

Talent and connectivity driving Lithuania's GDP and foreign investment growth

By Invest Lithuania

Lithuania In the EU for GDP growth since 2000, and with GDP growth of 3.8 % in 2017 and predicted growth of 2.9% in 2018, the country successfully weathered the aftershocks of the financial crisis of 2008, and has been increasing GDP year-on-year. Now in the top 16 nations in the 2018 Ease of Business rankings, Lithuania is justly taking its place as a regional hub for Foreign Direct Investment.

What has attracted so many big names to the small Baltic nation? For the answer to this question you first need to look to connectivity. Located at the heart of Europe, and as a convenient bridge between East and West, Lithuania is an ideal gateway nation. It can offer companies direct access to clients in the CEE, CIS and Western Europe. Moreover, with average flight times of 2- 3 hours to most European destinations, and international airports in both Kaunas and Vilnius it is easily accessible for international business. The country's airport and transport infrastructure has also proved to be a draw for the MRO sector, with companies such as Ryanair, Aeroflot, Easyjet and SAS all conducting MRO operations in the country. Ryanair's Chief Operations

Officer, Mick Hickey, explains why: "The excellent infrastructure, the quality of the aviation specialists and the possibility to successfully co-operate with local institutions were all key factors in our decision to establish – and then later expand-our aircraft maintenance center in Lithuania." Once more, you will find that the stress is placed on the talent on offer, a point that is reflected in the feedback from foreign investors time and time again.

The country also ranks 1st in the CEE for its roads, and it offers direct rail links to Russia, Belarus, Latvia, Poland, Germany, Ukraine and Asia (incl. China). This rail connectivity, meanwhile, is set to expand following the opening of the Rail Baltica rail-link, which will run from Berlin to Helsinki via Kaunas. Then there is the ice-free Sea Port of Klaipeda, which is the largest port in the Baltic States, handling up to 65 million tons of cargo each year.

But the connectivity the country has to offer is not limited to rail, road, air and sea. One of the global leaders in internet speed and 4G coverage, the country can provide a global digital reach that is fast, reliable and affordable: its fixed broadband

prices are the lowest in the EU. In fact, Lithuania ranked 1st in 2016 for globally fulfilling business needs for ICT. This is partly why the GBS sector in particular has taken off.

Overall, FDI is led by Nordic investment. In 2010-2017 FDI projects from the Nordics (Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland) accounted for 32% of the total number. Meanwhile, both the US and the UK each accounted for 10% of the total number of FDI projects. Another 8% of the projects originated from Germany. This particular weighting towards Scandinavian investment is, of course, precipitated by geographical proximity, but also by working culture and mindset. The local workforce is extremely adaptable, and quick to fit the needs of any incoming company. This is why such operations as Western Union and Barclays have been keen to scale up their operations from original projections by up to 200%.

Another reason the country has proven attractive is that its government and local institutions have been very proactive in enacting changes that improve the conditions for foreign investment. Lithuania's take on the emerging fintech industry

is a prime example of this. Just recently, the Bank of Lithuania overhauled the country's financial regulatory framework so that it could guarantee the sector with the quickest turnaround in the EU for financial license application. The pan worked nicely, and Lithuania is now able to issue e-money and payments institution licenses 2-3 times faster than other European nations. And these licenses are valid in the broader EU market comprising 512 million people and 23 million businesses, making Lithuania the fastest gateway to Europe. This commitment to providing the best environment for Fintech is clearly reflected in the words of Marius Jurgilas, Board Member of the Bank of Lithuania: "With a view to providing favourable conditions for FinTech companies that are considering setting up in Lithuania, we have made a number of improvements to the system which will be felt by companies from the very start." This forward thinking approach to making the country more attractive for investment and talent is most clearly expressed through the introduction of its new Startup Visa program. Designed to fast-track visa applications from Non-EU individuals looking to expand or build new innovative startups, this program has one overriding aim - to put Lithuania firmly on the map as a go to location for talent and innovation.

With corporate tax rates ranging from 0-15%, and 6 Free Economic Zones which offer a raft of financial incentives, Lithuania also offers a cost competitive solution for companies looking to expand or develop their operations. The country's FEZ zones in particular are especially attractive: they offer 0% corporate tax for the first 10 years, and a 50% reduction for the subsequent 6 years, 0% tax on dividends and 0% tax on real estate.

If we look at the Lithuanian FDI sector at a national level, we see that the largest centers are at

present Vilnius and Kaunas, which account for almost all of the fast growing GBS sector. The regions and Klaipeda meanwhile account for most of the second largest FDI sector, manufacturing.

