



A CALL FOR GOOD PRACTICE

IN TRAINING FOR
INTERNATIONALISATION OF
SMES

Deadline for submission: 30 SEPTEMBER 2017

Email: EEPGoodPractice@etf.europa.eu

BACKGROUND

A key priority of The Small Business Act for Europe¹ is to get more SMEs working internationally and particularly to export. Research underlines that SMEs involved in international cooperation are a) more innovative, b) more likely to have higher growth in turnover, and c) generate higher employment².

Training is an important factor in supporting SMEs in trading or with potential to trade internationally. This call specifically addresses training which supports SMEs to trade with the EU single market. Through the identification of good practice ETF intends to share knowledge and know-how of policymakers, the training community and SME support organisations to prompt further developments in this area particularly in those ETF partner countries with specific trade arrangements with the European Union.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the call are:

- to promote quality of training for SMEs already trading, or with potential to trade with the EU Single Market;
- to enhance the capacity of the training community in meeting the training needs of SMEs already trading, or with potential to trade with the EU Single Market;
- to encourage policymakers to improve policy and training support that respond to the specific needs of SMEs already trading, or with potential to trade with the EU Single Market.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN THIS CALL?

Training providers from one of the eligible countries listed below offering training to, or having recently trained SMEs, that are already trading, or have the potential to trade with or within the EU Single Market. These SMEs may lie outside the eligible countries. Training providers must be organisations that deliver training. This could include:

- business support organisations with a developed training profile e.g. chambers of commerce, SME agencies, regional development agencies, sector organisations;
- training organisations e.g. public or private training providers, universities, sector organisations, consultancy and advisory bodies, NGOs;
- SMEs that provide in-house training to promote knowledge, competences or skills (e.g. including on-the-job mentoring, peer learning, mentoring, e-learning).

Note that a training programme submitted under this call, and which has already finalised, should have been completed no more than 24 months prior to submission (post-training evaluation is included within this time limit).

Previous applicants to an ETF good practice call may participate in this call. Those who have received an ETF good practice award in the area of internationalisation of SMEs may also apply. Note that training programmes similar to previous submissions should demonstrate that recommendations from the most recent ETF peer review have been addressed.

¹ European Commission (2008). Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic & Social Committee, Committee of the Regions. Think Small First – a Small Business Act for Europe. COM/2008/0394

² European Commission (2011). Opportunities for the internationalisation of European SMEs. Final Report

HOW TO APPLY

Training providers should submit the application in Word for Windows format by e-mail to:

EEPGoodPractice@etf.europa.eu

The application form can be downloaded from the ETF website.

CONTACT

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EXAMPLE

For information, please see the good practice information note of Enterprise Lithuania (Annex 2) which was identified as a good practice in a previous call.

WHICH COUNTRIES ARE ELIGIBLE?

EUROPEAN UNION

- Austria
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- France
- Finland
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Ireland
- Italy
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- The Netherlands
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden
- United Kingdom

ETF PARTNER COUNTRIES

- Albania
- Algeria
- Armenia
- Azerbaijan
- Belarus
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Egypt
- Georgia
- Israel
- Jordan
- Kazakhstan
- Kosovo*
- Kyrgyzstan
- Lebanon
- Libya
- former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- Moldova
- Montenegro
- Morocco
- Palestine**
- Russia
- Serbia
- Tajikistan
- Turkey
- Turkmenistan
- Tunisia
- Ukraine
- Uzbekistan

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

** This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual position of the Member States on this issue.

WHY SHOULD I PARTICIPATE?

Training providers who participate in the call and who are selected as a good practitioner can benefit in a number of ways, including:

- participating in a peer review will help identify areas where the **training programme can be improved**;
- opportunities to have your **good practice showcased at international level**;
- the possibility to **enhance your networking through the ETF's community** from the EU 28 Member States, the ETF's partner countries and beyond;
- **access to the ETF good practice platform**, participation in events and other initiatives where your training programme may be disseminated.
- Inclusion of ETF good practice insignia on training provider's website to support marketing and development

SELECTION CRITERIA

The ETF will review all applications and will make a first selection of **10 submissions** for peer review.

