

ANNA IWACEWICZ-ORŁOWSKA  
University of Finance and Management in Białystok, Poland

## Expectations of Entrepreneurs in the Recruitment Process of Vocational Schools Graduates Based on the Examples of Poland, Lithuania and Latvia – Benchmarking Analysis

**Abstract:** the main aim of the article is to analyse expectations of entrepreneurs in the recruitment process of vocational schools graduates representing three countries: Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. Questionnaire survey conducted in 2016 is confirming that the most crucial elements to which employers are paying attention at seeking the employee are the experience of the candidate and the ability to constantly learn and improve. Moreover, the most desired skills in the view of employers are communicativeness, self-reliance, teamwork and organisational skills. One should emphasise there is a competence discrepancy between companies representing the analysed countries. An example can be the level of ICT skills and knowledge of foreign languages. Potential employers from Poland and Latvia agreed that the candidate for work does not have to be fluent in another language, for example, English. A communicative level in their point of view is sufficient.

**Keywords:** employee recruitment; entrepreneurs expectations; graduates; vocational schools

**Received:** 11 November 2016

**Accepted:** 23 February 2017

### **Suggested citation:**

Iwaciewicz-Orłowska, A. (2017). Expectations of Entrepreneurs in the Recruitment Process of Vocational Schools Graduates Based on the Examples of Poland, Lithuania and Latvia – Benchmarking Analysis. *Przedsiębiorczość – Edukacja [Entrepreneurship – Education]*, 13, 417–427. DOI: 10.24917/20833296.13.31

## Introduction

The primary factors determining the employment of a vocational school graduate are, apart from their education, the demand for their skills, knowledge and competences (Górniak, 2014: 20). These strengths significantly increase the chances of getting a job and thus fitting the candidate to the contemporary job market. What is also desirable is good cooperation between schools and companies where practical classes are held (Jelonek,

Szklarczyk, Balcerzak-Raczyńska, 2012). Nowadays, post-junior high school education, which should be strongly correlated with the needs of the labour market, differs drastically from modern requirements. As a consequence, higher education graduates are much better off on the job market, while those who graduate from secondary schools often feed the unemployed (Wronowska, 2013).

The aim of this article is to analyse the needs of entrepreneurs recruiting graduates of vocational schools representing three countries: Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. For this survey, a questionnaire consisting of ten questions was prepared. The study was conducted in March 2016 and included a random sample of 80 entrepreneurs from Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. The surveyed entrepreneurs represented the following industries: trade and services, hotel, catering, insurance, transport, construction and food processing. The analysis covers answers to questions from three core areas: the elements taken into account in the candidate search process, the competency gaps of potential employees and the desirable skills and knowledge of the candidates. The added value of the study is a comparison of the opinions of entrepreneurs from Poland, Lithuania and Latvia.

### Candidate search process

Research shows that the most important element that employers pay attention to when looking for an employee is previous experience of a potential candidate. In the case of businesses from Poland, 55% gave such a response, and regarding Latvian businesses – 40% of those surveyed. Latvian respondents recognised that equally important is the education of potential candidates (40% of responses). A slightly different situation was recorded in Lithuania. Soft skills of potential employees are the most important element for Lithuanian employers (40% of replies).

Table 1. Most important aspects to be considered in the candidate search process

Most important aspects		
Poland (55%)	Lithuania (40%)	Latvia (40%)
experience	soft skills	experience education

Source: own work based on the research results

The least important element that employers pay attention to during the recruitment process is knowledge of a foreign language. In the case of Polish businesses, 42.5% responded that way, from Lithuania 50% and Latvia 25%. Entrepreneurs from Poland do not follow the candidate's education in selecting a candidate. This factor is only relevant for 25% of respondents. Latvian companies also consider soft skills of the candidate less important.

