

# Training for Internationalisation of SMEs

ETF Case Study of Best Practice

**Giraffe Consulting**  
Exporting, Strategy, Marketing & Sales



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### Executive Summary

Training for the Internationalisation of SMEs is one of the main priorities of the EU's Small Business Act and the EU's '2020' growth and jobs strategy'. According to the European Commission, "businesses with an international profile tend to be more innovative and productive with greater growth and job creation potential."

Giraffe Consulting International's training division runs highly successful accredited export training courses in many countries and in 2016 its International Growth Programme in Lithuania was identified as an example of 'best practice' by the European Training Foundation (ETF). This programme was the only training course for SMEs recognized by ETF in the internationalisation category.

### Why is this Programme So Successful?

- ★ **Training meets national policy priorities:** the training 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
- ★ **Designed and delivered by experts in export:** the programme is designed and delivered by trainers with real-life experience in exporting, who have successfully developed business in international markets
- ★ **Export plan:** each company develops its own individual Export Plan during the programme, focused on its key EU target export market
- ★ **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



*"Export growth is essential for our economy, and training and learning is essential for our success"*  
[Jurgita Butkevičienė, Director, Enterprise Lithuania]



*"I now feel a lot more confident in sales and business meetings and closed approximately €2 million of business, which is a good result!"*  
[Justinas Bielskis, Participant from Stansefabrikken]

### Objective

The International Growth Programme provides training for Lithuanian SMEs preparing for, and doing business, in international markets.

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 key European export 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 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 are Training Needs assessed?

Research by Enterprise Lithuania has found that Lithuanian SMEs are often not adequately prepared for international trade.

Companies interested in participating complete an on-line questionnaire about their export knowledge and skills before the start of the programme.

Next, prospective participants are interviewed individually, and asked about areas of specific interest. This further defines their training needs.

Giraffe Consulting's consultants further customise the training during the delivery of the training modules, as well as providing individual coaching to the companies on a trade mission, based on the specific needs of the businesses.

### Training Design

The training programme in Lithuania lasts 10 days. It consists of five modules covering all aspects of SME exporting and international sales and is focused on one key European market (e.g. Germany, the UK or the Netherlands).

### Learning Outcomes

After following the training, participants are able to:

- ★ articulate their 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 the optimal method of market entry and development
- ★ identify preferred options for the firm's pricing strategy and getting paid
- ★ produce a realistic budgeted plan for business development in international markets
- ★ communicate confidently with international customers and/or business partners



*"I find the course very useful for my everyday work. I personally use the export plan... and the knowledge on a daily basis"*  
[Reda Liaučytė, Project Manager, Novameta]

The programme comprises the following learning methods and tools:

- ★ case studies, including videos
- ★ 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 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 Plans during training sessions for know-how exchange.

The ten companies with the strongest Export Plans are selected to take part in an organized 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 internationalization 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 Giraffe's trainers are experts in international trade with over 20 years' first-hand experience of doing business in international markets. All learning materials are made available in hard copy and electronic format.

### Budget

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



*"Producing an Export Plan and going out to the marketplace gives the companies a practical basis upon which to take their businesses forward."  
[Julian Lawson Hill, Managing Director and Trainer, Giraffe Consulting]*

### Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact

All SMEs that participate in the 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.

ETF Case Study Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wN4FY0OdQSo>

## Giraffe's Other Export Training Programmes

### Preparing to Export – Programme for Beginners

This is an introductory programme targeting companies new to exporting.

The aims of the programme are to:

- Enable companies to research opportunities in overseas markets
- Help them determine the right markets for their business
- Help them understand how to enter their chosen markets
- Enable them to produce an export action plan
- Give them the skills and confidence to succeed internationally

This course normally runs over 2-3 days and covers.

- ★ market analysis: why export, planning to export, selecting target markets, conducting international market research and legal issues
- ★ market entry: distribution channels / routes to market, and international marketing, website development and online sales
- ★ finance, contracts and logistics: the basic issues an exporter needs to know e.g. costing and pricing for export markets, currencies, taxes and tariffs, sales contracts & agent / distributor agreements
- ★ export planning: putting together an export action plan

Over 500 SMEs have been on this popular course over the past 5 years in Scotland (UK).

### Feedback from Attendees

*“Excellent introduction and good background to build on and start exporting”*

*“Improved my knowledge greatly and developed my confidence in taking the right steps to correctly export”*

*It gives me the chance to start out on the right path and hopefully avoid costly mistakes early on”*

*“It has been very useful”*

### Preparing to Export – Intermediate Programme

In Scotland, we also deliver an intermediate programme for companies with 2-3 years' experience. Our intermediate course covers:

- An overview of export strategy
- International culture and export marketing planning
- Export market identification
- Targeting the right export markets
- Researching target export markets
- The export business model
- Establishing market entry channels
- Managing the export channel
- Export pricing and terms of international trade
- Offline promotional strategy
- Digital marketing strategy for export markets
- Sales negotiation skills

This course normally runs over 6 days and, again, a critical component of the programme is that it helps companies develop a detailed export plan to help them grow their business in overseas markets.

Some Examples of Our International Experience

Further Information

South East Europe

- Albania SME Competitiveness and Export Development Strategy. Advice on capacity building and export support services for SMEs
- Bih Quality Management in International Competitiveness Programme
- Croatia Management and delivery of the SMEPASS Programme  
This programme provided one-to-one support in marketing and exporting to improve the competitiveness of Croatian SMEs
- Serbia National Programme to plan and introduce a range of SME specific export services, focusing on 7 key sectors
- Turkey Management development training programme

Central Europe

- Hungary Technology transfer programme matching Hungarian and UK SMEs, with the aim of strengthening their competitiveness
- Moldova Export training for SMEs and Business Advisors from the Moldovan Export Development Agency (MEDA)
- Slovakia Marketing support to SMEs participating in “Slovakian Programme for Enterprises with Excessive Debt” (SPEED)

Rest of World

- Asia Export Marketing Training to companies in Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam supplying food ingredients, both in market and in Europe
- Colombia Developed Sector Export Plans for the Colombian Textiles Sector and ICT Sector focusing on the EU market
- Pakistan e-learning programme for companies in the metalworking sector

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