The selection will be made on the basis of:

- **Training content:** The training programme must have a clear and explicit human capital dimension (e.g. training, self-learning, mentoring) that addresses the development of knowledge or skills required by SMEs to trade with the EU Single Market.
- **Quality:** The training programme selected will address each of the five good practice dimensions: 1) training needs analysis, 2) training design and delivery, 3) training environment, 4) monitoring, evaluation and improvements and 5) marketing.
- **Learning value:** The training programme has learning value to be shared with a wider training community and policy environment.
- **Geographical coverage:** Insofar as possible, and depending on the number of applications received, the selection will reflect a good balance between applicants from the EU and ETF partner countries.

An additional selection process may be undertaken at a later date subject to resources available.

ETF GOOD PRACTICE DIMENSIONS

Each selected application will be assessed against five good practice dimensions.

1. Training needs analysis
2. Training design and delivery
3. Training environment
4. Monitoring, evaluation and improvements
5. Marketing

The assessment dimensions are available in Annex 1 with more developed criteria.

SCORING METHODOLOGY AND AWARD

The assessment criteria within each of the five dimensions are scored exponentially, i.e. higher scores are assigned to more developed and innovative aspects of training.

The scoring system will be explained in more detail during an information webinar for training providers interested in making a submission.

The good practice will be written up as a short, easy-to-read, information note and made available on the **ETF good practice platform**.

Training providers meeting the good practice threshold will be awarded the **ETF good practice insignia** and will receive an **electronic badge** for use on their website and promotional material.

PROCESS OVERVIEW

The ETF good practice call involves the following steps:

PREPARATION	INFORMATION WEBINAR AND Q&A FORUM For more information about submitting a proposal, the selection and the award procedures, training providers may participate in an information webinar on 20 September 2017 from 10:00-11:00 (CET) . Please register here: http://bit.ly/2toVgbo In addition, training providers may also send questions to EEPGoodPractice@etf.europa.eu and/or post questions on the ETF good practice platform: http://bit.ly/2msX5jB . The deadline for questions is 27 September 2017, 24:00 (CET) . All questions will be answered through the good practice platform.
STEP 1	DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION The deadline for submission is 30 September 2017 .
STEP 2	SELECTION AND PEER REVIEW Following the deadline for submission, applications will be assessed and selected training providers will be invited for an online peer review. Each peer review will last up to two hours. During and after the peer review session, training providers may be required to provide evidence to demonstrate that the training programme meets the demands of the good practice assessment criteria (see Annex 1). Peer reviews will be held in two lots: (a) October – December 2017 and (b) January – March 2018. The results of the peer reviews will be communicated to the training provider within two weeks of the peer review. The peer review panel will be made up of an SME training expert and ETF staff. The purpose of the peer review is to obtain further information on the training programme. The ETF may undertake a site visit to the training provider to verify evidence as a final quality control step. They may also contact beneficiaries of the training to verify evidence.
STEP 3	INCLUSION IN THE ETF GOOD PRACTICE DATABASE The results of the peer review will be communicated to the training provider, identifying the strengths and weaknesses as well as recommendations for improvement, as appropriate. Training programmes that meet the good practice criteria will be included in the ETF good practice database. The ETF will publish a short, easy-read information note about the good practice. The information note will be shared with the training provider beforehand for approval. Note that all material used for the peer review will remain confidential. All material made public on the ETF website or platform will be agreed with the training provider beforehand.
STEP 4	PARTICIPATION IN THE GOOD PRACTITIONERS AND POLICYMAKERS FORUM The final step is a good practice forum involving (a) those training providers whose training programme has been assessed as good practice, and (b) policy makers nominated in their application. The forum is planned for April/May 2018. The objective of this forum is to determine how policymaking can benefit from the experience, knowledge and know-how of the training providers.

ANNEX 1: ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

DIMENSION 1: TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS

Rationale

A first step in a training programme is to define in concrete terms what the training requirements are for those who will follow a training programme. This information can also assist the training provider in monitoring market trends. A training needs analysis (TNA) involves an assessment of skill gaps and weaknesses. Accumulated TNA intelligence can help policymakers address systemic issues for training.

Objective

The objective of this component of the ETF good practice peer review is to determine how well the training needs analysis has been defined as input to the design and execution of a training programme, including the potential for use in wider policy developments.