Table 2. Least important aspects to be considered in the candidate search process

Least important aspects		
Poland (42.5%)	Lithuania (50%)	Latvia (25%)
foreign language education	foreign language	foreign language

Source: own work based on the research results

Analysis of the responses shows that, in the opinion of employers representing all countries, the most important factor to be taken into consideration during the recruitment process is the ability to learn and improve continuously. This answer was chosen in each country by, respectively:

- Poland – 18.6% of respondents,
- Lithuania – 28.1% of respondents,
- Latvia – 20.7% of respondents.

The next two elements that employers value among potential candidates are experience in similar positions and industry experience. In the case of same experience, this response was chosen by, respectively:

- Poland – 17.7% of respondents,
- Lithuania – 15.6% of respondents,
- Latvia – 17.2% of respondents.

Experience in the industry is significant in the opinion of, respectively:

- Poland – 17.7% of respondents,
- Lithuania – 18.6% of respondents,
- Latvia – 10.3% of respondents.

The analysis of answers to the above-presented question raises some reflections. Latvian employers particularly value the ability of potential employees to adapt (27.6%). The least essential elements taken into account by companies are the activity of potential candidates on the labour market and their activity in school organisations. These two factors are only relevant for Lithuanian employers (12.5% of respondents). A similar situation exists in the case of potential candidates for employment in other industries. Employers have not provided other options for answering this question, although there was such a possibility offered. Therefore, the proposed set of possible responses met their expectations.

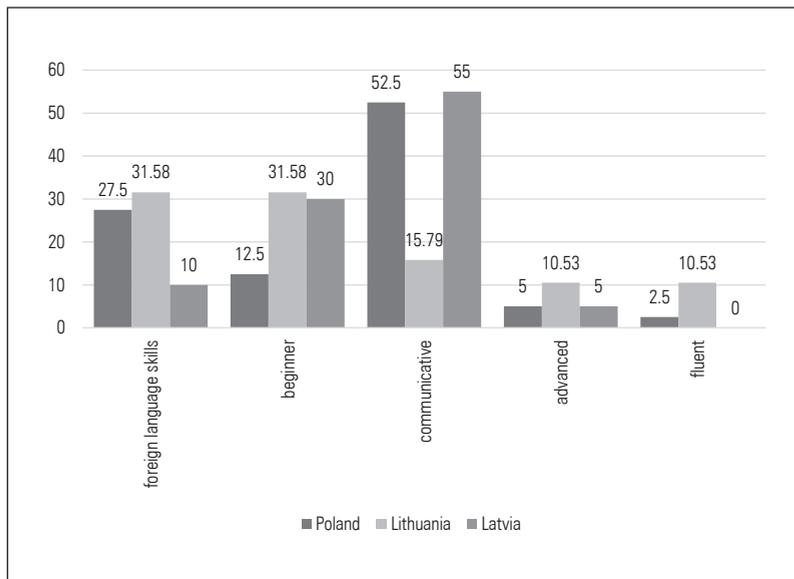
## Competency gaps of potential employees

The study also took into account the needs of employers regarding the applicant's foreign language skills. Detailed answers to this question are presented in Figure 1.

When analysing the answers obtained, it is important to note that potential candidates should be communicative in a foreign language. This response was highlighted by more than half of the respondents in Poland and Latvia (52.5% and 55%, respectively). Advanced and fluent foreign language is of little importance to employers from Poland and Latvia. A significant number of respondents recognised that the candidates' knowledge of foreign languages was insignificant (27.5% of respondents in Poland, 31.6% of respondents in Lithuania and 10% of respondents in Latvia). For about 30% of employers in Lithuania and Latvia, beginner level of English is sufficient.

The next question asked regarded the greatest competence gaps in the skills of potential employees. By analysing the responses, it should be noted that there are discrepancies in the perception of competence gaps between employers representing the analysed countries. In the case of businesses from Poland, the main competence gaps are customer service and analytical thinking. In both cases, 16.95% of respondents gave such an answer. Moreover, Polish entrepreneurs see shortages in foreign language skills (11.86% of those surveyed) and knowledge of business ethics (10.17% of respondents).