The capital Vilnius, as the largest and most populous city in the country, is unsurprisingly the focus for a large part of Lithuania's foreign investment. This largely comes in the shape of the GBS sector, where the city accounts for 84% of the entire sector. For proof of how well the city has managed to tailor itself to the sector, you need only look to the local CEE SSC awards, where Vilnius has taken top awards three years in a row. But why has the city become home to Western Union's biggest operation outside the US, as well as the first choice of support and expansion for a large part of the Scandinavian banking sector? The main reason may lay in its willingness to bootstrap. Vilnius has proven time and again that its self-motivating talent is driven to deliver results that outstrip expectations. This is how Kendra Rickenbaw, Managing Director at Western Union, Vilnius puts it: "The talent we have found in Lithuania has been motivated and inspired to drive results and improvements in Western Union's globally diverse and dynamic business." This desire to exceed expectations is not exclusively a characteristic of Vilnius however; it is in fact one of the defining traits of Lithuanian talent identified by all foreign companies with operations in the country.

Vilnius is not only a hub for GBS - it is also a thriving base for young and dynamic startups. A large part of those are designing and implementing cutting-edge technology, and the country was recognized best in the EU for progress in the ICT startup environment. The reasons for this are many. Firstly, there is the lure of the local talent as discussed above, but on top of that there is also a

commitment on the part of the local government, and in particular the city's municipality, to nurture and support innovative business. The opening in 2016 of Vilnius Tech Park - a cutting-edge tech-centered business park set amongst the lush grounds of a 19th-century manor estate-is evidence of this. As a private venture, developed in close co-operation with the municipality, the Tech Park stands as a clear statement of how the city is willing to help build and support private ventures that stimulate growth, investment and innovation. The fact that the city's tech park has been built in a green space is no coincidence.

the country's second city Kaunas is fast developing to become a hub of its own. It has a far lower saturation rate than most comparable European cities of the same size, especially in the key sector of GBS, where only 5 in 1000 is employed in the sector, compared to 66.1 per 1000 in Krakow. Added to which, wage rates in the city are 19% lower than in Vilnius. The city also offers cost competitive office space rates: 10EUR per 1m².

What makes Kaunas such an attractive destination overall is its educated workforce. As home to the country's (and the Baltic's) premiere technical university, Kaunas University of Technology, the city is able to consistently produce the kind of talent modern innovative business demands. This is born out by Intermedix, who opened their SSC there in 2014, and now employ 640 offering IT, F & A and Operations Support to 15,000 healthcare professionals worldwide. And Kaunas University of Technology is not only aware of its importance in creating the right talent for modern business, it is actively co-operating with business to make this a reality. Intermedix is collaborating with the university through their common Innovation and Creativity laboratory to help drive

new solutions and ideas. Barclays also has a partnered program, its Mainframe Talent Academy, which is especially tailored to help develop specific market-defined skills. The University is also home to the first Bloomberg Financial Markets lab in the Baltic States and Poland, which is designed to enable businesses and public sector organizations to hire new employees with practical experience of the processes which occur in global markets.

On the industrial innovation front, the country has a long tradition in cutting-edge photonics. Lithuania's Workshop of Photonics is working alongside Corning Incorporated - whose Gorilla Class is found in 4.5 billion smartphones worldwide - on new laser glass technology. Meanwhile, in the Health Technology field, Lithuanian talent is delivering solutions for such global names

as Thermofisher, Teva, Moog and Intersurgical. Information and internet solutions is also a growing field. The local startup community has attracted more than \$100 million in investment, and spawned such international successes as Vinted, TransferGo, CGtrader and Deeper. This has led big names such as Uber, Wix and Nasdaq to come knocking and set up local global operations.

Mention of the country's manufacturing sector, which is mainly focused in its regions and third city Klaipeda. Panevezys is notable as the location for Schmitz Cargobull's sizeable Lithuanian operations. Klaipeda, Lithuania's port city, meanwhile is the centre for manufacturing companies across a wide range of industries. As a port, it is a natural setting for a number of shipbuilding and offshore structure companies, with Hugaas

and Advantec each with a sizeable presence. Food and beverage production is also an important industry to the city, and FDI presence comes in the shape of Philip Morris and Mars, amongst others.

All in all, Lithuania's consistent GDP growth, along with its supportive business environment, makes it a fertile ground for companies wishing to expand their operations. As a gateway that provides links to Western Europe, the CEE, the CIS and Scandinavia, it is perfectly placed for companies looking to extend their market. Moreover, with a deep talent pool with the highest level of tertiary education in the EU, and near 100% proficiency in English amongst young professionals, the country is able to provide companies with the kind of employees that put them on the way to exceeding their business expectations. 