LEVEL	VALUE	INDICATOR	ASSIGNED SCORE	COMMENTS
1	1	Evidence of proxy-TNA process: data and analysis borrowed from other training environments with risk that training design is less relevant to local market		
	1	TNA tools borrowed but not adapted to local training environment		
2	2	Evidence of TNA is confined to ad hoc or one-off data/ intelligence gathering related to the training provision with no defined plans to update TNA knowledge		
	2	Evidence that TNA is driven by actors external to the training environment (e.g. donors)		
3	3	Clearly defined links between the training provider and private sector for identifying training needs		
	3	At least one TNA tool (e.g. survey, focus group) exploited for purposes of training design and delivery		
	3	At least one example that TNA tools and analysis are sensitive to specific target groups (e.g. exporting SMEs)		
4	7	TNA reflects scale of training provision in terms of numbers involved in training and geographical spread		
	7	TNA is core feature of training provider's business or organisation plan		
	7	There is at least one example which convinces peer reviewers of innovation in the TNA process. Innovation involves any phenomena which bring real added value to the TNA process		
	7	At least one example of an agreement established between training provider and general industry or sector-specific organisation for training development purposes		
5	10	TNA includes analysis of sector trends (e.g. trade, turnover, employment, skills) using primary and secondary data.		
	10	Evidence that TNA intelligence from the training programme has been provided by training provider for wider policy debate e.g. sector-specific, government policies (education, training, employment, enterprise, economic development)		
	10	There is at least one example which convinces peer reviewers of innovative use of technology for TNA process (e.g. e-surveys)		

DIMENSION 2: TRAINING DESIGN AND DELIVERY

Rationale

A well-designed training programme that is customised to the specific training needs of the target groups contributes to meeting the objectives of the training programme and enhances the learning experience.

Objective

The objective of this component of the ETF good practice peer review is to assess how the contents of the training programme, as well as the methods and assessment arrangements, have contributed to the learning outcomes.

LEVEL	VALUE	INDICATOR	ASSIGNED SCORE	COMMENTS
1	1	Curriculum materials directly borrowed from outside training provider environment		
	1	Learning outcomes borrowed from outside training provider environment		
	1	Pedagogic approach mainly relies on one-way communication between trainer and trainees		
	1	No evidence of assessment arrangements for trainees during the training programme		
2	2	Curriculum borrowed and adapted to training needs		
	2	Learning outcomes borrowed and customised to training programme under review		
	2	Assessment arrangements confined to end-of-cycle assessment		
3	3	Curriculum design includes clearly defined learning outcomes set against training needs identified		
	3	Participatory pedagogic approaches involve active learning (e.g. group work, focus groups, peer exchanges)		
	3	Evidence of ad hoc assessment arrangements of trainees during training		
4	7	Evidence of innovative approaches to curriculum design (e.g. students engaged in the design process, curriculum peer reviewed by representatives from business world) and how the curriculum is delivered in an innovative way (e.g. simulation, case studies, enterprise labs, engagement of external speakers)		
	7	Assessment arrangements for trainees involve a) entry assessment and b) exit assessment		
	7	Evidence of inclusion of trainees the review of learning outcomes		
5	10	Evidence of curriculum revision based on analysis of similar training provided by other training organisations providing similar training		
	10	Evidence that curriculum has been customised to meet training requirements of new customers or new demands of existing customers		
	10	Evidence of learning technologies feature in the training design (e.g. e-learning)		
	10	Assessment arrangements for trainees involve a) entry assessment, b) continuous review and c) exit assessment		

DIMENSION 3: TRAINING ENVIRONMENT

Rationale

Establishing an environment conducive to learning is a critical factor in meeting the objectives of a training programme.

Objective

The objective of this component of the ETF good practice peer review is to assess the appropriateness of the training infrastructure and support mechanisms, including expertise of training staff, as essential elements for delivery of the training programme.