Fig. 1. Foreign language proficiency expected from candidates



Source: own work based on the research results

In the case of employers representing Lithuania, the main competency gaps are customer service (19.3% of those surveyed), foreign language skills (14.4%), as well as workplace flexibility, continuous learning and improvement, and business ethics (10.53% of respondents each).

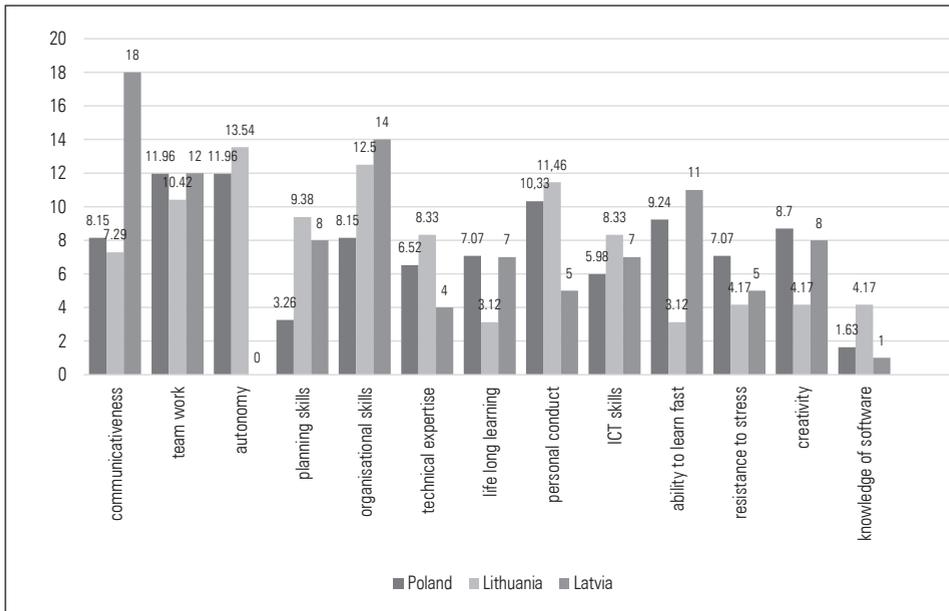
Latvian entrepreneurs mentioned flexibility in the workplace (20% of those surveyed), knowledge of foreign language (16.67% of those surveyed) and knowledge of software and communication, as well as continuous learning and improvement (11.67%). In the case of competence deficiencies, the least important in the opinion of the surveyed employers were entrepreneurship, knowledge of marketing, adaptation to new conditions and knowledge of business ethics.

### Desirable skills and knowledge of potential candidates

The study also sought to answer the question regarding the skills most required by employers. The detailed data are presented in Figure 2. Conclusions drawn from the replies to this question emphasise that the most desirable skills in the opinion of employers are communicativeness, self-reliance, teamwork and organisational skills. In this case, there are also divergences in the perception of particular skills by the managers representing the analysed countries. For employers from Poland, the most desirable skills are teamwork and autonomy (11.96% of respondents each). Subsequently, employers pointed out personal conduct (10.33%), the ability to learn fast (9.24%) and creativity (8.7%). The least valuable skills in the opinion of Polish employers are knowledge of software (1.63%) and planning skills (3.26%).

