ESCO MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIES TO NOT ONLY PRODUCE BUT ALSO DEVELOP MEDICAL EQUIPMENT AT NEWLY-BUILT PLANT

Starting with only three employees a decade ago, today Esco Medical Technologies has more than 70 employees and is actively looking for new ones. Spaces for its expanding ambitions and growing team are being built on a plot rented in the Kaunas Free Economic Zone (FEZ). The plan is a medical equipment plant, with approximately €15 million to be invested in it.

One of the strategic directions of the activities of the Kaunas Free Economic Zone (FEZ) is focused on attracting high-tech companies engaged in R&D. This is exactly what Esco Medical Technologies, which develops and manufactures equipment for fertility clinics and laboratories is and it announced this November the start of construction of its new medical equipment factory.

The company has been working in Kaunas for a decade. Starting as manufacturers of laboratory and pharmaceutical equipment, this Lithuanian/Danish team created its first incubator.

“Even then we already had the product and the people who knew the specifics of the market, so we offered the life sciences company, Esco, to invest in a newly-created company that would develop and produce medical equipment specifically for artificial insemination laboratories,” remembers Evaldas Pečiūnas, a spokesperson for Esco Lifesciences, owned by shareholders in Singapore.

After the creation of AT Medical, part of which was acquired by Esco in 2010, it employed three people to produce a single product. In two years, the team had grown to almost 15 people, and its product range — up to four device models. In 2015, Esco became a well-recognised name in the medical equipment market and one of the leading manufacturers of incubators. In 2018, Esco Group acquired the remaining assets of AT Medical and the company was renamed Esco Medical Technologies.

Currently, the company produces more than 10 different devices and is developing new ones: all Miri series incubators are created and produced in Lithuania, Kaunas produces benchtop and timelapse incubators*,* validation systems, and laminars for IVF (artificial fertilisation) processes.

Kaunas has excellent specialists, but still lacks programmers

The company has 75 employees and is actively looking for new ones. Currently, there are mechanical and electrical engineers, programmers, and IT specialists.

“Considering how the market is recovering, I am sure that we will need a lot of new team members. In the last month alone, we have recruited four people. But unfortunately, we are still limited by a lack of space, which is why we look forward to the new building in the Kaunas FEZ,” says Mr Pečiūnas.

When assessing the situation of the labour market in the Kaunas region, representatives of the company claim that they do not have the right to complain and are happy that excellent, hard-working people, responsibly and diligently performing their work, actively participating in the life of the company, are joining the team. However, there is still a general trend — the lack of programmers.

“We have not yet been able to attract as many as we would like — perhaps we have not yet found the right way to search for them or offer what such specialists expect. As far as I can see, this problem is not ours alone,” says Esco’s representative.

The company grows the right professionals for its positions both from young people who have just graduated from university or are still studying, and it attracts experienced professionals from other businesses of a similar profile. But even the latter need time to learn, to understand the subtleties necessary for successful work with Esco products.

“We don’t attract foreigners directly as there are enough local specialists, and we work with colleagues from other subdivisions of the group. In addition, we are always happy to present attractive offers to people returning to Lithuania from abroad, who, having made a successful career abroad, decide to use their experience for just as successful work here in Lithuania,” says Mr Pečiūnas about attracting specialists.

New products are time-consuming

In Kaunas, Esco not only manufactures products but also creates them. The company’s R&D department employs mechanical and electronic engineers, as well as programmers and biologists — a total of about 10 people. Eight more people work in Denmark to develop innovative products.

To this end, there is close cooperation with scientists from various Lithuanian and foreign universities. Speaking about partnerships with higher education institutions, Mr Pečiūnas mentions successful long-term cooperation with Prof Vidas Raudonis from Kaunas University of Technology, researchers from the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, who helped achieve excellent results, and consultations with physicists from Vilnius University.

“I can only rejoice in all these connections and that, despite the high employment rate of people in the field of science, we always receive the highest level of support and help from them. By the way, we are also assisted by foreign scientists — specialists from Austrian and Spanish universities. I could hardly imagine the growth of the company and the creation of new equipment without such cooperation.”

Typically, the need for the development of new products is dictated by both customers and the manufacturer’s insight and identification, trying to advance and offer a new approach to some processes. However, it takes time to present innovations: to make it from an idea to the consumer, the product usually takes at least two years, and some Esco projects have been under development for 4−5 years without the finish line in sight.

High-tech products also require relevant knowledge shared by the manufacturer during meetings and training. These are organised for technicians from different countries around the world, teaching how to service the equipment produced in Kaunas. Therefore, the new Esco building in the Kaunas FEZ also includes a so-called showroom — a hall where all the company’s products will be exhibited. Seminars, working sessions, and training for potential clients will be organised here.

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Currently, the Kaunas FEZ has attracted 53 foreign and local investors, applying advanced technological solutions and developing innovative products. Since the first investor in 2005, to today, more than 7,800 jobs have been created in the territory of the Kaunas FEZ and more than €1.2 billion of direct investment has been attracted.