LEVEL	VALUE	INDICATOR	ASSIGNED SCORE	COMMENTS
1	1	Trainer(s) engaged in the training programme have no practical experience in the subject area under review (e.g. marketing, management, exporting)		
	1	Basic technical specifications for delivery of the training programme are available.		
	1	Training plan available that specifies the objectives, learning outcomes, budget, resources, etc.		
2	2	In the 3 years prior to the peer review, at least one trainer engaged in the training programme has actually worked in the subject area under review (e.g. marketing, management, exporting)		
	2	Training programme has a comprehensive check-list of technical specifications for a successful execution of the training programme (e.g. equipment, rooms, internet connection)		
3	3	Evidence that at least one trainer involved in delivery of the training has contributed to the design of the training programme.		
	3	The training provider has a dedicated award/recognition system for those who successfully complete the training		
	3	Technical specifications for the training programme include e-learning options		
4	7	At least one trainer engaged in the training programme is a certified trainer (public or private certification body)		
	7	The training provider tracks latest trends in the training area under peer review (e.g. use of multi-media, virtual learning environment)		
5	10	Evidence that training provider has e-learning facilities to support their training provision.		
	10	At least one trainer engaged in the training programme is a recognised authority for training in the sector (e.g. publications published, awards received).		
	10	Training programme has technical specifications for on-line follow-up with trainees after completion of training		
	10	Area of training programme forms part of the organisational strategy of the training provider		

DIMENSION 4: MONITORING, EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENTS

Rationale

Monitoring a training programme allows the training provider to track developments during the training and particularly to ensure that the necessary adjustments and improvements are made to allow for the training objectives to be fully met. Evaluation of a training programme allows the training provider and other stakeholders (e.g. trainees, funding bodies) to determine the level of success of the training programme. Recommendations from the evaluation provide an opportunity to improve the training programme.

Objective

The objective of this component of the ETF good practice peer review is to determine how effective the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) arrangements have been for the training programme with implications for improving it.

LEVEL	VALUE	INDICATOR	ASSIGNED SCORE	COMMENTS
1	1	Evidence of one-off, ad hoc approach to monitoring and evaluation for training project (examples should be provided)		
	1	Training provider is aware of improvement requirements to the training programme but has not introduced change for whatever reason (e.g. lack of resources)		
2	2	Evidence of a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation of the training project (M&E plan, copies of M&E notes, reports etc.) involving trainees and trainers		
	2	Evidence of adjustments or improvements to training following either a) end-of-cycle evaluation or, b) feedback from trainees or trainers if training is still on-going		
3	3	An end-of-cycle evaluation report on training programme is available and recommended improvements to training programme have been introduced to the training programme		
	3	The training provider has a dedicated M&E function assigned to an individual or team.		
	3	Evidence that good practice identified through an evaluation has been disseminated locally to the wider training community		
4	7	A tracker system is available to follow-up trainees to determine post-training impact for the trainee and/or the business (e.g. surveys)		
	7	Evidence that the training programme has made an impact on the trainee and/or business		
	7	Evidence that good practice identified through an evaluation has been disseminated to the wider training community		
	7	Recommendations from the end-of-cycle, independent evaluation have been shared with policy makers		
5	10	Evidence that recommendations from independent evaluation have been incorporated into wider training developments		
	10	Training provider has a web-based tool to gather anonymous feedback from trainees on a) training programme, b) trainers		
	10	Evidence demonstrating that experience from the training programme has had an impact on public policy		

DIMENSION 5: MARKETING

Rationale

Good training providers ensure that their better training products and services are known which can prompt further demand for the training programme. This creates a win-win scenario: the training provider's business expands while individuals, enterprises and other organisations requiring training can more easily access the training they need.

Objective

The objective of this component of the ETF good practice peer review is to determine how effective the training provider is in promoting the training programme.

LEVEL	VALUE	INDICATOR	ASSIGNED SCORE	COMMENTS
1	1	Evidence of ad hoc marketing of the training programme		
2	2	Evidence of at least 2 methods being used to market the training programme		
3	3	The training programme is backed up with a marketing plan		
4	7	Evidence of use of information technology to market the training programme at national level		
	7	Evidence of impact of marketing plan at international level (e.g. new sponsors, customer base extended internationally)		
5	10	Marketing information (leaflets, websites, ...) provides detail on the impact of the training (e.g. on the trainee, business, sector)		
	10	Evidence of use of networking and social media for marketing purposes		

ANNEX 2: EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

Good Practice in Training for internationalisation of SMEs

International Growth Programme

Enterprise Lithuania and Giraffe Consulting (UK)