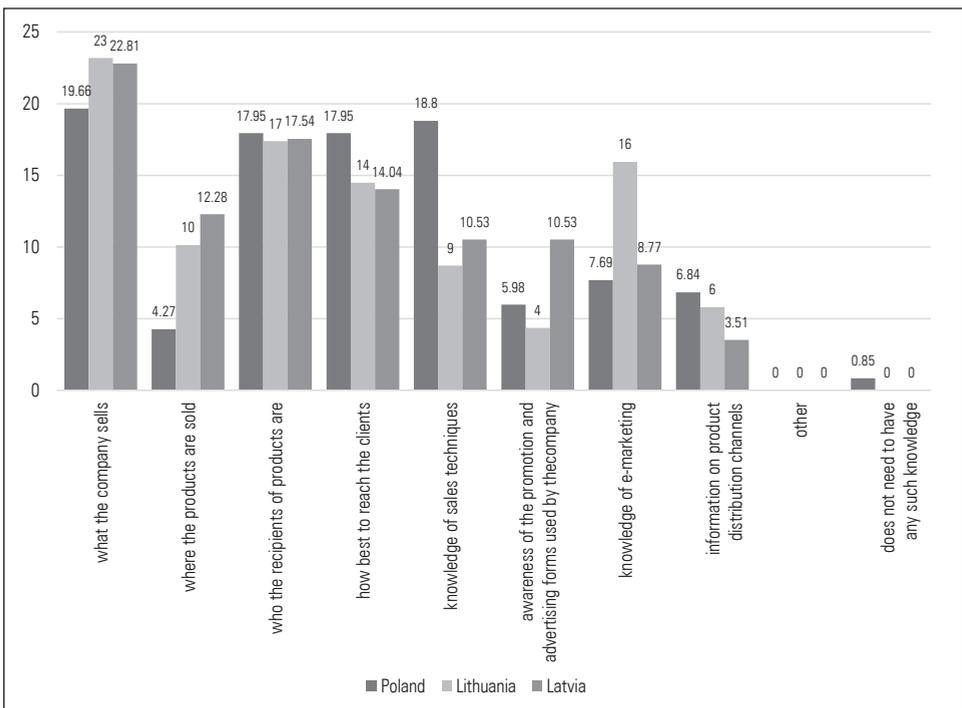
Lithuanian employers in the study drew attention to the most important skill required, which included autonomy (13.54%), organisational skills (12.5%) and corporate

Fig. 2. Most desirable skills in potential employees



Source: own work based on the research results

Fig. 3. Required information on ethics in business



Source: own work based on the research results

culture (11.46%). Lithuanian employers least valued candidates' ability to learn quickly and to continually learn and improve (3.12% of respondents).

In the case of Latvian businesses, the most valuable skills required were communicativeness (18%), organisational skills (14%) and teamwork (12%). Employers least valued employees' autonomy (no response) and knowledge of software (1% of respondents).