↑ Ports of Klaipieda, Lithuania (XINHUA/RIA Novosti)

立陶宛两大投资优势

立陶宛的互联互通不仅局限于铁路、公路以及空中和海上航线。其互联网网速也列居世界领先地位。立陶宛拥有欧盟国家中最好的高等教育水准和丰富的人才资源

文 | 立陶宛投资局 翻译 | 王晓波

立陶宛作为欧盟成员国，自2000年以来，国内生产总值一直处于增长态势。2017年的增长率是3.8%，预计2018年的增长率将是2.9%。立陶宛成功地经受住了2008年金融危机后的冲击，并且实现了国内生产总值的逐年增长。现在立陶宛已经跻身2018年全球营商环境便利化排名的前16名，成为所在区域外商直接投资的中心。

互联互通优势

为什么这个波罗的海小国能够吸引那么多世界知名企业？要回答这个问题，首先应当了解一下它在互联互通方面的优势。

立陶宛地处欧洲中心，是连接东西方的桥梁，并且是进入欧洲各区域最理想的门户。企业在立陶宛可以很方便地与其位于中东欧、独联体和西欧的客户联系。而且，从立陶宛前往大多数欧洲国家乘飞机平均只需2-3个小时，考纳斯和维尔纽斯的国际机场对于飞往世界各地开展业务也非常方便。

立陶宛的机场和交通基础设施对从事维修、维护和运营业务的外国公司来说颇具吸引力。一些航空公司，比如瑞安航空公司、俄罗斯航空公司、易捷航空公司和斯堪的纳维亚航空公司，都在

立陶宛开展了这类业务。瑞安航空公司的首席运营官米克·希基解释说，“优质的基础设施、高素质的航空专家与当地机构的默契合作是我们决定在此设立飞机维修中心的关键因素，而且很快就对中心进行了扩建。”

立陶宛的道路情况在中东欧地区名列第一，还有直达俄罗斯、白俄罗斯、拉脱维亚、波兰、德国、乌克兰和亚洲（包括中国）的铁路。同时，在波罗的海铁路线开通后，立陶宛的铁路线将实现与它的连接，因为波罗的海铁路线从柏林到赫尔辛基的途中会经过考纳斯。此外，立陶宛还拥有不冻港克莱佩达，它是波罗的海各国中最大的港口，每年可以装卸多达6500万吨货物。

立陶宛的互联互通并不局限于铁路、公路以及空中和海上航线，它的互联网网速和4G覆盖率也列居世界领先地位。它可以提供快速、安全和人们能够负担得起的全球数字网络，而且它的固定宽带价格在欧盟国家中是最低的。

在2010至2017年间，来自北欧的投资项目（瑞典、挪威、丹麦和芬兰）占到立陶宛总投资的32%。美国和英国对立陶宛的投资项目均是其总投资的10%，德国的投资占8%。这些投资大多集中在斯堪的纳维亚地区，这不仅是因为

为其优越的地理位置，而且也源于当地的文化和人们对待工作的心态。当地的劳动人口的适应能力极强，可以迅速满足前来投资的境外公司的需要。

致力改善投资环境

立陶宛能够吸引外国投资的另一个原因是政府致力于改善投资环境。最近，立陶宛银行为了能够以最快的速度获得欧盟的金融许可证，对国家的金融监管架构进行了全面改革。改革取得了很好的效果，现在立陶宛发放电子货币和支付机构许可证的速度是欧洲其他国家的2-3倍。由于这些许可证针对整个欧盟市场的5.12亿人口和2300万家企业都是有效的，这使得立陶宛成为了进入欧洲最快的门户。

国家在投资和人才方面颇具吸引力也表现在立陶宛为初创公司启动的签证申请项目上。为了帮助那些非欧盟国家的创业者来立陶宛创业或拓展业务，立陶宛为他们的签证申请设立了快速通道。

立陶宛的公司税率在0-15%之间，6个经济自由区还为有意落户经营的企业提供了许多财政激励政策和在成本方面极具竞争优势的方案。立陶宛的经济自由区的确很有吸引力：在企业经营的头十年，企业无需缴纳任何公司税；在此之后的六

年里，还可享受减免一半公司税的待遇，而且股息和房地产都无需缴税。

创业基地——维尔纽斯

立陶宛的外国直接投资，他们主要集中在维尔纽斯和考纳斯，这两个地方和克莱佩达也是制造业基地。

首都维尔纽斯是立陶宛规模最大、人口最多的城市，无疑也成为了外商投资的首选地。这里的大部分投资项目属于全球共享服务业务，占外商投资项目的84%。维尔纽斯连续三年获得中东欧国家共享服务中心的最高奖。同时，维尔纽斯的人才自我激励机制也是吸引投资的重要因素，员工在工作时总是要求自己要做到结果胜过预期。西联银行维尔纽斯分行总经理肯德拉·里森贝这样评价，“我们在立陶宛发现的人才都非常具有工作积极性和创造力，他们为推动西联的全球多样化业务付出了很大努力，取得了卓越的成就。”不过，这种超过预期的拼搏精神并不只是维尔纽斯人的性格。事实上，这是立陶宛的人才普遍具有的特征之一，所有在立陶宛经营业务的外国公司都认同这一点。

