

Business closer to education

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Participants of the conference *Education and Science in 21st Century – the Business Perspective*, organised by the Polish Confederation of Private Employers Lewiatan (PKPP Lewiatan), concluded that notwithstanding high unemployment rate, companies have great difficulties in finding the right employees. This is due to the fact that job seekers, the unemployed and graduates from schools and universities are insufficiently qualified to be employed.

'Education for companies' sake should take place directly in companies and should be supported by the state. It may be led by schools or other educational institutions upon specific firms' order. It does not have to be long-term. Małgorzata Rusewicz, Director at the Department of Social Dialog and Labour Relations at PKPP Lewiatan says: 'Financial solutions are needed to cover costs of expensive vocational and specialised education taking place in various alternative places (in companies, schools, at universities and in other educational institutions).'

Companies are more and more aware of benefits that result from planned and purposeful improvement of employees' qualifications. They look for solutions, which will allow them to build up a real competitive advantage based on knowledge and competences within the near future. Additionally, a study, conducted by KPMG upon PKPP Lewiatan's order within the frame of *Qualifications adjusted to Employers' needs* project, co-funded by the European Union under the European Social Fund, showed that cooperation between business and education sector begins to develop.

The main drive of the cooperation between enterprises and the education sector includes: regular improvement of present employees' qualifications, recruiting and educating new employees and reinforcing positive image of the company among employees. Organisation of vocational internships and apprenticeships is the most popular form of cooperation. Majority of recruited workers are unprepared as far as practice is concerned to fulfil tasks at a workplace.

Undertaking initiatives which stand out in a positive way, like developing comprehensive cooperation projects with institutions, is a promising trend. Initiatives which include business influencing the education system (e.g. cooperation with a specific school at local level, dialog with the Ministry of National Education - at the system level) are highly appreciated. They involve firms' direct participation in the education process, i.e. these are such initiatives that aim at adjusting curriculum to market and a given company's requirements. Many companies finance cooperation with the education sector from own budgets. Some of them share costs with educational institutions or use European Union funds.

Polish Confederation of Private Employers Lewiatan