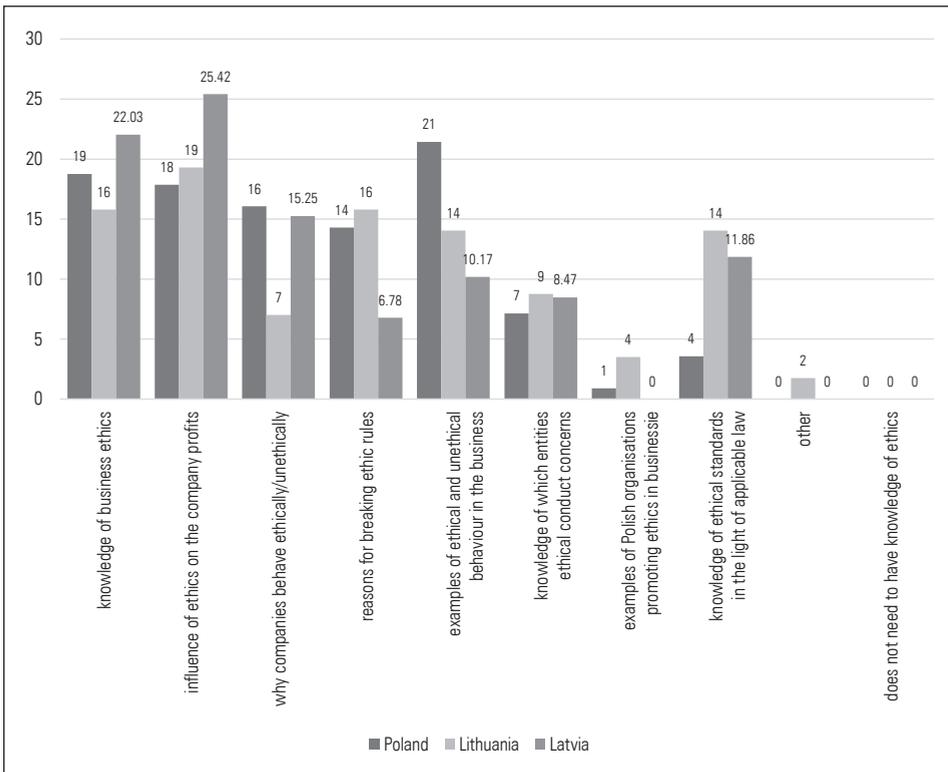
The next question asked regarded information on ethics in business an employee in the company should have. The detailed data collected in the questionnaires are shown in Figure 3. When analysing the answers, none of the companies considered that the employee should not have information on ethics in business. It means that companies find the knowledge of ethical issues critical to their functioning. Knowledge of business ethics and the impact of standards on profits in a company are two of the most important factors in the opinion of respondents in the three analysed countries. In the case of businesses representing Poland, the following aspects of ethical issues in business were considered: examples of ethical and unethical behaviour in the company (21.43% of respondents), knowledge of business ethics (18.75%), influence of ethics on the company profits (17.86%), and the knowledge of why companies operate ethically or unethically (16.07%). In the opinion of entrepreneurs from Poland, the most important issues related to business ethics are examples of Polish organisations promoting ethics in business (less than 1% of respondents) and knowledge of ethical standards in the light of applicable law (3.57%).

The aspects of business ethics mentioned by the companies representing Lithuania include: the influence of ethics on corporate profits (19.3%), followed by the ability to answer the question of what business ethics is and the reasons for breaking ethic rules (15.79% of responses each), as well as examples of ethical and unethical behaviour in a company and knowledge of ethical standards in the light of applicable law (14.04% of responses each). Representatives of Lithuanian companies considered the examples of Polish ethical business organisations (3.51%) as the least important from their point of view. It is understandable that groups interested in promoting ethics in business may not be interested in Lithuanian companies. Perhaps the respondents' interest would be greater if it concerned Lithuanian institutions. Lithuanian companies are not necessarily interested in the following issues of why companies behave ethically/unethically (7.01%), and the knowledge of which entities ethical behaviour concerns (8.78%).

In the case of organisations representing Latvia, the following aspects of business ethics were identified as the most important: influence of business ethics on the company's profits (25.42%), knowledge of business ethics (22.03%), and understanding why companies act ethically or unethically (15.25%). Ethical issues that do not interest Latvian entrepreneurs are Polish organisations promoting ethics in business (no one chose this answer), reasons for breaking ethic rules (6.78%), and examples of ethical behaviour in a company (8.47%).

The next question regarded the information on sales and marketing activities an employee in a business should possess. The detailed data are shown in Figure 4. The analysis of the answer to this question suggests the following conclusions. No Lithuanian or Latvian company recognised that an employee does not need to have any knowledge in those terms. In Poland, such response was given by less than 1% of respondents. It was therefore considered that the issue of knowing the sales and marketing activities in a company is significant. Entrepreneurs from the three surveyed countries believed that the most valuable knowledge for their employees regarded what the company sells. In each case, about