维尔纽斯不仅是全球共享服务的中心，而且还是充满活力的年轻人创业的基地，他们大多在这里从事设计和使用前沿技术。在欧盟国家中，对初创企业来说，立陶宛的信息通信技术被公认为是最好的。获得这一赞誉的原因是多方面的。

首先是由于前面提到的当地的人才优势。除此之外，还有来自地方政府，特别是市政府，对创新企业的大力支持和扶植。2016年维尔纽斯科技园区的正式启动——一个以尖端科技为核心的商业园区，坐落在19世纪庄园的绿地上——就足以证明这一点。科技园区虽然属于私人企业，但在建设过程中一直与市政

府保持着密切合作，并且得到了大力支持，因为市政府非常希望借助于它带动整个城市的发展、投资和创新。

全球服务中心——考纳斯

考纳斯是立陶宛的第二大城市，它正在飞速发展成为一个具有自身特色的中心。相较于欧洲同等规模的大多数城市，它的就业饱和度非常低，特别是在全球服务中心这样的核心产业领域。每1000名员工中只有5人从事这一行业，而在克拉科夫则已经有66.1人在这一行业工作。除此以外，其平均工资也比维尔纽斯的劳动力成本低19%，办公用地的租金也极具竞争力，每平方米只需10欧元。

考纳斯之所以能够成为极具吸引力的投资目的地，主要得益于其受过良好教育的劳动力。考纳斯理工大学是立陶宛（和波罗的海）首屈一指的技术大学，因此该市每年都会涌现出大批能够满足现代创新业务需要的人才。2014年美国Intermedix公司首先在考纳斯建立了其共享服务中心，现在它聘用了640名当地员工，为其世界各地15000名医疗保健专业人员提供信息技术、财务和运营服务。考纳斯理工大学不仅意识到为现代企业提供适用型人才的重要性，而且还积极与企业合作，确保学生能够学以致用。Intermedix就与该大学合作共建了创新实验室，为其工作中遇到的问题设计解决方案并开发新的想法。巴克莱银行也与该大学合作了一个名为“大型计算机人才学院”的项目，专门培养学生掌握市场所需的技能。该大学也是彭博在波罗的海国家和波兰成立的第一个金融市场实验室的所在地，这个实验室旨在帮助企业和公共部门能够雇佣到具有应对国际市场经验的员工。

从产业创新的角度看，立陶宛在尖端光子学方面有着悠久的历史。立陶宛

的光子学实验室与康宁公司合作——它的大猩猩玻璃用在世界各地45亿部手机上——展开对激光玻璃新技术的研发。与此同时，在医疗技术领域，立陶宛的人才正在为诸如赛默飞世尔科技公司、梯瓦制药、穆格公司和英特赛克医疗器械公司这样的全球知名企业提供解决方案。信息和互联网解决方案也是一个日益发展的领域。当地的创业社区已经吸引了超过1亿美元的投资，其中包括经营非常成功的企业，比如二手衣物交易平台Vinted、汇款服务平台TransferGo、3D模型公司CGTrader和智能探鱼器公司Deeper。这使得诸如优步、威克斯和纳斯达克等知名企业纷纷前来立陶宛，在这里建立运营基地，拓展其全球业务。

制造业基地——克莱佩达

立陶宛的制造业主要聚集在其第三大城市克莱佩达。克莱佩达是立陶宛的港口城市，同时也是各种制造业的中心。作为港口，它是许多造船和海上结构公司的天然选择，挪威的华加斯工程公司和优先科技公司都已在此建立了很大规模的基地。食品和饮料的生产是该城市的另一主要产业，参与其中的外商投资者包括菲利普·莫里斯和玛氏公司等。

立陶宛国内生产总值的不断增长及其鼓励营商所提供的环境使其成为吸引境外公司纷至沓来的热土。作为连接西欧、中东欧、独联体和斯堪的纳维亚半岛的门户，它也是有意拓展海外市场的公司首选之地。而且，立陶宛拥有欧盟国家中最好的高等教育水准和丰富的人才资源，年轻的专业人员几乎都可以用英语交流，因此，当地的劳动力完全能够胜任外国公司的要求，并为它们创造出超出预期的结果。

（编辑：张梅）