**Lithuania: optimisation of the public VET institutions network**

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**The**[**2018-20 development plan of the State vocational training institutions network**](https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/094a5111345511e884a38848fe3ec9e2?jfwid=zaydj60p3)**was approved in early 2019. It aims to bring together resources and use them efficiently, while improving the quality of vocational training to meet local labour market and students’ needs better.**

The [**plan**](https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/094a5111345511e884a38848fe3ec9e2?jfwid=zaydj60p3) was designed to reflect the trends of shrinking population and adjust VET to these trends. Education expert PhD Saulius Zybartas says that the country has been experiencing migration from regions to large cities, and from both regions and large cities to foreign countries, while the biggest migration flow has been from rural areas. Therefore, the network development plan is based on the following principle: if the number of students at a VET institution falls below a baseline critical level (for example, 200 students in a rural area), this institution should be restructured and converted into a department or subsidiary of another VET institution or general education school.

Another important goal is the creation of vocational institutions in big cities operating as competence centres with state-of-the-art equipment and infrastructure, and increased capacity to offer more and higher-level qualifications. Regions should be more focused on developing multidimensional schools, shaping their training offer based on assessment of (future) needs of the local economy. A national exchange programme is planned to support knowledge sharing among VET teachers across the country.

**Implementation started**

The measure is expected to allow rational use of material and financial resources and avoid duplication of vocational training programmes. The 67 public VET institutions will be reduced to 58 by 2020 (already down to 60 by September 2019).

The first successful merger took place in February 2019. The Vilnius Žirmūnai Labour Market Training Centre and the Vilnius Tourism and Commerce School merged into the Žirmūnai Vocational Training Centre. The new centre has a clear vision and offers quality programmes in the fields of food, healthy lifestyle, health and tourism. Following the merger, the number of applicants increased by 20%.

From September 1, the **[Žirmūnai Vocational Training Centre](http://www.mczirmunai.lt/" \t "_blank)** offers more practical training opportunities in Lithuania and Europe: greater flexibility (modular programmes, classroom training combined with apprenticeships, on-the-job specialisation modules) and updated training content for skills in demand.

In addition to formal IVET and CVET, it organises non-formal training programmes, evening classes, and regular events and seminars (knowledge-sharing for VET teachers, pre-vocational after-school non-formal education circles on specific study fields). To encourage young parents to continue their education, childcare arrangement are also available.

**Attractiveness of VET schools and fields of studies**

The main admissions phase through the general admissions information system is complete; additional admission processes are being carried out to fill a few vacant State-funded places. By September 2019, 12 216 students were enrolled (against 12 474 enrolments in the same period last year). Most of them (about 7 200) have achieved secondary education, while some 5 000 have not. The vast majority attend free of charge, while only about 300 students were offered non-State-funded places. In total, in 2019-20 1 124 vocational training programmes are on offer. The most popular study fields are:

* engineering professions (over 22% of applicants);
* personal services (21%);
* business and administration (11.5%);
* architecture and construction (10%);
* information and communication technologies (8%);
* health (6.7%); and
* arts (6%).