Fig. 4. Required information on sales and marketing activities



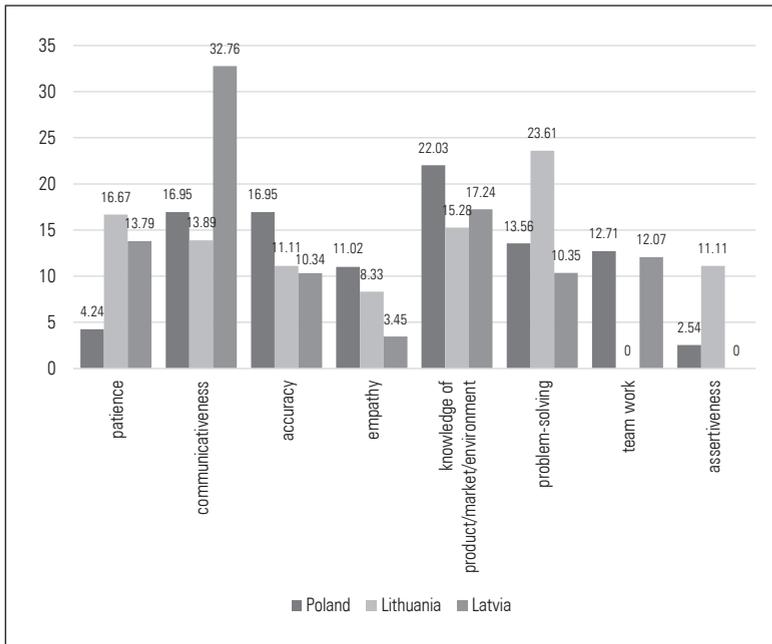
Source: own work based on the research results

20% of respondents gave such an answer. In the case of businesses representing Poland, the most important issues related to the sales and marketing activities were the knowledge what the company sells (19.66% of respondents), knowledge of sales techniques (18.8%), as well as information on who the recipients of products are and how best to reach them (17.95% of responses each). The least important issue for the Polish entrepreneur is the knowledge on where the products are sold (4.27% of the respondents), awareness of the promotion and advertising forms used by the company (5.98%), and information on product distribution channels (6.84%).

For companies representing Lithuania, the most important issues related to sales and marketing included knowledge of what the company sells (23.19% of respondents), knowledge of product buyers (17.39%), and knowledge of e-marketing (15.94%). Knowledge of e-marketing by company employees is particularly important for Lithuanian companies. Representatives of other analysed countries did not recognise this element of sales and marketing activities as indispensable as representatives of Lithuania.

For the companies representing Latvia, the most important issues related to sales and marketing were recognised similarly to the other countries, that is the knowledge of employees about what products the company sells (22.81% of the respondents), who the recipient of the goods is (17.54%), and information on how to reach the recipient (14.04%). Least important for Latvian employers was the knowledge of the product distribution

Fig. 5. Required skills and knowledge on customer service



Source: own work based on the research results

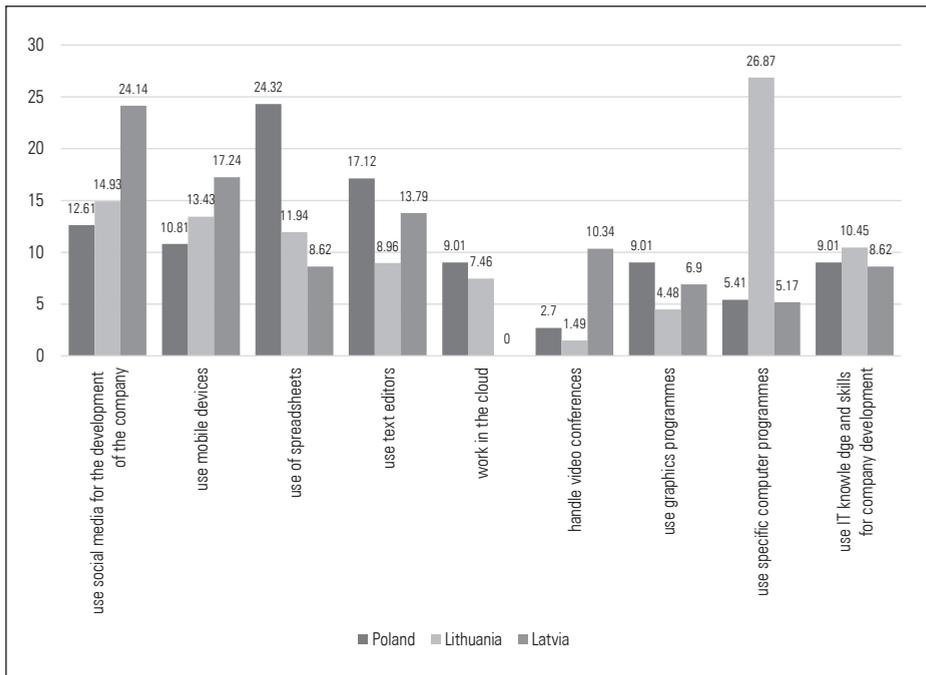
channels (3.51% of respondents), e-marketing (8.77%), as well as sales techniques and forms of promotion and advertising (10.53% of respondents each).

