 % of the staff are apprentices), as well as in electricity, vehicle maintenance, engineering and press sectors.

- Apprenticeship programmes are implemented in 7 stages: about 60 % of the time under the programme (4 stages) training is provided at working places, and 40 % (3 stages) – at vocational training institutions; duration of the programme – from 2 to 4 years.

- In Ireland, efforts are made to create an efficient National apprenticeship advisory council which will develop an action plan and the guidelines for the improvement of the apprenticeship system.

- It may be assumed that the Irish vocational training system is functioning efficiently; to an extent due to a unambiguous declaration that Ireland cannot automatically take over the apprenticeship system from any other country because of the differences in the educational structure, economy, the situation in the labour market, etc., in addition of the observation made in the course of longitudinal studies on the necessity to flexibly adapt the apprenticeship practice having regard to the needs of the specific sector.

- Although Ireland does not have an integrated and inclusive vocational training system, however, the strength to be followed is the system of individual counselling on career issues\(^4\), and the encouragement declared since 2001 for schools to establish and develop cooperation with social partners, employers and other educational institutions.

9. The experience of vocational training in Lithuania which has been designated as the school-level vocational training model, tends to integrate features of other vocational training models and shifts to a mixed vocation training model.

10. For the purpose of improving the vocational training in Lithuania, potentially the best alternative is to refocus the institutions providing vocational training for new objectives, while reviewing the role and the promotion of employers in the vocational training system. For the changes in the vocational training system to take place important preconditions are decision, selection, legal regulation with respect to implementing changes on the level of the State, employers, vocational training providers, and the actions promoting changes in the vocational guidance system (at the level of vocational training).

---

\(^4\) According to the data of the OECD, most individual consultations on vocational guidance were provided to students in Ireland, Korea and France studying under vocational training programmes.