

Development of entrepreneurship competences through international competitions of VET students

VET Centre Zirmunai has been a member of AEHT (Association of European Hotel and Tourism Schools) for almost 20 years. The association gathers around 400 hospitality sector schools from more than 40 countries. The association aims to promote a European outlook among Hotel and Tourism Schools by providing means of communication between European Hotel and Tourism Schools and business, by pooling teaching methods and materials, knowledge, and skills. It's like a great European family with a solid reputation, a facilitator of mobilities and exchanges, provider of learning opportunities in a multicultural and -lingual context, promotor of soft skills.

The association organizes annual competitions in hospitality and tourism. Students are divided into teams of 2 or 3. Students who speak the same native language cannot be in the same team. Competition language is English. They must be from different countries. In a team, they must agree, plan what they will produce, order products, describe, draw their work plan and finally put their practical skills into practice, working in teams, within the set time, following the rules and hygiene requirements, demonstrating the creativity and professional competencies.

Every year the conference and competitions take place in a different country. In 2023, this event will take place in Vilnius, Lithuania. The main organizer is the VET Center Zirmunai, together with 5 other vocational schools, members of the association. To train students, to prepare them to compete, VET schools organize national competitions. During the competitions, obviously students must be able to demonstrate their professional skills. Moreover, together with professional competences, a wide range of entrepreneurial competences are needed, and they are assessed by judges. To prepare students to compete, teachers must be aware what entrepreneurial competences are important and how they should be developed.

Competition is the situation when someone is trying to be more successful than someone else. Competitors need to learn to perform professional skills under a variety of competitive conditions. To understand how to develop competing competence, firstly, you need to understand what entrepreneurial competences are necessary for a particular competition and look for ways to train them. These competencies crucial for competitions are teamwork and collaboration, problem solving, strategic thinking, resource management and mental toughness covering persistence, resilience, and grit. One of the most common concerns and misconceptions regarding educational competitions is the "Competition vs. Collaboration" debate. Some people mistakenly think that competition is the antonym to collaboration. However, when it is broken down, well-structured, consciously designed competitions actually foster collaboration and teamwork. Most team-based competitions require students to take on challenging tasks that require effective communication, collaboration, and teamwork.

These skills are necessary for future successful career. Business doesn't exist in a vacuum. Whatever sector it operates in, there will always be other businesses competing for customers on price, the type of product or the quality of service in the same field.