The answers to the question regarding skills and knowledge of customer service an employee should possess are presented in Figure 5. The analysis shows that there are discrepancies in the individual countries as to the desired skills and knowledge of customer service. The customer service skills most desirable for employers in all the analysed countries are product/market/environment knowledge and communicativeness. The least desirable skills in those terms in all the analysed countries are assertiveness and empathy. In the case of entrepreneurs from Poland, the most desirable skills and knowledge of customer service should include product/market/environment knowledge (22.03% of respondents), and accuracy and communicativeness (16.95% responses each). The least important features for Polish entrepreneurs are assertiveness (2.54%) and patience (4.24%).

The entrepreneurs representing Lithuania found that the most desirable traits of employees regarding skills and knowledge in customer service were problem-solving skills (23.61% answers), patience (16.67%), and product/market/environment knowledge (15.28% answers). The least significant for Lithuanian entrepreneurs were teamwork (no one gave such an answer), empathy (8.33% answers), as well as accuracy and assertiveness (11.11% each).

According to the surveyed Latvian entrepreneurs, the most desirable skill is communication. Such was an answer of 32.76% of respondents. Another skill, but chosen much less often, is the knowledge of the product/market/environment (17.24% of those surveyed) and patience (13.79%). According to Latvian entrepreneurs, the least valuable skills are assertiveness (no one gave such answers) and empathy (3.45% of respondents).

Fig. 6. Required skills and knowledge on ICT



Source: own work based on the research results

The last question asked was about the ICT skills and knowledge an employee in a company should have. The detailed data obtained from the study are presented in Figure 6. The analysis of the respondents' answers to this question indicates that Polish entrepreneurs felt that the most necessary for their work were employees who had basic computer skills i.e. use of spreadsheets or text editors. Lithuanian and Latvian entrepreneurs are more in need of employees who can handle specific graphics programs or use social media to grow their business. In the case of surveyed entrepreneurs in Poland, the most desirable ICT skills and knowledge include the use of spreadsheets (24.32% of the respondents), the use of text editors (17.12%), and the use of social media for the development of the company (12.61%). The least valuable skills are meetings in the form of video conferencing (2.7% of respondents), and use of specialised computer programs (5.41%).

In the case of surveyed companies representing Lithuania, the most useful skill and knowledge in ICT is the use of specialised computer programs, as answered by 26.87% of the respondents. The next position selected by Lithuanian companies is the use of social media for the development of the company (14.93% of those surveyed), and the use of mobile devices (13.43%). According to the Lithuanian employers, the least useful skills include video conferencing (1.49% of respondents), and the use of graphics programs (4.48%).

Latvian entrepreneurs have found that the most valuable ICT expertise and knowledge among their employees are the use of social media for business development (24.14% of respondents), mobile devices usage (17.24%), and use of text editors (13.79%). Latvian employers are least interested in their employees' skills in working in the cloud (0% respondents) and use of specialist computer programs (5.17%).