Background

While low oil prices and trade restrictions on Russia have left their mark on Lithuania's export performance, policymakers are upbeat about continued growth in domestic demand as well as trade improvements, particularly with EU countries.ⁱ Hard hit by the financial crisis which saw GDP contract by 15% in 2009, Lithuania's economy has rebounded and is one of the fastest growing in the EU. Growth projections are 2.9% for 2016 rising to 3.6% by 2020.ⁱⁱ At 9.7%, jobless figures have considerably improved since the height of the financial crisis when unemployment peaked at 18%. The country's vision for 2030 includes a dynamic and highly-skilled talent pool to support the country in the global economy.ⁱⁱⁱ

Business performance is pivotal to national growth and employment - the centre piece of EU's '2020' development strategy.^{iv} Businesses with an international profile (e.g. importing or exporting) tend to be more innovative and productive with greater growth and job creation potential.^v In its bid to boost the export potential of SMEs, Enterprise Lithuania established the International Growth Programme to train SMEs with high-growth potential to trade in European and world markets. Training is important in getting businesses to trade internationally. The ETF supports its partner countries in improving SME training which is a core feature of the EU's Small Business Act for Europe.^{vi} Sharing good practice in training helps policymakers and training providers bring value to the training market and wider economy.

i. Central Bank of the Republic of Lithuania (2015). Lithuanian Economic Review. December 2015 <http://bit.ly/1PCRYGK>

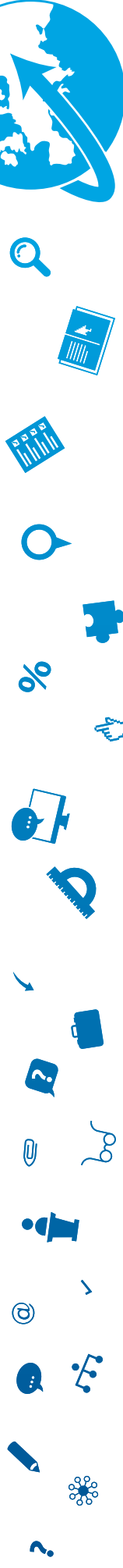
ii. International Monetary Fund (2015). World Economic Outlook: Adjusting to Lower Commodity Prices. Washington (October). <http://bit.ly/1OerBmr>

iii. Kubilius, A. (2015). Lithuania 2030: cycling into the future. LSE European Institute – APCO Worldwide Perspectives on Europe Series. <http://bit.ly/1XxZtC2>

iv. European Commission (2010). Europe 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Communication from the European Commission. Brussels 3.3.2010. <http://bit.ly/KMnOnV>

v. See, European Commission (2010). Internationalisation of European SMEs. Final Report. Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry. Entrepreneurship Unit. Brussels, 2010. <http://bit.ly/1KWOrOa> and Blackburn, R. (2012). Export to Expand: the key to small business growth in the UK. Small Business Research Centre, Kingston University. <http://bit.ly/1R6v1wf>

vi. European Commission (2008). Think Small First: a Small Business Act for Europe. Brussels, 25.6.2008 COM(2008) 394 Final. <http://bit.ly/1jUoKsb>



The training programme

Objective

The objective of the training programme is to reinforce Lithuania's export growth through strengthening the capacity of SMEs to identify, enter and develop business in European and international markets.

Target groups

The training programme focuses on SMEs or micro enterprises that can demonstrate the experience, resources, suitability of product/services and commitment to export. Participants in the training can be businesses with some export experience or those keen to export.

The training programme is also open to staff from Lithuania's SME agency (Enterprise Lithuania) and recent university graduates following a wider management programme led by Enterprise Lithuania.

How were the training needs assessed?

Firstly, research undertaken by Enterprise Lithuania underlines how SMEs and trade missions are not prepared for international trade. Secondly, on-line questionnaires submitted by individual companies identify level of interest, knowledge and skills for exporting. Next, interviews with prospective participants further defines the training needs set against the sector, company size and market interests. Finally, during the delivery of the training modules, as well as through individual coaching on a trade mission, support to participants is further customised to the specific needs of their businesses.

The training design

The training programme in Lithuania lasts 10 days. It consists of five modules covering all aspects of the SME exporting and international sales.