## Conclusions

To sum up the results of the study, it should be stated that in the opinion of employers representing all the analysed countries:

1. The most important element that businesses pay attention to when looking for an employee is the experience of a potential candidate, while the least important one is the knowledge of a foreign language.
2. The most important element to consider when recruiting an employee is their ability to constantly learn and improve. The next two factors that employers value among potential candidates regard their experience in similar positions and business branch. The least essential elements taken into account by companies are the activity of potential candidates on the labour market and their activity in school organisations.
3. Prospective candidates should be communicative in a foreign language. In spite of such a response, Lithuanian and Latvian entrepreneurs recognised foreign language skills as one of the leading competence gaps.
4. There are discrepancies in the perception of competence gaps between employers representing the analysed countries. In the case of companies from Poland, the main competence gaps are customer service and analytical thinking. In the case of firms representing Lithuania, essential competency gaps are customer service and foreign language skills. In the case of employers representing Latvia, the basic skills deficiencies include flexibility in the workplace and knowledge of a foreign language.
5. The most desirable skills in the opinion of employers include communicativeness, autonomy, teamwork and organisational skills.
6. The analysed companies consider knowledge of ethical issues critical to their functioning.
7. All respondents stated that their employees should have information about sales and marketing activities. Entrepreneurs from the three surveyed countries underlined that the most important knowledge for their employees is the information about the product sold.
8. The entrepreneurs in Poland recognised that they needed employees who have basic computer skills, such as the use of spreadsheets or text editors. Lithuanian and Latvian entrepreneurs are more in need of employees who can handle specific graphics programs or use social media to grow their business. It may be a testimony to two factors that precisely precipitate such polls. Firstly, employees in Lithuania and Latvia may already have basic skills such as support for text editors or spreadsheets. So it is not necessary for them to supplement this type of knowledge. Second, the polls are also dependent on the industry in which they operate. Lithuanian and Latvian companies are represented primarily by the gastronomy, hotel, tourism and transport industries. These industries use specific computer programs, which has also been shown in the survey.

## References

- Górniak, J. (red.). (2014). *Kompetencje Polaków a potrzeby gospodarki polskiej. Raport podsumowujący IV edycję badań BKL z 2013 roku*. Warszawa: PARP. [*Competences of Poles and the needs of the Polish economy.*]

- Jelonek, M., Szklarczyk, D., Balcerzak-Raczyńska, A. (2012). *Oczekiwania pracodawców a pracownicy jutra. Raport z analizy kierunków kształcenia na poziomie ponadgimnazjalnym i wyższym wzbogacony wynikami badań pracodawców realizowanymi w 2012 roku w ramach III edycji projektu Bilans Kapitału Ludzkiego*. Warszawa: PARP. [*Expectations of employers and employees of tomorrow.*]
- Wronowska, G. (2013). Oczekiwania pracodawców wobec absolwentów szkół wyższych w Polsce jako przykład bariery wejścia na rynek pracy. *Prace Naukowe UE we Wrocławiu, Ekonomia*, 305. [*Expectations of employers towards HE graduates in Poland as an example of barriers to entry into the labour market.*]

**Anna Iwacewicz-Orłowska**, PhD, assistant professor, University of Finances and Management in Białystok, Faculty of Economics Sciences. The author is employed as an assistant professor at the Faculty of Economics Sciences at the University of Finances and Management in Białystok. Apart from conducting lectures in economic subjects, she is researching sustainable development, income disproportions and social inequalities. She has published many articles in Poland and abroad and took part in conferences and internships at foreign institutions.

**Address:**

Wyższa Szkoła Finansów i Zarządzania w Białymstoku  
ul. Ciepła 40  
15-472 Białystok, Poland  
e-mail: anna.orlowska@wsfiz.edu.pl