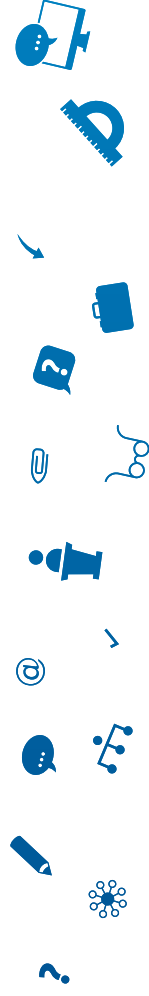
The programme provides training for SMEs preparing for, and doing business, in international markets.

After following the training, participants are able to:

- articulate their firm's business model and value proposition in export markets;
- use international market research to screen and select international markets and business partners;
- apply frameworks to inform the decision on optimal method of market entry and development;
- identify preferred options for the firm's pricing strategy and for getting paid;
- compile and present a realistic budgeted plan for business development in international markets;
- communicate confidently with international customers and / or business partners.

The programme comprises the following learning methods and tools:

- case studies, including video media;



- guest speakers for specific modules;
- practical exercises to track understanding and skills in each module as well as peer learning exchanges;
- learning-by-doing through international trade missions with coaching support.

Each participating company develops its own individual Export Growth and Development Plan. This is drafted and improved across the timeframe of the five modules at the company's headquarters. This ensures that important intelligence and knowledge from the wider company is used to shape the plan.

All training participants share the final drafts of their Export Growth and Development Plans during training sessions for know-how exchange.

The ten companies with the strongest Export Growth and Development Plans are selected to take part in an organised trade mission to their chosen market. This includes meetings with potential customers and/or business partners. At the start of the trade mission, the companies receive further training covering more advanced topics on internationalisation and sales. This includes direct coaching to company representatives in the sales process with export customers, and sales role-play in a 'real life' context.

Training Environment

All trainers are experts in international trade with over 20 years' first-hand experience of doing business in international markets. Training is delivered at hotels in Vilnius with good audio-visual and internet facilities which are

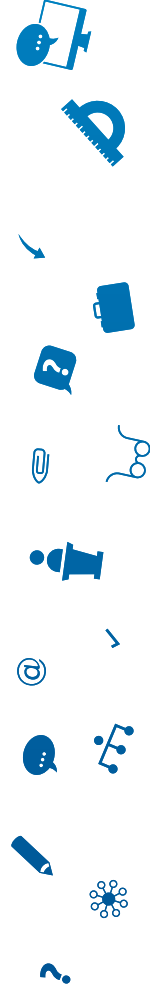
used in the modules and exercises. All learning materials are made available in hard copy and electronic format.

Monitoring, evaluation and impact

All SMEs that participate in the training programme are tracked by Enterprise Lithuania for five years for both quantitative and qualitative improvements in business performance. Improved performance of companies that have followed the training include 10.7% increase in foreign sales at one company; and a 46% increase in employment at another firm over 3 years following its participation in the International Growth Programme.

Implications for policy and practice

The success of the International Growth Programme has prompted Enterprise Lithuania to extend its training activities in two areas as part of its wider 'Export Academy'. Firstly, it has established a 'leadership academy' that includes owners and CEOs of companies that have followed the International Growth Programme. The objective is to reinforce the capacity of Lithuania's exporting companies and build a 'strong community' of high-performing, enterprise role models. Secondly, keen to build a next generation of young people to be hired into SMEs with export potential, Enterprise Lithuania has established the 'Wings' training programme. This allows young graduates from technical, business and arts faculties to learn key aspects of export management through in-company work placements. Wings trainees may also follow the modules of the International Growth Programme.



? What makes the training programme stand out?

Key learning points for training providers and policymakers from this good practice are:

- **mixed pedagogic paradigm:** the programme involves a mix of learning methods including classic instruction, individual and group exercises, one-to-one coaching and learning by doing;
- **learning extension:** the success of the SME export training has generated further opportunities in training through leadership training for company owners and apprenticeship options for young graduates to develop export skills;
- **training meets national policy priorities:** training provision specifically responds to the Lithuanian government's objective of putting learning at the centre of its efforts to build a dynamic economy to meet global competition.

Budget

The average cost per company is roughly €5,500 with companies paying 1,000 of this sum. Companies also pay the costs of travel, accommodation and subsistence for the trade mission.

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